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CONCEPT AND METHOD IN CROSS-CULTURAL AND CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract: An overview is given of cross-cultural psychology and cultural psychology, focusing on theory and methodology. In Section 1, historical developments in research are traced; findings indicate that initially extensive psychological differences tend to shrink when more carefully designed studies are conducted. Section 2 addresses the conceptualization of “culture” and of “a culture.” For psychological research, the notion of “culture” is considered too vague; more focal explanatory concepts are required. Section 3 describes methodological issues, taking the idea of the empirical cycle as a lead for both qualitative and quantitative research. Pitfalls in research design and data analysis of behavior-comparative studies and the need for replication are discussed. Section 4 suggests moving beyond research on causal relationships and incorporating additional questions, addressing the function and the development of behavior patterns in ontogenetic, phylogenetic, and historical time. Section 5 emphasizes the need for applied research serving the global village.

Keywords: conceptualization of “culture,” cross-cultural psychology, cultural psychology, design and data analysis, Tinbergen’s questions

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