Chapter 5

Dynamics of Intergenerational Communications

This chapter examines the dynamics of intergenerational communication process, which include a discussion on the role of culture and age stereotypes and their influence on the communication process. This is followed by a study of the pattern of communication gap between the generations. Discussions with participants revealed communication accommodation strategies adopted by them and the reasons for their choice. The types of communication behavior exhibited by the different generations are also studied.

Figure 5.1 Diagrammatic representation of Intergenerational communication process
The primary aim of this study is to identify and understand the dynamics of intergenerational communication. The schematic shown here is a representation of the communication process as proposed by the researcher.

Generation gap is the outcome of three factors: (a) age-gap, which is biological, (b) the context in which a given generation was socialized and (c) age stereotypes, culture, and generational characteristics. Generation gap tends to influence the mindsets of all generations, which in turn influences their intergenerational communication. It is also likely that intergenerational communication may cause a communication gap. This study showed that intergenerational communication has affected the communication gap (shown as a dotted line in the schematic) between generations.

It is not the researcher’s claim that this is always the case. Communication gap influences the various facets of communication like effectiveness, satisfaction, channel, style, and communication behavior. There is a two-way relationship between these concepts and communication gap. To overcome the gap, communication accommodation strategies are used by the generations. However, these strategies are not a long-term solution; purposeful actions are necessary at both organizational and generational level. In the previous chapters, some of the concepts have been discussed (communication satisfaction, communication effectiveness, generational characteristics, communication style, and communication channel. Generational initiatives will be discussed in the next chapter.

The Role of Culture
Value, as defined by Rokeach (1972 as cited in P.Sinha & Sayeed, 1981) is a type of belief that is located within one's total belief system. It is about how one ought to or ought not to behave, or about some end state of existence worth or not worth altering. Values are considered to be an important predictor of an individual’s attitude and behaviour (P.Sinha & Sayeed, 1981). D. Sinha (1979) proposed that man has a limited set of responses and a majority of them are either learned or acquired via culture. Therefore, if communication is considered as a response, it is imperative to investigate the role of culture. It is proposed here that intergenerational communication behavior is largely dependent on culture.
Every generation grows and socializes in a particular value system. Therefore, different generations bring their different personal values to the organization. Studies have shown that values differ with generations (Smola & Sutton, 2010). Conflicts between generations are generally due to differing value systems.

Arsenault (2003) argued that generational differences and conflicts arise when one assumes that the values held by an individual of one generation will change as the person ages. Therefore, as the person ages, the values held by him/her will different due to change in age. Values are relatively permanent in nature and they are formed during the formative stages of the person.

The values will change with different generations because of the different contexts in which socialization takes place and the significant events they are exposed to. Therefore, values and beliefs are the results of shared experiences. For instance, Generation X and Y have seen their parents working extremely hard and having no time for them. In such a context, the younger generation values spending time with family and strive to maintain work-life balance.

The Older generation’s Perspective on Culture

Perceptions about own culture. The older generation valued their integrity, sincerity, and commitment to work. Older generation argued that they were socialized in a joint family set up which, traditionally, is believed to uphold stability, cooperation and conformity, sometimes even at the cost of individual independence. Joint family fosters interdependence rather than individual independence (Bisht & D. Sinha, 1981). Older age participants felt that being honest and committed to work is paramount. Their value system was reflected in their communications also. While communicating, they are particular about their choice of words and the content of the communication. They aim to avoid casualness.

For me, I would say that the biggest value is the honesty of approach in serving your clients. I have been taught that for the sanctity of work, closing a deal with my client means that I will never go back to other people. This is what I have learnt and would like to hold on to. It makes you more of genuine person. Honesty will earn you respect in the long run; at least I have earned respect. Finally, honesty can only add positives to the communication so people should not be afraid of it (Sarthak, Older generation).

Integrity drives the older generation to be clear and transparent in their communications. According to them, keeping communication simple and clear makes and the experience more authentic helps them to gain respect.
It is difficult to define one common value for a particular generation as values may vary from person to person. To me, it is integrity and honesty that is most important. I prefer to communicate in a clear manner and do not wish to complicate matters. I keep it simple by making it clear that what should be done and what should not be done, what I want and what I don’t want. Again, if somebody is not honest then he will try to tell things in some other terms.- ‘ghooma-phira ke baat kare ge’ (beating around the bush). Unclear communication is dangerous as it negatively influences both personally and professionally. (Vagarya, Older generation)

Respect and discipline are the two values that the older generation participants were proud of. They also admitted that that they showed greater respect to age and a person’s knowledge in comparison to the younger generation. Respect and discipline do influence the communication process. By itself, knowledge cannot assure output; it is complementary with respect and a balanced approach. Respect helps to balance the communication process and forms strong relationships. Older generation believes that absolute freedom is detrimental.

For me, the greatest value is to respect others. One should respect knowledge; certain amount of respect should be towards the age of the person. Second value is discipline. You may have intelligence or knowledge but the output will be better if it is in a balance manner. I feel that when values like respect and discipline are there, then there is likelihood that the one will be able to achieve proper balance. It is important to have a certain degree of binding and the bonding, which these values provide. Too much of freedom is also not good; there should be some binding. If there weren’t any bindings then it would be difficult to achieve the end result (Shripal, Older generation).

The older generation also considered their generation to be less materialistic with greater importance being placed on interpersonal relationships as compared to the younger generation. Building relationship influences communication in a positive way. It helps one get to know a person better and alter communication style to suit the recipient’s need. Therefore, the older generation participants considered themselves to very flexible.

They also admitted to having faced the problems and issues being experienced by the younger and the middle-aged generations; they are better prepared to manage them and communicate. The older generation also stresses they make the efforts to pass on their values and beliefs to the next generations.

We are, as a generation, less materialistic and more focused on interpersonal relations. We are able to tailor our communication to the responsiveness and listening skills of the other person. Therefore, we are adaptable in our communications. We are more agile and flexible. We have gone through all the
phases which the current generations are going through We are able to recognize
and understand that this person gets impatient or with this person we can be little
formal with him. If the person is listening then we talk and speak more with them
else stick to what is necessary. (Rajesh Kaul, Older generation).

Perceptions about middle-aged generation’s culture. The older generation
considered the middle-aged generation to a value system that is more or less similar
to theirs. The middle-aged generation shows respect, are committed to work and
attach importance to interpersonal relationships.

They regarded the middle-aged generation to be closer to them in terms of age
and events because of which they were able to imbibe their value system. They also
felt that the middle-aged generation is trying hard to preserve these values. Kurien
(1986) said that focus of socialization in the South Asian countries are on social-
cultural continuity rather than on change. As discussed, it was seen in this study that
the older generation tries to impart their value system to the current generations to
maintain continuity. Maintenance of cultural identity is of supreme importance to the
older generation.

There is not much difference between the older and the middle-aged generations.
They have faced somewhat similar situations. Generational difference is more with
the younger generation, as they have to pass through 30 years. There is almost of
three decades between us. For instance, if you give 100 rupees to a 25 year old
person the way he is going to spend it is going to be very different from the way a
47 years old is going to spend it (Jadhav, older generation).

Perceptions about younger generation’s culture. The older generation concurred that
the younger generation is predominantly lagging in imbibing and sustaining positive
values. Inglehart’s (1997) socialization hypothesis explains the findings of the present
study. According to the hypothesis, an adult’s basic values are influenced by the
socio-economic conditions during childhood and adolescence. In the present study,
socio-economic conditions (LPG and shift from joint family to nuclear family) made
the younger generation more individualistic.

The older generation participants believed that an individualistic approach — as
exhibited by the younger generation is one of the potential causes for low
organization commitment and increased focus on specialization. The result is casual
communication. This is not acceptable to the older generation as they were brought
up in a more conservative environment. Young people are keen to learn, but their
focus is on developing expertise and specialization. This focused approach results
into the tendency to be informal and is seen by the older generation as a cause of embarrassment, especially while interacting with clients. Older generation terms the younger generation’s values as ‘modern values’.

The older generation also believed that the reason for informal communication is lack of commitment to the organization on the part of the younger generation. Younger generation is on a constant lookout for better job opportunities. This makes them less conscious of what and how they speak, as they see their association with an organization for a limited time. They are extremely focused on their personal goals, their path often conflicts with the organization’s. The older generation also believed that young people placed low importance to building interpersonal relationship.

Yet another negative perception of the younger generation is that they do not plan for the future, they prefer to live in present times. Older generation claimed that when they joined workforce, their aim was to save money to buy house and car. This is lacking in the younger generation.

They are into more of living for the present and less focused on planning for the future. Younger generation’s interest is only on the latest things. This is what that defines them. Their communication sometimes tends to be less formal, formal tone is required in official communication. Therefore, on most of the occasions it causes a bit of embarrassment. If you are writing a letter or mail to some external agency it required that you are little bit more formal in your mail as compared to the internal mails. However, the younger generation is usually less concerned about the organization. What I mean is that because they are not ready for a lifetime kind of commitment as compared to the middle-aged or the older generations who joined Parivartan knowing that they to have serve this organization for their rest of their working years. Younger generation is not clear about commitment; there are occasions when they are disrespectful to their older generation. On the other hand, we knew that we had to spend good 30-40 years here. So, we were much more careful and cautious while interacting with others. This is all related to the kind of opportunities that we had. We never had the opportunities they have today. Had these opportunities been there at that time some of us might have jumped on the bandwagon and attitudes would have changed (Rajesh Kaul, Older generation)

The younger generation has high expectations. According to the older generation, younger adults behaviour based on the feeling amongst that material comfort can be taken for granted. They do not appreciate the efforts and struggles of the older generation and also do not value their inheritance. They have become more demanding. This has negative impact on the communication process. The younger generation is seen as arrogant driven to proving their point. In addition, the older generation claimed that the younger generation work less but claim that they worked a lot.
Older generation believed the familial environment in which an individual is reared and socialized significantly influences the communication style of the person. Older generation participants compared nuclear and joint family environments to underscore the influence of family on the communication process. Being brought-up mostly in joint family households, older people said that there was emphasis on respect for hierarchy; and sustaining and transmitting the value system. 

Kakkar (1978 as cited in Tandon, 1981) argued that, in India, superior and subordinate relationships are marked by characteristics of eternal verity and moral imperative. Therefore, in a typical Indian joint family, each member has a clearly defined position in the family hierarchy. He/ she is expected to aware of the position and show appropriate the degree of love, respect and deference to others (Tandon, 1981).

The younger generation in this study was brought up mostly in nuclear families. The emphasis is on the immediate family and not to the extended family. They were socialized in set-up that encouraged freedom and independence. Bisht & D. Sinha (1981) state the younger generation has been socialized in a nuclear set up that encourages freedom and independence. People are taught to question and debate (Bisht & D. Sinha, 1981)

As a result, the value system that the older generation was exposed to was missing. This has had a negative influence on the younger generation’s communications. People brought up in a joint family household people are believed to have an implicit understanding of the meaning of relationships, the value of sacrifice and adjustment. For instance, the older generation states that when they were part of the younger generation, they used offer ‘Namaste’ to their older generation colleagues however the current generation says ‘Hi’ to them.

During our time, when we were young our parents and extended family members were there and made a positive difference to our lives. Today, because of the nuclear families, the level of attachments is not that strong. The Strong family bonds, which we used to have gone. However, one cannot blame the younger generation solely for this. It is our generation whose responsibility it was to impart these things to them. May be we are the reason for such a situation. We have not passed on our values to them as result of which the values have started to wear off. When we were growing up, the joint family system was in place, people used to take care of each other. Nowadays because of the nuclear families people are about the immediate family and hence do not focus on their extended family or any other person. In the sense, earlier people used to take care of their near and dear ones, for the younger generation is not like this; for them, it is only about the immediate family. So, obviously the younger generation doesn’t feel the bonding and the attachment to the other branches of the family. This shows in the office environment
also, you will see lack of warmth in the younger generation. A young officer will rarely come up and wish you. Earlier, this was not the case. During our time, when we were growing up in this organization, we respected our seniors and old employees and we wished them. Even today, I have maintained the same habit, if I see a person who is of my age or elder to me, saying a ‘namaste’ comes naturally to me, but that is not so from the younger generation. I have seen that the younger generation will pass you without even a greeting. Rather they would expect you to greet them! It is sad!! (Jearth Older generation)

On the positive side, the older generation believes that the younger generation is much more communicative. Older generation feels when they were young; they were not comfortable to be open in front of their elders whereas the current generation is extremely comfortable in communicating with elders in an open manner. Socialization of the older generation was a passive process and based on the behavioral model of biredirectionality. Bidirectional in terms of immediate reciprocal, exchanges of behaviors, producing linear and incremental changes (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007). On the other hand, socialization of the younger generation in this study is based on dialectical models of bidirectionality, wherein parent and child indulge in interaction to construct meanings. It is not a one-sided socialization. Dialectical socialization helped the younger generation to negotiate with the societal norms and gave freedom of choice to the child. One of the participant’s (older generation) pointed out that the differences in value systems are not the fault of the younger generation, but the effect of development.

Value shift. Generally, the older generation agreed that values have deteriorated over the years. Modern Indian society is characterized by the rapid breakdown of traditional values and the impermanent nature of social, economic and political structure (D. Sinha, 1977). In this study, it is seen that commitment levels to the organization have decreased. Low commitment levels have made communications more casual.

Younger generation does not reciprocate to the efforts of the older generation to know more about them with same intensity as a result the older generation finds difficulties in understanding them. The older generation is of the view that the younger generation is more impatient in their communication. Gallois, et al. (1999) said that young Chinese show more practical support to the older generation than communicative support like listening or being patient. According to the older generation, the younger generation is much more individualistic and self-centered in nature, it is reflected in their communication. Bengston (1975), in his study, asserted
that the younger generation is more individualistic in nature as compared to the older and the middle-aged generation.

*Younger generation does not have the same set of value system, which we had or have. They are much more materialistic in nature. For them, their own gain is of more importance rather that of organization. Their efforts are generally directed to have the maximum gain for themselves. This makes their commitment to the organization less. Our generation was more organization-oriented. I feel that, as they are not that committed to the organization, their communication becomes casual. Reason being, they are not concerned with understanding the impact their behavior on the organization. A person who cares for the organization will be specific and particular about what and how s/he communicates.* (Achutanad, Older generation)

Another participant suggested, obtusely, that the younger people are more open in the present times and do not hesitate to question and debate values. Earlier, values considered as norms, something that has to be followed and cannot be debated.

*People from the younger generation are more communicative than we were at their age. Therefore, values are being discussed amongst the younger generation, which was not the case earlier. Earlier, in our times, values were never challenged; they were taken for granted. In our time, there was no scope for a discussion about values. They were more like norms. Values are at least being discussed now. Probably five years back we could never think of being casual with our elders, which is not the case now. Younger generation believes in respecting each other but not to the extent that it becomes a barrier. Respect, I feel, one has to earn. Earlier people used to expect respect because they were senior or older, but, today, people understand that you can’t demand it* (Jearath Older generation).

*Cultural convergence.* The older generation participants observed convergences, too. According to the older generation, participants from all three generations were equally committed to the attainment of organizational goals and objectives. They placed importance on personal bonds; it equips the individual in understand the other person. In the view of older generation, everyone wants to feel important and be appreciated. Communication is one tool to make their presence felt, the first step to recognition. All the three generations have a learning approach and feel that knowledge and information is the key to effective communication. Lastly, all the three generations believes in offering respect though the intensity may vary.

*According to me, my generation, the middle-aged or the younger generation— we are all interested in completing the task. What differ are our methods and approaches to attain the goal. Our values might be different, but then there is also a common basic value system. All the three generations believe in offering respect, it*
is just that intensity varies. In addition, people across the generations want to learn something new. (Vagrgaya, Older generation).

**Cultural divide.** There was disagreement among the older generation on the question of cultural divide. Some felt that the cultural divide does not exist. Aims and objectives might have changed but the values have remained constant. Others believed in the presence of a cultural divide between the older and the younger generations. They felt that the younger generation is not forthcoming even if there is a need for interaction. There is an absence of emotional bond\(^\text{14}\). Younger people are inclined towards material goals whereas older people work believes in being and seeking emotional support and dominance (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007)

**Middle-aged generation’s Perspective on Culture**

Socialization of values can be achieved through different agencies some of which are customs, rituals, manners, loyalties and prejudices of the group to which they belong. Family is considered to be the first unit and contact point for a person’s socialization process (Tandon, 1981). Middle-aged generation participants said that values originated in and were taught in the familial context. They believed that a person is conditioned at home first. This shapes and governs his behaviour at workplace.

**Perceptions about Older generation’s culture.** There was respect for the value system of the older generation as well as the aspiration to imbibe them. The older generation, according to middle-aged participants, has good work ethics, discipline and emphasis on family ties. The older generation was born and socialized in a less competitive era due to which they could give more attention to social values. They, the middle-aged generation, accepted they had a lot to learn from the personal and professional experiences of the older generation.

> I feel that the older generation was more respectful towards people. One of the primary reasons is that they were not born in an era where success meant to trip someone else. Their upbringing made them understand social values and their importance. However, at the same time, it made them resistant to certain ideas. There is a feeling that the younger generation is going will soon reign and the values of the older generation will no longer have relevance (Dutta, Middle-aged generation)

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\(^\text{14}\) Emotional bond refers to a level of camaraderie that generations share.
But, on the negative side, the middle-aged also argued that the older generation approach is based on assumptions. They could not understand the older generation’s thinking process. If the older generation had a request for some information, they will not be specific. They would assume that their requirement would be understood by the middle-aged generation implicitly.

*On the positive side, they are knowledgeable and we need to learn from their values like hard work, discipline and their ability to put efforts in different parts of the society. However, when they ask some information, we don’t know what they need. We are not aware of their expectations. So, we have to assume what s/he wants. They are never explicit about what they want. They would not share the whole information. They would only say that ‘Mr C so and so ka information le kar aaye (Please get information for so and so thing). Then, we have to think that ‘oh, ok he is talking about this case’. He will never tell you clearly. On several occasions, they are not clear and specific with their communication, a lot is left to us to assume and understand (Ashok, Middle-aged generation).*

Lal (middle-aged generation), however, had a deviant opinion. He saw the value system of the older generation to be neutral as they are outcome- rather than process-oriented. The older generation is so focused on achieving targets that they tend to forget their values.

**Perceptions about own culture.** The middle-aged generation valued work and commitment to the organization. These are motivation for them to communicate intensely as a means to achieve their goals. As the organization commitment is high the middle—aged generation is particular about the content of communication. They are aware that any irresponsible act of communication can hit their pursuit of achieving targets. They are also outspoken about issues that may negatively affect the organization.

*Job commitment definitely increases communication effectiveness. I feel that when you are trying to reach to your goals there is a probability that you will make the effort communicate effectively to get the work done. Job commitment makes a lot of difference to many of aspects and communication is one of them (Sabita, Middle-aged generation).*

Middle-aged generation is conscious about their duty to society. They do not hesitate to stand up for others if they believe in the cause. They claimed to be more honest and transparent, which is reflected in their communications in form of being open and readiness to share information. For them, communication is fact and truth
driven, and seldom tries to conceal information. To them, communication effectiveness is possible only with transparency and honesty.

We are disciplined, hardworking and punctual. We are honest to our job and society. Our generation has vision, and works to achieve things for our family, country, and friends. If I am honest, I am going share the information in an open way and not hide information from employees. It would create a positive image in the company and on the minds of the people. Secondly, I have work hard to achieve goals to step up my career as well as for my company. I have to take decisions fast and do things correctly. We lived during the events (to some extent) of the younger generation and the older generation. So, we have to constantly change our behavior to match to the expectations of both the generations. For the younger generation, we have to be focused on punctuality. We need to set an example for them. We prefer to come to office early. We discuss issues in the office. We show our displeasure if they come late to the office. Otherwise we will not get respect from both sides. With the older generation, we have to get ourselves accustomed to their needs (Ashok, middle-aged generation).

Middle-aged generation participants felt that their experience and expertise act as a bridge between the older and the younger generations. In doing so, they attempt to make communication process easier between the two generations and tries to understand them. Experience and knowledge increases the effectiveness of communication.

What I have achieved in the last 15 years in this organization is a valuable. It is important how you put the experience and expertise to use. We are the fulcrum between the older generation and the younger generation by passing on(sic) the experience from one generation to another. We are able to grasp new ideas from the younger generation and pass them on to the older generation (Kalyan, Middle-aged generation)

**Perceptions about younger generation’s culture.** The middle-aged generation viewed the younger generation to be more open while conversing with the older generation. They are viewed as a group that is able to voice opinions and concerns without inhibition. Their ability to take up things upfront and being forthcoming is considered as their USP. This is very likely the result of their growing up in a nuclear family set-up. Sinha (1984) states the atmosphere in a nuclear set up is much more permissive and gives scope to the younger generation deviate from the societal norms.

Again, Inglehart’s socialization hypothesis explains the findings. Consistent with Inglehart’s proposition, Egri and Ralston (n.d.), in a comparative study between the USA and China, found that Chinese respondents’ basic values were influenced by the socio-economic conditions during their childhood and
adolescence. Economic reforms in China resulted in social changes, which were reflected in the young people’s attitude.

If, in a nuclear family, the father is engaged in his own vocation and the mother has also taken up a job, the parents have limited socializing roles simply because they do not have the time. The child is consequently left to the care of domestic help or is put in day-care schools and nurseries from an early age. This certainly helps early separation of the child, greater individuation, development of autonomous functioning and independence. He does not develop the kind of conformist attitude to traditional family norms’ (Sinha, 1984:278).

The values that the younger generation possesses are that they are tension-free and open. They are ready to share the information. They communicate properly and discuss things openly. Generally, older age people don’t discuss things in entirety and openly. Older generation always tends to withhold some information, which hampers the outcome. With the older generation we have to assume what kind of requirements they have, they will never share it with us. Older generation works at an assumptive level (Ashok, Middle-aged generation)

Value shift. All participants of the middle-aged generation felt that values have declined. Contradicting Begston’s (1975) work, the present study found that generational factors, along with family factors, tended to influence the value system. Decline (or the obliteration) of values suggests that transference of values at the family level has not taken place. The reasons for the decline are the context in which current generation has/is being socialized.

The middle-aged generation feels that the younger generation has had to struggle less than the other generations. Their desire for material comfort has increased, but the willingness to strive to attain them has declined. Struggle affirms the willingness of the individual to abide by his/her values system.

Frankly, value system that my generation had or I had, has almost vanished over the years. The values that people hold today do not measure up to the high standards of the past. Today, it is convenience that matters. You don’t plan now unlike what it used to be past (Udyaan, middle-aged generation)

Like there are phases in life, value systems also go through phases and are bound to change. For example, respect towards family and other important people has changed. The level of respect has decreased. Lack of respect has negatively impacted communication as the listening skills of people have significantly reduced. When respect is not offered, then the other person is always trying to prove his point. Emotions do not matter (Vinay, middle-aged generation).

Level of respect towards elders has declined significantly and has influenced communication in a negative way; listening skill has reduced, people enter in a conversation with intent to prove a point, and emotions are not respected. J. B.P Sinha
(2008) contradicted this point and asserted that people in a collective culture like India draw on external medium for selecting the message to make it more emotional than rational. Examples of external source are age, title, position and status. It is seen that lack of respect hurts the ego of the older generation and deteriorates communication process.

At family level, it varies from family to family. We were taught to respect others and understand the situation. We were taught to learn more and to strive in a competitive environment. Nowadays, competition is at a level that everyone has to go through it and there is no choice. For us it was a choice. Younger generation has very little time to even understand competition. For them, competition starts right from the day they are born. They were put in this vicious circle of to perform or perish. Once you are in fierce competition then you don’t have time to look here and there. Such a kind of environment makes the younger generation cold and low on emotions. They develop an unsympathetic attitude towards others. They have to move ahead. They may miss the personal touch and respect (Dutta, Middle-aged generation)

The middle-aged generation felt that it is while communicating that an individual’s knowledge and ability are put to the ultimate test. Therefore, a lack of content on the part of the younger generation becomes apparent when they communicate. However, it was also seen that the younger generation is more open in the presence of the older generation. Young people are extremely ambitious. However, they tend to lose their direction in pursuit of their goals. Hence, the middle-aged generation focuses on having structured communications with the younger generation in order to avoid distractions.

I have experienced that the younger generation are open in their communication. They share all information with each other. However, the older generation has some kind of a mental block, and may or may not share whole information. Older generation thinks that they are superiors because of the work that they have put in to get to this level. Therefore, they must be served by the middle-age group. This kind of thinking creates a communication gap. So, if we have to collect some information or data asked by them(sic), we make various efforts to gather the information so that they will like some bit of it; ‘sir ko kuch toh aacha lage ga’ .(Ashok, middle-aged generation).

Cultural convergence. Respect for people, especially the elders, as a point of convergence for the middle-aged generation across the generations. This is a norm that has been passed down from generations. Meeta states, ‘respect would be one of the things. All of them have this thing in them. All three generations converge here’. Another point of convergence is commitment towards the organization and its goals
as a supreme value that is common across the generations. They feel that higher organizational commitment leads to higher communication effectiveness.

*The common thing that binds all three generations is their understanding of the organizational goals of the system. Everyone is aware of what is expected out of them. I feel that if people they don’t know of what is expected out of them, what is the ultimate goal of an assignment, then communication will become irrelevant and ineffective. I think knowing the goal and knowing the methods to be adopted to achieve the same makes communication more effective (Dutta, Middle-aged generation).*

According to the middle-aged generation, irrespective of personal limitations people of all generations are making an effort to familiarize themselves with technology. Ratan (Middle-aged generation) states “persons of all generations are making an attempt to stay connected with technology”. The older generation is trying to catch up and the middle-aged generation is trying to keep pace with the younger generation. Communication can itself be considered as a point of convergence with all the three generations making an attempt to communicate with each other.

**Cultural divide.** There could be differences of opinion, but the middle-aged generation did not see a cultural divide. However, a deviant opinion, Ashok (middle-aged generation), said that cultural divide results in a communication divide. According to him, communication with the older generation takes place at an assumptive level and the middle-aged generation has to work around a lot to give communication the required perspective. Younger generation is overloaded with data/information that they are not aware of what to communicate and what to leave out.

**The Younger generation’s Perspective on Culture**

**Perceptions about older generation’s culture.** Younger generation participants believed the older generation to be conventional, always trying to arrive at safe answers instead of working toward productive solutions. This attitude makes the older generation diplomatic or circumspect in their communications. Therefore, the older generation is diplomatic in their communication, as they do not want to risk their career growth (promotion). In their orthodox approach, younger people allege that the older generation offers respect to people even when recipients do not deserve it.
Respect is a value about which the older generation is rigid. They expect to be respected.

*I would say ‘security’. I feel the older generation worship ‘security’, especially in government sector. A government job is important for them. Even in their office dealings it is evident that they want to play safe, they don’t want to take risks, and try their level best to see that any decision should not come back to them. They won’t put their jobs or promotion at stake and will always play safe. Having a stable job is more important than taking risks to rise and do different things* (Samrat, Younger generation).

But the younger generation also observed that, notwithstanding their rigid attitudes, the older generation has a better value system than them. Rakesh (younger generation) said, ‘*though it a subjective view, different people have different takes. But I would say that their value system is good*’. The older generation has efficient managerial and communication skills as it is backed by experience and maturity.

**Perceptions about middle-aged generation’s culture.** Younger generation consider themselves to be closer to the middle-aged generation as they have faced more or less similar events.

*Middle-aged generation is caught(sic) between the older generation and us. They have been with this organization for the last 15-20 years. So, if you look from the social perspective they have a global way of working. India liberalized in 1990s and they were groomed then in the organizations. They were influenced by the outside (Western) culture so they have seen those sides (also). They even understand the older generation and share some of their experiences. Knowing both worlds, they have mastered the art of balancing. According to me, they are the golden generation, they are best placed in the present times* (Kiran Younger generation)

The middle-aged generation was socialized in a liberalized setup, but having worked with the older generation, they are also familiar with the traditional and conventional. This has helped them to balance two extremes with the older generation’s values and the freshness of the younger generation’s ideas. The middle-aged employees were seen to balance the contradictory pulls of traditional and the modern instead of dismissing one or the other.

**Perceptions about own culture.** The influence of Western culture is evident in the younger generation. There is some evidence of the effects on their value system. However, is also clear that the cardinal values have unchanged. For instance, there
has been some diminishing in the respect that is traditionally shown to elders, but it has not entirely faded. This was admitted by the younger generation participants. Filial piety is a feature of Asian culture, but the younger generation expressed their dissatisfaction with such expectations.

 [...] it is about getting influenced by western culture; and if you agree with that, you can say that we are losing our values. However, it is not that we don't have a value system in our generation; it may not be as it is for the previous generations. I accept that we don't respect our parents that much. With time, values have deteriorated. I don’t want to comment on that [...] Earlier people respected their parents more but in our generation people do not respect to their parents to that extent [...] this gets reflected in some of the younger generation’s office behaviour (but not mine) (Anuj, Younger generation)

It is evident that the importance of respecting others is not completely lost on the younger generation. They understand its positive effects. A show of respect makes communication less antagonistic even though there may be an undertone of disagreement or dispute. According to the younger generation participants, respect is important if one wants to make a good impression.

Like I have said about respect, if you don’t show respect to others, your communication will certainly become more assertive and argumentative. Respect makes communication mild (sic). Respect to older people or anyone. You have to show some respect towards people. If you don’t offer respect, then it is not a communication, but an argument. It will come across like you want to push something to others- yahi sahi hain aur aisa hi hota hain ( this is the right way and this is how it suppose to be). So, like respect and other values, I will say if you are right then your communication shows more confidence. If you are confident, only then can you communicate effectively. If you know that you are wrong, or you are not doing ethical things, then the person thinks that he/she is not doing right. Morality comes into picture (Ramandeep, Younger generation).

The younger generation participants also believed themselves to hold standards of integrity and ethics. This gives them confidence in their communications, which helps in increasing communication effectiveness. They are ambitious and enterprising; and have to thrive in a competitive world. Their attitude is reflected in their communications (prefers to diverse modes of communication channels).

First thing is that we want do something. We have an ambitious attitude. Ambition is a value we bring to work. All people from the younger generation are ambitious; everybody wants to do things and do them differently. Our enterprising, ambitious nature, and ability to take risks sets us apart from other generations (Kishore, younger generation)

The younger generation acknowledged that their value system is flexible and not as rigid as the older generation’s. They hold on to certain basic values, but are willing
to compromise on others as warranted by the needs of the situation. What is important to them is the big picture and the prospects of long-term benefit.

I can speak for myself and for my generation, though there might be some variations. We live in a competitive environment. So, sometimes, the whole concept of values to me personally must suit a given situation. [...] But, yes, there are certain beliefs that all of us have and we don’t give them up (Amit, younger generation).

The younger generation also felt that they were more accommodating than the older generation. They were ready to change in order make their communications effective by accommodation at various levels.

**Value shift.** Younger generation believed in the same values of the earlier generation. What has changed is the intensity of the beliefs. Bengston (1975) found significant similarity in the values of several generations. We may thus infer that socialization of values did take place and that the values were transferred from one generation to another. This study also did not find the ‘great value gap’ between generations. In the case of the younger generation too, there was a convergence of family and generational influences.

The younger generation is more adaptive as than the older generation. Young participants said that the older generation does not initiate a conversation whereas their generation firmly believes in the value of communication and tries to initiate conversation. Young people perceive that they are more open-minded, less unidirectional and are better and more willing listeners. This is contradictory to the older generation’s opinion that the younger generation tends to avoid communication.

There has been a shift in the value system. As I told you that we are very open minded, but the older generation people’s minds are single- tracked. Another change is that we don’t show respect to people unnecessarily, which the older generation does. Younger generation does things fast whereas the older generation people take a lot of time. Sometimes, if you have an open mind, you will be able to listen to other person also. Therefore, I feel that we are better listeners. This change in value system or outlook has positively influenced communication (Debosmita, younger generation).

The major reason for the shift in value system is the different contexts in which people of various generations were socialized. Older generation was socialized in a context that determined by hierarchy and authority (age, sex and generational status). Respect was of paramount importance; unrestrained was discouraged (Tandon, 1981).
Media and technology played a pivotal role in influencing the context for the younger generation. The younger generation was also socialized in nuclear families, which gave them a scope to negotiate with values and norms (Sinha, 1988).

For the younger generation, values are context-dependent whereas for the older generation values were independent of the context. Younger generation was also seen to be less mindful of values and appeared more lethargic on certain matters. They also tend to follow only those set of values that will benefit them. Neha (younger generation), ‘For the current generation, I feel we first assess what values are relevant in today’s world and then choose to retain those that would benefit us and ignore the rest. Values are situation dependent’.

Yes, there is a shift in the value system. I will tell you an incident. A few days back, I was in my building and was going from my floor to another floor in the elevator. There was another guy who must be a school going kid. There are bars inside the elevator for people to hold. This boy was leaning all his weigh on the bars and pushing himself up. So, I just told him that he should avoid doing it as screws might come off. He said that they won’t break. I said, they might, why do you want to test it. He argued and said he knew they won’t. So, I am pretty sure now that my generation must be behaving like this with our older generation. These are certain values like being mindful of elders, that may be absent in my generation or may be in a decline and may vanish altogether in the next generation. There is a value shift. We are less mindful of values. I don’t mean this in a negative sense. We tend to look at values in terms of the context and our senior may be looking at values irrespective of context. We would be ok at flouting certain rules at certain times for the greater well-being, which the older generation will not do. It is more about following a rule in letter or spirit. So, the older generation would like to follow the rulebook to the letter and we would like to follow the rulebook in spirit. And because there are two different mindsets, there is a conflict. Sometimes they might not get our point. (Amit, Younger generation)

Cultural convergence. According to the younger generation, respect of the older generation is value shared by all three generations. The only difference may be in the intensity of the belief.

The main thing is to respect people. Only, the way this is done may be different, otherwise everything is the same. We also respect traditional values. But if something is forced on us, we tend to resist it. We don’t rebel, but definitely would like to negotiate things and will not accept anything at face value. We are critical of things (Saumya, younger generation)

The younger generation participants also agreed that people from all three generations are equally committed to their work and are not diffident about learning from one another. Area of learning might differ from generation to generation, for the older generation it might be technology and for the younger generation it might be
gaining experience but all the three generation are making an effort to learn something.

We are bound to the organization and committed to our work. We talk to each other because we want to achieve our personal and professional goals. Another common feature is our learning approach. A middle-aged generation person will learn from the older generation and the younger generation will learn from the older generation and the middle-aged generation (Kiran, younger generation).

Role of Age Stereotypes in Intergenerational Communication

Stereotyping is culturally rooted (Schneider, 2005). Understanding of the role of culture (in the previous section) will help in understanding the dynamics of stereotyping. Understanding and accepting generational diversity requires the overcoming of stereotypes. Stereotyping is a myopic attitude and increases the likelihood of missing the true picture (Lee, n.d.). McCann and Keaton (2013) espoused various types of age stereotypes that are generally attached to older workers: (a) older workers have poor memory skills and are prone to making more cognitive mistakes, (b) older generation is averse to technology, (c) older workers’ physical abilities reduce significantly, (d) older workers show declining productivity and performance, (e) older workers are not agile and (f) older workers are more loyal. It is apparent that the older generation is, mostly, stereotyped in negative light.

The Western context is largely characterized by the importance given to individualism. Western peoples are acutely conscious about their personal rights and autonomy. The empirical work of Hummert (2004) showed that people stereotyped elders negatively. Eastern culture shows the older generation in a largely positive light. However, recent studies paint a different picture altogether. In comparative study of Asian countries and the West (McCann & Keaton, 2013 ; Anantaraman, 1980) younger people were seen to have negative perceptions about the older generation. Sharma (1971), in his comparative study of India and several Western countries, found that Indian students attached negative stereotypes to the older generation. However, the middle-aged generations’ perceptions were not researched.
Older generation and Age stereotypes
A participant from the older generation said all people hold stereotyped notions, but they are not willing to admit to it.

Stereotype activation. For the older generation, stereotypes are activated from past experiences. Thus, an experience with person A of the younger generation is the basis for interaction with person B, also of the younger generation. It is likely that, in the process, there is likelihood that the experiences with person A will influence the perceptions about B. This is the start of the stereotyping process.

My interactions depend on the physical characteristics of the person. Like, if a person has gelled his hair, I take the cue that he is from the younger generation. The kind of body language helps me to categorize him. However, at the same time I would be going ahead with the content of conversation. I would like to assess the person without any kind bias. All said, the cues help to start the conversation, it gives us a fair idea of how to proceed with the communication (Sarthak, Older generation).

Stereotypes attached to the older generation. Weiss and Maurer’s (2004), in their study, reported that the older generation is viewed to be less flexible and more rigid. In this study, the most common stereotype about the older generation is rigidity. They are seen as being rigid, to which the older generation participants reacted that, indeed, they may be so, but they are also ready to adapt and change.

They think that we are reluctant to change. Whatever ideas we have, we are seen to be stuck with them and unwilling to look at other perspectives. We say it is 50-50. We are a bit rigid but we also show readiness to change. It is also important to understand that that we are less informed about technology, which is true to some extent. But to say that we are always like is wrong. We are trying to learn that preconceived notions are not always correct (vagraya, older generation).

In a comparative study of US and Thai workers, McCann and Keaton (2013) found that the younger generation viewed the older generation as being less flexible and also not comfortable with technology. In this study, when it came to technology, the older generation felt that they were being termed as ignorant and ‘technology phobic’. They may not be fully proficient, but they know enough of the basics to serve their functional needs. They are making the effort, but they also admitted to a sense of inertia that prevented rigorous use. The older generation also said that they
did not feel diffident about seeking help from the middle-aged and the younger generations.

Another stereotype attached to the older generation is pessimism. They are considered to be risk averse and unwilling to deviate from the conventional and consider new ideas. Older generation participants, who argued that they are not risk averse, contested this view; rather, from their knowledge of the organization and their experience, they are inclined to weigh all aspects of the matter before a decision. Their younger colleagues see this as pessimism. They feel that after being in workforce for so long they cannot afford to commit mistakes and hence can’t take impulsive decisions. Lastly, the economic environment in which they were raised also made them cautious.

We are not pessimistic. We grew in an economic environment that was gloomy, which influenced our thinking. There is this example of a cage in which they had put some monkeys and they electrified the bars so that whenever a monkey touched the bar he would get a shock and fall down. This happened for some time after which they disconnected the power supply to the cage. But the monkeys wouldn’t touch the bars. You will be surprised to know that generation of monkey did not touch the bars of the cage. Even the next generation of monkeys did not touch the bars. Their minds were conditioned. When we grew up there were no economic avenues available for growth. If you could get a job, it was good. If you thought of leaving your job, there were no alternatives. So, our generation was conditioned in such an environment. Some people might term this as a pessimistic attitude but that is way things were and we were conditioned thus. If you are an intelligent enough person, then you have to overcome that condition as you are not a monkey. I would say it was the impact of the economy rather than we being pessimistic (Mehen, Older generation)

**Stereotyping by the older generation.** By and large, the older generation participants did not stereotype the middle-aged generation. There was one exception, Mehen, who said that “the middle-aged generation has a habit of shifting their viewpoints”. The middle-aged generation argues that they have to constantly work towards finding a balance between the older and the younger generations. This is does not mean that they do not take firm views. Their ability to balance is seen as vacillation.

The older generation opinion about the younger generation was divided. Some of the participants said that they do not have any preconceived notions about the younger generation. They do not take things at face value and try to know the person. Others agreed that there are stereotyped views about the younger generation. They saw the younger generation to be argumentative by nature. However, as seen in the
discussion on communication behavior the younger generation tries to avoid an argument with the older generation because they think that they cannot add value to the discussion.

You always think that the young generation will get into arguments. Best way to deal such situations is that you don’t get into an argument. May be they don’t have patience to listen, to an extent that they prefer to only hear what they have to say rather than listening to me. You can’t force someone to listen to you.

The older generation also said that the younger generation is casual in communication. However, the younger generation participants insisted that they are conscious about their choice of words in their communications with the older generation.

When I was young, I did some exceptionally good work, did not expect to be rewarded. But for the current generation, if anybody has done something s/he feels that they should be rewarded. If he is not rewarded then he will not be satisfied and would feel that I am not appreciating him. Earlier in my time, if I was getting 85 at the scale then I used to be considered top performer. We were satisfied. But today’s generation is not. If you give them 85 they will probably beat you outside. A rating of 95 is exceptional. If 94.8 rating is given to them then they make things very difficult for the rater. So, now, the superiors have a tough time. People are expecting a lot in today’s environment as compared to our times. [...] Of course, it is very difficult for us to deal with them. If the younger generation comes to know that they have been given less than their counterparts, it becomes very difficult to deal with them. Then they avoid talking to us. (Mishra, older generation)

Yeah, they are very free, very casual. They don’t think twice before speaking, are not mindful that there is a senior present, and they will not stand. If we see an older person, we will stand up to greet that person. The younger generation doesn’t feel that, if an older person is present, you should stand. They think it is not necessary. They will say hello to you. Being mindful is not part of their personality. They feel that you are working and they are also working and age is not a factor that matters. I mean, in India one needs to respect. If you go outside (India) there is no such thing (Usha, Older generation).

**Middle-aged generation and Age stereotypes**
To the middle-aged generation, stereotypes are temporary. As interaction increases, people’s perceptions also change. It can thus be concluded that stereotypes need not be negative; they become disruptive only when people refuse to change.

**Activation of Stereotypes.** Stereotypes are activated by factors like past experiences and physical characteristics. The middle-aged generation also asserted that socialization is a catalyst in the activation of stereotypes. As example, it is commonly believed in schools that elderly teachers are stricter than the younger ones, which is
not necessarily so. Within organizations, too, when they see an older generation person age stereotypes get activated.

**Stereotypes attached to the middle-aged generation.** The middle-aged generation participants said that they are stereotyped by the older generation who thought that the middle-aged attained material success without really working for them. Hence, they are stereotyped as lacking efforts to achieve their goals and targets. They contest this view because, as they said, they worked just as hard, but the nature of the struggles was different.

**Stereotyping by the middle-aged generation.** The older and the younger generations have also been stereotyped by the middle–aged generation. The older generation was seen as pessimistic; and the younger as good in multi-tasking. Being multi-taskers has positive influence on communication because of higher grasping powers and knowledge.

> A bit, yeah!! yeah!! naturally as they are very young and one thing which makes a lot of difference is their education. They are very fresh and so, naturally, they brighter and more intelligent. Having the knowledge will definitely make the communication better. If you don’t have the knowledge then the communication is not that very effective. So, if they have grasp of the matter and the sufficient knowledge communication becomes easy and effective (Dutta, Middle-aged generation).

The younger generation was seen as casual in their communications. This has a negative influence because an impression may be conveyed that they are not being serious. However, younger generation participants responded that they are comfortable while communicating with the middle-aged generation and have never cross the line and been casual. Younger generation uses the analogy of elder brother and younger brother relationship. They are as respectful of the middle-aged generation as a person would be of an elder sibling.

> The younger generation is casual in communication. Being casual means not understanding the importance of the task. They will do it but then they delay it. Hence, work is not done on time, even if it is urgent. I really don’t understand why they can’t the sense of urgency in our voice. If we expect something to be done from the younger generation in a given time limit and in case it is not done immediately they give a casual response ‘yes we will do it later on’. This is what happens here.
Younger generation need to understand what is urgent and should not be casual in their approach or behavior (Dutta, Middle-aged generation).

This is due to age factor and the changing environment in colleges. Earlier, in schools the teachers were strict; but now the teacher and student relationship is much more open. It is open to such an extent that they openly discuss issues and share information. This is influencing the workplace setup also (Ashok, Middle-aged generation).

**Younger generation and Age stereotypes**

The younger generation participants felt that they were more labeled than stereotyped. They are of being perceived by the older and middle-aged generations as casual in their communications. They concede that they are casual, but not to the extent that others believe them to be.

They also have this opinion about us ‘Ok she is like this kind, bahut hee easily lete hain aaj kal ke log. Humare time mein aisa hoata tha’(they are like this only, they take things very leisurely, what would they know as they are new to the organization, in our time things used to be in this way). They feel that we take things easily and are not sincere enough. They have this perception that they had go through a lot of hardship to attain what they have today; but we get everything easily. According to them, we are callous and not loyal. I am fine with it, it is their perception and I can’t do much about it. I know what the truth is. We can’t change everyone (Saumya Younger generation).

**Stereotype activation.** Predominantly depends on prior experience with the people from different generations.

Actually, we have had experiences with old people. My experiences with them have influenced me. If you start with your college, the professors were older. So, if you were comfortable with your teachers, then you will be comfortable with the older generation in office also. If in college you were scared to talk to the professors, you will have difficulty with the older generation in office too (swapnil, younger generation).

**Stereotypes attached to the younger generation.** The extensive use of SMS, colloquialisms, abbreviated words was seen negatively by the older generation. Younger generation participants agree, but they insisted that they are careful with their language when communicating outside their generation.

What is seen as impatience by the older generation is actually their eagerness to learn, said the participants. However, they are seen to be immature, their communication lacks clarity. Sinha (1979) wrote how the younger generation is
referred to as ‘gadah pachisi’ (donkey twenty-five), a colloquialism for their impulsive, impatient, unwise and impetuous behavior.

According to them, we all speak sms language. They think that we are bad at communication though we also use English language. I don’t think this is the case. Secondly, as per them, our generation is too impatient. This may be true to a certain extent but it doesn’t apply to everybody. Then, there is the bit where you are termed as a very shallow person. In a sense, we can’t empathize with people or stuff, we are not emotional. Again, this is not true. There are some more stereotypes like we are the generation that loves outside food. We love going to movies. This is very stereotypical. I know people from my generation who love the music of 60s or 70s. This is very trivial but that is how they look at us. It is not about us and them (Debosmita, Younger generation).

**Stereotyping by the younger generation.** They claimed that that they do not stereotype the older generation. But they felt that, though the older generation is rigid (which older generation also agrees to an extent), they are also nurturing in their approach. The younger generation did think that the older generation was pessimistic.

Older generation’s experience forms their habits, which is very difficult to change. If they have some kind of skill set for a particular kind of job, so it is not easy to change or they never try to change their perception or thought process. I know that they have developed this thought process over the period of time and they are not going to change it so I will not force it, and accept whatever they are saying. If they have certain way of doing things then let them do it that way and I will try to do it my way but I won’t interfere with their thought process (Nagendra, younger generation).

Younger generation, in general, does not have stereotyped opinions about the middle-aged generation. A few of the participants felt that, on certain occasions, the middle-aged generation behaves like the older generation. They are dominating and strict, which negatively influenced communication.

In their study of the Indian context, Giles et al (2007) found that stereotypes are predictors of communication satisfaction. Thus, if negative stereotypes are attached to a generation, there is likelihood of low communication satisfaction with that generation. This study also showed that the negative stereotyping of the older generation and that communication satisfaction was lowest with the older generation. Therefore, it can be concluded that in case of the older generation, stereotypes influenced communication satisfaction.
Application of CPA model in the Present Study

The present study’s focus was on negative stereotypes. The researcher adopted CPA instead of the ASI (Age stereotype in Interaction model) or Communication Enhancement Model, which deal with the role of positive and negative stereotypes and their relationship with intergenerational communication. Positive stereotypes of the older generation reduced communication avoidance (McCann et al., 2006, Ryan et al., 2004). In the present study only the middle-aged generation was found to have positively stereotyped the younger generation. According to them the younger generation has very good multi-tasking capabilities, which increase ability to learn quickly and, in turn, enhance communication effectiveness.

Below is the communication predicament approach model

![Communication Predicament of Ageing Model](image)

FIG. 4.1. Communication Predicament of Aging Model (Ryan, Meredith, MacLean, & Orange, 1995, p. 91).

Source: Communication Predicament of ageing Model (Ryan et al. 1990, as cited in Hummert et al., 2004)
Figure 5.2 Improvised CPA model on the basis of findings

Age stereotypes generally have a negative impact on communication. The CPA model is grounded in CAT; it helps us to understand the relationship between stereotype and communication. The assumption is that old/middle/younger age cues trigger the activation of negative stereotypes making such expectations apparent. In the present study, physical characteristics and past experiences have acted as cues for all generations.

Hummert et al. (1997) carried out a study in which young, middle-aged and old participants were given a set of photographs (with smiling and neutral expressions) and asked to categorize them into positive and negative stereotypes. Results showed that those who appeared to be on the 80s and 90s (years of age) were ascribed negative stereotypes as compared to those in 40s and 60s (years of age). It was also seen that facial expression neutralizes stereotyping. Those who smiled were less negatively stereotyped in comparison to those with neutral expressions, irrespective of their age.

Activation of negative stereotypes results in various kinds of verbal and non-verbal behaviours in communication accommodation strategies. A common strategy is patronizing speech. In the present study, it was observed that the younger generation avoided jargon with the older generation and preferred a passive style of communication. This is exemplified by Debosmita (younger generation), who said
she avoided jargon because she felt that the older generation would not be able to relate to their language styles.

According to the CPA model, such reactions from the younger generation act as a reinforcement of the negative feedback cycle. Although the older generation is negatively stereotyped, it was also observed in this study that they clarified their position instead of internalizing them as their characteristics. This characteristic of the older generation was a departure from the model. It shows an encouraging aspect of the older generation response to negative stereotyping. The middle-aged and younger generations also responded similarly to their being negatively stereotyped.

From a review of past studies, it would appear that positive stereotyping would be an appropriate response to negative stereotyping. However, Hummert (1997) concluded that people tend to consider negative traits to be more reliable than positive traits. It is believed that negative traits do not form on their own and, hence, are more reliable. Hummert said that the middle-aged and younger generations are more likely to adapt themselves to negative stereotyping than the older generation. The discussion on communication accommodation showed that middle-aged and younger generations are — as claimed by them — more accommodating than the older generation.

The CPA model was designed from the perspective of the older generation’s stereotyping. The model does not consider the relationship between age stereotypes and communication when the middle-aged and younger generations are also stereotyped, which was observed in this study.

The participants of the Middle-aged generation said that they were stereotyped by the older generation. But they also felt that stereotypes are temporary by nature and will one day break down with better understanding of the person or group.

The younger generation felt that its was being stereotyped by the older and the middle-aged generations. Like the older generation’s response, the younger generation also defended itself. The older generation changed their communication style while interacting with the younger generation. They tended to have a paternalistic and nurturing approach in their communications.

Findings of this research show a departure from the CPA model. Stereotypical behaviour and constrained opportunities of communication do not result in loss of

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15 It is important to note that change in communication style does not take place only because of age stereotypes. There are several other factors like generational characteristics and culture.
personal control, self-esteem and diminished social interaction. Irrespective of the generation they belonged to, the participants were concerned about being stereotyped and defended themselves instead of internalizing the stereotypes as defining characteristics. The reason for the variance is the differences in context.

Ryan et al. had developed the model in a family or patient-nurse context. Here, it was expected that the older generation would be more dependent on the other generations for emotional support. The present study was carried out in an organizational context. Here, the older employees are respected for their experience and knowledge they have acquired over the years. Thus, their self-esteem is not lost. Rather than dependency, the workplace presents an atmosphere of interdependency.

**Communication Gap across Generations**

The present study uses Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to explain the nature of communication gap and communication accommodation strategies. As explained in the previous chapter that, as the generation gap increases, social comparison intensifies. The older and the younger generations indulged in rigorous social comparison. This results in the strengthening of generational identity and the formation of stereotypes and other factors like culture, conflicting generational characteristics that lead to a communication gap.

CAT is an improvised and revised version of speech accommodation theory whose basic aim was to understand, explain, and predict many of the adjustments that generations make in order to create, maintain or decrease social distance in an interaction. It focuses on the different ways that people accommodate as well as the reasons and consequences of accommodation (Giles & Ogay, 2006).

A relationship between communication satisfaction and communication gap can be established. As discussed in the previous chapter, that communication satisfaction is minimal with the older generation. It was also shown that communication gap was the highest with the older generation. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that lower the communication satisfaction; higher will be the communication gap.
Older generation’s Experience of Communication gap

The older generation reported communication gap to be highest with the younger generation followed by their own generation. It is noteworthy that instances of communication gap with the middle-aged generation are insignificant.

In Parivartan, a welfare facility was introduced. Loans for buying computers were offered. I had asked a young person, who had joined recently, release a circular announcing the scheme. But the circular did not make any mention of the word ‘computer’! Therefore, the circular didn’t solve its purpose. I suppose it happened because of a lack of experience. Experience counts a lot. When you do some work and if you know the organization well, communication will be effective. The younger generation has only book knowledge but their practical knowledge is nil. There will talk about the Companies Act, Clauses, etc. In actuality, nothing is like that. Theoretical and practical knowledge are both different. Younger generation works with theoretical knowledge, whereas the older generation has the practical knowledge. Therefore, there will be clashes. (Jadhav, Older generation)

The reason for the larger communication gap with the younger generation is the differing contexts in which the older and the younger generations were socialized. In the view of the older generation, young people were brought up in a different value system from theirs. Their environment fostered unhealthy competition in the pursuit of goals and targets. Therefore, the younger generation tends to become aggressive, which can lead to a communication breakdown. Different contexts make it difficult for the younger and the older generation to understand each other.

Reasons could be different. May be it is the values or the fact that they grew up in a different kind of environment where people were driven by competition. Too much competition teaches you that you need to strike first or you will be struck down. It is a combative attitude. They are aggressive and would go to lengths, being uncivil to get through, and to see to it that their ends are met (Sarthak, Older generation).

There is also the perception that there is wide gap between what the younger generation has learnt and how they must put it to practice. Therefore, there is a gap between the theoretical learning and practical learnings. The younger is lagging because of their inexperience, which causes negative influences on communication and resulting in a communication gap. The inability to apply learned knowledge is an obstacle to the implementation of business plans.
Younger generation people also tend to have high expectations, which often lead to a communication gap. The want quick results and feedback. The older generation finds it difficult to manage these expectations.

I did not expect my superiors to reward me, but for the current generation things have changed. If they have done something they feel they should be rewarded. If he is not rewarded then he will not be satisfied and would feel that I am not appreciating him. He may feel that I am against him or something like that. (Mishra, Older generation)

According to the older generation, young people generally tend to compare themselves with others. In such circumstances, it becomes difficult to satisfy them. The young people have few fixed notions, which are barriers to effective communication and results in a communication gap. Casual communication, the older generation feels, tends to dilute the importance of the subject. This, too, can lead to a communication breakdown.

Though the communication gap with their generation is substantial, the finding is contrary to published studies. It is, therefore, important to examine this further.

[...] I remember, we were a supposed to do a project within a given time frame. I needed the help of someone who was of my age (older generation). I provided the requirements and inputs; and it was confirmed that the inputs were in the line with the expected output. He claimed that he understood it. I had other work and when I came back, I found that nothing had happened even though, throughout our discussions, I was given the impression that my colleague understood everything. Nothing could be done and it was a waste of time because the person was not willing to acknowledge that he or she did not understand what was expected out of him (Tushar, Older generation).

The older generation, they grew up in an environment in which communication between parent (father) and child was not frequent. Gore (1978) discussed the father and child relationship in the Indian context. This relationship is characterized by a formal, restrained and affective behaviour. This was prevalent in large/ joint families. In the previous chapter, it was seen that the older generation has been reared in joint families. Parent and child did not feel free to share their opinions, feelings. They developed inhibitions, which prevented them from communicating with their elders.

The behavioural outcome such restraint was the development of an inherent reservation in making vigorous communication, which is carried to the workplace. The result is a distant approach even while communicating with their generation, which is detrimental to both sender and the recipient of the communication.
When we were growing up there was no communication between father and the son. Mother, of course, would communicate but there was always distance between father and children because of which we are comparatively less communicative. But our children are getting exposure (Achutanand, Older generation).

The older generation often assumes that a person from his generation at the workplace has sufficient knowledge from experience and hence need not be given detailed information or instructions. This is not always so. Participants reported incidents where the individuals concerned did not admit to insufficient knowledge. In such cases, assumptive communications often resulted in a breakdown.

Middle-aged generation’s Experience of Communication gap
The middle-aged generation attributed a wider communication gap with the older generation.

[...] my subordinate who is pretty senior to me. I told him to finish an assignment, which was more of coordination. He was supposed to get a magazine from one building to another. There were some time constraints as, on the next day, we had to distribute brochures in a meeting. This work was supposed to be finished by that day. On that day, it was raining heavily. I thought it would not take more than an hour for him to go and get the things; and we had more work lined up. I told him and he also agreed. But, as it was raining, he got stuck at one place with all the materials. Obviously, he was irritated. Then there was an eleventh hour urgency. We did not know that it has to be done. I was managing all the things in the office and he was out there on the streets. He made his deliveries, calls me up vented his frustration. He said that this is not the way he will work; this is not an assignment he should have been given and that I should have thought of the rain. I did not understand that he was irritated and he was also stuck in jam; and also that he had to deliver things by 6 before people left. So, when he called me I understood. Initially, I got really upset when he started shouting at me but then, you know, shouting back would have made the situation worse and ‘kaam hota nahin’ (work could have got delayed). I tried to keep my cool and told him that the work had to be done anyhow. I tried to help him out and told him that he will be able to complete the work. In the evening, he again called to tell me that I should handle all these things. He will not do the work. I just kept quiet. I did not want situation to flare up till the event was over. After the event was over and things had cooled, I told him then in the presence of my superior that this is the way he communicated, which is not right. He felt that he, being an elderly person, should not have been instructed by someone much younger. I have to understand that he is of the older generation; and I have to give him respect and acknowledge his age and experience to make him comfortable working with me. Such incidents continued to happen. Had I was older than him this would not have happened (Meeta, Middle-aged generation).

The middle-aged generation attributes such intergeneration relationships to ego issues. The rigid attitudes of the older generation were cited as the chief reason for
communication gap. The older generation is not open to discussion and is unwilling to listen to the views of the others.

The older generation is also seen as maintaining a distant relationship with the middle-aged generation. It is difficult to have two-way communications the reason being, as already discussed the context of their upbringing. This is the basis of the communication gap. The conference board of Canada (2009), in its report ‘Winning the Generation Wars’, said that the older generation lacks the construct of sociability. It is the younger generation followed by the middle-aged generation who are highly sociable.

_The older generation is stoic. I think they like to keep a distance. May be they are informal among their generation. But with others, they won’t share all information. I would like to know why such an instruction is being given and what is the intention behind it. This is withheld by the older generation. We want it to be more open and informal, so that we are at the same level of understanding. Actually, when I am not able to understand I cannot ask more questions. As far as communication is concerned I have the upper hand with the younger generation, as I can do this with them but I can’t do this with the older generation (Lal, Middle-aged generation)._ 

_In this organization, especially, they have their own ideas about what communication is. They think communication is only about facts and has nothing to do with feelings. Sometimes giving only facts without the background does not convey the message that I would like to give. Secondly, if you say that you want to share your feeling, they will give very simplistic responses and have negative impressions about you. They won’t even ask probing question like if I am saying something why am I saying it. They won’t be interested in knowing ‘why were you saying that?’ They won’t ask questions which will make me open up, which will encourage me to share my feeling. They are not too bothered about the information (Shantaram, Middle-aged generation)._ 

Constant changes in the channels of communication to accommodate the older generation cause modifications in communication content. The older generation is not conversant with technology and the middle-aged generation prefers technology if the situation demands it. The middle-aged generation believes in face-to-face communication but feels that the older generation is not flexible enough to use different channels as required by the situation.

The older generation also has the tendency to compare with the past. Thus, the middle-aged generation is called as the ‘lucky ones’ who achieved material comforts relatively easily and yet does not value them. Ashok, a middle-aged generation participant, said, _the older generation expects the middle-aged generation to serve_
them. With such contrasting perceptions and expectations of each other, a communication is inevitable.

With the younger generation, there is very little communication gap. However, they are seen not taking communication seriously. Lal, a middle-aged generation participant, said, they are more about themselves. Whenever they want something they are satisfied with what they find on Google; they won’t discuss with colleagues and seniors. We feel that there is an information gap, as they are not communicating.

The younger generation’s inexperience is reflected in their views and communication. They are unable to foresee the consequences of their action. They do not know how to communicate. However, the middle-aged generation also feels that the younger generation cannot be blamed, they will learn with experience.

Younger generation’s Experience of Communication gap

The younger generation agreed that communication gap is the largest with the older generation. There is a large distance in the relationship between the older and the younger generations on account of their differing socializing contexts and the large age difference. The younger generation described the tendency of the older people to not listen to their viewpoints and to lose patience quickly. J. B. P Sinha (2008) reported that people who are lower in the organizational hierarchy (generational hierarchy) have to keep status, mood, possible reactions and the nature of relationship in mind in their interactions.

As one gets older, there is a decline in one’s ability to give detailed input. Older generation gives a broader perspective on matters. They might overlook the problems regarding SOPs (Standard operating procedures), especially faced by the people at junior levels who actually have to do the work. Such things are hardly there on their minds. They only look at a superficial level, they are only concerned that the work has to be done. Only the output matters (Rakesh, younger generation).

Younger employees said that, in most cases, the older generation is not aware of the realities on the ground. They are not aware (or concerned) with the issues faced by the younger employees in the execution of their work. Here, it is apparent the role of level management. Communications are thus assumptive. Inputs and instructions are usually generic and not specific to the issues at hand.

Yeah, I have faced. It is much more frequent with the older generation. Reasons don’t matter. Suppose I communicate with the older generation and let us assume that it is my customer for some reason I am not able to deliver what he needs for
some reasons that are logical. He won’t be interested to understand what I am trying to say. He wouldn’t be interested in knowing what has happened and would only be interested in results. So, at that point in time I would not have any choice but to listen and apologize. (Shantaram, younger generation)

Working at the higher levels of management\textsuperscript{16}, the older generation may not be aware of operational issues. Younger (and less experienced) employees must be adequately communicated to by the older generation. But the older generation expects that the younger generation should explain their all their actions to superiors in detail.

*Once I had to transfer some material from one plant to another. So, I was interacting with operating people and got everything, but I had to take the permission from a top-level person. So he was cc’d in all the mails. He was not giving much attention to the mails. When the final approval had to be taken, I went to meet him where I was to explain him everything from the beginning. It took a while (Anuj, younger generation).*

However, one exception (deviant) was Kishore, who said that he experienced the widest communication gap with his generation (younger generation)

*Amongst ourselves, there was a discussion on improvements that are needed in Navchetna. All of us were of the same age group, GTs (Graduate Trainees) sitting around a table and discussing. I said that things won’t happen unless you place it properly and take the needed approvals. The other person said that when things are so obvious why are approvals necessary? It went to such an extent that we shouted at each other. Actually, the shouting was from other side. I had to stop talking. Others can shout at me irrespective of any thing. It is easy for the younger generation to make friends with each other. So it is more difficult to say something that they may not like because they are your friends (Kishore, Younger generation).*

**Communication Accommodation Strategies**

Communication accommodation strategies like divergence, convergence, and maintenance are broadly classified as approximations (Williams and Nussbaum, 2001). Approximation takes place when the speaker is conscious about the listener’s speech. Approximation strategies can be based on verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Other prominent communication accommodation strategies are interpretability and discourse management (Dragojevic, Gasiorek and Giles, n.d).

Human behavior must be guided by a motive or a set of motives. Therefore, if the different generations indulge in adopting accommodation strategies, their actions are

\textsuperscript{16} Predominantly the older generation will be at higher level in comparison to the younger generation. However, this might not be case in all the situations.
backed by motives. Published works mostly identified affective and cognitive motives that drive generations to accommodate (Giles & Ogay, 2006). Convergence as a strategy is adopted to establish a common ground by the speaker becoming similar to the listener. Participants from all the generations believed that being similar will help increase communication effectiveness and reduce the communication gap. Therefore, if the older generation is seen as trying to incorporate the use of technology in their communications with the younger generation, they are trying to be similar. Convergence is about trying to be similar to the target person; the present study adds a sub-construct, thereby meeting the target person’s expectation.

People achieve convergence by meeting the expectations of the target person and by being similar. As an example, when the middle-aged and the younger generations change their communication styles to submissive/passive for the older generation, they are essentially trying to find common ground by meeting the target audience’s expectations in order to increase communication effectiveness.

However, it is also important to add here that convergence has a cost — compromise of social identity. By becoming similar to the target audience, there is a likelihood of losing the characteristics of one’s own generation. In the present study, it was seen that divergence was an exception (deviant). Divergence was employed to maintain distinctiveness from the out-group. In the present study, divergence served to make the listener aware of speaker’s methods/style/channel of communication.

Besides the affective and cognitive motives that guide the accommodation process, it is also the individual’s initial orientation (goals, beliefs and predispositions) that influences the choice of accommodation strategy. CAT identifies several macro factors that can influence the initial orientation. These factors can be interpersonal history, norms, values, intergroup relations in the recent past, stakeholders personal history, and the cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism (Dragojevic, Gasiorek, & Giles, nd).

It is a well-accepted fact that Indian culture is predominantly collectivist (Hofestede, 1988 and Sinha, 1988). CAT theorists state that in a collectivist culture, people tend to prefer divergence over convergence as an accommodation strategy. People living in a collectivist resist dilution of identity by trying to remain distinct and, hence, the embracing of divergence. This study, however, showed that across generations, people preferred convergence. The reasons are based in existing socio-cultural norms, values and beliefs, which are seen to supersede the notion of
‘collectivism’. According to the researcher, not adopting divergence to follow values, beliefs, norms is also a type of collectivism, wherein being collective to the larger context is of more importance than to be collective to a generation.

The younger and middle-aged generations believed that showing respect to the older generation was more important than maintaining/ preserving social identity. Similarly, the older generation felt that they have the responsibility of nurturing the current generations. Thus, both sides realized the necessity of convergence.

**Accommodation Strategies Adopted by the Older generation**

Older generation participants also stressed that the intergenerational communication gap cannot be reduced in a short span of time. The process will be ongoing and will take time to achieve its objective. The reason is the different contexts in which people from different generations were raised. These contexts have shaped the mindsets, which will change only with time.

**Convergence with the younger generation.** The older generation participants accepted the need to change their mindset to reduce the communication gap with the younger generation. It was observed that they are making efforts at convergence with the younger generation. Certain behavioural and cognitive changes were adopted. The change in mindset can be achieved by increasing awareness of generational diversity and organizing sensitization programmes. Older generation feels there is a need to increase the level of interaction with the younger generation so as to know and understand them better. It is equally important that older employees do not attempt to influence the younger generation with their experiences and views. However, the older generation also feels that mere proficiency with the use of technology is not enough. They must necessarily learn to use it in their day-to-day work.

Accommodation on the part of the older generation is exhibited when they change their communication style with the younger generation. They adopt parentalitic and nurturant style as they can impart their experience to younger people in better way. It also gives a scope to the younger generation to confide in them and be their real self in front of them.
[...] we have to be more open-minded and should not get influenced by training or experience. There should be more interactions. Communication is based on the principle of not to disagree, be civil and polite. All this can lead to better communication. One should not to be rigid [...] avoid criticizing the younger generation. It is about trying to see the positives and trying to show that we are keen to hear them. We must demonstrate our keenness and curiosity. Communications will automatically improve. A sour face and critical approach, will put them off. So, no bias and no rigidity and one must try to see the positive and constructive sides of the younger generation (sarthak, Older generation).

Mehen (older generation) further elaborates, ‘Older generation should be conversant with gadgets and everything and they should see the company’s environment in a broader way. They have to be more aware and sensitive to these changes

**Other accommodation strategies adopted with the younger generation.** There were other accommodation strategies that were adopted by the older generation, which cannot be categorized as approximation strategies. Here, the emphasis is on developing non-formal relationships. Such a strategy is part of sub-category ‘field’ under discourse management.

Here the interaction is ‘situated’ in areas that the younger generation is aware of and is closer to their interests. The older generation adopts a learner-learner approach and restrains itself from imposing on the younger generation. Older generation feels that they need to indulge in patient listening, hearing out the younger generation without an intention of labeling them right or wrong. The essence of this relationship should be based on friendship so that scope is given to the younger generation to express themselves without inhibition. The older generation feels that they must be patient listeners and not be judgmental.

Usha, an older generation respondent, said that she discussed current movies and Bollywood stars with the younger generation to get closer to them. This approach sends a reassuring signal to the younger generation that the older generation is not cold to them and, instead, is keen on communicating with them.

*Our department has so many youngsters. Often, they come and say that this document is not available with them. I will make him/her comfortable and ask the person to sit. I will give an example. One fellow came to us and said that ‘oh madam mera toh yeh aatak gaya legal mein’ (My case has got stuck in the legal department). My files have been not cleared and my builder is in Lucknow. His problem was that a document was not made available to him and, as a result, his loan was not being passed at the office and builder was creating trouble. I told him to get someone to scan and mail it to me. I promised him that his work will be done;*
and it was done. His loan was sanctioned. He was very thankful and grateful. Such things happen often. I told you that the younger generation is not patient listeners. They know things, but they don’t choose the right path. They don’t take things in a positive manner. I mean that, first you try to know; and then if it doesn’t work out, then we will have to find another way.

If you are friendly with them then they will definitely open up and will make you comfortable in every way. I say this from my heart. Give them the trust that you are their friend and their secrets are safe. You must keep your word or no will trust you. All these things improve communication (Usha, Older generation).

I will try to make him (young person) comfortable, not letting him feel that he is talking to someone much older. Otherwise, he might not want to share something. I need to know everything; only then can I help and serve the organization better. I also ask about his well being, about his young daughter, his family, etc. I let him use my vehicle. This is emotional intelligence (sic) and, naturally, people get closer (Mishra, Older generation).

Criticism should be avoided and the approach must be positive. The older generation must make a positive impact with their communications using, wherever necessary and appropriate, the storytelling method to share experiences.

**Convergence within generation.** To bridge the communication gap within the generation, the older generation tried convergence by changing vocabulary and the style of communication. They avoid jargon and keep the communication simple, logical and pertinent to the issue. The older generation participants also felt that must change their communication style from participative to being submissive and passive.

Experience and the status of age peers cannot be ignored. Shripal (older generation) said, “I maintain a strong database. You cannot communicate with our generation without knowing the background but at the same time I need acknowledge their status and experience”.

Interpersonal relationships formed through informal conversations are important because it is often assumed that age peers are equally knowledgeable and experienced and hence will understand quickly.

I follow a simple dictum of repeating as often as I am required to. You can ask me thousand times and I will explain every time. But once you have told me that you have understood, I take it that you have indeed understood. After that, I only want to see the result. You have to create an environment in which they can ask freely. As I am responsible for getting a particular job done, it is also my responsibility to be open. Openness cannot be created overnight. Your relationship at work and outside has a lot of impact. Communication is of two types; formal (relationship within the organization) and informal (which is when we have coffee together) (Tushar, older generation).
Accommodation Strategies Adopted by the Middle-aged generation

Convergence with the older generation. Middle-aged adopt convergence as strategy to meet the expectations of the older generation. Middle-aged people try to be more patient. There is greater emphasis on listening than in speaking. A passive and submissive style of communication is preferred. The middle-aged generation also felt that the experience and age gap between them and the older generation should be respected. But it was commonly felt that the older generation has a rigid mindset and speaking about one’s viewpoint is futile because they are sure that their viewpoint is not going to be accepted.

With the older generation there is further gradation by superiors, peers and subordinates. I don’t argue with the superiors. Be clear with your facts. Don’t express them as I think so because of this and this. Then they will not be ready to listen to you. These are the two points that I keep in my mind. When I am going to them for a discussion I am ready with my points. With older generation subordinates, I speak very politely with them. If my subordinate is from the younger generation, I might just say that ‘arrey yaar kar do (my friend please do this)’; but if he is older, then it is ‘please, aap aise kard I jiye’ (Please can you do this). I will be very very polite and try to explain what my point is and what needs to be done. I may be very causal with my subordinates of younger generation but not so with my subordinates of the older generation (Meeta, Middle-aged generation).

Middle-aged generation also has a change in approach when they chose a channel to communicate. The choice is determined by the needs of the situation. With the older generation, the participants preferred face-to-face communication regardless of the situation because of their lack of proficiency with technology. This is because of the need to make the older generation comfortable for effective communication. In addition, efforts are undertaken to share information at every stage, make them aware of recent development and to repeat a message again and again.

Accommodation strategies with the younger generation. Though communication gap with the younger generation is not large, but the middle-aged generation participants cited some strategies to deal this gap. They must be able to match the energy level of the younger generation. They must also make the effort to establish friendly relationships with them so that there can be free exchange of views. They believe that indulgence in quality informal communication by understanding the likes
and dislikes of the other person is important. Middle-aged generation feels that workplace communication cannot be effective until they try to know the person with whom they are communicating at a personal level and not only in the role in encapsulates. Extensive use of technology is essential; as technology is extension of young people existence.

*First, give them a chance to explain. So we call them when we are free and ask them to explain their stand. I ask them what they plan to do and they require from us. They take their time to communicate the information that we need. Next, we give some guidelines. Things don’t end here; we also do the follow-up. We speak on the phone ‘ki proposal ka kya hua’ (what happened about the proposal), what is going to be your proposal? We communicate over phone, by email, etc. all to make sure that they have understood* (Ashok, Middle-aged generation).

**Divergence with the older generation.** Rakesh, a middle-aged generation participant who was an exception, was emphatic that the older generation must change their attitude. They have to adopt technology. However, the older generation is unable to use technology with ease. The use of technology-enabled communication channels by the middle-aged generation will increase the gap between the two generations and might impact the communication process negatively. However, the middle-aged generation viewed it differently. They stressed that technology helps to reduce the communication gap. With a reverse mentoring and learner-learner approach, the older generation can be enabled to use technology and in the process, get to know the other generations better.

**Other accommodation strategies.** The importance of feedback was stressed by the middle-aged generation. They feel that, with continuous and timely feedback, they will know whether their approach is right.

*With the older generation, you have to clearly listen to what they are saying. If there is a doubt, resolve it there and then. Try to know what exactly they want. You have to continuously interact with them. When you have been given some work you have to continuously follow it up so that there is no gap in understanding* (Bijoy, Middle-aged generation).

*I try to double check with them and try to be clearer and substantiate my communications. I try to and remind my colleagues that this is pending and requires follow-up or anticipate certain developments. I feel that focus should be on seeing that the work gets done; communication should be a steering process* (Udyaan, middle-aged generation).
Accommodation Strategies Adopted by the Younger generation

*Convergence with the older generation.* Analyses showed that the younger generation converges with the older generation’s style of communication. Younger generation participants said that they had to adapt to the working and communication style of the older generation by being passive and submissive. Amit (younger generation) said, “the older generation would reject our perspective without even listening, so it is better to save energy”. He believes that the older generation is rigid and resists looking at matters from different lens.

The younger generation also tries to change the channel of communication. The participants felt that by using non-technology modes to communicate with the older generation, it would take more time as they would require constant help with technology. Thus, there is less use of technology and more focus on face-to-face and written communications. The older generation must be kept informed all the time to avoid miscommunication.

[...] it is better to have face-to-face communications with an older person. Essentially, everything should be in a format that is understandable to them. We have to tell them everything so that they have a better idea and that they will not keep asking questions. Our generation and the middle-aged generation understand things very easily but the older generation people require everything to be explained (Kiran, younger generation).

Younger generation tends to respect the older generation and avoids friendly relationships so as not to dilute respect. Thus, they listen more, speak less and avoid giving feedback even if they think that their older colleague is wrong. This strategy is called the ‘tenor’ of discourse management strategy.

First, you have to listen to what he is trying to say. No interruptions. If you want to make your point, you have first tell him that he is right but there is scope for improvement. With their age and experience, they expect some respect from the younger generation. Else, they feel offended. From childhood, we have been taught to address our elders as chacha or chichi (Uncle and Aunt). We cannot call them by name. So, it is not something that is new to us; it comes naturally. It happens in our offices also. People who are old, and not in senior positions, we can call them by their names, but respectfully like sharma ji or pandey ji. (Nagendra, younger generation).
The younger generation is careful with their choice of words and expressions as they do not want to appear casual or argumentative. Whenever they become casual, the older generation views it negatively. The younger generation is particular about their choice of words; they avoid slangs and swearing words with them. They are constantly working to try work on their grammar and language skills.

[...] definitely, the words that you are using and the style we use changes in communications with the older generation. When I am talking with the younger generation, I am casual. However, with the older generation, I can’t be casual. I have to adjust while communicating with an older generation person [...] I feel that only the words have to be changed. I cannot communicate with the older generation as friend and say ‘hi’ and ‘hello’. I have to be formal and cordial. (Vipul younger generation)

**Divergence with the older generation.** Debosimta, younger generation participant (and a deviant case) said that the younger generation should not change the communication channel to suit the older generation. Technology must be used wherever needed. She had the opinion that it is the older generation that needs to change. Young people agree that the older people have started to adapt, but they think the pace is slow. For example, business processes like ERP is there but older generation do not make use of it.

If I am the only person trying to fight the system, I have to compromise. However, at the same time, some initiatives are necessary from the other side also. It can’t be that I am the one who is always adjusting. We have to reach a middle solution (Debosmita, younger generation).

**Maintenance with the older generation.** Anuj (younger generation) said that the older generation must also take the initiative because young people cannot always be made to feel intimidated and nervous. Young people should not be expected change their styles all the time. In the given situation the younger generation tries to meet the expectations of the older generation.

**Other strategies adopted in relation to the older generation.** The younger generation admits that it must be well-prepared before an interaction with the older generation.

I think that before anyone calls, you should basically have a good idea about the subject matter, about the possible questions they can put up and what you will ask because, in an interaction, many things come to the mind and many more are just forgotten. So, it better to make notes so that you don’t miss anything. It is basically about how to get work for which you need to be well-prepared. (Rakesh, Younger generation).
Young participants said that they first listen to what the older colleague has to say. They do not interrupt because it is seen as a sign of disrespect. Equally importantly, they do not react immediately and weigh their responses.

**Accommodation strategies with the middle-aged generation.** According to the younger generation participants, it is not necessary to change when communicating with the middle-aged generation. There is not much age difference between the two generations and some experiences have overlapped. The younger generation also said that interactions with the middle-aged generation are like interacting with a friend. They are willing to listen. The middle-generation people also try to build a consensus during communication, before a decision is taken. Young employees do not feel the need for detailed conversations as they have similar views on the issue. The use of colloquialism is also not discouraged.

The younger generation participants also stressed that though they could be friendly, they avoided being casual. A certain minimum level of respect was given. Kishore (younger generation) said, “See, the middle-aged generation is the one, which balances both sides. Respect will be there but not to the extreme level. Friendliness will be there. We won’t be that friendly. It is exactly balanced.”

As they did not perceive a communication gap, the younger generation did not see the need to change.

The present study showed that accommodation is done not only on the basis of generational characteristics, but also for age stereotypes. Past studies also concluded similarly — that of the initiator converging to the stereotype rather than the person. The individuality of a person is diluted (Dragojevic, Gasiorek and Giles, n.d.). This point may be explained by the example of the middle-aged and the younger generations using non-technology channels to communicate with the older generation, irrespective of the need of situation; and considering that the older generation is not familiar with the basics of technology-enabled communications.\(^\text{17}\)

It was also observed that the younger generation did not attempt technology-enabled communications with older colleagues, even when the latter were familiar

\(^{17}\) This does not mean that the younger or the middle-aged generation do not send emails when it required. It basically means that they do not prefer to use technology with the older generation.
with the basics. They did not use the gap as an opportunity to get closer to the older generation. They preferred to respond on the basis of age stereotypes.

This can lead to overaccommodation or underaccommodation. Neither state was observed in this study. There are certain reasons for this. As discussed earlier, CAT was developed in the context of family or patient-doctor relationships where overaccommodation or underaccommodation is necessary because one of the participants may be deficient in some aspects. In the organizational context, however, people are bound by certain rules and regulations; and there is a common goal that they must work together to achieve. It is expected that they are self-sufficient to manage situations within their remit; and seek support and assistance whenever required.

Another important organizational feature is that there is a clearly defined age limit at which an employee must retire (usually 58 years in the private sector and 60 in the government sector). There is no retirement age in family relationships and overaccommodation or underaccommodation may become necessary as an individual’s mental and physical abilities decline with advancing age.

This study revealed both upward and downward 18 convergences. The older generation attempted converging to the younger generation (downward convergence); and the middle-aged and the younger generations converging to the older generation (upward convergence)

**Communication Behavior**

Communication behaviour is believed to be a predictor of communication satisfaction and of enjoyment with elderly adults (Giles, Makoni, and Dailey, 2006). Studies on the subject viewed communication behavior chiefly from two dimensions: Respect/Obligation and avoidance. Avoidance is considered to be a predictor of communication enjoyment and satisfaction whereas respect is more predictive of enjoyment and not satisfaction. As discussed in the earlier chapter, it was seen that offering respect to the older or other generations does not increase the level of

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18 The relationship between the older, middle-aged and the younger generation is based on a generational hierarchicay. Hierarchy is formed from the age gap. The older the person, higher is his/her position in the hierarchy.
communication satisfaction. In the present study, it (communication avoidance) neither creates a sense of enjoyment nor avoidance. Conversation might be limited, but never avoided.

Older generation’s Communication Behavior

**Respect.** Older generation concedes that they have to respect everyone irrespective of generation. Work cannot progress if you are disrespectful to people. Respect positively changes the tone of the recipient and makes him/her more subdued to create a friendlier environment. Older generation feels that they are extra conscious of offering respect to their generation followed by the younger generation.

> Everyone must be equally respected. However, when you talk to anybody or send a note to a person of your age, you tend to be little more respectful. If I am sending a note to someone of my age, it will always end with regards. When I am talking with the younger generation it will be addressed with ‘dear’ so and so, please do so and so job and end with ‘best wishes. This was instilled in us from our younger days. When you were a kid, did you address your younger brother or sister or you parents or dada ji (grandfather) in the same manner? Of course not! Why do we address them differently? Does it mean that you had little respect for someone else? (Tushar, Older generation).

The older generation participants believed that their generation is emotional, tends to take offence easily. Communications become personal. This tendency may be traced to their upbringing, which stresses formal behavior. The necessity to be formal made them relatively inflexible. Older people felt that experience and age must be valued and respected.

> I am polite with everyone regardless of age. But I have to be more polite with my own generation colleagues. There is the problem of respect. You have to respect the older generation. With the middle-aged generation there is no problem of respect. When it comes to respect, age matters a lot. We respect age. We have to look at age and the work and position of the person also (Jadhav, Older generation).

It is also noteworthy that older generation respects the younger generation. Older generation participants feel that only if they respect their younger colleagues they can expect reciprocation. Respect is regarded more of a tool than as something of intrinsic value.

> I should make the effort to be cordial to everybody. It is always so with the younger generation because you will get hurt if you don’t respect them. Suppose you are telling something to the younger generation, there is a chance that they will retaliate in a very bad way. So, obviously, I have to make a lot of effort with the
younger generation so as to avoid being treated with disrespect (Achutanand, Older generation)

The older generation does not demand respect; rather it is an implied expectation. According to the participants, this is natural. The expectations are higher from their own generation because it conveys a feeling being recognized. With the younger generation, it is natural to expect respect.

Achutanand (older generation) said, ‘Yes, if I am giving respect to others, then I should also expect to be respected. I don’t think that there is anything wrong in it. I deserve this much, at least. If I am not being given respect, my personality collapses. Respect is very important to me’.

Indian culture encourages respect for elders. Older generation participants said that they were taught as children to be respectful and polite with people within/outside family, especially to older people; and affectionate towards the younger ones. Bhist and Sinha (1981) also suggested that the joint family arrangement is an obstacle to the development of a child’s self-identity. The individuality of the child is compromised by the hierarchical setup.

**Argument.** The older generation tries to avoid conflict. According to the participants, conflict draws people away from the merits of the issue and sacrifices logic. Vagaray (older generation) said, “Usually, I avoid arguments with anyone. All generations have people with whom I avoid an argument because I know that they will always try to push their points of view only”.

Older people do their best to avoid argument with their generation as well as the younger one. They are apprehensive that the younger generation’s response may be disrespectful and even insulting. It may be possible to rationalize such a reaction from the middle-aged middle-aged generation, but not so with the younger generation.

Older generation participants saw the younger generation as lacking in listening skills. They also believed that the younger generation does not have the knowledge and balance that is gained with experience. Achutanand (older generation) said, ‘Obviously, you feel insulted if a younger person retaliates. If a person of my age retaliates or humiliates me, I can try to rationalize it; but if a person who is younger to me says something that is wrong or abuses me, I feel insulted. That can’t be rationalized’.
Conflicts of the ego are not uncommon among the older generation, which is why they try to avoid arguments. The participants from the older generation believed that the respect that shown to each other does not allow scope for arguments. Mehen (Older generation) said that he avoided arguments with own generation colleagues because of ego clashes. Ego conflicts have their root in the rigid mindsets of the older generation. Jerath (older generation) said, ‘normally, with our generation the problems can aggravate. Those who think that they are experienced have a mindset of ‘hum toh yahan par 30 saal se hain, aap kya seekhao ge mujhe’ (I know everything as I have been for 30 years). I have to hear this in spite my long experience. You can’t overcome the age factor even if you belong to the same age bracket’.

**Holding back opinion.** Generally, the older generation is reticent in the presence of their generation. They are apprehensive that the rigid notions and beliefs may lead to challenges and rejections, which are likely to damage their self-esteem. They are held back from expressing themselves by their ego. On certain instances, the older generation demonstrates it in their laid-back attitude and being silent over issues. Therefore, there is a feeling of holding back opinions.

Rajesh (Older generation) said, “I think that in the presence of our generation, they generally are prone to get agitated sometimes. They are conditioned with some beliefs and if these are challenged, they get agitated”.

Mehen (older generation) said, ‘with my own generation, I avoid it. Actually, most of the time, it may be an ego problem; many times it is also work-related. If you are not holding back your opinions the other party may perceive it in some other way. Don’t say much let things be’.

**Bringing in change in communication behavior.** Older generation participants agreed that they have to change their attitude and behavior with the younger generation. But they also say that it is difficult get their point across to the younger generation, as the latter have kept pace with the developments in their field. Logic and rationale needs to be communicated to the younger generation. This makes communication more elaborative and detailed. Technology being one of the major barrier between the older and the younger generations as discussed in the previous chapters, the older generation accepts that they need adopt technology in order to
bridge communication gap. The changes referred to here can be achieved through a mentor-mentee relationship between the older and younger generations.

Certainly, with the younger generation, we have to change a lot. We have to change our mindset. We have to understand and know the things that they are talking, even if they seem to be 20 years ahead of us. We have to accept these things and change ourselves. We have to do this to reduce the communication gap (Jadhav, Older Generation).

Probably, with the younger generation, the only difference that I can perceive is that whenever we communicate, it should not come across that we are asserting ourselves. It should be participative and supported by rationale. Decisions and communications should be explained to the younger generation (Jearath, Older generation).

**Ending conversation.** The ending of conversation shows a mixed pattern. On occasion, the older generation feels like terminating the interaction with their own generation the rigid beliefs do not facilitate a useful exchange. But there also occasions when they want to end the conversation with the younger generation also. The lack of proficiency in technology (effortlessly making Powerpoint presentation or using ERP) often became embarrassing for the older people.

With the younger generation, the competition is different. They talk about the latest technology and we find ourselves being illiterate about these things. So, there is no point in arguing with them on that. Just accept move on. When it comes to discussing technology, I don’t let it drag. (Jadahv, older generation)

**Middle-aged generation’s Communication Behavior**

**Respect.** The middle-aged generation tended to show greater degree of respect and politeness towards the older generation. The participants felt that this is expected of them. Incomplete communications are avoided.

Generally, it is with the older generation. With them, the age factor comes to in your mind and also that they are more experienced. At some point of time, you may start thinking that they are right. Once the words leave your mouth it is very difficult to take them back. So you should think twice before speaking (Sabita, Middle-aged generation).

Respecting elders is a distinguishing characteristic of Indian culture. This trait is instilled in the family environment during childhood. Therefore, respecting elders and seniors at the workplace comes easily to the people who grew up in such an environment.
This is how we Indians were raised. This attitude is special in Parivartan; but everywhere in India. You have to respect elders. It is not a compulsion; you want to learn from their experience; so, obviously you will respect them. It does not mean that you should not respect the younger people. You must respect the older generation even in your thoughts. I respect the younger generation for their new ideas, their command over new technology they have. There are open to things. Same kind of respect may not be required for the older generation (Kalyan, Middle-aged generation).

However, a deviant opinion was observed in Lal and Meeta, both middle-aged participants. Their perception is that respect tends to make communication formal and restrictive. They regard it as a compulsion and make token gestures of respect. Their attitude is corroborated in literature, (Giles, 2007) showed that Indians respect family members more than non-family people. To the younger generation, middle-aged generation tend to be more friendly than respectful.

Arguments. Participants from the middle-aged generation said that they avoid arguments, but more cautious with the older generation. The need to show respect and the considerable age difference were the reasons cited by them.

Generally, with the older generation, the age factor comes to your mind and makes you show respect. They are also more experienced than us. You have internalized the notion that they are always right; so, after a point, whatever they have to say I think it is correct. Older generation take everything very personally; so you have to be careful with what you have to say. Once you have said something, it is difficult to take it back and the damage would have been done (Neha, Middle-aged generation).

Communication with the older generation is one way, the middle-aged participants believed. This makes the discussion (or exchange) restrictive in its scope and purpose. The nature of such communications also leaves very little room for arguments because of the passiveness of one of the parties in the exchange. In other words, if the communication is unidirectional in nature then there is less scope of entering into an argument or even a discussion. Lastly, Indian culture in general lacks the culture of debating, culture of servitude is fostered, and hence there is always a reservation towards argument.

[...] with the older generation. They don’t like too much detail; they have reservations over debating issues. It is like it was with our teachers — if you ask a valid question, they will not reply and instead will try to stop you from asking such questions. Our society does not have a culture of debating. We only understand the meaning of servitude, which is what is happening here in Parivartan. There is unnecessary praise when only some gestures of respect would have been enough.
There is too much of red-tapism. We spend a lot of time in making gestures of respect. (Lal, Middle-aged generation)

Middle-aged generation participants also felt that the older generation people are aggressive and allowing differences of opinion to develop into an argument with them would only irritate them, which could even lead to complaints and disciplinary actions.

**Holding back opinion.** The middle-aged generation also feels that expressing opinions is a part of the communication process. Thus, they do not hesitate to give their opinions on matters that concern them. At the same time, they are careful about how these opinions are articulated with the older people. The middle-aged participants asserted that older people tend to understand less and it is difficult to anticipate their responses or reactions.

 [...] it is not question about holding back one’s opinion. If they want know something, I will start speaking and I will stop when they tell me to. But if you ask me name one generation with whom I have to be extra cautious, it is the older generation. If I am not fully prepared, I don’t want to start the communication with the older generation (Rakesh, Middle-aged generation).

**Changing communication behavior.** Two schools of opinion are revealed in the analysis. The first opinion is that the middle-aged generation needs to change more with the younger generation. They must also make efforts to keep pace with the changes and advances in technology. This calls for constantly adjustments in approach and style as technology changes are taking place at a very rapid pace. With the older generation, such adjustments and details are not necessary the knowledge and the experience of the two groups are compatible.

The second opinion is that the middle-aged generation must change for the older generation in order to understand their expectations and respond to them. This is important from the behavioural perspective because older generation employees are considered to be conservative and not inclined to have closer workplace relationships, which calls for substantial adjustments by the middle-aged generation. This position is at considerable variance from the older generation’s assertion that they prefer building interpersonal relationships to enhance communication effectiveness and satisfaction.
I have to change a lot with both the younger and the older generations. Since, I am at middle-age, I am trying to grasp new technology and ideas from the younger generation. I need to change and adopt/learn technology. With the older generation, because of their vast experience, I have to be thorough. This means that, with both the groups, I have to adapt. But more energy is needed with the older generation (Kalyan, Middle-aged generation).

Ending conversation. Employees of the middle-aged do not end a conversation with the older generation even if they want to, and the purpose of the exchange has been served. This observation contradicts findings reported in literature that the younger generation avoids communicating with the older generation. In their comparative study on inter and intra-generational communication, Ota, Giles and Somera (2007) reported that there was a greater tendency to avoid/end communication with the older generation. It was the higher among the Asians (Japanese and Filipino) as compared to their western counterparts.

According to the middle-aged people, the older generation does not believe in making relationships. Older generation people also lack warmth and separates facts from emotions. These are the reasons why middle-aged generation participants preferred restricted communication with the older generation.

Younger generation’s Communication Behavior

Respect. Younger generation participants accepted that they have to respect everyone, and more so with the older generation. Indian culture played dominant role in shaping this attitude. As with the other generation groups, the value of respecting elders was instilled at home, reinforced at school and carried into the workplace. Giles et al (2003) observed that Asians from the younger generation feel obligated to offer respect to the older generation even if they are not part of the family. A possible explanation is that eastern cultures require one to treat strangers with particular politeness and respect.

Thus, the younger generation is conditioned to respect people. Tandon (1981) wrote that children learn values through family rituals and customs. Touching the feet of elders as a sign of respect is one example. Nagendra, a younger generation participant, said that he respected his older generation colleagues irrespective of the level of management they worked in, even he addresses his attendant as ‘Sharma ji’. In this regard, Zhang and Hummert (2001) observed that younger people offered respect to the older generation regardless of the context and personal satisfaction,
thereby making it a norm. Anuj younger generation, said ‘sanskaar to ghar se hi milte hai’ (values are formed in the familial context).

We have to be more guarded with older employees. Reason being, at the back of the mind you are worried that nothing wrong should be conveyed. Respecting others is something that we have been taught since childhood. Family helps you in developing your nature and the way you behave in office is the same way you will behave with family, and vice-versa(sic). So, family helps in nurturing your culture. It starts with the family and the same thing is reflected in the office. These things are interconnected (Rakesh, younger generation).

To a certain extent, respect is determined by age and experience. The younger generation participants felt that the older generation deserved respect, because of the age gap as well as their vast experience. Giles et al (2007) observed that young Indians tend to confer more respect as the age of the person increases.

Actually, it (respect) is always there. Whenever age is a factor, elders always get respect from you. It is a major factor. The other thing is their achievement. Other than that, it depends on the individual. You can’t ignore age and the experience of the older generation person (sic). I have to respect their age and experience. This is what I have been taught and I agree (swapnil, younger generation).

Younger generation participants observed that the older generation is at least more attentive when younger people approach them with respect. Without respect, however, a negative impression was formed. The participants felt that that the impressions thus created are long lasting and difficult to alter.

In the present study, it was seen that the expectation of respect can also become burdensome and leads to frustration. Giles et al (2007), in a comparative study between the USA and India, found that norms of respect and politeness decreased the level of communication satisfaction. This was because the younger generation felt that they were being forced to respect the older generation.

One of the many important goals of socialization is to ensure that people internalize values, beliefs and standards willingly rather than out of fear of external consequence (Grusec and Davidov, 2007). This study showed that the younger generation and deviant cases in the middle-aged offered respect only because they felt that they were obliged to. This raises the question as to whether socialization has really achieved its goal.

Lin et al (2003) observed that young Taiwanese only appeared to be respectful and attentive. Therefore, it may be inferred that the process of socialization may not have achieved one of its major goals. Nagendra (younger generation) observed,
“Sometimes, it becomes frustrating. But then also you have to offer respect because you have to get your work done. You know that older age person is not going to do the work by using age as his excuse. Some people use older age as excuse for everything. But it is ok to give them respect.

**Argument.** Younger generation also avoided arguments as they considered it to be a negative aspect of communications. However, they were more careful in this regard with the older generation. According to the participants, the older generation had a conservative approach to communications. They enter a conversation with the premise that they knew everything and any kind of contrary opinions will not be appreciated. Lin et al. (2004) observed that elderly people in Taiwan exercised a certain degree of power over the younger generation because of the sense of filial piety and any confrontation with elders is considered to be disrespectful.

The older generation’s minds are single-track oriented. They will not go against the rules. This mindset and the extra love for procedures makes them conservative in their approach. You know that their attachment to rules will make them rigid and that they will not change or budge from their viewpoint. Therefore, it is better that one should not get into an argument with such people. It may put you in a tricky position (Debosmita, younger generation).

An argument-based conversation is not constructive. The older generation was viewed as not being accepting of the younger generation’s views and perspectives. Younger generation participants were apprehensive that a confrontation might backfire on them with possible adverse effects on their reputation and service records.

I personally try to avoid arguments with the older generation. During meetings I know that if I argue, they will drag to the meeting it is not going to be constructive. Therefore, the best thing is not to get into arguments with them. Argument does not help the cause, especially with the older generation (Kiran, Younger generation).

A deviant opinion (Swapnil, a younger generation participant) was that arguments with one’s own generation because they do not end as one is willing to go to any length to prove his or her point. With older generation, the participant felt, the argument would end at some point.

**Holding back opinions.** The younger generation was seen to hold back their opinions in the presence of the older generation for the reason that they have no expectations of being heard. Saumya, younger generation participant, said, ‘Yeah, obviously, with
the older generation you have to be more careful. You have to keep things, opinion to yourself because it is not going to be accepted'.

An unexpected finding was that the younger generation also tended to hold back with their own generation. They thought that their views, not backed by experience, will not be appreciated. Their colleagues, being equally inexperienced, were not expected to provide the needed inputs.

I tend to hold back from my own generation most of the times. A person of my generation is neither experienced and nor would he value the perspective of the other person. Most of the time, colleagues of my generation don’t know the facts. Therefore, I feel that sharing my perspective to a person who cannot understand is futile (Siddhant, younger generation).

Within my generation there are some things that I hold back. I have seen that people of my generation have the habit of divulging information that they should not be sharing. I faced this problem in Navchetna. I shared my inputs about a project with a younger generation employee and she used it without even giving me credit. (Jyoti, younger generation).

Changing communication behaviour. Younger generation participants felt that they have to change their behavior to accommodate the older generation. The discussion in the previous chapter showed how the younger generation changes communication channels and style to meet the older generation’s expectations. It was agreed that the younger generation must be patient and respectful.

Ending conversation. The younger generation does not avoid communicating with the older generation, but they limit the exchange to what is absolutely necessary and avoid taking communication to personal level. The rigid attitude of older generation colleagues negatively influenced communication.

Sometimes they say that this is right way and you have to do their way only. They are rigid. Communications like this make the other person frustrated and feel that the older generation is not listening. The older generation has to understand that, sometimes, they can also be wrong. They must be more open–minded to other perspectives rather than always sticking to their viewpoints (Ramandeep, younger generation).

Communications with the older generation are always work-related. The younger generation finds it difficult to have personal conversations as the older generation may not be interested. Lin et al (2003) stated that, with the older generation, there is a
normative power imbalance, which prevents the younger generation from having personal conversation.

First thing is that they may not be free at that time when we have something to say. Second thing is that the level of comfort, which we have with them, us and the middle-aged generation, may not be there. In addition, they may not be interested in listening to us. They might not be interested in listening to my personal grievances. Initiatives must be taken by the older generation to break the barriers. The first steps must be taken by them. We being the younger generation, and somewhat new, are already nervous. (Anuj, younger generation).

Implications

The discussions and findings in this chapter have the potential to contribute to existing theory. This research validates published findings on the context of Indian culture in the socialization process. It is also obvious that values have changed over generations. However, certain essential beliefs have remained strong. The popular perception that young people no longer respect their elders has been challenged. In consonance to the literature, the current generations accept that the value system of the older generation was sound. But for their generation following it in an exact way is suffocating. The present generations accepts that the value system of the older generation was more robust, but their finds it too restricting.

Communication behavior among the middle-aged and younger generations is consistent with published works. Both generations are seen to be more respectful, avoid arguments and inclined to change for the older generation. However, as opposed to previous findings, here, they do not seem to want to end or avoid communication with the older generation; rather, they do not want to communicate more that what is essential.

The communication behavior of the older generation is contrary to published literature as it was seen that older people are respectful, try to avoid arguments and also prefer to restrict conversations within their generation.

On age-stereotypes, the present study makes a contribution to theory. It can be seen that the CPA model does not fit exactly in an organizational context. Generations (specifically, the older generation) do not behave according to stereotype and also do not internalize the stereotypes. CPA was also developed with the older generation as the focus. The perspectives of the middle-aged and the younger
generations were not considered. This study may be regarded as a modest attempt to bring these perspectives into the discourse.

The present study makes also showed that patterns of communication gap are largely in line with published findings. The reasons discussed are contribute to the validation.

The selection or choice of communication accommodation strategies contradicts CAT. According to CAT, in a collectivist culture like India, generations would prefer to adopt a divergence strategy to keep identity intact. However, in the present study, it was seen that the participants of all generations preferred convergence. Following social norms was considered more important than maintaining identity. The present study also makes a contribution by adding a sub-construct to convergence. People converge not only to be similar to the target individual; they also converge to meet the target individual’s expectation.

**Summary**

The present chapter discussed intergenerational communication process. It was seen that there is a value shift with generations. The culture of the three generations may vary; but the essential values are intact and being transmitted to current generations. However, the intensity of commitment to the values appears to have declined.

It was also seen that the middle-aged generation indulges in the least stereotyping. They also consider stereotypes to be transitory. Stereotypes do not reinforce opinions, thereby contradicting the CPA model. Participants from all the three generations tended not to accept the stereotypes; rather, they tried to defend themselves against stereotyping.

Communication gap was the highest with the older generation and lowest with the younger generation. This was primarily attributed to the generation gap. Contrary to CAT, there is a greater tendency to converge than to diverge because satisfying social norms was considered to be more important than personal identity. The middle-aged and the younger generation avoid arguments, show greater degree of respect and make significant changes for the older generation. However, they restrict communication to what is essential. Older people adopted a similar approach for their own generation.