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# A Thematic Analysis of Cultural Variations in Family Businesses: The CASE Project

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## Abstract

This article shows cross-cultural variations in family businesses using nine cross-cultural dimensions of family business from the CASE project. A content analysis of the emergent themes from a set of contextual articles on family businesses in 10 regional clusters worldwide, as defined by the GLOBE program, is conducted. This thematic analysis shows qualitative as well as quantitative variations in the family businesses of different cultural regions. Further research is required to understand the rich diversity of family businesses within each cluster and to refine scholars' knowledge about how the dimensions of family business are manifested in different clusters.

## Keywords

comparative study, thematic analysis, family business dimensions, the CASE project, the GLOBE program

Over the years, a growing number of international studies of family businesses have been conducted. In one review, Wortman (1995) found 144 country-focused family business studies; 84 (58%) focused on the United States, Canada, or the United Kingdom, and all were single-country studies. Based on this, Wortman concluded,

Presently, there are essentially no comparative studies of family business across cultural boundaries, ethnic boundaries, and country borders. Are there really differences in the ways in which family businesses operate sub-nationally, nationally, or globally? . . . Under what [environmental/] organizational contexts do family businesses operate most successfully? (p. 56).

Since then, more studies focused on family businesses in various nations have emerged and with greater consideration of contextual factors. Centeno-Caffarena (2006) found 120 articles published between 1977 and 2006 that examined the role of the institutional context of nations on family businesses. One third of the studies involved the United States, but other popular nations

studied included Spain (15%), China (6%), and the United Kingdom (6%). The most frequently examined institutional factors included culture (17%), values (15%), gender (14%), conflict (10%), networks (8%), and social capital (6%).

In light of the emerging evidence, Smith (2008) issued a call for “new empirical studies that control for context,” cautioning that “the differences between family and non-family firms may be less than many earlier studies have indicated and that industry differences and cross-national differences” (p. 40) may be more important.

## Context and Multination Studies

We searched the leading electronic databases (e.g., ABI/INFORM, EBSCO, and Business Source Premier) to identify multination studies that had been conducted since the mid-1990s and their contexts. Our search

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