
Pieter J. D. Drenth

Free University, Amsterdam

Bernhard Wilpert

International Institute of Management,

Science Center Berlin

**The role of
'social contracts' in cross-cultural research**

Most social science research — and virtually all cross-cultural research — is conducted in teams, often with an interdisciplinary composition. Hence, it is rather astounding to note how little attention social scientists have paid to the social boundary conditions facilitating or obstructing the success of research teams. This is true for team research in general and even more so for the specific case of research conducted in an international, inter-cultural research perspective.

One of the most recent and encompassing reviews of the literature on the psychological attributes of scientists and of the scientific process (Fisch, 1977) is rather sensitive to organizational and group dynamic parameters of successful research but fails to address problems of international, inter-cultural research collaboration completely. Brislin et al. (1973) expect a growth in multi-culture studies, but add as a warning that reality militates against expecting too much from collaborative efforts just because of the practical boundary conditions in this type of collaboration. The volume of Szalai and Petrella (1978) pays attention to the difficulties and preconditions for cross-national survey research and Brislin (1978) has reported on a survey among cross-cultural researchers, emphasizing the facilitating conditions and impediments of cross-cultural studies, but attention has seldom been paid to the specific group dynamics of international collaborating teams. Case studies of group problems and collaborative dynamics in international teams have been reported on rare occasions (cf. Mabry,

1966; Fourcade and Wilpert, 1976; Jennings and Farah, 1977). And Rokkan's impressive survey of the infrastructural conditions for cross-national research (1969) deals mainly with institutional requirements for multi-national research collaboration. He, too, excludes a more micro-analytical perspective with a focus on team formation, team maintenance over the period of the research project and team collaboration in the analysis phase.

At the same time, it appears to be self-evident that the 'objective' outputs of research groups are as determined by structural, organizational arrangements, affective perceptions and relationships, situational constraints and opportunities as any 'objective' output of groups of workers on factory production lines. Research is a social process as much as intellectual discourse. It thus appears appropriate to take a closer look at the organizational antecedents and consequences of international (inter-cultural) collaborative research ventures. At least three basic organizational forms can be distinguished.

Type A: 'safari' or replication research

This is the type of research project which is conceived, developed, implemented and controlled by one scholar or a group of researchers in a research center of one country. The same research is repeated in other countries by the same scholars or sometimes by 'native' collaborators who are brought into the research and may (or may not) receive immaterial benefits such as acknowledgements. Data analysis and ownership are centrally organized. A clear advantage of Type A is the economical use of centrally allocated resources which may also allow a higher degree of theoretical stringency at the cost of lacking identification and motivation of collaborators, a lack of enculturation of methods and intra-cultural data interpretation. Numerous examples of replication studies from test-psychology, developmental psychology and also organizational psychology (leadership studies, group characteristics and human behavior, conformity behavior, etc.) are available to illustrate Type A.

Type B: adaptation research

Such projects are usually conceived and developed by one researcher (or a team in a research institution), in the first place, but colleagues from other countries are then persuaded to adopt the study by giving them an opportunity to take responsibility for their own national substudy with idiosyncratic elaborations of the central design. Findings and data ownership are often decentralized or mixed (central-decentral). The relatively high responsibility of national teams will lead to a higher degree of identification (at least with their national part) and correspondingly a different distribution influence on the outcomes of research than in Type A. The disadvantage is that a great deal will depend on the 'salesmanship' of the project leader(s). The study by Tannenbaum (1968) on control in organizations may serve as an example of this semi-decentralized research with a Type B organization.

Type C: decentralized-collective research

A quite different approach is followed in this type of cross-cultural research in which collaborators from the different cultures participate from the beginning in the design and development of the project. This type of set-up can be found in various collaborative research studies in which only two countries are involved, or which have a typical experimental nature, such as the research on cognitive conflict by Hammond et al. (1968). It is much more difficult to find examples of studies of this nature in which a great number of nations are involved and where the subject is socially and politically controversial and is to be investigated by means of a field study.

This Type C research has a number of specific features: Each national team is represented in all phases of the study, and each country has a hand in the development of the theory, the instrumentation, the data analysis and interpretation. Data ownership is typically shared by all team members and funding will be decentralized with the possible exception of international overheads to facilitate meetings, standardization and coordination. The success of such an organizational structure will depend on the degree of consensus reached in the international team which will result in corresponding

levels of researcher identification with the project. The leadership function will be highly variable in the sense that different team members will take the lead depending on the specific issues and their demands for particular expertise. Central control may be reduced to an administrative service function. The time requirements of decision-making in such arrangements may be considerable, thus leading to projects being extended over prolonged periods. Type C more than the aforementioned ones insures a high level of utilization of team resources. It will be clear that Type C is more difficult to carry out than the other types. Its needs for a high degree of flexibility and willingness to compromise and at the same time for determination and goal orientation for an international team to stick together for often extended periods of time, keeping a reasonable time schedule on the one hand, sufficient opportunity for participation by all on the other, are reasons why we find only a restricted number of this inter-culturally more sophisticated type of research. The twelve nations comparison of industrial democracy systems (IDE, 1976) may be suggested as an example of Type C.

There are other differences between these three types of research. In the replication study there will usually be no difficulty with respect to publication rights, authorship, coordination of different publications. The original study will often have been published already and replication is often carried out with the consent of the first experimenter. Publications can be made with proper acknowledgement. Even in the case of an adoption study where a principal researcher has designed the study and has found a number of colleagues in other countries to translate and to replicate the study in their own country simultaneously, coordination, responsibility, authorship and the like do not normally seem to raise problems.

However, with a truly joint effort to design and to carry out a cross-cultural research study, a number of difficulties may arise. These may have to do with the responsibility for (parts of) the study, ownership of the instruments and data, proper acknowledgement with respect to sponsorship or to senior and junior co-workers, integration of national and international analyses and publications, the problem of not being able to meet deadlines on the part of some of the participating countries, and the like.

We surmise that a reasonable way to deal with such difficulties is to set aside sufficient time to discuss these potential problems and

to compose a written 'social contract' to which every member has to commit himself at a very early stage of the research. In the process of writing and discussing the social contract quite a number of potential sources of conflict and procedural difficulties can be considered and adequate remedies can be selected. This can not only prevent the occurrence of such difficulties to some considerable extent, but can provide ways to deal adequately with these in case they occur later. If this discussion is held at an early stage of the project it can be kept sufficiently abstract and general so as not to suggest that it is aimed at one particular member or case.

As an example of the type of contract that could serve for this purpose the 'social contract' of the International Research Group on Industrial Democracy in Europe will be described (IDE, 1976). The project in which this international research group is involved represents an international collaborative effort to study the behavioral consequences of legal, formal structures designed to regulate the interaction patterns of interest groups in industrial organizations. Its vantage point is recognition of the given wide variety of national industrial schemes which provide an almost ideal 'national experiment' of the treatment variable 'legal norms'. Eleven European countries plus Israel have been involved in this study since the beginning of the project in 1973.¹ At present, data have been gathered (close to 1,000 respondents per country, selected from at least nine companies per country) and are being analyzed at the International Institute of Management in the Science Center Berlin. The national studies have been as similar and comparable as possible: use has been made of the same instruments, the same sampling procedures have been followed, comparable companies have been selected, similar decision sets have been analyzed.

The need for a social contract in this research was felt as particularly pertinent. First, the study is an example of the type of research in which all twelve national research teams have been involved from the very beginning, and are equally responsible for the theoretical framework, the choice of instruments and the procedures of analysis and interpretation. Not all national teams, however, have remained identical during the whole research effort, and not all members of the national teams have been equally involved in the international study.

Secondly, each national team plans to write a national report in addition to the international comparative publication. This needs

timing and coordination, especially if national reports refer to international comparisons.

Thirdly, the research team is multi-disciplinary in nature. Psychologists, sociologists, economists and engineers collaborate in this study. The different disciplines (additionally representing different nations), might adhere to different professional practices.

Finally, funding of the project is rather complicated. Most of the national studies are financially supported by national sources and institutional funds. The international comparison and the 'overheads' are supported by two international agencies, the Fritz Thyssen Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

In the remainder of this article the social contract of the IDE research will be presented. It is not meant to be a contract that should be literally duplicated, but rather an example of the way different issues have been given attention and different potential problems have been foreseen and anticipated.

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH GROUP ON INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE (IDE) (Social Contract)

Objective

The purpose of the social contract is to ensure a continuing harmonious and productive relationship between members of a large multi-national research team over a number of years. This relationship can only be sustained if equitable acknowledgement to individuals in the group, research organizations, funding bodies, etc is made, and if other conditions described in this document are fulfilled.

Scientists in different countries, and even in different disciplines within the same country, are likely to have a variety of expectations and professional practices. It would therefore seem advisable to blend these expectations and practices into an acceptable code of conduct, that is to say, an agreed social contract.

Introduction

Most problems seem to come up in relation to acknowledgements and publication rights. Basic to these is the question of ownership. The international research study on Industrial Democracy is fairly unique in having been devised *jointly* by a group of some sixteen social scientists coming from twelve different countries. The theoretical framework, hypotheses, field methodology and research instruments have been worked out by varying subgroups or individuals within the team or by most of them together. Some have contributed more than others. Moreover, some of the work has been self-generated while in other cases it was borrowed from established theory, method and instrumentation.

Furthermore, some institutions, principally the International Institute of Management, Fritz Thyssen Foundation and the Ford Foundation, have played important roles in translating the motives of the research into reality. Finally, in each country there are institutions and/or individuals which play key roles in financing or launching the research.

In these circumstances, the task of giving fair acknowledgements is clearly complex. Lack of acknowledgement is usually due to thoughtlessness rather than malevolence. Hence it seems desirable (i) to adopt some common and agreed formulation of words; (ii) to have some means of getting a check on one's interpretation of the appropriate procedure if there is even the slightest doubt. Experience suggests that interpersonal relationships can be very seriously affected by errors or omissions. The problems become more serious as the research produces data and gets close to publication.

Agreements

Acknowledgements

1. Acknowledgements must be given according to the work done. Work means scientific work (e.g. theory, methodology, data-analysis, writing) more than administration and routine field work.

2. Research institutions as well as individual scientists should be mentioned.

3. Financial inputs must be acknowledged separately. If one country helps another financially, this too should be mentioned.

4. Acknowledgements should be prominently displayed. Usually this means the first page of an article or text.

5. In a study lasting several years some scientists may not stay with us to the end (though naturally we want to avoid this). The people are nevertheless entitled to the appropriate acknowledgements (see 6, 16, 17).

6. The social contract is designed mainly for the principal researchers. Nevertheless, in certain circumstances some students or research assistants may come to play important roles. Depending on the contribution acknowledgement should be given in the text or in a footnote.

Ownership

7. The international data are owned collectively by the International Research Group. The data generated in each country belong primarily to that country and to no other. However, each country has a solemn obligation to poll its data with everybody else for the total analysis. Each country has responsibility for its own data but see 12, 14, 18.

8. The interpretation of the data for any country is primarily the duty and prerogative of the principal researcher(s) in that country. The international comparison, however, is the primary responsibility of the international group, which appoints a drafting committee for preparatory work.

9. In the unlikely event of a conflict of interpretation between a national group (relating to its own data) and the International Research Group, the national teams' views must be allowed to appear in the report, article, book, etc (this could be handled like a minority report in a Commission's Report).

10. No member of a team and no national group can publish any material belonging to:

(i) the International Research Group (any general statement about the research theory, hypotheses, methods or findings, etc resulting from the collective effort of the IRG)

(ii) any other individual or group in the IRG without prior agreement.

11. Publications (theses, articles) using data belonging to the International Research Group or a national team can appear only after publication of the original studies and with proper acknowledgement.

12. Each member of the International Research Group has access to the international and/or national data, but only after the official international/national publications have appeared.

13. No person or team should give promises or undertakings to sponsors which conflict with the social contract.

Timing

14. Timing is important in providing the necessary data, interpretation, etc for the final analysis. Any team or individual considerably out of step with the rest, holds up everybody, risks reputations and courts serious trouble with funding bodies. A negative acknowledgement or a request for withdrawal may be a consequence.

15. No national team has the right to report on or to publish results from the international study previous to the actual publication of the international study.

16. No national team has the right to report on or to publish results from any other national study previous to the actual publication of the national study, unless both partners agree to produce a joint publication.

17. A clearing house function collecting information on all publications, planned or in process, should be performed by the International Institute of Management. Each country has an obligation to keep the International Institute of Management informed about such plans or publications.

Quality of Data

18. The quality of data from each country is obviously the concern of everybody in a comparative study. If any country cannot produce standard data by the agreed standards, this must be freely

admitted. A consequence of such a problem may be negative acknowledgement (however polite) or omission. Agreed standards include the possibility of 'equivalent' data (but of high quality) where identical data are not available or would not make sense.

Authorship

19. The final report will be authorized jointly by the IDE International Research Group which, other things being equal, will be the group as listed in Appendix A in the article 'Industrial Democracy in Europe' (IDE, 1976). In addition, due acknowledgement will be made to any important input (e.g. drafting committee, analysis committee).

20. In other reports articles, papers, etc. presenting parts of the international study the following guidelines should be accepted as standards: If 'input' of different people to an article, etc. is equal, names will appear alphabetically. Alternatively, the person who takes on primary responsibility for drafting a script and/or interpreting data for an article, etc. will be the senior author (his name will appear first). It is suggested that 'work' rather than general 'seniority' is the major criterion for senior authorship rights.

21. Where a national team has several scientists, the same general principles from this social contract should operate intranationally.

22. Each country has a responsibility for searching the available literature, both of its own country and generally. The national literature should be used as a starting point for the national data analysis. Useful references should be shared in the international group.

Royalties

23. The International Research Group will decide at a later stage the destination of the eventual royalties from publications.

Arbitration

24. In case of lack of agreement on any aspects of the social contract a permanent three-man arbitration team will solve potential conflicts. If the conflict cannot be solved the arbitration team brings the case to the International Research Group. Action will be suspended until the IRG takes a decision.

Notes

1. *Belgium*: Dr Pol Coetsier, Professor of Psychology, University of Ghent, Ghent. *Denmark*: Dr Flemming Agersnap, Assistant Professor of Organization, Institute of Organization and Industrial Sociology, School of Economics and Social Science, Copenhagen. *Finland*: Dr Oiva Laaksonen, Professor of Organization, Institute of Organization and Management, Helsinki School of Economics, Helsinki. *France*: Mr Dominique Martin, Centre de Recherches en Sciences Sociales du Travail, Sceaux. *Germany*: Dr Bernhard Wilpert, Research Fellow, International Institute of Management, Berlin. *Great Britain*: Dr Peter Abell, Professor of Sociology, University of Birmingham; Dr Frank Heller, Senior Staff, Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, London; Dr Malcolm Warner, Professor of Organizational Behavior, Administrative Staff College, Henley-on-Thames and Brunel University, Middlesex. *Italy*: Mr Ricardo Peccei, Imperial College of Science and Technology, London. *Israel*: Dr Eliezer Rosenstein, Senior Lecturer, Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa. *Netherlands*: Dr J. H. T. H. Jochum Andriessen, Senior Staff, Free University, Amsterdam; Dr Pieter J. D. Drenth, Professor of Psychology, Free University, Amsterdam; Dr Cornelis J. Lammers, Professor of Sociology, State University of Leiden. *Norway*: Mr Thoralf U. Qvale, Research Fellow, Work Research Institutes, Oslo. *Sweden*: Dr Walter Goldberg, Professor of Economics, Director, International Institute of Management, Berlin; Mr Thomas Sandberg, Research Assistant, University of Uppsala, Uppsala; Dr Bengt Stymne, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm. *Yugoslavia*: Dr Veljko Rus, Professor of Sociology, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana.

Associate Researchers: Mr François Dupuy, France; Ms Gabriele Freidank, international coordination; Mr Hendrik Hendrickx, Belgium; Mr Itzhak Gur-Lavie, Israel; Ms Vesna Pusić, Yugoslavia; Ms Ann Westenholz, Denmark.

Corresponding Members: Professor Theo Pirker, Germany; Professor Jean-Daniel Reynaud, France; Professor Stanley E. Seashore, USA; Professor William H. Starbuck, USA.

References

- Brislin, R. W. (1978). 'Involving Local Researchers in Cross-Cultural Studies: Problems and Prospects'. Paper presented at the 19th International Congress of Applied Psychology, Munich.
- Brislin, R. W.; Lonner, W. J.; Thorndike, R. M. (1973). *Cross-Cultural Research Methods*. New York, Wiley.
- Fisch, R. (1977). 'Psychology of Science', pp. 277-318 in I. Spiegel-Rösing and D. de Solla Price (eds.), *Science, Technology and Society — A Cross-Disciplinary Perspective*. London, Sage.
- Fourcade, J. M.; Wilpert, B. (1976). *Group Dynamics and Management Problems of an International, interdisciplinary Research Team*. International Institute of Management, Reprint Series, Berlin.
- Hammond, K.; Bonaiuto, G.; Faucheux, C.; Moscovici, S.; Frohlich, W.; Joyce, C.; Dimajo, G. (1968). 'A Comparison of Cognitive Conflict Between Persons in Western Europe and the United States', *International Journal of Psychology*, 3, 1-12.
- IDE — International Research Group (1976). 'Industrial Democracy in Europe: An International Comparative Study,' *Social Science Information*, 15, 177-203.
- Jennings, M. K.; Farah, B. G. (1977). 'Continuities in Comparative Research Strategies. The Mannheim Data Confrontation Seminar', *Social Science Information*, 16 (2), 231-49.
- Mabry, J. H. (1966). 'The Natural History of an International Collaborative Study of Medical Care Utilization', *Social Science Information*, 5 (4), 37-55.
- Rokkan, S. (1969). 'Cross-Cultural, Cross-Societal and Cross-National Research', in *Main Trends of Research in the Social and Human Sciences*. Paris, The Hague.
- Szalai, A.; Petrella, R. (1978). *Procedures of Papers of the Round-Table Conference of Cross-National Comparative Survey Research*. Oxford, Pergamon Press.
- Tannenbaum, A. S. (1968). *Control in Organizations*. New York, McGraw Hill.

Le rôle des 'contrats sociaux' dans la recherche inter-culturelle

Cet article envisage les conditions sociales et les facteurs de groupe qui facilitent ou empêchent le succès des recherches internationales et inter-culturelles. Trois modalités de collaboration internationale sont envisagées: des recherches en parallèle, des recherches d'adaptation et la recherche collective décentralisée.

C'est surtout le troisième type dans lequel toutes les équipes des pays impliqués, en principe, ont une contribution équivalente au développement de la théorie et des instruments, à l'analyse des données (data analysis) et à la publication du rapport final, qui demande la collaboration et l'engagement des équipes. Ce genre de recherche collective décentralisée a plusieurs avantages, notamment l'utilisation maximum des compétences, la participation et la satisfaction des collaborateurs.

Pourtant des difficultés peuvent se présenter comme, par exemple, la question de la responsabilité, du droit de propriété, de la reconnaissance, de l'intégration des analyses et de la confrontation des dates limites. La meilleure façon de résoudre ces difficultés est de rédiger au début des recherches un 'contrat social' écrit auquel chaque membre adhère. Le contrat 'Groupe de Recherches Internationales' travaillant sur la 'Dé démocratie Industrielle en Europe' est cité en exemple.