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**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES**

A Thesis in  
Human Resources and Employment Relations  
by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines differences and similarities across distinct generational groups in order to understand the components and delivery methods of effective leadership development programs. 159 individuals representing three generations currently in the workforce (Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials) completed an online questionnaire. Results suggest that Millennial individuals rate the importance of formal mentoring higher than Baby Boomers while Generation X individuals place more importance on the use of reading materials than those of Millennials. Moreover, the findings indicate that use of classroom-based learning is rated higher by Baby Boomers than Millennial individuals. Implications of the study findings for human resource practitioners are discussed.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

A generation is described by Kupperschmidt as “an identifiable group that shares birth years, age, location, and significant life events, at critical development stages” (Kupperschmidt, 2000, p. 66). There are differences between generations because of changes due to aging, experience, life stage, and simply being introduced to work at different periods in time (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Generational characteristics influence every aspect of an individual’s life including how they spend money, what they value, their attitudes towards work and authority, what they need from work, and how they expect to meet those needs (Kupperschmidt, 2000). In the area of leadership development, it is critical to understand how these differences affect individuals learn and perform in organizations (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Generationally savvy managers are said to accommodate generational differences by understanding divergent needs and providing training and education that account for these differences in individual ability and initiative (Kupperschmidt, 2000). In the present study, I investigate whether individuals from distinct generations respond differently to instructional components and delivery methods of leadership development programs.

Previous research suggests that the current workforce is primarily represented by three distinct generations are currently in the workforce (Behrens, 2009). Baby Boomers those born in the years 1946-1964 are considered the largest segment of the population. Generation X, a group where a lot of research has been concentrated, are those who were born in the years 1965-1981. Finally the most recent generation to enter the workforce, often referred to as Millennials, Generation Y, or Nexters, were born after 1981 (Forman & Carlin, 2005). People who were born

before 1945 (often called traditionalists) are not discussed in this study as they are nearly out of the workforce.

The American Society for Training and Development reports that, “All generations require training, but each has its own focus, perspective, and expectations about that training” (Craft, Ware, & Kerschenbaum, 2007). Lynham (2000) suggests the field of leadership development could benefit from further purposeful and scholarly inquiry and study. Additionally, he states that there is a “need to gather up studies and understand leadership development and to conduct analyses of the evolution and nature or what is really known in this field” (Lyman, 2000, p. 5). The study of training and leadership have yet to come together to examine the expectations and perspectives from the different generations. This study contributes to prior literature by focusing on how the impact of different components of leadership development training can be influenced by generational differences. Understanding the differences in training provides valuable information for the creation and execution of leadership development for a diverse multi-generational workforce.

The study focuses on ten major instructional designs of leadership development programs that have been derived from extensive research on leadership development and training programs. The research includes reviews from literature, training handbooks, leadership organizations, and personal communications with leadership program developers. The ten components that are tested have been developed from a body of research, literature, and conversation with experts in the field of leadership development. The leadership components include formal and informal mentoring, action learning, job assignments, group discussion, frequent or intensive feedback from supervisors, 360-degree feedback, self-assessments,



simulations and reading materials. This research can have practical implications for leadership programs as it provides meaningful data about generational differences and suggests developmental strategies for organizations to cope with the challenge of a multi-generational workforce.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

Leadership has been defined as “the reciprocal process of mobilizing, by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers” (Burns, 1978, p. 425). Leadership development is defined as expanding the collective capacity of organizational members to engage effectively in leadership roles and process (McCauley & Velsor, 2004). In order to develop leaders one must first understand how they can be developed or if in fact leaders are born and not made. The active debate that occurs today is most often settled with a compromise that leaders are born and made. Some leaders are born with qualities and attributes that assist them in leadership effectiveness. At the same time early childhood development, education, and later on-the-job experiences encourage and nurture leadership abilities (Bass, 1990; Conger, 1993).

Leadership theory can be separated into five categories: trait, behavioral, situational, power influence, and transformational (Brungardt, 1997). Such categories focus on personality characteristics, behavior style, the amount of power and influence a leader has and whether leaders can create organizational culture. Historically, the traditional theory of leadership has focused on an individual basis. Following this thought, development occurs by training the individual to address their intrapersonal skills and abilities (Skarlicki & Latham, 1997). However, more recent research indicates that the concept of leadership was much more complex. More specifically, leadership can be viewed as a dynamic interaction between the leader, the social environment, and the organizational environment (Fielder, 1996).

With a better understand of leadership theory scholars turned to understanding how leaders are developed. Very few studies have considered the complexity of developing leaders and the interaction of genetic and developmental components that foster leadership at different points across the life span (Ilies, Arvey, & Bouchard, 2006). Instead, research has focused on clearly definite the set of processes used to enhance a leader, including leadership development, leadership education, and leadership training. Leadership development encompasses both training and education and can be thought of something that spans an individual's entire life (Brungardt, 1997). While leadership education is a more formal and structured method used in the development process and can be described as those learning techniques and environments created to enhance leadership abilities (Brungardt, 1997). Finally, leadership training is used even more specifically to enhance leadership for a specific task or job. Two theories dominate the process that enhances leadership in an organizational setting; leadership development theory and learning leadership theory (Brungardt, 1997). Leadership development theory is comprehensive and it considers all development occurring both naturally and through formal education. Leadership development theory also encompasses everything one learns through experience during various stages in one's life from childhood to adult. Learning leadership theory on the other hand is narrow in scope and focuses on the role formal education plays. The learning can still occur through the course of an individual's life but is focused on formal programs and training rather than leadership experiences. The most popular methods of delivering leadership education include lectures and discussion, role playing, simulation, case studies, behavioral modeling, sensitivity training, and mentoring. Both theories when used

together have indicated that experiential approaches and structured behavioral modeling are the most successful in meeting the desired training objectives (Bass, 1990).

### **Generational Theory**

Generational cohort theory argues that growing up at about the same time and experiencing events at about the same point in one's development leads to similar values, opinions, and life experiences for people within each cohort (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Generational differences are often examined in order to understand how groups interact in the workplace. The study of generational differences becomes even more important when exploring the concept of leadership development because generational characteristics may influence what a person values, how a person learns, and what tools are needed to teach them. Leadership development programs have evolved since they were first introduced into training regiments in order to fit the needs of a changing workplace. Now the next big group, the Millennials, as they are often referred to, is entering the workplace and quickly progressing up the ladder. To accommodate this generation, leadership development programs are once again continuing to change to suit the needs of aspiring leaders. One of the largest areas of growth has been the formal Leadership Development Program or LDPs for entry-level candidates.

Differences between generations are theorized to occur because of major influences in the environment within which early human socialization occurs. Such influences can impact the development of personality, values, beliefs, and expectations (Macky, Gardner, & Forsyth, 2008). The socio-cultural events can be anything from wars, disaster, technology, or changing patterns in the role of work and family. Such events cause individuals to develop characteristics that differentiate them from others and impacts their values, traits, attitudes, and motivation

when it comes to work. Previous generational studies have determined that work values are more influenced by generational experiences than by age and maturation (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Generational differences are also found among personality and motivational drivers (Wong et al., 2007). Specifically differences were found between power, affiliation, and progression. Such motivational drivers can impact the type of training that an individual chooses to engage in. Even more important is the link between motivation and training because of the impact it can have on the transfer of training principals. When it comes to leadership development and the various components used in training, motivational differences among generations can help explain why generational cohorts prefer different methods.

Additionally, generational cohorts can produce differences in psychological contracts, learning orientation, and motivation to learn (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008). Organizational commitment was also found to be lower for younger generations but high among the baby boomer generations (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008). Learning orientation was found to be high among Generation X compared to the Baby Boomers because of the instilled need for continuous learning and expansion of their skills and capabilities. Psychological contract differences can impact the preferences individuals from different generational cohorts have on training methods. Cole (1999) argues that it is important to provide adequate learning opportunities to retain managerial talent in younger generations. The psychological contract between an employee and an employer as well as the importance of career development is different among older and younger generations. Baby Boomers are likely to have stronger loyalty and believe that hard work is the key to job security and pay increases. While younger generations, such as Generation X and Millenials, believe that they must take their career into their own hands because they have

seen the impact of layoffs and job insecurity in their lifetime. Such expectations make younger generations more likely to take advantage of unexpected learning and developmental opportunities in order to be prepared if they ever left the organization (Solomon, 1992; Hirsch & Shanley, 1996).

A study that explores generational differences in leadership development training preferences is important because “Each generation has a unique perspective on the world of work. Its members tend to hold similar views about what comprises an attractive work environment, the nature of the team they would choose to be a part of and preferences for acquiring, digesting, organizing, and distilling information and skills” (Brova & Kroth, 2001). In this study, I examine major characteristics across different generational groups and discuss how these differences may affect individual ratings of the features of leadership development programs.

### *Baby Boomers*

Typically these individuals are categorized as those born between 1946-1964. The name comes from the family prosperity after World War II. Baby Boomers have been thought to value entitlement and the best in life (Kupperschmidt, 2000). From the workplace, Boomers have held positive attitudes, strengths in mentoring and effecting change (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Their youth was affected by war, protest, civil rights, and Woodstock. The effects of these events have determined attitudes on authority but yet also created loyalty for some. In addition, Baby Boomers are typically caring, often to the extreme, towards their children and parents.

### *Generation-Xers*

Individuals referred to as Generation X-ers are often categorized as those born in the early 1960s until the late 1970s (Kupperschmidt, 2000). The socio-cultural events for Generation X individuals are less prosperous than Baby Boomers, as insecurity, divorce, and diversity characterized their world (Juriewicz & Brown, 1998). Generation X-ers are known for bringing practical approaches to problem solving and are comfortable dealing with diversity, multi-tasking, and competition (Kupperschmidt, 2000). When it comes to work values, previous research has shown a strong desire to be promoted quickly (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Additionally, previous literature has reported large differences in work values between the two prominent groups of the last few decades, Baby Boomers and Generation X-ers (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

### *Millennials*

Individuals born after 1980 have been immersed in a culture of rapid change with the introduction of technology and main stream media. A millennial can be described as an Internet-shaped learner who actively seeks information and evaluates sources with competing opinions. Millennials grew up in a structured world being pampered by Baby Boomer parents. A strong desire for supporting structured relationships characterizes their learning needs (Howe, 2006). The strongest talent of this generation lies in their technological abilities. Millennial upbringing has required these individuals to use a broad range of technologies and resources to quickly accomplish a number of tasks (Gorman, Nelson, & Glassman 2004). The speed at which knowledge can be obtained and shared has been engrained in the minds of Millennials. The effects of a young professional's technology savvy on business productivity, innovation, and knowledge sharing is only beginning to take effect. Technological ability is such an advantage

held by Millennials that training and education must be designed for them. Additionally, the millennial generation has been cited as the most adaptable in terms of technological skills. Yet they still place a high value intrinsic aspects of work such as mentoring and training (Loughlin & Barling, 2001; Lyons, 2004). Researchers agree that future studies are needed to understand the values Millennials bring to the workforce and the changes their entrance will create (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Differences between generations are confounded with changes due to aging, experience, life stage and career stage, however, the fact that each generation was introduced to work at separate points in time suggests that different work values and learning styles may exist between generations (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Identifying differences between generations when it comes to training components provides valuable information for the development of training. Suiting the needs of a diverse workforce does not stop with gender or race and ethnicity but must include generational considerations. Preparing the next generation of leaders will require research as each generation has vast differences in work style, abilities, beliefs, and overall needs in a work environment (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008).

### **Leadership Development**

Former Deputy Minister and Cabinet Secretary of British Columbia Ken Dobell once said “Leadership cannot be taught, but can be developed” (Henein & Morissette, 2007, p. 96). Some practitioners with experience developing leadership programs have begun to adopt such an approach. They look at development as a 70, 20, 10 split. 70 percent of the development time revolves around on-the-job training. 20 percent of the time developing leaders involves mentoring. While only 10 percent of the time is formal classroom learning (Cinnick, 2010). The



Center for Creative Leadership believes that leader development can be enhanced by intervening in the learning, growth, and change process of individuals (McCauley et al., 2004).

Traditional programs involve classroom style lectures focused on defining skills and leadership theories. A gradual shift has been occurring from single session programs to multiple session programs as practitioners begin to understand that one session is insufficient to create lasting change (Conger, 1993). More recently companies like Ford Motor have implemented programs that incorporate a week long session in which competencies and improvements are introduced. Then an interval occurs to practice what an individual learned. Finally a follow-up session reviews progress and addresses changes for the future (Conger, 1993). The style is referred to as *course-break course design* and offers the opportunity for reflection and follow-up (Conger, 1993). Other multiple session designs focus on a variety of skills and abilities needed for a specific position and then spread each lesson over the span of several sessions. Learning development activities for leaders have traditionally involved competency-specific training courses. According to the Center for Creative Leadership, recently the shift has been made to include on-the-job activities, project assignments, leadership development rotational programs, coaching, and mentoring (McCauley et al., 2004, p.14).

Additional research describes successful programs are those comprised of five components: education, practice, self-discovery, support, and community (Henein & Morissette, 2007, p. 117). Education provides a leadership framework and understanding of the concepts. Education is often delivered through classroom style learning focuses on the purpose, role, and the responsibility of a leader (Henein & Morissette, 2007, p. 119). Historically programs have mainly focused on this component. The second component is practice and is a key driver of

development. Programs have and will continue to enhance in-class and out of class opportunities to assimilate new learning (Henein & Morissette, 2007, p. 121). Practice is considered a key component because it is how leadership is performed, skills become engrained, and judgment is refined. The third component, self-discovery, can be described as aligning intent with impact (Henein & Morissette, 2007, p. 123). Assessment instruments are one formal approach as well as 360-degree feedback mechanisms. Feedback is important because of the support it can provide and it gives participants a thorough understanding of their skills and abilities (Henein & Morissette, 2007, p. 123). The fourth component of leadership development is support. Support is defined as “the safety net that enables developing leaders to venture out of their comfort zone without falling apart” (Henein & Morissette, 2007, p. 124). Within a leadership development program, formal and informal mentoring is often a way to provide support while also furthering a person’s understanding of the program objectives (Solansky, 2010). The final component of leadership development is community. Community can be intertwined with culture but is defined as a sense of belonging.

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) defines leader development as, “the expansion of a person’s capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes. Leadership roles and processes are those that facilitate setting direction, creating alignment, and maintaining commitment in groups of people who share common work” (McCauley et al., 2004, p. 2) Three important ingredients have been identified by the CCL that combine to make development experiences powerful. The three components are assessment, challenge, and support (McCauley et al., 2004). Additionally, the Center for Creative Leadership has described the process of advancing leadership development as an effort that seeks to answer fundamental questions such as, “What does it take to be an effective leader? How do people learn important leadership skills

and perspectives? What are the best strategies for enhancing leadership development?”

(McCauley & Velsor, 2004).

This research explores a more specific concern in leadership development of creating programs that suit the varying needs and work values of multi-generational employees in order to assure the programs are delivered in the best way. Literature review and my interviews with specialists in the field of leadership development produced a list of ten components of leadership development and training programs. Table 1 summarizes the sources where the major components of leadership development programs are identified. These components include formal and informal mentoring, action learning, job assignments, group discussion, intensive or frequent feed back from supervisors, 360 degree feedback, self-assessments, simulations, and reading materials. Each of these components is examined to understand generational differences and the effectiveness of leadership development. Additionally, three specific methods of delivery, including virtual, self-study, and classroom are also discussed.

**Table 1. Components of Leadership Development Programs**

| Program Characteristic                         | Prior Literature | Interviews | Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development |
|--|------------------|------------|---|
| Formal Mentoring                               | X                |            | X   |
| Informal Mentoring                             | X                | X          |   |
| Action Learning                                | X                | X          | X   |
| Job Assignments                                | X                | X          | X   |
| Group Discussion                               |                  | X          | X   |
| Frequent or Intensive Feedback from Supervisor |                  | X          | X   |
| 360 degree feedback                            | X                | X          | X   |
| Self-Assessments                               |                  |            | X   |
| Simulations                                    |                  | X          | X   |
| Reading Materials                              |                  | X          | X   |

Note: X indicates that whether the topic of each program characteristic emerges from prior literature, interviews with specialists, and/or the Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development.

### *Mentoring*

Mentoring relationships have been considered a critical career resource for employees in any generation (Ragins & Cotton 1999). Mentors are described as, “individuals with advanced experience and knowledge who are committed to providing upward support and mobility to their protégé’s careers (Hunt & Michael, 1983). Within a leadership development program, the goal of mentoring is to provide a vehicle for interaction and communication that furthers the mentee’s understanding of the program objectives (Solansky, 2010). Previous research has cited that Mentoring relationships contribute to the protégé’s personal growth and professional development (Kram, 1985). Others have cited career satisfaction (Fagenson, 1989) and increased promotions (Dreher & Ash, 1990) as other positive outcomes of mentorship. Outcomes of mentoring in leadership development programs have been thoroughly researched, however generational differences have not been fully explored. When learning a highly dynamic concept

such as leadership, support from a mentor can be a valuable asset. Previous research has indicated that the mentors are a powerful tool for developing effective leaders when mentors are trained to effectively mentor and coach mentees and have committed time to the relationship (Solansky, 2010). Mentoring relationships provide employees with an understanding of leadership that is unmatched in any other capacity. Communication as well as support is necessary for the array of challenges that comes with such a dynamic concept. The presence of an experienced individual provides a leadership role model throughout one's career progression.

Mentoring can be categorized into two forms, formal and informal. Formal mentoring is traditionally created from a structured program in which individuals are paired based on similarities and interests. The relationship is typically sanctioned by the program for a set period of time. Informal mentoring is not structured and has been known to arise out of spontaneous circumstances and based off of mutual identification (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). People who have had informal mentoring have been shown to have more career outcomes for individuals than those without a mentor (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). This study distinguishes between the two types of mentoring informal and formal mentors in the survey to explore whether one type of mentoring is perceived as more effective for different generations.

When it comes to mentoring individuals from varying generations different techniques should be considered in order to suit their preferences and learning needs. According to research, Generation X individuals prefer an informal environment with flexibility and freedom. The mentoring relationships built informally offers the flexibility of an unstructured and friendly relationship built on their terms. The same can be said for Baby Boomers who have not had many opportunities for formalized programs but rather have benefited from the informal

mentoring relationships that have developed over the course of their careers. Mentoring preferences for the Millennial generation is different. Millennial generations prefer structured supportive environments for a relationship. Millennials are also highly demanding and crave personalized attention. A formalized mentor program can offer the system of structure and support in a personalized relationship that is ideal for the Millennial generation individuals.

Based on these generational differences this study hypothesizes Generation X and Baby Boomer individuals will rate informal mentoring higher than Millennials. The Millennial generation will rate their preference for formal mentoring higher than any other generation.

H1: Generation X and Baby Boomers will rate the importance of informal mentoring higher than the Millennial generation.

H2: The Millennial generation will rate the importance of formal mentoring higher than Generation X and Baby Boomers.

### *Action Learning*

Action learning can be described as an opportunity to use leadership skills and processes for a business need. The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) describes action learning as, “working on key business and leadership challenges...enables participants to apply classroom learning immediately” (McCauley et al., 2004, p.34). Research has described leadership processes as highly complex and has been recognized that experience is one of the most important teachers when it comes to leadership (Day, 2010; Fiedler, 1996). Fielder (1996) considers successful leadership is when organizations can design situations that allow leaders to utilize intellectual ability, expertise, and experience more effectively. Several researchers have

cited the importance of interactive, real life experience when it comes to learning. For leadership development, practice is considered the most critical factor (Henein & Morissette, 2007, p. 123).

When it comes to traditional classroom style approaches to leadership development, programs suffer from transfer of training. Participating in leadership development programs provide the opportunity to enhance skills in a variety of ways. Action learning creates a scenario around a challenge. Often managers will use a real business problem that needs to be solved. “Participating in leadership roles and processes is often the very source of the challenge needed for leadership development” (McCauley et al., 2004, p. 10). For instance, CCL cites that individuals do not learn how to negotiate without having practice in negotiations to test out different strategies. By engaging in a challenging role, people will interact with the environment in a way that produces the information, observations, and reactions needed to learn (McCauley et al., 2004). When considering the conceptual idea of training transfer, research has shown that work environments can limit an individual’s ability to transfer what they have learned (Ford et al., 1992). Additionally trainees can exhibit work decay when they do not get the opportunity to practice what they have learned (Pentland, 1989). The opportunity to actually perform leadership skills through the use of action learning is a key component to improving an individual’s ability to lead. Action learning has gained an increasingly wide application across the globe with more adopting the practice because it allows the opportunity for experience without consequences. In her study about leadership and the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Wisniewski (2010) argues that Millennial’s thrive on active learning in interactive settings. Action learning provides the perfect platform for Millennial learning because these individuals who strive for feedback get the necessary remarks on their abilities while appreciating the opportunity to practice skills without fear of the

consequences. With this knowledge, this study hypothesizes that Millennials will rate their preference for Action Learning higher than any other generation.

H3: Millennials will rate the importance of action learning higher than Generation X and Baby Boomers.

### *Job Assignments*

Job experience has been cited numerous times as the primary source of learning. Job assignments are also the oldest and most potent forms of leader development (McCauley & Velsor, 2004). Individuals who are offered the opportunity to participate in a job assignment are learning by doing and solving real problems. Job assignments are often conducted by placing individuals in an actual leadership role whether in a small group or work team (Giber, Carter & Goldsmith, 2000, p. 14). Awareness of the importance of job assignments continues to grow in most of the large organizations today. Placing future leaders into challenging roles allows them to develop as a leader naturally and face real problems head on. Assignments can range from an entirely new job, to a role on a project, or a portion of a job. The important part of a developmental job assignment is that it pushes an individual out of their comfort zone and requires them to think and act differently (McCauley et al., 2004). One of the key purposes of job assignments is to provide a challenge where leaders can learn. Practice is considered a key component because leadership is performed, skills become engrained, and judgment is refined. Learning in a job assignment can change how a leader makes decisions, takes action, manages relationships, solves problems, and assumes risk (McCauley et al., 2004). Typically the challenging job assignment will incorporate a system of support for the leader during the difficult learning process they face. Millennials have had an increasing opportunity to engage in such



rotational programs in the form of Leadership Development Programs or LDPs. LDPs are designed to offer short term job assignments in order for individuals to gain as much development in a few years time frame. LDPs are exclusive programs and are known for providing a fast track for entry-level candidates to progress up the corporate ladder. The LDP will expose candidates to as many as four rotations in different lines of business, locations, or roles in order to develop their skills especially their leadership as quickly as possible. LDPs are offered in many large organizations in fields such as Finance, Engineering, Human Resources, Marketing and many more (Cinnick, 2010). Because of the increasing popularity of such programs for entry-level Millennials this study hypothesizes that this will impact how the generation will rate the importance of job assignments as a component of leadership development. Additionally, Generation X who shares some similar feelings about career progression and the importance of experience will also rate the importance of job assignments high.

H4: Millennials and Generation X will rate the importance of job assignments higher than the Baby Boomer generation.

### ***Group Discussion***

Incorporating a group discussion within a leadership development program can come in many forms. Often it is a peer-group discussion with other participants about program concepts or challenges in leadership practice. Whether the discussion is in-person or via an online discussion board, discussion creates a forum for individuals to seek and provide informal coaching to peers. Ideas, best practices, and problems are shared while effective communication is practiced. Participants are typically facilitated by a discussion leader who may set the topic or

the time-period for the discussion. The concept is the same when the discussion becomes more technologically advanced using blogs, online discussion boards, or video threads. The advance in the medium in which the discussion is delivered provides greater access and can even increase the quality of the discussion.

Traditionally programs have placed an emphasis on the group discussion because it provides an opportunity to hear many points of view as well as share ideas. Before technology began to play an increasing role in training the Baby Boomer generation has mostly participated in traditional programs that utilize face-to-face group discussion. The Baby Boomer generation appreciates the conversation and ideas that come from sharing experiences (Ferkchalk, 2010). Given this preference, this study hypothesizes that Baby Boomers will rate the use of group discussion higher than any other generation.

H5: Baby Boomers were rate the importance of group discussion higher than Generation X and Millennials.

### ***Intensive or Frequent Feedback from Supervisors***

Assessment is considered a key element in leadership development and provides, “participants with a picture of their effectiveness in their current role and a benchmark for future development” (McCauley et al., 2004, p. 34). CCL describes assessment as an important component because it gives people an understanding of where they are now and their primary development needs (McCauley et al., 2004). Assessment of an individual’s skills can be best achieved through frequent feedback or intensive feedback in programs. Feedback can highlight gaps between performance and the ideal state, whether it is a personal goal or one required by the job. The data that results from feedback can increase self-confidence as well as motivation to

improve. Feedback Intensive Programs are described by the CCL as assessment center type data that is fed back to participants in a safe, supportive environment for developmental purposes. Specifically it is, “a comprehensive assessment of an individual’s leadership, generally in one or more sessions, using multiple lenses to view numerous aspects of personality and effectiveness (McCauley et al., 2004, p. 26). Ultimately the feedback both good and bad is used to help the individual develop to his or her full potential.

Millennials are one generation in which a yearly performance review just will not suffice. They seek out feedback to know where they stand and how they can improve (Fallon, 2009). They yearn for feedback and confirmation of abilities (Fallon, 2009). Millennial’s will develop quicker and more effectively as leaders with frequent feedback on their abilities and this study hypothesizes they will rate the use frequency of feedback higher than any generation.

H6: Millennials will rate the importance of frequent or intensive feedback from supervisors higher than Baby Boomers and Generation X.

### ***360 degree Feedback***

The most obvious goal of feedback is to increase an individual’s self-awareness so that improvements can be made (Atwater & Waldman, 1998). Feedback in leadership development has traditionally been incorporated into most leadership programs. A more specific form of feedback known as 360 degree feedback which provides a well-rounded picture of an individual’s capabilities. The term 360 degree refers to a systematic collection of opinions about a leader’s performance from a wide range of coworkers including supervisors, peers, and subordinates (McCauley et al., 2004). In some cases the feedback can come from friends in the

workplace or customers of the company. The view gives participants a panorama of perceptions to present a more complete picture of leadership strengths and weaknesses (McCauley et al., 2004). It provides an opportunity to understand how your performance is rated from coworkers with different expectations. 360 degree feedback is formally structured typically using a standard instrument which offers the privacy to be objective.

Similar to the Millennials, Generation X thrives on feedback and most have experienced the value of 360 degree feedback in the workforce. Although Millennials will again rate the use of 360 degree feedback highly because of their desire to improve based on feedback, Generation X will prefer the use of 360 degree feedback the most (Benedict, 2010). Additionally, the Baby Boomer Generation has also experienced the value of 360 degree feedback and appreciates being judged from a well-rounded perspective. They value the fairness in 360 degree feedback and will also rate it highly.

H7: Generation X and Baby Boomers will rate the importance of 360 Degree Feedback higher than the Millennial generation.

### *Self-Assessments*

Comprehensive assessment in leadership development will often include the use of self-assessments. Assessments are effective tools to provide an understanding of where individuals stand in relation to their leadership skills. Self-Assessment goes a step further and asks people to evaluate themselves for effectiveness and requires individuals to ask what can I do better? How am I doing relative to my goals? (McCauley et al., 2004). Self-Assessment can also come from previously validated testing instruments such as screeners for emotional intelligence and the leadership style batteries. Most often personality-based questionnaires are used to demonstrate a

person's preferred ways of interacting with the world. When multiple assessments are used the result is a deeper understanding of self and a foreshadowing of possible feedback from others. Self-Assessments are not typically used alone in Leadership Development Programs but are an effective component, especially when leaders lack relationship skills.

There is little literature or evidence on how generational differences will determine individual's preferences for Self-Assessments. The research will explore if there is in fact a difference between generational cohorts or if self-assessment preference are based on factors of goal orientation or leadership style. Given other research on generational differences and preferences this study hypothesizes that the importance of self-assessments will also show some differences based on generation.

H8: There are generational differences in rating the importance of self-assessments.

### *Simulations*

Simulations are exercises that replicate aspects of people's real-life jobs, situations, or environments (McCauley et al., 2004). The task being simulated can be small or large such as an interaction with subordinate or leading a merger. Individuals are often scored based on the best solution or scored on the process they took to get to a solution. Simulations can take minutes, hours, or even occur over the course of a few days. Simulations can be delivered both in-person or virtually. Virtually they can be presented via a computer simulation that uses fictitious people, often called avatars, so individuals can control their actions and words in an online simulated world. The programs are extremely advanced and are programmed to throw challenges at individuals throughout the duration. They are often more cost efficient than hiring raters or

assessors to score performance. The online simulations automatically generate a score report based on programmed rating scales. In addition, they provide the ability to simulate a broad range of scenarios without the limitation of actually creating a real-world setting. The online system can be used more frequently and for more advanced scenarios. The roles individuals may take on in simulation can be quite challenging such as an advanced leadership position during a difficult period for a company (McCauley et al., 2004). The learning during a simulation is similar to a job assignment or action learning experience. Individuals are able to practice leadership skills and test their abilities in the environment. It also provides feedback on performance that can be used to enhance leadership capabilities in the future.

Simulations are important components for the Millennial learner who has the opportunity to practice the skill without the fear of making costly mistakes. Increasing technology allows simulations to be more advanced and tailored to an individual's need. The inclusion of real work problems is something the Millennial generation is interested in tackling (Benedict, personal communication 2010). This perspective as well as the importance of being comfortable with technology, this study hypothesizes that Millennials will rate the use of simulations higher than either older generation.

H9: Millennials will rate the importance of simulations higher than Baby Boomers and Generation X.

### ***Reading Materials***

The amount of literature on leadership is infinite. Everything from best practices, to coping with challenges, future environments, and even relationship-oriented skills have been captured in a number of books and scholarly articles. Traditional Leadership Development

Programs have taken advantage of the body of work in the field of leadership and assigned various books or articles as part of leadership training. The books provide an in-depth look at the topic that could never be captured in the course of training program. Often the style or subtopic of leadership will relate directly the needs of the participants in the program. One book that has been used for a program training employees with non-positional leadership is one by the name of “You Don’t need a Title to be a Leader”. The book provides great insight and generates ideas and even action. The use of books or reading material in leadership development may certainly be supplemental to other components but it does represent a characteristic that has been employed in numerous programs over the years.

The Baby Boomer generation appreciates the use of printed materials in their leadership development training. Often assigning a book beforehand or between sessions is done so that the participants can explore the topic in more detail on their own time (Ferchalk, personal communication, 2010). The use of accompanying material is favored highly by the Baby Boomer generation because they desire to get as much value out of a training as possible (Deep, personal communication, 2010). Based on the values and desires of the Baby Boomer and Generation X, this study hypothesizes they will rate their preference for reading materials higher than the Millennial generation.

H10: Baby Boomers and Generation X will rate the importance of leadership reading materials higher than the Millennial generation.

## **Delivery Methods**

In addition to the components listed there are several deliver methods in which the components can be administered. The three delivery methods explored are virtual, self-study, and classroom.

### *Virtual*

Technology has reached the point where organizations are at a disadvantage when they do not employ time and cost saving devices that technology has made possible. Incorporating technology into programs has become a huge area of growth for training. Global companies now have the advantage of supporting all employee development through programs and offerings available via the Internet. Specific concepts that may have traditionally been offered in a classroom are now available at the click of a mouse. As demands in the workplace increase, time and access to facilities is limited. Technology can provide a flexible platform to showcase training to employees when they are able to learn. Virtual programs can often be started and stopped at the employee's leisure. They also may incorporate other mediums such as an online discussion board to ask questions during the session. The flexibility that virtual programs provide gives leadership program developers a number of useful learning tools. With the increasing cost advantage to incorporate technology into training, computer simulations, are replacing traditional in-person simulations. The capability to create an advanced scenario and scoring system software is being used in organizations for leadership development. Simulations, group discussions, and action learning can all be delivered in this way.

The Millennials familiarity with technology has been engrained in them since early development. The use of technology to find answers, infinite amounts of knowledge, and instant



access to unlimited resources is used by this generation every day. The younger generations often yearn for more technology in order to keep pace with the rapid increase in all business environments (Benedict, personal communication, 2010). In one study on leadership training the research found that technology assisted students when learning leadership skills (Wisniewski, 2010). This study hypothesizes that the Millennial generation will rate the use of virtual delivery the highest among any other generation. Additionally, Generation X understands the benefits of programs delivered virtually. They appreciate the availability of training instantly (Ferchalk, personal communication, 2010) and will rate the use of virtual delivery high.

H11: Millennials will rate the use of virtual delivery higher than Baby Boomers and Generation X.

### *Self-Study*

Self-Study can be described as self-based learning not held in a formal setting but rather paced by the participant perusing the training. Often self-study can be used with the reading materials component as programs provide access to leadership readings for participants to read on their own time. The Baby Boomers desire to master training programs and access information on the topic is evidence that they will appreciate the use of self-study in leadership training and this study hypothesizes that they will rate it higher than any other generation. Millennials on the other hand want real interactive learning. Providing them with books or online resources is not enough to suffice their training needs (Wisniewski, 2010). The Millennial generation will rate self-study lower than any other generation.

H12: Baby Boomers will rate the use of self-study higher than Generation X and Millennials.

### ***Classroom***

The delivery of leadership development in the classroom is thought of as traditional leadership education. The classroom based method can be described as instruction delivered primarily through an instructor within physical proximity, including the traditional classroom setting. With the increasing use of technology in training, classroom can also refer to any program delivered in house to a physical presence of participants. Group discussion, dimulations, and action learning can all be delivery in this way.

Classroom delivery is the most traditional form of training and has provided skills to member of the Baby Boomer generations for some period of time. The Baby Boomer generation wants to be immersed in what they are learning and not distracted as they may be in a virtual world. Additionally the personalized attention and professional approach leadership trainers take in a classroom setting is valued by members of the Baby Boomer generation more than any other (Deep, personal communication, 2010). It is hypothesized that these factors will cause Baby Boomers to rate the use of the classroom delivery higher than other generations.

H13: Baby Boomers will rate the use of classroom delivery higher than Generation X and Millennials.

### **Other Variables**

To test the proposed hypotheses, this study controls for several individual characteristics such as learning goal orientation, leadership styles, and demographics that have been discussed in prior literature. Learning Goal Orientation is positively connected to a higher motivation to

learn (Colquitt and Simmering, 1998), better training performance and better task performance (Brett and VandeWalle, 1999; Seijts et al, 2004). The use of Learning Goal Orientation will be an interesting addition to the study of leadership development components. Learning Goal Orientation is thought of as stable personality characteristics (Dweck, 1999). Goal orientations are believed to create different perceptual-cognitive frameworks for how individuals approach, interpret, and respond to achievement situations (e.g., Barron & Harackiewicz, 2000; Duda, 2001; Dweck, 1999). When it comes to this study the two most popular orientations in the achievement goal tradition are a mastery orientation and a performance orientation. A mastery orientation focuses on developing competence, gaining skill, and doing one's best, whereas a performance orientation focuses on establishing one's superiority over others (Janssen & Yperen, 2004).

Mastery orientation is when an individual believes that their attributes are changeable and dynamic. They genuinely feel that effort leads to improved performance. Individuals with mastery orientations may effect their preferences in leadership training mechanisms because of the strong desire to improve skills. Performance orientation stems from the belief that attributes are not changeable but rather fixed. Individuals with high performance orientation view working hard as an indicator for low competence (Dweck, 1999). A study by Janssen and Van Yperen (2004) looked at the difference between mastery orientation and performance orientation and found that employees with stronger mastery orientations are more effective on the job because they tend to establish higher-quality exchanges with their supervisors. For this reason learning goal orientation will be used as a control variable in the study.

Bowers and Seashore (1966) defined the task-centered dimension as one that refers to behavior in which the leader organizes and defines the relationships in groups, establishes patterns and channels of communication, and directs the work procedures. They maintain definite standards of performance and ask subordinates to follow rules and regulations. The task-oriented leader is viewed as strongly concerned with goals and performance-facilitative behaviors. An individual who is person-oriented is respectful to subordinates, emphasizes friendship and trust. Leaders who are person-oriented are focused on supporting their follows and engage in interactive behaviors (Bowers & Seashore, 1966). Leadership style will be used as a control variable as leadership style may be an alternative explanation as to why an individual prefers different components to leadership training.

**Table 2. Summary of Study Hypotheses**

| Training techniques (Variables)                 | Millennial Generation | Generation X | Baby Boomers |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
|   | Mean                  | Mean         | Mean         |
| Mentoring                                       |                       |              |              |
| Informal mentoring                              | Low                   | High         | High         |
| Formal mentoring                                | High                  | Low          | Low          |
| Action learning                                 | High                  | Low          | Low          |
| Job Assignments                                 | High                  | High         | Moderate     |
| Group Discussion                                | -                     | Moderate     | High         |
| Frequent or Intensive Feedback from Supervisors | Highest               | High         | Low          |
| 360 degree Feedback                             | High                  | High         | High         |
| Self-Assessment                                 | -                     | -            | -            |

|                              |          |          |        |
|------------------------------|----------|----------|--------|
| Simulations                  | Moderate | Low      | Low    |
| Leadership Reading Materials | Low      | Low      | High   |
| Virtual Delivery             | High     | Moderate | Lowest |
| Self-Study                   | Lowest   | Moderate | High   |
| Classroom Based              | Low      | Low      | High   |

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### *Participants and Procedures*

Study participants were recruited using convenience sampling at a large Northeastern University and the surrounding town. A variety of recruiting methods were used. Email messages were sent to students in Introduction courses in Labor Studies and Employment Relations as well as a more diverse sample of students involved with a large student philanthropy organization. Personal connections to individuals involved in professional organizations as well as the use of snowballing provided additional access to participants. Assistance from professionals interviewed for this research provided additional access to a population of employees from multiple generations.

Data were collected from surveys administered online. Participants were asked to answer 43 questions that took approximately 15 minutes to complete. The participants were asked to rate their preferences on different leadership development components and delivery methods. They were also asked if they previously attended leadership training and to what extent they have been involved in the programs. The survey also included general demographic questions, including age, race, gender, and education level as well as a section to provide comments on leadership development training. Participants were informed that the results would be used for research purposes only. Identifying information was removed before analyses were performed.

Responses from 159 individuals were obtained. Table 3 summarizes the major characteristics of individuals participated in this study. Approximately 61 percent of the sample

was female and 39 percent was male. The sample was not extremely diverse as 94 percent of participants reported being White or Caucasian. However, most of the sample was drawn from a large Northeastern University that has reported 73 percent of the population as White or Caucasian. In terms of education, the largest percentage in the sample, about 40 percent, had received a Bachelor's degree, with about 20% reporting having achieved a Master's degree and 30 percent reported having completed some college which in part reflects the number of current college students who participated in the study.

In terms of leadership development training, the sample reported that approximately 33 percent have only attended between 1-3 leadership development trainings, 25 percent attended between 4-9 sessions while 20 percent have never attended formal leadership development training. The amount of time spent in leadership development programs over the past three years varied with the largest group (31 percent) reported spending 1-4 days in training while 25 percent said they had not spent any time in the past 3 years in leadership development training.

**Table 3. Participant Demographics by Generation**

| Category   | Total | Generation Y | Generation X | Baby Boomers |
|--|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <i>Gender n=151</i>  |       |              |              |              |
| Male   | 39%   | 44%          | 25%          | 39%          |
| Female   | 61%   | 56%          | 75%          | 61%          |
| <i>Ethnicity n=148</i>                                     |       |              |              |              |
| White/Caucasian  | 94%   | 93%          | 96%          | 95%          |
| Hispanic/Latino  | 1%    | 1%           | 0%           | 0%           |
| African-American   | 2%    | 1%           | 4%           | 5%           |
| Asian/Pacific Islander                                     | 3%    | 6%           | 0%           | 0%           |
| <i>Education n=142</i>                                     |       |              |              |              |
| High School  | 5%    | 10%          | 0%           | 0%           |
| Some College   | 28%   | 48%          | 4%           | 6%           |
| Bachelor   | 38%   | 32%          | 48%          | 56%          |
| Master's   | 19%   | 9%           | 37%          | 32%          |
| Technical Training   | 1%    | 0%           | 4%           | 0%           |
| PhD  | 3%    | 0%           | 7%           | 6%           |
| <i>Leadership Development Program Experience n=151</i>     |       |              |              |              |
| 25 or more programs  | 4%    | 0%           | 14%          | 5%           |
| 16-24 programs   | 5%    | 1%           | 7%           | 10%          |
| 10-15 programs   | 13%   | 5%           | 24%          | 21%          |
| 4-9 programs   | 26%   | 23%          | 24%          | 33%          |
| 1-3 programs   | 33%   | 38%          | 24%          | 31%          |
| None   | 19%   | 33%          | 7%           | 0%           |
| <i>Time spent in Leadership Development Programs n=148</i> |       |              |              |              |
| 6 weeks or more  | 5%    | 6%           | 11%          | 0%           |
| 3-5 weeks  | 11%   | 10%          | 21%          | 5%           |
| 1-2 weeks  | 14%   | 9%           | 18%          | 24%          |
| 5-7 days   | 14%   | 10%          | 11%          | 26%          |
| 1-4 days   | 30%   | 30%          | 21%          | 37%          |
| None   | 25%   | 35%          | 18%          | 8%           |
| Sample size  | 159   | 82           | 29           | 41           |

\*81 reported cases for Millennials ethnicity and education

\*28 reported cases for Generation X gender and LD program length

\*27 reported cases for Generation X ethnicity and education

\*40 reported cases for Baby Boomer education

\*34 reported cases for Baby Boomer ethnicity

\*39 reported cases for Baby Boomer program experience

\*38 reported cases for Baby Boomer program length



## *Measures*

*Generational Differences:* The Generations in the study are separated into Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials. This will be the independent variable. For purposes of this study, the accepted age ranges are:

- Baby Boomers: Those born in the years 1946-1964. Individuals who reported ages 47-65 represented 27 percent of the sample (n=41).
- Generation X: Those born in years 1965-1981. Individuals who reported ages 30-46 represented 19.1 percent (n=29) of the sample
- Millennials: Those born in the years 1982-1993. Individuals who reported ages 18-29 represented the majority of the sample, 53.9 percent (n=82).

### *Leadership Development Preferences*

The survey collected data on the preferences of ten leadership development program components (formal and informal mentoring, action learning, job assignments, group discussion, intensive or frequent feed back from supervisors, 360 degree feedback, self-assessments, simulations, and reading materials) and three delivery styles (virtual, self-study, classroom based). Participants were provided with a brief description of each leadership development component and delivery style. The dependent variables are the measured importance of each individual leadership development component on a 5-point Likert scale (not important, less important, neutral importance, important, and extremely important), the forced-ranking of the participant's top three leadership development components, and the measured importance of each delivery method on a 5-point Likert scale (do not prefer, slightly prefer, neutral preference, moderately prefer, and strongly prefer) The mean and standard deviation were calculated for

each of the ten leadership development components and three delivery styles and compared across generations using simple regression.

### *Learning Goal Orientation*

The scale measuring learning orientation contained six items expressing the extent to which a person values learning at work. The questions measuring performance and mastery goal orientation were developed from Van Yperen and Janssen (2002) who studied individual differences in individual's goal orientation. The questions measuring learning goal orientation can be found in the survey in Appendix A. The internal consistency was adequate for both Mastery Orientation 0.70 and Performance Orientation 0.76.

### *Leadership Style*

The T-P Leadership Questionnaire was used as control variable in the study to understand individual's leadership style. The questionnaire was originally developed by Sergiovanni et al. (1969). This scale consists of 30 statements measuring major characteristics of leadership styles. The scale measures two dimensions of leadership behaviors, Task orientation (T) and people orientation (P). The questions measuring leadership styles can be found in the survey in Appendix A.

A person can be high or low on both of these measures. The Cronbach's alpha calculated for people-oriented and task-oriented leadership style items used in the questionnaire were found to have acceptable values, Task leadership 0.82 and People leadership 0.75 (Sergiovanni et al, 1969). Six questions, three measuring the person-oriented style and three measuring the task-oriented were used to gather data on leadership style.

Based on the definition of task-oriented leadership the behaviors a task-oriented leader exhibits can be captured in the three questions in the survey. A task-oriented person is one who is concerned with performance and following rules and regulations. Questions chosen to represent task-oriented leadership provide a good measure for these behaviors. Person-oriented leaders show strong concern for their follows. As measured in the questions, individuals who seldom act without consulting the group are high on person-oriented leadership. Person-oriented leaders are those who support decisions made by a group and consider any thoughts or ideas from them before acting. For person-oriented questions individuals are scored for each answer in which they report seldom or never. For task-oriented they are scored when they report always or frequently. The internal consistency was not adequate for the study as the questions chosen were measuring different aspects of leadership. The Cronbach's alpha for Task Orientation was .67 and for Relationship Orientation .54. Ultimately, the final analysis did not include leadership style as a control variable because this measure was not adequately validated.

### *Critical Incident*

The survey also provided the opportunity for participants to generate qualitative results in critical incident reports. Two open ended questions about critical incidents during the leadership development program or leadership experience asked participants to cite a time when the program helped their development and a time when it hindered it. The qualitative results are used to support statistically significant findings.

**Table 4. Measures**

| <b>Variables</b>                               | <b>Source</b>                  | <b>Items</b>                            | <b>Alpha</b>   | <b>Alpha in study sample</b>   |
|--|--------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Learning orientation                           | Van Yperen and Janssen, 2002   | Page 2:<br>Question 1,<br>Items 1-6     | 0.90 for mastery orientation<br><br>0.91 for performance orientation | 0.70 for mastery orientation<br><br>0.76 for performance orientation |
| Leadership Style Description<br>Questionnaire  | Stogdill, 1963<br><br>LBDQ VII | Page 1:<br><br>Question 1,<br>Items 1-6 | Task Leadership 0.82<br><br>People Leadership 0.75                   | Task Leadership 0.67<br><br>People Leadership 0.54                   |
| Leadership Development Program Characteristics | Self-Developed                 | Page 3:<br><br>Question 1-3             |  |  |
| Critical Incident Technique                    | Flanagan, 1954                 | Page 6:<br>Question 1-2                 |  |  |

## Chapter 4

### Results

To test the hypotheses, the study first uses independent samples tests to examine whether there are significant differences in the mean ratings between any two generational groups on each of the training components and delivery methods. Simple correlation analyses are then conducted. Finally, multiple regression analyses are used to account for potential effects due to control variables learning orientation and demographic differences.

Table 5 shows the results from the independent samples tests. Means and standard deviations of the variables are presented in the Table.

**Table 5. Results of independent samples tests**

| Training techniques<br>(Variables)     | Millennial<br>Generation<br>N=82 |      | Generation X<br>N=29 |      | Baby Boomers<br>N=41 |      | T-Test<br>Results* |
|--|----------------------------------|------|----------------------|------|----------------------|------|--------------------|
|  | Mean                             | S.D. | Mean                 | S.D. | Mean                 | S.D. |                    |
| Mentoring                              |                                  |      |                      |      |                      |      |                    |
| Informal mentoring<br>(H1)             | 3.91                             | .918 | 4.06                 | .961 | 3.95                 | .985 |                    |
| Formal mentoring<br>(H2)               | 3.57                             | 1.00 | 3.41                 | 1.11 | 3.07                 | 1.26 | .020 (M>BB)        |
| Action learning (H3)                   | 4.18                             | .833 | 4.13                 | .990 | 4.25                 | .839 |                    |
| Job Assignments (H4)                   | 3.82                             | .966 | 4.06                 | .842 | 3.80                 | .939 |                    |
| Group Discussion (H5)                  | 3.30                             | 1.01 | 3.31                 | 1.10 | 3.50                 | 1.06 |                    |
| Frequent or Intensive<br>Feedback from | 3.86                             | .926 | 3.75                 | .739 | 3.62                 | 1.16 |                    |

|                                    |      |      |      |      |      |      |                           |
|------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---------------------------|
| Supervisors (H6)                   |      |      |      |      |      |      |                           |
| 360 degree Feedback (H7)           | 3.57 | 1.01 | 3.72 | .882 | 3.35 | 1.31 |                           |
| Self-Assessment (H8)               | 2.92 | 1.13 | 3.06 | 1.16 | 2.87 | .991 |                           |
| Simulations (H9)                   | 3.17 | 1.12 | 2.96 | 1.17 | 2.80 | 1.18 | .094 (M>BB)               |
| Leadership Reading Materials (H10) | 2.60 | 1.10 | 3.17 | 1.00 | 3.02 | 1.02 | .049 (M<BB)<br>.018 (M<X) |
| Virtual Delivery (H11)             | 3.37 | 1.16 | 3.10 | 1.19 | 2.87 | 1.32 | .034 (M<BB)               |
| Self-Study (H12)                   | 3.39 | 1.11 | 3.34 | 1.23 | 3.5  | 1.13 |                           |
| Classroom Based (H13)              | 3.69 | 1.10 | 4.06 | 1.09 | 4.35 | .921 | .002 (M<BB)               |

\*Only statistically significant data was reported with  $p \leq .10$

M=Millennial; X=Generation X; BB=Baby Boomers

Three of the leadership program characteristics, formal mentoring, simulations, and leadership reading materials, have shown statistical significance difference between at least two of the generations. Formal mentoring programs were rated higher by millennial individuals as reported with a 3.57 mean than by Baby Boomers who report a 3.07 mean ( $p=.020$ ). Millennial individuals rated simulations higher than Baby Boomers with means of 3.17 and 2.80 respectively ( $p=.094$ ). In addition, Generation X and Baby Boomers rated leadership reading materials higher than Millennial individuals with reported means for Generation X as 3.17, Baby Boomers 3.02 and Millennials as 2.60 ( $p=.049$  for Millennial and Baby Boomers,  $p=.18$  for Millennials and Generation X).

Statistically significance differences were also found between delivery methods of leadership development programs for virtual and classroom based delivery. Millennials rated the use of virtual delivery higher than Baby Boomers with reported means of 3.37 and 2.87

respectively ( $p=.34$ ). However, Baby Boomers rated classroom delivery it higher than Millennials with means of 4.35 and 3.69 ( $p=.18$ ).

A simple correlation analysis was then used to better determine the relationships between the variables. Table 6 shows a simple correlation matrix between the variables captured in the survey, specifically the leadership development components.

**Table 6. Simple Correlation Analysis Matrix for Leadership Development Components**

|                                 | Correlations |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |         |       |          |         |      |    |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|-------|----------|---------|------|----|
|                                 | 1            | 2      | 3       | 4       | 5       | 6       | 7       | 8       | 9      | 10      | 11    | 12       | 13      | 14   | 15 |
| 1. Formal Mentor                |              |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |         |       |          |         |      |    |
| 2. Informal Mentor              | .001         |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |         |       |          |         |      |    |
| 3. Action Learning              | .078         | .134*  |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |         |       |          |         |      |    |
| 4. Job Assignment               | .022         | .111   | .361*** |         |         |         |         |         |        |         |       |          |         |      |    |
| 5. Group Discussion             | .192**       | .051   | .151*   | .206**  |         |         |         |         |        |         |       |          |         |      |    |
| 6. Frequent or Intensive        | .347***      | -.036  | .046    | .057    | .218**  |         |         |         |        |         |       |          |         |      |    |
| 7. 360 degree Feedback          | .251***      | .041   | .189**  | .117    | .154*   | .307*** |         |         |        |         |       |          |         |      |    |
| 8. Self-Assessments             | .104         | -.007  | .134*   | -.004   | .230**  | .301*** | .291*** |         |        |         |       |          |         |      |    |
| 9. Simulations                  | .342***      | -.065  | .081    | .261*** | .292*** | .258*** | .234**  | .285*** |        |         |       |          |         |      |    |
| 10. Leadership Reading Material | .111         | .162** | .122    | .140*   | .216**  | .257*** | .144*   | .191**  | .142*  |         |       |          |         |      |    |
| 11. Gender                      | .008         | -.031  | -.163** | .067    | .077    | .214**  | .158*   | .147*   | .183** | -.081   |       |          |         |      |    |
| 12. Education                   | -.082        | .226** | .040    | .175**  | .024    | -.050   | -.054   | .028    | -.074  | .176**  | .046  |          |         |      |    |
| 13. Generations                 | .187**       | -.025  | -.028   | -.004   | -.075   | .106    | .073    | .011    | .139*  | -.184** | -.063 | -.471*** |         |      |    |
| 14. Mastery Orientation         | .283***      | .000   | .104    | .050    | .113    | .217**  | .112    | .089    | .119   | .145    | .091  | -.041    | .083    |      |    |
| 15. PerfOrientation             | -.110        | -.016  | -.002   | -.035   | -.127   | -.044   | .048    | .007    | .074   | -.169** | -.109 | -.203**  | .342*** | .005 |    |

Notes: 1. Gender coded as 0=male 1=female

2. Education was coded as 1=High School 2=Some College 3=Bachelors Degree 4= Masters Degree 5= PhD

3. Generations were coded as 1=Baby Boomers 2=Generation X 3=Millennials

4. Significance levels: \*\*\* $\leq .001$ , \*\* $\leq .05$ , \* $\leq .10$

The starred items report statistically significant bivariate association between variables in this study. Considering the relationships among ratings on training program characteristics, twenty-eight of the forty-five correlations were statistically significant, ranging from 0.140 to 0.381. Of the most interest to the study is the significance between Generations and the leadership components. Generations are positively associated with the presence of formal mentoring (0.187,  $p \leq .05$ ) and simulation (0.139,  $p \leq 0.10$ ), while it is negatively associated with

the use of reading material ( $-0.184, p \leq 0.05$ ). Other variables such as gender are correlated with components such action learning, frequent feedback, 360 degree feedback, self-assessments and simulations. These simple correlations suggests that women prefer the use of both forms of feedback, self-assessments and simulations more than men, while men may prefer the use of action learning more than women. In terms of education, those with a higher education may have a higher their preference for informal mentoring programs, job assignments, and leadership reading materials.

The control variables of learning goal orientation also had a significant connection to a number of leadership development program components. These bivariate correlations suggest that individuals who are high on mastery orientation may prefer the use of formal mentoring programs ( $p \leq .001$ ) and frequent feedback ( $p \leq .05$ ) more than those who are low are mastery orientation. Finally individuals who scored low on performance orientation may prefer the use of leadership reading materials ( $p \leq .05$ ) more than those who scored high of performance Orientation.

The correlation matrix also highlighted a statistically significant bivariate relationship between generations. Individuals from the Millennial generation may have less education than older generations, which would be expected based on the difference in age. The Millennial generation may also rate high on performance orientation ( $p \leq .001$ )

The second correlation matrix (Table 7) looks at the methods of delivery for leadership development programs.



**Table 7. Simple Correlation Matrix for Leadership Delivery Methods**  
Correlations

|                    | 1      | 2       | 3        | 4     | 5        | 6       | 7    |
|--------------------|--------|---------|----------|-------|----------|---------|------|
| Virtual delivery   |        |         |          |       |          |         |      |
| Self-Study         | .128   |         |          |       |          |         |      |
| Classroom delivery | -.071  | -.245** |          |       |          |         |      |
| Gender             | .138*  | -.149*  | .118     |       |          |         |      |
| Education          | -.157* | -.005   | .255**   | .046  |          |         |      |
| Generations        | .178** | -.036   | -.260*** | -.063 | -.471*** |         |      |
| MasteryOrientation | .089   | .147*   | .076     | .091  | -.041    | .083    |      |
| PerfOrientation    | .093   | .054    | -.095    | -.109 | -.202**  | .342*** | .005 |

Notes: 1. Gender coded as 0=male 1=female

2. Education coded as 1=High School 2=Some College 3=Bachelors Degree 4= Masters Degree 5= PhD

3. Generations coded as 1=Baby Boomers 2=Generation X 3=Millennials

4. Significance levels: \*\*\* $\leq$ .001, \*\* $\leq$ .05, \* $\leq$ .10

Two of the three delivery methods have a significant bivariate correlation between generations. The correlation between virtual delivery and generations is 0.178 ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) and the correlation between classroom delivery and generations is -0.260 ( $p \leq 0.01$ ). The finding suggests that younger generations may prefer virtual delivery while older generations may prefer traditional, classroom-based delivery methods. The amount of education also has a correlation with classroom delivery where the more education a person has the more they may prefer the use of classroom delivery. When it comes to gender, females may prefer virtual delivery ( $p \leq 0.092$ ) while men may prefer the use of self-study ( $p \leq 0.066$ ).

These simple bivariate correlations do not consider any other control variables so it is difficult to draw any firm conclusion about these relationships. However, these findings do suggest that there may be a number of different factors, including generation cohort, that may have an influence on preferences for leadership development components and delivery style that are worth further research.

The last stage of the analysis attempts to explore whether some of these bivariate relationships, specifically those related to generation cohort and preference for leadership development components and delivery style, still exist once additional factors are controlled for. This was done using a multiple regression analysis. For this analysis, generational groups were coded as a set of dummy variables and Millennials were treated as the omitted category. Only formal mentoring, feedback from supervisors, reading materials were included in this analysis of leadership development components. The components informal mentoring, action learning, self-assessments and simulations did not report statistically significant regression models and summaries were not included. Additionally, job assignments, 360 degree feedback, and group discussions did not report any statistically significant findings at the bivariate level and summaries were not included. Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 3, Hypothesis 4, Hypothesis 5 , Hypothesis 7, Hypothesis 8, and Hypothesis 9 were not supported.

For the analysis of delivery method only classroom delivery was included in the regression here. Self-Study did not show a statistically significant bivariate relationship indicating Hypothesis 12 was not supported. While the virtual method of delivery did have a statistically significant bivariate relationship, the resulting regression model was not significant and therefore did not support Hypothesis 11 and was not included here. Below is the summary of the statistically significant findings.

**Table 8. Results of Multiple Regression Analyses**

| Variables               | Formal Mentoring |            | Feedback from Supervisor |            | Reading Materials |            | Classroom Delivery |            |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|
|                         | B                | Std. Error | B                        | Std. Error | B                 | Std. Error | B                  | Std. Error |
| Generation X            | -0.209           | 0.283      | -0.09                    | 0.247      | .636**            | 0.281      | -0.039             | 0.282      |
| Baby boomers            | -.568**          | 0.254      | -0.229                   | 0.222      | 0.379             | 0.252      | .446*              | 0.253      |
| Gender                  | -0.066           | 0.188      | .387**                   | 0.164      | -.331*            | 0.186      | 0.226              | 0.188      |
| Education               | -0.019           | 0.113      | -0.025                   | 0.099      | 0.042             | 0.112      | .264**             | 0.113      |
| Mastery orientation     | .357**           | 0.139      | .245**                   | 0.121      | 0.286             | 0.138      | 0.159              | 0.139      |
| Performance orientation | -.179**          | 0.075      | -0.064                   | 0.065      | -.110**           | 0.074      | 0.031              | 0.075      |
| Constant                | 2.202            | 1.013      | 2.043                    | 0.882      | 1.658             | 1.003      | 1.582              | 1.009      |
| F                       | 2.787**          |            | 2.239**                  |            | 3.053**           |            | 3.138**            |            |
| R2                      | 0.112            |            | 0.092                    |            | 0.122             |            | 0.125              |            |
| Adjusted R2             | 0.072            |            | 0.051                    |            | 0.082             |            | 0.085              |            |

Notes: 1. Gender coded as 0=male 1=female

2. Education coded as 1=High School 2=Some College 3=Bachelors Degree 4= Masters Degree 5= PhD

3. Generation X coded as 0=Baby Boomers 1=Generation X 0=Millennials

4. Baby Boomers coded as 1=Baby Boomers 0=Generation X 0=Millennials

5. Significance levels: \*\*\* $\leq$ .001, \*\* $\leq$ .05, \* $\leq$ .10

When looking at Formal Mentoring, the independent variables jointly accounted for 7.2 percent of all variance of formal mentoring rating. The overall prediction model is significant at .014 level. When effects of gender, education, and learning orientation are held constant, the Baby Boomer generation rated formal mentoring .568 lower (on the 5-likert scale ranging from not important to extremely important) than those in the Millennial generation ( $p \leq .01$ ). In addition, mastery and performance orientation is also a predictor in the rating of formal mentoring. When the other factors are held constant those high on mastery orientation rated formal mentoring .357 higher than those low on mastery orientation ( $p \leq .01$ ). Those high on

performance orientation rated formal mentoring .179 lower than those low on performance orientation ( $p \leq .01$ ). However, a significant difference between Millennials and Generation X in regards to formal mentoring is not observed. Hypothesis 2 is partially supported.

For feedback from supervisors, the independent variables jointly account for 5.1 percent of the variance. The overall prediction model is significant at the .048 level. Gender is a statistically significant predictor of the rating of frequent or intensive feedback from a supervisor ( $p \leq .01$ ). When generation, education, and learning orientation are held constant, rating of feedback by females is .387 higher than that of males on the 5- point Likert scale ( $p \leq .01$ ). Similarly, mastery orientation is statistically significant to frequent feedback with those high on mastery orientation rating the use of frequent feedback .245 points higher than those who are low on mastery orientation ( $p \leq .01$ ). Hypothesis 6 is not supported.

For the component reading materials, the independent variable jointly accounted for 8.2 percent of all variance of leadership reading material. The overall prediction model is significant at .008 level. Generation X rated the use of Reading Materials .636 points higher than Millennials ( $p \leq .01$ ). Gender is a predictor of reading material ratings as males prefer the use more than females by .331 points ( $p \leq .05$ ). Performance orientation is also a significant predictor of ratings on reading materials for those high on performance orientation tend to rate reading materials low. ( $p \leq .01$ ). There is no significant difference between Millennials and Baby Boomers. Therefore, Hypothesis 10 is partially supported.

For classroom delivery, the independent variables jointly accounted for 8.5 percent of all variance of classroom delivery. The overall prediction model is significant at .007 level. When the effects of gender, education and learning orientation are held constant, Baby Boomers rate

the use of classroom delivery .446 points higher than Millennials ( $p \leq .01$ ). In addition, education is also statistically significant. One unit change in education is associated with a .264 point increase in classroom delivery ( $p \leq .01$ ). Hypothesis 13 is partially supported.

Additional findings include that 20 percent of Millennials ranked frequent or intensive feedback as the most important component for leadership development while 17 percent of Generation X ranked frequent or intensive feedback as the most important component for Leadership Development. Action learning received the highest ranking among all generations as 60 percent of the sample ranked it as one of the top three most important components.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

This research began with many ideas about the differences between generation cohorts. There is a significant amount of research on the nuances between the Baby Boomers and Generation X as well as a lot of cautionary reports about the vast differences that the Millennial generation will bring to the workplace. Prior literature has reported differences in personality, work values, and work styles but has not focused much on the differences in terms of leadership. While this study did not provide a lot of statistical evidence to support vast differences between generation cohorts in terms of leadership development and delivery preferences, it did provide an initial opportunity to explore how generational differences may have some role in leadership development and training.

Two components of leadership development, formal mentoring and leadership reading materials have statistically significant results in terms of generational differences after accounting for control variables. The hypotheses tested for formal mentoring and reading materials were not fully supported as there was no evidence for significance between all three generations, but findings do suggest that there may be some differences between at least two of the generations for these components which may be important to consider in the development of leadership training programs.

Formal mentoring programs did rate higher among Millennials than the Baby Boomers. The results support the initial hypothesis that Millennials will rate formal mentoring programs higher. This is consistent with other research that has suggested that the Millennial generation prefers structured, supportive environments for a relationship. Millennials are also highly

demanding and crave personalized attention. When it comes to leadership development training the use of a formalized mentor program can offer the system of structure and support in a personalized relationship that is ideal for Millennial generation individuals. 67 percent of Millennials surveyed reported the use of formal mentoring programs in leadership development as either very important or extremely important to their development as a leader and 40 percent of Millennials ranked Formal Mentoring as one of top three components in terms of importance. The phenomenon can be attributed to the commonplace of formal mentoring programs many Millennials experience through organizations or academic programs. Formal programs bring together individuals who want to mutually benefit from a relationship and therefore provide an incentive to create a meaningful connection.

Baby Boomers may have rated the use of formal mentoring less important because over the course of their career they have experienced the importance of informal mentoring. Although there were no statistically significant differences when it came to informal mentoring and generation cohort, there was some statistical evidence that suggested the more education a person had the higher they rated the importance of informal mentoring. 75 percent of Baby Boomers in the study reported the use of informal mentoring as very important or extremely important while only 50 percent reported the same for formal mentoring. Qualitative data reported some Baby Boomer individuals described a formal Mentor program as “forced”. Informal mentoring was described as a beneficial opportunity to seek out an individual that would support and understand individual needs.” In addition, the use of formal mentoring is becoming more popular and established in different work environments. Millennials are the first group reaping the majority

of the benefits from such programs at the beginning of their careers and see it as a benefit and not something that is forced.

In terms of structuring a leadership development program, the evidence supports implementing a formalized mentoring program with structure and support for Millennial individuals. The use of a formal mentor can help Millennial individuals navigate the role of being a leader in an organization and provide the right amount of structured support and feedback in order to be successful in a leadership role. However, there is still a need for informal mentoring in leadership development. Individuals of all generations should take the initiative to seek out informal mentors that they can connect with in a personalized way. Informal mentors can support an individual's needs and leadership growth.

Reading materials in leadership development programs rated higher among Generation X individuals than Millennials. The results support the notion that Millennials are hands on individuals that want real experiences and opportunities to practice leadership skills. The results suggests the Generation X cohort desires to learn as much about a topic as possible and enjoys the accompaniment of reading materials in a training session. This will become important for Training and Development coordinators to understand the differences between these two generations as they begin to mix together in increasing numbers in the workplace. When assigning a book to accompany other development components or when offering additional literature on the topic, Human Resource professionals need to first understand the needs of the audience. Generation X may embrace the additional reading but the Millennials may prefer more hands on components such as simulations and action learning.



The material and the training components are very important in leadership development, however, the way components are delivered can also prove to cause differing opinions and preferences. Baby Boomers rated the importance of Classroom learning higher than Millennials. As it has been suggested, classroom lectures are not the preference for Millennials even when it comes to traditional college courses, perhaps because they have grown up during a period of time when there has been an expanding variety of teaching methods, including technology. Instead, Millennials often prefer a more hands on experiential learning through a variety of methods. The findings from this study suggest that these learning preferences remain consistent when also learning about leadership. Millennials seem to prefer to experience learning in an interactive way through practical application.

However, Baby Boomers have been exposed to traditional classroom training throughout their careers. The Baby Boomer generation wants to be immersed in what they are learning and may not want the additional distractions or challenges they may experience in a virtual world. Additionally the personalized attention and professional approach leadership trainers take in a classroom setting seems to be valued by members of the Baby Boomer generation. These differences are important to consider when designing offerings and determining the best method of delivery.

Looking closer at differences between the ratings of leadership development programs both control variables of learning goal orientation can also suggest an individual's preference for formal mentoring, frequent feedback and leadership reading materials. Individuals who are high on mastery orientation believe they have control to enhance their skills through learning. Those who report a high mastery orientation rated the importance of formal mentoring and feedback

high because of the opportunities support and feedback can provide to growth. Participants who believe they can change desire to seek out the opportunities that will help them to succeed.

### *Limitations*

The first limitation is the generalizability of the study to a diverse population. The sample collected was not very diverse as 94 percent reported being White Caucasian. However, the results of the study can be generalized to a homogenous population of White Caucasian. An additional limitation comes from the survey sample size. The sample size used was not evenly distributed between generation cohorts and was obtained through convenience sampling which has limitations on the ability to generalize the study to the larger workforce population.

Additionally the study provides a great opportunity to explore generational differences in a cross-sectional way. However, true generational differences are best studied through longitudinal research. Studying the changes over time can separate the effects of generation, age, and other variables (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). In addition, there is ongoing debate on the conceptualization and measurement of generational differences. In this study, splitting of generations was based on previous literature on the birth years. One can make the argument that someone born in 1981 may not be dramatically different from someone born in 1982, however, those individuals would fall into two different generational cohorts.

### *Implications for future research*

The project has many theoretical and practical implications. First off the Millennial generation is just beginning to be studied. Theories about the generation's abilities and needs need to be statistically verified. The study represents one of these exploratory inquiries into the

topic. Also leadership development programs are becoming increasingly more important and are being offered to wider audiences. These audiences can include employees from all generations. Having a more comprehensive understanding of what elements of training are the most important and effective will be a crucial area to explore in the coming years. While this study did suggest some leadership development components do seem to differ based on generational cohorts, the statistical power of these predictions is somewhat weak. These results indicate that there needs to be further research to identify a more relevant set of variables to explain ratings of training components and delivery methods. Some future variables to consider are industry in which the development is taking place. Some of the informational interviews include leadership experts from higher education while other practitioners provided development techniques used in the technology industry. The difference between the methods used by industry was obvious which suggests a potential variable to include in future study. Similar to the industry, the educational background such as academic major could also play a role in preferences. Another interesting variable that should be included in future study is experience. Capturing the amount of years in a job or holding a leadership role could play a significant effect in how the individual learns about leadership. Collecting data from a participants about their background and experience would provide additional details that could be important to the study of leadership development.

Other relevant variables to consider that are very important to training in particular is the effectiveness of the program. Effectiveness is measured in many ways but some measures could include the ability of the trainer, the length of the program, and the design of the program. The increasing emphasis placed on measuring training effectiveness will make the inclusion of such variables easier to collect in the future.

### *Implications for practice*

Action learning was rated as the highest importance by all three individual generations. The interviews from professionals in leadership development training programs reported action learning as the crux of their Leadership Development Programs. By providing individuals a real opportunity to supervise 50 people, solve a legitimate problem, or make a business decision they have the opportunity to learn, grow, and develop as leaders. Action learning is less structured and allows individuals find their own best practice leadership rather than listen to someone tell them about leadership. From the critical incident questions, many individuals noted the importance of action learning. When answering the question about a helpful incident in their development respondents reported:

- *“Substituting for someone during a critical time in a project. I took a risk and showed leadership”.*
- *“Being promoted into a challenging position that I was not quite ready for”.*
- *“I was sent to a site in which my company works that was having some problems. I was asked to go fix the problems. I felt my company entrusted me as a leader to fix these problems and create solutions. It made me feel good that I was respected as someone who could be responsible for this.”*
- *“The best experience I have gained as a leader is being put in charge of a group with a high-impact goal to deliver. I was in charge of an objective that was critical to my organization's success. Being held accountable for the deliverable forced me to learn on the job how to lead effectively to achieve the goal.”*

By putting an individual in a challenging, unfamiliar situation it forces them to display leadership skills and develop quickly in order to meet the needs of the situation. Action learning is a great inclusion to all Leadership Development Programs regardless of the generational cohort of participants.

Simulations were not significantly different by generation, but women did in fact rate the importance of simulations higher than men. Also there was interesting qualitative data that supported the importance of simulations in Leadership Development Programs. One participant described an important component to their development:

*“Simulation experiences where we were forced to take on different roles of the group. We rotated roles therefore we each got to see the different aspects of being a part of that group. Knowing what it is like to be a member of the group allows you to connect better when you move up the rankings to be a leader, if you can identify with your staff/team and empathize with them you are more likely to succeed and motivate them to follow you”.*

Simulations provide the benefit of experience without fear of permanent damage but rather an opportunity to learn from mistakes. They also provide an alternative solution to geographic or cost challenges.

Self-Assessments rate very low for all generations. Such findings may be attributed to the lack of follow-up or formal explanation of self-assessment findings. Many tests or examinations may not be accompanied by a follow-up session on what the findings actually mean or how to improve on them. Organizations wishing to incorporate such assessments should consider

including a formal method for understanding the evaluation and a system for practical application and follow-up.

Although there were not any statistically significant differences between generations and 360 Degree Feedback it was still a highly rated component among all groups. In addition, the qualitative data provided consistent remarks about the benefits that feedback has played in an individual's development as a leader. For instance one member reported the most important part of their leadership development was the 360 degree feedback. "I asked my colleagues to do a 360 review on me and used the responses to help improve my relationships with others." Another individual reported, "At a previous job I had a 360 evaluation from peers, supervisors and subordinates. It truly showed areas of strength and weaknesses. It allowed me the opportunity to look at myself through the eyes of others and make positive changes."

A lot of the comments also focused on the importance of frequent feedback as a positive improvement on one's leadership development. A Generation X member reported that the most important experience in their development as a leader was "informal and regular feedback sessions with an immediate supervisor". Even more interesting the same individual reported that the experience that hindered their development the most was when "A supervisor held feedback from me for an extended period of time and then used it against me in a review". In addition, 25 percent of respondents ranked frequent feedback as the most important component to leadership development. It was the most commonly reported answer for the most important component. Feedback was also rated higher more frequently for females who wanted the opportunity to understand weaknesses and improve in order to succeed in an organization.

The data and comments provide important insight into how feedback should be conducted specifically in terms of leadership development. Reports from supervisors, peers, and subordinates on leadership abilities should be provided to individuals promptly, in detail, and often. Waiting long after an incident occurs does not help the individual improve nor does it help the organization improve the skills of its employees. The best practice for incorporating feedback into leadership development programs is do it often and include an extensive report on skills and abilities in which the individual can improve.

Understanding how differences may affect learning and development can provide insight on how to create best practices for a leadership development program. This study provided an important start to the research on leadership development programs in regards to the potential challenges of a multi-generational workforce. As more companies are increasing their investment in talent, particularly in leadership development programs, the data provides important insight about the types of training components that should be considered and included.

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## Appendix A: Leadership Development Survey

Page 1

### Implied Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research The Pennsylvania State University

#### Title of Project: Leadership Development Programs and Generational Differences

Principal Investigator: Valerie Smolter, Graduate Student  
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University Park, PA 16802  
(412)-979-3855; [vrs5021@psu.edu](mailto:vrs5021@psu.edu)

Advisor: Xiangmin (Helen) Liu, Ph.D  
003 Keller Building  
University Park, PA 16802  
(814)-865-5560; [xul16@psu.edu](mailto:xul16@psu.edu)

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research study is to explore how generational differences impact an individual's preferences for leadership development training. Also of interest is what techniques of leadership development training are the most important to individuals.
2. Procedures to be followed: You will be asked to answer 43 questions on a survey.
3. Duration: It will take about 15 minutes to complete the survey.
4. Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. The survey does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared because your name is in no way linked to your responses.
5. Right to Ask Questions: Please contact Valerie Smolter at 412-979-3855 or [vrs5021@psu.edu](mailto:vrs5021@psu.edu) with questions or concerns about this study.
6. Voluntary Participation: Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.
7. You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.
8. Completion and return of the survey implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to take part in the research. Please print off this form for your records or future reference.



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## **Leadership Development Programs and Generational Differences**

What is this survey about?

The purpose of this research is to explore the generational differences in leadership development components. Your participation is extremely important as it is the only way that consistent and accurate data on this important topic can be obtained.

Who will see my answers?

- The information you provide will be treated as strictly confidential. We guarantee that no one outside of our research team will ever have access to your responses.
- We will analyze the findings in a way that no one individual or organization may be identified.

How do I complete the questionnaire?

- Please complete the questionnaire completely and honestly.
- Occasionally you will find items that do not quite fit your circumstances. In this case, give the answer closest to your views.
- Feel free to add any additional comments you think would be useful in the final comment box or by email to the researcher.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study please contact Valerie Smolter  
vrs5021@psu.edu Suite 003 Keller Building University Park, PA 16801 or at 412-979-3855

Leadership Development programs have offered many techniques and delivery methods in order to effectively develop emerging leaders. In this section, you will provide answers based on your personal preferences of various leadership training techniques.

**1. In this section, several leadership development techniques are highlighted. Please rate how important each leadership development component is to your personal growth as a leader.**

|  | Not Important | Less Important | Neutral Importance | Important | Extremely Important |
|--|---------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Formal Mentor: individual assigned to provide support and guidance during leadership development training  | 1             | 2              | 3                  | 4         | 5                   |
| Informal Mentor: supportive connection that arises out of spontaneous circumstances and is based off of mutual identification  | 1             | 2              | 3                  | 4         | 5                   |
| Leadership Reading<br>Material: access to literature, readings, blogs, books etc. that provide a deeper understanding of leadership as it relates to you in the organization                       | 1             | 2              | 3                  | 4         | 5                   |
| Action Learning: opportunity to use leadership skills by addressing a business need (ex. solving a real problem or developing a new product)   | 1             | 2              | 3                  | 4         | 5                   |
| Job Assignment: an opportunity to hold a leadership role as part of a developmental program  | 1             | 2              | 3                  | 4         | 5                   |
| Group Discussion: a forum for individuals to seek and provide informal coaching to peers and share ideas and best practices of leadership.   | 1             | 2              | 3                  | 4         | 5                   |
| Frequent or Intensive Feedback from Supervisor: comprehensive assessment and performance review given often during leadership development typically at least once a quarter but usually more often | 1             | 2              | 3                  | 4         | 5                   |
| 360 degree Feedback: a systematic collection of opinions about a leader's performance from a wide range of coworkers including supervisors, peers, and subordinates                                | 1             | 2              | 3                  | 4         | 5                   |
| Self-Assessments: testing instruments such as personality tests that provide an understanding  | 1             | 2              | 3                  | 4         | 5                   |
| Simulations: exercises that replicate aspects of people's real-life jobs, situations, or environments.   | 1             | 2              | 3                  | 4         | 5                   |

**In this section you will rank the top three components based on how important they are to your personal development as a leader. Please only choose the top three and use the drop down box to indicate 1, 2, or 3.**

**3. Leadership Training techniques can be delivered in various ways. In this section you will indicate how strongly you prefer each of the following deliver methods of leadership development training.**

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Formal Mentor: individual assigned to provide support and guidance during leadership development training  | _____ |
| Informal Mentor: supportive connection that arises out of spontaneous circumstances and is based off of mutual identification  | _____ |
| Leadership Reading Material: access to literature, readings, blogs, books etc. that provide a deeper understanding of leadership as it relates to you in the organization                          | _____ |
| Action Learning: opportunity to use leadership skills by addressing a business need (ex. solving a real problem or developing a new product)   | _____ |
| Job Assignment: an opportunity to hold a leadership role as part of a developmental program  | _____ |
| Group Discussion: a forum for individuals to seek and provide informal coaching to peers and share ideas and best practices of leadership.   | _____ |
| Frequent or Intensive Feedback from Supervisor: comprehensive assessment and performance review given often during leadership development typically at least once a quarter but usually more often | _____ |
| 360 degree Feedback: a systematic collection of opinions about a leader's performance from a wide range of coworkers including supervisors, peers, and subordinates                                | _____ |
| Self-Assessments: testing instruments such as personality tests that provide an understanding  | _____ |
| Simulations: exercises that replicate aspects of people's real-life jobs, situations, or environments.   | _____ |

|                    | <b>Do not<br/>Prefer</b> | <b>Slightly<br/>Prefer</b> | <b>Neutral<br/>Preference</b> | <b>Moderately<br/>Prefer</b> | <b>Strongly Prefer</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Virtual Delivery   | 1                        | 2                          | 3                             | 4                            | 5                      |
| Self-Study         | 1                        | 2                          | 3                             | 4                            | 5                      |
| Classroom Delivery | 1                        | 2                          | 3                             | 4                            | 5                      |

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Leadership Development Training can occur in many forms. In this section think specifically about any experience you may have had learning about specific leadership skills or in formal leadership training.

**1. How many leadership development training programs have you attended?**

- More than 25
- 16-24
- 10-15
- 4-9
- 1-3
- I have not attended any leadership development programs.
- Other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

**2. How many days have you spent in Leadership Development Training Programs in the past 3 years?**

- 6 weeks or more
- 3-5 weeks
- 1-2 weeks
- 5-7 days
- 1-4 days
- I have not spent anytime Leadership Development Training in the past three years.
- Other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

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**Different types of people develop differing leadership styles. In this section, we would like to understand what kind of leadership style and behaviors you engage in. Please indicate how often you would perform the following statements as a leader of a group.**

|  | Never | Seldom | Occasionally | Frequent | Always |
|--|-------|--------|--------------|----------|--------|
| I would urge the group to beat its previous record                     | 1     | 2      | 3            | 4        | 5      |
| I would push for increased production/output.                          | 1     | 2      | 3            | 4        | 5      |
| I would ask the group members to work harder.                          | 1     | 2      | 3            | 4        | 5      |
| I would be reluctant to allow the group members any freedom of action. | 1     | 2      | 3            | 4        | 5      |
| I would refuse to explain my actions.                                  | 1     | 2      | 3            | 4        | 5      |
| I would act without consulting the group members.                      | 1     | 2      | 3            | 4        | 5      |

**1. Different types of people have different learning orientations. In this section please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements when feel successful on your job.**

|  | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Somewhat Disagree</b> | <b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b> | <b>Somewhat Agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Strongly Agree</b> |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| I acquire new knowledge or learn a new skill by trying hard. | 1                        | 2               | 3                        | 4                                | 5                     | 6            | 7                     |
| I master new knowledge or a new skill.                       | 1                        | 2               | 3                        | 4                                | 5                     | 6            | 7                     |
| I learn something that motivates me to continue.             | 1                        | 2               | 3                        | 4                                | 5                     | 6            | 7                     |
| I perform better than my colleagues.                         | 1                        | 2               | 3                        | 4                                | 5                     | 6            | 7                     |
| Others cannot do as well as me.                              | 1                        | 2               | 3                        | 4                                | 5                     | 6            | 7                     |
| Others mess up and I do not.                                 | 1                        | 2               | 3                        | 4                                | 5                     | 6            | 7                     |

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In order to study generational differences in leadership development training preferences please answer the following demographic questions.

**1. Age \_\_\_\_\_**

**2. Gender**

- Male
- Female

**3. What is your ethnicity?**

- White/Caucasian
- Hispanic/Latino
- African-American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Native American Indian

**4. What is highest level of education you have achieved?**

- High School
- Some College
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- PhD
- Technical Training
- High School

**5. What is your current job title? Please specify.**

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The section will capture qualitative data about your experience with Leadership Development Programs.

**Think of experiences you have had in your development as a leader. Describe one incident throughout your development that you believe was helpful in contributing to your success and aiding in your growth as a leader.**

**Describe the incident and any features about the program, training, or experience that lead to this feeling.**

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**Think of experiences you have had in your development as a leader. Describe one incident during your leadership development program that you believe hindered rather than helped with regard to the success of your leadership.**

**Describe the incident and any features about the program, training, or experience that lead to this feeling.**

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**Please provide any additional comments or remarks about the survey or leadership development training and delivery.**

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Thank you for your participation in this study. If you have any additional questions, comments, or concerns please contact Valerie Smolter at vrs5021@psu.edu or 412-979-3855.

## Appendix B: Interview Transcripts

### Table 9. Interview Summary

| Interviewees     | Occupation/Job title   | Industry                                   | Topic of Interviews   | Length of interviews  | Interview methods | Interview Date |
|------------------|--|--|---|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Diane Brown      | Manager, Human Resource Development Center Penn State University       | Higher Education, Training and Development | HRDC Leadership Program offerings, her experience as a trainer    | 35 minutes            | Telephone         | 7/26/10        |
| Warren Cinnick   | Director, People and Change Advisory Services, PwC                     | Consulting                                 | Leadership Development Programs and anticipated changes           | 1 hour and 30 minutes | Telephone         | 8/9/10         |
| Tonushree Mondal | Principal, Mercer Human Capital Consulting                             | Consulting                                 | Approaches to Leadership Development                              | 1 hour                | Face to Face      | 8/9/10         |
| Anne Benedict    | Global Marketing Services, Leadership Development                      | Information Technology, Marketing          | Current Leadership Development Programs                           | 1 hour                | Telephone         | 8/30/10        |
| Debra Vila       | Leadership Development, Mercer   | Consulting                                 | Current Leadership Program offerings                              | 30 minutes            | Telephone         | 9/17/10        |
| Kerrie Ferchalk  | Training and Development, Human Resource Development Center Penn State | Higher Education, Training and Development | HRDC Program offerings, new components for Leadership Development | 1 hour                | Face to face      | 12/14/10       |
| Sam Deep         | Leadership Consultant/Owner Sam Deep Consulting                        | Consulting                                 | Components of Leadership Development Programs                     | 1 hour                | Face to Face      | 12/21/10       |
| Diane Brown      | Manager, Human Resource Development Center Penn State University       | Higher Education, Training and Development | Effective Leadership Program Design, Changes in Design            | 1 hour                | Telephone         | 1/5/2011       |

**Interview 1: Diane Brown****Topic of Interview: Human Resource Development Center Leadership Training Programs****Date of Interview: 7/26/2010**

- I. Offerings of the Penn State Human Resource Development Center
  - a. How programs are designed
    - i. Effectiveness
    - ii. Characteristics of participants
  - b. What is involved in them
    - i. Length of Time
    - ii. Leadership Readings
- II. How Training is Measured
  - a. Participant Ratings
  - b. Supervisor Ratings
  - c. Future Behaviors

**Interview 2: Warren Cinnick, Director, People and Change Advisory Services, PwC****Topic of Interview: State of Current Leadership Development Programs and How They need to change****Date of Interview: 8/9/2010**

- I. Current Generations are becoming a big talking point in organizations. Program developers are not keen to the younger generation's attitudes about programs. Traditional development programs have been designed for Baby Boomers because they are committed, they likely stayed with an organization for the long haul, and they were comfortable with the hierarchy of traditional organizations. Now the question many practitioners are asking us is what are the values of the people we are putting through and what is the likelihood that they remain committed to the organization. What is the value of putting people through development if they don't plan on staying afterward?
- II. High Commitment is a requirement for most Leadership Development Rotation Programs. Work-Life balance considerations are important for the younger generations. Great employees are interested in marriage and child-bearing and LDPs can often weed out the best people. It will be interesting to see if companies can adopt a new style in which the culture can embrace a blended style of work.
- III. Design of Leadership Development Programs is 70% on-the-job, project based training. At higher levels the focus is mainly all action learning and on-the-job training. 20% of the program involves coaching and mentoring. The organization provides resources and accelerates learning for the participant. Only 10% is formal training. In formal training, mixed models of learning are being used more

increasingly. Social networking allows instant feedback and rapid response when mistakes are made. Seminar style programs are also used. Participants must be open to have the motivation to participate. Small group discussions and thematic sessions focusing on various aspects of leadership are also used.

**Interview 3: Tonshuree Mondal**

**Topic of Interview: Approaches to Leadership Development**

**Date of Interview: 8/9/2010**

- I. A Leadership profile describes specific behaviors that are required in order to be a successful leader. As a Consultant, I share with our clients the view that some competencies can be learned while others are born to individuals. We use an iceberg model to describe certain innate characteristics that cannot be taught. While leadership behaviors can be developed by linking specific behaviors needed to the training program.
- II. Typically we begin by mapping the leadership skills needed for the client, then conducting assessments on the level of skill. Once the process is complete an action plan is developed.
- III. Three specific characteristics are most often used: mathematical, verbal skills, and conceptual/strategic skills that allow a leader to persuade and influence followers. We also combine leadership training with measureable batteries. Often the batteries include tests on motivation and needs assessments.

**Interview 4: Anne Benedict, Global Marketing Services Leadership Development**

**Topic of Interview: Current Leadership Development Offerings and Strategies**

**Date of Interview: 8/30/2010**

- I. The 3 I's of Training
  - a. Individualized in terms of pacing and timing
  - b. Integrated by using a variety of topics
  - c. Interactive by engaging in complex exercises and self-reflection
- II. Training Mechanisms
  - a. Leadership Readings
  - b. Technologies
    - i. Unconventional delivery
    - ii. Online University
- III. Components of Leadership Development

- a. An Online Simulation provides participants a challenging situation in a virtual world. A fictitious role places them in an environment that tests their ability as a leader. A debrief with extensive feedback is provided afterwards as well as an opportunity to complete the exercise again.
  - b. Action Learning is an important concept to all Leadership Development. It involves using an actual business problem in which participants work with a team to solve. Often a coach is used to assist in the process. Leadership skills are tested and a tangible result makes the process more preferable to participants.
  - c. Feedback is an important component and has shifted to incorporate more technology. Oftentimes social media provides instant feedback. Depending on the activity or training the use of 360 degree feedback will be used.
- IV. Interesting Points for the Future
- a. We use an Engagement survey to determine the specific data about the future of our talent pool. We use the results such as the amount of people who plan to stay, and those who are interested in gaining more responsibility to help structure our programs.
  - b. Our population is mainly under 30. We have focused on people engagement and the opportunities for entrepreneurship. It provides confidence, attracts thinking, and helps individuals grow without risks. The young population appreciates the ability to contribute to content in the workplace and also have control over what is being said and shared.

**Interview 5: Debra Vila, Leadership Development Officer, Mercer Consulting**

**Topic of Interview: Current Leadership Program Offerings**

**Date of Interview: 9/17/10**

- I. Leadership Programs
  - a. Reverse Mentoring can be used for seasoned professionals. Younger generations provide technology mentoring
  - b. Virtual Self-Directed Programs
  - c. Formal Leadership Curriculum
    - i. Team Sessions
    - ii. Self-paced learning which includes videos and podcasts
    - iii. Coaching

**Interview 6: Kerrie Ferchalk, Training and Development****Topic of Interview: HRDC Program Offerings, New Components for Leadership Development****Date of Interview: 12/14/2010**

- I. Components of Leadership Development Programs
  - a. Reading Materials such as a book provides an outside perspective and more details on a particular concept. Typically the book will be assigned between sessions and then discussed in detail.
  - b. Group Discussion which often includes a group activity allows participants to share insights and ask questions about challenging situations. The program is beginning to explore the idea of virtual posts and online journals so that discussion can occur more frequently and even after programs end.
- II. Strategies
  - a. Blended Learning is when we provide pre-work, practice and application, then assessments on skills learned.
  - b. Informal Learning includes self-directed methods such as readings and assessments. Job shadowing when available allows participants to view leaders in organizations. Mentoring programs are also used but focus on informal relationships. Participants are coached on finding a individual within their group or business unit that can provide mentoring support.

**Interview 7: Sam Deep, Leadership Consultant, Owner Sam Deep Consulting****Topic of Interview: Components of Leadership Development Programs****Date of Interview: 12/21/10**

- I. The most important component of Leadership that I teach is the idea of Emotional Intelligence. Relationship oriented leaders have shown high correlation with effectiveness in research. Emotionally intelligent leaders have the ability to build strong relationships with followers and clear a path to share their vision. In my programs I typically offer a program booklet which focuses on the important skills necessary to build relationships. I often include a test of an individual's emotional intelligence which can provide feedback on how to improve.
- II. Components
  - a. 360 degree feedback
  - b. Mentorship which focuses on accountability on both sides. It allows the relationship to be beneficial to both sides.
  - c. Reflection

- d. Goal-setting
- III. Leadership
  - a. The kind of leadership never changes. The concepts and theories are the same but the demands and challenges have increased with global competition. Throughout Leadership Development, I focused on breaking the barriers from ignorance to knowledge that eventually leads to action.

**Interview 8: Diane Brown, Manager Human Resource Development Center**

**Topic of Interview: Effective Leadership Program Design and the Changes in Design**

**Date of Interview: 1/5/2011**

- I. Leadership Development Components: Then and Now
  - a. Reading Materials have evolved into online resources however there still is a desired for printed materials to be provided.
  - b. Measuring Effectiveness: There is an increase in our need to measure the effectiveness of our programs specifically the success in the future. We have begun much more in terms of follow-up with participant's months after they have taken a session.
  - c. Delivery Methods – the length of our programs has decreased dramatically. Participants had a difficult time attending lengthy sessions and missing ample amounts of work. We have even begun offering web-based sessions that include instant feedback to the presenter and an opportunity for participants to ask questions via the web. The interest in web-based programs is increasing.
- II. Generational Observations
  - a. Desire for Feedback
  - b. Motivation for Leadership Success
  - c. Strength of Questions
  - d. Quality of Discussion