2016

Experiences of the Millennial Generation with Politics & Power In Higher Education

Lauren Elizabeth Ouwerkerk
Wright State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/etd_all

Part of the Educational Leadership Commons

EXPERIENCES OF THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION WITH POLITICS &
POWER IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A thesis to be submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

By

LAUREN ELIZABETH OUWERKERK
B.S., Wright State University, 2014

Wright State University
2016

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

April 19, 2016

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER
MY SUPERVISION BY <u>Lauren Elizabeth Ouwerkerk</u> ENTITLED <u>Experiences of the
Millennial Generation with Politics & Power in Higher Education</u> BE ACCEPTED IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
<u>Master of Arts.</u>

_____
Carol Logan Patitu, Ph.D. Thesis
Director

_____
Jill Lindsey, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Leadership
Studies
of Education and Organizations

Committee on
Final Examination

_____
Joanne Risacher, Ph.D., Co-Chair

_____
Dan Abrahamowiz, Ph.D., Co-Chair

_____
Glenn Graham, Ed.D.

_____
Robert E. W. Fyffe, Ph.D., Vice President for Research & Dean of the Graduate School

ABSTRACT

Ouwerkerk, Lauren Elizabeth. M.A. Department of Leadership Studies in Education and Organizations, Wright State University, 2016. Experiences of the Millennial Generation with Politics & Power in Higher Education.

The millennial generation is continuing to replace previous work generations within higher education. The way that the millennial generation navigates issues of politics and power is not easily understood by institutions. This qualitative study of millennial professionals investigates how they handle issues of power and politics, their experiences with top-down structure, how they work around issues of power and politics and how their identity plays a role. Individual interviews and a demographic questionnaire were used to obtain data in this study. Participants invited to participate were millennial professionals who had worked at the institution from 1-5 years. Eight participants were interviewed, with five identifying as women, two identifying as men and one identifying as genderqueer. All participants were currently employed at a mid-size four-year, public university in the Midwest in a student affairs position or similar field. Themes that emerged from the interviews included politics and power, experience related to French and Raven's five bases of social power, labels and hierarchy, being intentional within the work, and identity. Limitations of the study, implications for higher education, suggestions for future research and recommendations for professionals working in higher education are also addressed.

Keywords: Politics, Power, Millennial Generation, Student Affairs

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I

Introduction to the Study

Higher Education is not alone in preparing for the millennial generation to replace the retiring older generations. Representatives of the millennial generation are slowly coming into the workforce and making waves already in every field they enter. Those who belong to the millennial generation were born between the years 1982-1999, making their age range in 2015, 16-33 (Fountain, 2014). Millennials have many traits that others may find to be less appealing than the previous generations. They are often viewed as lazy, problem starters, and always-needing reassurance that they are doing their job correctly as a result of their over involved parents (Ferri-Reed, 2013). Though these statements are frequently used to describe millennials, few individuals are actually informed about the ways millennials interact in the workplace. This research identified differences between the millennial and previous generations.

This study examined ways in which the millennial generation handles politics and power in higher education in an attempt to understand how complex the relationship between the generation and an institution truly is. The important key is beginning to understand what characteristics members of the millennial generation have that distinguish them from past generations and then identifying ways individuals may need to adapt to create a good work environment. Once that has been determined the study will look at suggestions for organizational change in the very historical structure of higher education.

The politics of higher education play a huge role in the distribution of power throughout an institution. In order to understand power one must understand the role that politics play. Describing the political environment sets the tone for what the power dynamic may look like for professionals, specifically new professionals. Understanding new professionals' definition and knowledge of power, and their relations with politics is crucial to developing future organizational models that better fit the generation.

Through this research, one can begin to see the reoccurring theme that student affairs professionals, as they enter the workforce full time are not able to translate the examples given in the classroom to real world experiences around political issues (Amey & Reesor, 2009). This lack of education may cause political issues to blindside new professionals once they enter the field. Without the proper education they may feel as though they were not prepared to handle political situations. When they face these issues new professionals may feel overwhelmed and insecure about their knowledge of the student affairs profession (Amey & Reesor, 2009). These feelings may be relevant to developing knowledge of the ways new professionals handle power. A new professional's understanding of power may be an important key to solving the issue of turnover. All of these ideas directly relate to the issues around new professional millennials as they began to gain power. This could help them understand the current structure of higher education, ways that structure may change in the future, and why those changes could happen.

Statement of the Problem

Millennials were born between the years 1982-1999 and are now beginning to enter the workforce as professionals in higher education (Fountain, 2014). This shift can cause issues around generational differences for institutions and can impact everything in the organization (Bolton, 2010). New professionals in their organization are often feeling undervalued because of the salaries that they earn and feeling a lack of trust from their colleagues (Frank, 2013). In order to prepare for changes brought by the millennial generation, the current professionals must first know the issues these generation members are facing in more detail.

The problem around this situation is that many new professionals are not prepared to manage situations surrounding politics and power (Amey & Reesor, 2009). Politics has been defined as "the way that people try to assert their particular interests and the way they use power and strategies to assert their interests," (Kezar, 2008, p. 408). Many decisions made at an institution are influenced by this political influence (Oade, 2009). Many millennials are not prepared to deal with power and politics in the work environment. This unpreparedness stems from a lack of discussion of the topics during their graduate programs and professional development outside of the program. Harrison (2011) found that many professionals felt that their programs did not teach them how to negotiate power in their work.

In order to understand the struggles that the millennial generation higher education professionals are dealing with, it is important to discuss the issues of politics and power with them. The purpose of the study was to discuss with millennials their experiences with power and politics in higher education to discover

exactly how they handled situations of power and politics and where they learned those skills. Once we can understand the issues facing this generation in the field we can better prepare for the future of higher education by implementing better graduate student preparedness opportunities.

It is important to understand experiences with power and politics and lessons learned in order to better understand the struggles new professionals currently face. Understanding those struggles can help better prepare future professionals as well as assist the field of higher education to adapt for the generational differences.

Definitions of Terms

- Baby Boomer Generation: Refers to those who were born between the years 1946-1964 (Fountain, 2014).

- Generation X: Refers to those who were born between the years 1965-1981 (Fountain, 2014),

- Millennial Generation: Refers to those who were born between the years 1982-1999 (Fountain, 2014).

- Graduate school preparation: Refers to training and education that prepared the professional for their work in higher education. Examples may include but are not limited to: higher education degree, conferences, and professional organizations.

- New Professional: Refers to anyone who is within the first 1- 5 years of their work experience in the field of higher education.

- Politics in Higher Education: Relates to the way that people try to assert their particular interests and the way they use power and strategies to assert their interests (Kezar, 2008).

- Power: Defined as the ability to produce an intended change in others, to influence them so that they will be more likely to act in accordance with one's own preference in the structure of an institution (Birnbaum, 1989).

- Reward power: Power that is based in the ability to reward someone. For example, individuals feeling that those who have power over them can give a positive compensation to remove or decrease negative feelings in their work. This base only works if those who have power and promising a reward and the probability that those receiving the reward actually feel they can obtain it (French & Raven, 1959).

- Coercive power: Based on the ability to manipulate others into believing if they do not comply with your power, they will be punished (French & Raven, 1959). This could manifest in an institution where someone feels they will be fired if they speak out against their supervisor's wishes. This type of power may is related to a negative reaction by those in power rather than a positive reaction as shown previously in reward power.

- Legitimate power: It is defined as power that stems from internalized values that one has a legitimate right to have influence over another person and that other person feels there is an obligation to accept that influence (French & Raven, 1959). This can be seen in higher education in the form of a president of the university simply having power over all of the workers at the institution. If the

president were to lose their title, they would no longer hold that power and those who were under them would no longer feel an obligation to follow their power.

- Referent power: The idea that someone feels they can identify with an individual therefore allowing them to have power over them. This identification can look like many things but some examples would be someone finding that person attractive, charismatic, or relatable (French & Raven, 1959). This type of power is often seen from celebrities or public figures influencing individuals to make a purchase or to go to a certain location.

- Expert Power: Defined as someone having more knowledge or is perceived to have more knowledge over an individual (French & Raven, 1959). This type of power can be seen in the way that individuals follow those who they view as more intelligent than they are or those who may be able to solve the problem. This type of power is very common in higher education based on the degree a professional holds and their experience level.

Research Questions

1) What are the experiences of the millennial generation with politics in higher education?

2) What are the experiences of the millennial generation with power in higher education?

    a. What have been millennials' experiences with the following bases of power (please refer to pp. 6-7):

        i. Reward Power

        ii. Coercive Power

iii. Legitimate Power

iv. Referent Power

v. Expert Power

3) What are the experiences of the millennial generation with the top-down structure in higher education?

4) In what ways do millennial generation professionals work around issues of power and politics?

5) Does identity (race, gender identity, etc.) affect how millennial generation professionals learn to navigate issues of politics and power?

Assumptions

The researcher assumed that those who work in higher education deal with issues surrounding the topics of power and politics and that they accurately convey their issues, experiences, and other useful information to assist in the research.

Scope

The scope of this study was limited to new professionals, born between 1982-1991, who had been in the field of higher education from 1-5 years at the main campus of a public, four-year university in the Midwest. The individuals who were identified were asked to attend an individual interview session during the spring semester of the 2015-2016 academic year to obtain the data. Professionals who were in their positions less than one year or over five years were not invited to participate in the study.

Significance of the Study

As the baby boomer generation and generation X continue to age, the millennial generation is filling more and more positions in the higher education field. The structure of higher education is very hierarchical while those who belong to the millennial

generation prefer a more holistic type of organizational structure (Balda & Mora, 2011). This identifies a struggle for those individuals who are looking to get involved in higher education from the millennial age group.

Higher education is full of political issues, yet those who belong to the millennial generation may have a different way of handling those issues (Renn, Jessup-Anger, 2008). The differences that the millennials are bringing into the workforce identify a need for institutions to be prepared for the shift that this new generation may bring and is already bringing. Due to the growing turnover rates of new professionals in higher education, developing an understanding of why they are leaving and what the political environment looks like for those individuals is crucial (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008).

While there are many research articles about millennials and many articles about politics and power in higher education, there is very little about the role that millennials play in those power and political dynamics. There is a need for this research in order for higher education institutions to better adapt their environments for the new generation. This research provided a better insight to the political and power dynamics and how those effect the millennial generation in ways that may be different from those before them.

Conceptual Framework

This study utilizes the <u>French and Raven Five Bases of Social Power</u> (1959) model used to identify an individual's base of power. These bases are broken down into five categories: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power. The five bases were discovered in the 1950's to identify the major types of power and be able to define them for a better understanding of the change they cause in an organization (French & Raven, 1959). Raven and French define a basis of power

as a relationship between two variables and the difference being the source of power itself (1959). Since the study conducted by French and Raven has been foundational to understanding power in organizations, in this study it was the framework for the experiences of new professionals in dealing with politics and power in higher education.

The first base of power that Raven and French define is Reward power, the ability to reward someone. For example, when this is the basis of power individuals feel that those who have power over them can give a positive compensation, which may remove or decrease negative feelings in their work. This base is successful only when those who have power do promise a reward and the probability that those receiving a reward actually feel they can obtain it (French & Raven, 1959).

The second base of power is Coercive power, the ability to manipulate others into believing if they do not comply with your wishes, they will be punished (French & Raven, 1959). This could manifest in an institution where someone feels they will be fired if they speak out against their supervisor's wishes. This type of power is related to a negative reaction by those in power rather than a positive reaction as shown by reward power.

Legitimate power is seen as the third base of power and is often the most complex of the five (French & Raven, 1959). It is defined as power that stems from internalized values that one has a legitimate right to have influence over another person and that other person feels there is an obligation to accept that influence (French & Raven, 1959). This can be seen clearly in higher education in the position of president of the university simply having power over all of the employees at the institution. If the

president were to lose their title, they would no longer hold that power and those who were under them would no longer feel an obligation to follow their power.

Raven and French define the fourth base, Referent power, as the idea that someone feels they can identify with an individual therefore allowing them to have power over them. This identification can include many things, for example someone finding that person attractive, charismatic, or relatable (French & Raven, 1959). This type of power is often seen from celebrities or public figures influencing individuals to make a purchase or to go to a certain location.

The final base Expert Power is defined as someone having more knowledge or being perceived to have more knowledge than another individual (French & Raven, 1959). This type of power can be seen in the way that individuals follow those who they view as more intelligent than they are or those who may be able to solve the problem. This type of power is very common in higher education based on the degrees held and experience level of an individual.

These bases of power help to establish a point that power can stem from in any organizational structure. To understand how one experiences power one must have an understanding of the type of power dynamics they are dealing with in their organization. Using Raven and French's bases of power to define the power dynamics they are facing could help individuals understand their reactions to that power. This theory was useful to create an understanding of what power looks like in an individual's situation and how they interact with that power.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Generational Differences

Bolton shared the basic relevance of this idea of generational differences stating, "In the workplace, generational differences can impact everything from interpersonal communication to creativity," (2010, p. 67); regardless of their generation one can agree that these differences can affect individuals work. The Millennial generation was born between 1982-1999, which put them in a time vastly different than their previous generations, with the updates of technology and others affecting their lives (Fountain, 2014). The majority of people in the workforce currently belong to three generations, Millennial, Baby Boomers, or Generation X. Baby boomers, defined to have been born between 1946-1964 after World War II, and Generation X, born between years 1965-1981 (Fountain, 2014). The millennial generation is slowly taking the work force by storm and often organizations are struggling to handle the generation's specific needs.

There is a lack of theory on generational issues in the work force but Fountain (2014) based his research on the use of Twenge's model that investigated generational work values and discovered that the variables fall into one of five categories: (1) work ethic, work credibility, and leisure, (2) altruistic values, (3) extrinsic versus intrinsic values, (4) affiliation or social values, and (5) job satisfaction and intention to leave. Using that information he used his study to determine if work values did actually differ between the generations of workers in America (2014).

Looking at the way millennials perceive structure, researchers Balda and Mora (2011) found that they could cause tension in organizations at times. Organizations founded before millennials time often had a top-down like structure, which is vastly

different than the holistic approach of self-regulating and self-enforcing organizational structure that the millennial generation prefers (Balda & Mora, 2011). Many have agreed that the millennial generation seeks a more supportive work environment than the previous generations and hopes to establish positive work place relationships. Though millennials in the workplace struggle to get along with other generations, it may not be because they are difficult but rather the older generations make it more difficult for them to earn respect and credibility (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

Though generations seem to be described as vastly different, it seems that Fountain found something that disagrees and stated, "Millennials desired extrinsic rewards less than Generation X, although still significantly more than Boomers," (2014, p. 26) making them really not that different than the current generation. The similarities between generations is again brought up in Graybill's (2014) article who noted that millennials share many similarities with generation X around being in an environment surrounded by teamwork and mentorship. These types of situations may cause the millennial generation more stress than previous generations. Compared to older generations 76% of millennials view work as somewhat of a significant stressor (Ferri-Reed, 2013). Regardless of the various different traits millennials bring into the organization, their ability to use technology can have an overall positive outcome and enhance any organization's productivity (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Millennials even feel that due to their increased knowledge of topics like technology they do not feel that they have to "pay their dues" to the organization, since their skills are needed by the organization immediately (Amey, Jessup-Anger & Tingson-Gatuz, 2009).

According to the Pew Research in a 2010 survey, millennials have identified technology as the trait that puts them apart from the other generations (Fountain, 2014). Millennials have grown up with technology in the form of internet and social media and really know how to use them to network (Bushnell, 2012).

Another positive that Fountain found in their research was that 17% of millennials believe it is most important to teach children to help others, higher than both generation X and the Boomer generation (2014). Ferri-Reed (2013) asserted that, "the millennial generation is more likely to prove adaptive, flexible, and ready to do what it takes to get ahead," and warned many not to write them off just yet (p. 23). In Boehman's (2006) research he found that, "generational membership may have some influence on the levels of continuance commitment exhibited," linking generational issues directly to job retention (p. 138). Lunceford (2014) noted that the knowledge she shares with new professionals is, "it is important that individuals from different generations and levels of experience realize that everyone plays an important role within the organization," (2014, p. 18). This especially becomes relevant in higher education when most of the supervisors for the new millennial professionals are seasoned with a lot of experience leading to the same issues that new professionals are facing in every job field (Amey, Jessup-Anger & Tingson-Gatuz, 2009). It is clear that generational differences will have an effect on the culture of any organization; higher education is no different.

Organizational Change

Due to this new group of individuals coming into the work force, it seems that there has been a lack of sensitivity in organizations to prepare baby boomers for the

takeover from generation X & the millennials (Lambert, 2015). In a study Omachonu (2012) stated, "Inevitably, power and politics require developed skills necessary for maneuvering in the organization." (p. 23). In order to develop those skills each organization has to take the proper educational steps. A solution that Harrison (2011) found was "teaching and learning how to acquire power through gaining control of the student affairs narrative is one strategy," on combating the issues that transformational leadership provides and for individuals to get "comfortable with power as a tool," (p. 51).

Not only is the struggle to understand the political aspect of student affairs, the field is now facing a shift in how it supports individuals that belong to the millennial generation. There is a call for organizations to make a shift in supporting the generation by allowing organizations to put an emphasis on a more relational perspective of structure to allow millennials to flourish (Balda & Mora, 2011). Another large change that was found focuses on not only the importance of the environment millennials work in but how long they work. Many millennials have a higher work ethic but would like to work fewer hours providing they get the same amount of work done in that time period (Fountain, 2014). Due to these suggestions for change the institution of higher education may need to make minimal adjustments to adapt for the new generation.

Politics

All institutions of higher education are political, but they all vary on how politics control the organization at its core. Kezar (2008) believes, "politics in higher education relates to the way that people try to assert their particular interests and the way they use power and strategies to assert their interests," (p. 408). Another statement by Ardoin

(2014) noted, "you at least have to learn how to navigate politics," regardless if you play into them or not (p. III). Oade (2009) stated that "depending on how prevalent political conduct is in your workplace you may find that some, or maybe most, of the decisions made by your leaders and managers, and many of the decisions that you make yourself, are influenced by political considerations," (p. 1) recognizing that sometimes the political choice goes completely unnoticed to some people. Due to higher education revolving around many different interest groups Kezar (2008) commented that, "existing groups defend the resources and power that they have, and new groups emerge trying to obtain resources and power, creating conflict," (p. 410). Not only does it increase the fight for resources but can also help when needed to know when you are relevant to showcase yourself for the university (Ardoin, 2014).

Omachonu (2012) describes the idea of a "political frame" that refers to "organizations arenas, contests, or jungles in which the powerful members of the organization compete for power and scares resources," (p. 10). Another researcher shares that without learning office politics it could be more harmful than helpful to the productivity to your office and career (Ardoin, 2014). Rosen and Levy (2013) found, "politically skilled employees are more likely to fit into political contexts because they have the capability of adapting their behavior to fit environments where interpersonal interactions are important for achieving success," (p. 57). They also found that employees who were politically skilled viewed politics as less threatening, which caused less effect on their day-to-day work proving the importance of student affairs graduate programs preparing their graduates for the political field (Rosen & Levy, 2013). Without

the help of graduate school preparation skills the new professionals are struggling to adapt to the structure of higher education around political issues.

The lack of training for new professionals around the topic of politics showed in Renn and Jessup-Angers (2008) study of new professionals' preparation for their first year on the job. Many new professionals felt that they had a lack of preparation in "navigating institutional politics" and stated "The sheer amount of politics surprised me" (Renn & Jessup-Angers, 2008, p. 325). Another new professional shared, "Those who make it to the higher paying jobs play politics instead of doing the best for our students. I consider myself a student affairs professional, but those in director and such positions are there because they are student affairs politicians," (Renn, Jessup-Anger, 2008, p. 326). The basis of these political tools is to truly learn the importance of "what you say, to whom you say it and where you have conversations," as Ardoin (2014, p. 114) described in her writings. Overall, the role politics plays is a large part of understanding the dynamics of higher education, something all the researchers can agree effects the experience of the professionals at any level.

Power Dynamics

Power is defined as, "the ability to produce intended change in others, to influence them so that they will be more likely to act in accordance with one's own preference," (Birnbaum, 1989, p. 13). Raven and French found five bases of power; reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert, which they believe all power stems from (1959). Harrison (2011) views the issue of power dynamics in higher education starting with the attention given to transformational leadership theories that presents the, "either-or positions creates more problems than it solves…the managements and

16

transactional ends of these dichotomies are the sites where power and politics are acknowledged more openly" (Harrison, 2011, p. 46). They believe that transactional leadership can allow them to understand systematic power while transformational leadership fails to address power at all (Harrison, 2011). Without addressing power these professionals have no true understanding of how to affectively create change in their organization (Harrison, 2011). New professionals have to take the time to really understand the structure of higher education before they can be a more prepared professional. One shared "I would often not 'work the system' appropriately and I took the time in this position to learn the system and the politics. I think that this has helped me grow because it has provided me with a balanced and realistic perspective" (Renn, Jessup-Anger, 2008, p. 327).

A solution that Kezar (2008) found in their study mentioned an often-overlooked group in dealing with politics, the students, stating "Presidents also suggested that students can be among the greatest supporters. While students do not have the kind of power that the board of trustees or external groups such as business and industry have, students have the 'special power of being what the institution is all about'," (p. 424).

Roles of graduate assistants to learn how to understand the power dynamic can look different at every institution, but researchers have given their own tips to overcoming barriers related to politics. New professionals must learn truly who has the information, what information is important and who distributes it understanding that information does not only flow from the top down. This information cannot just come from anyone; it must come from a reliable source and know who to ask for the proper information regardless of their position on the organizational chart. Once new

professionals figure that out and how the organization operates they can truly learn how to effectively navigate the system. Amey, Jessup-Anger, and Tingson-Gatuz (2009) stated, "a clear sense of proper procedures, cliques, active countercultures and informal networks that are common in every organization helps a new professional work more effectively and efficiently, build supportive connections, capitalize on opportunities, and succeed more consistently on behalf of students," (p. 31). New professionals must see themselves in roles of leadership where role models may not exist just yet, putting them in places of power. All of these tips Amey, Jessup-Anger and Tingson-Gatuz (2009) believe will assist in how new professionals feel in their roles as new professionals. Recognizing that power is a large part of being able to create change in an organization, new professionals must be able to understand their opportunity for change when they have the power to make the change.

Higher Education Structure

There is an issue between the division of faculty and staff creating a disconnect within how they are perceived by students. This division is created by a competition for influence and power which then results in students being less confident in faculty's abilities to understand the type of education they need (Rothman, Kelly-Woessner, Woessner, 2010). This disconnect results in students wanting more control over their education but both faculty and staff can agree that the students do not need more control. There needs to be a reconnection between faculty and staff in relation to how they work together. The structure of higher education allows for the division but the importance of working together to make the students feel as confident as they possibly can about their educational journey is crucial.

New professionals must learn to understand the hierarchical structure of higher education, especially in their organization, to better understand how to move up and through their workplace opportunities. In order to be successful professionals must learn to understand the culture of their organization and effectively analyze the structure. Though that is not the only solution, a professional must also understand how their organization moves and breaths with each of the members and who the stakeholders are. It is no longer a field where you can only pay attention to your direct supervisor; that thought process can leave a person very narrow minded and shortsighted (Amey, Jessup-Anger, Tingson-Gatuz, 2009).

Graduate Student Prep

Lombardi describes the time spent in graduate school as "time for individuals to learn the norms of the profession, therefore serving as an important component of the anticipatory socialization process" (2013, p. 15). It has been found that while many new professionals in student affairs come from varying backgrounds, they all share common issues during their transition, the same common issues that older professionals experienced around taking risks, career fit, and many others (Renn, Jessup-Anger, 2008, Hall, 2014). Many new professionals find that it is really hard to stay true to themselves through the process of finding institutional fit (Hall, 2014; Magolda & Magolda, 2011). To counteract that issue Magolda & Magolda (2011) suggested that graduate students learn how to negotiate power differences and make ethical decisions early on in their career. In order to truly be able to navigate the political realm of higher education new professionals must establish their identity, so they can avoid being pulled into the

political whirlwind that often happens when there is a competition for resources (Amey, Jessup-Anger & Tingson-Gatuz, 2009).

A study that Renn and Jessup-Anger (2008) did of new professionals found that there were many similar themes in the challenges that new professionals face. Those themes revolved around issues of creating a professional identity, navigating a cultural adjustment, maintaining a learning orientation and seeking sage advice. Many new professionals struggled between different periods describing their professional identity; "they alternated between feeling confident, overwhelmed, and at times, wholly unsure of their abilities," showing their real insecurities (Renn, Jessup-Anger, 2008, p. 324). Many have found that new professionals establish this mentality based on the idea that other professionals must know more than I do and begin to feel overwhelmed with everything they still have to learn (Amey, Jessup-Anger & Tingson-Gatuz, 2009).

Harrison found that many professionals felt, "graduate programs did not teach them how to negotiate power in university systems, so they have found mentors who give them knowledge and direction when confronted with power issues," (2011, p. 49). Overall, many new professionals felt that there was a variation in those who felt their graduate assistantships, practicum placements, and internships gave them more practical preparation (Renn, Jessup-Anger, 2008). Research indicated that it is possible a graduate program may never be able to prepare students to feel comfortable approaching the new experience of losing their social network and support systems as they enter into their job and leave behind their previous institution (Renn, Hodges, 2007; Lombardi, 2013). The key to helping them find support is establishing proper supervision to create a foundation for them to grow from (Kegolis, 2009).

Turn Over

Professionals are having a hard time enacting change in their organizations when they are committed to principles that surround the social justice movement. Harrison found that professionals who were committed to social justice work were more likely, "to lose a job, leave the field, or not aspire to high level positions out of lack of desire to be an insider within the institution," (2008, p. 48) contributing to the large issue of turn over in higher education. A theory that Renn and Jessup-Anger discovered on new professional attrition is that, "new professionals do not see intellectual preparation for the field as particularly well connected to the work of the field," (2008, p. 329). Research supported that entry-level professionals have the lowest rate of emotional attachment, identification and involvement with their organizations (Boehman, 2006). There is a call to pay more attention to new professionals to help promote their development and retain them (Boehman, 2006).

Another issue is that entry-level professionals feel that they cannot leave their organizations without a cost to their professional career (Frank, 2013). New professionals feel undervalued due to their often low salaries, compared to peers, and that causes them to reflect on how much the institution truly values them as a professional (Frank, 2013). They have a lack of support due to the "top-down" decision-making that often happens in higher education. When new professionals would ask questions about decisions, they were often told that they were not being a "team player" and were sometimes even black listed from their organizations. Everyone understands that the field of higher education can be very political but these new professionals

shared, "they were exasperating and affected the work they did, particularly their work with students," (Frank, 2013, p. 73).

Turnover causes a huge issue in the system of higher education due to the effect it has on creating change in an organization. Truly deep effective change takes 10-15 years to create and when leadership leaves the institution their projects often times go with them, causing the whole process to start over with a new professional (Kezar, 2009). When turn over is high, it can cause issues that many do not expect. Rosser & Javinar shared, "units lose efficiency, consistency, and quality in the delivery of services, as well as the investment made in the knowledge base of the institution or unit," (2003, p. 825) leaving many institutions scrambling to fix this problem. A solution to this large issue is the use of synergistic supervision to help aid with new professionals job satisfaction. Tull (2006) found there was a positive significant correlation between the level of synergistic supervision a new professional received and their job satisfaction. They believe that the lack of this type of supervision could be causing the large issue of turnover for new professionals in higher education. Holmes, Verrier and Chisholm found a 39% retention rate of staff that had moved out of the field of higher education by their sixth year in a 1988 study. By creating these types of supervisory relationships the research showed that supervisors could easily communicate the organizations goals, norms and values that would help new professionals feel more informed in their job (Tull, 2006).

Discussion

The importance of this issue is never ending due to the overwhelming problem in higher education surrounding politics. The millennial generation is a force to be

reckoned with due to their nature of being more technological and resistant to top-down methods. The structure of higher education is based around this idea of top-down organization, and the millennials may have an active role in changing that or changing themselves. In relation to this the amount of power a millennial feels they have directly correlates to the amount of change they can make within an organization. In order to properly make change they have to have an appropriate amount of power. This information may allow a brief look into what the future of higher education looks like with a generation that prefers to work in a very different structure.

Implications for Organizations

Organizations have a lot of work to do to prepare, retain, and understand the new millennial professionals. It is clear that all organizations are dealing with how to prepare for the new generation of workers, but the structure of higher education creates more barriers to enacting the changes necessary. Once organizations can understand the role that millennials play in their universities they can then begin to understand how they affect power, politics, organizational structure, and turnover. All of these topics are related to each other in order to have a successful and healthy organizational structure. It is clear that no organization is perfect, but this research will allow for other universities to begin to see the adjustments they need to make to their organizations.

Along with the suggestion for change in organizational structure there is a call for change of support for new professionals. The research shows there is a lack of support in the appropriate ways to ensure that new professionals feel comfortable in the work that they are doing. These are all related to the role that power plays due to the close work that these issues play on how a new professional perceives their

23

organizations. When there is a positive relationship with the new professional and the organization, there is a better understanding of what they need to be successful and act as a change agent in their organization.

Summary

Recognizing all the themes involved around the role power plays for new professionals in higher education it is no doubt going to be an issue to deal with in the future. The connection between all of these themes discovered during this author's research shows the large effect that new professionals have on the structure of higher education. The impact of new professionals will increase and in a few short years they will be assuming the roles of the previous generations. It is important to recognize the issues that this generation is dealing with now and how the future of higher education can prepare for them. Politics and power play a great role in all professionals' connection to their organization, especially in the way that new professionals connect. This generation connects to organizations differently and without their connections they will never truly feel welcome in higher education.

From the information in the literature there is a beginning of understanding the effect that generational differences, power dynamics, organizational change, structure of higher education, graduate student preparation and turn over have on power dynamics. It is very clear that the millennial generation handles situations differently than their previous generations. Through research eventually scholars can pinpoint the exact effect that power can have on the millennials generation new professionals in higher education and the effect it can have on the other varying generations. There is a culture of change that needs to happen in higher education in order to make sure they can fix the turn over

issue and establish a comfortable work environment for the new generation. This

research proves that there is a problem that needs to be addressed in regards to this new

generation impact on the hierarchy of higher education.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Target Population

This study took place at a medium-size, public, four-year, Midwest state university. The participants for this study were chosen from a staff roster of those in the millennial generation, born between 1982-1999 (Fountain, 2014), who have worked at the institution for 1-5 years. An invitation was extended to each individual who was identified on a list provided by the division of student affairs, of staff members in the student affairs positions and other related positions at the university. Individuals who participated were asked a series of questions about their demographics to be used to compare the data.

Procedures

The qualitative research method of individual one-on-one unstructured interview process was chosen to allow participants an opportunity to share their experiences without feeling their stories would be shared with their colleagues. The sample of 29 individuals that were thought to meet the research protocol was provided by the Division of Student Affairs at the institution in the form of a list. Before the interviews individuals were sent a demographic questionnaire, found in Appendix A, and asked if they were willing to participate in the study. Only 9 individuals met the research criteria, and only 8 responded to schedule interviews. During the process of obtaining data a pseudonym was assigned to each participant to ensure the confidentiality of the study. The researcher kept, in a locked space, the master list of the pseudonyms and real names of the individuals.

The individuals then scheduled a time to meet with the researcher one-on-one to conduct the interview. After beginning the interview process, the individual provided the researcher with their name, demographic information (i.e., race & gender identity), audio consent, and informed consent forms with their pseudonym on them. Participants were free to leave and terminate their participation in this study at any time without prejudice or repercussions. The interviews were recorded on a recording device to avoid technical difficulties. The use of the device was addressed in the audio consent form and noted in previous emails to the individual. The interviews were scheduled per the individual's requests. All individuals who appeared for an interview were entered into a raffle to win a $25 Amazon gift card. Only one participant was awarded this incentive prize. After the interviews were completed they were transcribed with the pseudonyms of the individuals to continue to ensure confidentiality.

Analysis

The interview results focused on qualitative data that were then analyzed based on a coding system that was determined once the data was transcribed. The researcher coded the responses based on Raven and French's five bases of power, reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert. Those five bases of power show the individuals' experiences within relationships that display situations of power and politics in their work. In order to ensure confidentiality the participants were asked to use pseudonyms to address any other individual within their interviews.

Summary

The majority of the data was collected by qualitative research methods guided by the research questions and conceptual framework for the study. French and Raven's five

bases of power were used as a foundation to organize the data into categories that were analyzed to better understand dynamics of power in higher education organizations. The data were collected through individual interviews and a brief demographic questionnaire with individuals whose identity remained confidential. To ensure confidentiality each participant completed a consent waiver to ensure that they were aware of the research they were participating in.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to develop a better understanding of the

experiences of millennial generation new student affairs professionals in relation to

power and politics.

This study researched the experiences of millennial professionals around issues of power

and politics at a four-year, public, research institution located in the Midwest. The

research questions for this study were:

1) What are the experiences of the millennial generation with politics in higher

   education?

2) What are the experiences of the millennial generation with power in higher

   education?

   a. What have been millennials' experiences with the following bases of

      power been (please refer to definitions on pp. 6-7):

      i. Reward Power

      ii. Coercive Power

      iii. Legitimate Power

      iv. Referent Power

      v. Expert Power

3) What are the experiences of the millennial generation with the top-down

   structure in higher education?

4) In what ways do millennial generation professionals work around issues of

power and politics?

5) Does identity (race, gender identity, etc.) affect how millennial generation professionals learn to navigate issues of politics and power?

This chapter includes demographic information of the participants, a discussion of the themes that emerged from the interviews, and a summary of the results from the study. The transcriptions of interviews are available in the appendices. Of the twenty-nine demographic surveys that were sent out only nineteen responded to the survey. From the nineteen that responded only nine fit the criteria of the sample and agreed to be interviewed. Eight of those individuals responded to schedule an interview and were interviewed for the study.

Demographics

Eight millennial professionals who had been in their professional careers within student affairs offices or positions that had a student affairs focus from 1-5 years at the institution participated in interviews. Four of the participants identified as white/Caucasian, two participants identified as Black, one individual identified as Asian and one individual identified as Hispanic/Latino. Five of the participants identified as women, two identified as men, and one participant identified as genderqueer using they, them, their pronouns. The master degrees obtained by individuals vary with seven participants receiving a master's in higher education or college student personal and one receiving a master's degree in business administration all from varying institutions across the Midwest. Three participants worked in residence life, one worked in admissions, one in student conduct, one in international education, one in student affairs upper administration, and one within an identity center.

The Participants

The eight participants were given pseudo names to protect their identity. Charley identifies as an Asian man and has a Master's Degree in Business Administration from another Midwest institution. Ana identifies as a white woman who has a Master's degree in Higher Education from a Midwest institution. Andrea identifies as a Hispanic/Latino woman who is currently obtaining her Master's degree in Higher Education from the institution where this study was conducted. Danielle identifies as a white female who obtained her Master's Degree in College Student Personal from a Midwest institution. Hank identifies as a Black man who obtained his Master's Degree in Higher Education from the institution where this study was conducted. Kate identifies as a Caucasian woman who obtained her Master's Degree in College Student Personal from a Midwest institution. Ivan identifies as a Genderqueer white person who obtained their Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from a Midwest institution. Diana identifies as a Black woman who obtained her Master's Degree in Higher Education from a Midwest institution.

Throughout the interviews five themes emerged including power and politics; experience related to French and Raven's five bases of social power; hierarchy; being intentional within the work; and identity. While many of the responses from individuals were unique to their experience, these themes were present in the stories that the participants shared during the interviews.

Politics and Power

The first theme that emerged related to power and accessing that power. Many participants mentioned various strategies they used in order to gain access to more

power at their institution. One individual, Charley, shared that the more access he had to power the less "red tape" or bureaucracy he would have to go through which allows him to make decisions quicker. Not only would he be able to get more things done but also he would be able to get them done faster in a more manageable way. About the access to power participant Hank felt that building relationships would aid in getting things done faster in his work. Charley echoed that sentiment stating, "knowing the right people and playing along with the politics can help make the changes quicker." Other individuals shared that their relationships with a mentor helped them understand the power dynamics at play within higher education. Kate, Diana, Ivan, and Andrea all mentioned their mentors and how helpful they were to learning the many aspects of their institutions.

Ana experienced a very different feeling about power and politics than her peers, "it's frustrating to have ideas and to be looked at as somebody who doesn't get to have an opinion because I'm completely powerless and I know nothing in the position that I'm in." Though no one else shared this specific experience, it was obvious that they had learned different ways to cope with the lack of power. Hank mentioned identifying individuals within the organization who would be able to make changes, establishing relationships with those individuals and using those relationships to his advantage. Charley and Kate felt that being strategic around when and how you address situations around power would help in gaining access later. Though Ivan shared overall that the political issues they were facing made them question their longevity as a student affairs professional.

Experiences Related to French and Raven's Five Bases of Social Power

Reward Power

Many individuals throughout the interviews shared that reward power was something they enjoyed as a way to feel that they were successful in their job. Andrea, Charley, Hank, and Kate all shared that obtaining a reward from doing well in their job motivated them to continue to work harder. Examples of rewards were positive performance reviews, promotions, flexibility with schedules and time off. Ana, on the other hand, felt different from her peers asserting:

> After a full year of 'hey look at me, look at all the great stuff I'm doing!' You didn't accomplish anything because you spend so much time trying to get rewarded for everything you just need to do, which is why you're getting a paycheck in the first place.

Ivan also felt that if they continued to say yes they would eventually get rewarded but that it is crucial at times to say no to prove why you may need more resources to do your job well. They felt it may cause a negative impact but overall it would help others recognize the need of more resources within their offices. Overall, the experiences that were shared around Reward Power were positive in nature.

Coercive Power

Seven of the individuals interviewed out of the eight had an experience with coercive power. Hank had never experienced coercive power during his professional career but all the others had varying things to say about it. Andrea had experienced coercive power in her previous role at another institution and shared her experience:

There were a lot of things going on with people getting fired, people moving on

and I did feel that if I spoke out against what I felt about that there would be

repercussions. It's not very comfortable and I think it's very oppressive.

Andrea went on to share that experience pushed her to seek other opportunities. Diana

mirrored a similar experience in that morale in the workplace dropped and people felt

very undervalued and fearful that they would lose their jobs. Ivan felt that they

experienced coercive leadership more from individuals in power pushing back on their

policy changes and basing decisions of push back off of fear. All of those who

experienced it felt that it was a difficult work environment to be in and that it was

frustrating for them completing their jobs. Overall, Ana felt that while coercive power

works to force individuals to make quick changes the impact it has on the individuals

feeling threatened for their jobs was not worth the impact.

Legitimate Power

During the interviews Andrea and Ana expressed that legitimate power was a

positive experience and that it is a very respectful type of power. Charley felt that with

this type of power he was comfortable questioning why people are making decisions. He

shared that he feels he has a responsibility to support the goals of the institution and he

understands that there are things he does not know because they cannot be shared with

him. Legitimate power is something that all eight of the interview participants

experienced and felt that it was a positive experience.

Referent Power

During the interviews it seems that the respondents varied in how they viewed

this type of power within higher education. One participant felt that this type of social

power could be seen not only in the professionals but also in the students and how they look up to professionals. Kate felt that she herself uses Referent power by looking to women as mentors and that women students she works with give her Referent power for possibly the same reason. Diana and Charley felt similar in that relating to others in various ways is important in leadership. Though most of them viewed this power as positive Ivan felt that referent leadership could be viewed as something different within higher education. They shared:

I want to enact or learn from and build from right? Especially if those folks are not only experts but we hold similar identities or they are kind of in higher education roles that are seen as 'famous' or scholars for their work. Those are the spaces and I think that's actually reflective of higher education and how we frame this interesting reality we live in.

This view was not shared by any of their peers but Ivan felt that referent power was given to "famous" people or scholars within higher education.

Expert Power

This base of power was strongly related to the role of faculty at an institution according to Hank and Charley. Danielle felt that students showcase a false sense of expert power during their graduate careers that can skew their idea of what the reality is for many students. Overall, it seemed that Hank had a strong belief that holding a doctorate degree would make him an expert. Hank mentioned:

One of my goals is to get a doctorate degree so that when you have those interactions with faculty members you can be perceived as more of a peer as opposed to a 'less than' and it will make interactions easier. It just gives you that

first impression like expert power because you have a doctoral degree, makes it

easier to navigate the politics of an institution.

It seems as though faculty are often seen as experts and that student affairs professionals

do not have the similar expert status when it comes to power. Kate felt that expert power

was not related to intelligence within the field but more related to the experiences that

those professionals have had over others. Participants felt that in order to show expert

power you also had to prove your expertise in the subject and continue to learn new

things along the way.

Hierarchy

Many of the participants struggled with the hierarchical structure of higher

education and the titles or labels of everyone at an institution. When asked about how

they handle top-down structure of higher education there were varying perspectives.

Some individuals struggle with being on the bottom of the hierarchy with limited

availability to create changes within their divisions or offices. Ana had a difficult

comment around being an entry level professional sharing:

It is difficult when somebody hires you for a position because of your

experience, because of your knowledge and because of your drive and then they

get upset when you try to spout your knowledge and show how much drive you

have.

Others strongly believe that titles do not mean anything to them in their professional

careers. Ivan and Kate both adamantly believed that titles are not important to them and

that titles must not get in the way of working with individuals to get the job done.

Participants also felt that student affairs professionals are working towards making a student's experience enjoyable and titles should not get in the way of helping students. Ivan shared, "hierarchy and those structures feel very uncomfortable and not very realistic to me. I'm all about working smarter and not harder and what gets the job done." A similar statement was shared by Kate. Andrea felt that this feeling may be connected with being a millennial, "I think it can be uncomfortable because I really think that we don't like that unequal balance of power" around the hierarchy. Danielle believed that there is a lot of pressure around titles and power that are not related to why she's in the field of higher education. Though Ivan had a positive outlook in saying:

> I am hoping that will change, I think another thing that motivates me is that I want to change the way power and politics look in higher education. I want to play it different, I want to do it differently, to shift how that plays out and prove that it can be done different and we can be successful. I think that's a motivating factor too.

Ivan is hoping to be able to enact change within the structure for labels and hierarchy. Andrea, Kate, and Ivan truly hoped to get the work done and not allow students to get hurt by the hierarchical structure. Since Ivan deals with an identity based group of students they expressed that, "I don't have time for your ego or your power trip or this bullshit politics because the populations I serve and the identities that they hold and how they all intersect we have people dying," around the large rate of suicidal students within the population they work with. Diane on the other hand felt that it was important for her to stay within the lines of authority in their job rather than challenging the system.

Being Intentional Within the Work

While asking participants about how they navigated issues of power and politics, the theme of being intentional within the work presented itself in various ways. Throughout the interviews participants shared that they enjoy making a difference in their work. Ana approached making change by asking a lot of questions and adapting her approach in order to make change. She emphasized the point around being intentional:

> I've seen from a lot of people in this generation where you come in and you want your voice to be heard so you're the loudest voice at the table but you're also the least educated voice at the table.

Charley felt similar but shared his thoughts in a way that was more addressing the lack of education for new employees to learn the appropriate way to handle situations. Charley felt that a way to counteract that situation was to learn to navigate the power and politics before individuals try to make an impact. Another individual shared that there is a lack of education around how to appropriately challenge situations that you do not agree with; Kate felt that approach to challenging is more than half of the battle. She also went on to share that it is crucial to allow individuals time in order to challenge their ideas or proposals, not doing it right on the spot but giving it time and thinking over the idea and approaching the individual one-on-one in person to ask questions about the topic. Kate overall felt that if millennials can continue to ask thoughtful questions in an appropriate way and not let their entitlement stand in their way they will go far.

During their interview Ivan felt that they simply do not engage in power and politics and work:

> Now that doesn't mean I'm not aware or at times strategic about that right? About how I navigate that or when and where or how far I push in certain settings but that doesn't mean that I'm not going to push.

Ivan also shared that even though policies or activities had always been done in a certain way did not warrant the continuance of that policy or activity because it may not have been done in the most effective way in the past. Though many participants felt they learned these skills over time and with experience Danielle shared that she learned how to be intentional in navigating power and politics during her graduate studies. They felt that based on the classroom discussions within their capstone course they were able to address various case studies and brainstorm possible ways to address situations they might encounter in the workplace.

Identity

Many participants shared aspects of their identity and how that influenced their navigation around politics and power within higher education. Not all participants who identified within a minority group felt that it influenced their interactions in the field. Andrea felt that her Latina household taught her to appreciate legitimate power due to respecting those who are older in society. They felt that the upbringing shaped that view and allowed them to function around legitimate power in a way that was natural for them. The other two participants who identified their identity as a crucial part of their understanding of power and politics spoke broadly on their experiences as a whole.

Through many experiences Ivan felt that individuals that shared identities with them were often the ones who pushed back on their policies or programs. Ivan mentioned, "I don't know if it's a deep internalized oppression that they feel if they do support they will be seen as only as that identity and they are fearful of their own politics they have to navigate around that," around these individuals possible perspectives. They felt that these individuals with similar identities were forced to sacrifice their support for those marginalized identities in order to play the political game within the student affairs field:

> They've been told that they have to do it in this way to be successful to get where they are together. You have to be respectful enough and professional enough and dress this way and talk this way. Present your ideas in this way, not be too pushy right? That's the only way they've been conditioned to thrive in higher education in student affairs.

While Ivan was facing an extreme push back from individuals of shared identities Hank was experiencing a sense of camaraderie. They felt that within this field you must identify individuals who will be allies and work as a sounding board when experiencing situations where they want to push back on. These allies were able to help individuals overcome issues of microagressions. Hank has strategically not interjected when he felt something wasn't appropriate in order not to be seen as a "feather ruffler" within the organization. He feels that he has to avoid perpetuating stereotypes that are often associated with being African American. Hank said, "My interactions with people who don't look like me, I've been doing that for a long time so I was able to learn how to assimilate and find my way and navigate early," around his experiences. Even though

they were able to navigate Hank still felt that the need to assimilate was one of the most

frustrating things but they did not let it overwhelm their experience. Using those

individuals as allies to overcome those moments of frustration and look at situations

from various angles helped them feel safe and welcome within their workplace.

Ivan shared a similar experience as being a member of the LGBT community.

They mentioned:

> I've learned that I don't have to not be myself there are just strategic ways to
>
> share parts of my professional approach and my values and how I do the work.
>
> That doesn't mean I don't have to talk to people or not engage, I've just learned
>
> ways to snapshot or talk about things that are more digestible depending on my
>
> audience.

At the end of their interview Ivan shared a powerful statement around the structure of

higher education for those who have marginalized identities:

> Fueled by power and politics look like and that's all been framed by white,
>
> cisgender, straight men, and we're still upholding those. We're still enacting it as
>
> folks who don't have those identities. Why are we upholding these structures?
>
> They're not benefitting anyone.

Summary

The responses from the staff that participated in this study show that they all

faced varying issues around power and politics within higher education. These issues

included problems around titles and hierarchy, individual's identities impact on their

experiences, power related to French and Raven's Five Bases of Social Power, power

and politics, and intentionality within their work. Participants mentioned several tools

that aided in their experiences around power and politics. Those tools include reaching

out to mentors, finding allies, being patient, learning from peer's experiences, and

asking questions. Participants overall have been impacted by the politics and power

within their institution and it has influenced how they navigate through their work.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH, &

RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter addresses how the results from the study compare to the literature on millennials, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research, recommendations and a final summary.

Discussion

The various themes that were presented in this research were power and politics; experiences related to French and Raven's five bases of social power; hierarchy; intentionality within work; and identity. As graduate students transition into their new professional roles within higher education, student affairs professionals must be prepared to understand how new professionals work within the structure of the institution. The individuals within this study shared an overall feeling of frustration around the issues of power and politics that happen at their institution. This issue of frustration has made some individuals unsure of their future within the profession of student affairs and caused them to question what their long-term commitment to this work is. Ivan mentioned that the political issues were causing them to question the longevity within student affairs. This is consistent with the findings from Harrison (2008) that professionals who were doing social justice work are more likely to leave the field or not continue to move up the ranks within the institution due to the lack of desire to fit in within the institutional structure.

Omachonu (2012) posited that it would be necessary for individuals within an organization to develop skills around power and politics in order to move about the organization. Participants felt that over time they developed more skills that helped them navigate these issues of power and politics. This also aligns with Ardoin (2014) findings that individuals have to learn to navigate politics even if they don't play into them, something that participants mentioned throughout their interviews. They shared that they learned taking time to understand the politics that are at play within the organization is important before making suggestions that would cause large amounts of change. Once they understood the politics they also made sure to ask questions and ask them in appropriate settings as to not challenge individuals in power roles.

French & Raven's Five Bases of Social Power was used as the conceptual framework for this study and it is crucial to look at the results within the lens of the theory. As mentioned in Chapter One, the five bases of power are Reward Power, Coercive Power, Legitimate Power, Referent Power, and Expert Power. Within the first base of power, Reward Power, many participants mentioned how reward power motivated them to do better work. Examples were given of rewards included successful performance reviews, promotions, flexibility with schedule, and time off. All of these experiences were shared in a positive way from participants and all felt that they were motivated by these rewards.

The second base of power is Coercive Power, which looks at situations in which individuals within an organization may feel pressured to act in a certain way in fear of losing their jobs. The participants in the study felt this type of power was very oppressive and often caused individuals to complete work quickly to ensure their job

security. This shows the overall feeling that coercive leadership was not a leadership style that millennials respond well to and should avoid supervisors or offices in which this type of power is enacted.

The third base, Legitimate Power, was responded to very well from individuals who participated in the study. Participants felt that legitimate power was respected highly and that they felt that legitimate power was positive to work with. Though participants did mention that they liked to ask questions of those with legitimate power to ensure that their choices are made in order to benefit the institutions mission as a whole.

The fourth base, Referent Power, had mixed reviews from participants within the study. Many individuals felt that it was important to be able to identify with those in power around them and their work. Another participant mentioned the role that referent power plays in higher education around "famous" people in the field or scholars that are well known for their work. This is highly related to referent power and can be seen throughout national organizations in the way that individuals are followed due to how the field of student affairs perceives their knowledge. This type of power may led to professionals blindly following individuals leading them down a path that may not be beneficial for their work. Though many participants felt that this power was helpful in creating relationships with those with whom you work and lets you feel more connected to them when you share identities or characteristics.

The final base is Expert Power and is seen as individuals who have knowledge on a subject or perceived to have that knowledge. Participants within the study often related this base of power to faculty being knowledgeable in their field. Hank even

shared that he hopes to obtain a doctoral degree to be perceived as more of an expert within the field of higher education. There was a push from participants to share that experts must also continue to learn new things and back up their statements with concrete evidence of their expertise. The results of this study found that most participants preferred to work within power dynamic roles that showed legitimate, reward or expert power.

Balda & Mora (2011) felt that the structure that is top-down is vastly different than what millennials prefer. Many participants mentioned that they prefer to function within the workplace without titles dictating what they should be doing. The participants mentioned not letting position titles get in the way of who they talk to in order to get things done, showing their dislike for the top-down structure. In order to overcome these issues with structure in higher education organizations should look at working in a more lateral approach rather than horizontal to promote conversations at all levels. Amey, Jessup-Anger & Tingson-Gatuz (2009) shared that millennials do not feel that they have to "pay their dues" to the organization. This is supported by participants mentioning that they do not feel that they need to play into organizational politics just because the previous generation had to.

A large portion of the findings within this research was the portion around identity and how that may aid in the navigation of power and politics for individuals who belong to minority groups. The participants shared powerful statements around needing to assimilate into the culture in order to not cause issues for individuals. Individuals who belong to a minority group approached the conversations of power and politics more freely than those participants who belonged to majority groups. One

participant mentioned that they avoid perpetuating stereotypes associated with being a Black male while at work. The participant also mentioned that they had developed ally relationships with coworkers as a coping skill to handle situations in which they felt frustrated. Those individuals did not have to belong to the same minority group as them in order to be seen as allies. This participant specifically mentioned that they felt they were able to navigate because they had been interacting with individuals who did not look like them for their whole lives. It is crucial to recognize that identities shape how individuals navigate their professional careers around power and politics.

Around identity it was also shared that those in minority groups have experienced more push back from those who share similar identities. It seems there is a fear to act as an ally for a minority group if you belong to that group because, as a participant said, they would only be seen as that identity. Along with that there seems to be more push back from people who share identities because they had to navigate the political field and almost pressure those entering the field to experience the same barriers they faced when working their way up the hierarchical ladder. The participant sharing this experience felt that there could be some type of internalized oppression that is causing professionals to react in this way. Those participants within the marginalized identities felt that they had to let go of parts of their own identities in order to navigate the political structure of higher education. This statement is quite powerful and thought provoking around what the field of higher education and more specifically student affairs needs to do around privilege and identities.

Limitations

This study lacks transferability since all of the participants were from a same mid-sized research institution. Due to a lack of participants from varying educational backgrounds that demographic information could not be analyzed. Since there were only 8 participants in the study it is hard to say if their experience is can be generalized for the profession as a whole. There is a lack of literature on this topic that could be found to understand if the experiences the participants shared were common.

Future Research

Future research is needed to add to the literature about the experiences of millennial generation new professionals in higher education and how well their graduate student preparation programs prepare them for the work environment. Another future research opportunity would be to add to the literature about the experiences of marginalized identities in higher education and how they learned to navigate power and politics. This study had limited ability to better understand the connection between the experiences of marginalized participants and the impact their identity had on their experiences. Further research is needed to understand how those experiences may or may not prepare professionals to better handle situations around power and politics.

In future research, subjects need to represent various educational backgrounds to have a better understanding to compare the experiences of those who obtained a master's degree in higher education or an equivalent to another degree. In order to obtain that the researcher may open up the study to multiple institutions to have a larger pool of participants. This would allow for a better understanding of just how prepared masters programs in higher education are preparing graduates to handle power and politics.

This study also opened up a conversation around referent power within the field of higher education from those who are seen as "famous" or scholars in their work. For future research this must be examined more to see how referent power may control the field. A large number of individuals within the profession promote their theories, research or publications, and it would be interesting to view the impact that those with high level recognition and reputation have within the field.

Recommendations

One recommendation for new millennial professionals experiencing situations around power and politics is to develop a relationship with mentors early on in their career. It would be helpful to recommend a mentoring program within a graduate program for student affairs that would pair graduate students with a professional that has been in the field for a number of years. These mentors may be doing similar work or share identities with the mentee. This process would allow graduate students to have conversations around navigation and open the conversation around the professionals' experience outside of graduate school. Mentorship could also aid in graduate students seeing how their mentors navigated the power and politics therefore allowing them to mimic that behavior in the future or adapt it for their situation. A mentor could help new professionals or graduate students have a better understanding of the political and power dynamics within the field. Many participants shared that their mentors helped them through situations and to understand things from various perspectives. Identifying mentors from other than the millennial generation may also aid in a greater understanding of generational differences and allow for varying perspectives.

Supervisors must approach millennials recognizing that they prefer to work around power that is based in legitimacy or expert status. Recognizing that they work best when there is a reason they are working for you. Reward power can be used more to motivate millennials to continue to do well within organizations. Rewards may vary from raises, professional development or simply taking a day off for being successful. Supervisors must recognize that when millennials feel that their hard work is being noticed they are more likely to continue to work harder and enjoy their work environments.

The experience that these individuals in a minority group shared is happening across identities and it needs to be addressed. In order to overcome barriers all professionals need to recognize their identity and how that has affected their experience within student affairs to have a better understanding of what new professionals are experiencing. A suggestion is to encourage more frequent conversations within staff to discuss identity and how their individual experiences shape their careers. Also educating staff and faculty on privilege or implicit bias and how that effects other populations within the field may assist in the education of all professionals.

Summary

The findings in this study illuminated a research area that was not yet discussed in the literature. Higher education must do a better job in preparation of new professionals to ensure that they develop the skills to navigate issues of power and politics. There is an issue with millennials feeling a lack of power and a lack of access to that power. These individuals do not experience power relationships around supervision in ways that previous generations may. They prefer to be rewarded with time off,

promotions or raises rather than awards or recognition. Mentoring helps millennial professionals have a better understanding of what to expect within their first few years and skills to navigate those situations. Those mentors may also aid in relieving some of the frustration that millennials face around power and politics. Individual identity plays a large role in the experiences of millennials around issues of power and politics. This has caused a lot of frustration for those who belong to minority groups and how they work within the system of higher education. Many individuals within the study felt that titles and hierarchy were not something they enjoyed and often navigated around those titles or positions in order to get the work done. The results from this study show the importance of helping millennials transition into power and politics rather than having an expectation that they would simply know how to navigate.

REFERENCES

Amey, M. J., & Reesor, L. M. (2009). *Beginning your journey: a guide for new professionals in student affairs. NASPA Monograph Series*. National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1875 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 418, Washington, DC 20009-5728.

Ardoin, M. S. (2014). *The strategic guide to shaping your student affairs career*. Sterling, Virginia : Stylus, 2014.

Balda, J. B., & Mora, F. (2011). Adapting leadership theory and practice for the networked, millennial generation. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, *5*(3), 13-24.

Birnbaum, R. (1989). *How colleges work: The cybernetics of academic organization and leadership*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Boehman, J. (2006). Affective, continuance, and normative commitment among student affairs professionals.

Bolton, S. (2010). *Career motivation theory: Generational differences and their impact on organizations*. Walden University.

Bushnell, E. J. (2012). Looking forward: New challenges and opportunities. *New Directions for Student Services*, *2012*(138), 91-103.

Ferri-Reed, J. (2013). Millennials-Generation" screwed" or generation" shrewd?". *The Journal for Quality and Participation*, *36*(1), 22.

Fountain, J. M. (2014). *Differences in generational work values in america and their implications for educational leadership: a longitudinal test of twenge's model*. University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Frank, T. E. (2013). *Why do they leave? departure from the student affairs profession* (Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University).

French, J. R., & Raven, B. (1959). The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright Editor (Eds.), *Classics of organization theory*, (pp. 311-320). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan.

Graybill, J. O. (2014). Millennials among the professional workforce in academic libraries: Their perspective on leadership. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *40*(1), 10-15.

Harrison, L. M. (2011). Transformational leadership, integrity, and power. *New Directions for Student Services*, *2011*(135), 45-52.

Holmes, D., Verrier, D., & Chisholm, P. (1988). Persistence in student affairs work: Attitudes and job shifts among master's program graduates. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 24*(5), 181-188.

Kegolis, J. L. (2009). New professionals' perspectives of supervision in student affairs (Doctoral dissertation, Bowling Green State University).

Kezar, A. (July/August 2008). Understanding leadership strategies for addressing the politics of diversity. *The Journal of Higher Education, 79(*4).

Kezar, A. (2009). Change in higher education: Not enough, or too much?.*Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, *41*(6), 18-23.

Lambert, M. (2015). *Generational differences in the workplace: the perspectives of three generations on career mobility* (Doctoral dissertation, The George Washington University).

Lombardi, K. M. (2013). *Understanding anticipatory socialization for new student affairs professionals* (Doctoral dissertation, Ohio University).

Magolda, P. M., & Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2011). *Contested issues in student affairs: diverse perspectives and respectful dialogue*. Sterling, Va. : Stylus Publishing, 2011.

Magolda, P. M., & Carnaghi, J. E. (2014). *Job one 2.0 : understanding the next generation of student affairs professionals*. Lanham : University Press of America, Inc., [2014].

Myers, K. K., & Sadaghiani, K. (2010). Millennials in the workplace: a communication perspective on millennials' organizational relationships and performance. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *25*(2), 225-238.

Oade, A. (2009). *Managing politics at work. [electronic resource] : the essential toolkit for identifying and handling political behavior in the workplace*. Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Omachonu, F. (March 26, 2012). "Politics" of upward mobility for women and minorities in higher education. *Oxford Round Table, Oxford England.*

Renn, K., & Jessup-Anger, E. R. (2008). Preparing new professionals: lessons for graduate preparation programs from the national study of new professionals in student affairs. *Journal of College Student Development, 49(*4).

Renn, K. A., & Hodges, J. (2007). The first year on the job: Experiences of new professionals in student affairs. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, *44*(2), 604-628.

Rosen, C. C., & Levy, P.E. (2013). Stresses, swaps and skill: An investigation of the psychological dynamics that relate work politics to employee performance. *Human Performance*, 26.

Rosser, V. J., & Javinar, J. M. (2003). Midlevel student affairs leaders' intentions to leave: Examining the quality of their professional and institutional work life. *Journal of College Student Development*, *44*(6), 813-830.

Rothman, S., Kelly-Woessner, A., & Woessner, M. (2010). *The still divided academy: How competing visions of power, politics, and diversity complicate the mission of higher education*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Tull, A. (2006). Synergistic supervision, job satisfaction, and intention to turnover of new professionals in student affairs. *Journal of College Student Development*, *47*(4), 465-480.

Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

1. Were you born between the years 1982 – 1999?

    □ Yes   □ No

2. Have you been in your job from 1-5 years?

    □ Yes □ No

3. What is your gender identity? _____

4. What is your race/ethnicity? _____

5. What is your current age? _____

6. What is your master's degree in? _____

7. What institution is your degree obtained from? _____

8. Including your current institution, how many institutions of higher education

    have you worked for?

    □ 1   □ 2

    □ 3   □ 4

    □ 5   □ Other _____

9. Would you be willing to be interviewed to discuss your experience with politics

    and power in the field of higher education?

    □ Yes □ No

Appendix B

Audio Consent Form

I, _____, acknowledge and accept that the audio from the interview session in which I participate on _____ (m/d/y), will be recorded via the researcher's cellular devices. *Please note: The audio recording will be used solely to aid in transcription purposes and will be erased upon the completion of this thesis research. You will still remain an anonymous participant if the session is recorded. You have the right to refuse audio recording for this session. You will not be penalized and are still welcome to participate.*

<div align="center">Yes □   No □</div>

Please print your name: _____

Please sign your name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form/Cover Letter

Project Title: Experiences of the Millennial Generation with Politics & Power in

Higher Education

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Lauren Ouwerkerk, and I am a graduate student in the College of

Education and Human Services in the Student Affairs in Higher Education program. As

part of my graduate research, I am reaching out to you to request that you participate in

my research study, which is described below. You have been invited to participate in

this research because the Division of Student Affairs identified you as a professional

who was born between the years 1982 -1999 and have worked at the university between

1-5 years. I look forward to this opportunity to talk and learn about your experience.

Purposes of the study: The purpose of this study is to discuss with millennials their

experiences with power and politics in higher education to discover exactly how they

have handled situations of power and politics and where they learned these skills. Once

we can understand the issues facing this generation in the field we can better prepare for

the future of higher education by implementing better graduate student preparedness

opportunities.

It is important to understand experiences with power and politics and lessons learned

in order to have better understand the struggles new professionals are currently facing.

Understanding those struggles can help better prepare future professionals as well as the

field of higher education to adapt for the generational differences.

Methods used for this study: All results of this study will be used for research purposes only. You will receive an email invitation to participate in this study because the Division of Student Affairs has identified you as millennial generation new professionals. You will be asked to schedule an interview by email, if you are interested. Upon arrival, audio consent form, and informed consent document will be provided for review and will need to be signed by the participant prior to the session beginning. These documents will have a pseudonym listed on them that will be previously determined to not allow the linking of your real name with the results of the study. Name cards will be provided to you with your pseudonym listed to help link your responses with their questionnaire responses. No session will be recorded if even one individual denies consent. The researcher's cellular phone and computer will be used to record audio from the interviews when consent is unanimously granted. All audio recordings (when applicable), transcriptions from interviews, and demographic questionnaires will be destroyed via shredding and erased from any password protected computer files once the requirements for this thesis research is completed. The interviews are expected to take between 30- 60 minutes.

Rights as a participant: There are no known risks of participating in this research. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. All individuals who show up for an interview will be entered into a raffle to win a $25 Amazon gift card. Only one participant will be awarded this incentive prize. Data collected during the interviews and questionnaires will contain no personally identifying information. Results will also not include personal identifiers; only the pseudonym provided to each individual by the researcher will be used. You are free to

leave and terminate your participation in this study at any time without prejudice or repercussions. All participants will individually receive by email summaries of the session in which they participated and the overall findings from their individual interviews to review for credibility and confirmability purposes. Your signature on this consent form indicates your consent.

If you have any questions about this study please contact the principal investigator, Lauren Ouwerkerk (Ouwerkerk.2@wright.edu), or Committee Chairs/Advisors Joanne Risacher, Ph.D. & Dan Abrahamowicz, Ph.D. (937-775-2680, 937-775-2808; joanne.risacher@wright.edu, dan.abrahamowicz@wright.edu). For further questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact WSU Institutional Review Board 937-775-4462 or robyn.wilks@wright.edu.

_____   _____

Print name here   Signature here

_____

Date

Appendix D

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your experience with politics in higher education?

    a. Can you provide a specific example?

2. How would you describe your experience with power in higher education?

    a. Can you provide a specific example?

    b. What have your experiences with the following bases of power been:

        i. Reward Power

            1. Defined as "power whose basis is the ability to reward," (French & Raven, 1959, p. 152)

        ii. Coercive Power

            1. Defined as someone's "ability to manipulate to attainment of valances," (French & Raven, 1959, p. 152)

        iii. Legitimate Power

            1. Defined as power that stems from an internalized belief that an individual has a right to influence another individual and they have an obligation to accept that influence (French & Raven, 1959)

        iv. Referent Power

            1. Defined as power that stems from a feeling that an individual wants so much to identify with another individual that they have a power over them (French & Raven, 1959)

     v. Expert Power

         1. Defined as power that an individual has due to their perceived knowledge of a certain area (French & Raven, 1959).

   c. What base do you respond to most favorable?

     i. Why?

3. Are there ways you have found to work around the issues of power and politics?

   a. Can you provide a specific example?

4. How did you learn to navigate issues of power & politics?

5. What are the experiences of the millennial generation with the top-down structure in higher education?

6. How have these experiences made you feel about your future as a student affairs professional?

7. Is there anything else you wish to share with me?

Introduction & Ground Rules

WELCOME

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I appreciate your willingness to participate. The audio from this session will/will not be recorded. Individuals will be identified by their provided pseudonyms only and therefore will remain anonymous.

INTRODUCTIONS

Researcher/Facilitator

PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW

The purpose of this study is to discuss with millennia's their experiences with power and politics in higher education to discover exactly how they have handled situations of power and politics and where they learned these skills. Once we can understand the issues facing this generation in the field we can better prepare for the future of higher education by better implementing graduate student preparedness opportunities. It is important to understand their experiences with power and politics and lessons learned in order to have a better understand of the struggles faced or are currently facing. Understanding those struggles can help better prepare future professionals as well as the field of higher education to adapt for the generational differences.

GROUND RULES

1. There are no right or wrong answers, speak up whether you agree or disagree.

2.   Every response is important and we want to hear what you have to say.

3. What is discussed within this room stays within this room.

4. Relax and be yourself.

Interview Handout

French and Raven's Five Bases of Social Power

Reward power
- Power that is based in the ability to reward someone. For example, this power bases is individuals feeling that those who have power over them can give a positive compensation and to remove or decrease negative feelings in their work. This base only works if those who have power and promising a reward and the probability that those receiving the reward actually feel they can obtain it (French & Raven, 1959).

Coercive power
- Based on the ability to manipulate others into believing if they do not comply with your power, they will be punished (French & Raven, 1959). This could manifest in an institution where someone feels they will be fired if they speak out against their supervisor's wishes. This type of power may is related to a negative reaction by those in power rather than a positive reaction as shown previously in reward power.

Legitimate power
- It is defined as power that stems from internalized values that one has a legitimate right to have influence over another person and that other person feels there is an obligation to accept that influence (French & Raven, 1959). This can be seen in higher education in the form of a president of the university simply having power over all of the workers at the institution. If the president were to lose their title, they would no longer hold that power and those who were under them would no longer feel an obligation to follow their power.

Referent power
- The idea that someone feels they can identify with an individual therefore allowing them to have power over them. This identification can look like many things but some examples would be someone finding that person attractive, charismatic, or relatable (French & Raven, 1959). This type of power is often seen from celebrities or public figures influencing individuals to make a purchase or to go to a certain location.

Expert Power

- Defined as someone having more knowledge or is perceived to have more knowledge over an individual (French & Raven, 1959). This type of power can be seen in the way that individuals follow those who they view as more intelligent than they are or those who may be able to solve the problem. This type of power is very common in higher education based on the degree a professional holds and their experience level.