A Typology of Management Studies Involving Culture
Author(s): Nancy J. Adler
Source: *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Special Issue on Cross-Cultural Management (Autumn, 1983), pp. 29-47
Published by: Palgrave Macmillan Journals
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/222590
Accessed: 08/05/2014 19:51

www.manaraa.com

A TYPOLOGY OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES INVOLVING CULTURE

NANCY J. ADLER*
McGill University

Abstract. As a methodological review, this paper delineates 6 approaches to researching cross-cultural management issues: parochial, ethnocentric, polycentric, comparative, geocentric, and synergistic. For each approach, assumptions are discussed concerning the similarity and difference across cultures and the extent to which management phenomena are or are not universal. The primary types of management questions which can be addressed using each approach are clarified. Main methodological issues which must be addressed are listed.

INTRODUCTION

■ What is research doing to help managers handle cross-cultural management situations? What confidence can managers have in the recommendations researchers are suggesting for the management of multinational organizations (MNOs)? What would be helpful to international managers that is not currently being addressed by researchers?

The purpose of this article is to review the history and directions of international, comparative, and cross-cultural management research from a methodological perspective. Are we addressing the correct issues? Are we addressing them from the correct perspective? What confidence can we have in our results?

Studying Management Across Cultures

As shown in Table 1, there are 6 different approaches to cross-cultural management research. Studies vary in the theoretical and management issues which they address, in their assumptions about universality, in their ways of dealing with similarity and differences, and, therefore, in the methodological problems which they must confront. The most common type of management studies has been and still is parochial: studies of the United States conducted by Americans. (In this paper, the term American is used to denote "people from the United States of America." Although all peoples from North, South and Central America are Americans, the term is used here as a shorthand convenience.) The second most common type is ethnocentric: studies which attempt to replicate American management research in foreign countries. The third is polycentric: studies which focus on describing, explaining, and interpreting the patterns of management and organization in foreign countries. The fourth type, comparative management studies, attempts to identify those aspects of organizations which are similar and those aspects which are different in cultures around the world. The fifth type, the geocentric studies, focuses on studying organizations which operate in more than one culture. In international management (often referred to as international business), these studies focus on identifying the similarities among cultures which will allow MNOs to have unified policies for their worldwide operations. The sixth, and to date the least common type of management research, is culturally synergistic studies which emphasize creating universality.

*Nancy J. Adler is Assistant Professor of Organizational Behavior and Cross-Cultural Management at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, and has taught at the American Graduate School of International Management (Arizona) and at INSEAD (France). She has consulted for government and multinational organizations on projects in North America, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East.

TABLE 1
Types of Cross-Cultural Management Research

Title	Culture	Approach to Similarity and Difference	Approach to Universality	Type of Study	Primary Question	Main Methodological Issues
PAROCHIAL RESEARCH	Single culture studies	Assumed similarity	Assumed universality	Domestic management studies	What is the behavior of people like in work organizations? Study is only applicable to management in one culture and yet it is assumed to be applicable to management in many cultures.	*Traditional methodologies*: All of the traditional methodological issues concerning design, sampling, instrumentation, analysis and interpretation without reference to culture.
ETHNO-CENTRIC RESEARCH	Second culture studies	Search for similarity	Questioned universality	Replication in foreign cultures of domestic management studies	Can we use home country theories abroad? Can this theory which is applicable to organizations in Culture A be extended to organizations in Culture B?	*Standardization and translation*: How can management research be standardized across cultures? How can instruments be literally translated. Replication should be identical to original study with the exception of language.
POLYCENTRIC RESEARCH	Studies in many cultures	Search for difference	Denied universality	Individual studies of organizations in specific foreign cultures	How do managers manage and employees behave in country X? What is the pattern of organizational relationships in country X?	*Description*: How can country X's organizations be studied without either using home country theories or models and without using obtrusive measures? Focus is on inductive methods and unobtrusive measures.
COMPARATIVE RESEARCH	Studies contrasting many cultures	Search for both similarity and difference	Emergent universality	Studies comparing organizations in many foreign cultures	How are the management and employee styles similar and different across cultures? Which theories hold across cultures and which do not?	*Equivalence*: Is the methodology equivalent at each stage in the research process? Are the meanings of key concepts defined equivalently? Has the research been designed such

GEOCENTRIC RESEARCH	International management studies	Search for similarity	Extended universality	Studies of multinational organizations	How do multinational organizations function?	*Geographic Dispersion:* All of the traditional methodological questions are relevant with the added complexity of geographical distance. Translation is often less of a problem since most MNOs have a common language across all countries in which they operate. The primary question is to develop an approach for studying the complexity of a large organization. Culture is frequently ignored.
SYNERGISTIC RESEARCH	Intercultural management studies	Use of similarities and differences as a resource	Created universality	Studies of intercultural interaction within work settings	How can the intercultural interaction within a domestic or international organization be managed? How can organizations create structures and processes which will be effective in working with members of all cultures?	*Interaction models and integrating processes:* What are effective ways to study cross-cultural interaction within organizational settings? How can universal and culturally specific patterns of management be distinguished? What is the appropriate balance between culturally specific and universal processes within one organization? How can the proactive use of cultural differences to create universally accepted organizational patterns be studied?

Synergistic studies explore cross-cultural interaction and the positive uses of similarities and differences in creating both universal and culturally specific patterns of management. The purpose of synergistic studies is to create transcultural structures and processes which can be used around the world while maintaining an appropriate level of cultural specificity.

Each of these 6 types of studies is designed to address a different set of questions. Each is based on a different set of assumptions. For researchers to build a successful theoretical framework for understanding the behavior of people in organizations around the world, and for managers to use the results of cross-cultural management research effectively, it is necessary to differentiate the 6 types of studies and to delineate those areas in which further research is needed.

Each of the 6 types of studies will be described separately. For each, the underlying assumptions will be made explicit, methodological approaches and dilemmas will be discussed, and implications for researchers and for managers will be identified. As the field has developed, there have been a number of excellent review articles which have highlighted various aspects of cross-cultural management research. [See Ajiferuke and Boddewyn 1970a and b; Bhagat and McQuaid 1982; Barrett and Bass 1970 and 1976; Bendix 1969; Boddewyn 1967 and 1969; Boddewyn and Nath 1970; Child and Tayeb 1982–83; Evan 1975; Graves 1973; Hofstede 1980; Inzerilli 1980–81; Jamieson 1982–83; Kraut 1975; Lammers 1976; Lammers and Hickson 1979; Nath 1968; Negandhi and Estafen 1965; Roberts 1970 and 1972; Roberts and Snow 1973; Schollhammer 1969 and 1973; Sekaran 1981a and 1981b; Sorge 1982–83; Triandis 1982–83]. The purpose of this article is to delineate the history and directions of cross-cultural management research methodology. It is not the purpose to judge that history by giving blanket praise or condemnation.

PAROCHIAL RESEARCH: Single Culture Studies

Parochial studies are research projects originally designed and conducted in one culture by researchers from that culture. The United States has produced the most management research and many of the most parochial research studies. In a review of over 11,000 articles published in 24 management journals between 1971 and 1980, approximately 80 percent were found to be studies of the United States conducted by Americans [Adler 1983a]. Less than 5 percent of the organizational behavior articles published in the 24 journals included the concept of culture. This situation is understandable and, at the same time, unfortunate. The United States has had such an extensive domestic market that many firms did not need to go outside the United States to be successful; but, unfortunately, the pattern of domestic dominance has changed. Even United States markets have become highly internationalized. Parochial research is therefore no longer applicable to many managers' most salient concerns.

Parochial Studies Assume Universality

By ignoring other cultures, parochial studies—usually implicitly—assume similarity across the world's industrialized countries. Most researchers conducting single culture studies assume that the results of their domestic studies are universal. In reality, most parochial studies are applicable only to one culture, the culture in which the research was conducted. They are not applicable to other cultures unless so proven. American studies conducted in the United States are, at best, applicable to the United States. They may or may not be applicable to Africa, Asia, Europe, or Central and South America.

Parochial studies use the whole range of traditional research designs. The methodological dilemmas which must be addressed by the researcher include the full range of issues concerning design, sampling, instrumentation, data analysis, and interpretation. The sole limitation, by definition, is that culture not

be considered a factor. Culture is included neither as an independent nor as a dependent variable. Culture is, in effect, implicitly considered to be a constant.

For many management researchers, parochial studies do not constitute a part of the history of cross-cultural management. It is important, however, to view the set of research studies which do address the issue of culture within the context of "all research." Within that context, it is clear that cross-cultural studies are in the minority.

Research which is confined to one cultural context is constrained in both theory construction and practical application [Barrett and Bass 1976]. These constraints are no longer acceptable to managers and are less and less acceptable to management researchers. Each of the 5 remaining types of research to be discussed in this article—ethnocentric, polycentric, comparative, geocentric, and synergistic—specifically addresses the issue of culture and its impact on the behavior of people within organizations.

In ethnocentric research, studies originally designed and conducted in one culture by researchers from that culture are replicated in a second culture. As in parochial studies, the vast majority of ethnocentric research is American research which has been replicated in countries outside of the United States. Ethnocentric studies implicitly assume that the home country (such as, the United States) is more important or superior to other cultures and that important learning will come from extending home country research to another culture. From a manager's perspective, these studies ask the question: "Can we use American (or home culture) approaches abroad?" From a research perspective, ethnocentric studies ask the question: "Can this theory, which is applicable in Culture A, be extended to Culture B?" Is the theory culturally dependent or universal? Researchers conducting ethnocentric studies are interested in extending theories applicable in their own culture to other cultures. They would like to increase the range of the independent variable and the range of its effects on the dependent variables of interest. They are interested in adding extremes. Researchers are concerned with testing hypotheses developed in one culture and thereby increasing the predictive range of their hypotheses [Brislin, Lonner, and Thorndike 1973]. Avoiding the parochial perspective of those who assume universality, ethnocentric researchers question the universality of their results and of their theories. Ethnocentric studies are primarily searching for similarity across cultural conditions, for validation in extending their theoretical frameworks under the more extreme conditions found in a second culture.

Replication is the most common approach to ethnocentric research. The researcher reconducts a single culture study in a second culture. As in domestic replication studies, the main methodological goal is standardization across the 2 research settings. To standardize, an attempt is made to keep all aspects of the research design and its implementation (with the exception of language) identical across the 2 cultures. As far as possible, the research is conducted in the same way, with the same types of people, using the same instrumentation (except for language), administered with the same instructions, and analyzed using the same methods in both cultures. Where linguistic differences exist, the research must be translated. In an ideal sense, replication studies literally constitute a Language A and a Language B version of a single research project which is conducted in Culture A and replicated in Culture B. The assumption, although frequently not the reality, is that standardization and equivalence are the same.

If the target population in the second culture speaks a different language from the people in the first culture (generally, if the people in the second culture are not English speaking), the research instruments and administration (such as, instructions) are translated literally from the first to the second language. The rule

ETHNOCENTRIC RESEARCH: Second Culture Replication Studies

guiding the translation is standardization of wording. The 2 versions must be the same. The rule guiding translation in ethnocentric research is not that the 2 versions have the same meaning in each of the target populations. Differences in interpretation of the research instruments and instructions (that is, differences in meaning) between the 2 groups are often treated as research findings. They are interpreted as cultural differences rather than being used as part of the translation process.

In cross-cultural replication studies, similar findings are most frequently interpreted as confirmation that the theory being tested is, in fact, universal. The universality of the theory is extended to the second culture. The conclusion is that the research results are not culturally dependent. An inherent fallacy in this interpretation of similarity is that a sample of 2 cultures is sufficient to prove universality. A more appropriate conclusion would be either that the particular results are not solely dependent on cultural factors in the first culture or that the results appear applicable to the second culture. The conclusion, from a 2–culture study, that the results are universal is unwarranted.

Since the purpose of replication studies is generally to extend the universality of a particular set of research results, differences are often interpreted as indicating a design defect. The researcher may interpret a difference in the results as indicating that the 2 samples were not properly matched; for example, that the employees from the second culture were less educated than those from the first. It is interesting to note that these interpretations are generally stated in terms of the second culture being "less than" the first culture on some critical design dimension. Measuring the second culture against the first—that is, using a self-reference criterion—is one of the indications of the underlying ethnocentrism inherent in this approach. The ethnocentric label comes from the initial design decision to replicate the study cross-culturally. The assumption behind this decision is that a study which was originally designed to be meaningful in the first culture will give results which are important and meaningful for both cultures. Ethnocentric research fails to question if the results, whether similar or different from those in the first culture, have any meaning or importance within the context of the second culture.

POLYCENTRIC RESEARCH: Studies Conducted in Many Cultures

Polycentric studies are studies designed to describe, explain, and interpret management and organizational practices within specific foreign cultures. Polycentric studies are individual domestic studies conducted in various countries around the world.

In their most extreme form, polycentric studies view institutions as understandable only in terms of their own culture. Oberg [1963], for example, postulated that "the rules and requirements for managerial success and/or effectiveness differ so significantly across cultural boundaries as to make any attempt to generalize certain universal principles for management a meaningless task" [as cited in Miller and Simonetti 1974, p. 89]. Functional equivalence between institutions in 2 or more societies is seen as unprovable. Labeled the "Malinovskian dilemma" after anthropologist Bronislav Malinovski [Berry 1969, p. 120; Hofstede 1980, p. 41; Lammers 1976, p. 28], the cross-cultural comparison of institutions is therefore seen as an essentially false enterprise: the researcher would be comparing things (organizations) which cannot be compared.

Polycentric studies are designed to answer the manager's question: "How do managers manage and employees behave in country X?" For the researcher, the purpose of a polycentric study is to identify the patterns of relationships which describe a particular foreign culture. Ideally, the polycentric study produces theories—new or established—which are applicable to the specific culture being studied.

Even in the less extreme forms of this approach, universality is largely denied. The researcher searches for that which is specific in a particular culture; the importance is placed on difference, not on similarity. Polycentric research has been the basic approach of anthropologists for years.

For the management researcher, the methodological approaches in polycentric studies generally involve: taking an inductive, rather than a deductive, approach—one which allows patterns to emerge from the data; taking a phenomenological approach stressing the careful description of a particular experience or situation within a particular culture; taking a more idiographic approach stressing the individuality and uniqueness of the specific culture being studied rather than a more nomothetic approach which attempts to study cases and events (cultures) as universals with a view toward formulating general laws; and attempting to minimize the impact of the research process on the culture being studied. Researchers must guard against imposing their own cultural perspective on the research design, data collection, interpretation, and analysis. This often means working with researchers from the target cultures and consciously masking one's own cultural conditioning. It demands a high level of cultural self-awareness on the part of the principal researchers.

Polycentric studies have been criticized for being strictly descriptive rather than evaluative [Bennett 1977]. The criticism is that cross-cultural management researchers make 2 assumptions: equifinality, the assumption that there are many culturally distinct ways to reach any particular management goal; and cultural relativity, the assumption that no culture's way of reaching a goal is any better than any other's. The first assumption, equifinality, is generally accepted by management researchers. The second assumption, cultural relativity, is not generally accepted. In cross-cultural management research, description of the "many ways" is often seen as a necessary first step. If one way of the many ways is not judged better than the others on such traditional (American) management outcomes as productivity, effectiveness, efficiency, or satisfaction, then the polycentric approach is criticized for being incomplete.

COMPARATIVE RESEARCH: Studies Contrasting Organizations Across Cultures

Comparative studies are designed to identify the similarities and differences across 2 or more cultures. For managers, comparative studies answer the question: "How is culture A different from culture B? In which areas can our organizational policies and strategies be similar across all cultures, and in which areas must they be different?" For the management researcher, comparative studies are designed to distinguish between those aspects of organizational theory which are truly universal and those which are culturally specific.

Using cross-cultural similarities, comparative studies are designed to identify an emergent universality. In ethnocentric studies, one culture's "universal" theories are imposed on another culture. In polycentric studies, the possibility of a meaningful universality is denied. In comparative studies, however, universality exists through attempting to define patterns which emerge from all cultures studied. Comparative studies thus search both for similarities and for differences. They label the emergent similarity as universality and the emergent difference as cultural specificity.

To conduct comparative studies, researchers must assume that there is no dominant culture [Hesseling 1973]. If the researcher either implicitly or explicitly assumes that one culture's view of reality is superior to the other culture's, or that one culture's ways of solving organizational problems is superior, then he is conducting ethnocentric, not comparative research.

The methodological issues involved in conducting sophisticated comparative management research are numerous and complex. The primary focus is comparison; being able to distinguish between culturally specific and universal

behaviors. As shown in Table 2, researchers in many fields—anthropology, linguistics, political science, philosophy, and so on—have attempted to delineate this distinction.

By definition, researchers who adopt the extreme position of cultural uniqueness cannot do comparative studies. In contrast, researchers who adopt the extreme culture-general approach are in danger of missing many of the important and unique aspects of the phenomenon being studied. Comparative management researchers must accept the possibility that there are both culture-specific and culture-general (universal) aspects to a phenomenon. In any particular study, one aspect may clearly dominate. In comparative management research, however, the balance between cultural-specific and culture-general elements is a research finding, not a pre-study assumption.

TABLE 2

Differentiating the Universal from the Particular

Terms Denoting Cultural Uniqueness	Terms Denoting Universality
Culturally Specific	Culturally General
Emic: Sounds which are specific to a particular language	Etic: Sounds which are similar in all languages
Particular	Universal
Idiographic: Descriptive of the uniqueness of the individual	Nomothetic: Laws describing behavior of groups of individuals
Polycentric: Cultures must be understood in their own terms	Geocentric: Search for universal, pan-cultural laws of human behavior
Within culture: Studies behavior from within the culture to discover whatever structure it might have. Both the antecedents and the consequences of the behavior are found within the culture	Across cultures: Emphasizes the most general description of social phenomena with concepts that are culture free. Structure of observation is created by the scientists
Culturally contingent: The studied behavior is dependent on the particular culture in which it is embedded	Culturally independent: The studied behavior is not related to or influenced by the particular culture in which it is embedded
Difference emphasized	Similarity emphasized
Universality denied	Universality central and accepted
Unique	Pancultural

As shown in Table 3, there are methodological questions which must be addressed in most comparative management studies. First, there are 5 fundamental dilemmas which permeate all aspects of the research: What is culture? Is the studied phenomenon culturally specific or universal? How can the researchers mask their cultural bias in designing and conducting the study? Which aspects of the methodology should be identical and which equivalent across cultures? And, what are the threats to interpretation caused by possible interactions between the cultural and research variables? Second, there are dilemmas which must be solved at each of the following stages in the research: selecting the topic, sampling, translation, measurement, instrumentation, administration of the research, data analysis, and interpretation. The major methodological issues at each of these stages will be discussed briefly below.

TABLE 3

Methodological Issues in Comparative Management Research

Methodological Issue	Description
PURPOSE of Comparative Management Research	To develop equivalent theories of social behavior within work settings in cultures around the world.
FUNDAMENTAL DILEMMAS confronted in all Comparative Management Research	**WHAT IS CULTURE?** —What is the definition of culture? —Can country be used as a surrogate definition for culture? —Should domestic (within country) populations be assumed to be multicultural or culturally homogeneous? —Culture should be used as an independent or as a dependent variable, but not as a residual variable. **CULTURALLY SPECIFIC VERSUS UNIVERSAL ASPECTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR** —Which aspects of organizational behavior vary across culture and which are constant regardless of culture? —When is culture a contingency? —When is culture—as an independent variable—not related to the dependent variable or theory of interest? When is a theory culture-free? **MENTAL PROGRAMMING OF THE RESEARCHER AS A CULTURAL BEING** In order to design, conduct and interpret research from each culture's perspective—and not strictly from a single culture or ethnocentric perspective—research teams should be multicultural. **IDENTICAL VERSUS EQUIVALENT APPROACHES TO CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH** At a sufficiently high level of abstraction, research topics, concepts, and approaches should be identical. At lower levels of abstractions, the operationalization of the concepts and approaches should not be identical, but should be culturally equivalent. **THREATS TO INTERPRETATION: Interaction Between Cultural Variables and the Research Topic and Approach** —Cultural and research variables interact. The interaction can confound results and render them uninterpretable. —Multiple approaches and multiple methods are needed to understand interaction effects.
RESEARCH TOPIC	At the highest level of abstraction, the research topic (that is, the research question or theory being tested) should be identical across cultures. The conceptual and methodological approaches to researching that topic should be equivalent across cultures. Across cultures, the topic should be: —Conceptually equivalent. The definition of the concept should have the same meaning in each culture. —Equally important. The phenomenon should be equally modal or marginal in each culture. —Equally appropriate. For example, the topic should be equally appropriate regarding political and religious sensitivities in each culture.
SAMPLING	Sampling issues involve size of sample, selection of cultures, representative versus matched samples, and the independence of samples:

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Methodological Issues in Comparative Management Research

Methodological Issue	Description
	—*Size of sample*. The number of cultures selected should be large enough to: —Randomize variance on non-matched variables. —Eliminate rival hypotheses. Studies with insufficient numbers of cultures (that is, 2 or 3) should be treated as pilot studies. —*Selection of cultures*. The selection of cultures should be based on theoretical dimensions of the research, not on the opportunistic availability of access to particular cultures. —*Representative versus matched samples*. Is the research goal to have samples which are representative of each culture or is it to have matched samples which are equivalent on key theoretical dimensions across cultures? Matched samples should be functionally, not literally, equivalent. —*Independence of samples*. Given the interrelatedness of the industrialized world, culturally, politically, and geographically independent samples in management research are generally neither feasible nor desirable.
TRANSLATION	*Equivalence of language*. The language used in each version of the research—instrumentation and administration—should be equivalent across cultures, not literally identical. —*Wording*. The wording of items and instructions should: —Use a common vocabulary (such as, high frequency words). —Avoid idiomatic expressions. —Use equivalent grammar and syntax. —Use plain, short sentences. —Include redundancy. —*Method of translation*. Recognizing the Whorfian hypothesis, the translation technique should aim at equivalence, not at literal translations. —*Whorfian hypothesis*. Different cultural and linguistic backgrounds lead to different ways of perceiving the world. Unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar or can be calibrated, people who speak 2 different languages will not perceive the world in the same way. —*Translation techniques*. To achieve equivalent translations, the material should be: —Back-translated. Translated and then back-translated into the original language using a good bilingual target population, or —Translated by an expert. Translated independently by excellent bilingual translators who are (1) familiar with the linguistic and cultural backgrounds in both cultures, (2) familiar with the subject matter of the research, and (3) translating into his or her native language.
MEASUREMENT AND INSTRU- MENTATION	*Equivalence of instrumentation*. Are the test items, scaling, instrumentation and experimental manipulations equivalent across cultures? —*Equivalent variables*. Across cultures, are the items or measures conceptually equivalent, equally reliable and equally valid? Have indigenous measures been created to operationalize conceptually equivalent variables? Are variables based on equally salient conceptual dimensions? —*Equivalent scaling*. Differences in means are uninterpretable

Methodological Issue	Description
	unless measured on equivalent scales which have been developed individually in each culture. —Equivalent procedures. Researcher must use the same or equivalent procedures in each culture to develop scales, or —Similar patterns of correlations. Items must have similar patterns of correlations within each culture. —*Equivalence of language.* See translation above. —*Equivalence of experimental manipulations.* Interaction between experimental and cultural variables can confound interpretation. Therefore experimental manipulations must be equivalent across cultures.
ADMINISTRATION	*Equivalence of administration.* The research settings, instructions, and timing should be equivalent, not identical, across cultures. *Equivalence of response.* Given that observation changes that which is observed (Heisenberg effect), the influence of the research on the subjects should be equivalent across cultures. The research should be designed and administered in such a way that the responses to the stimuli and to the situation are similar across cultures on such dimensions as: —*Familiarity.* Subject should have equal familiarity with test instruments, format, and the social situation of the research. —*Psychological response.* Subjects should have similar levels of anxiety and other psychological responses in the test situation. —*Experimenter effect.* The extent to which the researchers communicate their preferred hypotheses to subjects—both verbally and nonverbally—should be equivalent across cultures. —*Demand characteristics.* The extent to which subjects attempt to discover the researcher's hypotheses and thereafter attempt to help (usually) or hinder the research varies across cultures based on such things as (1) sensitivity to various topics (sex, religion, politics) and (2) the courtesy bias. —*Characteristics of the person conducting the research.* Depending on the culture, there can be a difference in response (respectfulness, indifference, hostility) to such characteristics of the research administrator as: —Gender —Race —Origin: from an economically developed or developing country —Status relative to subjects: high versus low —Foreigner versus citizen —*Characteristics of the presentation.* The response of the subjects can vary in reaction to the: —Introduction of the research —Introduction and characteristics of the presenter —Task instructions —Closing remarks —Timing of the presentation and data collection —Setting of the presentation and data collection The goal in comparative management research is to have the administration and experimental conditions equivalent, not standardized in each culture. The approach to conducting the re-

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Methodological Issues in Comparative Management Research

Methodological Issue	Description
	search may be identical, but the ways in which it is operational-ized will vary from culture to culture.
ANALYSIS	*Multivariate techniques.* Comparative research studies are com-plex. Univariate statistical techniques are generally inappropriate.
	Ecological fallacy. The problem in comparative research is that cultures are often treated and categorized as if they were in-dividuals. Cultures are not individuals; they are wholes, and their internal logic cannot be understood in the terms used for per-sonality dynamics of individuals [Hofstede 1980]. The ecological fallacy is the confusing of country or cultural level (ecological) correlations with individual correlations. The reverse ecological fallacy is the confusing of individual correlations with ecologi-cal/cultural correlations.

FUNDAMENTAL DILEMMAS: What is culture?

In traditional anthropological studies as well as in comparative management re-search, the term "culture" has been defined in many ways. One of the most re-cent working definitions of culture is Hofstede's [1980, p. 25]: Culture is "the col-lective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another ... the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group's response to its environment." In general, people are seen as being from different cultures if their ways of life as a group are signif-icantly different, one from the other. As critics have noted [see, for example, Ajiferuke and Boddewyn 1970a; Roberts 1970], to date, there is no single defini-tion of culture accepted by management researchers. It is important to note that cross-cultural management research is not solely interested in cultural explana-tions of similarities and differences which may, in fact, best be explained by eco-nomic, political, social, or other factors. "Cross-cultural" is strictly a system for including more than one cultural unit (delimited and defined using criteria of the researcher's discretion) in the study.

Beyond defining culture, the researcher and the field of comparative manage-ment must address 3 other related questions. First, can a country, or nation-state, be used as a surrogate definition for culture? In most of the comparative management studies, national boundaries are implicitly accepted as operational definitions of culturally distinct units. Second, should populations within a na-tional boundary be considered as culturally homogeneous or as multicultural [see Adler 1983b]? Third, should culture be treated as an independent variable, a constant, a dependent variable, or a residual variable? Culture should not be treated as a residual variable. Attributing the unexplained variance to "culture" is neither methodologically sound nor helpful in developing a credible field of com-parative management research. Currently, of the studies which do not treat culture as a residual variable, most treat culture as an independent variable, many as a constant, and a few as a dependent variable. [For example, see Kumar's work on the impact of multinational corporations on host cultures, 1979 and 1980.] Roberts [1970, p. 331] suggests that culture be treated as an interven-ing variable modifying and being modified by other phenomena.

Universality versus cultural specificity

Is the behavior of people in work settings universal or culturally specific [see Maurice 1976 and 1979]? As outlined in Tables 2 and 3, comparative management researchers must not assume that the behavior of people is either wholly culture-

40   Journal of International Business Studies, Fall 1983

specific or wholly universal. The results of a comparative management study should reveal the extent to which the particular behavior being studied depends on cultural factors.

Researchers, like other people, have been conditioned to think, feel, and behave in certain culturally conditioned ways. According to Hofstede's [1980] definition of culture, researchers embody the "collective programming of the mind" distinctive of their particular culture. Studies should integrate the cultural perspectives of all cultures being studied while masking the cultural blindness of the principal researchers. To do this most effectively, comparative management studies should be carried out by multicultural research teams [Triandis 1972].

Masking the researcher's cultural bias

Unlike domestic replication studies in which standardization across research settings is crucial, in comparative management research the aim is to have equivalent approaches to the research in each cultural setting. At a sufficiently high level of abstraction, the research topics, concepts and approaches must be identical. At lower levels of abstraction—generally at the level of operationalizing the concepts and approaches—the definitions and methodologies should be culturally equivalent. The researcher must determine a way to design the study so that the meaning in the 2 or more cultures is most similar. Unlike the ethnocentric researcher who is most interested in literal translation and standardization across cultures, the comparative management researcher must ask if the methodology is functionally equivalent at each stage in the research process and for each culture involved. Functional equivalence, for the cross-cultural researcher, implies that the aspects of behavior in question at each stage in the research process represent attempts of the compared cultures to solve the same problems [Berry 1969]. Are the meanings of the key concepts equivalent? Are the research design, the sampling procedure, the instrumentation, the administration, the analysis, and the interpretation of the data equivalent with reference to all cultures involved? And, in the pursuit of equivalence, has care been taken not to lose the true cultural differences which exist [Sekaran 1981a]?

Identical versus equivalent approaches to research

A major problem faced in comparative designs is that the results can be confounded by an interaction between the cultural and experimental variables. Unfortunately, in many parochial and ethnocentric studies, only the main effects are interpreted and no analysis is made of the interactions. According to Brislin, Lonner, and Thorndike [1973], multiple approaches and multiple methods must be used in comparative research studies in order to determine the effects of the research variables as distinct from those of cultural variables.

Interaction between cultural and research variables

As presented earlier, the problem of equivalence is faced at each stage of a comparative research study. At the highest levels of abstraction, the research topic should be identical across cultures. The conceptual and methodological approaches to researching the topic should also be equivalent in meaning—but not necessarily identical in structure—across cultures. This equivalence applies to the selection of a topic, sampling, translation, measurement, instrumentation, administration, and analysis. The major issues to be addressed at each stage in the research process are outlined in Table 3. [For a more in depth discussion, see Adler 1983c.]

METHODOLOGICAL DILEMMAS

Comparative management research aims at identifying those aspects of social behavior in work settings which are culturally specific and those which are universal. As has been outlined above, comparative management research is complex. Given the complexity, comparative research is usually more time consuming, more expensive, and more difficult to make rigorous than is either domestic research or some of the other types of international management research. Lack of rigor has been one of the major criticisms of comparative research [Roberts 1970; Sekaran 1981b].

In assessing comparative studies, it is important to realize that the whole field is still in its infancy relative to domestic organizational behavior studies, and to judge accomplishments accordingly. To the extent that the same rigor is demanded of comparative studies as is demanded of domestic studies, researchers may be tempted to use more standardized approaches rather than developing equivalent approaches. And, to the extent that this happens, the research is no longer comparative but has implicitly become ethnocentric or parochial. The creativity, at this stage in the development of the field, is in striving for the rigor demanded in domestic studies without compromising the very aspects which, to date, make that rigor impossible.

GEOCENTRIC RESEARCH: International Management Studies

Geocentric studies investigate the managing of MNOs—organizations which operate in more than one nation. Geocentric studies are not concerned with comparing domestic organizations within each culture. Although not explicitly, this type of research tends to be a search for similarity across cultures. The underlying assumption is that there are universally effective approaches to organizing and managing which are applicable throughout the world.

The term "transnational," literally meaning "beyond nation," is indicative of the geocentric approach. Managers are seen as being "beyond passport"; organizations as beyond nation, or culture. Heenan and Perlmutter [1979], who used the terminology "ethnocentric," "polycentric," "regiocentric," and "geocentric," saw a progression from defining managers and management styles by culture (ethnocentric) to using a transcultural definition based on individual skills and organizational goals (geocentric). Both Child [1981] and Laurent [1983] have suggested that the transcultural approach may be most appropriate for macro level organizational variables and least appropriate for the micro level behavior of people within organizations.

As distinct from most parochial, ethnocentric, polycentric, and comparative studies, the focus of geocentric research is a multinational phenomenon—the multinational or transnational organization (MNO). Most traditional international management studies (frequently termed "international business studies") generally focus on the geographic dispersion aspect of MNOs (their location in many countries). They focus on the fact that the MNO geographically operates in many locations (countries) and not on the cultural differences between those countries. In many studies, the culture of the countries involved is completely ignored. Geocentric research thus often assumes cross-cultural universality without questioning its validity. Although not in the conventional sense, the studies are still cross-cultural in that the phenomenon studied—the multinational organization—exists in more than one cultural (usually more than one national) context. By implicitly ignoring the dimension of culture or considering it of negligible importance, geocentric research simply uses noncultural variables to explain multinational phenomena. For example, much of the international finance research is geocentric.

The methodological problems are those of domestic research with the added complexity of distance. Since most multinationals have a common language (often English), translation is frequently not an issue.

Synergistic studies focus on understanding the patterns of relationships as well as the theories which apply when people from more than one culture interact within a work setting. Synergistic research focuses on the behavior of people within multinational and transnational organizations, people on international assignments for domestic organizations, and people in domestic organizations which have cross-cultural employee, supplier, or client populations.

Synergistic studies are designed to answer the manager's question: "How should we manage cross-cultural interaction within the organization? When is it best to create universal approaches to managing the interactions of people within organizations and when is it better to use indigenous, culturally specific approaches?" From the researcher's perspective, synergistic studies are designed to address the questions: "What laws govern the interaction between culturally different people? Under what conditions is a universal approach—using created similarities across cultures—possible and most appropriate, and under which other conditions is a pluralistic approach—using identified cultural uniqueness—possible and most appropriate?"

Synergistic studies are thus based on understanding cross-cultural interaction in order to understand how and when to use pluralism, that is, to use the culturally specific patterns of management and organization indigenous to each culture involved; how and when to use geocentric patterns, the naturally occurring patterns of management and organization which are common to all cultures involved; and how and when to create synergy, that is, to create universal patterns of management and organization which, based on both cultural similarities and differences, are effective when used with all cultures involved. [See Adler 1979 and 1980; Harris and Moran 1979; Moran and Harris 1981.]

Synergistic studies are therefore based on understanding cross-cultural interaction and using that understanding to decide how and when to use pluralistic or universalistic forms—both naturally occurring and created—of management and organization.

Synergistic studies differ from the previously discussed types of research in a number of ways. First, whereas parochial, ethnocentric, polycentric, and comparative studies are based on descriptions of individual cultures, synergistic (and to some extent, geocentric) studies are based on understanding the interaction between people of different cultures. Second, whereas the previously described types of research focus on identifying naturally occurring patterns of organization and management (often through emphasizing similarities or differences), synergistic studies emphasize the creation of such patterns. Third, whereas the 5 previously described types of research emphasize understanding similarities or differences, synergistic studies focus on balance—on understanding and generating the best balance between culturally specific (pluralistic) and universal (culture general) patterns of management and organization. Researchers conducting synergistic studies assume neither that emphasizing similarities nor that emphasizing differences is the most effective approach to management. The assumption underlying synergistic research is that it is possible for multinational and multicultural organizations to use a manager-created balance between specific and general approaches.

Focusing on created, rather than naturally occurring, phenomena is an action research rather than a traditional approach to investigation. Pure and applied research generally attempts to describe what is. Action research generally attempts to create new, research based solutions to existing management problems. Action research tends to emphasize what could be, rather than what is. Action research has not been as commonly accepted an approach to investigation as either pure or applied research. It is suggested that this approach, however, along with more traditional approaches, may be needed to continue developing a field of cross-cultural management which is relevant to international managers.

Similarly, the change in focus to cross-cultural interaction, from the comparison and description of people working in distinctly separated cultures, may be important if cross-cultural research is to remain relevant to managers. As mentioned earlier, independence of samples or populations—the absence of interaction—has been the norm in anthropological studies and the goal (although rarely achieved) in many management studies. But independence is not an accurate description of the manager's reality. Most international managers work in environments in which people from many cultures interact. It is the management of that interaction which confronts many employees of multinational organizations on a daily basis.

There have not been many studies which have addressed cross-cultural interaction within organizational settings, the creation of universal patterns, or the balance between culturally specific and universal approaches. Of the literature on cross-cultural interaction that exists, the majority is based on domestic multiculturalism or on international negotiations. The domestic research tends to be studies of immigrants, studies of bilingual and bicultural populations within a country, and studies of racial (black/white) and gender (male/female) differences within the United States. Of the very few studies which have focused on cross-cultural interaction within the international sphere, the majority deal with managing international negotiations and conflict. Much of this literature is based on political science and government models rather than on models for managing private corporations. Interaction is not nearly as well researched as is the description of distinctly separate populations.

A similar paucity of research exists in investigations on balancing the situations under which it is most appropriate to take a universal as opposed to a culturally specific approach. Originally, most studies questioned whether culture was an influence in the management of organizations. With the acceptance of multiple causation [see Child and Tayeb 1982–83; Farmer and Richman 1964; Negandhi 1975], the question became how influential is culture relative to other environmental factors. Various researchers believed that culture was highly significant while others believed that it was of negligible significance.

The question of when (rather than if) culture is most important in relation to other environmental factors was addressed by Child [1981]. Child concluded that macro level variables (such as organizational structure and technology) are becoming more and more similar across cultures—and thus culture is becoming a less important variable—whereas micro level variables (most notably the behavior of people within work settings) are remaining culturally distinct—and thus culture is remaining a highly important variable. In other words, our organizations are becoming more and more similar worldwide while the behavior of people within those organizations is maintaining its cultural specificity. What Child is suggesting is that there is an interaction between the type of organization variable (more static, macro level, process variables) and the influence of culture. If one simply asks, as the field has for years, *if* culture is a contingency rather than asking *when* (under what conditions) culture is a contingency, then only confusion results. The result of that confusion in the field of cross-cultural management has been a "convergence versus divergence" debate over the continued presence or absence of cultural influences on organizational functioning. That debate has obscured any understanding of when such cultural influences are in effect. Synergistic research focuses on better understanding when both naturally occurring and created universal approaches are most effective and when maintaining culturally specific patterns is most effective.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE FIELD The history of the field reveals significant progress. Studies have gone from single culture studies to multicultural studies. Research teams have gone from culturally homogeneous groups (mostly Americans) to collaborative multicultural

teams. Samples have become larger (note Hofstede's [1980] 40 country study), more guided by theory, and less opportunistic. Research designs have moved from emphasizing translation and standardization to aiming at functional equivalence and equivalence of meaning. Data analysis techniques have begun to incorporate the most sophisticated present-day qualitative and quantitative techniques. Research publication has dramatically increased its international orientation. (Note the special international issues of the *Journal of International Business Studies*, the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, and the *International Studies of Management and Organization*, all slated for 1983, as well as the new internationally focused journal, *Organization Studies*.)

In the future, the field should continue its eclectic approach. In studying complex worldwide phenomena, it is important that researchers neither limit themselves to narrow conceptual maps nor rigid methodological approaches. The field of cross-cultural management has many conceptual and methodological issues which are, as yet, unresolved. This should not be viewed as a weakness but rather as an indication that the field is continuing to grapple with the most important issues. It is an indication that the tension is being maintained between what we know best how to do (traditional unicultural studies) and what we would most like to know how to do (rigorous multicultural studies). Although that tension is frequently labeled as sloppiness and a lack of rigor, it is, in fact, an indication of a young field that is continuing to ask the right questions without yet having the right answers.

REFERENCES

Adler, Nancy J. "Cross-Cultural Management Research: The Ostrich and the Trend." *Academy of Management Review*, April 1983a, pp. 226–232.

_____. "Cross-Cultural Management: The Cultural Synergy Model." *Organization Development Network Conference*. Conference Presentation Papers. New York City: May 20–23, 1979, pp. 177–189.

_____. "Cultural Synergy: The Management of Cross-Cultural Organizations." In *Trends and Issues in OD: Current Theory and Practice*, edited by W. Warner Burke and Leonard D. Goodstein. San Diego, CA: University Associates, 1980, pp. 163–184.

_____. "Domestic Multiculturalism: Cross-Cultural Management in the Public Sector." To be published in *Handbook on Public Organization Management*, edited by William Eddy. New York: Marcel Dekker, Inc., 1983b.

_____. "Understanding the Ways of Understanding: Cross-Cultural Management Methodology Reviewed." To be published in *Comparative Management: Essays in Contemporary Thought*, edited by Richard N. Farmer. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, Inc., 1983c.

Ajiferuke, Musbau, and Boddewyn, Jean. " 'Culture' and Other Explanatory Variables in Comparative Management Studies." *Academy of Management Journal*, June 1970a, pp. 153–163.

_____. "Socioeconomic Indicators in Comparative Management." *Administrative Sciences Quarterly*, December 1970b, pp. 453–458.

Barrett, G. V., and Bass, B. M. "Comparative surveys of managerial attitudes and behavior." In *Comparative Management: Teaching, Training and Research*, edited by J. Boddewyn. New York: Graduate School of Business Administration, New York University, 1970, pp. 197–217.

_____. "Cross-cultural issues in industrial and organizational psychology." In *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, edited by M. D. Dunnette. Chapter 39. New York: Rand McNally, 1976, pp. 1639–1688.

Bendix, R. "Contributions of the comparative approach." In *Comparative Management and Marketing*, edited by J. Boddewyn. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1969, pp. 10–13.

Bennett, Mick. "Testing Management Theories Cross-culturally." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, October 1977, pp. 578–581.

Berry, J. W. "On cross-cultural comparability." *International Journal of Psychology* 4 (1969), pp. 119–128.

Bhagat, S. Rabi, and McQuaid, Sara J. "Role of Subjective Culture in Organizations: A Review and Directions for Future Research." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, October 1982, pp. 653–685.

Boddewyn, J. *Comparative Management and Marketing*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1969.

_____. "The Comparative Approach to the Study of Business." In *Management in International Perspective*, edited by S. B. Prasad. New York: Appleton-Century, 1967, pp. 201–210.

_____, and Nath, R. "Comparative Management Studies: An Assessment." *Management International Review* 10, no. 1 (1970), pp. 3–11.

Brislin, Richard W.; Lonner, Walter J.; and Thorndike, Robert M. *Cross-Cultural Research Methods*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973.

Child, John. "Culture, Contingency and Capitalism in the Cross-National Study of Organizations." In *Research in Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 3, edited by L. L. Cummings and B. M. Staw. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1981, pp. 303–356.

_____, and Tayeb, Monir, "Theoretical Perspective in Cross-National Organizational Research." *International Studies of Management and Organization*, Winter 1982–83, pp. 23–70.

Evan, William. "Measuring the Impact of Culture on Organizations." *International Studies of Management and Organization* 5, no. 1 (1975), pp. 91–113.

Farmer, R. N., and Richman, B. M. "A Model for Research in Comparative Management." *California Management Review*, Winter 1964, pp. 55–68.

Graves, D. *Management Research—A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. London: Elsevier Scientific Pub. Co., 1973.

Harris, Philip R., and Moran, Robert T. *Managing Cultural Differences*. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company, 1979.

Heenan, David A., and Perlmutter, Howard V. *Multinational Organization Development*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979.

Hesseling, Pjotr. "Studies in Cross-Cultural Organization." *Columbia Journal of World Businesses*. December 1973, pp. 120–134.

Hofstede, Geert. *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1980.

Inzerilli, Giorgio. "Preface: Some Conceptual Issues in the Study of the Relationships Between Organizations and Societies." *International Studies of Management and Organization*, Winter 1980–1981, pp. 3–14.

Jamieson, Ian M. "The Concept of Culture and its Relevance for an Analysis of Business Enterprise in Different Societies." *International Studies of Management and Organization*, Winter 1982–83, pp. 71–105.

Kraut, Allen I. "Some Recent Advances in Cross-National Management Research." *Academy of Management Journal*, September 1975, pp. 538–547.

Kumar, Krishna, ed. *Bonds Without Bandage: Explorations in Transnational Cultural Interactions*. Honolulu, HI: University Press of Hawaii, 1979.

_____, ed. *Transnational Enterprises: Their Impact on Third World Societies and Cultures*. CO: Westview Press, 1980.

Lammers, C. J. "Towards the internationalization of the organizational sciences." In *European Contributions to Organizational Theory*, edited by G. Hofstede and M. S. Kassem. Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1976.

_____, and Hickson, David J., eds. *Organizations Alike and Unlike: International and Inter-Institutional Studies in the Sociology of Organizations*. London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1979.

Laurent, André. "The Cultural Diversity of Management Conceptions." *International Studies of Management and Organization*, Spring 1983.

Maurice, Marc. "For a study of 'the societal effect': universality and specificity in organization research." In *Organizations Alike and Unlike: International and Inter-Institutional Studies in the Sociology of Organizations*, edited by Cornelis J. Lammers and David J. Hickson. London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1979, pp. 42–60.

_____. "Introduction: Theoretical and Ideological Aspects of the Universalistic Approach to the Study of Organizations." *International Studies of Management and Organizations* 6, no. 3 (1976), pp. 3–10.

Miller, Stephen W., and Simonetti, Jack L. "Culture and Management: Some Conceptual Considerations." *Management International Review* 11, no. 6 (1974), pp. 87–100.

Moran, Robert T., and Harris, Philip R. *Managing Cultural Synergy*. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company, 1981.

Nath, R. "A Methodological Review of Cross-Cultural Management Research." *International Social Science Journal* 20, no. 1 (1968), pp. 35–62. And in *Comparative Management and Marketing*, edited by J. Boddewyn. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1969, pp. 195–222.

Negandhi, Anant R. "Comparative Management and Organization Theory: A Marriage Needed." *Academy of Management Journal*, June 1975, pp. 334–343.

_____, and Estafen, B. "A Research Model to Determine the Applicability of American Management Know-How in Differing Cultures and/or Environments." *Academy of Management Journal*, December 1965, pp. 309–318.

Oberg, W. "Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Management Principles." *Academy of Management Journal*, June 1963, pp. 129–143.

Roberts, K. H. "On Looking at an Elephant: An Evaluation of Cross-Cultural Research Related to Organizations." *Psychological Bulletin*. November 1970, pp. 327–350.

_____. *International Research Related to Organizational Behavior: An Annotated Bibliography*. Technical Report No. 12. Stanford, CA: Graduate School of Business, Stanford University, 1972.

_____, and Snow, C., eds. "A symposium: Cross-national Organizational Research." *Industrial Relations*, May 1973, pp. 137–249.

Schollhammer, Hans. "Strategies and Methodologies in International Business and Comparative Management Research." *Management International Review* 13, no. 6 (1973), pp. 17–31.

_____. "The Comparative Management Theory Jungle." *Academy of Management Journal*, March 1969, pp. 81–97.

Sekaran, U. "Are U.S. Organizational Concepts and Measures Transferable to Another Culture? An Empirical Investigation." *Academy of Management Journal*, June 1981a, pp. 409–417.

_____. "Methodological and Theoretical Issues and Advancements in Cross-Cultural Research." Paper presented at the McGill International Symposium on Cross-Cultural Management. Montreal, Canada, 1981b.

Sorge, Arndt. "Cultured Organization." *International Studies of Management and Organization*. Winter 1982–83, pp. 106–138.

Triandis, Harry C. "Dimensions of Cultural Variation as Parameters of Organizational Theories." *International Studies of Management and Organization*, Winter 1982–83, pp. 139–169.

_____. "Factors Affecting Employee Selection in Two Cultures." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, February 1963, pp. 89–96.

_____. *The Analysis of Subjective Culture*. New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1972.