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International Journal of Cross Cultural Management 2008; 8; 107
DOI: 10.1177/1470595807088325

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://ccm.sagepub.com

The world we live in today is increasingly connected together in terms of commodity, person, and information flows. As a result, social and industrial-organizational psychologists are supposed to respond to the needs that have emerged from this ever pressing reality by developing theories acknowledging cultural differences in systematic ways, as well as proposing useful frameworks to cope with these differences. Smith, Bond and Kagitçibasi’s book is a jewel that elegantly fulfils this role by giving many insights for management scholars as well as practitioners who are concerned with cross cultural issues. Readers will easily recognize the names of these prominent scholars who have contributed considerably to advancing our knowledge in the fields of both cross cultural psychology and management. Interestingly, the fact that the authors are based in three highly distinct cultures (the UK, Hong Kong, and Turkey, respectively) illustrates their capacity to deal with this topic with vivid living and working experiences of their own. This book is an updated version of its two previous editions with significant rewriting. The premise of the book is that scholars have to account for the interplay of individual and context, especially national cultures. Presented as a textbook, it provides an excellent overview of cross cultural social psychology and its implications in various social and working settings. For this reason, it can also be a perfect tool for researchers into international management without a psychological background who want to borrow ideas from social psychological theories and apply them to understand cross cultural organizational or international human resources phenomena (i.e. leadership, teamwork, employee motivation, satisfaction, etc.).

The book is structured in three main parts: ‘Establishing the framework’, ‘Core issues’, and ‘The world in flux’. In Part 1, after a brief introduction on the pressing life challenges that people have to encounter in a world of enhanced interdependence and mobility (Chapter 1), the authors tackle the issue of improving the validity of cross cultural psychology, and provide 10 guidelines related to conceptual and methodological issues for conducting studies in the field (Chapter 2). These methodological issues repeatedly appear throughout the book as a way to emphasize and illustrate their importance for any cross cultural researcher. The concepts of culture and the models of Hofstede and Schwartz, two principal milestones of cross cultural psychology and
management, are discussed in Chapter 3. The authors effectively present the context of the studies, the research design and methods, implications, and limitations. In Chapter 4, the authors argue that the distinctive political, ecological, historical, educational, legal, economic and social characteristics of a nation as well as the socialization practices they entail justify the practice of treating nations as the proxy of culture in cross-cultural studies (Chapter 4).

Part 2 comprises five chapters that introduce the reader to the core issues of social psychology. Smith and his colleagues successfully present key models of the field with elegance and depth. For example, the authors start with a discussion on the making and remaking of culture, with emphasis on different models of family development that shape the values and concept of the self (self-construal) of children in that culture (Chapter 5). Culture’s impacts on cognition, emotion, and motivation, in both direct (mediation) and indirect (moderation) ways are carefully examined in Chapter 6, whereas similarities and differences of personality within and between cultures are treated in Chapter 7 so as to understand inter- and intracultural variation of individuals. Because the way in which we communicate is constrained by the way we think about ourselves (which is again constrained by our culture), the authors invite readers to pay attention to cultural issues such as face and emotional display in communication (Chapter 8). The book then describes how work-related issues such as work motivation, psychological contract, organizational commitment and citizenship, perception of justice, negotiation styles, team process and multicultural teams, and leadership, are susceptible to culture’s impacts (Chapter 9).

The chapters in Part 3 deal with the interaction among people of different cultures and the dynamics of culture. Coping with cultural differences is the central concern of cross-cultural management. What are the roles of language in this interaction process? What cross-cultural skills (or competences) do we need in order to achieve better psychological and sociocultural adaptation (Chapter 10)? How do social (and cultural) identity and nationality stereotypes influence interactions between different cultural groups (Chapter 11)? Again, the authors provide concise yet convincing answers to these questions that have important implications for organizational members working in a multicultural setting. Moreover, culture is not static. It is evolving and changing constantly, though slowly and sometimes unnoticeably. The authors argue that the convergence hypothesis (claiming that the world is becoming increasingly similar because of globalization and the pursuit of modernity) may exist, but is limited only to certain domains and certain regions. They also argue that it is far from imaginable that all the cultural differences could disappear one day and the field of cross-cultural psychology will have no future (Chapters 12 and 13).

I consider this volume ideal for graduate students and researchers who would like to become acquainted with the basic concepts and literature of cross-cultural psychology for the following reasons. If reading a book is like taking a journey (albeit a professional one), I have found great pleasure taking this one – seeing sights that I have visited before but with different eyes, this time guided by Smith and his colleagues. In addition to the use of a stylish and highly readable language, what makes this book distinctive is its well-thought structure and its tight articulation between theory summaries and consideration of research methods. Part 1 aims at setting the scene for a sound understanding of key issues in social psychology across cultures discussed in the latter parts. The authors call for the reader’s attention to conceptual and theoretical issues such as the equivalence of measurement instruments, levels of analysis, decentering research design, problems related to the acquiescent response bias, and balancing
emic/etic perspectives in research inputs. Not being a text specializing in cross cultural research methods, this chapter is impressive in showing the ways for scholars to follow to be able to conduct well-designed studies in a cross cultural setting. Once the framework is set, the authors present and comment on all the following theories and models under the lens of this same set of criteria, consequently rendering the strengths and limitations of each study explicit in the discussion. In other words, the authors do not only select and summarize key findings of the field for readers, but also offer readers useful tools to evaluate the contributions and limitations of each study. Ambiguous or contradictory findings in the literature are often skillfully brought together by the authors taking into account research methods, design and instruments. Among these concerns, Smith and his colleagues specifically emphasize the need to clearly distinguish individual-level and culture-level analysis, and give readers helpful tools to interpret findings of extant literature and to design their future research in a sound way.

In addition to providing a comprehensive overview of key issues of cross cultural psychology, I consider the discussions on migration in several chapters of the book particularly relevant to managerial issues in the globalized world today. As Smith and his colleagues point out at the very beginning of the book, we are living in a ‘world on the move’, and no one can be completely immune from contact with people of different cultural backgrounds. In fact, cultural diversity does not only concern expatriates or top level management, but also affects workers at all levels of society as the migration of the workforce, knowledge workers and blue-collar workers alike, becomes a reality all around the world. Lack of cultural understanding and of knowledge to cope with people of different cultural backgrounds is one of the major sources of tension and conflicts among ethnic groups. It is the responsibility of scholars to educate and prepare the broadest range of people in society to face these challenges in the work setting. Their efforts devoted to migration issues in the discussion on the making and remaking of cultures in the immigration context, acculturation and intergroup relationships, and cultural change are highly valuable.

If I am allowed to be extremely demanding with the authors, it is possible to expect more from their book. First, the authors cover a broad range of topics in social psychology across cultures in less than 300 pages. Whereas it makes the book accessible to a broader range of readers, the authors are forced to stay highly concise and selective in their theory discussions. As a result, they seem to assume that readers already possess a certain level of knowledge of the field, and hence do not go into details in presenting certain concepts (e.g. social loafing). Though it is a choice of the authors, readers would be likely to benefit more from the book if the authors could give more detailed explanations of some theories. Second, despite the fact that the authors recognize that culture is a term to describe social systems including nations, organizations, social units, teams, and so on, they choose to focus their discussions only on national cultures. It’s a pity that the discussions about level issues (as one of the key concerns of the authors in writing this book) are limited to only two levels – individual and national. We know that individuals are embedded in complex social systems in addition to national culture. It is conceivable that individuals are nested in organizations that are in turn nested in nations. It can be fruitful for researchers to broaden the conceptualization of culture in specifying multilevel models so as to better catch the complexity of human behaviour.

Facing the force of globalization, social psychology across cultures is in the stage of refinement to meet new requests/demands of the environment. In sum, the authors have done a fabulous job in presenting the field of
cross cultural social psychology to readers with impressive breadth and depth and, more valuably, strong considerations of conceptual and methodological rigour. Its comprehensiveness plus its well-knitted conceptual and methodological clarity make this book an excellent guide for scholars entering the field of cross cultural psychology and management, as well as reflecting promising research directions to pursue in the future.

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This is a book that follows in the footsteps pioneered by Geert Hofstede. The author has attempted to identify new nation-level dimensions of cultural variation by drawing on some of the richer sources of survey data that are now available. In particular, he has drawn on the publicly available databank provided by the World Values Survey (WVS). His philosophical position is that dimensions of culture do not exist in any objective sense. To better understand cultural variations around the world, he therefore argues that we should build on existing characterizations by identifying those groupings of cultural attributes that illuminate the particular contrasts that interest us. Starting with the dimensions that Inglehart (1997) himself identified from the World Values Survey, Minkov factor analyses specific groups of national item means to define the three dimensions that he favours. He labels these as Exclusionism versus Universalism, Indulgence versus Restraint, and Monumentalism versus Flexumility. Each factor is defined by up to six WVS item means, and Minkov provides the reader with scores on these factors for up to 72 nations.

The bulk of the book is given over to the presentation and discussion of correlations between Minkov’s factors and other available nation-level scores. This enables him to present his case for the utility of looking at culture from his particular perspective. The first factor turns out to be strongly correlated with existing characterizations of individualism–collectivism, so there is little here that is new, except that Minkov’s analysis strongly emphasizes in-group versus out-group relationships, rather than the many other attributes that have been tacked onto different definitions of individualism–collectivism.

Minkov’s second factor is most strongly defined by the endorsement of items referring to one’s happiness, one’s sense of freedom and one’s leisure. The nation in his sample scoring highest on Indulgence is Nigeria and the nation scoring highest on Restraint is Pakistan. Minkov suggests that this dimension may be similar to earlier discussions of cultural difference in terms of their tightness versus looseness. The tightness–looseness dimension has in fact been explored recently by Gelfand et al. (2006), and scores for 33 nations were reported recently by Gelfand (2006). The scores for nations that overlap between these two analyses do show a modestly positive correlation.

The positive pole of Minokov’s third factor is most strongly defined by national pride, wanting to make one’s parents proud and seeing religion as important. The top-scoring nation is Morocco. The negative pole is characterized by humility and seeing oneself as not having a stable invariant self, with Japan the most extreme case. Minkov sees some conceptual parallels between this dimension and Hofstede’s characterization of masculinity–femininity. An interesting aspect of this dimension is that the East Asian nations that have been so much studied by