Gender Diversity & Generational Gaps:

Two Hurdles Worth One Giant Leap

Renee' Marine

February 2020

Introduction

Man versus woman. The two sides represent an ongoing, eternal battle. But while the fight is nothing new, it has evolved through the years, especially when it comes to gender and leadership. As a matter of fact, in 1973, now Gettysburg College Professor, Dr. Virginia E. Schein, coined this phrase "Think manager-think male" (Schein, 1973). According to an article in *Forbes* magazine, Dr. Schein was referring to the "automatic association between leadership and masculinity" (Bailey, 2013). By definition, masculine means "showing strength and boldness" (Merriam-Webster, 2017). So was she saying women do not show strength and are not bold? It is believed that Dr. Schein was pointing out a glaring lack of women in the leadership roles and it was her way to call attention to it and maybe cause a stir to make women react with a desire to seek such positions. According to the article Schein wrote, containing the previous mentioned quote, only 5-percent of women were leaders. (Schein, 1973). 5 percent. So, it is any wonder why Northouse (2016), the author of *Leadership: Theory and Practice* says researchers "ignored issues related to gender and leadership until the 1970s" (p.397). Maybe Dr. Schein got the ball rolling. All those years women were around and it wasn't until the 70's that Northouse says researchers started asking "Can Women Lead?" (Northouse, 2016, p.397). That same question was being asked when it came to equal rights. 37 words never meant so much too so many people at the time when President Richard Nixon signed Title IX into law on June 23, 1972. According to the United State Department of Education, or DOE, (2015), Title Nine is enforced by the Office of Civil Rights, also known as OCR, as part of the Education Amendments of 1972 and states, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under

any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." DOE (2015) adds

these three elements must be met for Title IX to apply:

- Educational Program:
  - 16,500 Local School Districts
  - 7,000 Postsecondary Institutions
  - Charter Schools, For Profit Schools, Libraries, Museums
  - Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies & Education Agencies of 50 States, the District of Columbia and territories and possessions of the U.S.
- Federal Financial Aid
- Allegations of Sex Discrimination:
  - "Sex discrimination is discrimination against an individual because of gender identity, including transgender status, or because of sexual orientation is discrimination because of sex violation in Title VII" (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, EEOC, 2018).

So basically, according to Title IX, if an organization receives federal financial assistance, it cannot discriminate including:

- Recruitment, Admissions & Counseling
- Financial Assistance
- Athletics
- Sex-based Harassment
- Treatment of Pregnant & Parenting Students
- Discipline
- Single-Sex Education

- Employment (DOE, 2015).

The last item on the above list especially came into play when one of the founders of Title IX, Bernice "Bunny" Sadler was denied a position due to her gender. Steve Wulf (2012), senior writer for ESPN.com, says Sandler was a part-time adjunct professor at the University of Maryland, and when she applied for tenure track, she was told she came "too strong for a woman." Wulf (2012) says this got Sandler digging for discrimination laws and also got the attention of the then assistant director of the compliance division at the Department of Labor, Vincent Macaluso. A Saturday Review of Books ad and 250 complaints later, she and Macaluso got the attention of Congress. Congresswoman Edith Green from Portland, Oregon, held a hearing to talk about the complaints, and few Congressmen showed, so Green hired Sandler and they drafted Title IX, substituting sex for Title VI's words of race, color and national origin (Wulf, 2012). And get this, Green slipped the language into an education bill. Now there was a twist, it turns out Green did not like some of what was eventually included in the education bill and despite her now wanting it to die, it passed 218-180 (Wulf, 2012). For Sandler though, it was a profound victory. As a matter of fact, Sandler called the Education Law of 1972 "the most important step for gender equality since the 19th Amendment gave us the right to vote" (Wolfe, 2012). A step many women across all generations follow in today.

Literature Review

When it comes to determining the role women play when it comes to leadership in higher education, one must look at women's role in leadership overall. As discussed in the introduction, women, throughout history, have been fighting to grab ahold of any rung of the leadership ladder. Northouse discussed how women in leadership are no longer trying to break the glass

ceiling but rather are fighting their way through a labrynth (Northouse, 2016, pp. 398-399). That

labrynth is one full of many twist, turns and dead ends, but it also one some women are willing

to journey through. Case in point, take a look at these stats. According to Catalyst (2014),

women currently outnumber men when it comes to higher education, they make up nearly half of

the workforce, yet women are still underrepresented when it comes to leadership roles. So what

about politics? According to Northouse (2016), women make up nearly 20-percent of Congress

and a full 20-percent of the Senate. Yet according to the Center of Women and Politics (2014b),

women of color make up just 30 of those seats. When it comes to the military, the U-S

Department of Defense says women make up 7 percent of high ranking military officers (Center

of Women and Politics, 2014a). Worldwide, the United States is ranked 84th out of 189

countries, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2014). So why is this happening?

Northouse (2016, pp. 400-401) points to 3 main possibilities.

- Pipeline Problems. This means women have less education, training and work
  experience.
- Leaky Pipeline – Women haven't been managers long enough, thus, no natural
  progression.
- Women choose the "mommy track" and opt out of leadership roles (Belkin, 2003;
  Ehrlick, 1989, Wadman, 1992).

So what do men and women have in common when it comes to leadership? Northouse cites a

couple. They are both effective leaders and this effectiveness is seen more when leading their

gender (Northouse, 2016). He adds women are believed to lose their effectiveness when those

roles have them primarily overseeing men, like the military (Northouse, 2016). If you had to rate

a woman's success in different roles, Northouse says women are seen as somewhat effective in education, government and social service and substantially effective in roles of middle management (Northouse, 2016). According to Northouse (2016), women don't promote themselves for leadership roles, it's more difficult for women to emerge as leaders and women are less likely to ask for what they want, i.e.: a raise. But even then, the level of that difficulty can differ between generations.

- o Baby Boomers:

  - Identified by United States Census Bureau as people born between 1943 and 1965. This generation is the "hard work and sacrifice is the price you pay for success" generation (Tolbize, 2008, p.3).
  - Have a sense of entitlement and are good at relationships (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 1999).
  - Value the chain of command, technically challenged and expect authority (Rath, 1999).

- o Generation X:

  - Identified by the United States Census Bureau as people born between 1968 and 1979. This generation grew up in a period of" financial, familial and societal insecurity. They witnessed their parents get laid off and the decline of the American global power" (Tolbize, 2008, p.3).
  - Both parents worked and high divorce rates (Tolbize, 2008).
  - They strive for a work-life balance (Jenkins, 2007; Karp et al, 2002).

- They are "ruled by a sense of accomplishment and not the clock" (Joyner, 2000).

o   Generation Y:

- According to Crampton and Hodge (2006), this includes people born between 1980 and 1999.

- This is the parental excess generation ((Tolbize, 2008).

- They Value team work (Zemke et al., 2000).

- They are adaptable to change (Jenkins, 2007).

o   Generation Z:

- When combined with Generation Y, they are also "the largest and most diverse generation to ever attend college" (Strauss, 1991).

- Technologically advanced (Martin & Noble, 2007).

- Need to have immediate feedback (Martin &Noble (2007).

- "Confident and highly optimistic" (Howe & Strauss, 1991).

It's important to know what helps to define the generations in order to better understand the differences. Take diversity. According to Lydia Dishman (2015), a writer for fastcompany.com, there is stark difference in how Baby Boomers and Generation Xers define diversity and how Gen Y and Zers define it. "Millennials view diversity as the blending of different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives within a team, which is known as cognitive diversity" (Dishman, 2015, p. 2). Baby Boomers and Generation Xers "view diversity as a representation of fairness and protection to all, regardless of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation"

(Dishman, 2015, p. 3). So why does this matter? It helps lay the groundwork for how businesses will run in the future. According to Dishman (2015), nearly 75% of the workforce will comprise of millennials by 2025 and much of that generation does not stay with the same job for very long.   In a recent study from Deloitte and the Billie Jean King Leadership Initiative, or BJKLI, "the disconnect between the traditional definitions of diversity and inclusion, and the millennial definitions, is already causing business hardship" in the form of clashes leadership who do not allow millennials to express themselves (Dishman, 2015, p.4). That clash, according to a Gallop Poll, has helped lead to $350 billion loss per year in productivity (Dishman, 2015, p.4). If Millennials don't feel connected, that leads to a lack in motivation and engagement thus, according to the Deliotte & BJLLI study,

- o "Millennials are 33% more likely to disagree with the statement that their 'work has an impact on the organization.' They are also 13% less likely to say they feel excited to go to work and that they are attached to their organization.
- o Eighty-three percent of millennials are actively engaged when they believe their organization fosters an inclusive culture, compared to only 60% of millennials who are actively engaged when their organization does not foster an inclusive culture" (Dishman, 2015, p.4).

Another factor that could play a role in the disconnection is the generational differences in communication. An example used by Lanark County, Ontario, Deputy Clerk, Leslie Drynan (2011), paints the picture. If a manager says to use communication skills, "a fifty-five year old male employee may interpret the term "communication skills" to mean formal writing and speaking ability, whereas to a twenty-two year old female employee, this term could mean email

or text messaging" (p. 8). Then take into account the different communication skills of men and

women, and the gap widens.

Drynan (2012) also goes on to point out how men and women express gender

communication differences in content, style, and structure.

First she looked at *what* do men and women talk about?

• Men often talk about sports, money, and business.

• Women most often discuss people, feelings, and relationships.

Then she looked at *why* men and women talk?

• Men often express themselves to fix a problem, converse for competition, and talk to

resolve problems.

• Women most often express themselves to understand, converse to support, and talk to

connect.

Third, she looked at *how* do men and women talk?

• Men typically use precise words, to the point, without descriptive details.

• Women are more detailed, apologetic, and vague.

Lastly, Drynan (2012) looked at the gender differences in Communication Pattern and

Traits.

She says the male communication pattern and traits "tend to be honest, direct, factual, and is considered "report" type talk (Drynan, 2012, p. 7). The communication behaviors men tend to possess are as follows:

- reason

- logic

- power

- rank

- status

- compete

- winning

- team

- think (Drynan, 2012, p. 7).

As for the female communication pattern and traits, Drynan (2012) they "tend to be nurturing, indirect, and respectful and is considered "rapport" type talk (p. 7)." She adds, the communication behaviors women tend to possess are as follows:

- feeling

- empathy

- harmony

- closeness

- relationships

- sharing

- cooperation

- group

- intuitive (Drynan, 2012, p. 7).

As you can see, some of the differences in gender traits and behaviors are interchangeable with some of what makes the generations so different as well.

So what do we do about it?

Conclusion and Recommendations

"A great way to get people to work together across the generations is to provide them with an opportunity to educate each other about each generation's own history, characteristics, milestone events, culture, language, and norms. Rather than talking at your people, have representatives from each age-based generation put together programming to educate people and facilitate dialogue." (Drynan, 2011, p. 15)

Such a simple concept but it can be such a difficult task. Gender diversity alone is a subject that has been debated for as long as anyone could probably remember. And despite the ever changing roles of women in society, their status in the workplace has yet to be equalized. Whether it is by means of pay, attitude, respect or leadership positions, women still have a long way to go when it comes to bridging the gender gap. But it's not impossible. Just this past year, NYU, a private, predominately white institution recently appointed its first female Provost since its inception 185 years ago. Here at Delaware State University, two women, Dr. Wilma Mishoe and Dr. Devona Williams made the record books by becoming the first female Chair and Vice Chair of the University's Board of Trustees. Months later, Dr. Mishoe was named University President. This is the first time this has happened in DSU's 126 year history.

Stories like these do lend itself to hope for women leadership in the future.   As for the generational gap, it is human nature for us all to be different because as individuals, we have all been created as unique; so it makes sense that each generation would share in the fact there are many differences. However with every difference, there can also be a similarity, and if all that is done is to maintain a focus on how were are not alike, it can make it seem harder to those from differing generations to want to seek out what makes them alike.

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