



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 environment 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