COMMENTARY

The cross-cultural research imperative: 
the need to balance cross-national and 
intra-national diversity

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Abstract
This paper provides a brief overview of the evolution of comparative 
management theories/paradigms, and highlights the contribution of the 
'cross-vergence' construct. Despite progress, most studies of work values 
across countries continue to suffer from two primary limitations. The first is the 
fallacious assumption of cultural homogeneity with nations. Given the growing 
diversity of the workforce within country, intra-national variations can often be 
as significant as cross-national differences. The second is the fallacious 
assumption of cultural stability over time. Since cultures evolve, albeit slowly, 
it is important to take these changes over time into consideration, and be 
aware of the paradoxes inherent within any given society. Hence the paper calls 
for the need to balance cross-national and intra-national diversity in order to 
truly understand cross-cultural phenomena, and thus further improve the 
quality of cross-cultural research.

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COMPARATIVE MANAGEMENT THEORIES AND PARADIGMS: 
THE EARLY YEARS

The first systematic attempt to study and compare management 
practices across countries began with Harbison and Myers' 
publication Management in the industrial world: An international 
analysis (1959). In their book they hypothesized that variations in 
management styles could be attributed, by and large, to the stage 
and pace of economic development. This work was followed by a 
fairly rapid succession of research on the subject, including Farmer 
and Richman's Comparative management and economic progress 
(1965), which focused on the impact of the institutional environ- 
ment on managerial effectiveness, and Haire, Ghiselli, and Porter's 
Managerial thinking: An international study (1966), which adopted a 
behavioral approach to examine the values and attitudes that guide 
managerial action and practices.

Much of the subsequent comparative management research 
centered around the behavioral approach, as evidenced by 
Hofstede's (1980) influential work on cultural dimensions. Other 
cultural schemas ensued, including Schwartz's value inventory