

Cross-cultural Analysis: Religion in the Workplace in the USA and the Czech Republic

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Náboženství, pracoviště, zaměstnanec, zaměstnavatel, víra, spiritualita, náboženská diskriminace, náboženská diverzita, modlitba, Spojené státy americké, Česká republika

ABSTRACT

This work explores religion in the workplace in the Czech Republic and in the United States. It focuses on religion in the workplace from a historical perspective and deals with current problems related to religion in the workplace. This thesis endeavors to describe the influences of religion on working relationships and mentions the laws and traditions that the believers are obligated to follow in the workplace. In view of the fact that beliefs and religious affiliations are often not homogenous among employees, this work concentrates on how to manage the presence of more religions in the workplace. The aim of this thesis is to find out whether the current perceptions of religion in the workplace are different in the Czech Republic and in the United States.

Keywords:

Religion, the workplace, an employee, an employer, belief, spirituality, religious discrimination, religious diversity, prayer, the United States of America, the Czech Republic

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	10
I THEORY	11
1 DEFINITION OF RELIGION	12
1.1 Development of religion in the Czech Republic in 20 th and 21 st century	13
1.2 Development of religion in the workplace in the United States	15
1.3 The New Age Movement.....	17
2 SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE	19
2.1 Religion vs. Spirituality	19
2.2 Benefits of the presence of spirituality in the workplace.....	20
3 RELIGION IN THE WORKPLACE	22
3.1 Religious accommodation in the workplace.....	23
3.1.1 Managing religious accommodation in the workplace	23
4 RELIGION, EMPLOYMENT, AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS	26
4.1 Religion, employment, and anti-discrimination laws in the Czech Republic.....	26
4.2 Religion, employment, and anti-discrimination laws in the United States.....	27
4.2.1 Reasonable accommodation	28
4.2.2 Religious harassment from American legal point of view	29
5 RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT	30
5.1 Religious discrimination in the workplace	30
5.2 Dealing with religious discrimination and harassment in the workplace	31
6 RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOUR IN AN ORGANIZATION (POTENTIAL CONFLICT TRIGGERS).....	32
6.1 Religious proselytization in the workplace.....	32
6.2 The habit of prayer in the workplace	33
6.3 Dress code.....	34
6.4 Religious holidays or the Sabbath in the workplace.....	35
6.4.1 December as “holiday season”	36
6.4.2 Working weekends	37
II ANALYSIS	38
1 RESEARCH - RELIGION IN THE WORKPLACE IN THE USA AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC.....	39

1.1	Description of the research problem and methods of collecting and examining data	39
1.2	The characteristics of respondents and other data sources	40
2	DATA ANALYSIS.....	42
2.1	Basic information (age, the relationship between respondents and religion)	42
2.2	The difference between religion and spirituality	43
2.3	Religious discrimination and harassment in the workplace	43
2.4	Religious toleration within the workplace (habits associated with religious beliefs).....	44
2.5	People’s awareness of the laws or regulations related to religion in the workplace in the Czech Republic and in the U.S.	46
2.6	How specific companies deal with the issue of religion in their workplaces	47
2.7	Respondents’ own experience with religion in their workplaces	49
	CONCLUSION	51
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	52

INTRODUCTION

Religion is probably the most discussed phenomena from a historical perspective and it is still a very important part of most cultures in today's world. Even though there is no clear definition of religion, most people consider religion as the meaning of their lives and part of their souls. From this standpoint is obvious that if people go to work they bring their religious identities or beliefs with them to the workplace. Since for most people it is not so easy to leave their identity and a part of their souls at the workplace door.

Religion in the workplace is an issue on the rise. In the history of the United States, the Naturalization Act in 1965 and the Baby Boomer generation have been thought of as key factors in increasing the awareness of the issues related to religion in the workplace. From the perspective of the Czech Republic, a paradigm shift in terms of religion in the workplace occurred after the Velvet Revolution in 1989. Another reason that plays a very important role in terms of increasing interest in religion in the workplace is definitely the globalization, as globalization causes an increasing diffusion of cultures and builds one global business world. But there are many other reasons responsible for an increasing interest of religion with respect to the workplace.

The changing world of business requires a greater effort to manage companies' human resources departments nowadays. This is due to the fact that the labor market is becoming increasingly multicultural and religiously diverse. It goes hand in hand with potential sources of conflicts which can occur in every multicultural and religiously diverse workplace. There are many potential conflict triggers that relate to religion in the workplace. Most of these conflict triggers arise from different habits and obligations that are mostly the believers' duties to fulfill within their religious affiliation. Very frequent and the most common causes of workplace conflicts are issues such as habits of prayer, different types of dress codes, working weekends, or religious proselytizing in the workplace.

Approaches as well as ways how to deal with religion in the workplace are probably not the same in the whole world. A comparison between the Czech Republic (one of the most secular countries in the world) and the United States (a country with a rich religious history) in terms of religion in the workplace might bring some interesting findings. It will be also interesting to identify some of the main differences in people's perceptions of the issues related to religion in the workplace in the Czech Republic and in the United States.

I. THEORY

1 DEFINITION OF RELIGION

Patrick H. McNamara approaches the problem of defining religion with the statement: “Try to define religion and you invite an argument.”¹ His statement very aptly explains a difficulty, which occurs when creating a definition of religion.

The concept of religion has been one of the most important phenomena from a historical perspective. Considering religion to be a general concept containing all beliefs may seem to be wrong due to its long history and characteristics. It is obvious that to establish a definition of religion is extremely difficult. It is very likely due to the fact that the boundaries of religion are not clearly defined.² Zdeněk Nešpor shares the same standpoint. He claims that the main problem of the concept of religion is that religion is by no means a universal concept.³ And another problem is also in the fact that any definition of religion is closely linked to theoretical assumptions that can be challenged at any time.⁴ In addition, everyone chooses their own self-interpretation and personal approach to a religious affiliation. This means that there may be as many interpretations of religion as many believers exist.

Aurelius Augustinus (St. Augustine of Hippo) refers to the question of the meaning of religion as follows: “What is religion? If I am not asked, I know what religion is, but if I am asked, I do not know.”⁵ Aurelius Augustinus in his statement proved that even a great philosopher as he was is unable to formulate a definition of religion. Perhaps this statement says that a definition of religion is not so important.

Some authors deal with the philosophy of religion from a classical perspective. They argue that the object or the major point of a religious affiliation is always God. These authors mostly deal with concepts of faith, where there is no God. For example Buddhism and Hinduism do not have their own God, however, are still considered religions. Buddhism and Hinduism refer to themselves as “dharma” which means “law”. Based on

¹ Scott C. Idleman “The Role of Religious Values in Judicial Decision Making,” *Indiana Law Journal* 68, no. 2 (1993): under “442,” <http://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1479&context=ilj> (accessed February 4, 2013).

² Olga Pechová, *Psychologie Náboženství* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2011), 10.

³ Zdeněk R. Nešpor et al., *Příručka Sociologie Náboženství* (Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství Slon, 2008), 120.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

these findings and problems with defining religion, some authors have decided that it might be necessary to work without a definition of religion.⁶

Religion is a worldwide phenomenon which constantly changes and develops. It is not purpose of this thesis to comment on the establishment of definition of religion. But it is surprising that religion or some types of worship have been among people for such a long period and people are still not able to define it properly.

1.1 Development of religion in the Czech Republic in 20th and 21st century

So far, however, there has been little discussion about the religion in the workplace in the Czech Republic. There are almost no Czech books or publications that deal with religion in terms of the workplace. To place this issue into the context of this topic, we must begin with a brief summary of the development of religion in the Czech Republic. This summary will provide a better understanding and essential information for exploring an importance of religion in the workplace in the Czech Republic.

There were several fundamental changes relating to religion in Czech history. The first fundamental change relating to religion in the Czech Republic in the 20th century occurred after the First World War. The then political leader Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and the whole political scene of the Czech Republic approached to religion not in a friendly way. Their relation to religion is sometimes even described as dismissive. Despite this negative attitude Protestant Church strengthened its position in the period after the First World War. Also events after the Second World War, specifically the displacement of the Germans from the Czechoslovakia had a considerable impact on the Czech religious development. These events had a considerable impact on the Jewish population in the Czech Republic that has been significantly influenced by the Second World War. Most of the surviving Jews emigrated to Israel and the U.S on the basis of the events in the Second World War.⁷

One of the biggest opponents of religion in Czech history was undoubtedly communism. One could say that the greatest influence on the development of religion in the Czech Republic in the 20th Century had definitely communism. For instance many

⁶ Ivan O. Štampach, *Náboženství v Dialogu* (Praha: Portál, 1998), 29-30.

Catholic priests were persecuted and the Greek Catholic Church had to merge with the Orthodox Church. After this merger, the Greek Catholic Church was even prohibited. These persecutions and oppressions were the most severe in the 1950s. Even in the next decades the Church did not have a free hand and the Communist party still restricted and controlled its activities.⁸

Interesting events occurred after the Velvet Revolution in November 1989. After this revolution, there was a religious revival and increase of people avowing a membership and an affiliation to a various types of religions or beliefs. But in subsequent years, the number of believers have begun dramatically decline. This decrease was even more drastic than after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic after the First World War.⁹ This drastic decline of believers can be demonstrated on the last three population censuses of the Czech Republic (1991, 2001 and 2011). In 1991, 44 percent of the population avowed a relationship to any religion; in the year 2001, it was 31 percent of the population and in the year 2011 it was only 14 percent of the population.¹⁰ This decrease primarily affected major religious communities. Conversely, some small communities experienced growth of the believers.

The population of the Czech Republic has rather negative attitude towards religious communities than it is completely atheistic.¹¹ There is an increasing number of Czech people who are not atheists, but they are not the members of any religious community as well. These people usually tend to the concept of spirituality, but some of them refuse spirituality at all. As Nešpor stated, these people either tend to the concept of spirituality or they refuse it. He adds that according to the research, even people who refuse any links between spirituality and themselves, they might have some spiritual values. Most of people who refuse spirituality they usually read the horoscopes and believe them to some extent, use the amulets bringing happiness or attend various prophets and healers.¹² According to

⁷ Olga Pechová, *Psychologie Náboženství* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2011), 98-99; Petr Sedlák "Historie," Federace Židovských Obcí <http://www.fzo.cz/o-nas/historie/> (accessed February 5, 2013).

⁸ Olga Pechová, *Psychologie Náboženství* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2011), 98-99.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "První Předběžné Výsledky Sčítání Lidu, Domů a Bytů 2011," Český Statistický Úřad, http://notes2.czso.cz/cz/sldb2011/cd_sldb2011_11_12/cr.html (accessed February 15, 2013).

¹¹ Zdeněk R. Nešpor et al., *Příručka Sociologie Náboženství* (Praha: Sociologické Nakladatelství Slon, 2008), 171.

¹² Ibid.

the research, at least 50 percent of the Czech population fulfills these characteristics that can be labeled neither atheistic nor “fully” religious. And the number of these people is rising in the Czech Republic. This type of religiosity relates rather to middle-aged people living in larger cities. Since conservative people living in rural areas and villages rather tend to the generally known concepts of religion.¹³

1.2 Development of religion in the workplace in the United States

Regarding the U.S., we can move directly to the development of religion in the workplace, because this phenomenon is far more widespread in the U.S. than in the Czech Republic. There are no Czech surveys or studies and almost no Czech literature dedicated to the topic of religion in the workplace. This is probably the consequence of the fact the Czech Republic belongs to one of the most atheistic countries in the world. On the other hand, the U.S. is a country with the very significant presence of religious diversity in its population and of course in its workplace.

The most mentioned demographic reason responsible for an increasing interest in religion and spirituality in the workplace is that the Baby Boomer generation has reached middle age. The Baby Boomer generation is the age group that was born after the Second World War, especially between 1946 and the early 1960s. Many authors refer to this generation as “generation Y”. The members of this generation have brought many changes to the American society. For instance, the Baby Boomer generation renounces values of their parents. This generation is also responsible for the establishment of the subcultures or movements such as hippies or punk.¹⁴

From an overall perspective, teenagers and young people have little or no interest in religion and spiritual matters. But when people reach middle age their interest in spiritual matters is on the increase. And this is the reason why there was such a turnover in terms of an interest in spiritual matters in the U.S. at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s. In these years the Baby Boomer generation was reaching middle age. And since a rejection of the values of their parents is a typical feature for this generation, therefore many of them refused religion as well. That was the reason why the Baby Boomers began more interested

¹³ Dušan Lužný and Zdeněk R. Nešpor, *Náboženství v Menšině* (Praha: Malvern, 2008), 7-20.

¹⁴ Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 27-30.

in spirituality. This increased interest in spirituality caused that the religious institutions and religious communities were on the decline and the number of people who attended churches was getting smaller as well. It is obvious that the number of members or active participants in the religious congregations has decreased in the last decades.¹⁵ Robert Putnam delineates in his study of Americans' changing behavior that since the 1960s, church membership has experienced a slow decrease of about 10 percent. He continues with his assertion that actual engagement – regular participation – in religious activities has declined by as much as 50 percent.¹⁶

Another fundamental change affecting the American workplace in terms of religious diversity was emerged after the Naturalization Act in 1965. After the Immigration and Naturalization Act in 1965, there was any number of new spiritual possibilities, ideas or practices accessible for people in America. The American people started to convert to these alternative types of religion such as Islam, Buddhism or Hinduism that had become prevalent at that time. Regarding the availability of different religions and sorts of beliefs, American people could decide for themselves what they want to believe and what movement they will follow. They formed their own spiritual values (their own concept of a faith). The internet supported this free choice of spiritual values. In the 1990s, the internet has provided unprecedented opportunities to share or discuss a faith, religion and spiritual matters among people around the world.¹⁷

Islam is associated with terrorism so tightly in the U.S that when someone commits a terrorist attack, Muslims may be the first suspected of the attack. The same situation prevails even in the American workplace after the September 11. And events such as terrorist attacks may result in taunts or insults directed at Muslim workers. For example many Muslims described that some employers discriminated against women who were

¹⁵ Ibid.; Randall Balmer, *Religion in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2001), 115-116.

¹⁶ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 69–72, quoted in Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 28.

¹⁷ Zdeněk R. Nešpor et al., *Příručka Sociologie Náboženství* (Praha: Sociologické Nakladatelství Slon, 2008), 221-223; Randall Balmer, *Religion in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2001), 114; Joan Marques, Satinder Dhiman, and Richard King, *Spirituality in the Workplace: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Make It Work for You* (Fawnskin, CA: Personhood Press, 2007), 17-19.

wearing “jihad” (a traditional headscarf of Muslim women) after the September 11.¹⁸ Some authors, who deal with a religious diversity in the workplace, also comment on the attack that it was the attack on the religiously diverse workplace. As Hicks noted, The World Trade Center was one of the most religiously diverse collections of workplaces in one of the most religiously diverse cities in the United States.¹⁹ The September 11 has had also other consequences for the American workplace. Although the number of religious discrimination claims in the United States has been rising, there was a sharp increase of these claims after the September 11.²⁰

In recent decades there have been many alternative forms of religion and beliefs. Most of these alternative religions and beliefs got rid of traditional customs that are associated with traditional religions. One of the most popular alternative religious movements and beliefs is definitely The New Age Movement which consists of a wide range of different values and beliefs.

1.3 The New Age Movement

The New Age tradition is one of the largest developments that contribute to addressing the issue of spirituality and religion in the workplace. Many scholars very frequently associate The New Age Movement with the religiously-based workplaces. Since this tradition interests and contributes to the discussion of the spiritual workplace very significantly. It is also important to mention that The New Age is related to many different phenomena in terms of spiritual values.²¹

As David Spangler proposes, The New Age offers a vision of sacredness that does not separate the individual from the world or from everyday life and it explores a sense of holiness and wholeness that is life-affirming and world-affirming, intimate with nature and seeking out the spirit of God in the incarnate cosmos.²² It is important to note that a considerable amount of literature has been published on the topic of this movement. But

¹⁸ Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 70.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁰ Ius Laboris, *Religious Discrimination in the Workplace* (Brussels: A Ius Laboris Publication, 2010), 206; Joan Marques, Satinder Dhiman, and Richard King, *Spirituality in the Workplace: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Make It Work for You* (Fawnskin, CA: Personhood Press, 2007), 8.

²¹ Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 31-32.

²² Daren Kemp, *New Age: a Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 3.

difficulties arise, however, when an attempt is made to establish any definition of The New Age. The key problem with the definition of this movement is that everyone approaches to the issue of The New Age from their own perspective. A better approach might be to focus on general characteristics of this movement.

The New Age Movement contains all the “invisible” or alternative forms of religiosity and spirituality. Although the name of The New Age Movement originally referred to a specific religious group, this term extended to label all alternative forms of spirituality during the 1980s. These alternative forms of spirituality are mostly a reaction to organized and institutional religion. The New Age concept expresses the relationship between man, nature and spirituality. Some people might claim that The New Age is rather a lifestyle with certain spiritual values or practices. Some may also understand The New Age as a set of different doctrines, practices, ideas, concepts, and beliefs that exist together without any problems. The New Age is universal, variable, and by no means constant concept. From the description of The New Age is evident that The New Age has many features and attributes mutual with spirituality. These two concepts were forming together during the 1980s and spirituality might be considered a part of The New Age Movement.²³

²³ Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 31-32; Daren Kemp, *New Age: a Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 1-13.

2 SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Spirituality in the context of workplace has not been among people for a long time. According to Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, an interest in workplace spirituality has increased steadily over the last decade of the twentieth century and into the new millennium.²⁴ It follows that in the late 1980s spirituality has become a frequently discussed topic in public and this has affected the workplace as well. Spirituality also appeared in many magazines, books, or even in videos. As a triggers of increasing interest in spirituality in the American workplace can be considered factors such as demographic and religious changes in society or an overall progress and improvement in a standard of living in the United States and in the Czech Republic at the end of 1980s. As we can see there is not just one factor that triggered people's interest in spirituality and religion in the workplaces. The development of spirituality in Czech Republic is similar to the development of spirituality in the United States. After the Velvet Revolution in 1989 people become interested in different types of religion and alternative beliefs. Despite the fact that the number of members of different religious communities was declining, contrarily the number of adherents of alternative beliefs and spirituality was increasing in the Czech Republic in the early 1990s. Although it may not seem so, the Czech Republic may be rather spiritual than religious or atheistic country nowadays (see the chapter about the development of religion in the Czech Republic).²⁵

2.1 Religion vs. Spirituality

There are a number of important differences between Religion and spirituality. Numerous studies have compared religion and spirituality and found that these two phenomena are not identical. A comparison of spirituality and religion is an issue which has already resulted in many debates. As Garcia-Zamor noted, spirituality and religious belief are compatible, though not identical; they may or may not coexist. In office settings, it is absolutely crucial

²⁴ Spirituality in the Workplace and the Implications for Employees and Organizations" (master's thesis, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2006), 25, in University database, http://wed.siu.edu/Public1/departament/research_template.pdf (accessed February 10, 2013).

²⁵ Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 27; Ivan O. Štampach "Nahradila Spiritualita Náboženství?" Sekty, <http://www.sekty.cz/www/stranky/studie/Spiritualita.pdf> (accessed February 20, 2013).

to understand the differences between the two. Spirituality and religion are two concepts that should not be confused.²⁶

Many experts who deal with this issue agree that spirituality focuses more on the inner knowledge, personal experiences or principles, and general or universal values. While religion focuses more on outward knowledge using a various types of rituals or ceremonies. Religion is usually considered more like organization with its complex theology, rules and principles unlike spirituality, which is seen as a faith in inner self based on feelings, experiences and intuition.²⁷

Not all employees realize the difference between religion and spirituality. But many of them can recognize the difference in the areas related to the workplace. Research based upon a study conducted by Mitroff and Denton has shown that spirituality and religion are not perceived the same concepts. The participants of this research viewed religion as a highly inappropriate topic in the workplace. They saw spirituality, on the other hand, as a highly appropriate subject for a discussion. Another research conducted by East found that employees who feel spiritually connected at work experience peace of mind, inner strength, serenity, patience, calmness, sanity, and positive attitude.²⁸

2.2 Benefits of the presence of spirituality in the workplace

People do not want to work in an uncomfortable and hostile environment or in inhumane conditions nowadays; moreover it is not rewarding for companies with respect to their profitability. Surveys show that people increasingly become unable to separate their personal and spiritual lives.²⁹ It means that people more and more often bring their faith to their jobs.³⁰ And for this reason, an increase of interest in spirituality and religion in the workplace is very obvious. It follows that an interest of employers and managers in this field also increases. As Krishnakumar and Neck have stated, an encouragement of

²⁶ Jean Claude Garcia Zamor, "Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance," *Public Administration Review* 63, no. 3 (May 2003): 359, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/977493> (accessed February 11, 2013).

²⁷ "Spirituality in the Workplace and the Implications for Employees and Organizations" (Master's Thesis, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2006), 25, in University database, http://wed.siu.edu/Public1/departments/research_template.pdf (accessed February 10, 2013).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 43-44.

spirituality within a firm can lead to enhanced creativity, honesty and trust, personal fulfillment, and commitment, which will ultimately lead to increased organizational performance.³¹ It has been proved that “spirited workplaces” have done better with respect to profitability.³² It is very interesting finding that companies with the presence of spirituality in its workplace are more profitable. It might also relate to the fact that spirituality might serve as motivator for employees in the workplace. From the aforementioned survey we can conclude that the presence of spirituality belongs to positive factors in the workplace, which also has much to do with companies’ profitability and good working environment.

³¹ Sukumarakurup Krisnakumar and Christopher P. Neck, “The 'What', 'Why' and 'How' of Spirituality in the Workplace,” *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 17, no. 3 (2002): 162-63, <http://www.choixdecARRIERE.com/pdf/6573/2010/KrishnakumarNeck2002.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2013).

³² Ibid.

3 RELIGION IN THE WORKPLACE

Religion in the workplace receives more and more scholars' attention nowadays.³³ That is to say, issues such as ethnic diversity, pluralism, (spiritual) leadership, and religion are getting more and more popular in the today's workplace. Due to the globalization, the labor market is becoming increasingly multicultural and religiously diverse. The changing world of business also brings a greater need in terms of managing companies' human resources departments.

Many scholars who deal with issues related to religion in the workplace argue that it is not only an employee's or an employer's body what comes to work. They claim that people come to work as "whole human beings" with their feelings, problems, ideas, and beliefs. Scholars often associate this approach with person-centered management or person-centered leadership.³⁴ According to Hickman and Lee, person-centered management is an approach that focuses on the employee as a complex, multifaceted individual whose functioning in the workplace is not isolated from his or her functioning as a total person.³⁵ This implies that people behave, react, communicate and cooperate in the workplace according to who they really are. Human values and beliefs are another features affecting human behavior in the workplace. Since most people do not leave their beliefs or religious commitments and obligations at the workplace door.

It is important to mention that treating people as machines with respect to their religious background or beliefs may lead to the end of companies' profitability. As Hick explains spirituality talk and explicit use of religiously based ethical perspectives on humane working conditions have contributed to workers' rights and protections, faith-based perspectives at the workplace have had positive effects. But he also adds that it is necessary to consider some of the potentially detrimental effects when employers introduce

³³ Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

³⁵ Gill Robinson Hickman and Dalton S. Lee, *Managing Human Resources in the Public Sector: A Shared Responsibility* (Fort Worth: Harcourt College Publishers, 2001), 138, quoted in Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 40.

spirituality or religion into the workplace in ways that are coercive to some or all employees.³⁶

Nowadays, employees must very often meet the great quality demands of skills and abilities. The 21st century organizations usually tend to recruit the most suitable and most capable workers. Since it is one of the key factors which can help managers to make their organizations more successful, effective, and profitable in today's business world. That is the reason why organizations require hiring or maintaining of employees with different religious and cultural backgrounds. In these cases, it is in their best interest to ensure a smooth integration of these employees into the workplace and working team.

3.1 Religious accommodation in the workplace

Unlike the Czech Republic, The U.S. is very religiously diverse and it means that there is a greater probability of recruiting employees who have different religious background. If we were talking about the ideal workplace with the presence of religion, it would one, where the presence of religion does not cause any conflicts or problems either from an employee or employer point of view. But in the real workplace, problems might be caused very often due to the presence of religion in the workplace. As the previous sentence indicates, religious devotion influences the believers in many ways such as dress code, hairstyles, time of prayers, fasting, recruiting new employees, special diets, practicing of a specific language or behavior, and observing specific religious holidays. These characteristics suggest that conflicts based on different values and beliefs of employees or employers might be very frequent.

3.1.1 Managing religious accommodation in the workplace

Religious diversity does not necessarily bring negative aspects or causes problems in the workplace. For instance, religious diversity can enrich a working team and become a crucial element, motivation or inspiration for team members.

If employers want to use religious diversity for their benefit, they should focus on the most common principles, which might help them to ensure a smooth accommodation of religion into the workplace. The key principles related to a smooth accommodation can be

³⁶ Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 41.

listed as follows: education or employee trainings focused on religious diversity; an establishment of a specific corporate policy; creating a friendly working environment; or finding the way how to deal with conflicts.

Education and employee trainings in terms of religion in the workplace might help to accommodate religion in the workplace. If there is religious diversity in the workplace, employers should realize that it is their responsibility to deal with this issue. A diverse workplace is very prone to conflicts and misunderstandings. In many cases, a trigger of these conflicts and misunderstandings proceeds due to lack of information. Or sometimes, these conflicts may proceed from the spurious information that is widespread in society or among employees at the workplace. And this is the reason why employee trainings that are focused on a topic of religious diversity in the workplace are so necessary. During these sessions employees and employers learn how to manage religious diversity or typical situations that occur in the religious workplaces.³⁷

Corporate policy which sets basic rules for managing religious diversity in the workplace might be essential for the workplace with a religiously diverse workforce. Properly set corporate policy might help to prevent serious conflicts and reduce a potential religious discrimination. The main point is to set corporate policy to work well in the context of more different religions or beliefs in one workplace. According to the U.S. research, only 4 percent of all organizations have corporate policy that manages the concept of religious diversity or religious discrimination, even though such concepts might be very important for organizations with the presence of different religions or beliefs among their employees.³⁸

Employers should also provide paid time off for their employees during the celebration of employees' religious events such as feasts, festivals etc. But it will not be most likely approved by employees who do not share the same religion or belief. In this case,

³⁷ Raymond F. Gregory, *Encountering Religion in the Workplace: the Legal Rights and Responsibilities of Workers and Employers* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2011), 181 – 205; James A. Walcheske, “5 Tips for Employers When It Comes to Religious Accommodations,” Avvo, <http://www.avvo.com/legal-guides/ugc/5-tips-for-employers-when-it-comes-to-religious-accommodations> (accessed February 2, 2013).

³⁸ *Religion and Corporate Culture: Accommodating Religious Diversity in the Workplace* (Alexandria: Society For Human Resource Management, 2010), 13-15; Owen Pearson, “What Is Religious Diversity in the Workplace?” eHow money, http://www.ehow.com/info_12104435_religious-diversity-workplace.html (accessed February 8, 2013) ; James A. Walcheske, “5 Tips for Employers When It Comes to Religious Accommodations,” Avvo, <http://www.avvo.com/legal-guides/ugc/5-tips-for-employers-when-it-comes-to-religious-accommodations> (accessed February 2, 2013).

employers or managers should try to find a compromise beneficial to both parties. Another problem that occurs is that some religions or beliefs require certain times for prayers, which very often intersects with their working hours. In this case, employers or managers may try to adjust working hours so that people who need meet their religious obligations are able to fulfill their working duties as well.³⁹

Employers should strive to create a friendly working environment and encourage a mutual tolerance among employees. They should also be attentive to worry about already existing disputes related to religion. It is important that employers take an interest in these disputes and have a tendency to solve them as they arise. Also finding so called “common ground” (common topics and opinions) is essential for religious diversity in the workplace.⁴⁰ It may also help to make a friendly working environment when managers try to make employees feel comfortable and let them express their thoughts and feelings in the workplace. Employees should be sure that their ideas, suggestions or even complaints will not be forgotten and left without any response. In other words, workers should receive responses to their expressions and opinions.

Conflict management and building a mutual tolerance are most likely the most crucial parts of religious accommodation in the workplace. This relates to the aforementioned organizational policy. When employees do something illicit they should know what consequences it will have. And it is necessary that employees know exactly what behavior is permitted and what behavior is no longer tolerated.⁴¹

Due to the globalization, the labor market is becoming more and more multicultural and religiously diverse. This phenomenon also brings a greater need in terms of managing the management of human resources and this also raises a possibility of disputes, discrimination or harassment in the workplace. All members of an organization should know basic laws and regulations relating to discrimination or harassment on the basis of religion. This knowledge is essential in defending against religious discrimination or harassment.

³⁹ Raymond F. Gregory, *Encountering Religion in the Workplace: the Legal Rights and Responsibilities of Workers and Employers* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2011), 181 – 205; *Religion or belief and the workplace*. (London: Acas National, 2005), 19.

⁴⁰ Raymond F. Gregory, *Encountering Religion in the Workplace: the Legal Rights and Responsibilities of Workers and Employers* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2011), 181 – 205.

⁴¹ Ibid.

4 RELIGION, EMPLOYMENT, AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS

4.1 Religion, employment, and anti-discrimination laws in the Czech Republic

Czech Labour Code prevents discrimination in the workplace, especially on the basis of an employer-employee relationship and the Czech Act on Employment provides additional protection focusing on preventing discrimination against job applicants (what questions are prohibited during a job interview etc.). The Act on Employment includes all relevant EU regulation as well. Due to the fact that the Labour Code serves only as a general regulation against discrimination, thus there is the Anti-Discrimination Act that depicts discrimination precisely. The Anti-Discrimination Act was approved on 17 June 2009 and it focuses on a protection against discrimination in various types of common situations such as independent business activity, a professional training, an access to employment, or a membership within organizations consisting of employers and employees. Even though there are some specific laws and regulations against discrimination, still there are no laws and regulations relating directly to the issue of religion in the workplace.⁴²

The Czech legal system does not impose employers to accommodate employees' religious beliefs. The Czech legal system only places a duty on employers to treat employees equally. It means that employers cannot favor or oppress their employees. There may occur a situation, when an employer is helpful and accommodates an employee's religious beliefs, but atheists from that company may consider such behavior as being too favorable towards religious part of the workforce.⁴³

The penalty for breaking the aforementioned laws is mostly a fine. For example, if it is proved that an employee has been discriminated due to his religion or belief, in this case, an employer could be fined up to €14,000. And for discrimination against job applicants,

⁴² Ius Laboris, *Religious Discrimination in the Workplace* (Brussels: A Ius Laboris Publication, 2010), 45; Jaroslav Jakubka "Nový Antidiskriminační Zákon a Jeho Aplikace v Pracovněprávních Vztazích," Wolters Kluwer, <http://www.mzdovapraxe.cz/archiv/dokument/doc-d5585v7714-novy-antidiskriminacni-zakon-a-jeho-aplikace-v-pracovnepravnich/> (accessed February 20, 2013).

⁴³ Ibid.

an employer might be fined up to €35 000 (according to the Act on Employment).⁴⁴ Since the Czech Republic is a country with one of the smallest number of believers. Therefore an implementing new laws and regulations concerning religion in the workplace seem very unlikely.

4.2 Religion, employment, and anti-discrimination laws in the United States

According to the First Amendment (part of the Bill of Rights), the American people have two types of freedom in terms of religion. The first freedom says that Americans have a right to be free from the government, which prevents forced religion. The second freedom gives the American people the right to practice any religion. The First Amendment also prohibits religious discrimination resulting from acts of State. In case of private employers, they are bound by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VII focuses on private employers with at least 15 employees. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or nationality. The key aspects of Title VII can be listed as follows: treating applicants/employees differently on the basis of their faith or religious practices; harassing employees in terms of their beliefs or practices; refusing a requirement of reasonable accommodation; or retaliating against an employee or applicant who defies discrimination or warns of discrimination.⁴⁵

Regarding dismissal of employees on the basis of their faith, the laws in the U.S. are similar to the laws in the Czech Republic. Title VII prohibits a dismissal of employees on the basis of their religion or beliefs. But it may happen that an employer dismisses an employee who harasses other employees due to their religion or beliefs. Or if there is no reasonable accommodation, an employer may dismiss employees who refuse to perform work due to their religion or belief.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ius Laboris, *Religious Discrimination in the Workplace* (Brussels: A Ius Laboris Publication, 2010), 46-48;

⁴⁵ Ius Laboris, *Religious Discrimination in the Workplace* (Brussels: A Ius Laboris Publication, 2010), 203-205; "Religion in the Workplace," FindLaw, <http://employment.findlaw.com/employment-discrimination/religion-in-the-workplace.html> (accessed February 15, 2013).

⁴⁶ Ius Laboris, *Religious Discrimination in the Workplace* (Brussels: A Ius Laboris Publication, 2010), 208.

4.2.1 Reasonable accommodation

It is an employers' duty to accommodate an employee's faith and religion.⁴⁷ There may arise many problems associated with religious accommodation. For example, if employees require an exchange of work shifts, because their faith prohibits them from working on Sundays. These types of requirements seem reasonable and it is a duty of an employer to comply this request.⁴⁸ For example, a rock radio can dismiss a disc jockey who refuses to play rock music, because it is against his faith.⁴⁹ As Attorney Chad Wilson, teacher of ethics at the University of Tennessee said: "Reasonable accommodation also might include a compromise that meets the needs of both parties."⁵⁰

4.2.1.1 Undue hardship

The duty to accommodate an employee's religious beliefs does not mean that an employer must accommodate an employee's religious beliefs entirely. Employees should not think that they can require almost everything what will help fulfill their religious obligations. It would be impossible to accommodate all beliefs of all employees in an organization.

As lawyers from Ius Laboris pointed out, Title VII requires that the employer provide reasonable accommodation for an employee whose sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance conflicts with a work requirement, unless the accommodation would create an undue hardship.⁵¹ The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that undue hardship means that an employer need not incur more than minimal costs in order to accommodate an employee's religious practices.⁵² The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) describes undue hardship more precisely. EEOC has noted that an employer can show that a requested accommodation causes it an undue hardship if accommodating an employee's religious practices requires anything more than ordinary administrative costs, diminishes

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Hugh G. Willet, "Religion in the Workplace Is an Issue On the Rise," *Knoxvillebiz*, October 24, 2011. <http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2011/oct/24/religion-in-the-workplace-is-an-issue-on-the/> (accessed February 10, 2013).

⁴⁹ Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, *Religion or Belief and the Workplace*. (London: Acas National, 2005), 18.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ius Laboris, *Religious Discrimination in the Workplace* (Brussels: A Ius Laboris Publication, 2010), 204.

⁵² The Anti-Defamation League, *Religious Accommodation in the Workplace: Your Rights and Obligations* (New York: ADL, 2012), <http://www.adl.org/civil-rights/religious-freedom/c/religious-freedom.html#.USx862dfiTA> (accessed February 17, 2013).

efficiency in other jobs, infringes on other employees' job rights or benefits, impairs workplace safety, causes coworkers to carry the accommodated employee's share of potentially hazardous or burdensome work, or if the proposed accommodation conflicts with another law or regulation.⁵³

The whole process of accommodation begins when employees requests for their religious accommodation which means reasonable accommodation. Employees cannot rely on the fact that an employer is already familiar with the nature and habits of their religion or beliefs. An employer also cannot refuse religious accommodation of employees' beliefs without a previous discussion on this topic considering all possible options of employees' accommodation. In case that an employer cannot accommodate an employee to his or her present position, an employer should consider other free positions that fit an employee's qualification and where it is possible for an employee to be accommodated in a company.⁵⁴

4.2.2 Religious harassment from American legal point of view

Religious harassment is a form of religious discrimination. Lawyers from Ius Laboris mentioned that religious harassment occurs when an employee is required or coerced to abandon, alter, or adopt a religious practice as a condition of employment, or subjected to unwelcome statements or conduct that is based on religion and is so severe or pervasive that the individual being harassed reasonably finds the work environment to be hostile or abusive, and there is a basis for holding the employer responsible.⁵⁵

Regarding religious harassment in the workplace, there are two important facts from a legal point of view. The first is whether recipient objected to the behavior and the second important fact is whether the complaining person is the recipient of such behavior.⁵⁶

An employer is also responsible for the harassment conducted by employees. An employer also has a duty to take prompt corrective action in order to prevent further harassment. If he does not take prompt corrective action he becomes responsible for this behavior.⁵⁷

⁵³ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Facts About Religious Discrimination* (EEOC, 2010), <http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/publications/upload/fs-religion.pdf> (accessed February 16, 2013).

⁵⁴ Ius Laboris, *Religious Discrimination in the Workplace* (Brussels: A Ius Laboris Publication, 2010), 204-206.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 208-209.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

5 RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Regarding religion in the workplace, statistics show that number of complaints of religious harassment is increasing in the United States. Unfortunately, there are no similar statistics in the Czech Republic. Generally, when experts address issues of diversity in the workplace, they usually discuss the workplace in terms of gender, race, age, nationality, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation. This implies that religion is not one of the most discussed types of diversity in the workplace. The presence of religion in the workplace is mostly discussed only marginally or only in special cases such as immigrants who come to work with different beliefs and religious backgrounds.⁵⁸ But Rosalind Hackett, professor at the University of Tennessee says that religious harassment is the second most problematic issue in the workplace. According to her, the globalization of business and the economy leads to increasing diversity in the workplace. Employees now bring a wider range of personal religious practices to the workplace.⁵⁹

Many managers are not prepared to deal with such an issue. Many managers and employers are trying to avoid discrimination by treating everyone equally. But treating everyone equally sometimes means treating everyone differently. It also depends on your perspective, because as Attorney Chad Wilson confirmed, treating everyone equally sometimes means treating some people differently. He adds that most managers think the best way to avoid discrimination in the workplace is to treat everyone equally in the workplace. But this approach is not always possible in the modern workplace.⁶⁰

5.1 Religious discrimination in the workplace

American courts distinguish between different types of prohibited discrimination such as disparate treatment, disparate impact, and a hostile environment. Czech courts have a similar approach to discrimination, however, is not divided into these categories.

Disparate treatment is a form of discrimination, which focuses on unequal negotiations on the grounds of employees' religion or beliefs. This applies in particular areas such as

⁵⁸ Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 63.

⁵⁹ Hugh G. Willet, "Religion in the Workplace Is an Issue On the Rise," *Knoxvillebiz*, October 24, 2011. <http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2011/oct/24/religion-in-the-workplace-is-an-issue-on-the/> (accessed February 10, 2013).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

rejecting, promoting or hiring employees. But there is one case where this may not be considered discrimination even though it might be obvious. This case can occur if employers need certain types of employees who either profess or refuse certain values and beliefs. But in that case employers must be able to justify their behavior or policy.⁶¹

Disparate impact discrimination manifests when there are no rules or policy for conducting one or more religions in the workplace. This type of discrimination occurs when an employer favors one religious group over another. For example, this sort of discrimination may occur in a rule that forbids women to wear head coverings during the working day, despite the fact wearing head coverings is their religious duty. In this case, an employer is responsible for such discrimination.⁶²

The third type called hostile work discrimination occurs when members of an organization offend, threaten, intimidate, and create a hostile work environment for co-workers of a particular faith. This abuse must be harsh and systematic in order to be considered as the hostile work environment discrimination. In cases when it is proved that an employer has known or should have known about discrimination, an employer is a person who becomes guilty of this behavior.⁶³

5.2 Dealing with religious discrimination and harassment in the workplace

It is very difficult to determine a correct procedure for a situation when employees feel harassed or discriminated. First of all, persons who discriminate should know that they are committing something illegal. In other words it is necessary to make them clear that their behavior might be perceived as discrimination and it should be stopped as soon as possible. If this behavior continues, discriminated employees should contact their immediate superiors. In case that an immediate superior is the one who produces this behavior they should contact someone higher up. A superior should help and solve the problem. When a superior will not help, then the last and most radical option is to go to law.⁶⁴

⁶¹ "Religion in the Workplace," FindLaw, <http://employment.findlaw.com/employment-discrimination/religion-in-the-workplace.html> (accessed February 15, 2013).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, *Religion or Belief and the Workplace*. (London: Acas National, 2005), 24; Raymond F. Gregory, *Encountering Religion in the Workplace: the Legal Rights and Responsibilities of Workers and Employers* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2011), 91-115.

6 RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOUR IN AN ORGANIZATION (POTENTIAL CONFLICT TRIGGERS)

The workplace is a place where most people spend a large part of their day. The workplace is also a place where people discuss their faith and religion. It is noteworthy that more and more people consider their work as a suitable place for an expression of their religious and spiritual values.⁶⁵ But in many cases religion may become a disturbing and controversial feature of the workplace. For example, on the grounds that some religions require their adherents to spread their faith whenever an opportunity presents itself. This requirement of many religions may give rise to potential conflicts among employees in an organization. But there is only a thin line which separates expressions of one's beliefs from illegal proselytizing or other types of conflicts-causing religious behavior in the workplace.

Regarding conflicts in the workplace on the basis of religion, we must be sure whether these conflicts are really results of religious diversity, behavior, or religious disputes. People can sometimes regard conflicts as religious-based, while these conflicts might be on the basis of ethics, politics, or culture.

6.1 Religious proselytization in the workplace

Proselytization is usually associated with unethical methods of persuasion and coercion including violence. Webster's dictionary defines verb proselytize as "to induce someone to convert to one's faith or to recruit someone to join one's party, institution, or cause." Generally speaking, most people do not want to share their religious beliefs with their colleagues, on the other hand, these people usually try to keep their beliefs private. But others might feel that spreading their beliefs is their duty and religious obligation. For instance, American evangelical Christians are most likely to involve their co-workers in religious discussion.⁶⁶

As a typical example of a religious proselytizing in the workplace might be seen the case of Charita Chalmers who was a lifelong member of Baptist Church and she felt obligated to share her beliefs with her co-workers. As a result of her obligation, she wrote

⁶⁵ Raymond F. Gregory, *Encountering Religion in the Workplace: the Legal Rights and Responsibilities of Workers and Employers* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2011), 1-3.

⁶⁶ Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 103.

several letters to her colleagues. One of these letters was addressed to Brenda Combs, who was recovering from an undiagnosed illness after giving birth to a child out of wedlock.⁶⁷

Brenda,

You probably do not want to hear this at this time, but you need the Lord Jesus in your life right now. One thing about god, He doesn't like when people commit adultery. You know what you did was wrong, so now you need to go to God and ask for forgiveness. Let me explain something about God. He's a God of love and a God of wrath. When people sin against Him, He will allow things to happen to them or their family until they open their eyes and except [sic] Him. God can put a sickness on you that no doctor could ever find out what it is.... All I'm saying is you need to invite God into your heart and live a life for him and things in your live will get better.... Please take this letter in love and be obedient to God. In his name,

Charita Chalmers⁶⁸

After this letter the company ordered Chalmers's dismissal. But she claimed that her employer was supposed to accommodate her belief that God wanted her to convince her co-workers to live without sin. Eventually, the court concluded that the organization could not accommodate her beliefs without incurring undue hardship, so the court dismissed her suit.⁶⁹

6.2 The habit of prayer in the workplace

Prayers and people's approaches to prayer habits are different in almost all religions. Some religions require prayer at a certain time of a day or require a specific style of praying and the number of repetitions. For example, Muslims must pray 5 times every day. Each prayer takes about 15 minutes and Muslims must perform their prayers somewhere where it is quiet and clean. Provided that an organization wants to have religious diversity in the workplace, an organization should provide a prayer room, which is clean and quiet. Such a solution is convenient for all members of an organization, because prayers do not cause

⁶⁷ Raymond F. Gregory, *Encountering Religion in the Workplace: the Legal Rights and Responsibilities of Workers and Employers* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2011), 72.

⁶⁸ *Chalmers v. Tulon Co. of Richmond*, 101 F.3d 1012 (4th Cir. 1996), quoted in Raymond F. Gregory, *Encountering Religion in the Workplace: the Legal Rights and Responsibilities of Workers and Employers* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2011), 72.

⁶⁹ Raymond F. Gregory, *Encountering Religion in the Workplace: the Legal Rights and Responsibilities of Workers and Employers* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2011), 72.

problems, do not disturb, or do not bother other employees in an organization. But not always, of course, an acquisition of such rooms is available and accessible in organizations.⁷⁰

6.3 Dress code

It is more than obvious that people's choice of clothes they wear to work is a reflection of their personalities or values and it is also partly influenced by their religion or beliefs. We can say that a different dress code is one that goes beyond the attire which is customary in an organization. Problems associated with a different dress code may appear quite often in a religiously diverse workplace. In the most extreme cases, a different dress code may result in dismissal from employment. For example, the woman claims that she lost her job at the local public library because she insisted to wear a cross pendant shapes on her necklace.⁷¹

Nowadays, it is quite common that people wear for instance T-shirts with the names or pictures expressing certain religious motifs or T-shirts with various mottos relating to particular religions and beliefs. Some of the very popular slogans on T-shirts were for example "Promise Keepers" or Christian messages "What Would Jesus Do?"⁷² It is very likely that these slogans on someone's T-shirt will not stay unnoticed for a long time in the workplace. Especially adherents of religions that have nothing to do with such slogans might consider it as provocation or disrespect of their beliefs. Imagine how would react a Christian woman that strongly ignores an abortion if her co-workers came to work with an inscription on their T-shirts which proclaims their agreement with an abortion.

Wearing headscarf ("hijab") by Muslim women is one of the most problematic dress code in the American workplace. In 2001, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) has reported in its civil rights report of Muslims in public life that 23 percent of the cases of discrimination in the workplace and other public settings involved the wearing of

⁷⁰ Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, *Religion or Belief and the Workplace*. (London: Acas National, 2005), 19-45.

⁷¹ Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 68.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 73.

headscarves by Muslim women.⁷³ There is evidence that this attitude towards Muslims has worsened especially after September 11.⁷⁴

As the first thing when an disagreement over dress code occur in the workplace, persons involved in an disagreement should discuss this problem and try to find a compromise. Such a compromise usually requires making smaller or larger concessions. Both sides should always try to find “common ground” together. From the United States point of view, a religious dress code accommodation varies more or less from case to case. As a dress code may sometimes be considered a part of reasonable accommodation, however, it may also be considered an undue hardship. For example, a correctional officer in a prison might be refused an ability to wear a kirpan (a ceremonial dagger).⁷⁵ Regarding dress code in the Czech Republic, an employer can order employees to wear a certain dress code. This order must be based on justifiable reasons for instance hygiene reasons or reasons related to the nature of an employee’s job description.⁷⁶

6.4 Religious holidays or the Sabbath in the workplace

People coming from cultures affected religions such as Islam, Buddhism or Hinduism have almost no common habits or traditions with people in the Czech Republic or in the United States. These common habits mean for instance the historical development of religion especially Christianity (Christianity is dominant religion in both countries surveyed), or traditions associated with an ordinary life. In the Christian-based countries such as the Czech Republic and the United States, almost all the biggest events and celebrations of the year take place on the basis relating to Christianity. It means that the large number of public holidays take place during the biggest celebrations. Therefore, there may arise a mismatch between the important events of different religions that are present in the workplace. If Buddhists want to celebrate the Buddha’s birthday or Hindus want to

⁷³ Mohamed Nimer, “Accommodating Diversity: The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States 2001” (Washington, DC: Council on American–Islamic Relations, 2001), 5, quoted in Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 73.

⁷⁴ Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 70-73.

⁷⁵ Ius Laboris, *Religious Discrimination in the Workplace* (Brussels: A Ius Laboris Publication, 2010), 207-208.

⁷⁶ Ius Laboris, *Religious Discrimination in the Workplace* (Brussels: A Ius Laboris Publication, 2010), 48.

celebrate their festival called Diwali, they need to take a vacation time from work. From Jewish perspective, this problem is also very distinctive. This is rather connected with the United States, since there are a larger number of Jewish inhabitants than in the Czech Republic. Jews have very important holy days in September and October. But for the American Christians, it is a time period when they have nothing to celebrate and they are very busy during these months. As Hick has noted, the cultural disestablishment of Christianity can be seen as a positive development from a variety of perspectives. And he also adds that many people are likely to ask for a vacation time to celebrate religious holidays and, at a minimum, the number and a variety of those holiday dates have increased.⁷⁷

6.4.1 December as “holiday season”

December is full of religious holidays. December might be called as the “holiday season” and it is not only from the Christian perspective. It is the month which a majority of the U.S. or the Czech population enjoys more than other months of the year. A majority of employers, managers, and company/business owners decides what approach would be the best to proceed to manage religious diversity in the workplace during this month. In other words how to handle religious diversity of employees’ behavior in the workplace during December. Generally speaking, it might be essential to see this issue from the perspective of believers who enjoy holidays and celebrate them. However, it may also be essential to see this issue in terms of atheists and members of other religions or beliefs. These people often either approve or refuse to participate in the celebrations that relate to other religions. Some employers and managers try to meet requirements of all their employees in terms of celebrating holidays in a company. But choosing the right approach to this problem primarily depends on a variety of religions that might be found in the workplace. Other employers and managers choose so called the “avoidance strategy”. It means that leaders incline to boycott all manifestations of religious holidays and religious celebrations in a company. The latter strategy may sound neutral, however, it rather has a negative effect. As

⁷⁷ Douglas A. Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 67-68.

employees may need to share their values and it might sometimes even be necessary for them.⁷⁸

6.4.2 Working weekends

The issue of working hours in the religious workplace does not influence only a faith-based part of the workforce. Due to the globalization and thus the more frequent presence of religion in the workplace, this problem is becoming more and more common in organizations.

It is also very interesting to think about the problem of working hours on the weekend, in the sense suggesting that the weekends spent at work might have something to do with the fact that spirituality and religion are becoming increasingly common in terms of the workplace. According to this idea, employees and employers may bring spirituality and religion to their workplaces more often, since they simply have no time to attend a church or to spend some time in religion communities. Another reason for this might be that people who work long hours, they do not have an inclination to devote their free time to other spheres of their life such as religion or spirituality.⁷⁹ But on the other hand, those who have to work long hours on the weekends and want to fulfill their religious obligations in the same time may find this situation unacceptable. For instance, there is nothing in the Czech law what could help these people in such a situation. But in terms of the American workplace, requests for days off regarding the Sabbath days or religious holidays and traditions might be included in reasonable accommodation.

As we can see there are many potential triggers of conflicts due to the presence of religion in the workplace. But there are also many potential solutions how to manage these conflicts. As many scholars say all these problems and conflicts should be solved immediately after they occur. Since one small problem can escalate into a great conflict, which will not be so easy to resolve.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 1-4.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 46.

II. ANALYSIS

1 RESEARCH - RELIGION IN THE WORKPLACE IN THE USA AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC

In this part of my bachelor's thesis, I will describe reasons for a choice of qualitative approaches to research in more detail, and then I will focus on characteristics of respondents and sources of data. This research should primarily serve as a basis for further and deeper analysis of religious workplace issues. Moreover, this research does not attempt to provide a wide range of information on the presence of religion in the workplace in the two countries surveyed. This research will provide insight into several cases from each country.

1.1 Description of the research problem and methods of collecting and examining data

The main topic of this research was religion in the workplace and its impact on a working environment. There are, of course, subsequent topics such as relationships between employees, personal experience with religion in the workplace, or religious harassment and discrimination. This research also concentrates on religion in the workplace from the believers' point of view. Data obtained through this research will be processed and then compared between the two countries surveyed i.e. the Czech Republic and the United States.

I have chosen qualitative research methods, since qualitative research methods are more appropriate approach for this kind of examination than quantitative research methods. Each of these two research methods has its advantages and drawbacks. However a qualitative research is mostly used for research on people's lives, stories, behavior, or relationships. Given that this type of research relates mainly to lives of respondents, their attitudes and opinions, or their behavior, I consider a qualitative research to be the best option. A qualitative research is also more convenient due to the fact that quantitative methods focus more on the statistical data and numerical comparisons.

Although a truth value of a qualitative research on a local basis is limited with respect to an entire population, however, a comparison of results from two different countries can bring interesting findings.⁸⁰ A truth value of a qualitative research may also be challenged

⁸⁰ Dušan Lužný and Zdeněk R. Nešpor, *Náboženství v Menšině* (Praha: Malvern, 2008), 10.

due to the current situation and problems in society. Since the current situation and problems in society can to some extent influence respondents' answers.

Another problem that limits this research is small sample of respondents. Due to the small number of respondents from both countries surveyed, information from this research probably will not be representative enough for wider areas. The small number of respondents also means that results from this kind of research might not reflect real reality, however, results obtained from a qualitative research may be very close to reality. Therefore, it might be very difficult to predict a future development of the research problem. On the other hand, this research enables to get deeper and more concrete information from respondents for instance the way how respondents perceive religion with respect to the workplace nowadays. It was not possible to investigate significant relationships of religion and the workplace further, since a sample size was small. Many people either from the Czech Republic or the United States refused to fill in the questionnaire, despite the fact that it was anonymous. In the case of Czech respondents it is most likely a result of lack of interest in religion matters. And in the case of respondents from the United States, it might be result of unwillingness to share their ideas about religion matters.

1.2 The characteristics of respondents and other data sources

Information from a qualitative research will be complemented with information from these books: *Náboženství v menšině* by Dušan Lužný and Zdeňek Něšpor; *Náboženství z jiného úhlu* by Radek Tichý and Martin Vávra; and *Encountering Religion in the Workplace* by Raymond F. Gregory. This additional information will provide either a statistical comparison between the two countries surveyed, as well as a statistical comparison within individual country.

Respondents of this research are people from the Czech Republic and the United States. Regarding respondents from the Czech Republic, the research took place in Zlín and its surroundings. According to population census of the Czech Republic in 2011, Zlín and its surroundings belong to one of the most religious areas (regions) in the Czech Republic.⁸¹ Generally speaking, Czech society very often proudly acknowledges its

⁸¹ "První Předběžné Výsledky Sčítání Lidu, Domů a Bytů 2011," Český Statistický Úřad, http://notes2.czso.cz/cz/sldb2011/cd_sldb2011_11_12/cr.html (accessed February 15, 2013).

“atheism” and rejection of the Church, yet there is a renewal of religious matters in the form of alternative types of religion in the Czech Republic.⁸²

Regarding the current status of religion in the United States, the situation is completely different from the Czech Republic. The research took place in Lincoln (Nebraska) and in Chicago (Illinois). Both of these states and cities are in similar positions in terms of religion among people.⁸³ As we know from the theoretical part of this bachelor thesis, the American people are not nearly as atheistic as people from the Czech Republic. For this reason it will be very interesting to see research results from these two different countries.

⁸² Dušan Lužný and Zdeněk R. Nešpor, *Náboženství v Menšině* (Praha: Malvern, 2008), 8.

⁸³ “The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey,” the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, <http://religions.pewforum.org/maps> (accessed March 10, 2013).

2 DATA ANALYSIS

This research focuses on the issues related to religion in the workplace in the Czech Republic and the United States. Since this research relates to different areas in terms of religion in the workplace, it would be meaningless and confusing to compare all answers together. For this reason, I decided to divide this research into several smaller parts. This segmentation will definitely provide better orientation in the results of this research.

This research was divided into several areas as follows:

- Basic information (age, the relationship between respondents and religion)
- The difference between religion and spirituality from respondents' perspective
- Religious discrimination and harassment in the workplace (respondents' personal experience and their attitude toward this problem)
- Religious toleration within the workplace (habits associated with religious beliefs)
- People's awareness of the laws or regulations related to religion in the workplace in the Czech Republic and in the United States
- How specific companies deal with the issues related religion in the workplace
- Respondents' own experience with religion in their workplaces

2.1 Basic information (age, the relationship between respondents and religion)

Regarding the Czech Republic, the age distribution of respondents was 22 - 58 years and in terms of the U.S. it was 22 - 53 years. Another question ("How Important is religion or faith for you?") confirmed typical approaches to religion in both countries. In the Czech Republic, there are believers, atheists, or people who reject religion and incline to spirituality (one half of respondents). The situation in the U.S. is quite different. All respondents from the U.S. wrote about themselves that they are religious or spiritual (more than one half of respondents) or combination of both. It is interesting that religion is very important and sometimes even vital for the first half of faith-based respondents, but on the other hand, the second half of faith-based respondents from the U.S. consider religion as an "assurance" of a better future and life after death.

I am not sure what respondents (mostly from the U.S.) mean when they write about themselves that they are "religious with spiritual views". Most of respondents who wrote this answer are around 50 years old. This may be due to the fact that many older people,

particularly in the U.S., grew up in religious families and they have become more spiritual or they have adopted some spiritual values during their lives.

2.2 The difference between religion and spirituality

As I wrote in the theoretical part of this thesis, religion and spirituality are two different concepts that should not be confused. Religion is mostly organized and associated with particular community and specific rules, while spirituality focuses more on personal perceptions of faith without any rules and religious communities. It is very surprising that all respondents from the U.S. know more or less the difference between religion and spirituality. One respondent from the U.S. described the difference as follows:

If you are spiritual you believe in another power but you may not necessarily belong to any organized religion. You can be spiritual and respect others opinion and yet never go to a church service. Religion would mean you associate yourself with a particular community that follow specific religious practices and has specific believes about God. Spiritual people believe in God but think they can make the moral choice they want in living their lives without any religious interference.

The responses of respondents from the U.S. to this question were very sophisticated in most cases. On the contrary, about one third of respondents from the Czech Republic did not know answer to this question (age played no role). It proves that people in the U.S. know more about religion and spiritual matters and they can distinguish between these two. And this probably also reflects the fact that the U.S. country with religious traditions and American people are more familiar with spiritual matters than people from the Czech Republic.

In the next question, respondents were supposed to write what they think about the statement: "Spirituality unites, but religion divides". In this case, there are roughly the same results in both countries surveyed. Those who disagreed with this statement argued that the problem is not religion, but people are those who divide. I also think that it is people who divide, but religion is very likely a trigger responsible for this behavior.

2.3 Religious discrimination and harassment in the workplace

Respondents' answers to questions related to religious discrimination and harassment show that there is nothing like religious discrimination or harassment at work. None of research respondents has any experience with discrimination in the workplace on the basis of

religion. But when you enter the phrase “religion in the workplace” into a web browser, one of the first articles founded are articles about religious discrimination, harassment, laws etc. It seems that religious discrimination and harassment in the workplace are just popular topics nowadays as well as globalization, the economic crisis or environmental issues. None of my respondents also knows someone who had been subjected to some kind of discriminatory. But this is quite strange especially in case of the U.S. respondents. According to Raymond F. Gregory, a recent survey has shown that 20 percent of the workers interviewed reported that they had either experienced religious discrimination prejudice while at work or knew of a coworker who had been subjected to some form of discriminatory conduct. Regardless of their religion, 55 percent of the workers surveyed believed that religious bias and discrimination commonly occur in the workplace.⁸⁴

Companies pay almost no attention to religious discrimination or to a hostile working environment. Only one respondent who works for Schawk (the leader in workflow, copy and asset management technology in the U.S. market) wrote that his or her company has had seminars about ethical and expected behavior in the workplace.⁸⁵ He or she also mentioned that every employee is expected to review the guidelines every couple of years and sign off that they will abide by the company guidelines.

Before I processed data from this research I had assumed that this research will support what I had written about discrimination and harassment in the theoretical part, but the opposite is true. On the other hand, since none of my respondents has experienced religious discrimination in the workplace, there is no point to deal with this issue in their organizations. Of course, there might be an organization whose employees are religiously diverse. In this case, it is necessary to adopt some precautionary measures related to the presence of religion in the workplace.

2.4 Religious toleration within the workplace (habits associated with religious beliefs)

More than half of respondents from the U.S. would not want to work with a Muslim woman who has her head covered with a headscarf. These people argue that there should

⁸⁴ Raymond F. Gregory, *Encountering Religion in the Workplace: the Legal Rights and Responsibilities of Workers and Employers* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2011), 4.

⁸⁵ “About Us,” <http://www.schawk.com/> (accessed March 4, 2013).

be certain rules at work, or that wearing headscarf is habit from east and Muslims should behave according to American values. The latter argument is written by 22 years old student. However, many publications and books say that young people are more open to different values and beliefs. A quarter of U.S. respondents would accept Muslim woman with headscarf in their workplaces, but they would feel uncomfortable at work and for the rest of the U.S. respondents it would not be problem. One respondent mentioned that he or she does not like the idea of headscarves in hospital due to toleration and eye to eye contacts to patients. It is important to mention that respondents' religion or beliefs did not influence their responses in the case of American people. We can say that the Americans are more intolerant to Muslims women and their traditional headscarves than Czech people.

This research has shown that religious people from the Czech Republic are not tolerant towards people of different beliefs and habits. Although the survey conducted by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CVVM) in 2007 says that 89 percent of Czechs are tolerant towards people of different religious conviction.⁸⁶ The survey conducted by CVVM looks at the religious tolerance in general terms. This survey also does not distinguish between the views of believers and non-believers. Respondents (from this bachelor thesis research) for whom a Muslim woman with a headscarf on her head would be a problem in the workplace are all believers. These respondents argue that they cannot see who is hiding underneath a headscarf. They also argue that Muslim women living in the Czech Republic should respect Czech customs and traditions (it is the same argument as in the case of 22 years old respondent from the U.S).

Regarding prayer in the workplace, Czechs are not as tolerant as the Americans. About two-thirds of Czech people disapprove prayer at their workplace. They find prayer as a personal matter which is bothering and inconvenient at the workplace. All religious respondents from the Czech Republic answered that prayer would not disturb them in while at work, but they claim that it should never disturb other employees or colleagues. In contrast to the Czech Republic, respondents from the U.S. perceive prayer more positively in the workplace, but still less than half of respondents find prayer bothering and

⁸⁶ "Czechs Tolerant Towards People of Different Religious Faith-Poll," <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czechs-tolerant-towards-people-of-different-religious-faith-poll> (accessed March 4, 2013).

inconvenient in their workplaces. Almost all of those who responded in both countries indicated that people should pray in their free time during working hours. One American respondent answered that he or she would have to laugh for a moment when he or she hears a co-worker loudly pray.

2.5 People's awareness of the laws or regulations related to religion in the workplace in the Czech Republic and in the U.S.

People's awareness of laws or regulations related to religion, religious discrimination or religious harassment in the workplace should be widespread at least in terms of believers. Almost all respondents from both countries surveyed do not know any laws or regulations related to religion in the workplace. More than two-thirds of respondents from the U.S. do not know any laws or regulations. The rest of the U.S. respondents answered that they do not know any laws, but they know that there are some laws related to this issue. Czech respondents have lack of awareness of laws or regulations related to religion in the workplace as well. Only 10 percent of Czech respondents mentioned that the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Basic Freedoms deals with religious discrimination in the workplace. In fact, there is no mention about religious discrimination in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Basic Freedoms.⁸⁷

People do not notice an increasing interest in addressing the issue of religion in the workplace in the two countries surveyed. Only one respondent from the U.S. notices the increasing interest in addressing the issues related to religion in the workplace. It is somewhat surprising, that only one respondent from the U.S. notices the increasing interest in these issues. It is also strange, since there are many publications and books that deal with religion in the American workplace. Authors of these publications and books argue that religious workplace has been receiving more and more public attention nowadays.

People do not want to pay more attention to issues related to religion and spirituality in the workplace. Most Czechs think that it is useless. They argue that people in the Czech Republic are not interested in religious matters, therefore it is waste of time and energy to pay more attention to the problems connected with religion and spirituality in the

⁸⁷ "Listina Základních Práv a Svobod," Poslanecká Sněmovna Parlamentu České Republiky, <http://www.psp.cz/docs/laws/listina.html> (accessed March 10, 2013).

workplace. Respondents from the U.S. share the same view point. One of them wrote very interesting response. He or she wrote:

I believe it [religion] should remain a private issue for each employee. The more you raise the issue of religious beliefs the more you open the door to possible discrimination.

A respondent who wrote this response is the oldest of all respondents from the U.S. It may indicate that he or she has a certain experience with this issue. He or she may also mean that paying more attention to the issue of religion in the workplace would serve as “advertisement” or highlighting of a problem of religious discrimination that is not so serious nowadays, however, might become serious in the future. This might be a typical example of what psychologists call the “forbidden fruit hypothesis”. It means when there is something prohibited for people, it becomes more appealing and attractive for them.

2.6 How specific companies deal with the issue of religion in their workplaces

All Czech respondents wrote that there are no conversations about religious topics in their workplaces. On the other hand, more than half of respondents from the U.S. wrote that conversations about religion or spirituality are occasional in their workplaces. A respondent from the U.S. who works as a teacher responded that conversations about religion or spirituality are very common. This is probably due to the fact that he or she comes into contact with many different religions and beliefs in a school and religious topics are quite common in certain school subjects. Another respondent from the U.S. comments on this as follows:

Normally in the US spirituality and religion are not openly discussed in the work place unless you work for a religious organization. This is supposed to prevent discriminatory behavior between co-worker. However, if I do know the other co-worker and their beliefs and if there is a common bond we may discuss some religious matters. Many of my co-worker do have a Judo-Christian background. I do believe that the more spiritual someone is the easier they are to work with and communicate with. We do also have Hindu and Moslim employees but religion is not part of the general conversation.

Conversations about religious or spiritual topics in the workplace might be very closely related to conflicts in the workplace. From the experience of respondents, there are no conflicts due to religion in their workplaces. All Czech respondents have not experienced any conflicts due to religion in their workplaces at all. Many of Czech respondents argue that there are no religious-based conflicts in their workplaces, since people do not discuss religious topics at work. Respondents from the U.S. have almost no experience with conflicts as well. Just one respondent from the U.S. answered that religious-based conflicts are very rare in his or her workplace. And another U.S respondent (teacher) answered as follows:

I wouldn't probably call it conflict but a healthy exchange of opinions between me and my students which I welcome and embrace. Personal differences are beneficial in my field of work.

Czech respondents do not see any positive outcomes when talking about the presence of religion and spirituality in the work. Another question focuses on what positive and negative outcomes may result for employees and their organization from religion or spirituality at work. More than two-thirds of respondents from the Czech Republic do not see any positive outcomes resulting from the presence of religion or spirituality at work. Those who find some positive outcomes mentioned for example more common topics to talk among colleagues, sharing feelings or a unified corporate culture. On the other hand, Czech respondents find for example animosity, intolerance and a lack of cooperation among people of different religious beliefs as negative outcomes of the presence of religion and spirituality at work. Spiritually based respondent from the Czech Republic wrote that problem (negative outcomes) occur when an employee fulfills his or her religious obligations that adversely affect other employees. This seems as example of intolerance.

Regarding the U.S there are several outcomes that respondents consider positive. These are: faith makes you feel happier and more relaxed; it can help to make the atmosphere in a workplace more enjoyable; it can bring better understanding, harmony, honesty and cooperation to work. Respondents from the U.S. also mentioned several negative outcomes they associate with the presence of religion and spirituality at work. They mentioned for instance conflicts, suspiciousness, misunderstanding (some of the religious thinking might be too specific or too complicated to be understood by an average worker), or isolation of the worker who is different from the others.

2.7 Respondents' own experience with religion in their workplaces

Respondents from both countries surveyed agree that prayers and meditations do not belong to the workplace. There are, of course, some “exceptions”. These people wrote that they pray or meditate very rarely at work. If they pray or meditate they try not to attract attention to themselves.

Interesting stories or experience related to the topic of religion in the workplace are more common in the U.S. Respondents were asked to write some interesting stories or experience that they associate with work. Unfortunately, almost none of Czech respondents wrote any story or experience (all Czech respondents wrote that they have not experienced any). On the contrary, some respondents from the U.S. wrote their stories and experience with religion in the workplace. Receiving more stories from the U.S. is probably due to the fact that American workplace is much more diverse than workplace in the Czech Republic. One respondent wrote about a pilgrimage he or she experienced recently:

I do not normally discuss religion in the workplace. I recently went on a religious pilgrimage. When discussing it with a co-worker she was quite concerned of what could happen to me spending 10 days with all those “Church People”. She was concerned that I would come back and be preaching religion to everyone.

This story indicates that a lot of people who are not familiarized with religious traditions and habits do not know what they can expect from religious people. These people usually perceive all religious adherents as “tools” for spreading adherents' faith whenever an opportunity presents itself. This might be connected with “media message” which very often spread the idea that all religious adherents are fanatics who are capable of anything (this is mostly connected with adherents from the East). Another respondent from the U.S. described his or her experience with one Egyptian man as follows:

I used to work with one Egyptian once and based on his cultural and religious background he treated my colleagues (women) in very familiar way which my emancipated colleagues found quite irritating.

Only a few respondents have some strong spiritual experience that they associate with their jobs. The U.S. respondent who works in a hospital (probably as a nurse) associates his or her strongest spiritual experience with caring for and being responsible for the health of patients. This is different type of spiritual experience than I had expected, but we can see

that the workplace and work do not mean only the way how to earn money for some people. One Czech respondent who is Catholic wrote that his or her strongest spiritual experience in the workplace was a situation regarding:

The woman, who lost her children in a house fire in February 2013, works in our company. Everybody prayed and cried for her children and was assisting in ministering special mass for her and her family.

Almost half of all respondents from both countries have a special spiritual ritual, which help them to get through hard times in while at work. Czech respondents answered that they usually pray to a guardian angel when they are in bad situations in while at work. However respondents from the U.S. usually say silent prayers asking for strength when they have a bad day at work.

CONCLUSION

Perceptions of religion and issues related to religion very often differ from culture to culture or from country to country. The Czech Republic and The United States are two different countries with different cultures and different religious perceptions. This indicates that people's perceptions of issues related to religion in the workplace may differ in these two countries.

After conducting research in the Czech Republic and in the United States, it is now possible to state that there are some significant differences in perception of religion in the workplace in the Czech Republic and in the United States. The most significant difference is that respondents from the United States are much more proficient in religious matters relating to religion in the workplace. They have also more stories and experience with religion at work. It is probably due to the number of various religions and beliefs in their culture. Another quite surprising difference is that Czech religious people are more intolerant and reluctant to work with Muslims women than people in the United States. In the case of tolerance to Muslim women at the workplace, most people would probably expect the exact opposite. Regarding prayer in the workplace, Czechs are not as tolerant as the Americans. Americans are also more open to discuss spiritual matters at work, while on the other hand, Czechs never discuss their faith at work. It is very likely a consequence of greater interest of Americans in faith and spiritual matters.

Although religion in the workplace might be seen as a new issue, the opposite is true. This issue has been receiving more and more of scholars' attention in the last decade. Religion in the workplace is the issue that is not very easy to deal with in an organization. As there are many religions, beliefs or spiritual movements, it would be impossible to deal with every type of religion or belief individually in the workplace. Therefore employers, managers and business owners should follow certain rules that help to better and smooth over the accommodation of religion and beliefs, or help to manage religious diversity and religious-based conflicts in the workplace. This is very necessary to consider, as the encountering of religion in the workplace is likely to become more frequent due to the continuously expanding globalization.

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