

Chapter 2 Summary

- There are four basic goals of research in cross-cultural psychology: description, interpretation, prediction, and management. After identifying the goals, the researcher has to choose a methodological approach that is most appropriate for the implementation of these goals. In general, research methodology in cross-cultural psychology can be divided into two categories: quantitative and qualitative.

- Quantitative research in cross-cultural psychology involves the measurement of certain aspects of human activity from a comparative perspective. The variables chosen for examination have to be studied empirically, primarily through observation, as opposed to other forms of reflection, such as intuition, beliefs, or superstitions. The most common data are measures of central tendency: the mode, the median, and the mean. There are four types of measurement scales: nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio.

- Among the most important statistical methods used in cross-cultural psychology are correlational methods that establish relationships between two variables and the *t*-test for independent samples, which aims to estimate whether the difference between two samples occurred by chance.

- Qualitative research is conducted primarily in the natural setting, where the research participants carry out their daily activities in a nonresearch atmosphere. Qualitative studies are also conducted when there are difficulties in measuring variables, in situations when the subjects cannot read or use answer scales or when there are no standardized measurement instruments available. Qualitative research is also useful in situations in which variables are not completely conceptualized or operationally defined. The qualitative method can be useful when the experiences and priorities of the research participants heavily influence the research.

- Choosing an application-oriented strategy, researchers attempt to establish the applicability of research findings obtained in one country or culture to other countries or cultures. The comparativist strategy, on the contrary, focuses primarily on similarities and differences in certain statistical measures in a sample of cultures.

- There are several strategies for sample selection. One strategy is availability or convenience sampling. Another type of sampling, called systematic, involves the psychologist selecting national or ethnic samples according to a theory or some theoretical assumption. A third sampling strategy is random sampling. In this case, a large sample of countries or groups is randomly chosen, that is, any country or group has an equal chance of being selected in the research sample.

- Cross-cultural psychologists use all the typical psychological methods of investigation: observation, survey, experiment, content-analysis, psychobiography, meta-analysis, focus-group methods, and other procedures.

- The majority of cross-cultural projects—especially of the survey type—require translation from the researcher's language to other language or languages. In such cases, one of the most difficult tasks that appears before the investigator is to make sure that the translated version of the method is as close to the original version as possible.

- There are at least two approaches to the analysis of cross-cultural data. Psychologists supporting the absolutist approach argue that psychological phenomena are basically the same across cultures. However, the occurrences of certain processes and behaviors may vary from culture to culture. The relativist approach implies that human behavior in its full complexity can be understood only within the context of the culture in which it occurs.

- Cross-cultural psychologists should see similarities in different phenomena; likewise, similarities should not overshadow potential differences between samples. The specialist should be aware that to contrast a phenomenon with its polar opposite is to give definition to both terms. All polar opposites are dependent on each other for their very conceptual existence.

- Cross-cultural psychologists should avoid biases of generalization. At the same time, it should be understood that cross-cultural psychology requires a great deal of imagination and abstraction. Concrete human activities take place in diverse and unique contexts with a huge variety of underlying factors. To understand and compare psychological phenomena the researcher should assume that the number of such factors is relatively limited.

Key Terms

Absolutist Approach A view in cross-cultural psychology that psychological phenomena are basically the same in all cultures.

Application-Oriented Strategy An attempt to establish the applicability of research findings obtained in one country or culture to other countries or cultures.

Comparativist Strategy An attempt to find similarities and differences in certain statistical measures in a sample of cultures.

Content-Analysis A research method that systematically organizes and summarizes both the manifest and latent content of communication.

Correlation Coefficient A number that summarizes and describes the type of relationship present and the strength of the relationship between variables X and Y .

Dependent Variable The aspect of human activity that is studied and expected to change under the influence of an independent variable(s).

Direct Surveys The type of surveys in which the interviewer maintains or can maintain a direct communication with the respondent and is able to provide feedback, repeat a question, or ask for additional information.

Equivalence Evidence that the methods selected for the study measure the same phenomenon across other countries chosen for the study.

Experiment The investigative method in which researchers alter some variables to detect specific changes in the subjects' behaviors, attitudes, or emotions.

Focus-Group Methodology A survey method used intensively both in academic and marketing research. The most common use of this method is a procedure in which a group responds to specific social, political, or marketing messages. The typical focus group contains 7–10 participants, who are either experts or represent potential buyers, viewers, or other types of customers.

Independent Variable The condition(s) that are controlled by the researcher.

Indirect Surveys The type of surveys in which the researcher's personal impact is very small because there is no direct communication between the respondent and the interviewer. The questions are typically written and handed in, mailed, or e-mailed to the respondents in their homes, classrooms, or work places.

Laboratory Observation Recording people's behavior in an environment created by the researcher.