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## On the Meaning of Comparison : A Methodology for Cross-Cultural Studies

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Comparisons and comparative studies have been widely used in many fields to construct and test theories and hypotheses. In its broadest sense comparison can be viewed as synonymous with examination since any scientific investigation is bound to analyze some variables with reference to others. More commonly, however, comparative studies in the behavioural sciences are viewed as those that focus on the universality of the phenomena studied in different systems, societies and countries.

Comparisons (and contrasts), therefore, play an important part in conceptualizing and establishing generalizations about any discipline. Since comparisons can be viewed as experiments where the effect of the environment (the system, society or country for example) on the object of comparison is studied, they help reveal the conditions limiting the applicability of a particular concept, as well as its implicit assumptions or empirical bias (culture or society boundness).

Although made with reference to the nature and utility of comparative studies in political science and sociology, the following observations by Heckscher (1957) and Bendix (1963) apply to other behavioural fields. According to Heckscher,

"If we regard our field of study as mainly descriptive, comparisons are required to help us refine our tools of description. If we have hopes of establishing a general theory on an inductive basis, we can do so only through comparison. If we attempt to test specific hypotheses, this is possible only if we bring in a sufficient number of examples, to be investigated by the comparative method."

Similarly, Bendix maintains that comparative sociological studies attempt to

"develop concepts and generalizations at level between 'pure theory' and descriptive area studies. They help to elucidate the time and space limitations of sociological concepts that have less than universal applicability and uncover the generalization hidden in many 'composite concepts.' Positively they can help us develop typologies of social actions and structures and assess their characteristic range of variation."

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While comparisons are frequently made in sociology (for example Rokkan, 1966 and Marsh, 1967), economics (Blodgett, 1949), political science (Almond and Bingham, 1966), public administration (Thompson, 1959), anthropology (Kroeber, 1953 and Evans-Pritchard, 1963), religion (Haydom, 1935) and other disciplines (Handy and Kurtz, 1963), it is not always clear exactly what is the meaning of comparison, *i.e.*, *what* the conditions for a comparison are and *how* a comparison is and should be made.

Furthermore, while the considerable increase in available data, the availability of computers and developments in research techniques have greatly increased the potential scope of comparative studies, they have at the same time increased the danger of producing meaningless results. There is, therefore, a substantial need for a methodological framework to indicate how to establish criteria to select relevant data for a comparative study and how to establish appropriate methods of analysis. The purpose of this paper is to develop such a framework derived from a detailed examination of the meaning of comparison.

### *The Meaning of Comparison*

Often comparisons are defined as "the placing together or juxtaposing of two or more items to ascertain, bring into relief, or establish their similarities and differences" (Webster, 1963). Yet, how, for example, can we compare an orange and a lemon? Church (1952) points out that experiences can be compared only if they have some common denominator or dimension. If they are different in every respect they can be contrasted with each other in every respect but not compared.

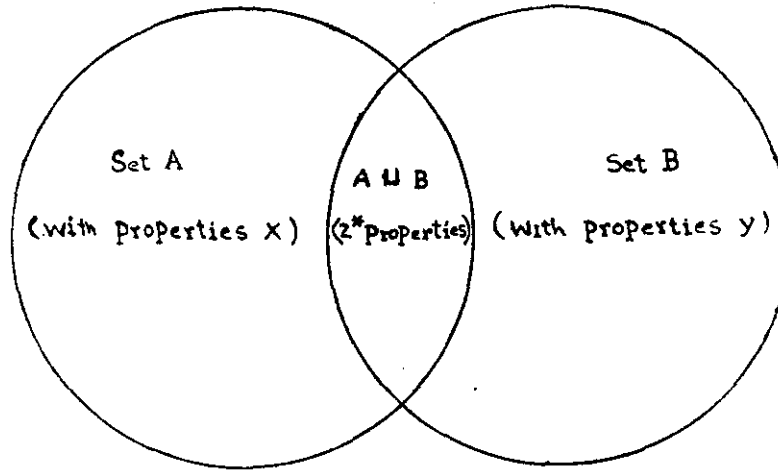
This suggests that in order to compare two things or experiences (A and B) they must be regarded in some sense as members of class or subjects of an encompassing set (C). The comparison is then made on the basis of some relevant properties of the C set which are common to both A and B.

Take, for example, the orange (A) and the lemon (B). Both can be regarded as members either of the "fruit" set ( $C_1$ ), or of the "object" set ( $C_2$ ) and can be compared with respect to the properties of a fruit ( $z_1$ ), *i.e.*, sweetness, juiciness, or of an object ( $z_2$ ), *i.e.*, shape, size. But a lemon and an orange cannot be compared with respect to the properties of an orange, since an orange is not an appropriate (encompassing) set (C).

Thus in order to compare two or more objects or systems, some relationship between the objects or systems must first be established. This relationship can be established either deductively or inductively.

If the relationship is established on a *deductive basis* all properties x of set A and properties y of set B are identified, and the properties which are common to both sets are distinguished. These constitute

the group of common properties ( $z^*$ ) (the intersection of the sets A and B). This distinction is presented in the following Venn diagram.



A deductive comparison therefore is made on the basis of the specific denominator or dimension which is common to all subjects or objects compared. For example, a lemon or orange can be regarded as similar, and therefore compared, with respect to the quantitative or qualitative values of their common properties ( $z^*$ ) as fruits or objects.

Comparisons may also be made on the basis of possession or non-possession of specific properties. In this case there is no need to establish the common properties  $z^*$  since sets A and B are compared with respect to all their properties, not only those common to both. Yet, whether the  $z^*$  properties are established or not, properties are generalized, so that their counterparts can be identified in the other set. For example, brightness of orange is generalized to colours for a comparison between oranges and lemons. At the same time the level of generality determines the scope of the set of properties ( $z^*$ ).

Alternatively, using the *inductive method*, A and B are viewed as subjects of the encompassing set C and the properties  $z$  of the set C are established. A and B are considered comparable if the same subset  $z_i$  is used to describe them. Each property of the subset  $z_i$  will have a particular value (qualitative or quantitative), in both A and B. In comparing these values one has to remember that the meaning of the variables may be ambiguous unless they are examined in the context of their own system.

This implies, therefore, the need for a transformation rule which will translate the abstract  $z_i$  properties in terms of properties applicable to A and B. Based on an analysis of C certain properties ( $z$ ) may be

established as necessary or as necessary and sufficient conditions for membership of a class. Comparability of A and B is then induced on the basis of possession of these z properties. For example, the relevant properties of a fruit are established and an orange and a lemon are then compared with respect to these properties. Again, the qualitative or quantitative values of the properties in the respective sets are compared.

In practice, any comparison is likely to involve a combination of both methods. Identifying the relevant x and y properties in a deductive comparison requires some reference, explicit or implicit, to an encompassing C set with z properties. Similarly, in an inductive comparison the z properties of the C set have to be determined with reference to the properties of A and B sets. In addition, as more is learned about the A and B sets, the appropriate z properties are likely to be modified.

In general, therefore, a combined inductive-deductive approach is preferred since the derivation of the C set and the z properties on a purely inductive basis is likely to result in oversimplification. On the other hand, a purely deductive approach may lack the consistency and focus required for a comparative study. An empirically derived C set (*i.e.*, derived with reference to the properties of the A and B sets) is considered, therefore, to provide the appropriate balance between simplification and consistency and yet to be sufficiently specific to permit the desired type and depth of comparison.

#### *A Framework for Comparison*

Since a comparison is based on identifying and comparing relevant properties of two or more objects or systems, it requires two major decisions—(1) determining *what* to compare, *i.e.*, identifying the relevant properties and (2) determining *how* to compare, *i.e.*, the basis of comparison between the properties.

A number of successive steps are, therefore, proposed indicating how these decisions can be made so as to achieve the objective of the analysis (Figure 1).

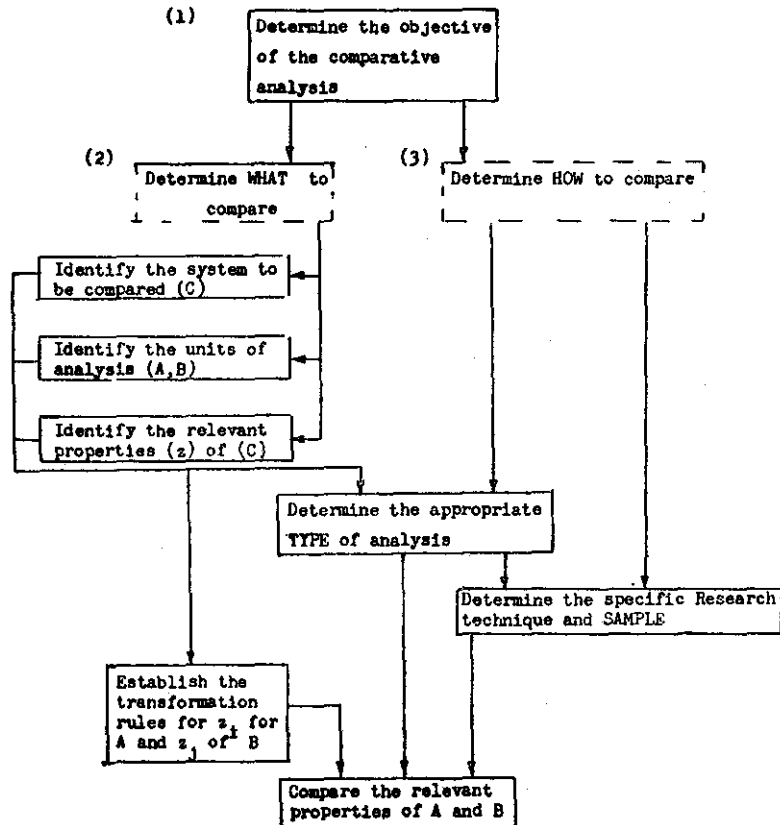
#### *Determining the Objective of the Analysis*

The objective of the analysis provides the guidelines for determining the appropriate object (what) and method (how) of comparison. The dependence of the appropriate approach on its objective is indicated by Harvey (1966)

“... validity of any means or approach, the appropriateness of any goal-related behaviour, is inextricably dependent on the nature of the goal itself. As the end changes, a review must be made of the means of instrumentation and these must be open to modification if anything approaching an adequate solution of the problem is to be had or maintained. Even with ends held constant, changes in the environment within the goal is embedded may render necessary the utilization of different means.”

Figure 1

A framework for Comparison



Specification of the objective is, therefore, an essential prerequisite to determine the units of analysis A, and B, to establish the relevant C set and its properties (z), and to decide on the appropriate type of comparison.

The objective of any comparative analysis depends on the specific problem context and biases of the analyst and hence may encompass a wide range of possibilities. For example, both an economist and a sociologist might be interested in comparing consumption behaviour in two or more countries. The economist would most probably emphasize the economic determinants of consumption behaviour (income distribution, GNP, etc.) while the sociologist would most likely tend to focus on the social and cultural factors (family structure and function, social class membership, etc.).

A specific objective will lead, therefore, to certain decisions concerning both *what* to compare and *how* to compare. Yet, concerning the latter decision, various research techniques can, in most cases, be used to achieve a given objective.

*Determining What to Compare*

Traditionally comparative studies in many fields tended to compare certain entities (institutions, countries, etc.), their structure and functions. Only recently have some comparative studies focused on systems as a whole, or on the structure and functioning of such systems. Since most of the entities to be compared can be viewed and analyzed as systems, it is necessary to establish *what* to compare within the context of a system. The decision as to what to compare involves three specific steps :

- (a) determining the system to be compared (the C set)
- (b) determining the unit of analysis (A, B)
- (c) determining the relevant properties (z)

*The System and Its Basic Elements.* Prior to any comparison the system to be compared, its boundaries and basic elements, must be identified. Traditionally a system is viewed as a process in which inputs are used by processors to produce certain results or output. The activities performed by the processor take place within a "black box" and are subject to certain controls. The results achieved may affect these controls and lead to changes in either the inputs, the process or both.

This approach, however, does not help to describe or to understand how the activities are performed by the processor or what goes on in the "black box". In order to do this a system can be viewed as composed of four major elements : participants, activities, results and constraints.

Thus the functioning of the system is viewed in terms of the activities of the system's participants. The participants and their activities are subject to certain constraints such as the values or objectives of participants, the capacity of participants and the availability of resources. The results achieved influence, in turn, these constraints by altering or affecting the values and objectives of the internal and external participants, and thus influence their activities.

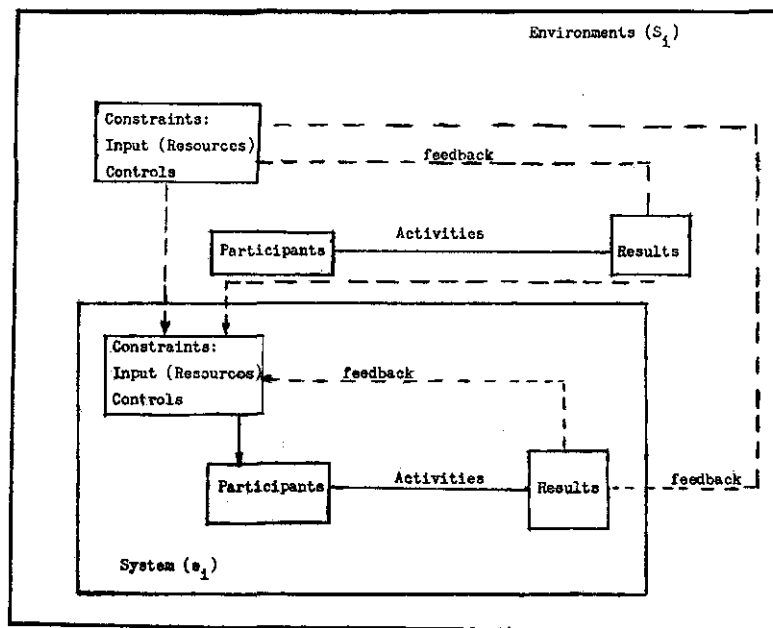
The interaction of these elements takes place within an environment. The environment of a system can be viewed as the set of all other existing systems. Since each of these systems has the same four basic elements, an environment can also be described in terms of the same four system elements. This view of a system and its environment is presented in Figure 2.

The elements of a system interact with the elements of its environment. The participants of a system will be affected by constraints within the environment such as the objectives and values of non-participants (people who do not participate in the system under consideration) the demand for resources in other system, etc. Similarly, the results achieved in the system will affect the constraints,

*i.e.*, resources and controls in other systems in the environment. This interaction of a system with its environment suggests, therefore, the importance of analyzing both the system (as a whole) and its interaction with its environment.

*The Unit of Analysis.* The next step is to determine the unit of analysis. In order to describe and, therefore, to analyze a system ( $S_i$ ) a number of different units of analysis might be selected. One possible unit of analysis might be the elements of a system, *i.e.*, participants, activities, etc., or items within an individual element, *i.e.*, a particular participant or activity. In this case any number of elements or items may be used but interaction between elements within a given system is not considered.

Figure 2  
A System and Its Environment



Another possible unit is the subsystem, which comprises two or more elements or items within an element, and the interactions between them. Any system contains a number of subsystems each with different types and numbers of interactions.

A third possibility is the overall system which includes all possible interactions among the basic elements and the various subsystems. In this case attention is centred on the functioning of a system as a whole, rather than on interactions between or within elements or subsystems. In practice it is seldom possible to make



an analysis at this level, because of the difficulties of identifying all relevant interactions or relationships.

Figure 3 presents schematically the possible units of analysis of an open system. For expository convenience, the diagram divides the horizontal axis into three sectors. Yet, it is in fact a continuous scale of increasing complexity and interaction between elements and subsystems.

Figure 3  
Possible Units of Analysis of A System

Elements of an Open System	Unit of Analysis		
	Elements 1, .....n	Subsystem 1, .....n-1	Overall System
Participant Internal External			
Activities Internal External			
Resources Internal External			
Results Internal External			

*The Relevant Properties (z).* Once the objective of the analysis, the system to be analyzed (C) and the unit(s) of analysis (A,B), have been determined, the relevant properties (z) must be identified. The dependence of z on the three previous stages of the comparative analysis is evident from the following example. Assume that a comparison of the economic growth of two countries is intended to improve the understanding of the causes of economic growth. The relevant z properties would then be the determinants of economic growth. These are determined by identifying the basic components of the economic system and their relationships, such as firms, scarce resources, consumers, the production possibilities of firms, the supply-demand mechanism, etc.

A comparison of any system can concentrate upon the properties of the elements of the system, of the subsystems, of the system as a whole or the relations of any of these units with its environment. Thus,

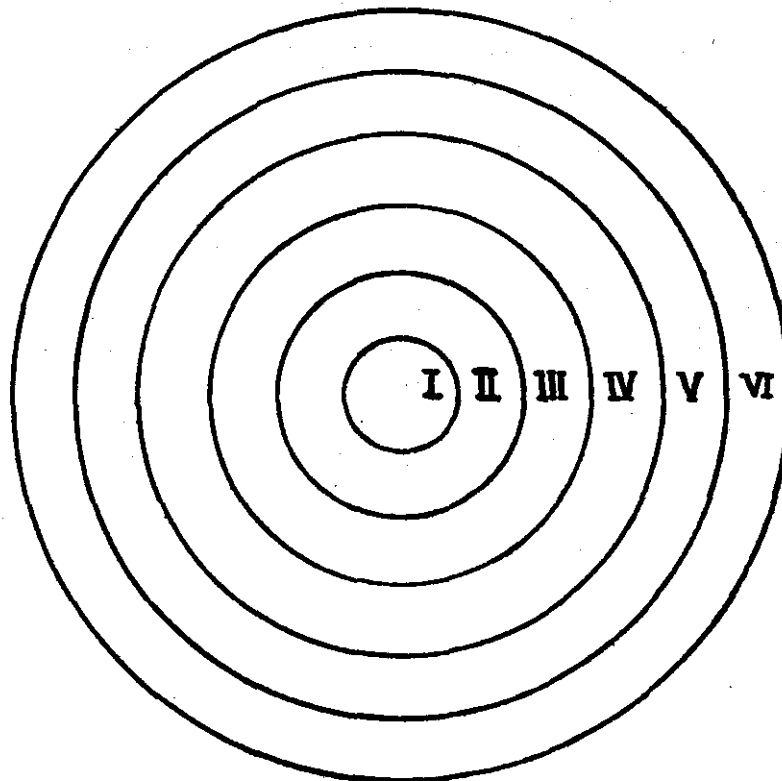
in comparing societies, the relevant properties might be either the characteristics of all members of society, for example, their activities, and goals, or the characteristics of all subsystems such as the family, the church, or the characteristics of society as a whole (viewed as a distinct entity), *i.e.*, general social values.

The relevant properties will also depend on the boundaries of the specific system on which the comparison is focused. These are in turn derived from the C set.

Any system short of the entire universe is a part of a larger hierarchy of systems; for example, a husband/wife relationship can be viewed as a subsystem of the family unit which is a subsystem of the social system, etc. Thus in one case the relevant focal system might be the family unit, and the husband/wife relationship would be a subsystem of this, while in another case the relevant focal system would be the social system, families would be subsystems, and a husband/wife relationship a subsystem within a family subsystem. This hierarchy of systems is illustrated in Figure 4. For example,

Figure 4

The Hierarchy of Systems



in an anthropological context, system VI might be all social systems, *i.e.*, all people in all societies and their activities, V a particular society, IV a tribe of that society, III a family, II the husband/wife relationship, I the husband alone.

While the identification of the  $z$  properties must be made with reference to the focal system derived from the C set, the properties should also lend themselves to being defined operationally and describe accurately each of the units of analysis (the A<sub>s</sub>).

#### *Determining How to Compare*

The decision of how to compare focuses on both the logic and methodology of comparison. It is derived from both the objective of the analysis, and from the selected object of comparison. It involves primarily three decisions :

- (a) determining the appropriate type of comparison
- (b) determining the specific research technique and desired sample
- (c) establishing the basis for the 'correspondence (translation) rule for comparison.

#### (a) *The Appropriate Type of Comparison*

Once the specific system on which the comparison is focused has been determined, a number of different types of comparisons may be made within and between systems. Comparisons may be made between two or more systems in the same environments or "super-system", between two or more systems in different environments, between the relation of two or more systems to the same environment or "super-system" and between the relation of two or more systems to different environments.

In the first two cases the focal system is viewed as a closed system and in the latter cases as an open system. These four types of comparisons are summarized in Figure 5.

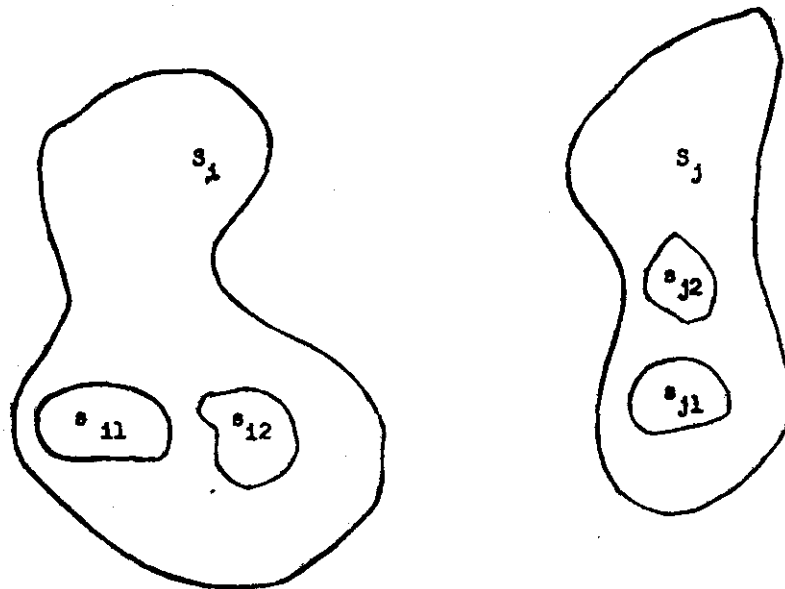
(1) *Comparisons of Two Systems within the Same Super-system (or Environment)* ( $s_{i1} \longleftrightarrow s_{i2}$ ). In this case the systems on which the comparison is focused are viewed as subsystems of the same super-system. For example, a husband ( $s_{i1}$ ) and a wife ( $s_{i2}$ ) might be compared as two subsystems of a family. Alternatively the focal system might be the family unit and two different families belonging to the same tribe might be compared.

(2) *Comparisons of Two Systems in Two Different Super-systems* ( $s_{i1} \longleftrightarrow s_{j1}$ ). In this type of comparison, the systems compared are viewed as similar subsystems of two different super systems. For example, the properties of a family unit in two different tribes might be compared.

(3) *Comparisons of the Relations of Two Systems to the Same Super-system* ( $S_{i1} \longleftrightarrow S_i$ )  $\longleftrightarrow$  ( $s_{i2} \longleftrightarrow S_i$ ). As in the first type of comparison the focal systems are viewed as belonging to the same hierarchy of systems. The comparison covers both internal and external, *i.e.*, environmental, variables of the system and focuses explicitly on differences and similarities in the interaction of the internal and external variables. For example, the role of one tribe in the social system might be compared with that of another tribe, or the role of the husband with that of the wife in the family unit.

Figure 5

Alternative Types of Comparison



	System	Environment or Super-system
Intra-system	$s_{i1} \longleftrightarrow s_{i2}$	$(s_{i1} \longleftrightarrow S_i) \longleftrightarrow (s_{i2} \longleftrightarrow S_i)$
Inter-system	$s_{i1} \longleftrightarrow s_{j1}$	$(s_{i1} \longleftrightarrow S_i) \longleftrightarrow (s_{j1} \longleftrightarrow S_j)$
$S_{ij}$	Environment or Super-system	
$s_{ij}$	Focal system	
$\longleftrightarrow$	Comparison	
$\longleftrightarrow$	Relationship	

(4) *Comparisons of the Relations of Two Systems to Different Super-systems* ( $s_{i1} \longleftrightarrow S_i$ )  $\longleftrightarrow$  ( $s_j \longleftrightarrow S_j$ ). In this type of comparison, as in the second, each focal system is regarded as a subsystem of a different super-system, but in this case attention is focused on the relationship between the focal and its super-system. For example, one might compare the role of the tribal system in two different societies or the role of the family system in two different tribes.

These four types of comparisons can apply to three distinct situations, each of which can be viewed as a special case of comparison :

- i. comparison over time, system *i* at time  $t+1$  is viewed as system *j* and is compared with system *i* at time *t*.
- ii. comparison between a given system (*i*) and an ideal system (I), can be viewed as a special case of the comparison between system *i* and system *j*.
- iii. comparison between a value of a given property in system *i* and the statistical distribution of the given property over all systems or over a relevant set of these systems.

*Time Dimensions of a Comparison.* In comparisons at a *given point in time*, the emphasis is on differences or similarities in the elements, subsystems or systems and their interaction. For example, the religious organization of two societies might be compared at a given point of time to see to what extent organized religion played similar roles in the two societies. In comparisons *over time*, on the other hand, attention is focused on changes in the elements, subsystems or systems and their interaction, in relation to changes in external or internal variables. For example, changes in the role of organized religion in two different societies might be compared over a given period of time.

*Comparisons with an Ideal.* Comparisons can also be made with reference to the properties of an "ideal" or model system. The implication underlying this type of comparison is that the system is evaluated with reference to deviation from the values of the properties in the ideal system. For example, in a comparison between two political systems the performance of an individual government or of a particular political system might be compared with established standards of efficient government, or with that of a model democracy (assuming this to represent an "ideal" state).

*Comparisons with the Distribution of Properties.* A comparison can be also made of the value of a given property or properties in a system with respect to the overall distribution or a selected range of the distribution of the values of the property overall systems. The focus here is on positioning the system with respect to other systems. For example, the stability of a given political system, as measured by the frequency of changes in government might be compared with average rate of change of government in other countries.

(b) *The Research Technique and Desired Sample*

Comparative studies in the behavioural sciences do not in general make use of special research techniques nor require special analytical tools. In principle, the problems involved in establishing the appropriate research design are similar to those encountered in any other type of investigation in the behavioural sciences. Thus, once the

appropriate object and the desired type of comparison have been determined, one should follow what has been called a "systematic empirical inquiry", *i.e.*,... "A conscious, trained concern with such matters as measurement and the sources of observational error, research design and the logical grounds for defensible inference, working hypotheses and the evidential grounds for disconfirming them, and so forth." (Hopkins and Wallerstein, 1967, p. 40).

While the appropriate research design will depend on the context and nature of the comparative study, the similarity between the logic of comparison and that of experimentation should be emphasised. Although comparisons frequently use historical data, which cannot be controlled experimentally, they should attempt "...to yield scientific explanation by the systematic manipulation of parameters and operative variables" (Smelser, 1967, p. 111).

Whatever the research design to be used in a given study, in most cases it is not feasible to analyze the whole universe of the units of analysis. A sample must therefore be selected which will be representative of the universe, as specified by the C set. Various standard statistical procedures may be followed in selecting appropriate probability or purposive (non-probability) sample.

(c) *The Basis for the Correspondence (Translation)*

*Rule for Comparison*

The third decision in establishing *how* to compare is to determine the correspondence or translation rule between a given property (*z*), and its corresponding property in each set (A and B). For example, if one of the *z* properties is the physical size of an object, an operational definition of physical size which will fit all objects being compared must be established. If a man and a crab are being compared using the height of the leg as the dimension of physical size, it would not provide a very meaningful comparison. Structural-physical similarities may therefore not be enough, since similar objects or properties may play a different role or perform different functions in two different contexts. For example, the government of a socialist economy may not play the same role as in a capitalist or mixed economy, or a priest or church leader might perform different functions in different churches.

The basis of correspondence for a given property may, therefore, be not only structural but either *functional*, *i. e.*, the function performed by the property with respect to the object or system, or *evolutionary*, *i. e.*, the role of the property with respect to the growth or development of the object or system. For example, in the comparison of the man and the crab, a common property based on a functional correspondence would be the use of a leg as a means of locomotion, whereas one based on an evolutionary correspondence would be

the stage of development of the leg in the crab's and the man's evolutionary process.

Despite their limitations as dominant approaches for comparative studies, the structural functional and evolutionary approaches comprise the relevant set of alternative bases for the correspondence rule. Once this has been determined the specific units of measurements (or indices) and how to measure them in each unit of analysis, must be determined. For example, the rate of divorce might be an appropriate way to measure the degree of family or social stability in one country, but not in another where there was no formal divorce procedures.

Thus a correspondence rule is needed to translate an abstract property ( $z$ ) into a meaningful and operationally defined property for the system which is being compared. This process is basically the establishment of relations of analogy between the abstract  $z$  properties (the "model") and the equivalent properties in the systems that are being compared. The process has to be based, therefore, on both adequate understanding of the specific nature of the systems being compared (A and B) and on the rules for and logic of analogy (Hesse, 1966).

#### *Applying the Methodology to a Comparative Marketing Study*

The methodology presented above was developed and applied in connection with a study of comparative marketing systems (Wind and Douglas, 1968). Using the conceptual framework outlined in Figure 1, the appropriate system and its relevant properties, the units of analysis, the desired type of comparison and the relevant research hypotheses, were determined from the objective of the comparative analysis.

The study was primarily concerned with analyzing the interaction of a marketing system with its environment, and with examining the effect of different environmental characteristics on the structure and functioning of a marketing system. This indicated that the scope of the analysis, *i. e.*, the C set, should comprise the marketing system and its environment, and that the appropriate unit of analysis or focal system should be the marketing system as a whole, *i. e.*, the marketing system of a country.

Four basic system elements, activities, participants, constraints and results were then identified in a marketing system. The activities of a marketing system were defined as all those activities involved in an exchange of goods and services between two or more people, for example, negotiating, financing, buying and selling, transporting of goods, etc. Participants in the system consisted of those performing these activities, for example, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, consumers and auxiliary agents such as insurance brokers, transportation companies, and government. The constraints on mar-

keting activities included the values and objectives of specific participants, society and the marketing system in general, as well as the availability of resources used to perform activities, *i.e.*, labour and capital, technical skills. The outcome of these activities were considered to consist of all returns to system elements and to the system in general, for example, satisfaction to consumers, profit to marketing firms, effect on social values.

Since the analysis was primarily concerned with the interaction between a marketing system and its environment, the relevant type of comparison and hence the appropriate research hypotheses were primarily of the  $(s_1 \longleftrightarrow S_1)$   $(s_2 \longleftrightarrow S_2)$  type, *i.e.*, comparisons of the relationship of different marketing systems to their respective (different) socio-economic-political-technological environments.

A sample of national marketing systems operating under different types of environmental conditions were, therefore, selected, and the relationships between these different environmental conditions and the nature and performance of marketing activities were examined. The constraints were viewed as summarizing the impact of environmental variables on the system. The effect of specific constraints, such as the degree of marketing orientation of the firm, the size of the firm, the level of economic development, on marketing activities in general and on specific exchange activities, such as financing, communication, and transportation, were analyzed.

The comparison focused on the activities performed in a marketing system. Since these activities were based on the concept of exchange as fundamental to a marketing system, they were not tied to specific empirical referents (*i.e.*, culture or society bound). They could thus be identified in any marketing system, irrespective of its specific environment or level of development.

Using the methodological framework thus provided a clear and explicit research plan for the project. Based on the objective of the study, it enabled the determination of the appropriate scope of the analysis, the relevant units of analysis and properties to be compared. The appropriate type of comparison was similarly indicated. Once these aspects of the study had been determined, specific research methods could then be established to select, process and analyze the data required for the verification of the specific research hypotheses.

### *Conclusion*

This paper has attempted to provide some understanding of the nature and concept of a comparison and its application to the comparative study of any system or subsystem. A specific methodological framework for comparative studies has been suggested, indicating how to establish both *what* to compare and *how* to make a comparison. The methodology is sufficiently generalized to apply



to any type of comparative study in the behavioural sciences irrespective of the particular objective or problem context.

The proposed methodology has a number of advantages. In the first place, it provides an operational approach for comparative studies, indicating clearly and explicitly the steps to be followed. It distinguishes between the object of comparison and the type of comparison.

Secondly, it underlines the dependence of decisions about *what* and *how* to compare on the objective of the comparison and suggests how a comparative study can be designed and research hypotheses generated so as to fit the desired objective.

Thirdly, the approach, although flexible in its breadth, emphasizes the importance of viewing a system as an integrated interdependent whole, rather than as composed of separate elements. A comprehensive comparison should, therefore, analyze all elements of a system simultaneously in order to take into account their interaction rather than focusing on comparisons between individual elements.

Forthly, the methodology intends to solve the "problem of comparability" which in the context of a socio-economic analysis, for example, arises, according to Smelser (1967, pp. 101-2) at three distinct levels :

- (a) How can we be certain that the *events* and *situations* we wish to explain are comparable from one socio-cultural context to another?
- (b) How can we be certain that the general *dimensions* used to compare societies cross culturally do not do violence to the events and situations we wish to study?
- (c) How is it possible to compare very different *social units* (or social systems) with one another?

Finally, the methodology can also be used as a classification scheme for different types of comparative studies. It thus reveals what types of comparison have or have not been made, and indicates appropriate lines for further investigation. The methodology, therefore, not only provides an improved research design for comparative studies but can also serve as a guideline to research needs.

The advantages of using this methodological framework were clearly evident in the authors' attempt to study comparative marketing systems (Wind and Douglas, 1968). The framework is, however, still far from providing a complete and comprehensive guide for "meaningful" comparative studies. The increasing amounts of "so-called" comparative data, and the current interest in comparative studies, suggest the need for further work in developing appropriate methodologies for comparative behavioural studies. It is our hope that this paper will stimulate such efforts and hence provide another step in the ladder toward better understanding of behavioural phenomena.

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