Cross Cultural Research

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Goal of Cross-Cultural Research

• Examine differences or similarities of psychological variables in two or more cultures
• Determine the meaning of similarities or differences in psychological variables between cultures
Experimental Validity

- **Experimental Validity**: The degree of accuracy with which a research study’s conclusions/key findings are drawn
- Researchers have a burden to demonstrate that their research findings are valid, meaning that they reflect reality
- The accuracy of a study’s findings is directly related to the accuracy of the research methods
  - Sample
  - Instrument
  - Procedures (Method of Data Collection)
  - Data Analysis

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Experimental Validity

- Research studies begin with a question about a variable or phenomenon
  - **Example**: Socioeconomic status
- The variable is operationalized so it can be measured
- After the data has been analyzed, you want to draw conclusions about the variable, not about the raw data that was collected
Equivalence in Cross Cultural Research Studies

- **Equivalence**: Evidence that the methods selected for the study measure the same phenomenon in all cultures studied

- For a cross-cultural comparison to be equivalent (valid), two conditions must be met:
  - Equivalence in the definition of the variable between cultures
  - Equivalence in the study’s method between cultures

- If any aspect of a research study is not equivalent across cultures, then the comparison is not valid
Equivalence in Cross Cultural Research Studies

• Types of Equivalence
  – Theoretical: Equivalent in meaning of theoretical framework and specific hypotheses tested
    • For example, mother’s caring for infants
  – Sampling: Samples are representatives of their culture and equivalent on non-cultural demographic characteristics
  – Measurement: Instruments are equally valid and reliable across cultures
  – Linguistic: Words used in the instruments are similar across languages
  – Procedure: Procedures used to collect data (Method of Data Collection) across cultures are similar

Sampling

• Sampling steps in cross-cultural research:
  1. Determine which cultures should be studied
    • Select cultures that clearly differ on an interesting independent variable
  2. Identify subgroups within the cultures
    • Two perspectives:
      – Samples in both cultures should be as similar as possible on non-cultural relevant demographic characteristics (e.g., education level)
      – Samples should be representative of their culture
  3. Select individuals within the sub-groups

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Measuring Variables

• **Perspective 1**: Use same instruments for each culture
  – **Assumption**: The instrument is not biased against a particular culture
  – **Conclusion**: Differences between groups reflect differences on the variable between each culture
  – **Advantage**: Comparison is straight forward
  – **Disadvantage**: The instrument might not be culturally meaningful for all cultural groups

Aspiration Questionnaire

• *Everyone has long-term goals. These are the things that individuals hope to accomplish over the course of their lives. In this section, you will find a number of life goals. For each goal, indicate how important is this goal to you, using the following scale:* 1 Not at all Important – 6 Very Important

1. To be a very wealthy person.
2. To grow and learn new things.
3. To have my name known by many people.
4. To have good friends that I can count on.
5. At the end of my life, to be able to look back on my life as meaningful and complete.
6. To work for the development of society.
7. To have many expensive possessions.
8. To be admired by many people.
9. To share my life with someone I love.
10. To have people comment often about how attractive I look.
Aspirations Index

- There are 6 categories of aspirations with five specific items within each category.
- Extrinsic aspirations of:
  - Wealth
  - Fame
  - Image
- Intrinsic aspirations of:
  - Meaningful relationships
  - Personal growth
  - Community contributions

Measuring Variables

- **Perspective 2:** Use different instruments for each culture
  - **Assumption:** The same instrument cannot be equivalent across culture because psychological variables are context-bound
    - **Conclusion:** Difficult interpretation on comparisons across cultures
  - **Advantage:** Measures behaviors that are more appropriate for each culture
  - **Disadvantages**
    - Uncertain whether the instruments are measuring conceptually similar constructs
    - Comparison between cultures is difficult
Instruments

- **Cultural Bias**: The instruments does not measure equivalent concepts in both cultures
- Cultural bias may result from any one of three types of bias:
  - **Theoretical/construct bias**: The definition of the concept differs between cultures
  - **Item bias**: Poor item translation (Linguistic Equivalence)
  - **Procedural bias**: Differences in testing procedures across cultures

Generosity

- I am never too busy to help a friend.
- I go out of my way to cheer up people who appear down.
- I love to make other people happy,
- I helped a neighbor in the last month.
- I get as excited about the good fortunes of others as I am about my own.
- I call my friends on the phone when they are sick.
- I get impatient when others talk to me about their problems.
Instruments

• **Response Style:** Systematic tendency to respond in a certain way to items on a questionnaire
  – Acquiescence bias: Agree with statements as presented
  – Central tendency bias: Avoid extreme categories
  – Social Desirability: Tendency to portray oneself in favorable light
  – Reference Group Effect
    • Participant self-report by comparing themselves to others
    • Individuals from different cultural groups will have different standards of comparison

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Social Desirability

1. I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble.
2. I like to gossip at times.
3. No matter who I’m talking to, I’m always a good listener.
4. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.
5. I don’t find it particularly difficult to get along with loud-mouthed, obnoxious people.
6. I’m always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.
7. I have never intensely disliked anyone.
8. Before voting I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all the candidates.
9. I sometimes feel resentful when I don’t get my way.
10. I am always careful about my manner of dress.
11. My table manners at home are as good as when I eat out in a restaurant.
12. If I could get into a movie without paying and be sure I was not seen, I would probably do it.
13. I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.
14. I never make a long trip without checking the safety of my car.
Reference Group Effect (Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2002)

- In a meta-analysis of research studies, we found no evidence of cultural differences in individualism/collectivism between East Asian and North American samples.

- **Methods**
  - **Participants:** Individuals who had experience in two distinct cultures, Canadians who had returned from teaching English in Japan, and Japanese exchange students who were living in Canada.
  - **Measure:** Singelis’s (1994) Independent/Interdependent Self Scale
  - **Experimental Manipulation:** All participants completed the questionnaire three different times.
    - **Standard:** I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.
    - **Cross-Cultural Comparison** (for Canadians): Compared to most Japanese I know, I think I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.
    - **Same Cultural Comparison** (for Canadians): Compared to most Canadians I know, I think I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.

*Difference is statistically significant*
Reference Group Effect

Linguistics Equivalence

- Can be established through back-translation of an instrument
  - **Step 1, Forward Translation:** Translate from English into Language
  - **Step 2, Back Translation:** A completely different person translates the translation back into English.
- The instrument is considered equivalent in both languages if the back-translation is equivalent to the original
- Most often, instruments have to go through multiple stages of forward and back translation.
Research Designs Revision

- **Causal-Comparative**: Compare groups of people who differ on an independent variable.
- **Correlational**: Compare one group of people on multiple variables to determine the relationship between variables.
- **Experimental**: The independent variable is manipulated by a researcher either through treatment and control groups or by comparing the same group on two or more tasks.

Cross-Cultural Research Designs

- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons**: Studies comparing different cultures on the same psychological variable.
  - Determine how individuals between cultures differ on psychological variables of interest.
    - Do Nigerians respond with more social desirability on questionnaires than Americans?
- **Cultural Studies**: Studies based on a theoretical framework that predicts and explains differences between cultures.
  - **Correlation studies**: Studies that determine whether the relationships between psychological variables are similar across cultures.
    - Is the relationship between academic achievement and intrinsic motivation the same in Nigerian culture as in American culture?
Cross-Cultural Research

- **Linkage studies**: Studies that establish links between elements of culture and psychological variables of interest
  - **Experimental studies**: Instead of culture as independent variable, a **context variable** is hypothesized to influence the dependent variable
    - **Example**: Nigerians have lower collective self-esteem than Americans. Is this because Nigerians don’t trust each other as much as Americans?
    - **Context variable**: Specific variable that explains cultural differences that then influences the dependent variable
    - Both the context variable and the dependent variable are measured
    - Degree to which the context variable influences the dependent variable is statistically tested

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Conclusion

- Only compare populations that have theoretical reasons for differing on a dependent variable
- Replace **culture** with specific independent variables that might influence the dependent variable
  - What aspects of the cultures cause differences in the dependent variable?

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Revision

• What validity consideration need to be taken into account in cross-cultural research studies?
• What are some key issues to consider when developing instruments in cross-cultural research studies?
• Describe research designs that are useful in cross-cultural research studies.

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