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Excerpt

[More Information](#)

## *Introduction*

Cross-cultural research is burgeoning. Behavioral and social sciences such as psychology, sociology, management, marketing, and political science witness a steady increase in cross-cultural studies. For example, during the last decades, there has been a consistently increasing number of psychological studies on cross-cultural similarities and differences (Boer, Hanke, & He, 2018; Smith, Harb, Lonner, & Van de Vijver, 2001; Van de Vijver & Lonner, 1995). The increased interest is undoubtedly inspired by various factors, such as the opening of previously sealed international borders, large migration streams, globalization of the economic market, international tourism, increased cross-cultural communications, and technological innovations such as new means of telecommunication.

The increase in the number of cross-cultural studies is not primarily due to an increase in the number of scientists who devote most or all of their research to cross-cultural studies. Rather, cross-cultural research is for most researchers a natural extension of earlier, usually intracultural work. Cross-cultural research has various unique features. Researchers have to deal with various methodological issues that they did not have to consider in intracultural research, such as the sampling of cultures and testing the accuracy of translations.

The present book can be seen as an extension and integration of previous work in methodological issues in (notably quantitative) cross-cultural research. The first, entitled *Cross-Cultural Research Methods*, appeared in 1973 and was written by Brislin, Lonner, and Thorndike. The next was the volume on methodology in the six-volume *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology* (Triandis & Berry, 1980), followed by Lonner and Berry's (1986) *Field Methods in Cross-Cultural Research*. The first edition of this book was published in 1997 (together with a chapter, describing the same issues, in the second edition of the above Handbook; Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). In the last 20 years, similar volumes have been published focusing on survey research (Davidov,

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Excerpt

[More Information](#)

2

## Introduction

Schmidt, Billiet, & Meuleman, 2018; Harkness, Van de Vijver, & Mohler, 2003). The latest volume on research methods in cross-cultural psychology was published in 2011 (Matsumoto & Van de Vijver, 2011). Important articles and chapters that address specific topics addressed in these books are not presented here, but these topics are discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

Many methodological innovations have taken place in the last 50 years. The first is the ever-expanding toolbox available for cross-cultural researchers. Many developments are statistical–technical and are based on new or generalized models that can help to resolve important cross-cultural questions, such as comparability of samples and instruments. In addition, procedures to conduct pilot studies have been refined in the last decades, such as cognitive interviews (Willis & Miller, 2011). The second is the massive heterogeneity of cross-cultural studies. Much cross-cultural research in the past was and continues to be monodisciplinary. More recently, however, cross-disciplinary research is increasing, notably in large-scale studies. Such large-scale cross-cultural studies require immense resources and are often initiated by large sponsoring bodies that typically have a multidisciplinary focus. For example, the OECD coordinates the study of educational achievement of 15-year olds in the so-called PISA project (Programme for International Student Assessment). The study, encompassing nowadays over eighty countries, addresses student performance and motivation, in addition to class and school characteristics, parental socioeconomic status and parental involvement in the school, and many more variables. Critical for the success of such projects is the availability of expertise in a multitude of domains. The same methodological issues have to be addressed in big and small cross-cultural studies even if the intellectual and material resources available to address these issues may be very different. There is also increasing heterogeneity in the use of research methods; more and more studies use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. These so-called mixed methods (Creswell & Clark, 2017) are useful for cross-cultural research, often amounting to an ethnographic, qualitative study of the cultural context, followed by a quantitative, psychological study. This heterogeneity requires a keen eye for the methodological issues that tend to recur. Finally, cross-cultural research is coming of age. As a consequence, the methodological sophistication of studies has gone up in the last decades. For example, translation followed by back-translation, long considered the gold standard in the field, is used less and less as we have come to appreciate that such

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Excerpt

[More Information](#)

*Introduction*

3

translations may lack comprehensibility and cultural appropriateness (Harkness, 2003).

The increasing sophistication implies that design and analysis have become more integrated than ever before. The theoretical framework, fielding, and analysis of a project are linked. Poor theorizing cannot be compensated by advanced statistical modeling. The substantive and methodological aspects of a study together make up its quality. The last decades have witnessed much professionalization in the field of cross-cultural studies. This increase in professionalization is partly fueled by conceptual innovations (e.g., the procedures for examining the adequacy of translations have become much better; Behr, 2018), statistical innovations (our statistical toolbox has increased considerably), and an increase in the empirical applications in which these novel approaches have been tested.

The present book gives an up-to-date overview of methodological and data-analytical issues of cross-cultural studies. An attempt is made to present the most important tools of cross-cultural research, both in terms of design and analysis. Statistical techniques are not described in detail, but we focus on the relevance of methodological and statistical tools in cross-cultural research: What are the relevant research questions that can be tackled with a particular technique? The most important techniques are illustrated in boxes.

The book is meant for graduate students and professionals with an interest in cross-cultural studies. Basic knowledge of methodology and statistics and some sensitivity to issues in cross-cultural research are assumed; however, advanced knowledge of statistics or cross-cultural research is not required.