Next Generation Leadership: The Changing Culture of Leadership in the Senior Student Affairs Officer (SSAO) Position

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NEXT GENERATION LEADERSHIP: THE CHANGING CULTURE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE SENIOR STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICER (SSAO) POSITION

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The purpose of this quantitative study was to identify and compare differences in leadership behaviors of senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) based on their generational cohort (Baby Boomer, Generation X, Millennial). The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was used to measure nine leadership behaviors and three leadership outcomes. Surveys were administered electronically to 3,361 individuals identified as a chief student affairs officer or director of student affairs in the Higher Education Online Directory (2014). There were 449 respondents including 246 Baby Boomers, 192 Generation Xers, and 11 Millennials. The findings showed that whereas generation x SSAOs exhibited more transactional leadership behavior, baby boomers were more transformational. The results of this study have implications for the field of student affairs as research and practice support the need for more transformational leaders in senior administrative positions in higher education.

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The field of higher education can often be described as an ever changing environment. Over the course of the next several years, the hierarchy of our campus administrators could witness some change with the impending retirement of the Baby Boomer generation, which was previously the largest working generation in the workforce. Leubsdorf (2006) argued that Baby Boomers will continue to vacate campus leadership positions, including student affairs. As these positions are vacated, Generation X and Millennials will bring their own leadership behaviors to the position of the SSAO. The change from Baby Boomer to subsequent generations will impact staff, campus communities, and stakeholders of colleges and universities. As a new generation of SSAOs assume positions of authority, it is important that they have the leadership and management skills to succeed. As Baby Boomers retire, it will be imperative to understand whether or not the Generation X and Millennial populations will be motivated by different leadership behaviors.

As stated, the Baby Boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1964, has been one of the largest contributors to the American workforce totaling over 70 million people (Colby & Ortman, 2015). Additionally, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that between 2004 and 2014, over 6,000 administrative positions within postsecondary educational institutions would become vacant (Leubsdorf, 2006). With a large number of Baby Boomers retiring from these positions, the next two largest generation groups: Generation X, born 1965 to 1980 and Millennials, born 1981 to 2002, will transition into positions of authority within the higher education environment. As new generations are transitioning into SSAO roles, it is important to understand their leadership behaviors in order to plan for their professional and personal growth and to comprehend the impact they will have on higher education, student affairs, and the campus community. However, with the expected retirement of Baby Boomer SSAOs, Generation X and Millennial SSAOs could be assuming many of these roles, and little is known about their leadership.

In our nation's history, the Baby Boomers who have held many of these leadership roles within higher education and other fields have been characterized as being dedicated to their work (Gibson, Greenwood, & Murphy, 2009; Kaplan & Taoka, 2005; Gibson, 2009; Lancaster & Stillman, 2003), embracing change (Crampton & Hodge, 2007; Smola & Sutton, 2002) and practicing personal, face-to-face, communication (Gibson, 2009). The results of this study can aid the field of higher education, including student affairs professional organizations, to understand the leadership behaviors of a new generation of SSAOs in comparison to their Baby Boomer peers that have historically assumed these roles while adding to the breadth of knowledge on the topic of SSAOs.

Literature Review

Previous literature has noted various differences between generational cohorts across industries within the United States workforce. However, much of the literature has focused on the subjective perceptions and qualitative research (Macky, Gardener, & Forsyth, 2008). While Deal, Peterson, and Gailor-Loflin (2001) argued that little empirical research existed to validate such generational differences in the workplace environment. Although, Herbst and Conradie (2011) conducted a quantitative study on the perceptions of transformational leadership behaviors of managers within a South African university. Their findings concluded that colleges and universities have a need for more transformative leaders in senior campus roles and organizations should seek to develop leadership development programs to assist in leader's growth and development. In further support of transformational leadership, Astin and Astin (2000) stated that campuses should utilize such leaders in a time of change for higher education organizations. Meriac, Woehr, and

Banister (2010) found significant difference in respondents' work-related attitudes and behaviors while Rodriguez, Green, and Ree (2003) found significant differences in all leadership behaviors between baby boomers and Gen Xers. Furthermore, Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, and Brown (2007) suggested that differences in leadership attributes existed across generational cohorts; and Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak (1999) found differences in leadership preferences based on generational cohorts while Yu and Miller (2005) did not find any differences in leadership styles of higher education educators but did find differences related to machine workers based on generational membership.

These findings gave support and a foundation for exploring the leadership behavior of a new generation of leaders within student affairs. Much of the literature related to effective leadership behaviors of SSAOs has sought to explore leaders with years upon years of experience within the field which could be argued are characterized as Baby Boomers and are leaving the field of higher education at a high rate (Leubsdorf, 2006). With the influx of retirements within the field of higher education and beyond, this study sought to compare and contrast leadership behaviors of a multi-generational population of SSAOs and potential implications for the future of higher education and student affairs administration. In addition, as argued by Astin and Astin (2000) and Herbst and Conradie (2011), there is a growing need for senior campus administrators to practice transformational leadership within the field of higher education. The question arises, however, as to whether or not Generation X and Millennials exhibit the influence and characteristics of transformational leaders to effectively lead their student affairs organizations.

Furthermore, there were considerable gaps in the literature with very few studies that concentrated on generational differences in the higher education workplace and even fewer related to student affairs. As stated previously, leadership has been studied thoroughly within the field of student affairs and higher education although few studies have drawn comparisons between leadership behaviors and generational membership within the student affairs environment. The findings of this study could add the breadth of literature on student affairs administration, leadership, and generational membership. Additionally, this study comes at a critical time as a generation of Baby Boomers begin to depart the workforce and younger generations start to serve in SSAO positions at colleges and universities. Findings of this study could help campuses and the field of student affairs better understand a new generation of SSAOs that could impact campus culture and governance.

Methodology

This quantitative study used a survey research design to identify leadership behaviors of persons employed as SSAOs at colleges and universities in the United States. An established survey instrument, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Bass & Avolio, 2000) was utilized to collect data to address the research questions. This survey design was cross-sectional because data was collected at one point in time versus longitudinally (Creswell, 2009). A cross-sectional design seeks to collect data from more than one case on two or more variables for examination of possible patterns of association (Bryman, 2012). This association was of potential interest to compare the leadership behaviors of different generations of SSAOs and the potential impact the results may have to higher education and organizational culture. By employing inferential statistics, generalization can be made related to SSAOs and their associated leadership behaviors through a generational comparison.

The research questions were:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference in leadership behaviors between SSAOs classified as Generation X, Millennial, and/or Baby Boomer?

2. If there is a statistically significant difference in leadership behaviors based on SSAO generational membership, which leadership behaviors differ?

Variables of Interest

The construct of leadership behavior was represented by nine sub-constructs/dependent variables: *Idealized Influence-Attributes, Idealized Influence- Behaviors, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, Individualized Consideration, Laissez-Faire, Management-by-exception-Passive, Management-by-Exception- Passive, and Contingent Reward*. The three independent variables represented the generational classification of the SSAO. The independent and dependent variables are presented in Table 1. As it was expected the nine measures were correlated with each other, a multivariate approach to modeling was preferred when looking at their relationship with the independent variable generation.

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Bass & Avolio, 2000) was chosen as the data collection instrument which was designed to measure nine leadership behaviors associated with the full range of leadership model (FRL). The full range of leadership model (FRL) which served as the theoretical framework of this study includes the leadership behaviors of laissez-faire leadership, transactional, and transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The MLQ "is considered the best validated measure of transformational and transactional leadership" (Ozaralli, 2003, p. 338). The MLQ asks respondents to rate their frequency of their own leadership behavior on a 5-point Likert scale (0-4) on 45 standardized items. The nine leadership behaviors associated with the FRL model were assigned numeric values based on mean responses and serve as the dependent variables of the study.

Table 1: *Independent and Dependent Variables*

Category	Name	Abbreviation	Scale	Range
Independent	Baby Boomer	BB	Categorical	
Independent	Generation X	GX	Categorical	
Independent	Millennial	MM	Categorical	
Dependent	Idealized Influence: Attributes	IA	Continuous	0-4
Dependent	Idealized Influence: Behaviors	IB	Continuous	0-4
Dependent	Inspirational Motivation	IM	Continuous	0-4
Dependent	Intellectual Stimulation	IS	Continuous	0-4
Dependent	Laissez-Faire	LF	Continuous	0-4
Dependent	Management by Exception: Passive	MBEP	Continuous	0-4
Dependent	Management by Exception: Active	MBEA	Continuous	0-4
Dependent	Contingent Reward	CR	Continuous	0-4

The researcher sought to compare and analyze the transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant leadership behaviors amongst SSAOs generational groups.

The population for this study was SSAOs listed in the 2014 Higher Education Directory. The publication was utilized to send to all represented in the population. Within the Higher Education Directory there were 2,164 individuals categorized as chief student affairs officers at four-year institutions (1484-private; 670 public). Furthermore, there were 1,197 (714 private; 483-public) individuals categorized as director of student affairs with a variety of titles such as assistant vice president, dean of students, and associate vice chancellor who may serve in a SSAO role which were determined by pre-qualifying questions explained later. Therefore, a combined population of 3,361 of student affairs administrators (chief student affairs officers & director of student affairs) was utilized for this study of SSAOs.

An electronic invitation was sent to the entire population of chief student affairs officers and directors of student affairs at four-year institutions within the 2014 Higher Education Directory. The invitation email included the informed consent, a brief description of the problem and purpose of the study and a link to complete the survey. The researcher also included demographic questions for each participant prior to beginning the MLQ which helped collect data for eligibility for participation (i.e., generational classification; job title; gender; institution type; race; years of experience). The respondents had six weeks to complete the survey with reminders sent every two weeks.

The analysis itself was conducted in two sections. First, descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables, including means and standard deviations for continuous variables and frequencies and percentages for categorical ones. Pearson's correlation coefficients were generated to assess the relationship between the continuous variables. This method helped the researcher determine any inter-correlation between the continuous variables (Urdan, 2010). A MANOVA was conducted to determine whether or not there were statistically significant differences between the nine dependent variables based on the independent group variables. MANOVA allows for examining differences in the means of several continuous variables based on levels of some categorical variable (Stevens, 2002). In addition, MANOVA is a more notable model in comparison to ANOVA as it provides some control of inflated alpha levels and committing a Type I error while also investigating multiple variables helps the researcher capture a more broadened understanding of phenomenon being studied (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006).

Much like ANOVA, MANOVA makes the assumption that within-group covariance matrices are equal which if there is an unbalance with the number of observations included in the study then Box's M test should be utilized to assess the equivalence-of-covariance matrices for each dependent variable. A statistical significant at $p<.05$ indicates heterogeneity or inequality which may require data transformation of dependent variables (Meyers et al., 2006). Furthermore, if the omnibus MANOVA model indicates a statistical significance differences, then post-hoc tests will be run to determine where the difference exist amongst the various groups.

Results

Unfortunately, there were only 11 senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) identified from the millennial generational group. Therefore, after considering this group's contribution to unequal sample sizes, the decision was made to remove them from the dataset and further analysis. Additionally, utilizing the method for missing Likert data as discussed by Downey and King (1998), there were 68 surveys with more than 20% of item responses incomplete. Therefore, these participant responses were also removed from the dataset leaving a total useable sample size of 438 for the study.

Post hoc power analysis utilizing G*Power 3.1.9.2 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner,2007) was conducted to determine the actual power achieved based upon the final sample. Using the same parameters related to effect size (.02), alpha level (.05), number of independent variables (3), and sample of 438, a power level of .715 was achieved, Additionally, based upon a population of 3,361 and sample of 438, the results of the survey have a margin of error of +/- 4.37%.

Frequency distribution tables for the categorical demographic variables are presented in Table 2. Of the sample, 246 self-reported as Baby Boomers while 192 were classified as Generation X. The gender of participants was distributed almost evenly with approximately 49% males and 50% females. The majority identified as Caucasian (81%). SSAOs identified completing a terminal degree by either a Ph.D (35%) or Ed.D (27%) or Master's Degree (33%). The professional experience varied from 5 to 36 or more years with 21-25 years (23%) as the majority. Finally, private school SSAOs were identified as 59% compared to their public school counterparts (39%).

Table 2: *Frequencies and Percentages of SSAOs*

Category		N	%
Gender	Male	215	49.1
	Female	219	50.0
	Transgender	1	.2
	Prefer not to answer	3	.7
	Total	438	100
Race/Ethnicty	African American	47	10.7
	Caucasian	355	81.1
	Asian	4	.9
	Hispanic	24	5.5
	Native American	2	.5
	Not Listed	3	.7
	Prefer not to answer	3	.6
	Total	438	100
Generation Group	Baby Boomer	246	56.2
	Generation X	192	43.8
	Total	438	100
Education	Ph.D	154	35.2
	Ed.D	120	27.4
	J.D. or Professional Degree	11	2.5
	Master's Degree	148	33.8
	Bachelor's Degree	4	.9
	No Response	1	.2
	Total	438	100
Professional Experience	5-9 years	18	4.1
	10-15 years	47	10.7
	16-20 years	68	15.5
	21-25 years	103	23.5
	26-30 years	80	18.3
	31-35 years	65	14.8
	36 or more years	56	12.8
	No Response	1	.3
	Total	438	100
Institution Type	4-year private	260	59.4
	4-year public	170	38.8
	No Response	8	1.8
	Total	438	100

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients for the continuous dependent variables. The correlations between the transformational leadership behaviors (IA, IB, IM, IS, and IC) were moderate and positive and statistically significant at alpha .001. The transactional leadership behavior of Contingent Reward (CR) was also moderately and positively correlated ($p \leq .001$) with the five transformational leadership behaviors (IA, IB, IM, IS, and IC). This finding is consistent with previous research by Bycio, Allen, and Hackett (1995) who found

Table 3: *Correlation Matrix- Dependent Variables of Full Range Leadership Model*

n=438

Variables	IA	IB	IM	IS	IC	CR	MBEA	MBEP	LF
IA	-								
IB	.489**	-							
IM	.495**	.588**	-						
IS	.405**	.503**	.505**	-					
IC	.441**	.450**	.477**	.510**	-				
CR	.431**	.398**	.484**	.405**	.394**	-			
MBEA	.089	-.012	-.067	-.073	-.122*	.061	-		
MBEP	-.210**	-.216**	-.248**	-.250**	-.201**	-.229**	-.014	-	
LF	-.275**	-.224**	-.279**	-.213**	-.296**	-.242**	.043	.411**	-

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed).

Contingent Reward and transformational leadership variables highly correlated. Avolio and Bass (2004) found similar correlations and argued that leaders that exhibit Contingent Reward through building trust over time by establishing developmental expectations with their followers.

Furthermore, the leadership behaviors of management by exception passive (MBEP) and laissez-faire (LF) were weak and negatively correlated ($p \leq .001$) with the five transformational leadership behaviors and contingent reward. MBEP and LF also showed a moderate and positive correlation ($p \leq .001$) with one another. The correlation with each other and the five transformational leadership behaviors could be explained by the fact that at times, MBEP leaders take no action until complaints are received while LF can be described as an avoidance or absence of leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006). MBEP is considered a transactional leadership behavior yet it may have a negative reaction towards followers as it could be mistaken for a lack of leadership. In contrast, transformational leadership behaviors and contingent reward are quite the opposite while always showing a high need for the actions of their followers.

A MANOVA was utilized to determine if statistically significant differences existed between the nine leadership behavior constructs of senior students affairs officers from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire instrument. An initial interpretation of MANOVA involves the testing of equality of variances and co-variance matrices. Much like Levene's test in the univariate case, MANOVA involves a much more sensitive test for equality among the co-variances of the dependent variables. The Box's M test was statistically significant, F (45, 553617)

= 1.415, p=.035, at alpha .05 indicating a violation of the equality of co-matrices variances assumption. However, Field (2009) notes that Box's M is highly sensitive to data normality, so its outcome may or may not truly reflect equality of the co-variance matrices. Therefore, a visual inspection of the dataset was performed to determine any potential violations of normality. SPSS (IBM Corp, 2012) was utilized to produce Q-Q plots, or a visual depiction of the dependent variables quartiles again the quartiles of a normal distribution. Plots in which the values that fall on or close to a positive 90° diagonal are considered normal (Field, 2009).

Finally, Levene's tests to check for the equality of variances in each dependent variable were conducted. The Levene's tests of univariate equality of variances between the groups were not statistically significant and are presented in Table 4.

Discussion

The first research question sought to understand if any significant differences existed between SSAOs based on their identified generational group. The results from research question one, displayed in Table 5, indicated statistical significance based on results of the Box M's test F (45, 553617) = 1.415, p =.035 and Hotelling's Trace test at alpha .05, p =.040, F(9, 428) = .030, partial ε^2 = .040 which indicated significant differences of leadership behaviors between Baby Boomers and Generation X. These results are consistent with findings from Meriac et al. (2010); Rodriguez et al. (2003); Sessa et al. (2007); Zemke et al. (1999) related to the differences of leadership based on generational membership and failed to offer support to the partial findings by Yu and Miller (2005). However, while the results of the MANOVA did indicate signifi-

Table 4: *Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances*

Leadership Construct	F	df1	df2	P
Idealized Attributes	.846	1	436	.358
Idealized Behaviors	.686	1	436	.408
Inspirational Motivation	.813	1	436	.368
Intellectual Stimulation	.943	1	436	.332
Individual Consideration	.528	1	436	.468
Contingent Reward	.706	1	436	.401
Mgmt By Exception Active	2.690	1	436	.102
Mgmt By Exception Passive	.152	1	436	.697
Laissez-Faire	1.424	1	436	.233

Table 5: *Full Range Leadership Model Descriptive Statistics-Factor Scores*

	Baby Boomer *N*=246		Generation X *N*=192	
Leadership Construct	M	SD	M	SD
Idealized Attributes	.10	1.00	-.13	.99
Idealized Behaviors	.09	.99	-.12	1.00
Inspirational Motivation	.04	1.03	-.06	.96
Intellectual Stimulation	.09	.97	-.11	1.03
Individual Consideration	.07	.98	-.09	1.02
Contingent Reward	.05	.96	-.07	1.04
Mgmt By Exception Active	-.10	.94	.13	1.06
Mgmt By Exception Passive	-.04	1.01	.05	.98
Laissez-Faire	-.08	.94	.10	1.06

cant differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X, this could have been the result of a small effect size and moderate power. Although, the significance of the two groups does have considerations on future research which will be discussed in greater detail later.

The second research question sought to examine which leadership behaviors SSAOs differed on based on generational membership. The results from the MANOVA of factor scores in Table 6 indicated significant differences on four of the nine leadership constructs which included idealized attributes, idealized behaviors, intellectual stimulation and management by exception active. The characteristics of these four leadership behaviors articulated by Bass and Avolio (2004):

Idealized Influence. (Attributes and Behaviors)-Leaders are often admired, respected and trusted while being relatable to the followers which they serve. Additionally, leaders often exercise the needs of their followers over their own while consistently achieving high ethics and morals.

Intellectual Stimulation. Leaders encourage their followers to be creative and innovative by not following the status quo to address problems. Additionally, leaders do not publicly criticize or ridicule followers for their mistakes.

Management-by-Exception Active. Leader identifies and creates standards for all followers and holds these

Table 6: *MANOVA- Leadership Constructs*

Leadership Construct	Df	F	P	η_p^2	D
*Idealized Attributes	1	6.08	.014	.014	.69
*Idealized Behaviors	1	5.06	.025	.011	.61
Inspirational Motivation	1	1.13	.288	.003	.19
*Intellectual Stimulation	1	4.53	.034	.010	.56
Individual Consideration	1	3.08	.080	.007	.42
Contingent Reward	1	1.59	.208	.004	.24
*Mgmt by Exception Active	1	6.05	.014	.014	.69
Mgmt by Exception Passive	1	.83	.362	.002	.15
Laissez-Faire	1	3.55	.060	.008	.47

individuals accountable for ineffective performance which may include punishment. Leaders closely monitor followers for errors and mistakes and takes action quickly as needed.

Additionally, three of the four of these leadership behaviors (idealized behaviors, idealized attributes, and intellectual stimulation) are classified as transformational leadership behaviors with management by exception active as a transactional leadership behavior.

The results suggested that Baby Boomer SSAOs were more transformational while Generation X SSAO means were higher in some transactional and all passive/avoidant leadership styles. This finding does not support Herbst and Conradie (2011) and Astin and Astin (2000) who argued for more transformational leaders in higher education administrative roles but suggests that a new generation of SSAOs led by Generation X could be more transactional. Furthermore, transactional leaders less often get involved with the development of their followers and utilize a management-by-exception philosophy with predetermined rewards and consequences for meeting organizational objective and goals (Bass, 1985; Bass 1990; Howell & Avolio, 1993). The results of this study suggested that Generation X SSAOs had more transactional leadership behaviors which could have an impact at institutions of higher education currently and in the future if such a trend continues.

Transformational leaders are often seen as leaders who attend to their needs of their followers by providing charisma, intellectual stimulation, influence, and inspirational motivation (Avolio, Waldman & Einstein, 1988; Barbuto, 1997; Bass, 1990; Hunt, 1999). However, the findings of this study noted differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X on four of the nine leadership

behaviors with Baby Boomer SSAOs being identified as more transformational.

Leaders within educational institutions who are transformational make an impact by identifying organizational priorities, empowering others, mentoring followers, and recognizing the leadership capacity in people (Tierney & Foster, 1998). The findings of this study suggested that Baby Boomer SSAOs have more transformational leadership behaviors in relation to their Generation X counterparts which could have implications for higher education and student affairs.

Implications for Practice

Previous literature sought to illustrate the relationship that Baby Boomers have had on the field of student affairs and higher education by characterizing such individuals as transformational leaders in the work they have done and continue to do so on college campuses. The results of the study justified and supported previous findings as noted in the summary of findings. However, there are larger implications on the staff that serve as followers to the SSAO position. The staff of student affairs adhere to the vision of SSAOs who as depicted in this study and previous research of Baby Boomers who are transformational. However, the results of this study suggested that Generation X SSAOs are not as transformational as and more transactional than Baby Boomers. Therefore, it could be assumed that SSAOs will be more transactional leaders until they receive the necessary development and experience.

Additionally, there are potential implications for SSAOs currently serving in this role on college and university campuses throughout the nation. Those that identify as Baby Boomer SSAOs have a responsibility to mentor and develop younger generations that are currently serving as a SSAO or have interest in such a position to assure noted transformational leadership behaviors are developed appropriately with a new generation of SSAOs. Additionally, Generation X SSAOs should comprehend the findings of this study so they may seek opportunities to help develop their leadership behaviors to strengthen areas of weakness related to the full range leadership model used as the framework of this study.

There are also implications for the university presidents or supervisors of SSAOs. College presidents desire SSAOs with integrity, conflict resolution skills, and decisiveness in their roles as campus leaders (Randall & Globetti, 1992). The findings for the study may help college presidents/SSAO supervisors understand the disparities between Baby Boomer and Generation X SSAOs leadership styles and behaviors. Additionally, the findings of this study may assist college presidents/SSAO supervisors in making decisions related to hiring. These results could also assist university presidents/SSAO supervisors in evaluating the performance, leadership style, and behaviors of those they supervise to ensure maximum performance of SSAOs at their institutions.

Furthermore, the findings of this study has relevance for those that are aspiring to become SSAOs. As stated by Leusbdorf (2006), there is a growing need both currently and in the future to fill administrative positions in higher education. As more Baby Boomers retire, Generation Xers and Millennials are the next generation in line to assume positions at the top of the higher education hierarchy. Therefore, those assuming such positions of authority should be able to assess their skills and behaviors. The findings of this study may help reveal to those that aspire to become SSAOs the intricacies of the Baby Boomer and Generation X leadership behaviors that could be emulated, but also those behaviors that should be avoided. Additionally, professional associations should support the leadership development of aspiring SSAOs including but not limited to SSAO mentor/mentee programs, new SSAO institutes, and/or additional research and literature related new SSAOs.

Finally, there are implications of this study related to research, specifically as it

relates to generational cohorts and leadership of the SSAO. As stated previously, much of the research related to the differences of generational cohorts is subjective and qualitative (Macky et al., 2008). Thus, this quantitative study may add to the breadth of the literature on the topic of multi-generational differences in the workforce. In addition, the topic of leadership of the SSAO has been thoroughly investigated by researchers. However, much of the literature discussed in this study is related to seasoned leaders in the field of student affairs from the Baby Boomer generation and beyond. Through this study, the attempt was to gain a perspective not only from Baby Boomers but also Generation X and Millennials. The data collected related to Generation X SSAOs will help begin a comprehension and understanding of a new generation of SSAOs as they begin to lead student affairs in the future. The perspective of Millennials that was not addressed in this study will be illustrated in the next section related to future research.

Limitations

The goal of this research was to compare leadership behaviors of SSAOs across generational groups to determine if significant differences existed. Additionally, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was selected to measure the leadership behaviors of SSAOs. However, the MLQ, while valid and reliable, measures nine leadership factors and three leadership outcomes of transformational, transactional, and non-leadership behaviors. It does not measure the infinite and diverse number of leadership behaviors that could be identified using other theories or models. Thus, the findings for this study were limited to illustrating the leadership behaviors within a theoretical framework of the full range leadership model (FRL). Data collected from SSAOs were self-reported and cannot be verified with regard to accuracy. Also, due to low effect size and moderate power of this study, it is difficult to generalize this study to the entire population of SSAOs from a generational comparison.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research on the leadership behaviors of SSAOs should attempt to include Millennials in the analysis once there are more individuals in this generation which assume such leadership roles within institutions of higher education. Additionally, as stated previously, this study achieved moderate power with a small effect size. Future researchers should achieve a larger effect size to be able to generalize to all SSAOs. Throughout this study, the professional association of NASPA was readily available to help and interested in the study. Those that determine to replicate the study should utilize listservs available by professional associations to promote the study with goal of achieving a more representative sample. However, the findings did identify some significant differences in each group of SSAOs. Future research should explore these differences from a qualitative perspective by formulating interview questions that are similar to the quantitative questions asked in the Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire. By investigating through a qualitative lens, future researchers may gather a deeper understanding of why such difference may exist between SSAOs from differing generations.

Future research should also gain an understanding of the relationship of factors such as institution type, gender, and/or years of experience may have on leadership behaviors of SSAOs. This study collected demographic information from all participants but was not explored in the data analysis. Future research should investigate these to help comprehend and more in depth understanding of generational differences amongst SSAOs.

Conclusions

The findings from this study identified that there were significant differences related to the leadership behaviors of SSAOs at

both public and private institutions in U.S. from a generational perspective. Specifically, Baby Boomer and Generation X SSAOs differed on four of nine leadership behaviors (idealized attributes, idealized behaviors, intellectual stimulation, and management by exception active). Additionally, this study suggested that Baby Boomer SSAOs were more transformational while Generation X SSAOs were more transactional while Millennial SSAOs were excluded from study. The findings supported previous research by Meriac et al. (2010) & Rodriguez et al. (2003) who found that differences in leadership existed based on generational grouping while Sessa et al. (2007) and Zemke et al. (1999) found differences of leadership style and preferences across generations. Although, the findings of this study contrast, Yu and Miller (2005) who found no differences in preferred leadership styles of educators in higher education. The findings of Yu and Miller (2005) could possibly be explained due to the significant differences in the population as the study sought to explore generational difference in the Taiwan workplace. It can be concluded that the United States education system is significantly different than the Taiwan education system which could have led to differing results between Yu and Miller (2005) and the findings of the study.

The results of this study have implications to the field of student affairs to support the assertion of Herbst and Conradie (2011) and Astin and Astin (2000) the need for more transformational leaders in senior administrative roles. The findings of this study should be shared with professional associations, student affairs practitioners, and university presidents in an effort to better develop Generation X SSAOs with the skills to move towards a more transformational leadership style and away from transactional and avoidance of leadership styles. By utilizing this study various internal and external campus constituents may gain an understanding how SSAOs lead currently based on their generational category. Further research on the topic should seek to illustrate if such differences between generational groups change over time and/or why such difference exist between generational groups.

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