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Abstract
Ideal leadership style preferences in the workplace is an issue that has received a large amount of attention; yet, the vast amount of literature remains inconsistent about the type of leadership that most subordinates prefer. Previous research has indicated that men and older generations prefer task-oriented leadership styles, whereas women and younger generations prefer interpersonally-oriented leadership styles. The aim of this study was to investigate the interaction between generation and gender on ideal leadership style preferences. The sample consisted of 272 participants who completed an online survey, consisting of the initiating structure and consideration subscales of the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire – Ideal and the transformational and transactional subscales of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire – 5X – Short Form via Amazon’s Mechanical Turk. The results of this study provided evidence that men, women, and all generations preferred significantly more transformational leadership behaviors than transactional leadership behaviors. This has several implications for organizations in how they should recruit, hire, and train potential managers, so that leadership styles are conducive to subordinates’ leadership style preferences.
Chapter I

Review of the Literature

Leadership styles are becoming increasingly important within organizations, creating heightened attentiveness to developing leaders and investing resources (Bolt, 2007). There are several follow-up questions that arise with this increased attention to leadership development: What qualities do ideal leaders possess? Which type of leader is most preferred by subordinates? Are there demographic variables that affect leadership style preferences? Do these demographic variables interact with one another in a meaningful way to affect those preferences?

The present paper looks to examine the effects of generation and gender on an employee’s ideal leadership style preference. Currently, generational cohort literature posits that differences in leadership preferences matter because the preferences and outlook of a generation last for the entire lifetime (Meredith, 1994). These values and mindsets are formed by experiencing historical events at approximately the same age, which creates collective memories and similar approaches to institutions and authority. From this logic, it appears that generational differences could create different preferences for style of leadership. Implementing leadership development programs, selecting candidates for leadership positions, and evaluating leaders in each position are all areas that could be affected by generational differences for leadership style preferences.

Within the leadership literature, another area of focus is gender bias. There are
two general sides to this literature, with one focusing on the leader and the other focusing on the subordinate’s perception of the leader. As the present study aims to evaluate leadership style preferences, this paper will limit discussion to the latter. Much of the gender bias literature utilizes the role congruity perspective, which hypothesizes that biases materialize when a member of a certain group acts or thinks in a way that is incongruent with the norm of that particular group (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Hoyt & Burnette, 2013). Individuals who hold traditional viewpoints of gender roles have been shown to be negatively biased against women leaders because of the agentic qualities associated leadership and the communal qualities stereotypically linked to women (Hoyt & Burnette, 2013). Hence, women often have a difficult time being perceived as competent leaders in comparison to their male counterparts (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Both generational cohort and gender have been connected to differences in leadership style preferences separately (Aldoory & Toth, 2004; Bellou, 2011; Eagly et al., 1992; Gursoy, Maier, & Chi, 2008; Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007). However, no study known to the present author has examined the relationship between these two determinants together relative to leadership style preferences. Because both of these constructs individually influence an individual’s preference for leadership style, there could be a link between the two (Embry, Padgett, & Caldwell, 2008; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). As such, the present paper reviews the literature for leadership styles, generational cohorts, and gender as it relates to leadership style preferences, hypothesizes about the nature of the relationship between generation and gender, and discusses implications for organizations in light of these findings.
Leadership Styles

Much of the leadership literature is based on a fairly well-accepted definition of leadership. Burns defined leadership as “the reciprocal process of mobilizing by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in context of competition or conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by leaders and followers” (as cited in Bellou, 2011, p. 2818). Regrettably, the different types of leadership styles are not as well-accepted in the leadership style literature. Recently, the leadership literature has included transactional versus transformational styles of leadership, but the breadth of the literature includes almost a dozen types of leadership styles (e.g., Bass, 1997; Hargis, Watt, & Piotrowski, 2011; Johnson & Klee, 2007; Vecchio & Boatwright, 2002; Waldman, Ramirez, House, & Puranam, 2001). Because of the recent focused attention on transformational leadership theory (Hargis, Watt, & Piotroski, 2011; Hoffmeister et al., 2013), which is derived from the style approach (Seltzer & Bass, 1990), the current paper examines two well-researched leadership style theories: the style approach (including consideration and initiating structure) and transformational leadership (including transformational and transactional; Northouse, 2007).

Consideration. Fleishman and Harris (1962) defined consideration leadership within the style approach as including “mutual trust, respect, and a certain warmth and rapport between the supervisor and his group” (p. 43). Consideration also encompasses subordinate participation in decision making and a deeper concern for employees’ needs than just a superficial workplace relationship (Fleishman & Harris, 1962). Homan and Greer (2013) examined the relationship between consideration and workgroup diversity.
and discovered that leaders high in consideration and the ability to see each member as unique improved team functioning for highly diverse teams. Highly considerate supervisors exhibited expressive behaviors that helped the social and normative integration of workgroups (Parsons, 1951). Studies such as Halpin (1954) and Halpin and Winer (1957) have revealed a significant positive correlation between consideration leadership behaviors and subordinate satisfaction, and Oaklander and Fleishman (1964) found higher group member cooperation in teams led by highly considerate supervisors. Additionally, leaders who were high in considerate behaviors were found to have subordinates with lower turnover and grievance rates than leaders who were low in consideration (Fleishman & Harris, 1962). Likert (1961) similarly found that leaders high in consideration were more likely to be in charge of workgroups that showed high productivity.

**Initiating structure.** The second style in the style approach is initiating structure. Fleishman and Harris (1962) described a structured leader as one who “defines the role he expects each member to assume, assigns tasks, plans ahead, establishes ways of getting things done, and pushes for production” (p. 44). The authors further defined initiating structure as an overt attempt to achieve the goals of the organization. According to Parsons (1951), the directive and task-oriented type of instrumental activities incorporated in initiating structure were necessary for an organization to solve basic problems of adaptation and goal attainment. This type of leader was judged to be highly rated by superiors on dimensions such as productivity and cost (Harris, 1952). Directive, task-oriented leaders were rated by superiors as more effective than leaders who spent less time planning and organizing (Katz & Kahn, 1953). However, Fleishman and Harris
(1962) discovered that leaders rated highly in initiating structure by their supervisors also had significantly higher rates of grievances and employee turnover than leaders who were rated lower in initiating structure by their supervisors.

It is important to note that consideration and initiating structure have a relationship that is not mutually exclusive in most instances (Lowin, Hrapchak, & Kavanaugh, 1969). This finding indicates that a supervisor can be high on both consideration and initiating structure, low on both, high in one and low in the other, or have moderate levels of both. The most effective leaders achieve a balance by being high in both and appropriately adapting their leadership style to each individual situation (Lowin et al., 1969).

**Transactional leadership.** One type of leadership style in transformational leadership is transactional leadership. In this type of leadership, there is a clear intended direction, with the leader holding the “right” position (Aldoory & Toth, 2004). Transactional leadership is often divided into three facets: contingent reward, active management-by-exception, and passive management-by-exception (Avolio, 1999). In the contingent reward facet, positive behaviors are encouraged by allocating appropriate awards, and the conditions that these rewards are contingent upon are communicated properly (Hoffmeister et al., 2013). Hoffmeister et al. (2013) outlined that active management-by-exception focuses on discouraging negative behaviors in a proactive, preventative manner, whereas passive management-by-exception focuses on discouraging these negative behaviors in a reactive, correctional fashion. Bass (1985a) claimed that both contingent reward and active management-by-exception were effective leadership styles, but passive management-by-exception was not an effective leadership style.
Further, Bass (1997) claimed that transactional leaders were best at organizing work and concentrating on accomplishing the task at hand in stable, predictable environments. This idea was expanded upon in later literature by categorizing a transactional leader as someone who is unsupportive of change and solely invested in cultural maintenance, not growth (Aldoory & Toth, 2004; Waldman et al., 2001). Johnson and Klee (2007) and Hargis et al. (2011) claimed that this type of leader was task-oriented, provided negative feedback, and used discipline to correct employees.

**Transformational leadership.** The second type of leadership style in this approach is transformational leadership. Rowold and Borgmann (2013) stated that transformational leadership is similar to consideration in that the underlying constructs are based on the same dimensions. The four facets of transformational leadership are *idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation,* and *individualized consideration* (Bass, 1985a). Bass (1985a) describes all four facets in depth, starting with idealized influence, which is the extent to which the supervisor is seen as a leader whom the subordinate seeks to imitate. Encouraging employees to work towards a larger goal than their own personal goals is encompassed by inspirational motivation. Intellectual stimulation involves motivating subordinates to be creative and inventive, whereas individualized consideration involves a leader who shows respect to each employee and treats everyone as an individual with specific needs, talents, and goals (Bass, 1985a). Each of these facets is considered an effective and appropriate component of leadership.

Whereas many articles placed a different emphasis on which facet was most important in transformational leadership, they all concluded that transformational leaders were best known for showing consideration and focusing on the needs and growth of
employees who performed well and invested in the organization (Bass, 1997). This type of leadership involved captivating and energizing employees as well as taking risks, setting high expectations, emphasizing collective identity, and asserting a vision (Aldoory & Toth, 2004). Transformational leaders in Aldoory and Toth’s (2004) study defined growth in terms of the individual, which inevitably impacted the organization.

In comparing transformational and transactional styles, Waldman et al. (2001) found that a leader’s performance in uncertain and turbulent times was largely predicted by a high level of charisma, which is a vital component in transformational leadership, and negatively related to transactional leadership. Bass (1985b) offered the augmentation hypothesis, in which transformational leadership added to transactional leadership behaviors but not vice versa. This was supported in Seltzer and Bass’ (1990) study, which found that employees preferred transformational behaviors and performed better under conditions in which the leader exhibited transformational style behaviors. Furthermore, McCue, Magrinat, Hansen, and Bailey’s (1986) study demonstrated that high-relationship styles, such as transformational leadership, were more prevalent and rated higher by subordinates than low-relationship styles, such as the transactional form of leadership. Barling, Weber, and Kelloway (1996) similarly found that subordinates rated their managers higher in intellectual stimulation, charisma, and individual consideration when they had been trained in the transformational style of leadership.

Generation as a Determinant of Leadership Style Preferences

Research in generational differences has drawn attention in recent years, perhaps because this is the first time in history that there have been four different generations operating in the United States at one time (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010).
Because of the recent entrance of the youngest generational cohort, the Millennials, there has been little research that encompasses the entire age spectrum of current employees. Kupperschmidt (2000) defined a generational cohort as “an identifiable group that shares birth years, age location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages” (as cited in Macky, Gardner, & Forsyth, 2008, p. 858). Furthermore, Arsenault (2004) claimed that when age groups shared factors such as traumatic or formative events, a persona was formed with similar attitudes, preferences, and beliefs about authority and family roles. These qualities were found to not change as a function of age and were intimately integrated in an individual’s personality and perspective, forming a generational cohort as opposed to an age group. As can be understood from this definition, an individual will share significant life events at the same developmental stages with others in his or her age cohort since they share birth years and age location and will therefore be a part of the same generational cohort. Although subcultures within these groups certainly exist and create individual differences, Arsenault (2004) claims that there is still an overarching culture within each generational cohort.

Costanza, Badger, Fraser, Severt, and Gade (2012) proposed that each generational cohort has at least slightly different levels of motivation, satisfaction, organizational commitment, and values in the workplace. Although many studies differed by a few years on when each generational cohort begins and ends, Twenge et al. (2010) summarized a general consensus that there are four (fairly) distinct generational cohorts in the United States. First, the Silent Generation (Veterans) cohort has birth years that range from 1925-1945 and were raised through the Great Depression and World War II. The Veterans are stereotypically thought of as conservative and disciplined. The second
generational cohort is the Baby Boomers. These individuals were born between the years of 1946 and 1964, grew up during the era of the John Fitzgerald Kennedy assassination, the Vietnam War, and Watergate, and are thought to be time-stressed and self-sacrificing.

Third, Generation X (Gen X) individuals were born between 1965 and 1981, were raised during the Cold War, the AIDS epidemic, and the Reagan presidency, and are conventionally thought of as skeptical and individualistic. The final generation is Millennials, sometimes referred to as Generation Y, who were born between 1982 and 1999. Millennials were raised during the technology boom and the September 11, 2001 attacks. These individuals tend to be stereotypically socially conscious, highly critical, and entitled.

The present paper serves to demonstrate the relationship between generational cohort membership and ideal leadership style preferences. The most recent available nationwide study revealed that the current U.S. workforce was made up of about 1% Veterans (The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). As such, the present paper focuses on the generational differences of the three generations that make up approximately 99% of the workforce.

**Baby Boomers.** Hui-Chun and Miller (2005) found that Baby Boomers preferred task-oriented leadership, whereas Cambiano (1999) found that Baby Boomers appreciated an environment that provided a warm, positive surrounding. The overall impression of Baby Boomers was their live-to-work attitude, preference for a persuasive, diplomatic, and collegial leader, and clear focus (Gursoy et al., 2008; Sessa et al., 2007; Zemke et al., 2000). Gursoy et al. (2008) claimed that the Baby Boomer generation has a respect for hierarchy and are happy to wait their turn for promotions and rewards.
Conversely, Zemke et al. (2000) found that Baby Boomers despised and rebelled against hierarchy. These opposing findings in terms of leadership preference need to be empirically examined so that decisions concerning promotions and monetary rewards can be handled in a way seen as positive to most of the individuals in this generation.

**Gen X.** Cambiano (1999) found that Gen Xers worked best in the evening and preferred work that was more structured. Some studies found that the Gen X cohort preferred egalitarian-oriented leaders who listened well and were fair, straightforward, and competent (Hui-Chun & Miller, 2005; Sessa et al., 2007; Zemke et al., 2000). Whereas this was the common finding in terms of Gen Xers, Gursoy et al. (2008) claimed that Generation X members worked to live, rebelled against authority, and expected immediate praise. Once again, these findings are not inherently counter to one another, but these mixed findings suggest that there is not a concrete picture of the style of leadership that Generation X prefers.

**Millennials.** Anecdotally, older generations may think of Millennials as notorious for their narcissism and entitlement. Because parents instilled so much self-esteem into this generation with no specific cause to do so, Millennials did not respect authority, but they also did not resent it (Stein, 2013). Stein (2013) also found that the Millennials were the first generational cohort to not have a large rebellion against authority, and they were also deeply fearful about missing out on something better since they grew up with so much available to them technologically. Gursoy et al. (2008), Sessa et al. (2007), and Zemke et al. (2000) all found that Millennials were privy to collective action, generally trusted authority, liked teamwork, had a strong will and spirit, and were optimistic about the future. However, Thompson and Gregory (2012) concluded that the youngest
generation’s greatest weaknesses (entitlement, neediness, eagerness, relationship-orientation) were also their biggest strengths, allowing them to be eager to learn, cultivate genuine and meaningful relationships, be open to feedback, and have just enough nerve to be innovative.

**Generational Preferences for Leadership**

There are several reasons that researchers should be paying more attention to generational research as it pertains to leadership preferences. More than 40 years ago, Bhushan (1968) found that there were differences among demographic categories and the determination of leadership preferences. Unfortunately, very few studies have followed up in researching age, and most studies that have researched age and leadership limit their focus on either adolescents or those about to retire (Barbuto, Fritz, Matkin, & Marx, 2007). In fact, Arsenault (2004) claimed that generational differences in the workplace have often been plagued with false impressions because of a lack of validation research. Yet, individuals who were born into a certain historical period were found to develop a unique set of values and belief systems, which resulted in predictable patterns (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Because these predictable patterns formed employees who worked more effectively with different types of leadership styles, Hui-Chun and Miller (2005) found a need for concrete data in this area of the literature.

To be fair, there are some common preferences for leadership qualities across generations. All four generations rated the quality of “honesty” to be the most important leadership quality, followed almost unanimously by high rankings of loyalty, determination, and competence (Arsenault, 2004; Sessa et al., 2007). However, value systems were a significant difference between younger and older generations. (Hui-Chun
& Miller, 2005). In Hui-Chun and Miller’s (2005) study, Millennials tended to value personal satisfaction and autonomy, whereas Baby Boomers valued loyalty and hierarchies. Rodriguez, Green, and Ree (2003) found that individuals in Gen X preferred environments conducive to building relationships, whereas Baby Boomers preferred a work environment that was conducive to achieving results. Gen Xers also differed from Baby Boomers in their preferred use of the internet rather than the phone, desire for flexible working hours, and portable benefits (Rodriguez et al., 2003).

Boatwright and Forrest (2000) found that the younger the employee, the greater the preference for worker-centered leadership. Two years later, Vecchio and Boatwright (2002) discovered that younger workers desired less structure than originally hypothesized because of their craving to be more autonomous. Because of this, Gursoy et al. (2008) hypothesized that as Baby Boomers and Veterans retire, top-down management will no longer function as effectively. Instead, they suggested that organizations need to focus more on work-life balance as they hire new, younger managers, create training programs, oversee flexible working conditions, and set up performance appraisal systems because of the Gen X and Millennial emphasis on working to live, not living to work (Gursoy et al., 2008).

Organizations have recently started paying attention to generational research because of younger employees’ casual attitude and sense of entitlement and the difficulty that bosses are encountering in managing different types of ideal leadership preferences (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). Because of this, managers “need to adopt leadership…styles that complement their young employees’ work styles in order to succeed” (Thompson & Gregory, 2012, p. 243). Indeed, Gilliam (2010) emphasized the
importance of managers understanding how to best engage the younger generations, since these individuals will be filling the soon-to-be-vacant positions.

Again, generational cohort theory suggests that these previously mentioned attributes are due to the Millennials’ generational cohort and not their young age (Macky et al., 2008). However, at least one study claimed that it was difficult to disentangle whether the effects were due to age, time period, or generational cohort membership (Costanza et al., 2012). Generational research is under-utilized because there tends to be a low consensus on differences due to generational cohort membership versus individual characteristics as well as a low agreement on birth year ranges. Yet, not researching generation as a determinant of leadership preferences could lead to shortcomings in recruiting, hiring processes, and training (Costanza et al., 2012).

There are three main issues that inhibit the application of generational leadership to the leadership domain, but these issues illustrate the importance of integrating these literatures. First, a large portion of the leadership style literature focuses on transformational and transactional leadership behaviors (Bass, 1997; Hargis et al., 2011), but only one of the reviewed generational articles mentioned any of these styles (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). Without a common language, the generational literature cannot easily be compared to the leadership literature.

Next, the generational cohort literature often focuses on Generation X, Baby Boomers, or Millennials separately (Hui-Chun & Miller, 2005; Rodriguez et al., 2003; Thompson & Gregory, 2012). There is a need for a direct comparison of the generations, since they are working together in the current workforce. Having a better sense of leadership style needs and preferences by generation will allow organizations to recruit
more effectively, hire managers, interpret performance reviews for managers in a more comprehensive way, and learn how to best motivate each generational cohort. Because of the lack of definitive research in this area and the implications that leadership preference could have on recruitment, hiring, performance appraisal, and motivation, there is a demonstrated need for more research concerning each generational cohort’s preference of leadership style.

Finally, a major critique of the generational cohort literature is that it may be trying to make significant issues in an area where there is no significance. Authors such as Costanza et al. (2012) make the argument that the literature works to create stereotypes based on generational cohorts that ignore individual differences about how attitudes may have developed. With so many opposing viewpoints within the literature, it is possible that there is not a single generational viewpoint towards leadership preferences, organizational commitment, or motivation. Putting too much emphasis on the variance of people across generations may decrease the recognition and importance of the diversity of people within generations.

**Generational cusp theory.** Perhaps one reason why some of the literature on generations has yielded mixed findings is that only one author, Arsenault (2004), has examined the lack of mutual exclusivity among generations. People who were born on the cusp (within three years of each generation’s assigned cutoff date) had a significantly different experience of their generation than people who were born in the midst of their generation. Put differently, analyzing the results for individuals born in the middle years of their generations showed more drastic differences among the generations. Although the generational cusp theory addresses the individual differences issue that Costanza et al.
(2012) discussed, it unfortunately does not completely rectify the issue. However, in Arsenault’s (2004) study, individuals who were born within three years of either side of a generational cutoff date were shown to have significantly different experiences of their generation than members born in the middle years of a generation. This addresses Costanza et al.’s (2012) concern about the lack of mutual exclusivity between the different generational cohorts. Taking this into account, it appears that generational cohort membership could have an effect on leadership style preference when accounting for the individuals born within three years above or below the generational cutoff dates.

**Gender as a Determinant of Leadership Style Preferences**

Another construct that is often examined within the leadership literature is the gender of both the subordinate and the leader; that is, the congruence of gender between the leader and the subordinate. Bellou (2011) offered several reasons for the increased attention to leadership within organizations, one being leadership’s vast impact on organizational success and its effect on employee job performance. One explanation that Bellou (2011) presented for the increased attention to gender preferences for leadership styles was that there is an ever-increasing number of women in the workplace, and it behooves organizations to understand the concrete similarities and differences between male and female employees.

**Consistencies in the research literature.** Fortunately, there is some consensus in the research literature that the leaders who are most preferred by both male and female employees are leaders who change their style of leadership per person, regardless of the subordinate’s or supervisor’s respective genders (Statham, 1987). Hoyt (2010) explained
that this adaptive style of leadership was defined by an androgynous collection of traits, best exhibited by a mixture of consideration and initiating structure characteristics. An encouraging finding is that if researchers are able to deduce employees’ expectations and preferences of leadership styles and there is a demonstrated need for an intervention, training for leadership effectiveness will work when implemented correctly (McCue et al., 1986; Nelson, Zaccaro, & Herman, 2010).

There are some tendencies in the literature concerning which leadership style is preferred by a specific gender. In general, women preferred interpersonally-oriented, considerate supervisors, whereas men preferred task-oriented, structured supervisors (Bellou, 2011; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Hoyt, Simon, & Reid, 2009; Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Statham, 1987). Bellou (2011) claimed that this was because of social role theory, where women are expected to exhibit and appreciate feminine characteristics and men are expected to exhibit and appreciate masculine characteristics. According to Eagly et al. (1992) and Hoyt et al. (2009), women preferred and exhibited communal qualities such as being friendly and emotionally open, concerning themselves with the needs of others, and exhibiting unselfishness. Likewise, Lipman-Blumen (1992) found that women most preferred relational styles that were collaborative, contributory, and vicarious in nature where all employees contribute to one another’s tasks. In essence, women preferred and more often performed behaviors that were more commonly associated with the considerate leadership style (Lipman-Blumen, 1992).

As mentioned above, men preferred direct, task-oriented leadership behaviors (Bellou, 2011; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Hoyt et al., 2009; Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Statham, 1987). Eagly and Johnson (1990) went so far as to claim that men occasionally
preferred directive, autocratic styles of leadership. Men also preferred and more often displayed agentic qualities such as independence, assertiveness, and competence (Eagly et al., 1992; Hoyt et al., 2009). According to Aldoory and Toth (2004), males were more likely to devalue female leaders than they were to devalue male leaders. This stigmatization of women leaders may have occurred because of the threatening trend of women entering the workforce and taking over positions of a previously male dominated space. Men preferred intrinsic, competitive, and power styles of leadership and saw females and feminine characteristics as counter to this preference (Lipman-Blumen, 1992). Lipman-Blumen (1992) also discovered that men preferred and performed attributes that were more task-oriented in nature, mimicking the directive, structured style of leadership.

Some studies have examined each gender’s leader behaviors. Eagly and Johnson (1990) found that in laboratory and assessment studies, women and men led in gender-stereotypic ways, engaging in interpersonally-oriented and task-oriented behaviors, respectively. In more tangible terms, female leaders generally exhibit more interpersonally-oriented behaviors, whereas men exhibit more task-oriented behaviors than their female counterparts (Aldoory & Toth, 2004; Boatwright & Forrest, 2000). In addition, Davis, Capobianco, and Kraus (2010) found that women were rated more likely to employ constructive behaviors in times of conflict or crisis, whereas men were more likely to engage in actively destructive behaviors during parallel circumstances.

**Inconsistencies in the research literature.** In other ways, leadership preferences research for the two genders is inconclusive. For example, several studies found support for social role theory and the role congruity perspective in which the subordinate
preferred when the manager performed in a sex-appropriate style, with the style itself (transformational or transactional) not mattering as much (Hoyt & Burnette, 2013; Statham, 1987). Conversely, Embry et al. (2008) reported that men using an interpersonally-oriented style were rated more positively by men than men with task-oriented style, and females rated women leaders with task-oriented style more positively than men leaders with task-oriented style. Owens (1990) found that male and female managers were perceived to display equal levels of consideration and that female managers were actually perceived to display higher levels of initiating structure than male managers. To add even more confusion to these inconsistent findings, still another study found that both men and women preferred male bosses (Singh, Nadim, & Ezzedeen, 2012). Singh et al. (2012) claimed that both genders preferred male bosses because of the strongly held belief that leadership effectiveness is equivalent to possessing masculine traits. Because of this notion, women’s potential and actual leadership effectiveness were often rated lower than men’s (Singh et al., 2012). Hoyt (2010) agreed with this reasoning by noting that women were stigmatized as leaders because of a lower power status, so they encountered negative and low expectations. These expectations oftentimes created a downward spiral of self-efficacy, causing females to perform worse than if expectations of their performance were high (Shea & Howell, 2000).

There are also many discrepancies in the current leadership literature as it pertains to leadership style preferences across genders. For instance, some studies showed that participants had a strong preference for masculine team managers and were more likely to think in male gender identity terms when presented with a masculine leadership style (Embry et al., 2008; Inderlied & Powell, 1979). Supporting this, when primed with
mortality salience, women wanted an agentic (masculine) leader regardless of sex, whereas men wanted a male agentic leader (Hoyt et al., 2009). However, Aldoory and Toth (2004) found in focus group sessions that regardless of the subordinate’s or supervisor’s gender, there was a strong preference for interpersonally-oriented leadership behaviors. This same study discovered that men in the workplace rated male leaders with feminine traits as less effective than male leaders with masculine traits (Aldoory & Toth, 2004). Thus, it seems as though men, in theory, appreciated a worker-centered approach, but gender-inconsistency in practice was a strong deterrent in men’s ratings. Moreover, Statham (1987) originally claimed that employees preferred the sex-appropriate, gender-consistent style of leadership, but actually found many examples when this was not accurate. For example, women appreciated male supervisors who were person-invested, but men saw these supervisors as weak. On the other hand, men appreciated women leaders who were invested in autonomy, but women saw these leaders as cold and distant. Whereas Statham’s (1987) findings went along with the general trend of women preferring a worker-centered approach and men preferring a task-centered approach in the literature, it offered the idea that there are occasionally some cases that may be counter to this.

**Overall conclusions.** In general, women were often placed in a “less effective” box in the ratings of male and sometimes female employees, even though the best bosses ranked highly in how nice, inspiring, empowering, civil, and humane they were (Singh et al., 2012). Interestingly, these were all characteristics of the consideration leadership style. Because women more often exhibit this style but are still frequently rated lower than their male counterparts, perhaps it is the general idea of female (interpersonally- or
task-oriented) leaders that many took issue with, and not the specific female leader qualities. This unseen, unsanctioned barrier contributed to the limitation to women’s advancement, even in female-dominated occupations (Singh et al., 2012).

The solution to this comes in a form of more effective leadership, which likely includes attributes from several of the previously examined leadership styles. Effective leaders took risks, showed empathy to employees, were extraverted, had strong integrity, inspired others, and motivated peers, supervisors, and subordinates (Hoyt, 2010). Possessing all of these qualities would indicate that the leader is high on both initiating structure and consideration, which has been shown to be the most effective combination of leadership within the style approach (Lowin et al., 1969). However, until the incongruity of equating leader stereotypes and gender stereotypes is eradicated, men and women will both have biased preferences of which leadership style they prefer. This preference is influenced by the subordinate’s gender, the supervisor’s gender, and individual differences. Despite the general tendency for women to prefer considerate leadership styles and men to prefer initiating structure leadership styles, the literature indicated that women were generally more accepting of gender-inconsistent characteristics, whereas men were not as accepting of gender inconsistencies (Vecchio & Boatwright, 2002).

**Direction and Need for Future Research**

Some findings have indicated that the younger the worker, the greater the preference for worker-centered, considerate styles of leadership, much like female employees have often preferred (Boatwright & Forrest, 2000; Vecchio & Boatwright, 2002). Northouse (2007) posits that the style approach accentuates the behavior of the
leader and splits leadership behaviors into two main dimensions: task-focused and relationship-focused, which are referred to as initiating structure and consideration, respectively. Unfortunately, research remains inconclusive as to the leadership style (initiating structure or consideration) that subordinates prefer and which improves outcomes such as morale and productivity (Northouse, 2007). Yet, there is some evidence that transformational leadership is better than transactional leadership. Northouse (2007) directly stated that “transformational leadership produces greater effects than transactional leadership” (p. 184) and that transactional leadership results in outcomes that are expected, whereas the transformational style results in outcomes that go beyond expected results (Barling et al, 1996). However, there is still a need within the transformational leadership approach to understand how transactional and transformational styles are perceived and preferred by different types of employees (Northouse, 2007).

In regards to initiating structure and consideration leadership styles, a consistency across the literature is that male leaders are generally rated higher than female leaders by subordinates, regardless of the leadership style exhibited; this is especially true of male subordinates (Aldoory & Toth, 2004). However, Aldoory and Toth (2004) found that it is unclear which leadership style is preferred by both male and female subordinates when not controlling for the leader’s gender as a variable. Similarly, results from Zemke et al.’s (2000) study showed that Millennials preferred more relationship-oriented leaders, and Baby Boomers preferred a more task-oriented leadership approach. Although literature on the style approach has not considered generational cohort as a variable, it seems as though Millennials may prefer consideration, whereas Baby Boomers may prefer the
initiating structure style.

In regards to transformational and transactional leadership styles, some studies have found that transformational styles account for significantly more variance in outcome measures than did initiating structure and consideration and that the transformational approach actually augments initiation and consideration (Barling et al., 1996; Seltzer & Bass, 1990). Seltzer and Bass (1990) noted the importance of “adding transformational leadership for better prediction and understanding of leadership” (p. 701). It is not known if these benefits hold up across gender and generational cohorts.

As such, research should examine different types of employees’ preference for transformational and transactional leaders. Generational cohort membership and gender of subordinates have both been examined separately in regards to ideal leadership style preference (e.g., Bellou, 2007; Costanza et al., 2012; Twenge et al., 2010). However, no study to the present author’s knowledge has investigated the interaction between generation and gender concerning transformational leadership. Thus, the relationship between generation and gender is examined in the current paper to add to the currently inconclusive body of literature and to determine if there is a significant association between these two variables and a preference for transactional or transformational leadership, as well as initiating structure and consideration leadership.
Chapter II

Rationale and Hypotheses

Currently, the leadership literature posits that an individual’s gender influences that individual’s preference for an ideal leadership style (Eagly et al., 1992). This perspective encompasses the idea that individuals have certain expectations for behavior (for themselves and for others) based on the specific behaviors that they believe are appropriate for each gender to exhibit. Eagly et al. (1992) submitted that when a leadership behavior was performed by a woman, it was viewed as less favorable than when a man performed that same leadership behavior. Within an organization, there is a set of behaviors with leadership qualities that are agentic in nature. Some agentic qualities are: independence, assertiveness, and competence; these attributes are generally thought of as masculine (Bellou, 2011). Non-leadership behaviors include being friendly, emotionally open, concerned with the needs of others, and unselfish. These are often referred to as communal traits and are regularly associated with women (Bellou, 2011). Although leadership styles are not mutually exclusive, participants will likely prefer one style over another, making it appropriate to examine these leadership styles as a dichotomous relationship.

In an evaluation setting, exhibiting masculine-related initiating structure leadership characteristics caused women to be devalued more than exhibiting feminine-related consideration leadership characteristics (Eagly et al., 1992). Eagly et al.’s (1992)
meta-analysis also found that when leading with consideration characteristics, men were not devalued but were in fact rated equivalently with women. As it was not a variable in Eagly et al.’s (1992) study, it is unclear whether the gender and/or position of the rater influences a male subordinate’s preferences when it comes to the consideration leadership style. However, Eagly et al. (1992) also discovered that leaders who display initiating structure leadership are rated lower by women than men. A measure of role congruity also showed that the more an individual equated men and leaders with agentic qualities, the more biased the individual was towards a leader with initiating structure leadership (Hoyt & Burnette, 2013). However, when participants in Hoyt and Burnette’s (2013) study perceived higher role congruity between women and leadership, the evaluation of consideration leadership resulted in a higher rating. Based on these findings, the following results are hypothesized:

\( H1: \text{Men will rate the initiating structure leadership style higher than the consideration leadership style.} \)

\( H2: \text{Women will rate the consideration leadership style higher than the initiating structure leadership style.} \)

Although gender differences have been found for preferences within the style approach, no studies known to the present author have examined the transformational approach in regards to individual differences due to gender. In an effort to integrate the language utilized in different types of leadership style preference literature, the current paper also examines gender preferences based on the transformational style approach. Rowold and Borgmann (2013) found a high convergence between the transformational approach and the style approach because the constructs are implicitly based on similar
leadership structures and underlying dimensions. These authors further noted the theoretical overlap between the initiating structure and transactional styles as well as the consideration and transformational styles. Because the task-oriented approach of initiating structure is considered to be a transactional leadership style and the relationship-oriented approach within consideration is thought to be a transformational leadership style (Rowold & Borgmann, 2013), the following is proposed:

\[ H3: \text{Men will rate the transactional leadership style higher than the transformational leadership style.} \]

\[ H4: \text{Women will rate the transformational leadership style higher than the transactional leadership style.} \]

Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials presently comprise nearly 99% of the current U.S. workforce (The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013) and have shown to have generally different preferences for their respective ideal leadership style (e.g., Arsenault, 2004; Gursoy et al., 2008; Sessa et al., 2007). Nearly 50 years ago, Bhushan (1968) claimed that personal factors influenced the type of preferred style of leadership. Several studies demonstrated Baby Boomers' higher preference for task-oriented leadership than interpersonally-oriented leadership, which is more preferred by Millennials (Gursoy et al., 2008; Hui-Chun & Miller, 2005; Sessa et al., 2007). For Generation X, the literature seems mixed as to whether they prefer more task- or interpersonally-oriented leadership styles (Gursoy et al., 2008; Hui-Chun & Miller, 2005).

Although many critics claim that generational diversity in the workplace is largely due to individual differences within each generation as opposed to the variance among
the generations (Costanza et al., 2012), one study found that the lack of mutual exclusivity among generations was partly due to the cusp effect (Arsenault, 2004). In Arsenault’s (2004) study, individuals who were born within three years of either side of a generational cutoff date were shown to have significantly different experiences of their generation than members born in the middle years of a generation (Arsenault, 2004). Taking this into account, it appears that generational cohort membership could have an effect on leadership style preference. As stated previously, there is a theoretical overlap in which transactional and initiating structure leadership styles as well as transformational and consideration leadership styles converge (Rowold & Borgmann, 2013). Whereas the literature is fairly clear concerning Baby Boomers’ and Millennials’ leadership style preferences, it remains unclear whether or not Gen Xers have a preference between transformational and transactional leadership. Because of this, there are no significant differences in terms of leadership style expected for Gen Xers. However, the generational cusp effect may assist in identifying significant differences between the individuals born in the middle years of a generational cohort (Arsenault, 2004). As such, when applying the cusp effect, the following is hypothesized:

**H5:** Baby Boomers will prefer significantly more transactional behaviors than Generation Xers and Millennials.

**H6:** Generation Xers will not significantly prefer transformational or transactional behaviors over one another.

**H7:** Millennials will prefer significantly more transformational behaviors than Baby Boomers and Generation Xers.

To gain a more sophisticated understanding of the factors that influence
leadership style preferences, the relationship between the subordinate’s generation and
gender together needs to be considered within the leadership literature. To the best of the
present author’s knowledge, there has been no such research to date. Generally,
Millennials have shown to be the most open to new experiences and most interested in
progressive collective action (Arsenault, 2004; Zemke et al., 2000), Gen Xers appreciate
leaders who are fair and straightforward (Sessa et al., 2007), and Baby Boomers most
often prefer a diplomatic and collegial leader (Gursoy et al., 2008). Given this, it seems
as though Millennials may prefer the same type of leadership that women tend to prefer,
whereas Baby Boomers may prefer the same type of leadership that men tend to prefer.
Arsenault (2004) claimed that preferences due to generational cohort membership are
derived from the experiences that one has in his or her adolescent, formative years.
Perhaps Millennials do not hold the same implicit belief as Baby Boomers that leadership
is necessarily equivalent to masculine behaviors performed by a male leader because
feminine leaders were more common-place and accepted during the formative years of
Millennials (Ng & Gossett, 2013). Ng and Gossett (2013) found that Millennials rated a
progressive working environment as an ideal employer characteristic, more so than older
generations. Given the previously discussed different attitudes of genders and generations
separately in terms of ideal leadership style preference, the relationship between
generation and gender should be explored to determine if gender interacts with
generational cohort membership in regards to preferred leadership style. Once again,
there are no hypothesized expectations regarding Gen Xers. As such, the following is
hypothesized:

\[ H8a: \text{Generational cohort membership and gender will significantly interact.} \]
such that there will be a significant difference between male and female Baby Boomers’ preference for the transactional leadership style, but there will not be a significant difference between male and female Millennials’ preference for the transactional leadership style (see Figure 1).

H8b: Generational cohort membership and gender will significantly interact, such that there will not be a significant difference between male and female Baby Boomers’ preference for the transformational leadership style, but there will be a significant difference between male and female Millennials’ preference for the transformational leadership style (see Figure 2).
Figure 1: Expected interaction for the transactional leadership style
Figure 2: Expected interaction for the transformational leadership style
Chapter III

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited using Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk), which is an online marketplace that links researchers of human intelligence tasks (HITs) with workers who wish to complete these tasks (Barger, Behrend, Sharek, & Sinar, 2011). Participants who were 18 and older of all generations, races, and genders within the United States who had ever been previously or currently employed were allowed to participate, with the exception that they had to have at least a 95% HIT approval rate with a minimum of 50 HITs completed. Although the Millennial cohort includes individuals born between 1982 and 1999 (and thus contains 15, 16, and 17 year olds), this study focused on individuals who were 18 and older because it was concerned with work history. As a majority of students graduate from high school at the age of 18, that is the age at which they have their first opportunity to have a full-time job. Additionally, workers must be at least 18 years of age to sign up for an MTurk account.

According to Cohen (1992), a minimum of 52 participants per group were targeted in order to have .80 power to detect a medium effect with an alpha of .05. Specifically, data for 91 Boomers, 102 Gen Xers, and 79 Millennials were collected. After deleting participants who did not complete the study (2), who failed quality check questions (7), who were born during the cusp years (23 Baby Boomers, 34 Gen Xers, and
22 Millennials), and who did not meet the criteria for the study (4), there were 61 Baby Boomers, 64 Gen Xers, and 55 Millennials left for analysis. Overall, 46.7% were males, and 53.3% were females. Moreover, 39.34% of the Baby Boomers were males, 48.44% of the Gen Xers were males, and 54.54% of the Millennials were males. Within the participants, .76% identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 6.08% were Asian or Pacific Islander, 7.22% indicated they were Black or African American, 2.28% were Hispanic American, 81.37% identified as White or Caucasian, and 2.28% indicated they were part of the Other category. All of the participants had been previously or were currently employed. Whether or not a participant was born during the cusp of his or her generation, he or she was still paid for his or her participation.

**Measures**

**Initiating structure and consideration leadership styles.** The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire – Ideal (LBDQ-Ideal) measures ideal leader behaviors (Stogdill, 1963) and was used to assess initiating structure and consideration leadership styles. The LBDQ-Ideal is a variation of the LBDQ-XII, with the sole difference being a change in participant directions. Specifically, the LBDQ-Ideal instructs the respondent to answer how he or she thinks an ideal leader ought to supervise a group instead of how his or her manager actually supervises the group. The LBDQ-Ideal also changes active verbs from the LBDQ-XII such as “maintains” or “asks” to “maintain” and “ask,” since there is no actual leader in question. There are 100 items in this measure that correspond to 12 subscales: Representation, Demand Reconciliation, Tolerance of Uncertainty, Persuasiveness, Initiation of Structure, Tolerance and Freedom, Role Assumption, Consideration, Production Emphasis, Predictive Accuracy, Integration, and
Superior Orientation. Each subscale has five or 10 items. In order to measure the components of the style approach, the present paper only used two of the subscales, Initiating Structure and Consideration, both of which have 10 items each. Each item utilized a 5-point response scale ranging from (1) not at all to (5) frequently, if not always. A sample item is, “Let group members know what is expected of them.”

Even though the LBDQ-XII has a scoring guide and a manual, there is no accompanying manual for the LBDQ-Ideal, although it is intended to be scored in the same manner as the LBDQ-XII. Since the intent of this study was to measure ideal leadership style and not behaviors that were actually exhibited by current supervisors, it was necessary to use the LBDQ-Ideal instead of the LBDQ-XII. On the LBDQ-XII, Yunker and Hunt (1976) found that the Consideration subscale had a reliability of .81 and the Initiating Structure subscale had an acceptable reliability of .76, whereas Stogdill (1963) found slightly higher reliabilities of .83 and .77 for Consideration and Initiating Structure, respectively. The present study found reliability of .75 for Consideration and .74 for Initiating Structure. For this study, the means for the Initiating Structure and Consideration scales were compared for analyses. Items were reverse-coded as necessary (see Appendix A).

**Transformational and transactional leadership styles.** Avolio and Bass’ (2004) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form – 5X – Short form (MLQ5X) is based on the work of Bass (1985a), who originally suggested that transformational leadership accounts for unique variance that other leadership style theories cannot and do not account for. The MLQ5X is intended to measure leadership styles ranging from passive leaders to transactional leaders and transformational leaders. As discussed previously, the
transformational leadership style includes idealized influence (attributes), idealized influence (behaviors), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Similarly, the transactional leadership style consists of contingent reward, active management-by-exception, and passive management-by-exception (Avolio, 1999). These are eight of the nine subscales of the MLQ5X; the final subscale, laissez-faire, does not fit within the scope of this study and was not included in the assessment of leadership style. Although the authors of the MLQ5X technically split passive management-by-exception into the passive leadership style and avoidant leadership style, several studies include it as one type of transactional leadership style (e.g., Avolio, 1999; Hoffmeister et al., 2013). As such, the present paper included the passive management-by-exception scale in the transactional leadership construct. Since the aim of the current study was to assess preferences between transformational and transactional leadership styles, these are the two constructs that were utilized from the MLQ5X.

Kanste, Miettunen, and Kyngas (2007) noted that the “MLQ is suitable for both leader’s self-evaluation and subordinates’ evaluations of their supervisor,” (p. 203). Because of the seemingly malleable nature of the MLQ5X, each participant was asked about their ideal supervisor instead of an evaluation of his or her current supervisor (see Appendix B). Although this was not the intent of the original measure, the change in directions for the instrument is suitable and appropriate for the current study. The MLQ5X utilizes a 5-point response scale ranging from (1) not at all to (5) frequently, if not always. A sample item is, “Provides me with assistance in exchange for my efforts.” A higher score represents a stronger preference for the transformational or transactional
leadership style being assessed. Avolio and Bass (2004) stated that it was appropriate to combine each subscale into a composite score for the overall leadership style. The five transformational subscales demonstrated the following Cronbach’s alphas in Kanste et al.’s (2007) study: idealized influence (attributes) = .88, idealized influence (behavior) = .90, inspirational motivation = .92, intellectual stimulation = .91, and individualized consideration = .94. In the present study, the reliability for the transformational construct was .90. Following this, Kanste et al. (2007) also found that the three transactional subscales demonstrated the following Cronbach’s alphas: contingent reward = .91, active management-by-exception = .80, and passive management-by-exception = .78. Additionally, the present study found a reliability of .61 for the transactional construct.

Even though Kaste et al. (2007) only reported subscale alphas, they stated that it was appropriate to report the overall alpha. A factor analysis indicated that the five transformational subscales loaded onto one construct, and the three transactional subscales also loaded onto one construct.

Northouse (2007) cited findings of strong support for the validity of the MLQ5X. For example, Antonakis, Avolio, and Sivasubramaniam (2003) found that the MLQ5X clearly distinguished among all nine factors. Overall, it appears that the MLQ5X demonstrates adequate reliability and validity (Antonakis et al., 2003; Northouse, 2007). The long form contains 63 items, whereas the short form contains 45. Taking out the unnecessary items for the laissez-faire construct, the present study utilized the short form of the MLQ5X, which resulted in 32 total items (4 items per subscale), because Avolio & Bass (2004) regarded the shorter form as the more appropriate version of the measure.

**Demographic measure.** Each participant indicated his or her gender, race, age,
country of residence, and employment status on a questionnaire that followed the previous two measures (see Appendix C). Because they were the main variables for this study, age, gender, and whether they had ever been employed were required items in order to proceed with the study, whereas the other demographic items were voluntary. The participant’s worker ID number was also a mandatory facet so that he or she could be paid. Anonymity was assured to the MTurk worker on this demographic form, as any identifying information (i.e., MTurk worker ID) was removed and discarded prior to analysis.

Procedure

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was sought through Xavier University’s IRB. As this study involved anonymous workers and posed minimal risk to these participants, the “Exempt” status was pursued and granted (see Appendix D).

This study was posted to MTurk as multiple, separate HITs serially so that the correct number of collected participants per group could be closely monitored by the researcher. Recruiting for this study consisted of posting the survey to MTurk via Qualtrics and keeping the survey open until an appropriate number of participants participated in each group. Participants were paid $0.40 upon successful completion of the survey, in line with the $0.25 to $0.50 that the majority of other surveys on MTurk offer (Barger et al., 2011). Since the participants likely came from a wide range of jobs and industries, results should be fairly generalizable to the population at hand (Barger et al., 2011).

Each participant was presented with the MTurk interface page, followed by an informed consent form, which indicated that proceeding in the study indicated consent
(see Appendix E). Before the measures were administered, qualifying questions concerning age and whether the participant had ever been previously employed was included so that only participants between the intended age for that specific HIT and who had held a job will be able to continue in the study (see Appendix F). There was also a question regarding the year the participant was born at the end of the study. Each generational cohort’s informed consent page was tailored so that it was clear that each participant could only participate in one posting of the HIT. These requirements were listed in the title and description of the study so that the participant could see them before the study was selected. Next, the participants completed the LBDQ-Ideal followed by the MLQ5X. After the leadership measures, the participant was instructed to input his or her demographic information such as birth year, gender, race, and if they had ever been employed for the purpose of more sophisticated analyses and to identify to which generation and gender each participant belonged. Upon successful completion of these questions and measures, the individual was compensated for his or her time.

Throughout the study, there were three quality checks (see Appendix G) that instructed the participant to select the indicated response to ensure quality data. Each quality check instructed the participant to select an answer on that respective question. For example, the participant should have selected “not at all” to the question, “Select the response ‘not at all’ as the correct answer to this item.” An incorrect answer on any of these quality check items demonstrated a low quality respondent and that respondent’s data were discarded; otherwise, all participants’ results were included in the final analysis if they answered 100% of the quality checks correctly and answered all required items. There were six participants who did not answer a total of one of the questions. For these
items, the mean for that participant’s gender and/or generation on that particular question was input as their response so that each participant could be included in the final analysis. Analyses were completed with and without the data from these six participants and did not make a significant difference in the results, so their data was retained and are reported in the results. Participants were notified before the survey that they had to complete all survey items in order to be compensated. Therefore, the six participants who did not answer all of the questions were not compensated. Demographic information was collected after the LBDQ-Ideal and MLQ5X were administered, and a short debriefing statement was presented after the study was completed (see Appendix H).
Chapter IV
Results

A paired-samples $t$-test was conducted to test Hypothesis 1, which stated that men would rate the initiating structure leadership style higher than the consideration leadership style. Results indicated that men did not rate initiating structure ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.45$) significantly higher than consideration ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.50$); $t(120) = 0.37$, $p = .72$. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

To test Hypothesis 2, which stated that women would rate the consideration leadership style higher than the initiating structure leadership style, a paired-samples $t$-test was utilized. Women rated consideration ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.43$) significantly higher than initiating structure ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.41$); $t(137) = -2.14$, $p < .001$. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

A paired-samples $t$-test was also conducted in order to test Hypothesis 3. This hypothesis stated that men would rate the transactional leadership style higher than the transformational leadership style. Contrary to what was expected, men rated transformational leadership ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.48$) significantly higher than transactional leadership ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.41$); $t(120) = -19.97$, $p = .003$. Because these differences were in the opposite direction of what was hypothesized, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Similarly, a paired-samples $t$-test was utilized to test Hypothesis 4, which predicted that women would rate the transformational leadership style higher than the
transactional leadership style. Results suggest that women did rate the transformational leadership style \((M = 4.06, SD = 0.45)\) significantly higher than the transactional leadership style \((M = 2.83, SD = 0.36)\); \(t(137) = -28.61, p < .001\). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Hypothesis 5 stated that Baby Boomers would prefer significantly more transactional behaviors than Gen Xers and Millennials. Because this hypothesis included all three generations and was a between-subjects design, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted in order to test this hypothesis. The ANOVA showed that the difference between groups was not significant for transactional leadership, \(F(2,177) = 1.41, p = .25\). Consequently, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

Hypothesis 6 stated that Gen Xers would not significantly prefer the transformational leadership style or the transactional leadership style. Because this hypothesis included only one generation and it was a within-subjects design, a paired-samples \(t\)-test was conducted. Results indicated that Gen Xers preferred significantly more transformational behaviors \((M = 4.00, SD = 0.45)\) than transactional behaviors \((M = 2.83, SD = 0.38)\); \(t(63) = -21.38, p < .001\). Therefore, Hypothesis 6 was also not supported.

Hypothesis 7 stated that Millennials would prefer significantly more transformational behaviors than Baby Boomers and Gen Xers, respectively. Because this hypothesis included all three generations and it was a between-subjects design, an ANOVA was conducted in order to test this hypothesis. The ANOVA showed that the difference between groups was not significant for transformational leadership, \(F(2,177) = 0.37, p = .69\). Consequently, Hypothesis 7 was not supported.
A Two-Way MANOVA (Multivariate ANOVA) was employed in order to test Hypotheses 8a and 8b, which assessed the proposed interaction between generation and gender in terms of preferred leadership styles. There was not a significant interaction between generation and gender, $\lambda=0.99; F(2,11) = 2.33, p = .10$. Two-Way ANOVAs were conducted on Hypotheses 8a and 8b to ensure that there were no differences between generation and gender for each of the DVs. Hypothesis 8a stated that for the transactional leadership style, generational cohort membership and gender would significantly interact in that there would be a significant difference between male and female Baby Boomers’ preference, whereas there would not be a significant difference between male and female Millennials’ preference for the transactional leadership style. The Two-Way ANOVA revealed a non-significant interaction of participant’s generation and gender on transactional style, $F(2,111) = 3.41, p = .07$. Therefore, Hypothesis 8a was not supported. Hypothesis 8b indicated that for the transformational leadership style, generational cohort membership and gender would significantly interact in that there would not be a significant difference between male and female Baby Boomers’ preference, but there would be a significant interaction between male and female Millennials’ preference for the transformational leadership style. The Two-Way ANOVA revealed a non-significant interaction of participant’s generation and gender on transformational style, $F(2,111) = 1.78, p = .19$. Therefore, Hypothesis 8b was not supported.

**Exploratory Analyses**

The notion of testing whether there were differences across genders for initiating structure and consideration leadership styles as well as transformational and transactional
styles was also explored. Independent-samples $t$-tests were conducted to test Hypotheses 1 and 2 as well as Hypotheses 3 and 4. There was not a significant difference between men and women for preferences on the initiating structure, $t(257) = 0.65, p = .51$, and consideration styles, $t(257) = -1.27, p = .15$. Similarly, there were no gender differences in preferences for transactional leadership, $t(257) = 3.37, p = .07$, nor for transformational leadership, $t(257) = -1.40, p = .46$.

Additionally, Hypotheses 5 and 7 predicted that there would be significant differences between the generations, but the leadership style preference within each generation was not tested. Baby Boomers significantly preferred transformational leadership ($M = 4.06, SD = 0.46$) over transactional leadership ($M = 2.94, SD = 0.50$); $t(60) = -13.61, p < .001$. This is a large Cohen’s $d$ effect size of 2.33. Millennials also significantly preferred transformational leadership ($M = 3.99, SD = 0.45$) over transactional leadership ($M = 2.92, SD = 0.34$); $t(54) = -15.11, p < .001$. This is also a large Cohen’s $d$ effect size of 2.68. And, as previously reported, Gen Xers preferred significantly more transformational behaviors ($M = 4.00, SD = 0.45$) than transactional behaviors ($M = 2.83, SD = 0.38$); $t(63) = -21.38, p < .001$. Similarly, this is a large Cohen’s $d$ effect size of 2.81.
Chapter V

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to examine the effects of both generations and gender on an employee’s ideal leadership style preference. The results of this study did not find support for Hypothesis 1, which stated that men would rate the initiating leadership style significantly higher than the consideration leadership style. Results indicated that there were no differences in preferences between initiating structure and consideration for men. Several studies reviewed in the literature found that men preferred more direct, task-oriented leadership behaviors (Bellow, 2011; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Hoyt et al., 2009; Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Statham, 1987). However, a few of these studies (e.g., Eagly & Johnson; Lipman-Blumen, 1992) stated that men preferred more task-oriented leadership behaviors than women but not necessarily more than interpersonally-oriented leadership behaviors when compared to task-oriented behaviors. Although Aldoory and Toth (2004) found that males were more likely to devalue female leaders than they were to devalue male leaders, their study did not examine what type of leadership style those males preferred. In 1992, Lipman-Blumen found that females and feminine characteristics were not powerful leaders or leadership qualities; however, there has been a large increase of women as leaders in the workplace since 1992 (Hoyt & Burnette, 2013), and this may have shifted the notion of men preferring task-oriented leadership characteristics.
Another potential cause of this hypothesis not being significant could be the fact that much of the literature examined gender-role congruence and leader-subordinate relationships that were male-male, male-female, female-male, and female-female. The current study did not take leader gender into account as a variable, which could have potentially changed the results, with men preferring male leaders and women preferring female leaders. Instead, this study simply found that men did not significantly prefer the initiating structure leadership style over consideration leadership style. Another interesting area for future research could be to explore the idea of the researcher as a male or female surrogate leader. The gender of the researcher could influence how the participants thought of a leader given the context in which they were answering the questions. This pertains to the context of the study in that there was a surrogate leader and/or a virtual leader effect. Perhaps this has implications for the ideal versus actual leader assessment.

Support was found for Hypothesis 2, which stated that women would rate the consideration leadership style significantly higher than the initiating structure leadership style. This finding makes sense in regards to the previous findings that women preferred interpersonally-oriented, considerate supervisors that were collaborative in nature (Bellou, 2011; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Hoyt, Simon, & Reid, 2009; Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Statham, 1987). Hoyt et al. (2009) found that women were more likely to prefer qualities such as being emotionally open, being concerned with the needs of others, and putting others first. Along with this, the consideration leadership style includes a deep concern for others’ needs as well as including others in decision making. Because of this connection, it is logical that women preferred the leadership that most closely aligned
with their needs and preferences. Overall, there was not much variability in the leadership rating means for initiating structure and consideration. The means for initiating structure and consideration were both relatively high, which may mean that both leadership approaches are typically preferred by both genders.

Next, Hypothesis 3 stated that men would rate the transactional leadership style higher than the transformational leadership style, but the results did not support this hypothesis. Men actually rated the transformational leadership style significantly higher than the transactional leadership style, contrary to the theme found throughout the literature of men preferring task-oriented leadership styles (e.g., Eagly et al., 1992; Hoyt et al., 2009). The current study found a large Cohen’s d effect size of 2.22. Although the gender leadership literature generally does not utilize transformational theory, Rowold and Borgmann (2013) found a high convergence between transactional and initiating structure leadership styles as well as transformational and consideration leadership styles. Whereas this study sought to integrate the style theory leadership literature with the transformational leadership literature, it appears that men do not prefer transactional behaviors significantly more than transformational behaviors. These results may corroborate the findings by Embry et al. (2008), who found that male leaders who used an interpersonally-oriented style were rated more positively by men than male leaders who displayed a task-oriented style. Overall, the results of the current study suggest that men prefer the transformational style significantly more than the transactional style, at least when the gender of the leader is not salient or is not known.

The results also supported Hypothesis 4, which stated that women would rate the transformational leadership style significantly higher than the transactional leadership
style. The current study found a large Cohen’s d effect size of 3.02. Following the logic above for Hypothesis 2, it appears that women generally prefer behaviors that are focused on the needs of others, show consideration for others, and support the growth of others (Bellou, 2011; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Hoyt, Simon, & Reid, 2009; Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Statham, 1987). Similar to the consideration leadership style, transformational leaders are best known for showing consideration and focusing on the needs and growth of others (Bass, 1997). These results seem to corroborate previous findings that women prefer leadership behaviors typically attributed to women (Eagly et al., 1992; Hoyt & Burnette, 2013).

The finding that men do not significantly prefer the initiating structure leadership style over the consideration style but instead significantly prefer the transformational leadership style over the transactional leadership style needs to be further examined. Furthermore, the high leadership means for both initiating structure leadership and consideration leadership warrants further research. These findings contradict the notion of initiating structure leadership being nearly the same construct as transactional leadership, at least for male subordinates (Rowold & Borgmann, 2013). One reason for the vast differences in terms of preferences for transformational leadership compared to transactional leadership could be the differences in means for the subscales. The five subscales for transformational leadership had the following means in the current study: idealized influence (attributes) = 4.14, idealized influence (behavior) = 3.81, inspirational motivation = 4.22, intellectual stimulation = 3.96, and individualized consideration = 3.99. On the other hand, the three subscales for transactional leadership had the following means in the current study: contingent reward = 4.14, active management-by-exception =
2.85, and passive management-by-exception = 1.74. Hence, the transactional leadership items within passive and active management-by-exception had a very low means compared to the other leadership subscales. These differences may help explain why there were such large differences between transformational and transactional leadership styles, as it appears that participants do not like the management-by-exception leadership style. Additionally, perhaps initiating structure leadership and transactional leadership actually assess different constructs, and it is not appropriate to compare these two styles to one another, contrary to the high convergence that Rowold and Borgmann (2013) found between the two task-oriented styles. However, there is an apparent connection between the style and transformational theories for women. The results of this study found that women significantly preferred consideration and transformational styles over initiating structure and transactional styles, respectively. For women, it seems that there is a high convergence between the consideration leadership style and the transformational leadership style. Future research should focus on this discrepancy in order to resolve this conflict.

Hypothesis 5 postulated that Baby Boomers would prefer significantly more transactional behaviors than Gen Xers and Millennials. However, all three generations and both genders preferred significantly more transformational leadership behaviors than transactional behaviors. Hence, the current study did not find support for a collective identity of Baby Boomers preferring more structured, task-oriented leadership styles like the generation leadership literature has previously indicated (Cambiano, 1999). Perhaps the more recent trend of interpersonally-oriented work teams and leadership styles (Stein, 2013) in the workplace has changed the ideal leadership preferences of the older
generation still in the current workforce from transactional behaviors to transformational behaviors, or perhaps those differences were not robust. Indeed, Cambiano (1999) found an eta squared effect size of .05 for Baby Boomers’ leadership preferences, whereas the current study found an eta squared effect size of .02 for this generational difference. Hence, the non-significant finding for this hypothesis may be due to the small effect size within generational cohort differences.

Hypothesis 6 stated that Gen Xers would not significantly prefer transformational or transactional behaviors over one another. Like Baby Boomers, Gen Xers also preferred significantly more transformational behaviors than transactional behaviors, so the mixed findings for Gen Xer’s leadership preferences in the literature were not indicative of the findings within this study (Sessa et al., 2007; Zemke et al., 2000). For the same reason given above, the recent trend towards work teams and interpersonally-oriented styles (Stein, 2013) may have shifted the preferences for this generation to a stronger preference for transformational behaviors than transactional behaviors.

The results also did not support Hypothesis 7, which stated that Millennials would prefer significantly more transformational behaviors than Baby Boomers and Gen Xers. Each of the three generations in the study preferred significantly more transformational leadership behaviors than transactional leadership behaviors. Although Millennials did prefer significantly more transformational leadership behaviors than transactional leadership behaviors as the generation leadership literature indicated (Gursoy et al., 2008; Sessa et al., 2007), they did not prefer it significantly more than the other generational cohorts. Thus, it seems that as reported in the exploratory analyses, regardless of generation and gender, all employees prefer the transformational leadership style.
Costanza et al. (2012) have made the argument that the generation leadership literature works to create stereotypes about each generational cohort but that these stereotypes completely ignore individual differences about how attitudes have developed based on genetics and upbringing. Outcomes such as job satisfaction, turnover, and organizational commitment were examined by Costanza et al.’s (2012) meta-analysis and found very little to no differences based on generational cohort membership. The differences that they did find were less than one-half of a standard deviation, and this was attributed to chronological age and job characteristics of older employees. The results of the current study support the possibility that there may not be a generational difference towards leadership preferences and that putting too much emphasis on the differences between generations decreases the relevant variance attended to by people within individual generations.

Additionally, the current study did not find support for the cusp theory, which examined the lack of mutual exclusivity among generations. An exploratory analysis conducted within the current study inspected the data with and without the data of the individuals of the participants born inside and outside the generational cusp, and there were no differences on the obtained results. As stated previously, the generational cusp theory addresses the within-generation individual differences variability issue that Costanza et al. (2012) delineated, but it did not completely remedy the issue. Without finding support for Arsenault’s (2004) cusp theory, the results of the current study indicate that controlling for mutual exclusivity among the generations may not have an effect on leadership style preferences.

Finally, Hypotheses 8a and 8b claimed that there would be an interaction between
generation and gender in terms of preferred leadership styles. The preference for transactional and transformational leadership was not influenced by the specific category of generation and gender to which a participant belonged. Because individual differences are likely not accounted for within generational cohort membership (Costanza et al., 2012), measuring the strength to which a participant identifies with his or her generation and/or gender could be a way to further examine this type of interaction in future research.

Based on the results of this study, organizations should emphasize transformational leadership when recruiting, hiring, training, and rating leaders. It is important for subordinates to like the style of leadership that their leaders portray because of increased organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and job satisfaction (Bolt, 2007; Halpin & Winer, 1957; Oaklander & Fleishman, 1964). The results of this study indicated that women preferred consideration leadership over initiating structure leadership and transformational leadership over transactional leadership, whereas men also preferred transformational leadership over transactional leadership, although men did not prefer initiating structure leadership over consideration leadership. In fact, all three generations preferred transformational behaviors over transactional behaviors. Hence, men and women, as well as all three generations, preferred the transformational leadership style over the transactional leadership style. If employees are happiest with interpersonally-oriented supervisors, leaders who can achieve results but also connect on a personal level with subordinates will be most preferred by both the subordinates and the organization.

Limitations
Choosing to conduct this study in the manner described had several limitations. To begin, when using MTurk, the researcher was unable to hold situational and participant variables constant. The convenience of sampling a more diverse range of participants online than typical in-person populations came at the cost of being unable to control the research situation (Barger et al., 2011). Websites such as MTurk may be accessed less often by minority groups such as African Americans and Hispanics because of a lower access rate to the Internet (Suarez-Balcazar, Kinney, Masi, Cassey, & Muhammad, 2005). However, Barger et al. (2011) found that MTurk samples are more representative of the general population than a typical college student sample. As such, MTurk was chosen as the most viable option to reach the most representative population.

Additionally, the generational leadership literature has been critiqued as highly simplified and putting too much stock into variance between groups instead of variance within groups (Reeves & Oh, 2008). To separate out the differences due to age and those due to generational cohort membership, Arsenault’s (2004) notion of the cusp theory was employed in that individuals who were born within three years in either direction of the cut off year for a generation were not included in the analysis. Because there were not any generational differences within this study, utilizing the cusp theory did little more than reduce the sample size, so the current study cannot comment on the utility, or lack thereof, of generational cusp theory. Unfortunately, this procedure did not yield information more relevant to any actual generational differences.

The instrument used to measure preferred leadership style, the LBDQ-Ideal, has not been empirically tested for reliability and validity coefficients. However, given its purpose of being malleable and its similar nature to the LBDQ-XII (which has been
empirically tested; Stogdill, 1963), there was no reason to expect that using the LBDQ-Ideal instead of the LBDQ-XII would produce different psychometric results than the original LBDQ-XII. Still, data were analyzed to ensure that the LBDQ-Ideal did indeed have comparable reliability to the LBDQ-XII. A factor analysis confirmed the two subscales, initiating structure and consideration, on the LBDQ-Ideal. The LBDQ-Ideal measure in this study also produced moderate to high reliability coefficients for both subscales, despite the changes that were made. In addition, the directions were slightly altered for the MLQ5X so that the participants would rate their ideal leader instead of their current leader. Although this was necessary, there could have been a slight change in the original psychometric properties of the MLQ5X. Again, data were analyzed to ensure that the “ideal” MLQ5X assessed the same subscales and did indeed have comparable reliability to the original MLQ5X. A factor analysis confirmed the two subscales, transformational and transactional, on the MLQ5X measure used in the current study. The MLQ5X also yielded both moderate and high reliability coefficients in the current study, even with the slight alterations. Facets were also combined on the MLQ5X, which was not the original intention of the measures. However, the authors of the MLQ5X stated that it was acceptable to combine certain facets to obtain an overall subscale score on both the transactional and transformational measures, so this should not have affected scoring (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Yunker & Hunt, 1976).

Another potential limitation is that both of the leadership styles examined in this study, style and transformational theories, are not dichotomous in nature. Initiating structure and consideration as well as transactional and transformational leadership styles are all four separate leadership behaviors, meaning that one leader could simultaneously
be high or low in initiating structure and consideration and could simultaneously be high or low in transactional and transformational leadership behaviors. Although these leadership styles are not mutually exclusive, it was likely that participants would prefer one style over another, which made it appropriate to examine the styles as a dichotomous relationship. However, it is possible that some participants prefer both styles (initiating structure and consideration) equally, as opposed to one or the other. Nevertheless, neither initiating structure and consideration nor transactional and transformational are dichotomous leadership styles, which should be considered as a limitation of the present study when interpreting results.

Finally, this study obtained data using self-report methods. Williams, Cote, and Buckley (1989) found that common method variance accounted for approximately 25% of the variance in measures they analyzed. Although it is accurate that conclusions and findings are results of the method that is utilized, Spector (2006) stated that the common method variance argument is distorted and oversimplified. Spector’s (2006) article casts doubt that it is the method itself that produces significant correlations in systematic variance of observations. As such, the present paper focused on the interplay between constructs and methods. Additionally, compensation and an assurance of anonymity should have given participants a level of comfort in answering questions truthfully. Overall, it is likely that the importance of this study outweighed the limitations set forth in the present section. By utilizing the knowledge acquired in this study, organizations should be able to more accurately assess and evaluate candidates to lead different types of diverse populations.

**Future Directions**
The research on generation and gender and how they may be related to leadership style preferences is not complete. Further research should build off of the previously discussed limitations in order to add to the current body of literature. This could be done by obtaining data from the field instead of MTurk or collecting the data in a different manner than self-report, such as peer or supervisor evaluations. A new measure could also be developed with the intent of assessing ideal leadership style preferences instead of actual leadership behaviors of current supervisors. Based on the findings of this study, it would not be recommended to further analyze generational differences in terms of leadership style preferences, as there were no apparent differences.

In addition to confirming the results of this study, researchers should consider the impact of gender-role congruity and how this affects each gender’s and generation’s leadership style preferences. Researchers should investigate male-male, male-female, female-male, and female-female relationships in terms of subordinate preferences for leadership styles. It would also be interesting to study the strength of identity that one has with his or her own gender. For example, a masculine female may have a significantly different strength of association with the “typical” female sex than a feminine female. Analyzing the differences within gender could lead to an increased knowledge and understanding of why men in this study rated typically-feminine leadership styles significantly higher than typically-masculine leadership styles. Similarly, assessing the generational match-ups of leader-subordinate pairs has not been previously examined to the present author’s knowledge. For example, Baby Boomer-Gen Xer, Baby Boomer-Millennial, Gen Xer-Baby Boomer, Gen Xer-Millennial, Millennial-Baby Boomer, and Millennial-Xer would all be interesting combinations to assess if the cohort membership
of the leader affects the leadership style preference of the subordinate.

Researchers should also compare leadership styles to one another directly in order to test the findings that transformational styles account for more variance in outcome measures than other leadership style approaches (Barling et al., 1996; Seltzer & Bass, 1990). In this study, transformational leadership styles were preferred by both males and females. Within this, the current study suggests that transformational leadership may be distinct from consideration leadership, and transactional leadership could be different from initiating structure leadership. Future research should seek to confirm these findings, since there are not many studies that have explicitly tested gender preferences within the transformational leadership styles framework.

Finally, in addition to assessing the leadership styles in comparison to one another and examining the strength of association to the participant’s respective gender, researchers should further test the cusp theory. Since no known study to the present author’s knowledge besides the original one has examined the cusp theory (Arsenault, 2004), more research is needed to determine if those born near the ends of each generation do indeed share similar characteristics with two generations. A more direct test of cusp theory could be to test those within the cusp versus those outside of the cusp, although one is likely to be limited on sample size for those within the cusp timeframe. The inconsistencies in the literature towards generational differences may mean that the differences simply do not exist, or they are not being studied in a way that identifies those differences. Because of this, more studies should utilize the cusp theory to further assess the validity of it.

**Conclusion**
Due to the importance of leadership in the workplace, it is critical to assess the traits leaders possess, the situations that require leadership, the behaviors that leaders most often exhibit, and the preferences of leadership styles. The current study added to the body of knowledge on leadership preferences by showing that men did not prefer initiating structure leadership style over consideration leadership style. Moreover, when gender was an unknown leader characteristic, men significantly preferred the transformational leadership style over the transactional leadership style. Women significantly preferred consideration behaviors over initiating structure behaviors and transformational behaviors over transactional behaviors. The current study also did not find significant generational differences in terms of leadership preferences. Instead, all generations preferred the transformational leadership style over the transactional leadership style. In fact, this study found that transformational leadership behaviors were most preferred by men, women, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials. A primary implication of this finding is that when investing resources in selecting and developing leaders, organizations should consider subordinate leadership preferences as well as transformational behaviors in selection and training and how these may affect other outcomes such as job satisfaction, organization commitment, absenteeism, and turnover. Future studies will ideally build on the current understanding of leadership style preferences by not paying as much heed to generational cohort membership and potentially looking more at leader-member relationships in terms of role-congruity between the supervisor and subordinate as well as generational cohort match-ups.
Chapter VI

Summary

The present paper looks to examine the effects of generation and gender on an employee’s ideal leadership style preference. Currently, generational cohort literature posits that differences in leadership preferences matter because the preferences and outlook of a generation last for the entire lifetime (Meredith, 1994). Another area of focus is gender. Much of the gender literature utilizes the role congruity perspective, which hypothesizes that biases materialize when a member of a certain group acts or thinks in a way that is incongruent with the norm of that particular group (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Hoyt & Burnette, 2013). No study known to the present author has examined the relationship between these two determinants together relative to leadership style preferences.

Leadership Styles

The current paper examines two well-researched leadership style theories: the style approach (including consideration and initiating structure) and transformational leadership (including transformational and transactional; Northouse, 2007).

Consideration. Fleishman and Harris (1962) defined consideration leadership as including “mutual trust, respect, and a certain warmth and rapport between the supervisor and his group” (p. 43). Consideration also encompasses subordinate participation in decision making and a deeper concern for employees’ needs than just a superficial
workplace relationship (Fleishman & Harris, 1962).

**Initiating structure.** The second style in the style approach is initiating structure. Fleishman and Harris (1962) described a structured leader as one who “defines the role he expects each member to assume, assigns tasks, plans ahead, establishes ways of getting things done, and pushes for production” (p. 44). Directive, task-oriented leaders were rated by superiors as more effective than leaders who spent less time planning and organizing (Katz & Kahn, 1953).

**Transactional leadership.** One type of leadership style in transformational leadership is transactional leadership. In this type of leadership, there is a clear intended direction, with the leader holding the “right” position (Aldoory & Toth, 2004). Johnson and Klee (2007) and Hargis et al. (2011) claimed that this type of leader was task-oriented, provided negative feedback, and used discipline to correct employees.

**Transformational leadership.** The second type of leadership style in this approach is transformational leadership. Transformational leaders were best known for showing consideration and focusing on the needs and growth of employees who performed well and invested in the organization (Bass, 1997).

**Generation as a Determinant of Leadership Style Preferences**

Kupperschmidt (2000) defined a generational cohort as “an identifiable group that shares birth years, age location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages” (as cited in Macky, Gardner, & Forsyth, 2008, p. 858). Twenge et al. (2010) summarized a general consensus that there are three (fairly) distinct generational cohorts currently employed in the workforce.

**Baby Boomers.** Hui-Chun and Miller (2005) found that Baby Boomers preferred
task-oriented leadership, whereas Cambiano (1999) found that Baby Boomers appreciated an environment that provided a warm, positive surrounding.

**Gen X.** Cambiano (1999) found that Gen Xers worked best in the evening and preferred work that was more structured. Some studies found that the Gen X cohort preferred egalitarian-oriented leaders who listened well and were fair, straightforward, and competent (Hui-Chun & Miller, 2005; Sessa et al., 2007; Zemke et al., 2000).

**Millennials.** Stein (2013) stated that Millennials did not respect authority, but they also did not resent it. Stein (2013) also found that the Millennials were the first generational cohort to not have a large rebellion against authority.

**Generational Preferences for Leadership**

There are several reasons that researchers should be paying more attention to generational research as it pertains to leadership preferences. More than 40 years ago, Bhushan (1968) found that there were differences among demographic categories and the determination of leadership preferences. Boatwright and Forrest (2000) found that the younger the employee, the greater the preference for worker-centered leadership.

**Generational cusp theory.** Only one author, Arsenault (2004), has examined the lack of mutual exclusivity among generations. People who were born on the cusp (within three years of each generation’s assigned cutoff date) had a significantly different experience of their generation than people who were born in the midst of their generation.

**Gender as a Determinant of Leadership Style Preferences**

Another construct that is often examined within the leadership literature is the gender of both the subordinate and the leader; that is, the congruence of gender between the leader and the subordinate. Bellou (2011) offered several reasons for the increased
attention to leadership within organizations, one being leadership’s vast impact on organizational success and its effect on employee job performance.

**Consistencies in the research literature.** There are some tendencies in the literature concerning which leadership style is preferred by a specific gender. In general, women preferred interpersonally-oriented, considerate supervisors, whereas men preferred task-oriented, structured supervisors (Bellou, 2011; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Hoyt, Simon, & Reid, 2009; Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Statham, 1987).

**Inconsistencies in the research literature.** Some studies showed that participants had a strong preference for masculine team managers and were more likely to think in male gender identity terms when presented with a masculine leadership style (Embry et al., 2008; Inderlied & Powell, 1979). Supporting this, when primed with mortality salience, women wanted an agentic (masculine) leader regardless of sex, whereas men wanted a male agentic leader (Hoyt et al., 2009).

**Overall conclusions.** Until the incongruity of equating leader stereotypes and gender stereotypes is eradicated, men and women will both have biased preferences of which leadership style they prefer. This preference is influenced by the subordinate’s gender, the supervisor’s gender, and individual differences.

**Direction and Need for Future Research**

Some findings have indicated that the younger the worker, the greater the preference for worker-centered, considerate styles of leadership, much like female employees have often preferred (Boatwright & Forrest, 2000; Vecchio & Boatwright, 2002). However, there are several inconsistencies in the literature regarding leadership style preference.
Consequently, based on the current research regarding leadership styles, generational preferences, and gendered preferences, the following are hypothesized:

**H1:** Men will rate the initiating structure leadership style higher than the consideration leadership style.

**H2:** Women will rate the consideration leadership style higher than the initiating structure leadership style.

**H3:** Men will rate the transactional leadership style higher than the transformational leadership style.

**H4:** Women will rate the transformational leadership style higher than the transactional leadership style.

**H5:** Baby Boomers will prefer significantly more transactional behaviors than Generation Xers and Millennials.

**H6:** Generation Xers will not significantly prefer transformational or transactional behaviors over one another.

**H7:** Millennials will prefer significantly more transformational behaviors than Baby Boomers and Generation Xers.

**H8a:** Generational cohort membership and gender will significantly interact, such that there will be a significant difference between male and female Baby Boomers’ preference for the transactional leadership style, but there will not be a significant difference between male and female Millennials’ preference for the transactional leadership style (see Figure 1).

**H8b:** Generational cohort membership and gender will significantly interact, such that there will not be a significant difference between male and female Baby
Boomers’ preference for the transformational leadership style, but there will be a significant difference between male and female Millennials’ preference for the transformational leadership style (see Figure 2).

Method

Participants

This study consisted of 61 Baby Boomers, 64 Gen Xers, and 55 Millennials. Overall, 46.7% were males, and 53.3% were females. More specifically, 39.34% of the Baby Boomers were males, 48.44% of the Gen Xers were males, and 54.54% of the Millennials were males. All of the participants lived in the United States and had been previously or were currently employed. Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) was used to recruit participants, and the study was posted on Qualtrics.

Measures

Initiating structure and consideration leadership styles. The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire – Ideal (LBDQ-Ideal) measures ideal leader behaviors (Stogdill, 1963) and was used to assess initiating structure and consideration leadership styles. The present paper used two of the subscales, Initiating Structure and Consideration, both of which have 10 items each.

Transformational and transactional leadership styles. Avolio and Bass’ (2004) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form – 5X – Short form (MLQ5X) is based on the work of Bass (1985a), who originally suggested that transformational leadership accounts for unique variance that other leadership style theories cannot and do not account for. Since the aim of the current study was to assess preferences between transformational and transactional leadership styles, these are the two constructs that were utilized from
the MLQ5X.

**Demographic measure.** Each participant indicated his or her gender, race, age, country of residence, and employment status on a questionnaire that followed the previous two measures (see Appendix C).

**Procedure**

This study was posted to MTurk as multiple, separate HITs serially so that the correct number of collected participants per group could be closely monitored by the researcher. Each participant was presented with the MTurk interface page, followed by an informed consent form (see Appendix E). Before the measures were administered, qualifying questions concerning age and whether the participant had ever been previously employed was included (see Appendix F). Next, the participant completed the LBDQ-Ideal followed by the MLQ5X. After the leadership measures, the participant was instructed to input his or her demographic information. Throughout the study, there were three quality checks (see Appendix G) that instructed the participant to select the indicated response to ensure quality data. Demographic information was collected after the LBDQ-Ideal and MLQ5X were administered, and a short debriefing statement was presented after the study was completed (see Appendix H).

**Results**

A paired-samples $t$-test was conducted to test Hypothesis 1, and results indicated that men did not rate initiating structure ($M = 4.09, SD = 0.45$) significantly higher than consideration ($M = 4.07, SD = 0.50; t(120) = .37, p = .72$). Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

To test Hypothesis 2, a paired-samples $t$-test was utilized. Women rated consideration ($M = 4.14, SD = 0.43$) significantly higher than initiating structure ($M =
Hypothesis 2 was supported.

A paired-samples t-test was also conducted in order to test Hypothesis 3. Contrary to what was expected, men rated transformational leadership ($M = 3.98, SD = 0.48$) significantly higher than transactional leadership ($M = 2.99, SD = 0.41; t(120) = -19.97, p = .003$). Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Similarly, a paired-samples t-test was utilized to test Hypothesis 4, and results suggest that women did rate the transformational leadership style ($M = 4.06, SD = 0.45$) significantly higher than the transactional leadership style ($M = 2.83, SD = 0.36; t(137) = -28.61, p < .001$). Hypothesis 4 was supported.

A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted in order to test Hypothesis 5. The ANOVA showed that the difference between groups was not significant for transactional leadership, $F(2,177) = 1.41, p = .25$. Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to test Hypothesis 6. Results indicated that Gen Xers preferred significantly more transformational behaviors ($M = 4.00, SD = 0.45$) than transactional behaviors ($M = 2.83, SD = 0.38; t(63) = -21.38, p < .001$). Hypothesis 6 was also not supported.

An ANOVA was conducted in order to test Hypothesis 7. The ANOVA showed that the difference between groups was not significant for transformational leadership, $F(2,177) = 0.37, p = .69$. Hypothesis 7 was not supported.

A Two-Way MANOVA (Multivariate ANOVA) was employed in order to test Hypotheses 8a and 8b, which assessed the proposed interaction between generation and gender in terms of preferred leadership styles. There was not a significant interaction
between generation and gender ($\lambda=0.99$; $F(2,11) = 2.33$, $p = .10$). Hypotheses 8a and 8b were not supported.

**Discussion**

The purpose of the current study was to examine the effects of both generations and gender on an employee’s ideal leadership style preference. The results of this study did not show support for Hypothesis 1, which stated that men would rate the initiating leadership style significantly higher than the consideration leadership style. Results indicated that there were no differences in preferences between initiating structure and consideration for men.

Support was found for Hypothesis 2, which stated that women would rate the consideration leadership style significantly higher initiating structure leadership style. This finding makes sense in regards to the previous findings that women preferred interpersonally-oriented, considerate supervisors that were collaborative in nature (Bellou, 2011; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Hoyt, Simon, & Reid, 2009; Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Statham, 1987).

Next, Hypothesis 3 stated that men would rate the transactional leadership style higher than the transformational leadership style, but the results did not support this hypothesis. Men actually rated the transformational leadership style significantly higher than the transactional leadership style, contrary to the theme throughout the literature of men preferring task-oriented leadership styles (e.g., Eagly et al., 1992; Hoyt et al., 2009). These results may corroborate the findings by Embry et al. (2008), who found that men who used an interpersonally-oriented style were rated more positively by men than men with task-oriented style.
The results also supported Hypothesis 4, which stated that women would rate the transformational leadership style significantly higher than the transactional leadership style. Following the logic above for Hypothesis 2, it appears that women generally prefer behaviors that are focused on the needs of others, show consideration for others, and support the growth of others (Bellou, 2011; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Hoyt, Simon, & Reid, 2009; Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Statham, 1987).

The finding that men do not significantly prefer the initiating structure leadership style over the consideration style but do significantly prefer the transformational leadership style over the transactional leadership style needs to be further examined. For men, there is a disconnect here between the style and transformational theories. Perhaps initiating structure and transactional leadership actually assess different constructs, and it is not appropriate to compare these two styles to one another, contrary to the high convergence that Rowold and Borgmann (2013) found between the two task-oriented styles. However, there is an apparent connection between the style and transformational theories for women. Future research should focus on this discrepancy in order to resolve this conflict.

Hypothesis 5 postulated that Baby Boomers would prefer significantly more transactional behaviors than Gen Xers and Millennials. However, all three generations and both genders preferred significantly more transformational leadership behaviors than transactional behaviors. This finding may be due to the small effect sizes that generally exist in the generational cohort literature.

Hypothesis 6 stated that Gen Xers would not significantly prefer transformational or transactional behaviors over one another. Like Baby Boomers, Gen Xers also preferred
significantly more transformational behaviors than transactional behaviors, so the mixed findings for Gen Xer’s leadership preferences in the literature were not indicative of the findings within this study (Sessa et al., 2007; Zemke et al., 2000).

The results also did not support Hypothesis 7, which stated that Millennials would prefer significantly more transformational behaviors than Baby Boomers and Gen Xers. Each of the three generations in the study preferred significantly more transformational leadership behaviors than transactional leadership behaviors.

Additionally, the current study did not find support for the cusp theory, which examined the lack of mutual exclusivity among generations. An exploratory analysis conducted within the current study inspected the data with and without the data of the individuals of the participants born inside and outside the generational cusp, and there were no differences on the obtained results. Without finding support for Arsenault’s (2004) cusp theory, the results of the current study indicate that controlling for mutual exclusivity among the generations may not have an effect on leadership style preferences.

Finally, Hypotheses 8a and 8b claimed that there would be an interaction between generation and gender in terms of preferred leadership styles. The preference for transactional and transformational leadership was not influenced by the specific category of generation and gender to which a participant belonged.

Based on the results of this study, organizations should emphasize transformational leadership when recruiting, hiring, training, and rating leaders. It is important for subordinates to like the style of leadership that their leaders portray because of increased organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and job satisfaction (Bolt, 2007; Halpin & Winer, 1957; Oaklander & Fleishman, 1964).
Limitations

The generational leadership literature has been critiqued as highly simplified and putting too much stock into variance between groups instead of variance within groups (Reeves & Oh, 2008). To separate out the differences due to age and those due to generational cohort membership, Arsenault’s (2004) notion of the cusp theory was employed in that individuals who were born within three years in either direction of the cut off year for a generation were not included in the analysis. Unfortunately, this procedure did not yield information more relevant to any actual generational differences.

Both of the leadership styles examined in this study, style and transformational theories, are not dichotomous in nature. Initiating structure and consideration as well as transactional and transformational leadership styles are all four separate leadership behaviors, meaning that one leader could simultaneously be high or low in initiating structure and consideration and could simultaneously be high or low in transactional and transformational leadership behaviors.

Future Directions

Further research should build off of the previously discussed limitations in order to add to the current body of literature. This could be done by obtaining data from the field instead of MTurk or collecting the data in a different manner than self-report, such as peer or supervisor evaluations. A new measure could also be developed with the intent of assessing ideal leadership style preferences instead of actual leadership behaviors of current supervisors. Based on the findings of this study, it would not be recommended to further analyze generational differences in terms of leadership style preferences, as there were no apparent differences.
Finally, in addition to assessing the leadership styles in comparison to one another and examining the strength of association to the participant’s respective gender, researchers should further test the cusp theory. Since no known study to the present author besides the original one has examined the cusp theory (Arsenault, 2004), more research is needed to determine if those born near the ends of each generation do indeed share similar characteristics with two generations.
References


doi:10.1177/107179190300900406


doi:10.1108/01437731311289956


doi:10.1177/014920639001600403


Appendix A

Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire – Ideal

The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire – Ideal is not reproduced in this document.

The measure is made available in the following reference:

Appendix B

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire – 5X – Short Form

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire – 5X – Short Form is protected by copyright, so it is not reproduced in this document.

The measure is made available in the following reference:

Appendix C

Demographic Variables

Your MTurk worker ID number will be removed and deleted prior to analysis, guaranteeing your anonymity. Please answer the following questions accurately about yourself:

1. What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female

2. What race/ethnicity best describes you?
   a. American Indian or Alaskan Native
   b. Asian/Pacific Islander
   c. Black or African American
   d. Hispanic American
   e. White/Caucasian
   f. Other
   g. Prefer not to respond

3. What year were you born in? __________

4. Do you currently live in the United States?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. Have you ever been employed?
   a. Yes
   b. No
February 10, 2015

Rebecca Baker

Re: Protocol #4-054, Ideal Leadership Style Preference by Generational Cohort Membership and Gender

Dear Ms. Baker:

The IRB has reviewed the materials regarding your study, referenced above, and has determined that it meets the criteria for the Exempt from Review category under Federal Regulation 45CFR46. Your protocol is approved as exempt research, and therefore requires no further oversight by the IRB. We appreciate your thorough treatment of the issues raised and your timely response.

If you wish to modify your study, including the addition of data collection sites, it will be necessary to obtain IRB approval prior to implementing the modification. If any adverse events occur, please notify the IRB immediately.

Please contact our office if you have any questions. We wish you success with your project!

Sincerely,

Morell E. Mullins, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Xavier University

MEM:sb
Appendix E

Informed Consent Form

My name is Rebecca Baker, and you are being given the opportunity to volunteer to participate in a project conducted through Xavier University.

This project examines ideal leadership style preferences. BEING BORN BETWEEN THE YEARS OF X AND Y, CURRENTLY LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES, AND HAVING EVER BEEN EMPLOYED makes you an acceptable candidate for this project. You will complete 3 short surveys, 2 of which will ask about your leadership style preference and 1 of which will ask about your demographic information. This is expected to take about 10 minutes. There are no known risks to completing this study. You can benefit from this study by thinking more about your ideal type of leader. Your privacy will be maintained by deleting your MTurk worker ID number prior to any analyses being run. All answers to this questionnaire will be kept completely confidential since all data will be collected anonymously. To compensate you for your time, your worker ID number will be paid $0.40 upon successful completion of the entire survey. You must pass the quality checks and answer all required questions in order to be compensated. You are free to withdraw from the study at any point in time and will face no penalty whatsoever if you choose to do so. If you decide to participate in the project, please click the button to continue on to the surveys. You may print a copy of this screen for your records. IF YOU HAVE PREVIOUSLY PARTICIPATED IN THIS STUDY, YOU CANNOT PARTICIPATE AGAIN.

If you have any questions at any time during the study, you may contact Rebecca Baker at bakerr1@xavier.edu or Mark Nagy at nagyms@xavier.edu. Questions about your rights as a research subject should be directed to Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board at (513) 745-2870.

I have been given information about this research study and its risks and benefits and have had the opportunity to ask questions and to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I freely give my consent to participate in this research project.

By clicking the “Next” button, you are indicating your informed consent to participate in this project.

*“X” and “Y” in the second sentence of the second paragraph were tailored with the years for the intended generational cohort
Appendix F

Qualifying Questions

Please answer the following questions accurately about yourself:

1. Were you born between the years X and Y?
2. Have you ever been employed?
3. Do you currently live in the United States?

*item 1 was tailored with the years for the intended generational cohort*
Appendix G

Quality Check Items

1. Select the response “Not at all” as the correct answer to this item.

2. Choose the response “Frequently, if not always” as the answer to this item.

3. Select the response “Once in a while” as the correct answer for this item.
Debriefing Statement

Thank you for your participation in this study!

You were previously informed that the purpose of the study was to examine ideal leadership style preferences. The goal of this research is to analyze the relationship between different generation’s and gender’s leadership style preferences.

Upon your confirmed successful completion of this study, you will receive $0.40 to compensate you for your time. If you have any additional questions, please contact Rebecca Baker at bakerr1@xavier.edu or Mark Nagy at nagyms@xavier.edu. Please do not disclose research procedures to anyone who might participate in this study in the future, as this could affect the results of the study.