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Unsubstantiated Conclusions: A Scoping Review on Generational Differences of Leadership in Academic Libraries

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Title

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Abstract

The academic library profession is experiencing a large turnover in leadership. To date, information on differences in the generational expectations about how to lead is scarce and the research is contradictory. This article presents a scoping review of the literature on generational expectations of academic library leaders. Based on predefined eligibility criteria, the authors searched twelve bibliographic databases and performed a broad web search. 5,435 articles were located and considered for inclusion, however, only four eligible articles were identified and included for analysis. There is little empirical evidence that generational differences are evident in the academic library setting or in individual leadership expectations. There is a lack of original research on generational differences in leadership in libraries, however, anecdotal and opinion literature is drawing attention to this topic in ways that cannot be validated.

Introduction

Kotter (1990) defines leadership as the act of creating a vision, and through this vision the organization sets a course to reach organizational goal. The workforce is organized to align with the vision and to implement it with the proper communication and appropriate support networks in place. In order for this to happen, the leader motivates and inspires employees to overcome obstacles and produce change. Kotter distinguishes leadership from management by describing management as the tasks of creating a plan, managing budgets, and managing staff among other activities, with the goal to have a predictable and stable organization. This paper focuses on leaders of academic libraries, specifically deans, university librarians and directors (director). Hernon, Powell and Young (2002) suggest that moving into a director role means that the individual transitions from managing internal functions to becoming a leader at the institutional level.

The academic library profession is experiencing a large turnover of directors in the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). Before the 1970s, turnover in director positions was stable and those leaders remained in their jobs for decades (Hernon et al., 2002). Since then, a growing trend in turnover of directors has been identified. Based on data the authors received directly from ARL in 2018, in the 1970s, 16 new directors were hired; in the 1980s, 38 directors took office; and in the 1990s, 69 were hired. This growing turnover continued between 2013 and 2018, as 87 ARL dean/director positions were filled. Furthermore, the age demographic of ARL directors indicates that additional positions will open in the next 5-10 years. In 2015, 39 percent of ARL directors in the US and Canada were age 65 or above, a marked increase from only 2 percent in 2000, and in 2015, 14 percent of ARL directors in the United States were age 70 and older (Wilder, 2018a).

In tandem with the aging workforce, changes are adrift in the general hiring within libraries. In reference to recent hiring trends, Wilder (2018b, p. 17) noted, "taken as a whole, these changes in hiring amount to an epochal shift in the nature of library work, in what it means to be a library professional." As a result of this shift, 41 percent of hires have been for non-traditional jobs, which are defined as jobs for which the candidates need skills outside of traditional librarianship, e.g., computing, the legal field, financial expertise and human resources experience. In addition, three non-traditional jobs, which include digital specialists, functional specialists, and administration, are included in the top six job categories as reported in the 2015 ARL Salary Survey of 21 job categories. Further, 40 percent of non-traditional new hires do not have library degrees versus 8 percent for those hired into traditional positions (Morris, 2017).

With such changes in mind, it is timely to examine the leadership models that academic libraries are using, both in their training and expectations for what a leader is. Further, as academic libraries are transitioning from leadership by Baby Boomers to that by Generation X and Millennials, we must consider generational divides to help usher in this new wave of leadership. As such, this scoping review inspects current research about generational differences in personal leadership values in academic librarians with the following research questions in mind:

1. In academic libraries, what are the qualities of leadership within generations?
2. Should leadership development be redefined based on generational divides?

Literature Review

Generations Defined

Starting with Mannheim's (1970) seminal essay, there has been a modern interest in generations and how their expressions impact the workplace. Generational experiences and commonalities are defined by localized, impactful, shared experiences. The global economy and world-wide impact of events such as WWII have created generational cohorts across western culture. Baby Boomers experienced common concerns such as protests against the Vietnam war that created a unity and provided them with enough safety to be vocal about their views. This stability also manifested because of secure job opportunities. The Gen X generation that followed experienced a political disconnect, no shared political agenda, and fewer jobs opportunities (Edmunds & Turner, 2005). Though specific dates of birth and names for each generation are often disputed, the primary generations in today's workforce include Baby Boomers, born following WWII, Generation X, born between the mid-1960s and late 1970s, and Millennials, born in the early 1980s through early 2000s. The Pew Research Center (2015) identifies three factors associated with generational differences: life cycle effects; period effects; and cohort effects. The life cycle effect denotes differences between younger and older people due largely to their age and position in the life cycle. The period effect is seen when large scale events and social forces have a simultaneous impact on everyone in a population. The cohort effect is the most similar to what Mannheim (1970) discussed, noting the unique historical circumstances that members of an age cohort experience during a time when they are in the process of forming opinions.

Seen through a library lens, Baby Boomers began their careers with card catalogs, large paper collections, and the need for expert knowledge to answer even basic reference questions. Generation X entered librarianship when card catalogs were almost gone, computers

in libraries were common, and databases were available on CD-ROM. Millennials have entered the library workforce in a time when librarians might not work at a reference desk, and digital technology is present in every component of the job (Lewis & Orr, 2018). Wilder (2018a, p. 14) makes an astute observation about the recruitment of new librarians as Baby Boomers retire, saying "they will be disproportionately important, injecting new experience, attitudes, and aspirations into our libraries, keeping them relevant in a climate of fundamental change and uncertainty. Learning about the characteristics of the new workforce in contrast to what the Baby Boomers valued is important in understanding the institutional change that will need to take place to allow new leaders to be successful.

Leadership Training Programs

Many articles describing generational differences focus on training and professional development for the younger generation to prepare them to lead in the same way and in the same organizational structures that have existed and currently still exist. In the book edited by Irene Herold (2015, p. 341) examining academic library leadership programs, only one of the 18 programs refer to exploring "new leadership and transforming organizations/leading change." The rest of the programs seem primarily focused on developing leadership qualities and do not mention new models of management. None mention generational differences in their curriculum content descriptions.

Generational Leadership Preferences

Ample work has been done describing generational differences and leadership. Baby Boomers tend to have a participatory leadership style and value a collegial environment with a fair and level playing field, whereas Generation X considers leadership situational, often taking roles for altruistic reasons, and value fairness and honesty (Salahuddin, 2010; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). Generation X also appears to have a high level of intolerance for bureaucracy and hierarchy, is cynical toward the status quo, and tends to establish a sense of community within their organizations (Mosley, 2005). A study by Daboval (1998) found that Baby Boomers also have a higher level of commitment to an organization and supervisor than Generation Xers. Millennials have more recently arrived to leadership, and often believe themselves ready to assume leadership roles, despite not having the hard and soft skills traditionally attributed with these positions (Al-Asfour, 2014; Emanuel, 2012; Haynes, 2011; Myers, 2010; Nye, 2017; The Hartford, 2014, 2015). Emanuel (2012) also found that Millennial librarians want to be able to shape the profession in their own way and are frustrated when their opinions are not valued, and they are not given an opportunity to lead. Gordon (2010) reminds current library leaders that Millennials are already taking leadership roles and training them for these positions is

essential. Unfortunately for librarians hoping to move into leadership positions, Munde (2010, p. 93) notes that, "many human resources professionals hold stereotypical opinions about age groups based primarily on anecdotal rather than empirical evidence", which is an additional barrier to library professionals when trying to avoid ageism, intergenerational conflict, and meeting the professional development needs of age-diverse learners.

In 2015, 12 percent of the professional librarian population in ARL libraries were Millennials and of new hires in that year, 41 percent were Millennials. Forty-three percent of Millennials were in nontraditional jobs in contrast to 32 percent of Baby Boomers. Although Millennials have had enough years of experience and are now ready to be filling leadership positions, they remain underrepresented in leadership positions, which was the case for previous generations as well (Wilder, 2018c).

Leadership Expectations & Preferences

Though research on leadership traits of the generations is easy to find, research on the leadership expectations and qualities that individuals of different generations hold and value for themselves as leaders is more scarce. Generation X expects leadership to be more inclusive and collaborative, rather than top-down, and believes that people should lead from where they are within an organization. They find that developing human talent is essential to successful leadership and also in retaining qualified workers (Penney, 2011). Many studies have been done to determine the leadership characteristics valued most highly by the different generations, however the results of these are all conflicting, often finding more similarities than differences (Arsenault, 2004; Cox, 2016; Dulin, 2008; Gentry, Griggs, Deal, Mondore, & Cox, 2011; Martin, 2018; Salahuddin, 2010).

When exploring current organizational cultures and how well they might serve future library leaders, Maloney, et al. (2010) found that future library leaders reported dissatisfaction with current organizational structures that tend to be hierarchical, defined by Cameron and Quinn (2011, p. 75) as "a very formal and structured place to work. Procedures govern what people do" and instead, they would prefer an adhocracy culture, which is "a dynamic, entrepreneurial, and creative place to work. People stick their necks out and take risks." They report a desire for a culture less internally focused and less rigid than the current structure that is not promoting effectiveness. Several studies found that libraries that use creative group efforts that require formalized project management practices for example, generally do not follow hierarchical organizational structures, but favor clan or adhocracy cultures (Currie & Shepstone, 2008; Heyns & Huijts, 2018; Kaarst-Brown, Nicholson, von Dran, & Stanton, 2004).

Methods

This scoping review was conducted following the PRISMA-ScR checklist (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & the PRISMA Group, 2009). The checklist includes 27 items for conducting and reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses divided into the areas of title, abstract, methods, results, discussion and funding. Tricco, et.al. (2018) published an article to establish a reporting guideline for scoping reviews since their research found that with the increase in scoping reviews, no standard methodology and reporting guidelines existed. They note that scoping reviews "may examine the extent (that is, size), range (variety), and nature (characteristics) of the evidence on a topic or question; determine the value of undertaking a systematic review; summarize findings from a body of knowledge that is heterogeneous in methods or discipline; or identify gaps in the literature to aid the planning and commissioning of future research" p. 467.

Inclusion criteria

We registered a protocol via Open Science Framework on February 1, 2018 (DOI 10.17605/OSF.IO/XE2MT, https://osf.io/xe2mt/). Any data sources that were discovered were considered, including, but not limited to, scholarly articles, conference proceedings, opinion pieces, policy papers, and quantitative or qualitative data. We defined eligible data sources as any that were published about Baby Boomers, Generation X, and/or Millennials in languages that the authors could read, including English, Afrikaans, Dutch, German, or Spanish, and with no date cut-off. As generational characteristics are typically defined by cultural phenomena and norms, such cultural attributes only reach a subpopulation of the world. Thus, this review only applies to those cultures that acknowledge the generations we are focusing on. In addition, we only included data sources that addressed leadership qualities or characteristics for members of academic libraries or academic librarians, not including paraprofessionals or others who do not hold a professional librarian status. We defined leadership in a narrow sense, and excluded data sources that addressed leadership practices, such as administrative functions, management, or mentorship. Finally, it is worth noting that the definition of each generation may vary between publications, particularly in the dates that comprise specific generations (for example, the break between Generation X and Millennials is often cited as anywhere from 1980 to 1985). For the purposes of this paper, we maintained the generational definition used by each paper, thus our findings may include slight variations in the age of the individuals represented in each included study.

Search strategy

Twelve bibliographic databases were searched on February 1, 2018, including ABI/Inform Collection (ProQuest platform, 1984 - present), Academic Search Premiere (EBSCOhost platform, 1975 - present), Business Source Complete (EBSCOhost platform, 1922 - present), Digital Commons Network (https://network.bepress.com/, unknown date coverage), Library Literature & Information Science Index (EBSCOhost platform, 1984 - present), Library Literature & Information Science Full Text (EBSCOhost platform, 1980 - present), Library and Information Science Abstracts (ProQuest platform, 1969 - present), Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts (EBSCOhost platform, 1965 - present), NDLTD global ETD search (http://search.ndltd.org/, unknown date coverage), ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global (1743 - present), Scopus (1970 - present), and Web of Science Core Collection (Clarivate Analytics platform, 1900 - present). On February 2, 2018, we searched five websites including the American Library Association (http://www.ala.org/), the Association of Research Libraries (https://www.arl.org/), the Coalition for Networked Information (https://www.cni.org/), the International Association of University Libraries (https://www.iatul.org/), and Ithaka S + R (http://sr.ithaka.org/). On March 7, 2018, we searched Google (https://www.google.com/), and on March 20, 2018, we searched Worldcat (https://www.worldcat.org/). Bibliographic database searches were rerun on November 26, 2018, to capture fresh publications, with the exception of Library Literature & Information Science Index (due to cancelled subscription), Library and Information Science Abstracts (due to cancelled subscription), Digital Commons Network (no date limiter in database), and NDLDT global ETD search (no date limiter in database). An example search can be seen in Table 1. In addition to our bibliographic and website searches, we contacted experts in the field to identify new information that may not be otherwise available.

INSERT Table 1

Screening

Results from searches in bibliographic databases were imported into Covidence (https://www.covidence.org/) for study deduplication and screening. Most website searches could not be manipulated to import into Covidence. For these results, we created Excel spreadsheets that we blindly screened. For all data sources that were deemed as relevant or possibly relevant (including conflicts), a corresponding list was created using Zotero, which was then exported as an RIS file and imported into Covidence. Our Google search found approximately 155 million results. The authors wrote a Python script that allowed them to scrape the first 666 results before timing out and they converted the scraped Google search results into an RIS file that was imported into Covidence. Even though searching Google is not

customary for scoping reviews, the nontraditional topic called for searching it to ensure all relevant information was captured.

Studies in Covidence were reviewed first by title and abstract using Covidence's blind review functionality, which ensures that each record is reviewed by two authors. Conflicts were reviewed by the third author as a tie-breaker. The same blind review process was used for all data sources considered for inclusion at the full-text level (two authors, with a third as a tie-breaker). We searched the bibliographies of all included studies to identify other potentially relevant data sources that we had not yet considered.

Data extraction

Data extraction themes were determined by one author (EE) then refined via a discussion by all three. Data were compiled using an Excel spreadsheet. Data charted included i) citation information (author(s), year), ii) source type, iii) general methodology of data collection or reporting, iv) number of participants and v) generation(s) studied (Table 2).

To understand generational values in leadership qualities, the authors extracted relevant information from each included study. Young, Hernon, and Powell and Graybill each included a range of results from their studies, in which lists of characteristics were ranked and comments were collated for their results (Graybill, 2014; Young, Hernon, & Powell, 2006). To synthesize these results, we considered the top 10 leadership attributes identified by each of these studies. Several attributes that were identified in one study were similar to other studies, or they corresponded with a larger idea (for example, "team player" corresponded to "collaborative"). In this manner, findings from each study were identified and grouped in Table 3. Leadership traits identified by Murray (2013), who wrote a narrative from the view of a Millennial, were further grouped into these results.

Martin (2015) presented the only quantitative data that was eligible to be included in this study. He conducted a survey for which he used a validated tool, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, to assess the leadership traits of 29 library leaders who responded to his survey. He calculated each respondent's quantitative measure of three leadership styles: laissez-faire (the absence of leadership), transactional (in which the mechanics of supervision are enacted, but the leader does not inspire workers to go beyond their tasks), and transformational (in which the leader builds and nurtures relationships, creates a shared vision and builds positive change). Martin (2015) shared his data with the authors, which we coded to correspond with generational cutoffs. Generations were compared using nonparametric Mann-Whitney U tests.

P-values < 0.05 were considered statistically significant. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (version 25). Critical appraisal of included studies was not conducted.

Results

In sum, 5,435 potential data sources were identified and screened. One hundred forty one (141) data sources were assessed for eligibility via full-text screening, and of those, four were included (Graybill, 2014; Martin, 2015; Murray, 2013; Young et al., 2006). See Figure 1 for a PRISMA Flow Diagram of included and excluded studies.

INSERT Figure 1

Table 2 shows details of each included study. After grouping characteristics that were identified in included studies, we found that Millennials and Generation X shared many characteristics but that members of each generation also identified unique leadership characteristics (Table 3). No qualitative information on Baby Boomers was available in the included studies, thus Baby Boomers are not represented in the qualitative summary.

INSERT Table 2

The results of our reanalysis of Martin's (2015) data showed that although Baby Boomers are more likely to use a transactional leadership style than members of Generation X, it is not a statistically significant difference (Table 4). No differences between Generation X and Baby Boomers were found for either laissez-faire or transformational leadership traits. No Millennials responded to Martin's (2015) survey, thus could not be included in this analysis.

INSERT Table 3

INSERT Table 4

Discussion

Lack of evidence for generational differences in leadership

Based on the results of this scoping review it is evident that there is little empirical research in the literature to pinpoint how generational differences are expressed in the academic library setting or in individual leadership expectations. Most publications on this topic are based on personal perspectives, some of which have become highly cited in studies using

literature reviews as their methodologies. Despite the lack to rigorous original research on generational differences in leadership, the growing body of anecdotal and opinion literature seems to give some conclusions a higher level of significance than the existing research can justify. As Gardner and Galoozis (2018, p. 184) point out, both "methodological concerns and a dearth of intersectional understanding of identity" contribute to problems in generational research in the Library and Information Science sector.

In the four articles that we identified that do address individual leadership expectations across generations, there is evidence to support the notion that generational perceptions may align more than expected. Our analysis of the qualitative data available showed that Generation X and Millennials were parallel in many of their expectations of leaders. That said, only 60 individuals across three studies were included in the summary of these traits, a perilously low number from which to be able to draw wide-ranging conclusions. Likewise, for the quantitative data included in our analysis, only one study with 29 respondents contributed to our conclusions. Despite this small sample size, it is worth emphasizing that we found no statistically significant difference between Generation Xers and Baby Boomers in their expression of laissez-faire, transactional, or transformational leadership traits.

This scoping review contributes an important insight into the field of leadership in academic libraries, specifically that there is little known about generational differences in leadership expectations and qualities in the academic library setting. Academic librarians must reexamine the assumptions made about cross-generational conclusions and whether they apply. Our analysis of the included studies showed that both Millennials and Generation Xers identified that they value leaders who are able to enact change, are approachable, collaborative, communicative, ethical, inspirational, and who have vision and influence. Generation Xers may be more concerned than Millennials about the resources required to carry out jobs and enact change. On the other hand, Millennials may be more likely to value leadership that cultivates an open, experimental, and respectful working environment.

Leadership development

The current leadership model has been stable over many decades. Advancing to the position of library dean has traditionally required a hierarchical, rigid progression that may otherwise exclude qualified individuals. Hernon, et al. (2002) found that out of 25 vacant ARL director positions in 2002, all but one was filled by either other ARL library leaders or from associate library directors. Announcements for administrative jobs now routinely include vision and leadership requirements, however, a study of job ads led to the conclusion that

"administrative jobs reflected the historical approach to library management" (Lynch & Smith, 2001, p. 415)

A few articles have begun to create a framework to think about the topic of a transition of library leadership to younger generations. Emanuel (2012, p. 187) found that Millennial librarians do not want to wait to be given leadership opportunities, particularly in areas of interest to them. She continues that, in general, "Millennial librarians just want to be able to shape the profession in their own way," which has implications for leadership styles. It is clear that the profile of the profession is changing (Wilder, 2018b). More professional librarians are being hired without library degrees, and instead with advanced subject degrees and/or specialized experience (Lindquist & Gilman, 2008). With this change, there will likely be a push for a transition to a new leadership model. Not only will it shift organizational norms, but a younger generation of librarians, many of whom are not steeped in the acculturation of previous generations, will have to build a new model of modern leadership (Hérubel, 2006).

Brundy (2018) states that leadership development may not be effective, and that programs on the subject are often not evaluated. For those who have engaged in leadership training, has the training been flexible enough to allow generational or personal differences to develop? Mentoring is one important element in fostering newer employees. Traditionally, mentoring has most commonly occurred between a senior and junior librarian, although peer mentoring has become more prominent in recent years (MacKinnon & Shepley, 2014). We must be careful, though — if a goal of mentoring is to train new librarians to fit in and succeed in the traditional model of librarianship, we might be doing them and the profession a disservice.

Conclusions

The conclusions of this study challenged the cultural assumptions of the authors. Based on our initial research and scoping of the literature, we believed that we would find differences in generational expectations of leadership. On the contrary, we can only conclude that the library literature does not support the idea that generational differences apply to leadership. In addition, we intended to address how we can redefine leadership development based on generational divides. However, the lack of evidence on this topic leads us to the conclusion that this topic cannot currently be addressed.

The composition of the academic library workforce has shifted dramatically over the last 10 years. With a large turnover of the academic library workforce, we must examine our processes within each organization with an eye towards adapting to both the needs of our workforce, and that of the library users whom we serve. With this in mind, we should be mentoring and supporting the upcoming generation of librarians to explore their own leadership styles and not to simply model their leadership practices on their predecessors.

Murray (2013) points out that the leadership styles of Millennials has yet to be defined, and we have come to the same conclusion eight years later. Further empirical research needs to be conducted to understand, support, and harness the skills, abilities, and motivations of academic librarians. Such research could be conducted on Generation Xers and Millennials to identify their unique characteristics and needs, with an understanding that the needs of individuals in these two generations may be parallel for academic librarians. Concurrent with the evolving landscape of libraries today, we must be sure that mentoring and leadership training allows our new leaders to blaze a new path forward, which may be a different path than that which our predecessors have taken.

Acknowledgements
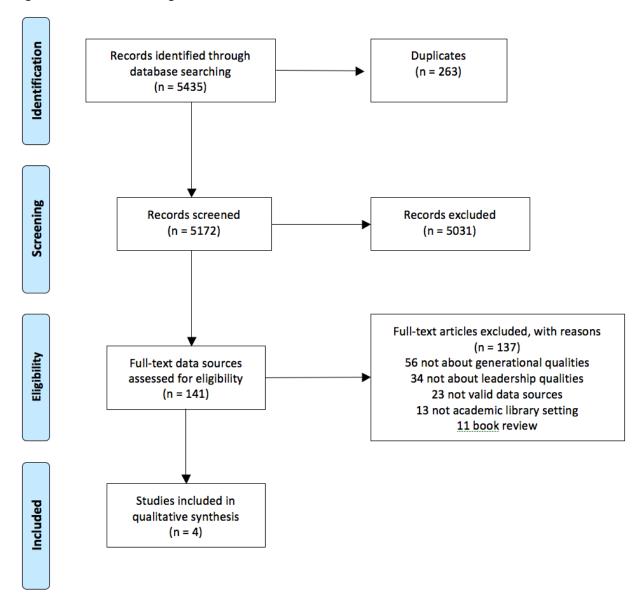
Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram

Table 1: Search terms used for Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts (LISTA), with no limits or filters applied. This search was adapted for each bibliographic database that we searched, and modified for website searches.

#1	(leader* OR leading)
#2	(millennial* OR "baby boomer" OR "baby-boomer" OR "baby boomers" OR "baby-boomers" OR Boomer* OR "generation X" OR "generation-X" OR "generation Y" OR "generation-Y" OR "millennium generation" OR "millennium-generation" OR "gen Y" OR gen-Y OR "gen Yer" OR gen-Yer OR "gen X" OR gen-X OR "gen Xer" OR gen-Xer OR "generation why" OR "generation-why" OR "next gen" OR "next-gen" OR "next generation" OR next-generation OR "net generation" OR net-generation OR "echo-boom generation" OR "echo boom generation" OR "echo boomers" OR echo-boomers OR "gadget generation" OR gadget-generation OR "Myspace generation" OR Myspace-generation OR intergenerational OR "baby buster generation" OR "baby-buster generation" OR "dot.com generation" OR "dot com generation" OR "dot-com generation" OR Xer* OR "generational cohort" OR multigeneration* OR multi-generation* OR "millennium generation" OR "generation Next" OR "generation Me" OR "cross generational" OR cross-generational OR "age diversity" OR "generational differences")
#3	("higher education" OR university OR college OR academ*)
#4	librar*
#5	#1 AND #2 AND #3 AND #4

Table 2: Studies included in this scoping review.

Citation	Source type	Information type	Methodology used	Number of participants	Generation(s) studied
Young 2006	Peer reviewed journal article	qualitative	Delphi technique	10	Generation X
Murray 2011	Peer reviewed journal article	qualitative	Case study, opinion	1	Millennials
Graybill 2014	Peer reviewed journal article	qualitative	Survey	49	Millennials
Martin 2015	Peer reviewed journal article	quantitative	Survey	29	Generation X, Baby Boomers

Table 3: Qualitative leadership traits identified by each generation. No qualitative information on Baby Boomers was available in the included studies, thus Baby Boomers are not represented in this summary.

Generation	Millennial	Generation X
Shared Leadership Qualities	- Able to enact change - Approachable - Collaborative - Communicative - Ethical, Integrity - Inspirational - Vision, influence	
Unique Leadership Qualities	- Encouraging - Experimental - Goal-oriented - Hard working, dedicated - Knowledgeable about the organization - Open-minded - Respectful - Work/life balance	- Successful in securing resources - Passionate about libraries

Table 4: Summary statistics of laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational leadership styles for members of Generation X and Baby Boomers. Information reanalyzed from Martin 2015, with permission from the author. No millennials responded to this survey, thus are not represented here.

	Baby Boomers (n=25)	Generation X (n=4)	p-value
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
Laissez-faire	0.92 (0.51)	0.69 (0.43)	0.482
Transactional	2.14 (0.52)	1.69 (0.54)	0.181
Transformational	3.34 (0.30)	3.29 (0.67)	0.647

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