

**INVITED ARTICLE**

**INTER-GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN INDIVIDUALISM/COLLECTIVISM  
ORIENTATIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR OUTLOOK TOWARDS HRD/HRM  
PRACTICES IN INDIA AND THE UNITED STATES**

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**Abstract**

This article proposes a conceptual model to explore the effects of inter-generational transition in individualism/collectivism orientations on the outlook towards different human resource development (HRD) and management practices. It contributes to the existing cross-cultural research in HRD by defining three prominent generations in India and by proffering a comparative cross-cultural study of the effect of generations on individualism/collectivism orientations and preferences for human resource practices in India and the United States.

The unprecedented growth of globalization has altered the global economy and caused tremendous changes in the management and conduct of business and organizations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With the arrival of globalization, multinational organizations have eliminated borders and barriers of trade between nations resulting in a shift in traditional patterns of investment, production, distribution, and exchange of human resource development (HRD) and human resource management (HRM) practices across borders. However, the implementations of HRD/HRM practices have often failed in the overseas subsidiaries due to the cultural unsuitability of those practices. Several authors suggest that successful implementation of HRD/HRM practices depend on whether the employees perceive them to be appropriate (Erez & Earley, 1993) and that the individualism/collectivism (I/C) orientation of employees can influence their preferences for different HRD/HRM practices (Gomez-Mejia & Welbourne, 1991). Thus, a study of preferences for HRD and HRM practices can guide human resource practitioners in the successful implementation of HRD/HRM practices in the overseas subsidiaries. This paper discusses potential cultural and generational factors that can influence preferences of Indian and U.S. employees for HRD and HRM practices in the subsidiaries located in India and their headquarters in the United States.

## **Problem Statement**

The advent of globalization has made India an attractive location for international business. Consequently, many multinational organizations located in the United States have opened overseas subsidiaries in India. Although there are studies involving cross-national comparison of human resource practices between India and other countries (e.g., Lawler, Jain, Venkata Ratnam, & Atmiyananda, 1995; Sparrow & Budhwar, 1997), previous studies have mostly focused on the effect of national and organizational factors on the choice of different HRD/HRM practices. For instance, a six-country comparative study of U.S. subsidiaries in developing countries including India suggests that economic, legal, technological, and political conditions can influence different managerial actions and practices (Negandhi & Prasad, 1971). As generational differences have not been considered in understanding the preferences for HRD/HRM practices, a discussion on the influence of generational differences in the cultural outlook of Indian employees and their U.S. counterparts towards different HRD/HRM practices seems prudent both from a theoretical and practical point of view.

## **Methods**

For this article, we reviewed the cross-cultural and cross-national comparative studies on HRD/HRM practices in India and the United States conducted within an approximate 20 year time span (1985-2006). Electronic databases, such as EBSCO, ProQuest, and JESTOR, helped us to obtain scholarly articles on generational differences, cultural orientations, and outlook towards HRD/HRM practices. In addition, bibliographies of books and web references related to the topic concerned were reviewed. Keywords and phrases used to search the literature included “cultural specificity of HRD/HRM practices,” “effect of generations on self-construal,” “individualist-collectivist (I/C) orientations of Indians and U.S. Americans,” and “effect of I/C orientation on attitudes towards HRD/HRM practices.” The articles generated from these searches were studied, and only peer reviewed articles pertinent to these areas guided the conceptualization of the model proposed in the paper.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this article is to discuss how the value orientations of different generations can affect cultural orientations of Indian and U.S. employees and consequently their preferences for different HRD/HRM practices. First the generational cohorts in India and the United States are described followed by a theoretical framework that suggests how generation can moderate the relationship between nationality and individual self-construal. Finally, two paragraphs explaining the connections among self-construal, individualism/collectivism, and preferences for HRD/HRM practices precede the propositions and the conceptual model proposed in the article.

## **Generational Cohorts in India and the United States**

We make an attempt to describe three different generational cohorts in India and the United States in the subsequent paragraphs. Kupperschmidt (2000) defined generation as an exclusive group that besides sharing birth years, also shares age, location, and significant life

events at critical developmental stages. A generational group, often represented as a cohort, includes those who share historical or social life experiences, the effects of which are relatively enduring over the course of their lives. These life experiences are phenomenal in distinguishing one generation from another (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). Kopperschmidt (2000) further asserted that a cohort results in the development of a personality that influences a person's feelings toward authority and organizations. While the generational cohorts in the United States are well established, there is a scarcity of research on the existence or characteristics of generational cohorts in India.

### *Generational Cohorts in India*

India, the largest and most populous democracy in the world, is replete with contradictions and antagonism between the new and the old, and the traditional and the modern, making India a goldmine for the sociologists. Over the years, many cultures and rulers have influenced India, and each has added to the uniqueness and diversity of India. Major social and political events, including several wars, famine, a protectionist national policy, opening of the economy, and finally the software boom, resulted in distinct change in the demographics of Indians, resulting in three different birth cohorts in India.

While the U.S. generational cohorts have been thoroughly researched, we believe that this is the first ever endeavor from an Indian perspective. Our principal focus is on the nature of cultural and social change in India, which has profound implications on Indian corporate transformation. We also acknowledge the fact that India is a land of contrast, where we have more than 26% of people living below the poverty line and where there are tremendous differences in the way people live in urban and rural areas (Medora, 2007).

We identify the three generations as Conservatives, Integrators, and Y2K. At the outset, we would like to convey the point that the categorization of generational cohorts in this paper is more likely a representation of urban India.

*Conservatives, born between 1947-1969.* The generation born in the decade following India's independence from British rule on August 15, 1947, grew up during times that endured three wars, several famines, and rigid protectionism. Such adversities made them shy, obedient, and preferring socialism in the 1960s and '70s (Kripalani, 1999). The Government interference was at its maximum. Bureaucratic red tape strangled the private sector, leading to rampant corruption and massive inefficiency. Congress was the only dominant political party that was voted into office again and again.

During this era, the importance of family was a major theme. They idealized large families and their main goal in life was to make one's parents proud. Family unity and family integrity were highly valued and joint or extended family was the predominant family form (Mullatti, 1995). This phase was also characterized by a rigid caste system, whereby social position of each person was determined by heredity, and not by personal accomplishments. Mullatti (1995) posited that membership in a caste was decided by birth in family, which dictates one's occupation and alliances.

Conservatives had high levels of national pride, stressing social conformity rather than individualist striving, respect for authority, and protectionist attitudes towards foreign trade. People belonging to this generation were techno phobic, regarded civil services with high regard, and tended to be avid savers. Consumer choice was limited to one state-run TV channel known as Doordarshan and few brands of household products such as shampoo, soaps, and car models that remained the same for decades (Kripalani, 1999).

*Integrators, born between 1970-1984.* In this era, the emphasis moved from economic and physical security towards an increased emphasis on self-expression and quality of life concerns. There was improvement in economic growth that reduced poverty significantly. This generation can be defined as the product of India's economic liberalization, bringing about incredible sociological change and initiating a period of painful transition from one-party, socialist rule to an economy where free markets are more important (Kripalani, 1999). This period was marked with major social changes. The middle class started dominating the workforce and a great deal of integration occurred. The caste identity diminished, as did the regional identity due to inter-class marriages, inter-regional marriages, and inter-religious marriages. There was also a substantial amount of migration from rural to urban India in search of better education and career prospects. The advent of globalization upon the youth of this generation made them less conservative and insular, unlike their parents. They proudly mixed Indian values with Western packaging.

People of this generation enjoyed wearing saris and still admired Mahatma Gandhi. However, they also liked wearing blue jeans, drinking fizzy sodas, and watching MTV (Kripalani, 1999). As Rajan (1993) suggested, the new Indian woman not only attended to her national identity but also displayed a global outlook that would make her grandma proud. The availability of satellite television provided an alternative to Doordarshan, which led to the proliferation of both U.S. television shows as well as the production of Indian versions of U.S. talk and game shows (Fernandes, 2000). This period also marked a significant increase in readership of English consumer magazines, which increased from approximately 29,000 to over 93,000 in 1988-1989, despite the effects of a national economic recession (Fernandes, 2000). *Hinglish*, a hybridized language that combines Hindi and English, became the medium of communication.

Due to the tech-services boom, the country's college grads could enjoy economic optimism, and unlike the generation of their parents and grandparents, this group had hopes for vibrant job prospects (Hamm, 2008). Social, economical, and political liberalization brought about a paradigm shift in people's thinking allowing Indians to believe that making money was respectable (Kripalani, 1999). This new generation shared the ambition of becoming rich. They were tech-savvy, grew up amidst food surpluses, could watch several TV channels via cable television, tended to be guiltless consumers, and favored computer driven higher paying careers. Government jobs were considered to be unattractive and out of fashion. In a nutshell, the integrators were clearly the amalgamation of Indian traditional cultural heritage and modernized western values.

*The Y2K generation, born between 1985-1995.* The Y2K generation was instrumental in recalibrating the image of our country in a global arena. Previously, India was known as a

country of snake charmers, poor people, and Mother Teresa, whereas today India's image has been transformed into a country that breeds brainy people and computer wizards (Friedman, 2005). Furthermore, the economic reforms initiated since 1991 opened up the Indian economy, playing a crucial role in furthering the modernization of India. India is now one of the fastest growing economies in the world with a growth rate of 9.1% ("Economic Boom and Poverty", 2008). The Y2K youngsters are progressive by birth. They like new games, latest software, and trendy gadgets. They have grown up during times that have seen surging salaries and a huge boom in the economy. The world is flat for them, as they can explore every opportunity irrespective of any geographical boundary. Connectivity with the world is indispensable for them, as they cannot survive even a day without mobile or internet. They see future cash-flow as resource to spend. They do not perceive a loan as a liability and are willing to spend on credit. Decent education and jobs are no longer distant possibilities for them. They have an individualistic rationale for their personal and professional lifestyles that include choice of professions, work-life balance, and sexual orientation. They are assertive about their choices in life and fearless about their aspirations. They belong to the generation of opportunities and possibilities.

### *Generational Cohorts in the United States*

Based on the demographics of the workforce, people in the U.S. is also divided into three groups, namely the Baby Boomers, the X Generation and the Y Generation (Smola & Sutton, 2002). While there is a general consensus on the labels attached to the different generational cohorts in the United States, there is some disagreement on the years encompassing them (Smola & Sutton, 2002). The beginning of the boomers' birth years vary between 1940 to 1946 and generally end between 1960 to 1964. Similarly, the X Generation's birth years begin somewhere in the early 1960s and end between 1975 to 1982 (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998; Kupperschmidt, 2000). The generation born between 1979 and 1994 is named the Millennials or the Y Generation (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

The Baby Boomers to a certain extent are an assimilation of the Conservative and the Integrator Indians as they display collectivistic values in shouldering responsibility towards parents and their children like the Conservatives, and value material success like the Integrators (Kupperschmidt, 2000). The Baby Boomers account for most of the workforce and still hold the maximum number of influential positions in most of today's organizations (Kyles, 2005). Sirias, Karp, and Brotherton (2007) noted that due to their influential positions, Baby Boomers are implementing team based structures in organizations. This may be due to their being in universities or colleges or just starting their careers when participative team oriented styles of management began to gain dominance in the 1970s and early 1980s.

The literature suggests that the X Generation, also referred to as Baby Busters, are significantly different from their predecessors (O'Bannon, 2001). The X Generation grew up amidst financial, family, and social insecurity and lacked the foundation of any solid tradition (Smola & Sutton, 2002). This resulted in a highly individualistic mind frame. They are very similar to the Generation Y2K Indians, as both these generations are technically competent and tolerant to diversity, change, and competition (Kupperschmidt, 2000). The influence of latchkey social conditions, MTV, shopping malls, video games, and environmental conditions, including

global competition, have inculcated values, expectations, and ways of working in the X Generation, which are quite different from the Baby Boomers (O'Bannon, 2001).

Generation scholars have varied assumptions about the attitudes of the X Generation. Many authors have described this group as pragmatists, detached, unfocused, unreliable, disloyal, arrogant, opportunistic, and cynical (Alerton & Tulgan, 1996). Kennedy (1994) concurred that the X Generation is loyal to individuals than to institutions. She further added that this generation witnessed their parents being laid off in the early 1980s and again in the mid 1990s, and hence, this generation grew up with diminished expectations. The experience of witnessing their parents' suffering during downsizing might be the reason for their lack of commitment towards organizations. The X Generation has been described as rebellious job hoppers by Cordeniz (2002). However, Tulgan (1997) pictured this generation in a positive frame, describing them as being flexible, computer savvy, entrepreneurial, independent problem solvers, adaptive to change, and value added providers.

The Millennials or the Y Generation have just started entering the workforce and are said to be born into a wired world where they are connected 24 hours a day (Smola & Sutton, 2002). According to Lancaster, Stillman, and Mackay (2002), they are known to be more inquisitive than any other prior generation, as they tend to challenge the conventional way of functioning. Like the X Generation, they have also witnessed their parents being victimized by downsizing and have developed a cynical and untrusting attitude.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This section presents the theoretical framework of this article. We combine two conceptual frameworks to understand how the cultural orientations of Indian and U.S. employees might vary across generations. The first is Hofstede's (1980) conceptualization of nationality being the predictor of I/C orientations of Indians and U.S. employees. The second is Inglehart's (1997) generational sub-culture theory, which proposes that significant macro-level social, political, and economic events occurring during a birth cohort's impressionable pre-adult years can result in individuals developing a generational identity with distinctive set of values, beliefs, expectations, and behaviors that remain fairly constant throughout a generation's lifetime.

#### *Individualist-Collectivist Orientation and National Culture*

In order to distinguish between the variations in cultural values across nations, the seminal work of Greer Hofstede (1980) seems the most relevant. But a pertinent question that can be raised now is to what extent Hofstede's dimension of national culture is applicable in today's world, which has undergone a major metamorphosis since Hofstede's conceptualization of nationality. The present economic conditions have resulted in business organizations setting bases in diverse cultures and countries. The shifting boundaries, rise in virtual work, and increasing migration are making it complex to define the culture of a particular nation. Simultaneously, it is constantly posing threat to the nearly universally accepted model of national cultures framed by Hofstede.

Hofstede (1980, 1983) has defined national cultures along four dimensions, namely power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, and individualism versus collectivism. Hofstede (1980, 1983) defines these dimensions as follows: (a) power distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions expect and accept that power is distributed unequally, (b) uncertainty avoidance is the intolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity, (c) masculinity versus femininity is the assertiveness and competitiveness versus modesty and caring, and (d) individualism versus collectivism is defined according to the integration of individuals into groups.

Since Hofstede's (1980) work on national cultures, human resource scholars have extensively used the role of individualistic versus collectivistic values in influencing work attitudes of employees (Ramamoorthy, Kulkarni, Gupta, & Flood, 2007). In this article we focus on the I/C dimension of cultural variation, for two reasons. First, I/C is one of the most commonly operationalized dimension (Morling & Lamoureaux, 2008), and second, psychologists have targeted I/C as a central cultural syndrome (Triandis, 1996). It should be noted however, that Hofstede's (1980) initial conceptualization was a one-dimensional bipolar view of human values, with individualism and collectivism at the opposite ends of a continuum. Nations and cultures were defined as residing at one or the other of those extremes or somewhere between the two. Subsequent studies have treated I/C as a multi-dimensional individual difference variable (Ramamoorthy & Flood, 2002).

Hofstede (1980) and Triandis (2001) posited that collectivistic cultures are often associated with non-western societies, where people are interdependent within their in-groups. In contrast, individualistic societies are often associated with western, industrialized, and modern societies, wherein people are more self-directed and independent from their in-groups. In a collectivistic society, precedence is given to the goals of in-groups, on the contrary in an individualistic culture, highest priority is accorded to personal goals. Further extending this line of thinking, Triandis (2001) suggested that there are different types of individualism and collectivism. From Triandis' conceptualization, culture can be divided into four quadrants namely horizontal individualism, where people strive to be unique and do their own thing; vertical individualism wherein people want to do their own thing and strive to be the best; horizontal collectivism, where people unite themselves with their in-groups; and vertical collectivism, where people succumb to the authorities of the in-group and are willing to sacrifice themselves for their in-group. Triandis (2001) contends that Indians are vertical collectivists whereas U.S. Americans are vertical individualists. However, other contemporary writers have deciphered a strong element of individualism among Indian collectivism (Sinha, Sinha, Verma, & Sinha, 2001). This could be an effect of continuing modernization, which is more thoroughly explained by Inglehart's (1997) generational sub-culture theory in the subsequent section.

Furthermore, one of the basic problems with many cross-cultural studies is that the country is often misconstrued as culture. Babbie (1989) posited that this interchangeable use of the concept of culture and country creates two critical problems. First, it results in an ecological fallacy, making an assertion on one type of unit of analysis, for example the culture, on the basis of the examination of another, such as the country or the ethnic group. And the second problem is the use of aggregate data that does not differentiate between people despite some obvious differences. Such assumption leads to homogeneity of cultural orientations within countries (Sun

& Stewart, 2000), which is not exactly the case, as there are intra country variations as well (Lavee & Katz, 2003). Additionally, researchers have already acknowledged the fact that national and cultural values are not the same and cannot be used interchangeably (Sawang & Oei, 2006). Hence, other factors such as the effect of generational cohorts might help to explain the variations in cultural orientations of individuals within countries.

### *Generation as a Sub-Culture*

Generation as a sub-culture can moderate the national cultural orientation because individuals belonging to different generational cohorts experience significantly different events that influence their impressionable pre-adult years of life. According to Thau and Heflin (1997), generational cohorts are defined as subcultures in the society with distinctively different value orientations. A particular cohort's values are shaped by significant cultural, political, and economic developments occurring during a generation's pre-adult years. Inglehart's (1997) theory of intergenerational values is based on the socialization and the scarcity hypotheses. The socialization hypothesis proposes that socioeconomic conditions during individuals' childhood and adolescence shape their basic values as adults. And the scarcity hypothesis states that the socioeconomic aspects that are in short supply during a generation's youth are likely to influence the kind of values that generation will subscribe to as adults. For instance, generations growing up amidst social upheavals such as wars tend to learn modernist survival values of conformity, whereas generations growing up in a secure economic environment learn postmodernist values of individualism.

Mishra (1994) and Triandis (1995) found that people growing up in settings that were less developed and less urbanized developed collectivist behavioral traits whereas people growing up in affluent and urban places developed individualistic behaviors as they were less likely to depend on others for their every day needs.

Thus, although nationality or a nation's cultural context can predict an individual's traditional cultural orientation, generational differences may moderate the way he or she views himself or herself and sometimes perception of the self may vary from the traditional perception. An individual's self-perception in relation to others has been defined by Markus and Kitayama (1991) as self-construal. According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), self-construal is what people "believe about the relationship between the self and others, and especially, the degree to which they see themselves as separate from others and as connected with others" (p. 226). When the view of self is connected to others, self-construal of the individual is interdependent, whereas when the view of self is separate and distinct from others, the individual's self-construal is independent. While Hofstede's (1980) theory of individualism-collectivism refers to the national culture as a whole, self-construal refers to the individual's view of the self, which may differ from the national cultural view due to the influence of distinct generational cohorts.

Thus, the theoretical framework implies that generation may moderate the relationship between an individual's nationality and his/her self-construal and informs the conceptual model proposed in the article.

## **Self-Construal and Individualism/Collectivism Orientation**

A brief discussion on the relation of self-construal and cultural values of individualism and collectivism is required before we review the literature that has linked cultural values to HRD/HRM practices. The Markus and Kitayama's (1991) framework of independent and interdependent self-construal provides an interesting backdrop for discussing how individual cognitions, emotions, and levels of motivation can be oriented by one's view of self as connected or disconnected from others at work and how such orientations can affect work attitudes. In regards to the cognitive domain, Markus and Kitayama (1991) contend that individuals with interdependent selves may "be more attentive and sensitive to others than those with independent selves. The attentiveness and sensitivity to others, characterizing the interdependent selves, will result in a relatively greater cognitive elaboration of the other or of the self-in-relation-to-others" (p. 231). In regards to the emotion domain, Markus and Kitayama (1991) believe that people with interdependent self-construal may experience an affective dimension that is defined by their level of engagement or attachment with others, "one representing the extent to which the individual is engaged or disengaged from an interpersonal relationship" (p. 238). Finally, the level of employee motivation might also vary according to an individual's self-construal. For instance, individuals with an independent self-construal may attribute higher importance to opportunities that allow them to express their unique qualities, whereas individuals with an interdependent self-construal may give higher priority to maintenance of group harmony over opportunities of assertion of individual views and expectations that might run contrary to group decisions (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, it is apparent that independent self-construal relates to cognition, emotion, and motivation levels that support individualistic values of self-assertion and uniqueness whereas inter-dependent self-construal relates to cognition, emotion, and motivation levels that support collectivistic values of harmony and belongingness. In view of this obvious relationship, we can argue that employees with independent self-construal may prefer HRD/HRM practices that value assertion of an individual's ability, whereas employees with inter-dependent self-construal may prefer HRD/HRM practices that focus on team skills and team performance. This connection is depicted in the conceptual model proposed in the article.

### **Individualism/Collectivism Orientation and Preference for HRD/HRM Practices**

Few studies in the literature (Aycan, 2005; Kanungo & Jaeger, 1990) have systematically linked cultural values of individualism and collectivism to HRD/HRM practices. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) initially proposed the cultural orientation framework that identified a set of four basic orientations regarding relationships that humans have with each other and their environment. They are: (a) the human nature orientation, (b) the person nature orientation, (c) the activity orientation, and (d) the relational orientation. Of these four, the relational orientation is relevant to our article.

According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), the relational orientation has three subdivisions: (a) lineal or hierarchical, (b) collateral or collectivistic, and (c) individualistic. The hierarchical dimension attributes highest importance to the hierarchy of authority. According to this notion, individuals at higher echelons in organizations should be responsible for making decisions for the ones who are hierarchically below them and there should be a distance between leaders and followers.

The collectivistic dimension attributes highest importance to one's workgroup and cultures advocating a collectivistic dimension expect individuals to sacrifice their own interest for the good of all. And, the individualistic dimension reflects the belief of a philosophy that encourages independence by rewarding individuals for performance and by making individuals accountable for their actions.

Thus, individuals with the hierarchical cultural orientation are more likely to perceive HRD/HRM practices endorsing empowerment unfavorably unlike individuals with individualistic orientation who prefer autonomy over hierarchical authority. Additionally, individuals with a collectivistic orientation might perceive team based performance management and development initiatives favorably unlike the ones with individualistic orientation who believe in independent contributions to work. The hierarchical dimension is pertinent to our discussion as collectivism in India is blended with strong hierarchical orientation resulting in what Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, and Gefland (1995) called vertical collectivism. In vertical collectivism people have a sense of dutifulness to the authorities of the in-group (Triandis, 2001).

The relation between HRD/HRM practices and culture has also been explicated by the theoretical model of culture fit (MCF) by Kanungo and Jaeger (1990). According to the MCF, the organizational work culture is based on elements such as the task and the employees with the management implementing HRD/HRM practices depending on their assumptions of the type of tasks and the nature of employees. Thus, the nature of employees, including their I/C orientations, guides the implementation of HRD/HRM practices.

The following discussion will specify the relevance of I/C orientations in HRD and HRM practices by reviewing scholarly research work that have studied the effect of I/C orientations on preferences for HRD and HRM practices in organizations.

#### *Individualism/Collectivism Orientation and HRD*

Unsworth and Bonello (1999) examined the relationship between employees' I/C orientation and attitudes or preferences towards HRD activities such as training and development activities. They conducted a survey of 191 manufacturing employees who provided information on I/C orientation, preferences for training practices, and actual participation behavior in different kinds of training and developmental activities. The findings showed that employees with greater collectivistic orientation preferred activities that emphasized group or team skills. However, the authors did not find any relationship between an employee's preference for developmental activities emphasizing personal skills and his/her individualistic orientation. Analysis of actual participation behavior in training and development practices also showed that collectivists participated more in activities that stressed group skills than activities focusing on individual skills. The trend was the opposite in case of individualists.

Unsworth and Bonello's (1999) findings supports the results reported by Earley (1994). In his experiment, Earley (1994) found that group-focused training that stressed the collective self and enhancement of in-group capability was more effective in improving self-efficacy and performance of Chinese participants who have a collectivistic cultural orientation, whereas

individual focused training that emphasized personal capability and private self was more effective for U.S. participants who have an individualistic cultural orientation. Thus, I/C orientations might have significant implications on the conduct of training and development activities in organizations. Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) advocated the use of I/C constructs in different aspects of training such as training objectives, audience analysis, program design, and training methods. Additionally, I/C orientations may predict different learning styles in adult employees. Braman (1998) investigated the relationship between self-directed learning and I/C by using two combined instruments namely the self-directed learning readiness scale and a measure of individualism and collectivism. He found a statistically significant relationship between self-directed learning and individualism, whereas there was no significant relationship between self-directed learning and collectivism. Thus, based on these findings it can be argued that HRD activities encouraging self-directed learning approaches may not be successful with employees who have a collectivistic cultural orientation.

Moreover, HRD practitioners should consider the I/C orientation construct while designing formal mentoring programs for their employees. As noted by Sanchez and Colon (2005), mentoring programs that focus on one-on-one relationships may be less popular with individuals from collectivistic backgrounds, such as Asian American or Latino American backgrounds. Instead, such collectivist individuals would be more drawn towards mentoring from multiple individuals in their social networks. Their argument can be further extended to propose that the developmental network mentoring model with multiple mentors (Higgins & Kram, 2001) would be more suitable for collectivist cultures.

#### *Individualism/Collectivism Orientation and HRM*

The connection between I/C orientations and HRM is explained by the work of Aycan (2005) and Ramamoorthy and Carroll (1998). Aycan (2005) expanded on the MCF model and proposed a typology of HRM practices according to three cultural categories. Two of those categories are relevant to the topic of this article. In the first category, the choice of HRM practices depends on the degree of group harmony and loyalty versus high performance. Individuals from cultural contexts emphasizing collectivism would be more prone to liking HRM practices that reinforce commitment to the in-group whereas; individuals from individualistic cultural contexts would regard individual performance as more important.

In the second category, the importance of hierarchy versus egalitarianism differentiates the HRM practices. Individuals with hierarchical collectivist orientation may prefer the top-down decision making in performance evaluation and top management driven needs assessment for training and development unlike the ones who tend to believe in autonomy and prefer minimal interference from the top management.

As Ramamoorthy and Carroll (1998) noted

Specifically, individual focused job design, emphasis on individual achievements, individual incentive schemes, formal appraisal processes with feedback about performance, and merit-based hiring and promotion are considered as suitable for individualistic cultures. On the other hand, group focused job designs, emphasis on group

achievements, group incentive schemes, informal appraisals, and hiring and promoting individuals on the basis of their loyalty and seniority are considered appropriate for collectivistic cultures. (p. 571)

Additionally, Ramamoorthy and Carroll (1998) noted that although Hofstede (1980) conceptualized individualism-collectivism as a bipolar national character, many researchers (e.g., Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990) have indicated that individualism-collectivism may be multidimensional and should therefore be examined at the individual level.

Ramamoorthy and Carroll (1998) addressed this research gap by treating individualism-collectivism as an individual difference variable and by examining the effect of such orientation of U.S. employees on outlook towards different HRM practices. Their study identified different degrees of individualism and collectivism among U.S. employees and their findings indicated that “a higher collectivism orientation was positively related to preferences for job security, equality in reward allocations, a dislike for individualistic HRM systems, and merit based promotions” (p. 581).

Thus, based on the aforementioned research, it can be argued that HRD/HRM practices are culture specific and awareness of such inclination at the individual level in addition to the information about an individual’s national cultural orientation will help human resource practitioners to align the HRD and HRM practices with the preferences of their employees. This connection is depicted in the conceptual model in the following section.

### **Propositions and Conceptual Model**

According to the arguments from the scholarly research referred in the previous sections, the following propositions can be postulated.

*Proposition 1a.* The Integrators (born between 1970-1984) and the Y2K generation (born between 1985-1995) in India have independent self-construal and attribute higher importance to individualism than the Conservative Indians (born between 1947-1969).

*Proposition 1b.* The Conservative Indians (born between 1947-1969) have dependent self-construal and attribute higher importance to collectivism than the Integrators (born between 1970-1984) and the Y2K generation (born between p1985-1995) in India.

*Proposition 2a.* The Integrators (born between 1970-1984) and the Y2K generation (born between 1985-1995) in India are similar to the X generation (born between 1965-late 1970s) and the Y generation (born between early 1980s-1994) in the U.S in terms of I/C orientation.

*Proposition 2b.* The Conservative Indians (born between 1947-1969) are dissimilar to the Baby Boomers in the U.S (born between 1940-1964) in terms of I/C orientation.

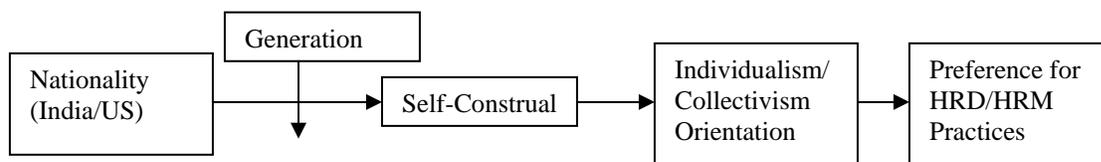
*Proposition 3a.* The Integrators (born between 1970-1984) and the Y2K generation (born between 1985-1995) in India have higher preference for individualistic HRD/HRM practices than the Conservative Indians (born between 1947-1969).

*Proposition 3b.* The Conservative Indians (born between 1947-1969) have higher preference for group oriented HRD/HRM practices than the Integrators (born between 1970-1984) and the Y2K generation (born between 1985-1995) in India.

*Proposition 4a.* The Integrators (born between 1970-1984) and the Y2K generation (born between 1985-1995) in India are similar to the X generation (born between 1965-late 1970s) and the Y generation (born between early 1980s-1994) in the U.S. in terms of preference for HRD/HRM practices.

*Proposition 4b.* The Conservative Indians (born between 1947-1969) are dissimilar to the Baby Boomers (born between 1940-1964) in the U.S. in terms of preference for HRD/HRM practices.

The model in Figure 1 proposes relationships among nationality, self-construal, generation, I/C orientation, and preference for HRD/HRM practices.



*Figure 1.* Relationships among nationality, generational cohorts, self-construal, I/C orientations, and preference for HRD/HRM practices.

The theoretical rationale for the model has been provided in the previous sections. As shown in the figure, generation may moderate the influence of nationality on an individual's self-construal which may influence his/her I/C orientation and consequently his/her preference for HRD/HRM practices.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

This is the first article that attempts to define the generational cohorts in India. We acknowledge that a limitation of this attempt is the possibility of overlap between the generations defined in the Indian context. Empirical studies need to be conducted in future to more clearly identify the similarities and differences between the three Indian generations in order to support the stated propositions.

Regarding recommendations for future research, the conceptual model and the propositions postulated in this article should be empirically verified. A cross-national comparison of I/C orientation and preference for HRD/HRM practices in India and the United States would help to validate the arguments made in this article. The generalizability of the results of such a study could be further enhanced by including different generations of Indians

who have migrated to the United States. Inclusion of the migrated Indians in the sample would help to estimate whether the proximity to traditional Indian society can affect self-construal, I/C orientation, and consequently the preferences for HRD/HRM practices of the three Indian generations defined in this article. Empirical validation of the propositions and the model proposed in this article will guide the global human resource practitioners in proficient application of HRD/HRM practices across the cultural boundaries of India and the United States.

### **Contributions to New Knowledge in HRD**

This article attempts to contribute to the growing field of HRD cross-cultural research in three distinct ways. First, this article is the first endeavor to define three distinct Indian generations and how they may react to different HRD/HRM practices. Second, the article provides a strong grounding to do further empirical research to study the differences in behavior between comparable generations from India and the United States - two diametrically opposite countries. And third, this article provides a conceptual model that can be applied to HRD interventions, such as team orientation training with multi-generational and multi-cultural workforce in transnational organizations. As transnational organizations have work groups with a mix of expatriates, and host country nationals, it is even more critical for human resource practitioners in these organizations to gain a comprehensive understanding of how generational and cultural differences can predict preferences for HRD/HRM interventions. The model proposed in this article hopefully conceptualizes a path linking possible antecedents of such preferences and guides human resource practitioners to design effective interventions for a global workforce.

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