Exploring the link between organizational values and human resource certification

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ABSTRACT

We contribute to the discussion of human resource (HR) certification by identifying organizational values as a key antecedent to (1) an organization's use of HR certification and (2) whether organizational members choose to pursue HR certification. Building on research which has looked at the influence of organizational values on the behavior and attitudes of the organization and its employees, we propose that key organizational values will influence the extent to which an organization and its members value HR certification. Specifically, we explore the relationship between the organizational values of innovation, people orientation, and stability and the extent to which an organization uses HR certification for selection purposes. In addition, we propose that these key organizational values will also influence whether the organization's members pursue HR certification. Exploring the link between key organizational values and HR certification is critical to our understanding of an organization's HR practices and the behavior of its employees. By taking a more organization focused perspective, we highlight the top-down effects of organizational values on the value of HR certification and call for additional research on the antecedents of the value of HR certification.

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"It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are"
Roy Disney, The Walt Disney Company

1. Introduction

Organizations are defined by their values. Values serve as a foundation for an organization's culture (Rokeach, 1979; Williams, 1979, 2002), shaping and guiding the choices, attitudes, and behaviors of the organization and its members (Toh, Morgeson, & Campion, 2008). Although research has typically focused on the relationship between organizational values and employee attitudes and behaviors (Johnson & Jackson, 2009), there is renewed interest in understanding the impact of organizational values on strategic decisions (Williams, 2002). For example, research suggests that an organization's values can influence the pursuit and adoption of human resource practices (Caldwell, Chatman, & O'Reilly, 1990; Toh et al., 2008; Truss & Gratton, 1994; Truss, Gratton, Hope-Hailey, McGovern, & Stiles, 1997; Voss, Cable, & Voss, 2000), responses to environmental issues (Bansal, 2003), and perceptions of organizational change (Kabanoff, Waldersee, & Cohen, 1995). The influence that organizational values have on shaping the attitudes and behaviors of the organization as well as its members holds important implications for our understanding of human resource (HR) certification.

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Lengnick-Hall and Aguinis (2012) recently proposed a multi-level framework for research on HR certification. Their model begins with an organization's use of HR certification as a selection tool. They argue that this top-down effect will drive HR management knowledge and HR department human capital, which in turn will influence macro- and micro-level outcomes (e.g., HR department reputation, individual level pay). In so doing, the authors highlight the importance of the organization, and more specifically the organization's perceived value of HR certification for staffing purposes. Although valuable, this model is silent with respect to the antecedents that influence an organization's use of HR certification as a selection tool. That is, what drives organizations to value HR certification? Why do some organizations value HR certification whereas others do not? In addition, why might employees choose to pursue HR certification, particularly if there is no immediate financial gain?

To address this gap, we build upon and extend Lengnick-Hall and Aguinis' multi-level model by incorporating organizational values. Specifically, based on past research we argue that an organization's values will influence (a) the extent to which the organization uses HR certification as a selection tool, and (b) whether the organization's members pursue HR certification and recertification. Although Lengnick-Hall and Aguinis chose to focus specifically on the organization's use of HR certification for selection purposes, we acknowledge the dual influence of organizational values on both the organization's decisions (i.e., the extent to which HR certification is used in selection decisions) and on its members (i.e., the extent to which organizational members pursue HR certification). As noted by Williams (2002), organizational values influence what ought to be in an organization as well as how members ought to behave. Understanding what drives an organization to value HR certification is an important issue to explore because it can help us better understand the organization's HR practices around certification, as well as the behavior of its employees.

With this in mind, we review the extant literature on the perceived value of HR certification. Building upon this research, we then address the role of organizational values. Next, we discuss organizational values as a critical driver of the organization's use of HR certification for selection purposes and on the employee's pursuit of HR certification. In so doing, we contribute to the HR certification literature by taking an organization focused perspective, where we discuss the top-down effects of organizational values on the value of HR certification.

2. Differences in the perceived value of HR certification

Given the costs associated with HR certification, both in terms of time and money, research has sought to understand its perceived value for employees and employers. For example, Aguinis, Michaelis, and Jones (2005) examined the relationship between HR certification and career opportunities. They analyzed the percentage of HR job announcements posted on four job search engines (e.g., careerbuilder.com) over a 1-week period. Of the 1873 job announcements they reviewed, only 4.2% required or preferred HR certification. More recently, Lester, Mencl, Maranto, Bourne, and Keaveny (2010) found that university undergraduates who passed the Professional in Human Resource (PHR) certification exam were more than twice as likely to obtain an HR job than those who did not take or did not pass the exam. However, they found that passing the PHR exam was not a significant predictor of starting salary or number of promotions received. Lester, Fertig, and Dwyer (2011) found similar results. Ninety percent of the supervisors they surveyed felt that having a HR certified professional was generally beneficial, but that HR certification did not have a significant influence on hiring or salary decisions. In contrast, the HR Certification Institute found that approximately one-half of participating certified HR professionals received recognition from their organization for their certification. In addition, approximately one-third reported that their HR certification resulted in higher pay (HRCI, 2008).

Together, these mixed results would seem to suggest that organizations differ in their perceptions of the value of HR certification. For their part, Aguinis et al. (2005) found that the requirement or preference for HR certification in job announcements varied across industry type. Specifically, approximately 10% of job announcements in manufacturing, 10% of job announcements in accommodation and food services, and 7% of job announcements in health care and social assistance included a statement indicating that HR certification was required or preferred. In contrast, none of the job announcements in transportation and warehouse, and only .7% of job announcements in retail trade required or preferred HR certification. Consistent with this, Lester et al. (2010) found that perceptions of the value of HR certification varied greatly across a sample of three Midwestern Universities. For example, one university had a required capstone course for HR majors designed to prepare students for the exam, and only students who passed the PHR exam graduated as HR majors. Another university strongly encouraged HR students to take the PHR but it was not a formal requirement. Finally, the third university neither promoted the PHR exam nor offered a structured method for studying for the exam.

These findings suggest that organizations differ in their perceptions of the value of HR certification. Because the majority of research has focused on the relationship between HR certification and career outcomes (e.g., job offers, starting salary), much remains to be understood about the factors that influence perceptions of HR certification. As noted by Lengnick-Hall and Aguinis (2012), given the increasing popularity of HR certification, it is critical to determine its value to individuals and organizations. We agree whole-heartedly, yet we also believe that an understanding of the value of HR certification would be incomplete without a consideration of the broader organizational context in which this evaluation is made. That is, it is essential that we understand why some organizations might value HR certification more so than others.

Research on the influence of organizational values may help shed light on the different perceptions of HR certification across organizations. At the core of an organization's culture are its values. Research suggests that as a key component of the organization's context and culture (Hatch, 1993; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996), organizational values play a critical role in the behavior and attitudes of the organization and its employees (Enz, 1988; Katz & Kahn, 1978; McCoy, 1985; Williams, 1979). This would suggest that an organization's values may influence the extent to which it values HR certification. In the following sections,

we review past findings on the impact of organizational values before discussing its influence on an organization's use of HR certification for selection decisions.

3. Organizational values

Past research has defined organizational values in numerous ways. For example, O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991) defined an organization's values as "defining elements around which norms, symbols, rituals, and other cultural activities revolve" (pp. 491–492). More recently, Williams (2002, p. 220) defined values as those elements of the context that "describe characteristics of organizations (Chatman, 1991), guide action and behavior (Williams, 1979) and serve to differentiate organizations (Rokeach, 1979)." For their part, Johnson and Jackson (2009) defined organizational values as standards for evaluating member behavior and organizational success. Albeit different definitions, the heart of organizational values rests in its ability to guide and influence the choices, priorities, actions, and attitudes of the organization and its members (Chatman, 1989; Toh et al., 2008; Williams, 2002). As noted by Chatman (1989, p. 339) an organization's values "provide an elaborate and generalized justification both for appropriate behaviors of members and for the activities and functions of the system."

A considerable body of research exists that has sought to understand the relationship between organizational values and the organization's and member's attitudes and behaviors (Chatman, 1989; Jin, Drozdenko, & Bassett, 2007; Naus, van Iterson, & Roe, 2007; O'Reilly et al., 1991; Robert & Wasti, 2002). By looking at these past findings, we may be able to understand how organizational values influence the extent to which an organization and its members value HR certification.

3.1. Influence on organizational decisions

Organizational values form the framework from which all other strategic decisions are made. In a 1990 interview titled "Values make the company," then Chairman and CEO of Levi Strauss & Co., Robert D. Haas described the importance of the organization's core values (what they termed "the aspirations") on key decisions within the company. He talked in detail about how the company's values not only shaped the occupational roles and responsibilities of its employees, but also the company's performance evaluations, training programs, organization of work, and key business decisions. When asked specifically about the influence of the company's values on business decisions, he gave the following example:

> "The Aspirations make us slow down decisions. We challenge ourselves more explicitly to give some factors more weight than we did before — especially the impact of a plant closing on the community. There have been plants we have decided not to close, even though their costs were higher than other plants we did close. The reason was the community impact" (Howard, 1990, p. 143).

A number of empirical studies have sought to understand the relationship between a company's values and the organization's actions and practices. For example, Kabanoff et al. (1995) studied 88 corporations to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of nine different organizational values. The authors found that organizations with different value structures varied in how they described and reacted to organizational change. More recently, Bansal (2003) used an ethnographic longitudinal research design to study the relationship between organizational values and the organization's response to environmental issues (e.g., energy and waste management, sustainable development, office-waste recycling reduction). Within two large-scale organizations, Bansal found that the company's values explained whether the organization chose to respond to a given environmental issue. In addition, she found that the organization's values also determined the scope, scale, and speed of the company's response. Thus, it is clear that organizational values play a key role in determining the organization's attitudes and actions.

Other research has focused more specifically on the influence of organizational values as they relate to a company's HR practices, policies, and decisions. For example, Caldwell et al. (1990) found that strong, clear, and visible organizational values were related to rigorous recruitment and selection processes (e.g., company recruits are subject to at least four in-depth interviews, company actively facilitates deselection during the recruitment process by revealing minuses as well as pluses). For their part, Voss et al. (2000) used a qualitative research method to identify five core values within 97 nonprofit theater organizations. These prosocial (i.e., expanding community access to and appreciation for the arts), artistic (i.e., artistic creativity, innovation, and independence), financial (i.e., financial stability and security), market (i.e., commitment to customer satisfaction), and achievement (i.e., publically recognized excellence) values were then empirical linked to the company's decisions regarding human resource allocations. Specifically, the authors tested the relationship between each of the organizational values and the number of full-time employees devoted to either outreach, development, marketing, or design and acting. Results indicated that organizations higher on the prosocial value dimension invested significantly more in outreach and education employees, whereas organizations higher on the artistic value dimension were more likely to have a greater number of employees dedicated to design and acting. In contrast, organizations higher on the achievement value dimensions were less likely to have full-time employees devoted to design and acting activities but were more likely to employ full-time development staff.

In one of the largest scale studies to date, Toh et al. (2008) examined the relationship between organizational values and bundles of HR practices in 661 organizations across a full range of industries and organizational size. Building on the work of O'Reilly et al. (1991), the authors derived three core organizational values from a factor analysis of 28 organizational values. The values of innovation, people orientation, and stability were found to differentially relate to five types of HR bundles consisting of 19 human resource practices (e.g., recruitment, mentoring, and benefits). For example, organizations that value innovation tend

to focus on using reward packages to attract and motivate employees. Their findings suggest that "organizations possess HR systems consistent with their values," (p. 874) and that "organizations maintain some level of fit between their HR systems and their espoused values" (Toh et al., 2008, p. 876). Hence, it is clear that the type of HR practices adopted by an organization is influenced by the organization's core values.

Because the use of HR certification in selection decisions (i.e., the extent to which organizations value HR certification) represents a key HR practice, we chose to focus on the three values identified by Toh et al. (2008). In the following section, we discuss each core organizational value in greater detail before addressing its influence on the organization's perceived value of HR certification.

3.2. Organizational values and the use of HR certification for selection decisions

Toh et al. (2008) found that three organizational values, innovation, people orientation, and stability, relate to HR practices adopted by the organization. Innovative organizations value employee risk taking, competitiveness, experimentation, and leveraging potential opportunities. People oriented organizations value collaboration, supportiveness, information sharing, flexibility, and respect and tolerance. Finally, stable organizations value predictability and continuity.

Innovative organizations require employees that possess an extensive knowledge base and skill set that allows them to experiment, take risks, and capitalize on opportunities (Mumford, 2000; Toh et al., 2008). In addition, highly innovative organizations operate in environments that often require rapid response to change. Thus, employees must be prepared to adjust and to handle new information. Because there are significant costs associated with developing employee knowledge and skills, highly innovative organizations are likely to purchase already competent and qualified human resources off the market rather than investing significant amounts of time and money in training employees (Toh et al., 2008). In turn, "these organizations ensure that the human resources that they hire off the market are immediately capable through sophisticated selection and recruitment practices" (Toh et al., 2008, p. 876). This "buy" orientation allows the organization to focus on taking risks, being first to market, and on adjusting to changes more quickly than if new employees had to be trained (Miles & Snow, 1984; Toh et al., 2008). By buying human resources off the market, organizations that value innovation are able to adapt quickly without having to invest in training. This would seem to suggest that organizations that value innovation will be more likely to value employees with HR certification when making selection decisions because certification signifies the mastery of a particular area of the HR body of knowledge (Lengnick-Hall & Aguinis, 2012; Wiley, 1995). Thus, certified HR professionals already possess a preexisting body of information, knowledge, and skills straight from the market that is particularly attractive to organizations that value innovation.

Proposition 1. *The use of HR certification in selection decisions will be higher in innovative organizations than in people oriented or stable organizations.*

Like highly innovative organizations, people oriented organizations aim at selecting and hiring the best people (Toh et al., 2008). In addition, these organizations are more likely to treat their employees fairly by paying equitable wages and attractive benefits. This commitment to selecting and hiring the best people is likely to influence the extent to which organizations hire certified HR professionals. Because HR certification signifies a given level of knowledge that distinguishes certified candidates from other applicants, people oriented organizations are likely to value HR certification when making selection decisions. However, unlike highly innovative organizations, people oriented organizations are more likely to take a long-term perspective with respect to their employees' professional development (Toh et al., 2008). That is, people oriented organizations are more likely to ensure that their employees are provided with developmental opportunities and are able to gain additional knowledge and skills. For example, they are more likely to provide new employees with career mentors to assist in their development (Toh et al., 2008). Because high people oriented organizations focus on employee development and have a long-term perspective with respect to their employees, they are more likely to hire applicants that do not have HR certification when compared with highly innovative organizations. In addition, people oriented organizations do not face the same time constraints that highly innovative organizations face. As a result, these organizations can devote the necessary time and resources to develop employees who are not initially hired with HR certification.

Proposition 2. *The use of HR certification in selection decisions will be higher in people oriented organizations than in stable organizations but will be lower than in innovative organizations.*

Organizations that value stability and predictability in their human resources stand in contrast to innovative and people oriented organizations (Toh et al., 2008). To achieve stability in their human resources, these organizations strive to provide extensive training and development programs for their employees. Like people oriented organizations, organizations that value stability take a long-term perspective to their employees' career paths. By providing training and development opportunities, the organization can help assure standardization and predictability across their employee's work behaviors (Ranson, Hinings, & Greenwood, 1980; Toh et al., 2008). Thus, unlike innovative organizations that utilize a "buy" strategy to hire the best applicants off the market, organizations that value stability may choose a "make" strategy where the organization develops their own human resources. As such, organizations that seek predictability and stability may choose to train candidates in accordance with their

particular goals and priorities. Consequently, an organization that seeks to develop and make their own human resources may be less concerned with hiring HR certified professionals.

Proposition 3. *The use of HR certification in selection decisions will be lower in stable organizations than in innovative or people oriented organizations.*

3.3. Influence on employee attitudes and behaviors

The influence of organizational values can extend beyond the organization's decisions. Employees draw from the organization's values to guide their own attitudes and behaviors. In the following section, we build upon the large body of evidence that looks at the influence of organizational values on employee behaviors. Using this research and the work of Toh et al. (2008), we propose that the organizational values, innovation, people orientation, and stability will determine the extent to which employees within the organization value HR certification.

Organizational values can significantly impact employee attitudes and behaviors (Finegan, 2000; Jin et al., 2007; Robert & Wasti, 2002; Vandenberghe & Peiró, 1999). Thus, research suggests that to better understand organizational behavior, scholars should adopt a values-oriented approach (Voss et al., 2000). As noted by Williams (2002, p. 221), "Organizational values are believed to shape every move and decision made by employees at all levels…" Research indicates that an organization's values can impact a wide range of employee outcomes from workaholism (Burke, 2001) to employee innovation (Khazanchi, Lewis, & Boyer, 2007). In a series of studies, Jin et al. (Jin & Drozdenko, 2010; Jin et al., 2007) examined the influence of organizational values on employee and manager unethical behaviors. They found that organizations that value collaboration, creativity, encouragement, empowerment, and trust, reported lower levels of unethical behaviors. In contrast, organizations that value structure, hierarchy, power, regulation, and procedures were more likely to engage in unethical behaviors (Jin et al., 2007). Newnam, Griffin, and Mason (2008) examined the influence of organizational safety values in a sample of fleet drivers. Their findings suggest that organizational safety values directly influence employee and manager safety values, which in turn influence employee safety behaviors. Clearly, organizational values play a critical role in influencing the behaviors and actions of its members.

Given this influence, we suggest that the organizational values, innovation, people orientation, and stability will influence employee perceptions of the value of HR certification as evidenced by the employee's pursuit of HR certification.

3.4. Organizational values and employee pursuit of HR certification

Consider the following dilemma. You are a HR professional for an organization and currently do not have HR certification. Should you invest your time, effort, and money in taking the HR certification exam? Or, should you forgo these costs and spend your time elsewhere? When making this decision, you are likely to consider the extent to which your organization values and rewards HR certification. Organizational values are critical because they signal to its members what the organization identifies as important (Johnson & Jackson, 2009). Research has shown that employees adopt the values that are rewarded in their organizations (Chatman, 1989). Thus, to understand why employees choose to pursue HR certification (or to recertify) one must consider the context within which that decision takes place, and in particular the organization's values.

Organizations that value innovation require that employees maintain a set of knowledge and skills that allow them to produce new ideas and information while responding quickly to a rapidly changing environment. Thus, employees must be prepared to adjust and to handle new information. As such, employees in innovative organizations are likely to seek out continuous improvement and development opportunities. HR certification exams require test-takers to demonstrate a given level of mastery over HR knowledge that may allow them to implement forward thinking HR practices. In addition, to maintain one's HR certification, HR professionals must retake the exam every three years thus representing an opportunity for continuous development.

In line with the organizational value of innovation and the "buy" strategy toward human resources, these organizations are likely to reward employees for their innovation, creativity, and adaptability. Thus, high innovation organizations are more likely to motivate employees using competitive knowledge or skill-based pay (Toh et al., 2008). This would suggest that employees are likely to receive greater recognition for HR certification and recertification. Hence, organizations that value innovation are likely to have a greater number of HR professionals that pursue certification.

Proposition 4. *Innovative organizations will have a greater number of HR professionals that pursue HR certification than stable organizations.*

People oriented organizations value, care, and support their employees. These organizations are similar to those identified by Hartnell, Ou, and Kinicki (2011) as "clan" type organizations. Hartnell et al. (2011) suggest that these type of organizations value affiliation, collaboration, and trust. This results in greater employee participation, involvement, and commitment. One way in which HR professionals may seek to contribute to their organization and demonstrate their commitment is to seek out knowledge and skills sets that will allow them to participate and add to the organization. To achieve this goal, HR professionals may be more likely to pursue HR certification. In addition, people oriented organizations encourage employees to focus on their development

and to take a long-term perspective with respect to their careers (Toh et al., 2008). Thus, although people oriented organizations may be less concerned with initially selecting HR certified professionals, they are more likely to encourage HR professionals to seek out HR certification and recertification as they continue in their careers.

Proposition 5. *People oriented organizations will have a greater number of HR professionals that pursue HR certification than stable organizations.*

Organizations that value stability focus on routinization, formalization, and consistency. A core assumption of these organizations is that control, stability, and predictability foster efficiency (Hartnell et al., 2011). Because their focus is on conformity and predictability, stable organizations are likely to standardize employee behaviors through extensive training and development. This is consistent with their "make" strategy toward human resources where the organization seeks to align the knowledge and skills of employees with the organization's specific goals and priorities. This focus on control, consistency, and rule orientation in turn may influence an organization's preference to develop their own employees instead of encouraging them to seek outside developmental opportunities. In support of this, research suggests that high stability organizations are less likely to empower employees (Toh et al., 2008). As such, HR professionals in these organizations may view HR certification as unnecessary given the strong norm for internal training and development. In addition, organizations that value stability are less likely to reward employees via knowledge or skill-based pay. Given that stable organizations are unlikely to motivate employees to seek out external developmental opportunities, HR professionals within these types of organizations are less likely to pursue HR certification or recertification.

Proposition 6. *Stable organizations will have a lower number of HR professionals that pursue HR certification than innovative or people oriented organizations.*

4. Conclusion and future directions

As noted by Williams (2002) the impact of values "lies not in and of the values themselves, but in the coordinated actions and behaviors they are known to encourage and foster" (p. 221). In this article, we build upon the work of Lengnick-Hall and Aguinis (2012) by looking at organizational values as drivers of an organization's use of HR certification for selection purposes. In addition, we extend their model and propose that organizational values will also influence the extent to which employees choose to pursue HR certification.

It is clear that organizations have different values. These values, in turn, are likely to influence the extent to which organizations value HR certification when making selection decisions. An organization that values innovation and wishes to save time and money associated with developing employees may instead choose to select candidates that already possess a given set of knowledge and skills. As such, these organizations are most likely to value HR certification when making selection decisions. In contrast, organizations that highly value stability and predictability in their human resources may be less likely to value HR certification in their initial selection decisions. Instead, these organizations may choose to develop and train employees post-hire to fit with the organization's specific needs.

Employees are also sensitive to organizational values, particularly given the fact that they are often attracted to, selected by, and remain in organizations due to an organization's values and the specific practices implied by those values (Schneider, 1987). Such values have a top-down influence on employee decisions and behavior, which is consistent with an emerging body of research that demonstrates how context can come to shape worker behavior (Dierdorff & Morgeson, 2007; Dierdorff, Rubin, & Morgeson, 2009; Johns, 2006).

Although research has sought to better understand organization and employee perceptions of the value of HR certification, these efforts have largely ignored the role of the organizational context in influencing these evaluations. Based on a large body of research that has looked at the critical role of organizational values, we propose that the organizational values of innovation, people orientation, and stability will directly influence perceptions of the value of HR certification. By focusing on organizational values as a driver of the value of HR certification, we help encourage research to consider a broader set of organizational-level factors and cross-level effects.

In this paper we have argued for a link between organizational values and organizational and employee behavior (see Table 1). Clearly, future research needs to be conducted to determine whether our propositions are empirically supported. A challenge with exploring these issues is the need to conduct research at the organizational-level. Because values are a property of the organization, multiple organizations would need to be sampled in order to obtain variability in innovation, people orientation, and stability.

Table 1
The influence of organizational values on HR certification.

Organizational value	Value of HR certification	
	Use of HR certification in selection decisions	Pursuit of HR certification
Innovation	+ + +	+ + +
People orientation	+ +	+ + +
Stability	+	+

In addition, although we have chosen to focus on the values of innovation, people orientation, and stability, there are other values that may be potentially meaningful. For example, the extent to which an organization values learning and development might play an important role in the kinds of processes we describe. Future research would be wise to explore other potentially relevant values.

Beyond values, however, there are numerous other factors that might impact whether an organization values HR certification. We chose to focus on values given its clear connection to organizational culture and its impact on HR practice adoption, but other factors may be relevant. For example, the extent to which the HR function is viewed as a strategic partner and represents the strategic core of the organization is likely to impact how an organization values HR certification. As Jack Welch (2005, p. 99–100), former CEO of General Electric noted, "Without a doubt, the head of HR should be the second most important person in any organization. From the point of view of the CEO, the director of HR should be at least equal to the CFO." When a CEO feels this way, the HR function is likely to be viewed more positively, with a potentially meaningful impact on how HR certification is viewed in the organization.

Another potentially interesting issue to explore is how values might differ across cultural contexts. The laws and regulations around HR certification, the expectations of workers, and the general benevolence of organizations are likely to vary considerably across countries. The importance of continuous learning and development implied by HR certification is likely to be quite different across countries, and would be worthy of study. For example, Wiley (1999) conducted a comparative analysis of HR certification among three major certification programs (i.e., Human Resource Certification Institute, Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario, Institute of Personnel and Development) in the U.S., Canada, and the UK. She found that although there were areas of similarity, there were major differences with respect to the HR certification programs' integration with the government, industry, and academia. For example, UK's HR certification program coordinates with the government to develop national standards and qualifications whereas in the U.S. the HRCI is not integrated with any government agencies. One possibility is that HR certification programs that are integrated with government agencies may have more perceived value amongst organizations and employees, thus suggesting cross-cultural differences. Most recently, the HRCI (2010) found that employers outside the U.S. placed a greater emphasis on providing study leave for HR professionals interested in certification and were more likely to monitor increases in productivity and customer satisfaction resulting from certification. These findings provide initial evidence that the value of HR certification differs across countries and that considering the unique cultural values in these contexts may be an area of future study.

Finally, by focusing on organizational values, we have neglected the potentially important role that individual values can play in pursuing HR certification. It is likely that an employee's own values toward development more broadly and HR certification more specifically will have a critical influence. Future research could explore this individual-level influence. In addition to examining the solely organizational-level or individual-level influences, another potentially interesting area to explore is the extent to which congruence in these values might predict the value and pursuit of HR certification. A significant body of evidence suggests that congruence between the organization's and the employee's values is likely to yield positive outcomes (Harris & Mossholder, 1996; Judge & Cable, 1997; O'Reilly et al., 1991; Wang, Zhan, McCune, & Truxillo, 2011). It is likely that high and low levels of value congruence will lead to high and low levels of pursuit of HR certification. What would be particularly interesting to explore would be the disconnects in values, such as when an organization values certification but the employee does not or when an organization does not value certification but the employee does. Which values become more important? Future research could explore such possibilities.

In our paper we have sought to highlight a neglected factor in the HR certification discussion, that of organizational values. As we have suggested, an organization's values can have an important effect on the attitude an organization and its employees take toward certification. Much research remains to be done, and we hope that our paper helps advance work in this important domain.

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