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### Research on selection in an international context: Current status and future directions

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#### Citation

LIEVENS, Filip. Research on selection in an international context: Current status and future directions. (2007). *Handbook of Research in International Human Resource Management*. 107-123.

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Research on Selection in an International Context:  
Current Status and Future Directions

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Lievens, F. (2007). Research on selection in an international context: Current status and future directions. In M.M. Harris (Ed.) *Handbook of Research in International Human Resource Management* (pp. 107-123). Lawrence Erlbaum's Organizations and Management Series.

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## Research on Selection in an International Context: Current Status and Future Directions

Due to the globalization of the economy, organizations continue to move beyond national borders. This is reflected in international collaborations, joint ventures, strategic alliances, mergers, and acquisitions. As a consequence, it is necessary for organizations to view the labor market in an international scope. In addition, there is a need for HR systems that can be used across multiple countries while at the same time recognizing local particularities (Schuler, Dowling, & DeCieri, 1993). One of these HR challenges is selecting people in an international labor market.

The aim of this chapter is to review prior research dealing with personnel selection in a global context. Generally, prior studies about selection in an international context can be grouped in three research streams. First of all, there is a large body of research that has examined whether there are differences in the use of common selection procedures from one country to another. Relatedly, some studies have also tried to explain why some selection procedures are more used across various countries. A second more narrow line of research studies has focused on the perceptions of selection procedures in different countries. Again, the main thrust of these studies was to ascertain whether commonly used procedures in personnel selection are differentially perceived across countries. Third, a limited amount of prior studies has examined whether the criterion-related validity of selection procedures differed across countries. These three streams of research are reviewed and possible avenues for future research are proposed. We pay special attention to the fundamental issue as to whether selection techniques that are valid in one culture

will necessarily be valid in another culture. Table 1 summarizes the main international findings related to each of these three research streams. Note that this chapter does *not* deal with the selection of expatriate employees. This issue is discussed at length in another chapter of this Handbook.

### *Use of Selection Procedures across Countries*

In the past, many studies have examined the usage of selection procedures in different countries. Early studies were conducted on a national level in one specific country and were descriptive in nature because surveys simply asked respondents to report how frequently they used various selection procedures. For example, in 1991, the *European Review of Applied Psychology* published a special issue with several separate studies about selection procedure use in France, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, Norway, and Spain. Another example is the special issue of the *International Journal of Selection and Assessment* (1994) that contained information about usage of selection procedures in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and various European countries. Given that these studies were conducted at the national level, broader conclusions could be drawn only by pooling the results across many individual studies (e.g., Bruchon-Schweitzer, 1996; Levy-Leboyer, 1994). However, meaningful across-country comparisons were hampered because the surveys (e.g., data gathering method, selection procedures surveyed, question type, response scale) were not the same across countries. In addition, direct comparisons across countries were often difficult to make because the type of companies and industries surveyed differed considerably across countries.

To overcome these methodological problems of earlier studies, other studies used the same survey and sampling plan across different countries (Shackleton &

Newell, 1997; Smith & Abrahamsen, 1992). For example, in their large-scale survey, Shackleton and Newell asked respondents in Germany, Italy, Belgium, France, and the UK to indicate the frequency of use of selection procedures. Their results revealed significant across-country variability in terms of use of selection procedures. Examples included the more frequent use of assessment centers in British and German companies as compared to other countries. German and Italian organizations were relatively infrequent users of psychological tests. An interesting conclusion was that the size of the organizations surveyed had a much less significant impact on the use of different selection procedures than the country of the organization. A recent study (Ryan, McFarland, Baron, & Page (1999) surveyed 959 organizations in 20 countries and confirmed that national differences accounted for considerable variance in selection practices.

#### *Explanations For Variability In Use Of Selection Procedures Across Countries*

Various scholars (Herriot & Anderson, 1997; Newell & Tansley, 2001; Ryan, Wiechmann, & Hemingway, 2003; Schuler, Dowling, & DeCieri, 1993; Wiechmann, Ryan, & Hemingway, 2003) have proposed a host of contextual factors as explanations for the potential variability in terms of selection procedure use. Generally, the contextual factors proposed refer to cultural value differences, economical differences, employment legislation differences, educational differences, institutional network differences, and technological differences. Although the potentially influencing contextual factors are abounding, empirical research to test the impact of these factors has been limited. To our knowledge, only one study (Ryan et al., 1999) linked cultural differences to the variability in selection procedure use. Ryan et al. (1999) examined the influence of two dimensions of Hofstede's

(1991) model on differential usage of selection techniques across countries. For example, Ryan et al. hypothesized that organizations in cultures high in power distance would be the ones where selection decision making is more hierarchical and where peers are less likely to be interviewers. Other hypotheses were that organizations in cultures high in uncertainty avoidance would use a more extensive selection process, would be more likely to use a fixed set of interview questions, and would be more likely to audit selection processes in some manner. Results showed that cultural dimensions explained some of the variability in staffing practices. Yet, there was only mixed support for the hypotheses regarding Hofstede's culture dimensions. Whereas the hypotheses for power distance were not confirmed, some of the hypotheses for uncertainty avoidance were supported. Organizations in cultures high in uncertainty avoidance used more selection methods, used them more extensively, and conducted more interviews.

In short, these two recent studies illustrate that there is some empirical support that country-specific differences in the use of selection procedures are rooted in deeper cultural beliefs. Yet, as noted in Table 2, it is clear that we need more research about the determinants of the differential use of selection procedures across countries. Granted, the examination of cultural, national, legal, economical or technological influences on selection procedure use is challenging because these influences are often intertwined. We believe that research on organizational determinants of selection procedure use in a national context might serve as inspiration here. A good example is the recent study of Wilk and Cappelli (2003). They investigated how organizational characteristics (specific work characteristics such as skill requirements of a position, training, and pay) lead a representative sample of U.S. companies to use other selection procedures.

Table 2 also mentions other avenues that deserve attention in future research. First, the impact of legal factors on selection procedure use should be scrutinized. It is generally known that the legal framework and codes of practice differ from country to country. For instance, in North America (U.S. and Canada), there is a heavy emphasis on job-relatedness and equal opportunity, as evidenced by the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (1978) or the Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures (2003). This legal framework in the U.S. has increased the popularity of specific selection procedures such as structured interviews (Williamson, Campion, Malos, Roehling, & Campion, 1997). In other countries, the threat of legal action on the basis of adverse impact is perceived by employers to be far less likely. For example, Arvey, Bhagat, and Salas (1991) noted that in Japan there is apparently little enforcement of formal laws prohibiting discrimination and bias. A similar situation seems to be present in many European countries. Even though standards of testing exist (e.g., the European Federation of Professional Psychologists' Association, Bartram & Coyne, 1998), these standards are often not compulsory.

Second, users' familiarity with selection procedures are worthy of investigation. It is possible that HR practitioners in other countries are simply unfamiliar with specific selection procedures and therefore do not use them (Rowe, Williams, & Day, 1994). For example, people might be unaware of different types of interviewing methods (see also Terpstra & Rozell, 1997). Professional associations play a role in divulging information about selection procedures. Levy-Leboyer (1994) noted that professional associations such as the *American Psychological Association* or the *Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology* have a strong role in the U.S. They actively encourage professional practices by publishing guidelines for

professional practice, funding research projects, organizing conferences, and disseminating professional publications among their members. In other countries, professional associations might have a much weaker influence on practice.

Research that furthers our understanding of the determinants of the use of selection procedures across countries is important because it can help multinational organizations to reduce resistance when introducing a specific selection procedure in a specific country. This brings us to a last avenue for future research. We need studies that identify factors that might bolster the introduction and acceptance of selection procedures in different countries. Similarly, case studies about successful and unsuccessful implementations of selection procedures in other countries would be welcome. Even on a national level, we know very little about the organizational factors that enable or hinder implementation of selection procedures. Along these lines, Johns (1993) posited that we have typically placed too much emphasis on selection practices as rational technical interventions (e.g., attempts to “sell” utility information or structured interviews). Conversely, practitioners in organizations perceive the introduction of new selection procedures as an organizational intervention that is subject to the same pressures (power games, etc.) as other organizational innovations. In an international context, these introduction and implementation issues become even more complex. So far, primarily exportive tactics have been used when introducing a selection procedure in another country. On the basis of the diffusion of innovation literature (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; O’Neill, Poudier, & Buchholtz, 1998) other tactics might be explored and studied.



### *Perceptions Of Selection Procedures Across Countries*

Although many studies have examined applicant perceptions on a national level (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000), only a few studies have explored how applicants in different countries perceive selection procedures. Steiner and Gilliland (1996) conducted the first study that examined applicant reactions to selection procedures in an international context. Specifically, they compared how people in the U.S. and France perceived various selection procedures. They used Gilliland's (1993) justice model as a theoretical framework for representing applicant perceptions. Inspired by Steiner and Gilliland (1993), similar studies were conducted in South Africa (De Jong & Visser, 1999), the Flemish part of Belgium (Lievens, De Corte, & Bryse, 2003), the French part of Belgium (Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, & Brancart, 1999), Spain, Portugal (Salgado & Moscoso, 2000), and Singapore (Phillips & Gully, 2002). Recently, Steiner and Gilliland (2001) reviewed most of these studies. Although Steiner and Gilliland anticipated considerable variations in the perceptions across countries, results were fairly consistent. Interviews, resumes, and work samples consistently received favorable reactions, whereas cognitive ability tests, personal references and personality inventories were typically rated in the middle of the scale. In all countries, job-relatedness (face validity) emerged as the key determinant of favorable perceptions. Phillips and Gully (2002) reached similar conclusions for their US- Singapore comparison. Again, interviews, resumes, and work samples were rated most favorably and job-relatedness was the crucial driver of these perceptions. A difference was that personality tests were rated more favorably in Singapore.

Steiner and Gilliland (2001) suggested sampling reasons as a possible explanation for these consistent findings. In particular, all of the aforementioned countries shared a European heritage. Hence, Steiner and Gilliland expected more

diverging results in applicant reactions when a more diverse set of countries would be surveyed. Along these lines, they posited that cultural dimensions might serve as powerful influences of applicant reactions. For instance, Steiner and Gilliland expected (2001) that the equality and special needs rule of distributive justice would be more prevalent in collectivistic cultures because these cultures are more concerned with group harmony or individuals in need. Conversely, they asserted that the equity rule would be most salient in individualistic cultures. So far, these assertions have not been fully tested. Thus, as noted in Table 2, they constitute an important avenue for future research on applicant perceptions in an international context.

Apart from exploring the generalizability of selection procedure perceptions, future research about applicant perceptions in an international context should broaden the type of perceptions investigated. In particular, candidates' perceptions of invasion of privacy have remained unexplored, even though there exists a large literature on organizational privacy that might be integrated into the organizational justice literature (Eddy, Stone, & Stone-Romero, 1999; Stone & Stone, 1990). There are a couple of reasons why invasion of privacy perceptions might be useful dimensions in an international context. First, there is evidence that there are cultural differences in terms of privacy perceptions. In fact, in many European countries legislation is much more strict in terms of invasion of privacy than in the U.S. (see also Smith, 2001) so that European industrial and organizational psychologists seem to be more concerned to protect the privacy of the candidate. That might be the reason why drug testing, honesty testing, or polygraph testing is virtually never used in Europe. Second, the emergence of web-based testing systems that might be used across countries is another reason for focusing on candidate's privacy perceptions.

Along these lines, Harris, Van Hove, and Lievens (2003) found that the discrepancies between privacy legislation in the U.S. and Europe were related to different privacy perceptions of web-based testing applications among candidates in the U.S. versus Europe.

### *The Criterion-Related Validity Of Selection Procedures Across Countries*

#### *Validity Generalization versus Situational Specificity*

When organizations use selection procedures in other cultures and across cultures, it is of key importance for them to know whether a specific selection procedure is transportable to another culture and whether the criterion-related validity of the selection procedure is generalizable. Essentially, two hypotheses have been proposed, namely the validity generalization hypothesis and the situational specificity hypothesis (Salgado & Anderson, 2002). The *validity generalization* hypothesis states that observed criterion-related validity coefficients vary only because of statistical artifacts (such as sampling error, range restriction, criterion unreliability). When these statistical artifacts are accounted for, criterion-related validity coefficients will generalize across different situations (jobs, occupational groups, organizations) (Schmidt & Hunter, 1984). In an international context, this means that criterion-related validity coefficients associated with a specific selection procedure obtained in one country will generalize to another country.

Exactly the opposite is posited by the *situational specificity* hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, there will be high variability in the observed criterion-related validity coefficients obtained in different situations (jobs, occupational groups, organizations, etc.). Whenever the situation changes, the observed criterion-related

validity coefficient might also change (Schmidt & Hunter, 1984). Applied to an international context, this means that selection procedures might be valid in one country but not in another country. The following quote from Herriot and Anderson (1997) further illustrates the basic arguments behind the situational specificity hypothesis: *“The findings from [the American] meta-analyses have been unreservedly cited by personnel psychologists in other countries and appear to have been unquestioningly accepted as being generalizable to different national contexts. Social, cultural, legislative and recruitment and appraisal differences have been overlooked, and certainly in many European countries the results of meta-analyses conducted in the United States have been cited without caveat. These findings may indeed be transferable to other countries, but then again they may not be, given the pervasive cultural differences”* (p. 28).

#### *Does the Criterion-Related Validity of Selection Procedures Generalize?*

To date, few empirical studies have tested the two aforementioned hypotheses, examining whether the criterion-related validity of selection procedures differed across countries. To our knowledge, only the criterion-related validity of cognitive ability tests and personality inventories has been put to the test in an international context. Generally, results have provided support for the validity generalization hypothesis. For example, Salgado and colleagues (Salgado, Anderson, Moscoso, Bertua, & De Fruyt, 2003, Salgado, Anderson, Moscoso, Bertua, De Fruyt, & Rolland, 2003) examined the criterion-related validity of cognitive ability tests in several countries of the European Community (Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Norway, Spain, and the U.K.). They found evidence for validity generalization for cognitive ability tests as the

magnitude of the criterion-related validity coefficients was very similar across European countries as different as Spain and the U.K. As compared to previous meta-analyses in the U.S. (Hartigan & Wigdor, 1989; Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998; Schmidt, 2002), this European Community meta-analysis showed a somewhat larger operational validity for cognitive ability for predicting job performance. For training success, the European and American results were very similar. In addition, similar to earlier North American findings, the European results revealed that job complexity moderated the magnitude of the operational validities of cognitive ability tests, with higher coefficients for more complex jobs. All of this underscored that the criterion-related validity of cognitive ability tests generalized across jobs, occupations, and national borders.

Evidence for validity generalization has also been obtained with regard to personality tests. Specifically, Salgado (1997) conducted a meta-analysis of the criterion-related validity of the Big Five personality traits in Europe. He found that Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability were valid predictors across job criteria and occupational groups. Extraversion emerged as a predictor for 2 occupations, and Openness and Agreeableness were valid predictors of training proficiency. These results are fairly consistent with results found in North American meta-analyses (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hough, Eaton, Dunnette, Kamp, & McCloy, 1990; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991). It is also important to note that the Big Five personality characteristics have been replicated in an impressive series of studies, across raters and rating scales, but also in different countries and cultures (Collins & Gleaves, 1998; Ghorpade, Hattrup, & Lackritz, 1999; Saucier, Hampson, & Goldberg, 2000).

Whereas the previous studies were meta-analyses, we also retrieved some primary studies that explored the criterion-related validity of common selection procedures across different countries. Ployhart, Sacco, Nishii, and Rogg (2004) examined whether the criterion-related validity of various predictors (measures of team skills, work ethic, commitment, customer focus, and cognitive ability) differed across 10 countries. They found that criterion-related validity was largely constant across countries and unaffected by culture. Such and Hemingway (2003) concluded that a biodata measure was valid in 7 countries. Finally, Such and Schmidt (2004) validated a situational judgment test in 4 countries. Results in a cross-validation sample showed that the situational judgment test was valid in two countries, namely the United Kingdom and Australia. It was not predictive in Mexico.

Taken together, research dealing with the criterion-related validity of different selection procedures in an international context is scarce. On the one hand the limited amount of prior studies in this domain have already produced quite some interesting findings. A key conclusion for cognitive ability and personality seems to be that the criterion-related validity of these two predictors generalizes across countries. This runs counter the situational specificity hypothesis. On the other hand we also believe that prior research about the criterion-related validity of different selection procedures in an international context has only scratched the surface. Hence, the following section is uniquely devoted to avenues for future research on the criterion-related validity of selection procedures in an international context.

#### Directions for Future International Validity Research

In this section, we discuss four directions for future international validity research. As will be detailed below, we first suggest that researchers make a clear

distinction between within-country and across-country applications of selection techniques. Second, studies need to address the importance of matching the predictor and the criterion in an international context. Third, the constructs measured should be clearly distinguished from the methods used to measure these constructs. Finally, future international studies should not only focus on the criterion-related validity of individual selection procedures but also on the validity of selection batteries, thereby acknowledging the impact of predictor weighting schemes. Similar to the previous research streams, we summarized the main research questions that need to be addressed in future research about the criterion-related validity of selection procedures in an international context in Table 2.

#### *Within-Country Applications Versus Across-Country Applications*

It is important that future studies about personnel selection practices in an international context distinguish between within-country and across-country contexts. If the criterion data are gathered in the same country as the country wherein the selection procedure was developed and used, this can be termed a *within-country application* (e.g., the selection procedures are used in South Korea and the job performance data are also gathered in South Korea). Most prior studies of selection procedures in an international context investigated these so-called within-country applications. When the selection procedures and criteria are carefully developed and matched within a given country, we believe that the selection procedure will be valid (regardless of the country under examination). When framed in this way, it is less surprising that Salgado et al. (2003) found that cognitive ability tests in various European countries were good predictors of criterion data gathered in *those* respective countries. Examples of within-country applications of selection procedures

that turned out to be valid are widespread (e.g., assessment centers developed, used, and validated in the Netherlands, Jansen & Stoop, 2001, or situational judgment tests developed, used, and validated in Singapore, Chan & Schmitt, 2002).

The story is different in *across-country applications*. In these applications, a selection procedure might be developed and used in a specific country, whereas the criterion data might be gathered in a another country. For example, a selection procedure might be developed and used in the U.S., whereas the criterion data might be gathered in France. Similarly, a selection procedure might be developed and used in the Europe, whereas the criterion data might be gathered in Japan. The selection of expatriates might constitute an example of such an across-country application of selection procedures. In these instances, it is crucial that one ensures a matching between the predictor and criterion domains across cultures, as will be discussed below.

Although we presented the within-country and across-country contexts as a dichotomy, this does not necessarily have to be so. In both within-country and across-country applications, it is assumed that the predictor is developed in one specific country (culture). However, this should not always be the case. For example, Schmitt, Kihm, and Robie (2000) used judgments of various personality experts around the globe for constructing a personality inventory. In such a combined emic and etic approach the predictor is developed with cross-cultural input.

### *Importance Of Matching the Predictor to the Criterion*

Conceptually, using a selection procedure across cultures (i.e., in a different culture than originally intended) is not different from using a selection procedure for another job or occupation than originally intended. All of this is based on the well-



known notion that validity is about matching predictor and criterion domains (Binning & Barrett, 1989). A drawback of prior research was that it did not factor in this relation between predictor and criterion. Prior studies concentrated either solely on the generalizability of selection predictors across countries (e.g., Salgado et al., 2003a; 2003b) or solely on the generalizability of job performance ratings (e.g., Ployhart, Wiechmann, Schmitt, Sacco, & Rogg, 2003).

We believe it is a crucial issue that the selection procedures used in a given culture are matched with the definition of performance adopted by that culture (see also Hough and Oswald, 2000). Let us illustrate this assertion with a couple of examples. Consider the employment interview. Eder and Harris (1999) discussed that the employment interview and especially the structured employment interview represents something of a “contest” wherein the candidate has to prove that he or she has the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for the job. Hence, the employment interview as we know it seems to represent achievement oriented and individualistic cultural styles. Eder and Harris (1999) warned that this might not be the case in collectivistic cultures. In these cultures, lengthy unstructured interviews about one’s family, childhood, education, and interests might not be uncommon. In these cultures, unstructured interviews might also reflect much more a collaborative and modest style where the candidate is reluctant to boost up his or her own individual performance and accomplishments. We also heard from HR personnel working in China that behavior description interviews do not yield useful information in China because it is socially more acceptable to construct fictitious stories about one’s achievements than not to answer the question (From my part, I also experienced this when getting lost in China and asking for directions). These cultural differences might undermine the usefulness of behavior description interviews in

these cultures. Yet, this does not mean that lengthy unstructured interviews reflecting a more collaborative and collectivistic cultural style that seem to be prevalent in collectivistic cultures will be necessarily invalid. The key point is whether the constructs measured in these interviews match the criterion. If supervisors, peers, and managers also value a collaborative and modest style, such interviews might still produce useful information about people's performance according to the predictor-criterion matching logic. Conversely, this will not be the case if North American or European managers who typically value a more achievement oriented and individualistic style are required to rate work performance in these cultures.

The importance of matching predictor and criteria can also be illustrated with assessment centers. The dimensions and exercises that are typically used in assessment centers in North America and Europe might be less relevant in other countries. Perhaps, in a high power distance culture, candidates might be extremely uncomfortable engaging in role-plays. Again, this does not mean that assessment centers will be invalid in these cultures. The question is: Are these role-plays indeed relevant for the criterion domain that one tries to predict in these cultures? Empirical research attests to this. Recently, Lievens, Harris, Van Keer, and Bisqueret (2003) examined whether two assessment center exercises were valid predictors of European executives who were selected to work in Japan. They found that one of the exercises, the group discussion exercise, was a very powerful predictor of future performance as rated by Japanese supervisors later on. The presentation exercise, however, was not a valid predictor. According to Lievens et al. (2003), the group discussion exercise reflected the team-based decision culture inherent in Japanese culture. This result underscores the importance of using assessment center

exercises that match the culture in terms of key features and then assessing requisite skills in that context.

A final example deals with a Japanese division of a U.S. firm that selects people in Japan. The divisional HR department uses a selection technique (e.g., a situational judgment test to measure teamwork) imposed by the corporate HR headquarters in the U.S. However, when the individuals enter the job, Japanese supervisors rate them. Clearly, these supervisors' view on teamwork is different than teamwork as seen by the corporate HR department in the U.S. Hence, the Japanese supervisors might rate the performance of their personnel differently than the test predicted, resulting in low criterion-related validity.

All these examples demonstrate that it makes little sense to posit that a specific selection procedure will be or will not be useful in a culture without carefully examining the criterion domain. Although this logic is fundamental to the notion of validity (Binning & Barrett, 1989), it is often ignored in international selection. Yet, three caveats are in order with respect to this predictor-criterion matching logic. First and most important, the criterion measures used in foreign countries should be related to organizational success of the multinational corporation. Although there might be a match between predictor and criterion domains in a specific country, this does not guarantee that the theory of performance adopted in a specific country is aligned with the general theory of performance of the multinational corporation. Actually, it is possible that the performance measures gathered in the foreign country do not contribute to organizational success. Re-reading the above examples from this perspective illustrates this. This underscores the importance of relating selection predictors to the success of the organization instead of using subjective performance measures as the final criterion.

Along these lines, one might expect that criterion-related validity in an international context will be different for subjective criterion measures (supervisory performance ratings) than for objective criterion measures (e.g., measures of quantity of work or work quality on an assembly line). This is because subjective criterion measures might reflect the theory of performance adopted in a specific country, whereas objective criterion measures represent aspects of work output that might generalize from one country to another. In other words, subjective criterion measures gathered in a specific country might deviate from performance indicators set by the multinational. Conversely, it is more likely that objective measures of work output are aligned with organizational success. Future research is needed to test these ideas.

Second, careful attention to matching predictor and criterion domains in international use of selection procedures might be less important for cognitive predictor constructs. This is because cognitive ability test has emerged as the best stand-alone predictor whose validity generalizes across jobs, occupations, and countries (Salgado et al., 2003). Relatedly, we expect that attention to matching predictor and criterion domains in international use of selection procedures might be especially crucial for externally-constructed predictor measures such as work samples, situational judgment tests, assessment center exercises or situational interviews because these predictors typically sample behaviors directly from the criterion. In that case, it should be guaranteed that the behaviors sampled and the scoring key used represent criterion behavior and performance (in a different culture). This is illustrated by the aforementioned results of Such and Schmidt (2004) as their situational judgment test was valid in the United Kingdom and Australia but not in Mexico.

Third, the job at hand might moderate the importance of matching predictor and criterion domains. In fact, when the job domain is not drastically different from culture to culture, a mismatch between the predictor and the criterion will have fewer deleterious effects on criterion-related validity. Conversely, if the job is culture dependent and the selection procedure development was done in a different culture from the culture that the selection procedure is used, it will matter in terms of criterion-related validity. As argued by Furrer, Liu, and Sudharshan (2000), customer service quality might be an example of a job dimension that is especially susceptible to cultural differences (see also Ployhart et al, 2003).

#### *Method Versus Construct Distinction*

In prior research about the criterion-related validity of selection procedures in an international context the distinction between “constructs” and “methods” was typically ignored. In personnel selection, constructs refer to the content that is being measured (Arthur, Day, McNelly, & Edens, 2003; Chan & Schmitt, 1997; Schmitt & Chan, 1998; Schmitt & Mills, 2001). Examples are cognitive ability, Extraversion, manual dexterity (see Peterson et al., 1990, for a detailed overview of the predictor construct space). Conversely, methods refer to the myriad of specific techniques that measure these constructs. A specific construct such as Extraversion might be measured via various methods such as specific interview questions, specific inventory items or specific situational judgment test items.

Our general proposition is that the broader constructs will generalize across countries and cultures. As shown in our review above, the available research is consistent with this premise as both the validity of general mental ability and personality constructs was about the same in the U.S. as in Europe. Equally

important, we propose that even though the underlying constructs might be the same, the measurements (e.g., specific items used) of these constructs will be different across countries.

These general propositions can be illustrated in various ways. First, the large body of research on the cross-cultural equivalence of cognitive ability and personality tests shows that item and/or wording changes are typically necessary when cognitive ability and personality tests are transported and translated to another language and culture. The underlying structure of the tests, however, remains typically the same. For example, the basic underlying construct of Conscientiousness might not be different across cultures, although the behavioral expressions of this construct are likely to differ (Church & Katigbak, 1988).

The development of the global personality inventory of Schmit, Kihm, and Robie (2000) is a second illustration that the behavioral indicators of personality constructs might vary, although the broader underlying constructs are similar across countries. Schmit et al. developed a global personality inventory with input from a panel of experts around the world. Despite the fact that 70 psychologists around the world wrote items in their own language for the constructs as defined in their own language, construct validity studies provided support for the same underlying structure of the global personality inventory across countries.

Third, the cultural sensitivity of methods (in the sense of the items used and the behaviors elicited) as compared to the cultural robustness of constructs is also illustrated by the use of situational judgment tests (Lievens, in press) or assessment center exercises across cultures (Briscoe, 1997). The scores generated in this kind of selection procedures might be especially prone to cultural sensitivity because there is ample evidence that the behavioral expressions and interpretations for

common constructs measured in assessment centers or situational judgment tests might differ from one culture to another. The extensive work of Smith and colleagues (e.g., Smith et al., 2002; Smith, Dugan, Peterson, & Leung, 1998) is probably the best example of how managerial behavior (e.g., handling disagreement, seeking guidance) is differently valued across countries. As another example, Adler, Doktor, and Reddin (1986) showed that there were differences in decision making and information processing across cultures and countries. Given these well-established cross-cultural differences, the same situation or the same response to the same situation might be differently scored/rated across cultures.

A final example is given by Lawler, Walumbwa, and Bai (2006) in this Handbook. They argue that in China the method of face reading is often used to discover essential aspects of a candidate's personality because the face is believed to hold clues to one's "fate". Again, the measures used differ across cultures (face reading versus rigorously developed inventories) but the constructs measured might be the same.

In short, no studies have made this explicit distinction between constructs and methods in the context of research on selection procedures in an international context. Yet, it should be fairly easy for future research to test our propositions through tests of structural and measurement equivalence. A good example on a national level is the study of Hatstrup, Schmitt, and Landis (1992) which revealed that two different types of cognitive ability tests (a cognitive ability test with traditional items versus a cognitive ability test with business-related items) measured the same underlying constructs.

### *Impact Of Predictor Weighting*

Our review of prior selection research in a cross-cultural context illustrated that only the criterion-related validity of individual selection procedures was examined. An additional set of issues arises if we move from an individual selection procedure (a univariate prediction model) to a selection battery (a multivariate prediction model). A multivariate prediction model implies that decisions have to be taken about how to combine or weight the several predictors into a composite predictor score<sup>1</sup> (Murphy & Shiarella, 1997).

Many studies have already demonstrated the impact of predictor weighting schemes on criterion-related validity (e.g., De Corte, 1999; Hattrup, Rock, & Scalia, 1997; Sackett & Roth, 1996; Schmitt, Rogers, Chan, Sheppard, & Jennings, 1997). In particular, Murphy and Shiarella (1997) found that the criterion-related validity of a selection battery depended substantially on how predictors were combined. Roughly 23% of the variance in the criterion-related validity of the selection battery could be explained in terms of the weights assigned to the predictors of the battery. On a national level, there is also evidence that practitioners assign implicit weights to the predictors in making overall hirability ratings. Dunn et al. (1995) presented American managers with applicant profiles who were described on GMA and the Big Five. Policy capturing analysis showed that GMA and Conscientiousness were viewed as the most important attributes. Dunn et al. also found that the relative importance attached to the personal attributes was consistent across six occupations, although some minor differences were found (see also Ones & Viswesvaran, 1999). A similar study of Lievens, Highhouse, and De Corte (2005) demonstrated that the method of selection used (paper-and-pencil test vs. unstructured interview) affected the relative importance attached to the constructs among Belgian supervisors. Specifically, the



importance attached to Extraversion and GMA was significantly moderated by the selection method, with Extraversion and GMA decreasing in importance when store supervisors knew that scores on Extraversion and GMA were derived from a paper-and-pencil test as opposed to from an unstructured interview.

In an international context, there is similar evidence that predictor constructs are differentially weighted. A good example is the large-scale survey of Huo, Huang, and Napier (2002) (see also Von Glinow, Drost, & Teagarden, 2002). They surveyed selection preferences in ten countries all over the world and concluded that companies in these countries differed in how they valued specific characteristics to be used in selection. Countries such as Australia, Canada, Germany, and the U.S. assigned great importance to proven work experience in a similar job and technical skills for deciding whether someone should have the job (see also Arvey et al., 1991). Conversely, companies in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, placed a relatively low weight on job-related skills. In these countries, people's potential and teamwork skills seemed much more important (see also Morishima, 1995). Other evidence comes from Triandis and Vassiliou (1972) who asked both Americans and Greeks to make decisions about job candidates. The Greek sample emphasized much more information from interpersonal sources than the American sample. In countries such as Mexico (Kras, 1988) or South Korea (Koch, Nam, & Steers, 1995) it has also been found that recruiters attach much more importance to information provided by interpersonal sources of information such as friends or relatives of the candidate.

Although these studies revealed that predictors might be differentially weighed from one culture to another culture, no studies have taken this further. Specifically, we do not know whether the same information about predictor constructs on the

basis of a specific selection battery might be differently combined into an overall selection decision across cultures. Given the aforementioned differences in the importance of predictors across cultures, we expect that this will be the case. Even more important, future studies are needed to investigate whether these potential cultural differences in predictor weighting schemes affect the criterion-related validity of a selection battery. In light of the well-documented evidence of the impact of predictor weighting schemes on criterion-related validity on a national level, we also expect that the criterion-related validity of the selection battery will differ from one culture to another.

### Conclusions

This chapter gave an overview of prior research about personnel selection in an international context. Although we tried to use a truly “international” perspective, Table 1 exemplified that the large majority of studies were conducted in the North America and Western Europe. Therefore, future studies should be conducted in other parts of the world (South America, Africa, and Asia). Only in that case, we can obtain a full understanding of the cultural influences on personnel selection.

We believe that prior international selection research has only scratched the surface. Prior research was descriptive and primarily explored differential usage of selection techniques. The more fundamental issue of whether the criterion-related validity of selection procedures generalized across countries was largely ignored so far. Therefore, a large part of this chapter focused on criterion-related validity issues in an international context. We posited that in most cases the criterion-related validity of most selection procedures will generalize and that researchers should put forward explicit hypotheses as to why criterion-related validities should *not* generalize. To

this end, we proposed various testable hypotheses. First, researchers should carefully distinguish between within-country and across-country applications of selection procedures. If the predictor is used for within-culture applications (predictor and criterion are developed and gathered in the same culture, e.g., an organization in Germany hires German individuals for a given job in Germany), criterion-related validity should be ensured when the predictor is carefully developed (based on job analysis, etc.). Conversely, cultural differences might threaten the criterion-related validity of selection procedures in across-country applications (predictor and criterion data are gathered in different cultures, e.g., a multinational hires individual for a given job in host culture). This might be especially the case if the performance theory used in a specific culture is different from the performance theory adopted by the multinational organization. A second general conclusion was that the predictor constructs will often be very similar across countries. Third, we posited that even though the predictor constructs are similar, the behavioral content and measurement of the predictors might be different across countries and cultures. Therefore, it is crucial that the predictor specifications are matched with the criterion specifications in another culture so that the culture-specific theory of performance is taken into account. We also argued that both subjective as objective criterion measures should be used as the latter seem to be more generalizable across cultures. As a fourth conclusion, we posited that even though the criterion-related validity coefficient associated with an individual selection procedure (univariate model) might be the same across cultures, this does not necessarily mean that the criterion-related validity coefficient associated with a selection battery (multivariate model) will be the same across countries because the relative importance attached to predictor components is likely to differ across countries.

### Footnotes

1 Note that Murphy and Shiarella (1997) also discuss the impact of combining or weighting the criterion dimensions into an overall criterion (job performance) on the validity of selection procedures.

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Table 1

*Overview of Main Findings of International Selection Research in Different Continents.*

	Use of Selection Procedures	Perceptions Of Selection Procedures Across Countries	Criterion-Related Validity Of Selection Procedures Across Countries
<i>North America</i>	Canada and the United States were surveyed. Detailed results per country and selection procedure are reported in Ryan et al. (1999).	In the U.S., interviews, resumes, biodata, and work samples received favorable reactions, whereas cognitive ability tests, personal references and personality inventories were rated in the middle of the scale. Honesty tests, graphology, and personal contacts were poorly perceived (Steiner & Gilliland, 2001).	Schmidt and Hunter's meta-analysis (1998) reviewed 85-year of research on the validity of common selection procedures.
<i>Europe</i>	Germany, France, Belgium, Spain,	In France, Belgium, Spain, and	The meta-analysis of Salgado et al.

<i>(including UK),</i>	Sweden, the United Kingdom, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Italy, and The Netherlands were surveyed. Detailed results per country and selection procedure are reported in Ryan et al. (1999).	Portugal interviews, resumes, and work samples received favorable reactions. The other tests (ability tests, references, and personality tests) were rated in the middle of the scale. Biodata received mixed ratings across countries. Graphology, and personal contacts were poorly perceived in all European countries surveyed (Steiner & Gilliland, 2001).	(2003) reviewed research on the validity of general mental ability in Europe. Another meta-analysis of Salgado (1997) reviewed research on the validity of personality in Europe. Generally, the results of these meta-analysis mirrored results found in North American meta-analyses.
<i>Asia (including Australia)</i>	Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, and New Zealand were surveyed. Detailed results per country and selection procedure are reported in Ryan et al. (1999).	Work samples, resumes, and interviews were rated most favorably in the US and Singapore. Personality tests were rated more favorably in Singapore (Phillips & Gully, 2002).	No information available

<i>Africa (including the Middle East),</i>	South Africa was surveyed. Detailed results per selection procedure are reported in Ryan et al. (1999).	In South Africa, interviews, resumes, work samples, biodata, and ability tests were favorably perceived. Personality tests, references, and honesty tests were rated in the middle of the scale. Graphology and personal contacts were poorly perceived (Steiner & Gilliland, 2001).	No information available
<i>South/Central America.”</i>	No information on these countries was presented in Ryan et al. (1999).	No information available	No information available

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“No information available” means that we did not find *published* studies about this issue that were written in English.

Table 2

*Summary of Directions for Future International Selection Research*

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*Use of Selection Procedures*

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1. Which cultural factors affect the differential use of selection procedures across countries?
2. What is the impact of legal factors on the differential use of selection procedures across countries?
3. How do users' familiarity with selection procedures impact on the differential use of selection procedures across countries?
4. How do applicants' perceptions impact on the differential use of selection procedures across countries?
5. Which factors might bolster the introduction and acceptance of selection procedures in different countries?
6. Which factors discourage the use of selection procedures in different countries?

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*Perceptions Of Selection Procedures Across Countries*

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1. Do cultural dimensions predict the differential perception of selection procedures across countries?
2. What's the role of privacy perceptions in the differential perception of selection procedures across countries?

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*Criterion-Related Validity Of Selection Procedures Across Countries*

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1. Does the criterion-related validity of common selection procedures generalize in across-country applications?
2. Is there a difference in the international generalizability of the criterion-related

validity of sign-based tests (e.g., ability and personality tests) versus sample-based tests (e.g., assessment centers, situational judgment tests, behavior description interviews)?

3. What is the impact of careful predictor-criterion matching on the criterion-related validity of common selection procedures in across-country applications?
  4. Are common selection procedures in across-country applications related to organizational success?
  5. Are objective measures of work output more generalizable across cultures as criterion measures than subjective performance ratings?
  6. Does the job moderate the importance of matching predictor and criterion domains in establishing the criterion-related validity of common selection procedures in across-country applications?
  7. What is the international generalizability of the constructs underlying selection procedures versus the international generalizability of the methods used to measure these constructs?
  8. Is the same information about predictor constructs (selection procedures) differently combined into an overall selection decision across countries?
  9. Do potential cultural differences in predictor weighting schemes affect the criterion-related validity of a selection battery in an international context?
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