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Polytasking and Job Stress across Cultures

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ABSTRACT

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The current study explored the relationship between country of origin and personal and organizational polytasking in relation to stressors and strains. The study also investigated how temporal incongruence could be a source of *stress*. A total of 440 surveys were collected from full-time employees, including Asian Indians in the USA (n= 67), Asian Indians in India (n=253), and non-Asian Indians in the USA (n= 120). Results indicate that non-Asian Indians in the USA perceive significantly greater levels of personal and organizational polytasking than Asian Indians. There were no significant differences in perceptions of personal and organizational polytasking for Asian Indians (in India and the USA). Second, stressor and strain responses to perceptions of organizational polytasking and temporal incongruence were different among the three cultural groups. Implications for time management and future research directions are discussed.

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Time, a concept so innate to all living beings, is hardly comprehended at all. The significance of time can be evidenced by its pervasiveness in many domains, such as physics, religion, and social sciences. Physicists conceptualize time as a linear concept (Hawking, 1988) with every second leading to another second. People of many eastern religions, for example Buddhists, perceive it as an endless cycle of reincarnation and death (Gombrich, 1988). Social scientists try to unravel the mystery of time (e.g., Hall, 1983), asserting that time is a perspective, an orientation, or a way of organizing things and events that shapes attitudes, behaviors, and mental schemata (Brislin & Kim, 2003; Nonis, Teng & Ford, 2005; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999).

Time is incorporated into various social frameworks, including occupational stress models (Beehr & Newman, 1978). For example, Beehr and Newman explicitly identify time as a key component of occupational stress. However despite this recognition, study of time in occupational stress research is sparse.

Hofstede (2001) further acknowledges that time is a social construct that varies across cultures. Individual constituents (e.g., the family unit, organizations, and national cultures) that endorse their culture's values tend to uphold culturally unique perceptions of time (Hall, 1983). These perceptions of time are so innate to the people within the culture that they become the *silent language* (Hall, 1983), passed on from one generation to the next through the process of socialization. Levine (1997) asserts that "Unsuspecting outsiders…walk into a cultural minefield [when] these unwritten rules are violated" (p.15).

As businesses become increasingly multinational, the organizational practices are typically those reflected in the US business cultures (Nonis et al., 2005). For example, time is a resource that needs to be used efficiently. This means that time at work will always be filled with various work activities. In other words, people will juggle tasks (polytask, Leonard, 2008). This *preference* to juggle tasks is defined as polychronicity (König & Waller, 2010) or polytasking (Leonard, 2008). Specifically, employees who prefer to juggle tasks are labeled polychronic (polytaskers) whereas employees who prefer to focus on one task at a time are labeled monochronic (monotaskers) (Bluedorn, Kalliath, & Strube, 1999; Leonard). Conducting business with someone who does not polytask and respect deadlines or lacks punctuality might be perceived as *stressful* to someone influenced by western business practices. Likewise, a monotasker (i.e., someone who handles tasks sequentially) employed in a polytasking environment might develop strain working in such an environment. Therefore, in this thesis, I study the extent to which time perception relates to occupational stress among three cultural groups, including Asian Indians in India, Asian Indians in the USA, and non-Asian Indians (i.e., employees whose country of origin was not India) in the USA.

The purpose of this thesis is four-fold. First, I will provide a theoretical review of different conceptualizations of time to give the reader a holistic perspective of time. Second, I will review different temporal philosophies that are likely to result in distinct temporal preferences across three groups of employees in high-tech companies, including Asian Indians (in the USA and India) and non-Asian Indians in the USA. Third, I will provide a theoretical review of occupational stress, including Person-Environment (P-E)

fit, stressors, and job outcomes. Fourth, I will discuss the relationship between polytasking congruence (i.e., employees' preference for polytasking and their perceptions of their organization's preference) and both work-related role stressors (i.e., role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload) and strains (anxiety, low well-being, job satisfaction, intention to leave and affective commitment). Throughout each section hypotheses are posed.

Literature Review

Conceptualizations of Time

The underlying premise of time or temporal orientation is that it is implicit in nature, ingrained in our cognitions, and beyond our conscious awareness (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Decades of research (Hall, 1983; Leonard, 2008; Nonis et al., 2005) have finally concluded that individuals construe time differently across cultures. Researchers have broadly categorized time into two main umbrellas – temporal perspective and temporal orientation (Lasane & O'Donnell, 1993). Temporal perspective refers "to the composite cognitive structures that characterize the way an individual projects, collects, accesses, values, and organizes events that reside in distinct temporal loci" (p.12). In contrast, temporal orientation refers to an individual's preference to manage time across various domains (e.g., work or leisure).

Temporal Perspective. Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) define temporal perspective as "a fundamental dimension in the construction of psychological time [that] emerges from cognitive processes partitioning human experience into past, present and future temporal frames" (p. 1271). Each perspective is characterized by a multitude of practices and attitudes (Lasane & O'Donnell, 1993) and reflects how individuals appraise personal experiences and create meaning between past memories, present experiences, and future expectancies. For example, an individual may appraise and recall a particular experience (such as a job interview), as pleasant or unpleasant. Years later, a related event (interview for a higher position) may evoke this memory, contingent upon ability to recall the event and a preference to associate past events with present outcomes. Finally, the

individual's past experiences may alter behaviors and attitudes in the present (e.g., trying to emulate interview strategies that were successful in the previous interview). An individual's temporal perspective can thus influence how he appraises an event, makes certain decisions and cognizes goals.

Time perspective relates to our self-perception (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999), as well as to our well-being (Bond & Feather, 1988). Zimbardo and Boyd developed the Zimbardo Time Perspective Scale (ZTPI) that measured an individual's time perspectives on five dimensions. Briefly, individuals with a past orientation construe their past (i) negatively, or (ii) positively. In contrast, individuals with a present perspective are (iii) hedonistic, that is, focused on the attainment of pleasures, or (iv) fatalistic, that is, rely heavily on fate to attain personal or professional goals. Lastly, individuals with a (v) futuristic approach plan their present to accomplish future goals.

Temporal Orientation. Within the domain of temporal orientation, researchers (e.g., Hall, 1983) construe time in terms of (i) time tangibility- viewing time as a resource (i.e., clock or temponomic time) or as a "backdrop against which events unfold" (Palmer & Schoorman, 1999, p. 325) (i.e., event or temponostic time), and (ii) polychronicity and monochronicity. These are related concepts as will be described below.

Clock Time and Monochronicity. When time acts as a catalyst in predicting behaviors it is called clock time; event time is concerned with the natural inception and conclusion of events (Brislin & Kim, 2003). When cultures operate on clock time regimen, they are referred to as temponomic societies (Jones & Brown, 1993). Time is an integral element of a temponomic society, determining individual behavior. Clock

time cultures, such as the USA (Brislin & Kim), emphasize deadlines and set sequential plans. In temponomic societies, *order* is determined by structure, timeliness, and efficiency around work related tasks (Jones & Brown). Temponomic cultures are future-oriented, sacrificing present gains to realize future goals and are typical of developed economies. For this reason, countries like USA are labeled monochronic (Hall, 1983).

Monochronic (M-time) societies are ones that are time-bound (Hall, 1983). Briefly, monochronicity refers to the tendency to regulate work related events around the clock (Hall, 1983). People in monochronic societies speak of time as being "wasted" (e.g., "I wasted time because my boss was late for the meeting"), "saved" (e.g., "I saved time by taking the shorter route"), or "spent" (e.g., "I spent the whole morning working on this problem") (Hall, p. 45).

Event Time and Polychronicity. In contrast, societies that operate on event time are referred to as temponostic societies, indifferent to the passage of time (Levine 1997). Temponostic cultures are generally present-oriented, living in the now and enhancing personal control. A temponostic perspective is generally pervasive in deprived or underdeveloped societies (Jones & Brown, 1993). Order within temponostic societies is derived from cultural values, social obligations and interdependent group systems that thrive on in-group support (Jones & Brown). Event time cultures, such as India (Brislin & Kim, 2003), regulate the day around events that occur naturally during the course of the day. Indians let events (e.g., helping a coworker meet an unanticipated emergency) interfere with their daily *routine*. For this reason, countries like India are labeled polychronic (Brislin & Kim; Hall, 1983).

Polychronicity (P-time) is defined as a preference for juggling many activities (personal, leisure, and work) within a given time period, such that people in these cultures allow one domain (e.g., leisure) to interfere with another (e.g., work; Hall, 1983). Time is abstract, construed by the natural inception and conclusion of life events (e.g., attending to an unanticipated event, such as an unexpected visit from a colleague or friend in the middle of another ongoing activity) rather than preset schedules. Emphasis is placed on personal relationships and involvement with people. In polychronic societies, people "are deeply immersed in each other's business" (Hall, 1983, p. 46) and value knowing every little detail of people surrounding them; "...their involvement with people is at the very core of their existence" (Hall, 1983, p. 46).

Changes in Conceptualization of Polychronicity. In the decades that followed Hall's (1983) conceptualization of polychronicity, several interpretations and alternate definitions emerged. While Hall's conceptualization of time was at the culture level of analyses, recent studies (e.g., Bluedorn et al., 1999) addressed the concept at the individual level of analyses and on a continuum ranging from polychronic to monochronic (e.g., Bluedorn et al.; Palmer & Schoorman, 1999). This is a digression from Hall's original definition; "… by focusing on the work environment, researchers fail to…" capture "…a hallmark of polychronic cultures" which is "…a permeable, if not absent boundary between work and nonwork" (Todd, 2009, p. 50).

Indeed, Lasane and O'Donnell (1993) purport that temporal orientation is an internal representation of a culture's normative approach to time. They write that temporal orientation is

> …a behavioral predisposition to be more likely influenced by thoughts, emotions, and motivations for a distinct region of time. An individual's time orientation is an individual difference variable that predicts various aspects of an individual's social behavior and the overall self-schema that may reliably drive and influence behavior (p. 14).

This shift in level of analysis can pose a problem when interpreting data, because what holds true for cultures does not necessarily hold true for individuals or organizations (Hofstede, 2001; Todd, 2009). Just because a culture is monochronic, it does not mean that people in that culture are also monochronic in domain specific activities. For example, Americans are polyphasic (i.e., juggling many activities; Palmer & Schoorman, 1999) despite the culture being monochronic. I speculate that at the individual level of analysis, focusing within a life domain (e.g., within work domain or within family domain), Americans will juggle activities. However, they probably do not juggle between life domains such that one interrupts the other. Rather, one engages fully in each domain until *time* for that domain comes to a close. Even Hall (1983) supports this notion that, "… in a deeper sense American time is both polychronic and monochronic. M-time dominates the official worlds of business, government, the professions, entertainment, and sports. However, in the home- particularly the more traditional homes in which women are the core around which everything revolves- one finds that P-time takes over…" (p. 49). In contrast, Asian Indians, unlike Americans, will not juggle activities in the work domain. For example, in their qualitative study, Cotte and Ratneshwar (1999) found that more than half of their Latin American sample preferred

working on a single task in the work domain and juggling activities in the leisure (life) domain. Since Latin Americans are conceptually closer to Asian Indians on the temporal dimension (Brislin & Kim, 2003), one would expect Asian Indians to exhibit similar temporal preferences as Latin Americans.

Slocombe and Bluedorn (1999) conceptualize polychronicity as an individual level trait because *time*, like values, is culturally ingrained into our cognitions, and form stable characteristics rather than transitory states. Further, polychronicity is influenced by environmental demands, personal preferences, type of activity, and context (e.g., Bluedorn et al., 1999; Manrai & Manrai, 1995). In other words, person, environment (i.e., culture), and situation (i.e., life domain) each influence a polychronic/monochronic preference.

Multidimensional Concept of Time

Palmer and Schoorman (1999) further describe polychronicity as a multidimensional construct composed of three independent variables, including time use preference (polyphasic vs. monophasic), context (high context vs. low context communication), and time tangibility. Polyphasia (vs. monophasia) defines a tendency to do many things at once (multitasking vs. monotasking), high context (vs. low context) implies communicating complex ideas employing few words, and time tangibility (vs. time intangibility) implies viewing time as a finite resource around which events can be regulated. Although the constructs (at the individual level) are labeled like that of Hall's (1983) original definition, for the culture level, Hall conceptualizes polychronicity as strictly *polyphasic + high context + time intangible*, and monochronicity as *monophasic*

+ low context + time tangible. In contrast, Palmer and Schoorman (1999) identified polychronicity and monochronicity as independent constructs with eight potential combinations. One of these eight combinations, that is, multitasking (polyphasia), hostility (low context), and time urgency (time tangibility) are likened to Type A Behavior Pattern (TABP) (Palmer & Schoorman). Extracting polyphasia and monophasia from Palmer and Schoorman, we arrive at Bluedorn et al.'s (1999) operationalization of polychronicity vs. monochronicity, whereby polychronicity refers to a preference to juggle many tasks at the same time and monochronicity refers to engaging in one activity at a time.

According to Bluedorn and colleagues (1999), monochronics prefer to focus on one project at a time before initiating the next one, whereas polychronics prefer to move intermittently between ongoing projects. On the basis of these definitions, Bluedorn and colleagues developed The Inventory of Polychronic Values (IPV) in relation to work behaviors (i.e., the work domain). Specifically, they defined polychronicity as "the extent to which people in an [organizational] culture: (i) prefer to be engaged in two or more [work] tasks simultaneously and (ii) believe that their preference was the best way of doing things" (p. 207). The IPV does not take into consideration interpersonal relationships, time tangibility, and communication patterns. Instead it focuses on a single life domain (i.e., work) and a preference for engaging in multiple work tasks (Leonard, 2008; Todd, 2009). A high score on the IPV indicates a preference to multitask and is appropriate for the business world, where virtual teams, working with employees in different time zones and juggling several work projects have become the norm (Todd,

2009). To ensure clarity of the concept, I will refer to this study's assessment of polychronicity vs. monochronicity as *polytasking vs. monotasking* respectively, which is more consistent with the operational definition of the concept (Leonard; 2008; Todd, 2009).

Polytasking refers to an employee's preference to engage in two or more activities within a given time block (Leonard, 2008). In this study, I examine both personal preference for polytasking and same person's perception of his/her organization's preference for polytasking. Additionally, the terms polychronicity and monochronicity will be used to characterize a culture's preference for polychronicity or monochronicity per Hall (1983).

Study Context

In this study, I examine Asian Indians in the USA and India, as well as non-Asian Indians in the USA as the target samples for several reasons. First, according to the CIA, India is the second largest populous country with an estimated 1,189,172,906 people, making it an attractive market for multinational companies (Central Intelligence Agency). Secondly, Asian Indian population in the USA is at an estimated 2,765,815 forming the second largest ethnic group in the USA (U.S. Census Bureau). Most of the Asian Indians in the USA are employed in high tech firms (U.S. Census Bureau), from where our sample is drawn. A recent survey by UC Berkeley stated that almost "one-third of the engineers in Silicon Valley are of Indian descent, while 7% of Valley high-tech firms are led by Indian CEO's [Chief Executive Officer]" (Indian American). Thirdly, the recent upsurge in technology and innovation in India has created reverse outsourcing, attracting

many American students to work for Indian firms (Medill Reports). Considering the high level of interactions between business sector employees from both nations, the current assessment of polytasking among individuals from these two cultures is important and will enrich our understanding of the role of polytasking in perceiving stressors and stress-related outcomes.

Temporal Philosophies: India vs. USA

Indian philosophy is rooted in the concept of *moksha (nirvana)* or liberation from the endless cycle of reincarnation and death (Brodd, 2003). Adhering to clock time is viewed as bondage and the only way to free oneself is through equanimity of mind and immersing oneself in present duties (Majumdar, 1992). This is elaborated in a famous verse from the ancient Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita that translates as: "You have the right to action alone, never to its results. Do not desire results of action nor be attached to non-action" (Majumdar, p. 71). The basic premise of this verse dictates a present oriented view of time, with present actions disconnected from the attainment of any future goals. It also emphasizes a more passive view of time, with events unfolding naturally and determining individual behavior. The only emphasis is on selflessly immersing oneself in present *karma* (work, activities*)* as they unfold naturally throughout the day.

The American philosophy, in contrast, is influenced by the *American Dream* coined by historian and writer James Truslow Adams (1931) as "...a dream of being able to grow to fullest development as a man and woman, unhampered by the barriers which had slowly been erected in older civilizations, unrepressed by social orders…and that

dream has been realized more fully in actual life here than anywhere else, though very imperfectly even among ourselves" (p. 416). The American philosophy is in stark contrast to that of Asian Indians. Hindu Indians believe in liberation ("nirvana") of soul from the body, necessitating a broader perspective of time and therefore viewing time as endless. In contrast, Judeo-Christian Americans believe in liberation of the self from any bondage to social structure and oppression that undermined individual well-being. They emphasized building a structure that allowed innovation, progress, and most importantly, individual freedom and liberty. This necessitated a tangible, linear, and pragmatic view of time. The two philosophies therefore present an important backdrop for the present study.

Focal Population of High-Tech Workers

High-tech firms are also characterized by change including constant growth, innovation and restructuring (Benabou, 1999). Benabou further writes that USA learning organizations÷ "…are turning toward a so-called polychronic conception of time (P-time), as opposed to monochronic time (M-time)" (p. 259). Thus, learning organizations find multiple solutions to problems and thrive in ambiguity as it breeds innovative products or services before customers need them.

While multitasking has become a norm, USA organizations still emphasize deadlines, punctuality, and structure more than organizations in India (Hall, 1983; Lasane & O'Donnell, 1993; Palmer & Schoorman, 1999). For example, Nelson and Gopalan (2003) classified American values high in the work quadrant:

> Studies of North American culture consistently stress the active, pragmatic, time-oriented, work-oriented nature of the American character, the tendency toward superficiality in interpersonal relations and extreme individualism, an emphasis on freedom of action and resistance to external control, and a strong future orientation with a focus on change and newness (p. 1126).

This viewpoint suggests that non-Asian Indians in the USA, on account of their work- oriented nature likely prefer juggling multiple tasks. This is also consistent with the stereotypical TABP American worker who is time urgent and prefers to attain multiple goals in the least amount of time (Jamal, 2007). In contrast, Nelson and Gopalan (2003) classified India low on the work quadrant due to "…a general absence of a strong work ethic and a de-emphasis on punctuality and the value of time" (p. 1127).

Indians, therefore have a passive view of time, allowing events to naturally commence and conclude (Brislin & Kim, 2003). Since events are not regulated around the clock, this group will de-emphasize polytasking activities in the work domain. On the basis of these cultural contexts (Hall, 1983; Palmer & Schoorman, 1999), I hypothesize that:

H_1: Non-Asian Indians in the USA will prefer polytasking in the work domain more than Asian Indians in the USA will, who will prefer polytasking more than Asian Indians in India will.

Given that (1) the USA is *temponomic* (emphasizing schedules and deadlines) and India is *temponostic* (emphasizing values, social obligations, and interdependent group systems), (2) organizations' cultures draw from the host culture in which they operate (Nelson & Gopalan, 2003), and (3) US organizations (on account of their competitive nature) are goal-oriented, and will juggle multiple projects. Therefore, I hypothesize:

H_2: Non-Asian Indians in the USA will perceive their organizations as preferring polytasking more than Asian Indians in the USA will, who will perceive their organizations as preferring polytasking more than Asian Indians in India will.

Work-Related Stress

Stress refers to a general area of study that includes the examination of stressors and strains. Stressors are environmental stimuli that are precursors to strains. More specifically, stressors are "events and conditions within the environment [that]…create a motivation to react" (Beehr & Glazer, 2005, p. 8). As discussed earlier, conflicts in preference to juggle tasks can be a source of stressors and strains. Thus far, however, no published studies have examined links between organizational polytasking with stressors

and strains. In this thesis, I focus on role stressors within the work domain, specifically, role ambiguity, role overload, and role conflict. Role ambiguity results from lack of adequate information regarding one's role in the workplace (Beehr & Glazer). Role conflict occurs when an employee is faced with two or more conflicting demands, where attending to one demand, may conflict with fulfillment of the other (Beehr & Glazer). Lastly, role overload results from having too many work-related tasks to complete in limited time (Beehr & Glazer).

Strains refer to negative, psychological, physiological or behavioral responses to stressors (Jex, Beehr, & Roberts, 1992). Examples of strains are anxiety (Glazer & Beehr, 2005), general low well-being (Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2001), intention to leave, low affective commitment, and low job satisfaction (Glazer & Beehr). Employees who desire to remain in the organization and are willing to exert effort on its behalf are affectively committed to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Similarly employees who experience overall happiness with their jobs experience job satisfaction (Highhouse & Becker, 1993). Intention to leave refers to an employee's desire to sever ties with the organization and relates to low organizational commitment (Glazer & Beehr). Anxiety is operationalized as "…a state of physio-psychological sensation, addressing people's perceptions of psychological and physiological states (e.g., feeling tightness in the chest or nervousness)" (Glazer & Beehr, p. 469).

Organizations of the 21st century face a multitude of temporal stressors, as noted by anthropologists (e.g., Hall, 1983), consumer and marketing researchers (e.g., Kaufman, Lane, & Lindquist, 1991), and industrial-organizational psychologists (e.g.,

Cotte & Ratneshwar, 1999, Frei, Racicot, & Travagline 1999). For example, Cotte and Ratneshwar (1999) found that when preference to monotask conflicted with temporal norms at the workplace (i.e., having to multitask), American women experienced feelings of frustration and confusion whereas Latina women experienced lack of focus. Similarly, Frei et al. found faculty members' monotasking work behaviors (in a polytasking working environment) positively correlated with work induced stress. Based on these results, it is plausible to assume that employee reactions' to perceptions of organizational polytasking are distinct and evoke unique stressors and strains. With the exception of the above studies, no other published empirical studies to date have investigated links between perceptions of organizational polytasking with stressors and strains. Other studies focused on strains resulting from time pressures (Greiner, Krause, Ragland, & Fisher, 2004) or congruence between personal and organizational values for polytasking (Hecht & Allen, 2005). These studies suggest a positive relationship between organization's preference for polytasking and strains.

The present study aims to explore the relationships between organizational polytasking with perceptions of stressors and strains and compare these relationships across three cultural groups, including Asian Indians in the USA and India, and non-Asian Indians in the USA.

H_{3a}. In each cultural group, organizational polytasking will positively correlate with psychological stressors (role overload, role conflict, and role ambiguity) and strains (anxiety and intention to leave), and negatively correlate with well-being, affective organizational commitment, and job satisfaction.

Cultural differences in the magnitude of relationships among variables are expected. As Asian Indians in India do not necessarily expect their organizations to prefer polytasking, this group is expected to experience the most stressors and strains if they perceive their organization as preferring polytasking. Because US business cultures likely endorse polytasking, despite individuals' preference for monotasking (Cotte & Ratneshwar, 1999), it is expected that the cultural group with the next strongest correlations would be Asian Indians in the USA and non-Asian Indians in the USA.

H_{3b}. The above correlations will be strongest for Asian Indians in India, followed by Asian Indians in the USA, and least strong for non-Asian Indians in the USA.

Person-Environment (P-E) Fit

Stress is a body's natural response to various environmental demands (Glazer & Beehr, 2005). Within the temporal domain, one can surmise that incongruence in polytasking preferences between employees' and their working environment would likely trigger stressors and strains. This is the basic premise of P-E fit theory (Edwards, Kaplan, & Harrison, 1998); stress ensues when organizations' temporal demands exceed the employee's polytasking preferences. Likewise, employees with a high need to polytask may be a misfit in organizations low in task variety (Hecht & Allen, 2005; Hui, Lee, & Niu, 2010). The current study explored the impact of polytasking incongruence between employees and their organizations on stressors and strains. This assessment was deemed pertinent, because when their personalities match the organization's culture (1) employees attain maximum organizational success (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, &

Johnson, 2005), (2) feel greater identification with the organization, and (3) view the companys' success as their own (Slocombe & Bluedorn, 1999).

Broadly, researchers have examined temporal congruity between employees and their jobs (e.g., Francis-Smythe & Robertson, 2003; Hecht & Allen, 2005; Slocombe & Bluedorn, 1999), workgroups (Slocombe & Bluedorn), and organizations (e.g., Hui et al., 2010). Polytasking person-job fit addresses fit between an individual's predisposition to polytask with the demands or nature of the job. Polytasking person-workgroup fit addresses an employee's temporal alignment with his peers and colleagues. Finally, when employee's polytasking preferences complement the organization's general work ethic, there is a person-organization fit on polytasking. Polytasking fit between employees and their working environments has been variously linked to job satisfaction, distributive fairness, self-efficacy, psychological strain, low well-being, and organization-based self esteem (Arndt, Arnold, & Landry, 2006; Francis-Smythe & Robertson, 2003; Hecht & Allen; Hui et al.; Todd, 2009).

The above studies focused on incongruence as the source of strain. However, it is also possible that incongruence would be a source of stressor. No published study has yet examined the extent to which a fit between personal preferences for polytasking and perception of the organization's polytasking preference relates to employees' role stressors, let alone differences across cultures, as will be done here. For example, one may speculate that incongruence in polytasking preferences, between a person and his or her organization, might result in role ambiguity, role overload, and role conflict. This paper explores the extent to which temporal misfit between employees and their

organizations relates with role stressors (ambiguity, overload, and conflict) and strains (anxiety, general well-being , affective commitment, intention to leave, and job satisfaction) between the three cultural groups. It is expected that Asian Indians in the USA would experience greater P-O gap, given that their temporal orientation is unlike that of the USA (Brislin & Kim, 2003). On the basis of the above, we hypothesize:

H_4: Temporal incongruence between personal and organizational polytasking will yield greater stressors and strains for all samples, but the relationship will be strongest among Asian Indians in the USA than either of the two groups.

Summary of Study

The aims of this study are four-fold. First, I aim to study if non-Asian Indians in the USA, Asian Indians in the USA, and Asian Indians in India differ on their (a) preference for polytasking and (b) perception of organizational polytasking. Second, I study if perceptions of organizational polytasking relate to stressors and strains differently across the three focal cultures. Finally, I examine and compare the extent to which temporal incongruence relates to stressors and strains across the three focal cultures.

Methods

Sample

The present study is based on data collected from 781 surveys that had been distributed to individuals in approximately 63 private organizations throughout the USA and India (see Appendix B for IRB Letter). Of these 781 surveys, 440 surveys were returned, yielding a response rate of 56%. The final sample comprised of full-time employees in high tech firms including Asian Indians working in the USA (*n*= 67), Asian Indians working in India (*n*=253) and non-Asian Indians working in the USA (*n* = 120). The rationale behind selecting employees from a single business sector was to minimize variation caused by potential changes in organizational culture.

Participants in India ranged in age from 20 to 59 years (M = 37.49 years, SD = 11.18). Indians in the USA ranged in age from 20 to 50 years (M = 30.2 years, SD = 5.37). Non-Asian Indians in the USA ranged in age from 21 to 58 years (M = 37.7 years, SD = 8.47). A majority of participants across all three groups were married men working full time (78% men, 66% married, and 96.1% working full-time). More specifically, 86.2% of Indians in India, 71.6 % of Indians in USA, and 64.2% of non-Asian Indians in the USA were men. Nearly, two-thirds of each sample was married (65.2% of Indians in India, 65.7% of Indians in the USA, and 68.3% of non-Asian Indians in the USA). A majority of the sample were full time employees (95.7 % of Indians in India, 97.1% of Indians in the USA, and 96.7% of Non-Asian Indians in the USA) holding higher degrees (40.7 % of Indians in India, 62.7% of Indians in the USA, and 40% of non-Asian Indians in the USA had earned a Master's degree whereas 45.1 % of Indians in India, 17.9% of

Indians in the USA, and 40.8% of non-Asian Indians in the USA had a Bachelor's degree). Indians in India had an average tenure of 12.30 years (SD= 11.39), Indians in the USA had an average tenure of 3.38 years (SD= 3.86), and non-Asian Indians in the USA had an average tenure of 5.45 years (SD= 5.40 years). Asian Indians in the USA had resided an average of 6.94 years (SD= 6.96 years) in the USA with 95.5% reporting India as their country of origin. Similarly, non-Asian Indians in the USA originated from a diverse number of countries with 45.8% reporting USA as their country of origin and 48.4% originating from 24 different countries. The average length of stay for non-Asian Indians originating from a country other than the USA was 4.92 years (SD = 8.65 years). Approximately, 38.8% of Asian Indians in the USA, 67.1% of Asian Indians in India, and 34.2% of non-Asian Indians in the USA reported supervising other employees. Additionally, 64.2% of Asian Indians in the USA, 37.5% of Asian Indians in India, and 19.2% of non-Asian Indians in the USA held technical positions whereas 7.5% of Asian Indians in the USA, 38.7% of Asian Indians in India, 5.8% of non-Asian Indians in the USA held management positions.

Measures

The survey administered in India and the USA was mostly the same, except for an item pertaining to religion - Asian Indians in India responded to an additional item, "If you are from a religion with a caste system, to which caste do you belong?" All other items in the demographic section (whenever necessary) were modified to reflect the corresponding country, for example, "Were you born in India" vs. "Were you born in the USA?"

Polytasking. Bluedorn et al.'s (1999) Inventory of Polychronicity Values (IPV) was used to measure personal polytasking preferences (see section I (B), items 1-10, Appendix A). Respondents rated their preference to multitask on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (very uncharacteristic) to 5 (very characteristic). Items 2, 4, 5, 7, and 9 were reverse scored with higher scores indicating a preference to polytask. A sample item measuring polytasking was "I like to juggle several activities at the same time." Bluedorn et al. found this scale to be reliable and valid on a sample that consisted of 2,190 students, with an average alpha reliability coefficient of 0.80 and a test re-test reliability analysis on four independent samples that averaged 0.86. In the current study, all ten items were retained. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the measure was .84 for Indians in USA, .77 for Indians in India, and .86 for non-Asian Indians in the USA (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Summary of Means, Standard Deviation (SD), Correlations, and Reliability Coefficients (in parentheses) for Main Study Variables

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Asian Indians in the USA (*n* = 67)												
1. Role Overload	3.76	1.10	(.76)									
2. Role Conflict	3.81	1.09	.54*	(.76)								
3. Role Ambiguity	3.14	1.23	-.04	-.08	(.92)							
4. Anxiety	3.16	1.20	.44**	.47*	.28*	(.79)						
5. Well- Being	5.44	0.70	-.24	-.23	-.41**	-.45*	(.81)					
6. Org Commitment	4.22	0.88	-.18	-.19	-.43**	-.39**	.43**	(.70)				
7. Turnover Intention	3.31	1.33	.40**	.38**	.28	.55**	-.31*	-.44**	(.81)			
8. Job Satisfaction	4.91	1.17	-.23	-.26	-.18	-.13	.33**	.46**	-.52**	--		
9. Org Polytasking	3.16	0.54	.13	.23*	-.11[bf]	.24	-.23[c]	-.13	.18	.04	(.79)	
10. Pers. Polytasking	2.77	0.65	.11	.23	.06	.25	-.04	-.20	.34*	-.05	.40**	(.84)
11. Gap	0.59	0.71	-.02	.09	-.06	-.12	-.11	-.04	-.18	-.02	.30**	-.55**
Asian Indians in India (*n* = 253)												
1. Role Overload	4.08	1.18	(.74)									
2. Role Conflict	3.95	1.24	.41**	(.78)								
3. Role Ambiguity	2.96	1.07	.19**	.29**	(.80)							
4. Anxiety	3.76	1.31	.47**	.43**	.16*	(.73)						
5. Well- Being	5.19	0.86	-.35**	-.44**	-.51**	-.45**	(.81)					
6. Org. Commitment	4.96	1.17	-.16*	-.25**	-.40**	-.24**	.45**	(.76)				
7. Turnover Intention	3.27	1.65	.28**	.40**	.23*	.27**	-.45**	-.59**	(.84)			
8. Job Satisfaction	5.13	1.56	-.25**	-.26**	-.38	-.22**	.55**	.60**	-.60**	--		
9. Org Polytasking	3.16	0.56	.29**	.14*[a]	.17**[b]	.04	-.17*[d]	-.19**	.10	-.23**[e]	(.70)	
10. Pers. Polytasking	2.74	0.61	-.01	.06	.02	.00	-.07	.02	.01	-.04	.15*	(.77)
11. Gap	0.62	0.63	.23**	.00	.05	.03	-.02	-.17**	.05	-.11	.51**	-.56**

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Non Asian Indian Americans (*n* =120)												
1. Role Overload	4.37	1.11	(.79)									
2. Role Conflict	4.25	1.12	.39**	(.75)								
3. Role Ambiguity	3.33	1.03	.14	.37**	(.80)							
4. Anxiety	3.81	1.50	.21**	.21*	.18	(.75)						
5. Well-Being	5.09	0.78	-.26	-.19*	-.44*	-.47**	(.78)					
6. Org. Commitment	4.23	1.16	-.03	-.27**	-.43**	-.08	.38*	(.80)				
7. Turnover Intention	3.41	1.56	-.00	.19	.16	.05	-.16	-.44**	(.88)			
8. Job Satisfaction	5.11	1.29	.02	-.34	-.42**	-.15	.37*	.57**	-.78**	--		
9. Org Polytasking	3.33	0.48	.27**	.36**[a]	.25**[f]	-.03	.44*[cd]	-.02	.04	.02[e]	(.72)	
10. Pers. Polytasking	3.01	0.68	.21*	.33**	-.02	.03	.22	.11	-.09	.17	.33**	(.86)
11. Gap	0.60	0.47	-.08	-.04	.31**	.04	-.13	-.28**	.10	-.17	-.34**	-.52**

Note. Values in parenthesis along the diagonal are Cronbach alpha reliability estimates.
***p* < .01; **p* < .05; [abcdef]Denotes significant differences between correlations of the shared superscript. Org Commitment= Affective Commitment; Org Polytasking= Organizational polytasking; Pers. Polytasking= Personal Polytasking; Gap= Temporal Incongruence.

Perceived Organizational Polytasking. Bluedorn et al.'s (1999) IPV scale was adapted to assess individuals' perceptions of their organization's polytasking preference (see section I (C), items 1-10, Appendix A). For example, "I would rather complete parts of several projects every day than complete an entire project" was modified to "My organization prefers that people complete parts of several projects every day than complete an entire project." The response scale was the same as above. Items 2, 4, 5, 7, and 9 were reverse scored with higher scores indicating higher perceptions of organizational polytasking. Hazan (2005), who first modified this scale, found it to be internally consistent at .71. In the present study, Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients were .79 for Indians in USA, .70 for Indians in India, and .72 for non-Asian Indians in the USA.

For the stressor and strain measures below, items were rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1, *strongly disagree* to 7, *strongly agree.* Items for each measure were averaged and higher scores indicated more of the given variable.

Role Overload, Conflict and Ambiguity Role overload (items 1-5), role conflict (items 6-10), and role ambiguity (items 11-15) were adopted from Glazer and Beehr (2005) (see section II (A), items 1- 15, Appendix A). Positive items were reverse scored (items 2, 11-15) and higher scores implied more of a given stressor. A sample item measuring role overload is "I often notice a marked increase in my workload." Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients were .76 for Indians in the USA, .74 for Indians in India, and .79 for non-Asian Indians in the USA. A sample item measuring role conflict is "I receive incompatible requests from two or more people." Cronbach alpha reliability

coefficients were .76 for Indians in the USA, .78 for Indians in India, and .75 for non-Asian Indians in the USA. Finally, a sample item measuring role ambiguity is "Explanation is clear of what has to be done." Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients were .92 for Indians in the USA, .80 for Indians in India, and .80 for non-Asian Indians in the USA.

Affective Commitment. Seven items were adapted from Allen and Meyer's (1990) measure of affective commitment toward the organization (see section II (B), items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, Appendix A). An example of the items measuring affective commitment is "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me." The scale was found reliable in each sample. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients were .70 for Indians in USA, .76 for Indians in India, and .80 for non-Asian Indians in the USA. Negative items were reverse scored (items 1, 5, 10) and higher scores were indicative of high affective commitment among participants.

Intention to Leave. Intention to leave was measured using three items that Glazer and Beehr (2005) adapted from Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh (1979) (see section II (B), items 3, 8, 12, Appendix A). An example of the items used to assess intention to leave was "I often think about quitting." The scale was reliable in each sample. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients were .81 for Indians in the USA, .84 for Indians in India, and .88 for Non-Asian Indians in the USA.

Anxiety. Anxiety was measured using four items that Glazer and Beehr (2005) adapted from Parker and DeCotiis (1983) (see section II (A), items 17-20, Appendix A). An example item measuring job-related anxiety is "sometimes when I think about my job

I get a tight feeling in my chest." Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients were .79 for Indians in the USA, .73 for Indians in India, and .75 for non-Asian Indians in the USA.

Overall Well-Being. Eleven items adapted from Goldberg's (1972) General Health Questionnaire assessed general employee well-being (see section II, items 16, 21-30, Appendix A). An example item measuring general health is "I have been feeling unhappy or depressed." Negatively worded items (items 21, 24, 27-29) were reverse scored and higher scores were indicative of overall positive well-being. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients were .81 for Indians in the USA, .81 for Indians in India, and .78 for non-Asian Indians in the USA.

Job Satisfaction. One global job satisfaction item, "Overall, I am satisfied working at this organization," assessed the focal variable (see section II, item 9, Appendix A).

The final section of the survey addressed demographics, including participants' age, sex, occupational status, ethnicities, languages spoken, and years spent in chosen career path, marital status, job title, tenure, and several questions regarding the characteristics of their organization.

Procedure

Paper-and-pencil surveys were administered using two different methods. One method was the snowball technique, wherein friends, family and peers were asked to distribute surveys to their friends and relatives. The second method employed was to request employees directly to participate in the study. In both methods, participants received a hard copy of the survey and were briefed on the purpose of the study (either directly or via emails) before they agreed to participate in the study and they received an informed consent form. No rewards or monetary reimbursements were offered; participants had the prerogative to decline participation in our study. Once surveys were distributed, we requested that participants return them within one week.

Data Analyses

First, measures were calculated and tested for reliability. Means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables were computed. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested via an analysis of variance (ANOVA), whereas Hypotheses 3a and 3b were tested via correlation analysis and chi square tests. To test the fourth hypothesis, a polytasking fit variable was created by calculating the difference between personal and organizational polytasking. This new variable was then correlated with stressor and strain variables.

Results

Correlations, means, standard deviations, and Cronbach alpha reliabilities of the main study variables are presented in Table 1. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to test Hypothesis 1, which stated that non-Asian Indians in the USA will prefer polytasking in the work domain more than Asian Indians in the USA, who will prefer polytasking more than Asian Indians in India. The result of the analysis was significant (F= 7.66, df (2,437), $p <$. 001), implying that perceptions of personal polytasking differed significantly across the three groups. Tukey post-hoc comparisons indicated that preference for polytasking was significantly greater ($p < .05$) for non-Asian Indians in the USA ($\underline{M}$= 3.01, SD = .68) than Asian Indians in the USA ($\underline{M}$ = 2.78, SD =.64) and India ($\underline{M}$ = 2.77, SD= .65). Mean scores for Asian Indians in India and the USA did not differ significantly from each other. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported. On Bluedorn et al.'s (1999) IPV, the correlation between polytasking preference and individuals' reports of their organization's time preference was significant for Asian Indians in the USA ($r = .40$, $p < .01$), Asian Indians in India ($r = .15$, $p < .05$), and non-Asian Indians in the USA ($r = .33$, $p < .01$).

Hypothesis 2 stated that non-Asian Indians in the USA would perceive their organizations as preferring polytasking more than Asian Indians in the USA, who would perceive their organizations as preferring polytasking more than Asian Indians in India. A one-way ANOVA results yielded significant findings (F= 4.39, df (2,437), $p \leq .01$), implying that perceptions of organizational polytasking differed across the three groups. Post-hoc comparisons of the three groups show that perceptions of organizational

polytasking were significantly higher for non-Asian Indians in the USA (M = 3.33, SD = .48) than Asian Indians in India (M = 3.16, SD = .56) and the USA (M = 3.16, SD = .55). Mean scores for Asian Indians in India and the USA did not differ significantly from each other. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

Hypothesis 3a stated that perception of organizational polytasking will positively correlate with role overload, role conflict, role ambiguity, anxiety, and turnover intention and negatively correlate with affective commitment, well-being, and job satisfaction. After controlling for culture, partial correlations revealed that organizational polytasking significantly correlated with role overload (r = .26, p < .01), role conflict (r = .20, p < .01), role ambiguity (r = .14, p < .05), well-being (r = -.12, p < .05), affective commitment (r = -.14, p < .01), and intention to leave (r = .11, p < .10). Organizational polytasking did not correlate significantly with anxiety (r = .05, *ns)*.

Correlations within each focal cultural group were examined further. Perceived organizational polytasking and role ambiguity positively correlated for non-Asian Indians in the USA (r = .25, p < .01) and Asian Indians in India (r = .17, p < .01), but did not correlate significantly among Asian Indians in the USA. Correlations between perceived organizational polytasking and each of role conflict and role overload were positive for all three groups, but only significantly correlated among non-Asian Indians in the USA (r = .36 and .27, p < .01) and Asian Indians in India (r = .14 and .29, p < .01). With respect to strains, perceived organizational polytasking correlated positively with well-being for non-Asian Indians in the USA (r = .44, p < .01), and negatively for Asian Indians in India (r = -.17, p < .05). Further, perceived organizational polytasking did not

correlate significantly with anxiety for any of the three focal groups. However, the correlation between perceived organizational polytasking and job satisfaction was negative among Asian Indians in India (r = -.23, p < .01). Lastly, although the correlation between perceived organizational polytasking and each of affective commitment and intention to leave was in the expected direction for all three groups, only the perceived organizational polytasking and affective commitment correlation was significant among Asian Indians in India (r = -.19, p < .01). With the exception of role ambiguity and well-being, Hypothesis 3a was mostly supported.

Further, Hypothesis 3b proposed these correlations would be stronger for Asian Indians in India, followed by Asian Indians in the USA, and least strong for non-Asian Indians in the USA. Differences between correlation coefficients were computed by transforming r to their corresponding z□ equivalents and dividing this value by the standard error. This value was then compared against the normal curve table to obtain the two-tailed probability (*P)* level (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Many of these correlations were significant after controlling for Type I error (i.e., by adjusting significance levels to 0.02). However, given that the study was exploratory in nature, results at 0.05 levels were also considered. It is worth noting that although some correlations were significant in H3a (for example, affective commitment), Cohen's tests for significant differences between the three culture groups revealed that significant correlation did not imply differences from non-significant correlations found among other groups.

Correlations between perceived organizational polytasking with each of role conflict, role ambiguity, low well-being, and job satisfaction significantly differed across

the three groups. The correlation between role conflict and organizational polytasking was significantly stronger for non-Asian Indians in the USA (r = .36, p < .01) than Asian Indians in India (r = .14, p < .05, (z=-2.11, p < .05), but not Asian Indians in the USA (r = .23 p < .05) (z= .66, *ns*). The three groups did not differ significantly on the correlation between organizational polytasking and role overload (see Table. 1), however the correlation between role ambiguity and organizational polytasking was significantly stronger (and in the opposite direction than hypothesized) for Asian Indians in India (r = .17, p < .01) (z= -2.01, p < .05) than Asian Indians in the USA (r = -.11, *ns)*. Similarly, the correlation between role ambiguity and organizational polytasking was significantly stronger for non-Asian Indians in the USA (r = .25, p < .01) (z= 2.34, p < .01) than Asian Indians in the USA (r = -.11, *ns)*. Correlations between organizational polytasking and each of well-being and job satisfaction significantly differed across the three groups. The perceived organizational polytasking with well-being correlation was significantly stronger (and in the opposite direction than hypothesized) for non-Asian Indians in the USA (r = .44, p < .05, z = -3.36, p < .001) than Asian Indians in India, (r = -.17, p < .05, z = -3.36, p < .001) and Asian Indians in the USA (r =-.23, *ns*, z= -3.11, p < .01). The correlation between perceived organizational polytasking and job satisfaction was significantly stronger for Asian Indians in India (r = -.23, p < .01, z= -2.51, p <.01) than for non-Asian Indians in the USA (r = .02, *ns*, z = -2.51, p <.01), but not for Asian Indians in the USA (r = .04, *ns*, z = 1.80, *ns*). Lastly, there were no differences between the three focal groups with respect to the correlations between organizational polytasking and each of affective commitment and intention to leave. With respect to affective

commitment, although correlation for Asian Indians in India (r = -.19, p < .01) was significant, Cohen's tests revealed that Asian Indians in India did not differ significantly from Asian Indians in the USA (r = -.13, *ns*) and non- Asian Indians in the USA (r = -.02, p < .01). Because four of the eight study variables' correlations with organizational polytasking significantly differed across the three groups, Hypothesis 3b was partially supported.

Hypothesis 4 stated that incongruence in personal and organizational polytasking would yield greater stressors and strains for all the samples, but the relationship would be strongest for Asian Indians in the USA than either of the other two groups. In order to test the fourth hypothesis, a new variable labeled "temporal incongruence" was created to reflect the difference between participant's polytasking preference and his or her perception of the organization's temporal preference. Temporal incongruence was created by calculating the absolute value of the difference from personal polytasking and perceived organizational time preferences (Hazan, 2005). The temporal incongruence score was correlated with the stressor and strain variables. Temporal incongruence and role overload (r = .23, p < .01), organizational commitment (r = -.17, p < .01) correlated significantly for Asian Indians in India. Similarly, temporal incongruence and role ambiguity (r = .31, p < .01), organizational commitment (r = -.28, p < .01) correlated significantly for non-Asian Indians in the USA. In contrast, temporal incongruence did not relate significantly to any stressors or strains for Asian Indians in the USA (Table 1). Omnibus chi-square tests did not reveal any significant differences between the three groups on any of the stressors or strains. Therefore Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Discussion

Albert Einstein once said, “The only reason for time is so that everything doesn’t happen at once” Extending this quote to the business arena, one finds that time also plays a pivotal role in triggering various employee responses (e.g., Bluedorn et al., 1999; Frei et al., 1999) toward the organization (e.g., organizational commitment and intention to leave), interactions with others, and personal well-being. Although the results of the study do not provide a clear demarcation of differences across cultures, results do show that person and organizational polytasking relates with stressors and strains to some extent.

The current study sought to understand employees’ temporal perceptions in relation to stressors and strains. Specifically, the study’s original aim was to examine links between polychronicity and occupational stress among Asian Indians in India, Asian Indians in the USA and non-Asian Indians in the USA. However, the chosen measure for assessing polychronicity, the IPV scale (Bluedorn et al., 1999) only addressed one aspect of polychronicity, namely polytasking. The IPV disregarded the social aspects and quantified time in relation to task fulfillment vs. relationships (Todd, 2009). Thus, the study focused on polytasking, as a component of polychronicity. Focusing on one aspect of temporal behavior, namely polytasking, the current study posed the following research questions- Do employees’ prefer to juggle multiple tasks and projects at work? Do they perceive their organizations to polytask? Are these perceptions and preferences determined by context or country of origin? Do these preferences and perceptions relate to employee stressors and strains?

The first objective of this study was to examine the relationship between country of origin and perception of personal polytasking in the work domain. Non-Asian Indians in the USA had significantly higher mean scores on personal polytasking than Asian Indians of either country. These results are consistent with Hypothesis 1 and highlight the work oriented nature of non-Asian Indians (Nelson & Gopalan, 2003). Researchers, Cotte and Ratneshwar (1999) conjecture that American employees prefer polytasking, because it 'says something' meaningful about the individual's personality, motivation, and importance; it signals to others a sense of urgency and accomplishment. That polytasking triggers such perceptions within non- Asian Indians maybe anticipated, as they correspond with the ambitious, competitive, and goal-oriented (Mastery and Autonomy) values shaping US culture (Schwartz, 1999). On the first hand, polytasking allows individuals to juggle (and perhaps attain) multiple goals within a given time block, consequently bolstering personal well-being. On the other hand, these explanations remind us of the stereotype of the Type A American, who has a "...heightened pace of living, accelerated speech pattern, polyphasic activities…" (Jamal, 2007, p. 102). The IPV, assessing participants' preference to "juggle tasks" and "doing many things at once," overlaps conceptually with the polyphasic aspect of Type A Behavior Pattern (Palmer & Schoorman, 1999), which has been variably linked to negative health consequences (Jamal). Future studies should therefore investigate their relationship and combined health implications.

It was also hypothesized that Asian Indians in the USA would perceive significantly higher levels of personal polytasking than Asian Indians in India. While

levels of personal polytasking among the three groups were in the expected direction (Table 1), personal polytasking preferences did not differ significantly for Asian Indians in the USA and India. As suggested by some bicultural researchers (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993), Asian Indians in the USA may be selecting the extent to which they endorse polytasking behaviors consistent with the host culture (USA) or their culture of origin (India). This is elaborated by the alternation model which "postulates that an individual can choose the degree and manner to which he or she will affiliate with either the [US] second culture or [Indian culture] his or her culture of origin" (LaFromboise et al., p. 400). Again, that Asian Indians in the USA did not differ significantly from Asian Indians in India, despite residing an average of 6.94 years within the United States (giving them sufficient time to acculturate with the dominant culture), provides some validation to the alternation model. It is recommended that future research investigate the role of adaptive strategies of Asian Indians (with reference to temporal behaviors), while controlling for organizational culture, for example, we are not sure if Asian Indians in the USA were working in Indian managed organizations.

Next, it was expected that personal polytasking preferences of non-Asian Indians would be more similar to those of their temponomic USA employers, resulting in higher perceptions of organizational polytasking for non-Asian Indian employees than their Asian Indian counterparts. Results support the hypothesis, as non–Asian Indians in the USA had significantly higher mean scores on perceived organizational polytasking than Asian Indians in India and the USA. Interestingly, Asian Indians in the USA did not differ significantly from Asian Indians in India with respect to their perceptions of

organizational polytasking. While these results are contrary to Hypothesis 2, they are in accord with the alternation model posed above. Since Asian Indians in the USA likely alternate their personal polytasking preferences without having to fully integrate to the temporal norms of the host culture, their perceptions of organizational polytasking may remain unaffected. Given these preliminary findings, it is worth investigating perceptions of organizational polytasking with other variables such as nature of job (e.g., management vs. technical positions) or organizational size. For example, Bluedorn (2001) suggested a link between the nature of a job and polytasking, noting that employees in managerial positions polytask more than those in non-managerial positions (Bluedorn). However, only 32.8 % of non-Asian Indians in the USA (who also had the highest perceptions of organizational polytasking) reported supervising other employees, hence it is unlikely that nature of job interacted with participants' ratings of perceived organizational polytasking. With respect to organizational size, Bluedorn and Ferris (2000, as cited in Bluedorn, 2001) found that organizational size positively correlates with organizational polytasking in their sample of 200 publicly traded companies. Given the anonymous nature of the current `study, these organizational variables were not controlled.

Third, I hypothesized that perceptions of organizational polytasking would positively correlate with stressors and strains. Results partially supported the hypothesis. Perception of organizational polytasking correlated significantly with most of the stressors and strains for Asian Indians in India (Table 1). In contrast, perception of organizational polytasking correlated significantly only with role conflict for Asian

Indians in the USA (Table 1). Lastly, for non-Asian Indians in the USA, higher organizational polytasking correlated significantly with all of the stressors, with the addition of greater well-being. Thus perceptions of organizational polytasking evoked unique stressors and strains within the different cultural groups. That perceived organizational polytasking did not correlate with any strains (and most stressors) for Asian Indians in the USA but for those in India, suggests that the immigrant group may have acculturated to US work-life well enough that this perception is not a source of *stress*.

It was also hypothesized that the correlations predicted would be strongest for Asian Indians in India followed by Asian Indians in the USA and non-Asian Indians in the USA. Results partially supported the hypothesis. For example, organizational polytasking correlated strongly with role conflict and role ambiguity but also for greater well-being among non-Asian Indians in the USA, whereas organizational polytasking correlated strongly with lower job satisfaction and lower overall well-being among Asian Indians in India. Reports of positive correlations of well-being to perceptions of organizational polytasking among non-Asian Indians may be attributed to positive meaning associated with polytasking behavior (i.e., time moving more quickly, signaling importance, and a sense of accomplishment; Cotte & Ratneshwar, 1999). This may further be expected since this group also had significantly favorable responses to personal polytasking statements such as "I like to juggle several activities at the same time."

Another possible explanation for greater links to well-being for this group may be attributed to differentiation matching. Leonard (2008) explains differentiation matching,

stating that individuals are likely to be more positive in affective and behavioral terms when "the cognitive orientation of individuals matches the structure of features of their societies" (p. 481). The non-Asian Indian workers in the USA appear to match the perception of their organization's preference for juggling many work projects. In contrast, for Asian Indians in India, significant correlations between perceived organizational polytasking and role conflict, role ambiguity, job satisfaction, affective commitment, and well-being might also be explained in terms of differentiation matching. In the case of Asian Indians in India, their cognitive orientation (influenced by their national culture) probably does not match the organization's culture and therefore incongruence yielded strains. These results suggest that national cultural context might play a role in determining when perceived organizational polytasking may relate with stressors and strains.

The fourth hypothesis addressed the degree to which congruence between personal and organizational polytasking correlated with stressors and strains for each of the three cultural groups. Research has already supported the notion that congruence in personal and organizational polytasking relates to organizational commitment (Slocombe & Bluedorn, 1999) and psychological strain (Hecht & Allen, 2005). Extending this research cross-culturally, the current study found that temporal incongruence evoked unique *stress* responses from each of the three cultural groups. For Asian Indians in India, as the incongruence between individual and organizational polytasking preferences increased, perceived role overload increased and affective commitment decreased. Similarly, for non-Asian Indians in the USA, temporal incongruence related to higher

role ambiguity and lower affective commitment. However, for Asian Indians in the USA, temporal incongruence did not significantly correlate with any stressors or strains. This may likely be due to the increased quality of life experienced as immigrants to the United States, which serves to compensate for the expected temporal incongruence.

Sodowsky and Carey (1988) aptly portray this group in the following:

> The new Asian-Indian immigrants seem to be upwardly mobile, probably because the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 established special immigration quotas for professionals, talented people with exceptional ability in the sciences and arts, and those capable of performing specified technical work. Such immigrants are welcome because the U.S. government expects that they will benefit the U.S. economy or its cultural interests. Thus, the selectiveness of the U.S. immigration laws may be strongly related to the Asian-Indian sample reporting high educational achievements, professional occupations, middle to upper-middle class socio-economic status, and acculturation to Protestant work ethics. In addition, their successes could be attributed to their primary purpose for coming to the United States, which is to attain educational, career, and material advancements. Similarly, the Asian-Indians' successes and act of voluntary migration may have enabled them to be proud of their nationality group in the United States and be strongly bound to their national identity (p. 130).

On the basis of the above view of Asian Indian immigrants to the USA, it is likely that fulfillment of their personal aspirations, living the *American Dream*, influences their psychological well-being and the other cultural differences have little negative influence on well-being. Indeed, Hecht and Allen (2005) suggest that incongruence between one's strongly held values and those of the environment are more damaging than values that are not so important to the individual. Perhaps for this immigrant group, polytasking incongruence was not so important.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study is not without limitations. First, the present study set out to assess polychronicity as defined by Hall (1983) in relation to occupational stress across cultures.

However, the measure used to study polychronicity, the IPV addressed only the work-related component of multitasking. Future research may benefit from development of a robust scale addressing the social aspect of polychronicity across work and non-work domains. Further, it may be more appropriate to recoin the IPV as it lacks focus on social relationships and communication patterns and instead only centers around polytasking behaviors in the working environment (Todd, 2009).

Next, the study also faced sampling limitations because of the challenges faced during data collection. Not only were the sample sizes uneven for the three cultural groups, but the sample size of Asian Indians within the USA was small. Research assistants employed a snowball technique, relying on their acquaintances for data collection. A higher representation of males than females within all three cultural groups was another sampling limitation, restricting generalizability of our results. However, this uneven gender distribution is not unusual given that most high-tech employees are male (US Department of Labor). Further, as Bluedorn (2001) points out, gender does not affect reports of polytasking preferences. To increase the sample sizes for each cultural group, particularly, the Asian Indian group in the USA, future research could employ an online survey, as they may be preferred by high-tech employees constantly employing the internet as a "communication tool or as a resource for information" (Zhang, Goonetilleke, Plocher, & Liang, 2005, p. 8).

Next, the study's cross-sectional design did not allow for long term inferences of our findings. For example, to examine whether polytasking is a trait, we would expect participants within our sample to exhibit stable temporal characteristics over a period of

time, irrespective of context, attitudes, and life experiences. Longitudinal designs may therefore be more useful in drawing any conclusive results. Future studies would benefit from examining polytasking preferences in relation to stressors and strains through longitudinal designs, allowing for more meaningful interpretation of the results.

Another limitation of the study is the inability to account for control variables that could potentially interact with the study's variables as they were not gathered. For example, organizational size is an important control variable to control in the measurement of polytasking preferences (Bluedorn, 2001), but it was not obtained. Similarly, the current study did not assess acculturation values espoused by Asian Indians in the USA. It is possible that an employee's level of acculturation with the host culture could impact polytasking preferences and perceptions and can further impact reported stressors and strains. Acculturative stress (Krishnan & Berry, 1992), arising from difficulties in adapting to the norms of the newly introduced culture, could also be an important control variable. Future research investigating cross-cultural perceptions of personal and organizational polytasking should therefore account for acculturation and acculturative stress as potential confounds to the results. Lastly, since the study was anonymous, it did not account for ownership origin of organizations, that is, whether organizations were managed by Indian vs. American employers, as these could impact employee perceptions of their organization's endorsement of time.

The non-Asian Indian sample was diverse in terms of country of origin. Specifically, while 47.4% of non-Asian Indians in the USA were born in the USA, the remaining subsample comprised of participants from 23 countries living in the USA for

an average of 4.59 years. It is therefore likely that they uphold unique polytasking values aligning with the temporal norms of their country. Given the heterogeneity of the sample, any findings associated with this sample should be interpreted with caution.

Implications

The current study posed several relevant implications for practitioners globally. Results demonstrated that individuals with different cultural backgrounds embrace distinct preference to time allocation. Thus, strategies developed to cope with organizational polytasking in one culture maybe irrelevant in the other. For example, Nonis et al. (2005) found that success of time management strategies depend on individual and cultural level polytasking preferences. Extending this research to several countries and understanding how time and work are prioritized could be of great benefit to multinational companies rapidly outsourcing their business. Moreover, it could undermine the dominance of western business philosophy across the globe, suggesting a need to develop creative strategies relevant to the local populace.

It is surmised that a fit between organizational time culture and employee time preferences may have implications for employee well-being (Frei et al., 1999) and job outcomes (Conte & Gintoft, 2005; Conte & Jacobs, 2003). Conducting such quantitative assessment of polytasking behaviors could therefore direct HR practitioners in mapping candidates to the right jobs. A better understanding about employee time preferences may also enable managers to be better equipped at delegating appropriate tasks, potentially alleviating the impact of several stressors.

Finally, a key recommendation of the current study is development of a relevant scale assessing Hall's polychronicity, emphasizing social relationships, polytasking preferences and communication patterns. Occupational stress researchers could employ results of such research to understand polychronicity in relation to the receipt of social

support. Specifically, since polychronic individuals would prioritize relationships over structure and monochronics would prioritize structure, one would anticipate buffering effects of social support for polychronics and reverse buffering effects for monochronics (Viswesvaran, Sanchez, & Fisher, 1999). Research advancements in this arena may help develop effective stress management interventions and training to executives to better deal with diversity of time preferences among their employees.

Conclusion

The main contributions of the present study include the cross-cultural comparison of personal and organizational polytasking, temporal incongruence, and their implications on employee stressors and strains. The study findings suggest that temporal incongruence and perceptions of organizational polytasking relate to distinct stressors and strains among the different cultural groups. Moreover, in societies where organizational polytasking is perceived, but culturally not preferred, stressors and strains are higher than in societies where polytasking perspective is congruent.

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Appendix A

Survey Instrument

San José State
UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychology
DMH 157
One Washington Square
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Voice: 408-924-5600
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Assessment of Time Perceptions across Cultures

Informed Consent for Survey Questionnaire

The purpose of this survey questionnaire is to obtain information about time perceptions and preferences among people of various cultural backgrounds. This information is being acquired for research purposes only. Your responses will remain **anonymous**. The researcher will not have access to personal information about potential participants; no one will be able to identify you and your organization will not receive raw data, only aggregated results.

This questionnaire is divided into 4 sections. The first three sections of the survey ask questions that are related to time perceptions and preferences in time management, aspects of work stress, and values. The last section asks questions that will help describe the sample on which these data were obtained. This information will not be used to identify you or what you say.

Completion of the survey is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time. Choosing not to participate in completion of this survey will not affect your relations with San Jose State University or your organization. Questions in this survey are not expected to cause harm or discomfort to any participant. Overall results of this study may be published.

Included with the questionnaire is an envelope addressed to me. Please seal your questionnaire in this envelope and return it to the individual who originally gave you the survey. I will then be responsible for obtaining your responses from this individual. Alternatively, you may send your completed survey via postal mail to my address below. If you have opted to complete this survey, please do so within **one week** from the date you received it.

Finally, the questionnaire will take about 25 minutes to complete.

Should you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this research, please call me Dr. Sharon Glazer at: +1 (408) 924-5639. For complaints about the research, please contact Sheila Bienenfeld, Ph.D., Chair of the Psychology Dept. at: +1 (408) 924-5600. Questions about research subjects' rights or research-related injury may be presented to Pam Stacks, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at +1 (408) 924-2480.

Your time and effort is much appreciated.

Sharon Glazer, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Psychology
San Jose State University
San Jose, California 95192-0120
sglazer@email.sjsu.edu

Please turn to the next page…

Very uncharacteristic/not true 1	Uncharacteristic/not true 2	neutral 3	Charcteristic/true 4	Very characteristic/true 5

B. Personal Time Management Preferences					
1. I like to juggle several activities at the same time.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I would rather complete an entire project every day than complete parts of several projects.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I believe people should try to do many things at once.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When I work by myself, I usually work on one project at a time.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I prefer to do one thing at a time.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I believe people do their best work when they have many tasks to complete.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I believe it is best to complete one task before beginning another.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I believe it is best for people to be given several tasks and assignments to perform.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I seldom like to work on more than a single task or assignment at the same time.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I would rather complete parts of several projects every day than complete an entire project.	1	2	3	4	5

Please answer the following question: "How characteristic or true is this of **your organization**?" for each item by circling the appropriate number, from 1 (very uncharacteristic/not true) to 5 (very characteristic/true).

C. Organization Time Management Preferences					
1. My organization likes employees to juggle several activities at the same time.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My organization would rather employees complete an entire project every day than complete parts of several projects.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My organization believes that people should try to do many things at once.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My organization prefers that when people work by themselves, they usually work on one project at a time.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My organization endorses people doing one thing at a time.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My organization believes that people do their best work when they have many tasks to complete.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My organization believes it is best to complete one task before beginning another.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My organization believes it is best for people to be given several tasks and assignments to perform.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My organization prefers that people work on more than a single task or assignment at the same time.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My organization prefers that people complete parts of several projects every day than complete an entire project.	1	2	3	4	5

Please turn to the next page… 3

Section II.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the appropriate number, from 1 (strongly disagree) to (7 strongly agree).

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Somewhat Disagree 3	Neither Agree nor Disagree 4	Somewhat Agree 5	Agree 6	Strongly Agree 7

A. Job-Related Stress								
1. I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I am given enough time to do what is expected of me on my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. It seems like I have too much work for one person to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. On my present job, the amount of work seems to interfere with how well I can do the job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I often notice a marked increase in my work load.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I have to do things that should be done differently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not accepted by another.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I work on unnecessary things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I feel certain about how much authority I have.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I have clear, planned goals and objectives for my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I know I have divided my time properly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I know exactly what is expected of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Explanation is clear of what has to be done.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I have been able to concentrate on what I am doing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I have felt fidgety or nervous as a result of my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. My job gets to me more than it should.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. There are lots of times when my job drives me right up the wall.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Sometimes when I think about my job I get a tight feeling in my chest.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I have lost much sleep over worry.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I have felt that I am playing a useful part in things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I have felt capable of making decisions about things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I have felt that I can't overcome my difficulties.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. I have been able to enjoy my normal day-to-day activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. I have been able to face up to my problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I have been feeling unhappy or depressed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. I have been losing confidence in myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. I have been thinking of myself as a worthless person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. I have been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B. Organizational Attitudes							
1. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I will actively look for a new job in the next year.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside of it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I often think about quitting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Overall, I am satisfied working at this organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I will probably look for a new job in the next year.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please turn to the next page… 4

Appendix B

IRB Approval Letter

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

Division of Academic Affairs
Associate Vice President
Graduate Studies & Research
www.sjsu.edu/gradstudies

One Washington Square
San José, California 95192-0025
Voice: 408-924-2427
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To: Ashwini Palekar

From: Pamela Stacks, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President
Graduate Studies and Research

Date: May 26, 2010

The Human Subjects-Institutional Review Board has registered your study entitled:

"Polytasking and job related stress amongst Asian Indians and Non-Asian Indians"

This registration, which provides exempt status under Exemption Category 4 of SJSU Policy S08-7, is contingent upon the subjects included in your research project being appropriately protected from risk. Specifically, protection of the confidentiality of the subjects' identity with regard to all data that may be collected about the subjects from your secondary sources needs to be ensured.

This registration includes continued monitoring of your research by the Board to assure that the subjects are being adequately and properly protected from such risks. If at any time a subject becomes injured or complains of injury, you must notify Dr. Pamela Stacks, Ph.D. immediately. Injury includes but is not limited to bodily harm, psychological trauma, and release of potentially damaging personal information. This approval for the human subject's portion of your project is in effect for one year, and data collection beyond May 26, 2011 requires an extension request.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (408) 924-2427.

Protocol # S1002186

cc. Sharon Glazer 0120

The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
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