

Call for Papers for a Special Issue in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*

Title (preliminary): **Methodological and Conceptual Challenges to Cross-Cultural Research**

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Cross-cultural psychology is like the proverbial glass that is half full and half empty. Empirical research as published in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* (JCCP) reflects a strong increase in volume of research and in sophistication over the last 50 years. At the same time, there have been consistent challenges to design and analysis of typical studies, recently reinforced by alarming criticisms of research practices in social psychology that also bear on cross-cultural psychology. Equally, “culture” the core construct of the field, remains fuzzy with cross-cultural psychologists generally agreeing that it is something real and important, but with poor conceptual anchoring of its many definitions. We are encouraging submissions that focus on these challenges, how they affect cross-cultural psychology and how they can be dealt with.

This proposal for a special issue has grown out of discussions following two symposia at the international conferences of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology in Stellenbosch (2012) and Reims (2014). Our field has in principle very sophisticated methods for detecting equivalence and bias issues, but these are often not employed and their rigorous application is even perceived to limit cross-cultural research. Within the larger context of psychology, methodological issues associated with null-hypothesis significance testing, virtual absence of replication studies, issues of selective sampling and researcher degrees of freedom (see Simmons et al., 2011; *Psychological Science*, 22, 1359-1366) in conducting research and analyzing data have received much attention. We believe that these methodological issues also bear on cross-cultural psychology, including cultural psychology and cultural neuroscience. The challenges are not only implicating our ways of doing research, but are likely to have consequences for our findings and the emphasis on differences between cultures in psychological functioning that has become a major hallmark of our trade. Hence, when addressing these methodological and statistical challenges, conceptual issues of how culture becomes ingrained in ontogenetic development and different models of culture (with implications for how cross-cultural research can be conducted) come to the fore. We believe that there is a threat of marginalization of our field unless important criticisms are being met. This proposed special issue aims to discuss these concerns and provide thoughts on how our field may be able to address them.

We like to invite submissions on broad topics that fall within the general description given above and that deal with issues central for the future scientific development of cross-cultural psychology, such as the following:

## **Replication and Reproducibility in Cross-Cultural Psychology**

Cross-cultural psychology is marked by a lack of replication studies. What insights are being gained from the major replication efforts in psychology currently under way, and what are implications for cross-cultural psychology from these broader efforts in social psychology? What are standards for good cross-cultural replication studies? How can we deal with the current emphasis on “literal replication” (i.e., close repetition of methods and procedures of the original study)? This may not make sense in our field where less than perfect equivalence of instruments can be a major reason for non-replication of findings. Which areas and topics of cross-cultural psychology are particularly promising for a replication effort, and why?

## **Addressing Systematic Error in Cross-Cultural Research with Survey Designs**

Even in well-designed performance studies, such as the PISA (better explain it briefly) project which has elaborate checks on item quality, respondents tend to do better on items originating from their own country and full score equivalence is mostly not met. If full score equivalence is an unattainable ideal (as is, for example, perfect reliability of data) the question arises how this imposes limits on the validity and interpretation of cross-cultural differences. What alternatives exist? We are particularly interested in submissions on advances in multi-level and latent variable modeling (including theoretical challenges and alternatives to the latent variable approach). Equally of interest are alternatives to the (quasi-) experimental paradigm of psychology, such as mixed methods and indigenous approaches, which respect the need for empirical testing and falsifiability.

## **The Future of Cultural Neuroscience Research**

Cultural neuroscience has emerged as a major field of cross-cultural inquiry, and has reported exciting findings. At the same time, methodological standards have not been clearly defined. There have been recent challenges to the two main approaches that have captured the attention of the research community and the general public alike (i.e., population differences in allelic frequencies, and the study of task-related physiological events in the brain via fMRI and ERPs). We encourage submissions that outline the weaknesses of current research in cultural neuroscience, how these can be addressed and what the implications are for future research in neuroscience-oriented cross-cultural psychology.

## **Moving Beyond Cultural Anthropology: Alternative Models to Consider for Cross-Cultural Psychology**

Historically, most of cross-cultural psychology has been a marriage between notions about culture from cultural anthropology and methods from psychology. There are other fields of research that are struggling with the relationships between culture and the biological underpinnings of human behavior (e.g., Laland et al., 2014; *Nature*, 514, 161-164), including human behavioral ecology, evolutionary psychology, cultural evolution theory, gene-culture coevolution and niche construction approaches. While in the 1990s it was a controversial issue whether any non-human species displayed cultural variation and transmission, there is now evidence that not only the great apes, but also many

other mammals and birds (such as crows and even the great tit, *see Nature*, 2015, 518, 538-541) show evidence of cultural transmission of behavior. We encourage submissions that review methods and theoretical approaches that have led to new insights of interest to cross-cultural psychologists.

***To submit a paper for publication consideration in this special issue, please submit a 2-page (single-spaced) extended abstract to Ronald Fischer ([Ronald.Fischer@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Ronald.Fischer@vuw.ac.nz)) and Ype Poortinga ([y.h.poortinga@uvt.nl](mailto:y.h.poortinga@uvt.nl)) by August 15, 2015.***

The Editors of the special issue will review the abstracts and invite submission of the full manuscript for the selected papers. The deadline for submission of the full manuscript is **March 1, 2016**. As with all previous special issues and special sections of regular issues, this exploratory effort has been endorsed by Walter J. Lonner, Founding and Special Issues Editor. Deborah L. Best, Editor, and JCCP's Associate Editors.

Contributors should note that this call is open and competitive; submitted full papers will be reviewed in the usual way via the Manuscript Central protocol employed by JCCP. Submitted papers must be original manuscripts that are not under consideration by any other outlets.

The guest editors are happy to discuss initial ideas for papers. Please contact them directly at the email addresses given above.