



## GENERATIONAL VARIATIONS IN WORK APPROACHES: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ACCOUNTING PROFESSION

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**Abstract:** *Recruiting and retaining qualified certified public accountants (CPAs) is essential for organizations' fiscal management and success. The accounting profession is expected to grow significantly, increasing the pressure on businesses to hire CPAs whose work styles align with the evolving demands of the field. Traditionally, personality inventories have been used to assess candidates' fit with companies and positions, but these tools often overlook work styles. In high-demand, high-turnover professions like accounting, it is crucial to find accountants whose work styles align with the competencies needed for the role. This paper explores the changing landscape of the accounting profession, focusing on the competencies required for success in the 21st century, and discusses the importance of aligning work styles with these competencies.*

**Keywords:** *Recruitment, certified public accountants, accounting profession, work styles, competencies.*

### 1. Introduction

Since the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) began surveying accounting firms in 1997, staff recruitment has been a top priority (AICPA, 2013). Furthermore, pressure to recruit and retain high quality accounting personnel will mount as demands for accountants increase. Such pressures are not expected to slow anytime soon; the career sector of accounting is projected to increase by 13% between 2012 and 2022 (United States Department of Labor, 2014). Because the recruitment and retention of qualified certified public accountants (CPAs) is vital to an organization's fiscal management and success, it is critical that businesses attract and hire accounting professionals whose work styles align

with the skills demanded of the profession (Briggs, Copeland, & Haynes, 2007). Historically, hiring managers have often relied on personality inventories to assess CPA candidates' fits with companies and positions (Jacoby, 1981; Kreiser et al., 1990; Otte, 1983; Schloemer & Schloemer, 1997); however, these instruments fail to assess candidates' work styles. When seeking to fill positions for professionals in high demand occupations with high turnover rates, such as CPAs (Briggs et al., 2007), finding accountants whose work styles are congruent with positions' work and skill competencies is essential (Bahador & Haider, 2012; Gupta & Marshall, 2010; Tudor, Gheorghe, & Oancea, 2013). However, growing concerns exist that fewer CPAs are entering the field with the professional competencies required to be successful in the 21st century (Gupta & Marshall, 2010). As the profession has evolved, so too have the competencies required to succeed as a CPA. As organizations strive to accomplish more while exhausting fewer resources, decision-makers face increasing pressures to hire and retain the best and brightest workers (Owens-Jackson, Highsmith-Quick, & Robinson, 2013). Thus, companies must

attract employees who contribute to an organization's long-term success and performance (Suliman et al., 2010) and must also hire individuals that have work styles compatible with positions.

Job fit refers to the congruence between an individual's needs, desires, or preferences and his or her work environment (Prottas, 2011). A mismatch between an individual and an organization—whether related to work environment, social atmosphere, or professional demands of a position—can impede individual and organizational success (Aksu, Sekerciogu, Ehtiyar, Yildiz, & Yilmaz, 2010). An integral component of job fit is work style, which describes an individual's approach to job tasks (Waldo & McCoy, 2010). Understanding candidates' work styles may be used to guide hiring and retention decisions.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

While CPA career orientations have been explored from a personality theory perspective (Briggs et al., 2007; Jacoby, 1983; Kreiser et al., 1990; Otte, 1983; Schloemer & Schloemer, 1997), such studies fail to acknowledge the role of work styles in success as a CPA. Work style, the way job tasks are approached (Waldo & McCoy, 2010), is an important component of job fit. Poor person-job fit is associated with low levels of satisfaction and increased turnover rates (Chhabra, 2015). The direct costs of turnover for skilled positions, such as accountants, is 21 percent of an employee's annual salary (Boushey and Glynn, 2012).

The problem to be addressed in this study is that organizations need to hire and retain CPAs who possess the work style dimensions that contributing to organizational success, and organizations need tools to assess CPAs' work style dimensions. Thus, it is important to assess the extent to which, if any, CPAs' work style dimensions differ according to generation and job rank. In light of the retention problems among CPAs (Briggs et al., 2007), hiring managers must be able to better assess candidates' work styles. When CPAs who do not possess the required work style dimensions are hired, the likelihood for turnover increases, thus, draining organizational resources. It is important to understand if work style dimensions differ according to generation and job rank. The problem to be addressed in this study was that organizations need to hire and retain CPAs who possess work style dimensions that contribute to organizational success, the work style dimensions of CPAs are unknown, and organizations need tools to assess CPAs' work style dimensions.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the proposed study was based on Waldo's (2015) Leading Dimensions Profile (LDP). The LDP, which was designed to explore work styles, is based on the two factors of personality: achievement drive and relational drive. Achievement drive describes an individual's focus and intensity when he or she approaches tasks and goals, and is measured along a continuum of *methodical* to *urgent*. Relational drive describes an individual's emotional engagement in common circumstances and is measured along a continuum of *guarded* to *expressive*. Five supporting dimensions of achievement drive include work intensity, risk tolerance, assertiveness, adaptability, and decision-making. Relational drive also has five supporting dimensions, including affiliation, consideration, openness, status motivation, and self-protection (Waldo, 2010).

## 4. Literature Review

The field of accounting has undergone rapid changes in recent decades (Enofe et al., 2012). Professionals are now required to possess a bevy of competencies that were not essential in the past, including technological skills, interpersonal skills, intercultural communication and sales skills (Bahador & Haider, 2012; Simms & Zapatero, 2012). Today's accountants must also keep up with the changing needs of clients and update skills and expertise in order to stay competitive and be able to provide the broadest range of services to clients (AICPA, 2011). Further, they must familiarize themselves, and grapple with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) to stay updated on the field's ever-changing regulations (Kieso, et al., 2011; Simms & Zapatero, 2012).

In the midst of all these changes and as demand for CPAs continues to rise, high rates of turnover among CPAs indicate areas of concern (AICPA, 2013; Glodstein, 2014). Research has shown that turnover affects financial performance (Park and Shaw, 2013).

In addition to the costs related to organizational financial performance, research indicates that the direct costs of turnover for skilled positions, such as accountants, is 21 percent of an employee's annual salary (Boushey and Glynn, 2012).

Because turnover is so costly to organizations (Cloutier, Felusiak, & Hill, 2015), hiring managers often rely on personality assessments to improve the odds of selecting candidates who demonstrate strong fit with positions and organizations (Schloemer & Schloemer, 1997; Taggar & Parkinson, 2007). However, research indicates that personality assessments have many shortcomings when it comes to selecting the best CPA candidates (Haynes, Briggs, & Copeland, 2008).

As the profession has evolved, so too have the competencies required to succeed as a CPA (AICPA, 2011). As Briggs et al. (2007) suggested, alignment between work style dimensions and professional competencies required for the 21st century might be a missing element that has contributed to the high rates of turnover among CPAs. While professional competencies are known (AICPA, 2011), work styles of accountants are unknown. One way to assess an individual's work style dimensions may be through a work style inventory, such as the LDP (Waldo, 2015). During its development, the potential statistical relationships between the LDP and a variety of other widely used assessments were evaluated in order to provide evidence of convergent and divergent validity. Specifically, Waldo (2010) assessed the LDP against the following: (a) Jung typology, (b) the Hogan Personality Inventory, and (c) the Big Five Taxonomy, each of which have been used by previous researchers to assess accountants (Andon, Chong, & Roebuck, 2010; Briggs et al., 2007; Chen, Jones, Scarlata, & Stone, 2012; Jacoby, 1981; Kreiser et al., 1990; McRae et al., 1999; Otte, 1983; Schloemer & Schlomer, 1997).

## 5. Work Style Factors

Other factors that potentially affect person-job fit include generation and job rank. These variables are discussed below. Relevant research is cited to provide rationale for the examination of these variables in the proposed study.

**5.1 Generation.** An important factor that may affect work motivation and job satisfaction is generation (Ertas, 2015). As the retiring Baby boomers are replaced by millennials, understanding the generational differences becomes increasingly important (Ertas, 2015). The definition of generation includes age and birth cohort (DeVaney, 2015). Social scientists have categorized four generations in society. These generations include the silent generation (born between 1930 and 1945), the Baby boomers (1946 to 1964), Generation X (1965 to 1979), and Generation Y, also known as millennials (1980 and 2000). Ertas (2015) explored turnover intentions and work motivation of millennials in federal service jobs among a sample of 266,000 government employees. Work motivation was measured by fairness, skill development, creativity, work-life balance, work group, meaningfulness, and diversity. Findings indicated that millennials were five times more likely to turnover than were employees from earlier generations. However, as job and pay satisfaction increased, turnover intention decreased for all workers. In addition to increased pay and job satisfaction, the following factors appeared to reduce turnover intentions: (a) higher levels of perceived fairness of performance appraisal and promotions, (b) opportunities for skill development, (c) support for creativity, and (d) appreciation of the work group. Support for work-life balance and perception of diversity in the workplace did not significantly affect turnover intention or job satisfaction. Meaningfulness of work was significant for older respondents regarding turnover intention. Lack of support for creativity had a greater impact on older workers than for younger workers. Finally, overall job satisfaction was more important for millennials than older workers (Ertas, 2015).

**5.2 Job rank.** Job rank is another factor that may affect individual's work competencies. Researchers from a variety of industries have created professional model competencies to help organizations recruit individuals who possess the appropriate competencies for various job ranks and

titles (Calhoun, Dollett, Wainio, Griffith, & Warden, 2008; Kaml, Weiss, Dezendorf, Ishida, Rice, Klein, & Salfinger, 2014). For example, Kaml et al. (2014) developed a competency framework to guide hiring managers of food testing laboratory personnel. The researchers developed unique competencies for each of five levels of job rank, including entry-level, mid-level, expert level, supervisor/manager, and senior administration. Similarly, Calhoun et al. (2008) developed a competency framework for use in healthcare leadership.

Researchers have also examined how work competencies vary based on job rank. Hoffman and Bresciani (2012) explored the differences in professional competencies expected for entry-, mid-, and senior-level student affairs professionals. The researchers found that different levels of education and work experience were expected for different position ranks.

Hoffman and Bresciani explained that some of the competencies were cumulative, developing over an individual's years of professional experience, while other competencies may have greater utility for jobs of specific rank. Entry-level positions tended to emphasize practical competence and familiarity with technology, while higher ranked positions were more likely to emphasize leadership skills.

The existing studies on the relationships between job rank and work competencies indicate that job rank is likely to be somewhat correlated with an individual's set of job-related competencies. To date, research on the relationship between job rank and work competencies has not been performed on accounting professionals. Accordingly, the study will involve an investigation of any correlations between CPAs' work competencies and job rank, which will be categorized as follows: (a) senior administration, such as managing partner, chief executive officer, or chief financial officer; (b) senior management, including senior manager, tax manager, or senior accountant; (c) junior management, including auditor II, staff accountant II, or tax accountant II; and (d) entry-level, including auditor I, staff accountant I, or tax accountant I.

While CPA career orientations have been explored from a personality theory perspective (Briggs et al., 2007; Jacoby, 1983; Kreiser et al., 1990; Otte, 1983; Schloemer & Schloemer, 1997), such studies fail to acknowledge the work style dimensions of CPAs. It is possible that individual's work styles have a greater impact on their success as CPAs than their personality types, alone. However, research is needed to explore CPA's individual work style dimensions. The lack of research on CPA's work style dimensions represents a significant gap in the current body of research.

## 6.1 Research Question

**RQ.** To what extent, if any, do CPAs' work style dimensions differ according to generation and job rank?

**H1o.** CPAs' work style dimensions do not have statistically significant differences according to generation and job rank.

**H1a.** CPAs' work style dimensions have statistically significant differences according to generation and job rank.

## 7. Research Method and Design

### 7.1 Sample

A random sample of participants were drawn from the membership of a regional society of CPAs in the US. To be included in the investigation, individuals must have met the following inclusion criteria: (a) be currently working as a CPA; (b) be a current member of the regional society of CPAs included in the study; and (c) have at least one year of experience working as a CPA. At the time of this investigation, the association chapter consisted of 787 active members.

### 7.2 Instrument

For the purposes of this quantitative study, the online survey instrument was the Leading Dimensions Profile (LDP). The LDP included demographic questions regarding respondents' generation and job rank. Four generation categories, are the Silent Generation, Baby Boom, Generation X, and Generation Y, or Millennials. The job rank categories are entry-level, mid-level, expert level, supervisor/manager, and senior administration. The LDP (Waldo & McCoy, 2010) is a 95-item survey that assesses the approach, or work style of an individual to tasks and goals. The instrument utilizes a forced response



format, with one response option of –mostly true and the second response option of –mostly false. The survey asks participants to respond to work-related scenarios according to how they would approach different situations.

The framework of the LDP utilizes two primary factors of achievement and relational drives to measure how individuals' approach and accomplish work-related tasks (Waldo & McCoy, 2010). These factors are assessed by 10 dimensions, indicated in Table 1. Five achievement dimensions include intensity, risk tolerance, assertiveness, adaptability, and decision-making. Five relational dimensions include affiliation, consideration, openness, status motivation, and self-protection.

The LDP has been tested and analyzed for reliability by the author of the instrument. Internal consistency of the LDP, which addresses the homogeneity of responses, has tested favorably. Reliability of primary and supporting factors was evaluated using Cronbach's coefficient alpha and test-retest reliability analysis. Analysis using Cronbach's alpha indicated all supporting factors of relational dimensions except Self-protection ( $\alpha=0.66$ ) have  $\alpha \geq 0.70$  or greater. Achievement drive had the greatest Cronbach's alpha result at  $\alpha=0.84$ .

Table 1 *Achievement and Relational Drive Dimensions of the LDP*

Achievement dimensions	Relational dimensions
Intensity (measured vs. intense)	Affiliation (independent vs. social)
Risk tolerance (cautious vs. bold)	Consideration (objective vs. nurturing)
Assertiveness (reflective vs. confident)	Openness (private vs. open)
Adaptability (consistent vs. flexible)	Status motivation (competitive vs. contented)
Decision-making (analytical vs. intuitive)	Self-protection (skeptical vs. trusting)

Source: Waldo (2015)

**Achievement drive.** Achievement drive represents an individual's approach to common activities and long-term goals (Waldo & McCoy, 2010). Achievement drive pushes humans to improve performance, either for themselves or for society (Merrick & Shafi, 2011), and it has been found to affect economic growth and entrepreneurial activity (Xu, Xu, Mellor, & Duan, 2012). Achievement drive affects an individual's commitment to goals (Schuler et al., 2010) and flow experience, and has a positive effect when coupled with situational incentives (Schuler et al., 2014). Achievement drive also contains aspects of autonomy and independent decision-making (Schuler et al., 2013). The conceptualization of achievement motivation is one of the most influential theories in motivation research (Ziegler et al., 2010).

Lang, Zettler, Ewen, & Hulsheger (2012) found that achievement drive played an important role in the workplace because achievement motive can affect job performance. Employees with high achievement drive often demonstrate greater task and contextual performance (Lang et al., 2012). When individuals perform well, an organization benefits through improved organizational performance (Suliman et al., 2010). Prottas (2011) found an important element of employees' work performance was person-environment fit. Individuals with a high achievement drive may fit and perform well in a variety of environments. They may work well as members of an organization or as entrepreneurs (Prottas, 2011).

**Relational drive.** Relational drive describes the degree to which a person emotionally engages in everyday situations (Waldo & McCoy, 2010). Relational drive, also referred to in the literature as *affiliation*, signifies one's concern for warm, close relationships with others (McClelland, 2010). Relational motivation is triggered when an individual comes into contact with another person with whom he or she is unfamiliar (Merrick & Shafi, 2011). Individuals with high relational motives gain great satisfaction from their relationships and work to maintain and cultivate those relationships (Lang et al., 2012).

Relational drive has also been found to impact individuals and countries. At the macro level, relational drive is instrumental to economic growth (McClelland, 2010). McClelland (1985) found that greater political instability was demonstrated in countries with higher levels of power motive than relational drive. Based on McClelland's (1985) findings, Winter (1992) suggested that countries with high power motives and low relational drive were more likely to engage in war. At the micro level, relational drive may affect an individual's well-being and flow experience (Schuler et al., 2014).

Lang et al. (2012) found that affiliation, or relational drive, also had an impact on work performance. This impact can have positive or negative performance implications, depending on situational cues and explicit factors of personality, such as extraversion. For example, individuals with high relational drive and high extraversion will most likely use social opportunities at work to develop healthy social relationships. Performance may increase to maintain good relationships with colleagues and supervisors (Lang et al., 2012).

Prottas (2011) found that individuals who worked as members of an organization enjoyed greater opportunities and reported greater needs for affiliation, unlike individuals with lower needs for relationships, who preferred self-employed status.

## 8. Results

The survey was sent to members of a state society of CPAs in a southern state. The voluntary participants of this study answered a few demographic questions and the 95-item LDP. A recruitment email was sent to 730 members of a regional society of CPAs in the US. Responses were received from 26 members, a response rate of 3.6%. Summaries of the demographic variables of the respondents are provided in Tables 2-8. The first three variables are important to the research question of the study, the latter three are only included to describe the sample.

Table 2. *Frequency Distribution of Respondent Generation*

Generation	Frequency (n=26)	Percent
Baby Boomers	12	46.2
Generation X	11	42.3
Millennials	3	11.5

There are relatively similar numbers of Baby Boomers and Generation Xers in the study (46.2% and 42.3% respectively), but very few Millennials (11.5%). There are no representatives of the Silent Generation.

Table 3. *Frequency Distribution of Respondent CPA Job Rank*

Job Rank	Frequency (n=26)	Percent
Entry level	2	7.7
Junior management	1	3.8
Senior administration	16	61.5
Senior management	6	23.1
No response	1	3.8

One respondent did not provide their job rank. The greatest category of participants was senior administration (61.5%), followed by senior management (23.1%). There were very few respondents at entry level or junior management (11.5%).

Table 4. *Frequency Distribution of Respondent Ethnicity*

Ethnicity	Frequency (n=26)	Percent
Black or African American	1	3.8

White/Caucasian	25	96.2
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The majority of respondents were white/Caucasian (96.2%). There was only one black/African American respondent (3.8%).

Table 5. *Frequency Distribution of CPA Years in Current Position*

Years in Current Position	Frequency (n=26)	Percent
1-5 years	3	11.5
6-10 years	8	30.8
11-15 years	2	7.7
16-20 years	4	15.4
25+ years	9	34.6

There was a large number of respondents with 6-10 years in their current position (30.8%) and with 25+ years in their current position (34.6%). Overall, half of the respondents (50%) have 16 or more years in their current position.

Table 6. *Frequency Distribution of CPA Years of Experience*

CPA years of experience	Frequency (n=26)	Percent
1-5 years	1	3.8
6-10 years	3	11.5
11-15 years	4	15.4
16-20 years	4	15.4
25+ years	14	53.8

When measuring overall experience, more than half of the respondents (53.8%) have 25+ years of experience, making this a very experienced sample.

Participants of the study were also given the LDP, in which answers were reported in a forced-choice response format. When presented with a work scenario, the participants responded with the response options of –mostly true or –mostly false that resulted in ten measures of work style dimensions (Waldo & McCoy, 2011). The scores of the ten sub-dimensions were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software to determine the descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, median, minimum and maximum score. Table 7 provides summary statistics for the five dimensions related to achievement drive. Table 8 provides summary statistics for the five dimensions related to relationship drive.

Table 7. *Summary Statistics of Achievement Drive Dimensions*

Sub-Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Work Intensity	50.12	34.93	40	4	100
Assertiveness	26.85	24.66	14	2	85
Risk Tolerance	73.27	28.54	84	16	100
Adaptability	32.27	31.19	22.5	2	100
Decision-Making	44.27	25.52	41	11	83

Table 8. *Summary Statistics of Relational Drive Dimensions*

Sub-Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Status Motivation	38.77	30.78	29	6	100
Affiliation	47.38	20.18	45	4	94
Consideration	48.62	35.56	33	1	100
Openness	54.73	31.82	49	8	100
Self-Protection	63.35	23.11	56	26	100

The scale for each dimension ranged from a potential minimum value of 0 to a potential maximum value of 100. The measure is a normed percent, based on a sample of all of those who have taken the LDP at the time the norm was determined. A score of 30, for example, would mean that the individual scored in the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile of the population; seventy percent of the population scored higher than this individual, and 30% scored lower.

From the data analyzed, the individuals in this study appear to have scored near the population average, which is between the 40<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> percentile, on the dimensions of work intensity, decision-making, affiliation, consideration, and openness. They appear to have scored lower than the population average, which is less than the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile, on assertiveness, adaptability and status motivation. They scored higher than the population average, greater than the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile, on risk tolerance and self-protection.

### 9. Statistical Analysis

The initial analysis planned for this data set was the one-way MANOVA. This analysis would allow all five dimensions of each of the larger factors, achievement and relational drives, to be analyzed together in order to determine if they are related to the demographic variables of generation or job rank. One of the assumptions of this analysis is that the dependent variables must be normally distributed (Fields, 2009).

Shapiro-Wilk tests for normality were conducted, and determined that the scores on the dimensions were not generally normally distributed across the 26 respondents. The results of the Shapiro-Wilk tests for normality are provided in Table 9.

Table 9. *Results of Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality for Work Style Dimensions*

Factor	Dimension	W Statistic	df	P-value
Achievement Drive	Work Intensity	0.863	0.835 26	0.003
	Assertiveness	0.812	26	0.001
	Risk Tolerance	0.826	26	0.000
	Adaptability		26	0.001
	Decision-Making	0.900	26	0.015
Factor	Dimension	W-statistic	Df	P-value
Relational Drive	Status Motivation	0.866	0.962 26	0.003
	Affiliation	0.858	26	0.441
	Consideration		26	0.002
	Openness	0.904	26	0.019
	Self-Protection	0.930	26	0.078

In the Shapiro-Wilk tests, the W statistic can be viewed as the correlation of the data with data produced from a normal distribution. The closer the W statistic is to 1, the more closely the data resembles a normal distribution (Field, 2009). The degrees of freedom (df) are equal to the sample size of 26. The p-value helps to interpret the W statistic. The p value is the probability that a normally distributed population could produce a sample with a W statistic at least as far from 1 as the one in this sample. The lower the p-value, the greater the evidence that the test scores are not normally distributed (Field, 2009). Here, with the exception of affiliation and self-protection, all of the dimension scores have p-values lower than 0.05, the typical level of significance, and therefore the score cannot be considered approximately normal.

This means that an alternative to the MANOVA was required in order to answer the research question. Unfortunately, there are no mainstream accepted non-parametric alternatives to the MANOVA to



examine multiple response variables together, and so a simpler analysis that examines each dimension was used. An appropriate nonparametric alternative is the Mann-Whitney U test. This test compares the medians of two groups to one another, and unlike the MANOVA, has no requirement of a normal distribution for the dependent variables. Table 10a provides the results of the Mann-Whitney tests for generation, and Table 10b provides the results for job rank.

In each of these tables, the median for each of the groups being compared is provided. Additionally, the U statistic and a *p*-value from the Mann-Whitney tests are included. The U statistic compares the medians of the two groups, based on ranking the values recorded for the individuals in each group. It is interpreted through the use of the *p*-value. The *p*-value is the probability that the rankings of the measurements for each of the two groups would be at least as different as they are in this sample if there are no population level differences in the sub-dimensions between the two groups. Smaller *p*-values provide greater evidence of a systematic difference between the two groups.

Table 10a. Results of Mann-Whitney Tests for Generation

Dimension	Median		U statistic	P-value
	Generation X	Baby Boomers		
Work Intensity	60	29	95.0	0.079
Assertiveness	14	26	60.0	0.740
Risk Tolerance	84	84	56.0	0.566
Adaptability	29	22.5	60.0	0.740
Decision-Making	41	48.5	65.5	0.976
Status Motivation	56	20	105.0	0.016
Affiliation	45	45	74.5	0.608
Consideration	33	51.5	57.5	0.608
Openness	49	76	46.0	0.235
Self-Protection	84	56	93.5	0.091

Table 10b. Results of Mann-Whitney Tests for Job Rank

Senior Dimension	Median		U statistic	P-value
	Senior administration	Senior management		
Work Intensity	40	30.5	40.5	0.590
Assertiveness	14	15.5	50.0	0.914
Risk Tolerance	84	92	69.0	0.134
Adaptability	16	19	40.5	0.590
Decision-Making	48.5	33.5	34.5	0.329
Status Motivation	24	34	53.5	0.693
Affiliation	45	39.5	40.0	0.590
Consideration	51.5	47	49.0	1.000
Openness	43	62.5	54.0	0.693
Self-Protection	56	77.5	70.5	0.098

Typically, the *p*-value is compared to a significance level of 0.05, and considered significant if it is less than 0.05. However, because five related tests were run in place of one MANOVA, as originally planned, an adjustment for multiple testing is more appropriate to compare the *p*-values to a significance level of 0.01 (0.05/5) instead. There are, therefore, no statistically significant differences in the work style dimensions according to generation or job rank amongst respondents. The test that comes closest to showing statistically significant differences was status motivation, in which individuals from Generation X scored higher than Baby Boomers (*p*=0.016), but this is not statistically significant after accounting for multiple testing.

In order to evaluate the effect that the small sample size may have had on this analysis, effect sizes, in the form of Cohen's D are provided in Table 11. Effect sizes, such as Cohen's D, are universal rather than being particular to any given study or sample size, and therefore can be evaluated by a common standard. These effect sizes are generally evaluated as 0.2 to 0.3 is a –small effect size, 0.5 a –medium effect size, and 0.8 and higher a –large effect size. The larger the effect size, the easier it is to detect with a statistical test.

Table 11. *Cohen's D Effect Sizes for Demographic Comparisons*

Demographic	Work-style Dimension	Cohen's D
Generation	Work Intensity	-1.04
	Assertiveness	0.21
	Risk Tolerance	0.27
	Adaptability	-0.04
	Decision Making	0.01
	Status Motivation	-1.52
	Affiliation	-0.34
	Consideration	0.25
	Openness	0.53
Job Rank	Work Intensity	0.30
	Assertiveness	0.27
	Risk Tolerance	-0.99
	Adaptability	0.42
	Decision Making	0.49
	Status Motivation	-0.11
	Affiliation	0.26
	Consideration	-0.05
	Openness	-0.16

The range of effect sizes of the data in this sample ranges from magnitudes as small as 0.01, for decision making across generations, to those as large as 1.52, for status motivation across generations.

Because even the largest of these was not found to be statistically significant, this indicates that small the sample size is likely to have been a factor in the lack of statistically significant differences.

## 10. Findings

The results of this study show none of the LDP dimensions were found to be significantly different according to generation or job rank for the CPAs. These are interesting findings because work outcomes have been reported to be affected by generation and job rank, but the data indicated that none of the dimensions of work style for CPAs were significant. The researcher conducted a Cohen's D effect size analysis to extend the findings. The results of this extension showed that the small sample size may have affected the findings.

## 11. Implications

The problem to be addressed in this study was that organizations need to hire and retain CPAs who possess work style dimensions that contribute to organizational success, work style dimensions of CPAs are unknown, and organizations need tools to assess CPAs' work style dimensions. The purpose of this quantitative study was to assess the extent to which CPAs' work style dimensions differ according to generation and job rank, as measured by the Leading Dimensions Profile. The instrument showed the ability to measure work style dimensions of CPAs, indicating differences between CPAs and the general population and the possibility of differences in generations, indicating that this instrument may be a possible solution for organizations when making hiring and promotion decisions regarding CPAs. Most organizations utilize personality tests to identify person-job fit (Jacoby, 1981; Kreiser et al., 1990; Otte, 1983; Schloemer & Schloemer, 1997) and personality is not always stable across time and situations

(McCrae, 1999). Researchers have found that personality preferences might not be constant across situations, and may differ significantly between work and social, non-work situations (Haynes, et al., 2008).

The study has important practical and theoretical implications. Results may shed light on the work style dimensions of current, practicing CPAs. Organizations may utilize this information to inform hiring and retention practices. The information may be used to support and inform accounting education programs and/or training courses to develop needed work style dimensions. Further, organizations and hiring managers charged with recruiting and hiring CPAs may consider use of the LDP to assess candidates' work style dimensions. In addition, the study will contribute to the body of literature on job fit among CPAs. It may also introduce the LDP as a potential tool for researchers to use to assess work style dimensions among professionals from a variety of fields. Finally, this study will expand upon the existing research that has been conducted on CPAs using personality assessments, such as the MBTI (Briggs-Myers & McCaulley, 1985).

Staff recruitment has been and continues to be a top priority for accounting firms (AICPA, 2013). Recruitment and retention of qualified CPAs is critical to the fiscal management and success of organizations; therefore, organizations must attract and hire accounting professionals whose work style dimensions align with competencies demanded of the profession (Briggs et. al., 2007).

## 12. Conclusion

This quantitative study examined the research question: To what extent, if any, do CPAs' work style dimensions differ according to generation and job rank? There were no significant differences of CPAs work styles according to generation and job rank. In general, CPAs in a regional society scored high in risk tolerance and self-protection and low in assertiveness, adaptability and status motivation. Generation Xers scored higher than Baby Boomers in status motivation. Even though there were differences indicated, there were no statistically significant differences.

Organizations need to hire and retain CPAs who possess work style dimensions that contribute to organizational success. Understanding CPAs' work style dimensions and having an instrument to measure work style dimensions could support all organizations in their hiring and promotion decisions and in their training programs. The LDP could potentially serve as the instrument to measure CPAs' work style dimensions and support organizations as they strive to hire and retain CPAs.

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