CAF POLICY CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF MILLENNIALS

Major A.S. Waraich

JCSP 40	PCEMI 40
Exercise *Solo Flight*	Exercice *Solo Flight*
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By Maj A.S. Waraich

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Better talent is worth fighting for…You can win the war for talent, but first you must elevate talent management to a burning corporate priority.

- Elizabeth G. Chambers et al[1]

INTRODUCTION

Canada's aging population, comprised of the largest generational cohort in history (i.e., "Baby Boomers") has already begun to retire, and will continue to do so in scores over the next decade. This mass exodus of personnel from the workplace, which includes the majority of senior leaders and executives in both the public and private sectors, will create an enormous gap in skills, knowledge, and manpower within the workforce. The gap will be filled, in large part, by the emerging, second-largest generational cohort, "Generation Y," dubbed the "Millennials."[2] Organizational Human Resource Management (HRM) policies and programs must account for this new generation, by reflecting a coherent understanding of the differences (e.g., in cognitive worldviews and perceptions, value systems, motivations, desires, etc.) that Millennials will bring to the workforce, in order to attract and retain talent. By sheer numbers, Millennials are expected to begin to control the workforce over the next decade.

> …thinking ahead to a workforce that will look very different from today's is essential…By 2025, Millennials – a generation that currently ranges from middle school-age to their early 30s – will dominate the workforce, perhaps as much as 75 percent…the size of the Millennial generation is double that of its immediate predecessor, Generation X…[3]

[1] E.G Chambers, M. Foulon, H. Handfield-Jones, S.M. Hankin, and E.G. Michaels III, "The War for Talent," *McKinsey Quarterly* (August, 1998): 1.
http://www.executivesondemand.net/managementsourcing/images/stories/artigos_pdf/gestao/The_war_for_talent.pdf
[2] Both forms of spelling, "Millenial" and "Millennial," have been used prevalently in the various literature. This paper will utilize the latter form here forth.
[3] Laura Putre, "The March of the Millennials - Your Hospital Staff in 2025: The Same, Only Different," *Hospitals and Health Networks* (September 2013): 38.

Given this forecasted gap in human capital and the relative strength and stability of the Canadian economy, skilled Millennials will have the advantage of "choice" towards a multitude of career options.

> …young workers (Generation Y or *Millennials*) are also entering the workforce for the first time, bringing with them unique values and expectations that employers have not had experience hiring and managing. Given the tightening labor market and the demand for skills, it will be the Millennials who will be selecting which organizations they want to work for. Therefore the challenge of attracting a new generation of workers into the public service is an important one.[4]

Faced with such a reality, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) will certainly find itself in stiff competition with other Public Service (PS) organizations and the private and non-profit sectors, to recruit and retain skilled human capital to meet its future strategic objectives. Not only are *more* Millennials entering the workforce, but this new workforce is increasingly diverse (e.g., in ethnicity and culture), a direct reflection of the demographic shifts of Canadian society. The notion of competition for the "best" recruits between the public and private sectors is certainly not new. However, the forecasted size of the manpower gap and the notable character differences of the Millennial cohort, will exert even more pressure on employers of all types to compete for talent by representing themselves as "employers of choice."

> They're here and will make up more than one-third of the adult population before 2015, so successfully integrating them into the workforce, which in some cases means rethinking workplace practices, is a necessity, not a choice.[5]

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[4] Ng, Eddy S.W., and Charles W. Gossett. "Career Choice in Canadian Public Service: An Exploration of Fit With the Millennial Generation." *Public Personnel Management* 42, no. 3 (2013): 338.

[5] Mike Rickheim, "Capturing the Minds and Hearts of Millenials," *Profiles in Diversity Journal* (November/December 2011): 76.

The author posits that certain natural, intrinsic characteristics of the military institution place the CAF in an advantageous position (i.e., a "head start"), which can be further exploited through policy adaptation, to attract the "best and brightest" Millennials. This is not to say that the CAF should simply pursue its *status quo* with respect to recruiting policy and programs. Once recruited, *retention* of Millennial workers is necessary to sustain the CAF's long-term manpower requirements. Accordingly, the CAF must demonstrate an unprecedented level of flexibility to build on its extant advantages in the "war for talent," by both enhancing recruiting- and retention-related HRM policies, and conveying them in a manner that resonates specifically with Millennials.

Analyzing commonly-cited characteristics of the Millennial generation from prevailing literature, the author will identify key traits that can inform the CAF's knowledge of its future recruits' perceptions, desires and motivations (i.e., employee knowledge). Using Cable and Turban's "employer knowledge" framework, supported by business HRM concepts and practices, it will be demonstrated that the CAF has institutionally-unique characteristics that can both attract Millennials (i.e., recruit) and facilitate their "long-term employment" (LTE) (i.e., retain), both critical functions in developing an experienced, senior cadre of military leadership. Extant CAF HRM policies and programs which can be improved to accommodate the unique needs of Millennials will be identified, to provide policymakers with policy options that can help ensure the CAF's "Talent Management" objectives are met, which involves getting "the

right people in the right place at the right time."[6] The paper will focus on the leadership

and management demographic (i.e., officers), given the literature available about

executive management, and the fact that the largest gap from retiring Baby Boomers is

being experienced at the senior levels of the workforce.

BACKGROUND

Millennials - Who are they?

Members of different generations are distinguished from each other based on the

specific historical timeframe in which they grew up, and the specific historical and social

events during that period which shaped their experiences, and perceptions.[7]

> The timeframe in which people are raised and what they are exposed to definitely
> impacts their behavior…we've seen with the passage of times that different eras
> can generate different behaviors and points of view in terms of how they see the
> world.[8]

Thus, while people remain heterogeneous in their individual characteristics,

values, and experiences, there are commonalities which emerge based on shared

experiences, history and norms, which allow for the analysis of each successive

generational cohort. A brief description, of the three primary generations that will interact

during this large-scale transition of the near-future workforce, follows.

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[6] Ted Glenn, "The State of Talent Management in Canada's Public Sector," *Canadian Public Administration* 55, no. 1 (March 2012): 25.

[7] Lindsey Farrell, and Andrew Hurt, "Training the Millennial Generations: Implications for Organizational Climate," *Journal of Organizational Learning and Leadership* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 48.

[8] David Tobenkin, "Millennials: Youthful and Full of Expectations." *Alaska Business Monthly* (March 2008): 20.

"Baby Boomers," born approximately between 1945-1962, is the largest cohort in history, preoccupied with changing the status quo, equality, personal gratification and "paying one's dues." Information Technology (IT) has been largely introduced during the latter half of their lives.[9]

"Generation X," born approximately between 1963 and 1980, is much smaller in number (i.e., 45 million versus 78 million Baby Boomers, in the U.S.), and demonstrates the general characteristics of skepticism (i.e., based on several high-profile scandals during their formative years), self-reliance (i.e., due to "workaholic" Baby Boomer parents), and good working knowledge of IT (i.e., since personal computers were invented during their youth).[10]

Finally, the "Millennials," were born between the early 1980s and early 2000s, and are the second largest generation ever.[11] As a group, they are often defined by cohesion, positive outlook (hope), civic mindedness and humanitarianism, a sense of entitlement, and high confidence in, and expectations of, themselves. Millenials maintain dependencies on structure and strong relationships with their parents, making them the most "sheltered" generation, as noted by the coining of terms such as "helicopter parents"[12] (i.e., overbearing, highly-protective, highly-involved parents). Millennials are

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[9] Alicia Blain, "The Millenial Tidalwave: Five Elements that will Change the Workplace of Tomorrow," *Journal of the Quality Assurance Institute 22, no. 2*. (April, 2008): 11.

[10] *Ibid*., 11.

[11] Lindsey Farrell, and Andrew Hurt, "Training the Millennial Generations: Implications for Organizational Climate," *Journal of Organizational Learning and Leadership* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 47.

[12] Business Management Daily, "'Helicopter parents': Should you take cover?," Last accessed 10 May 2014, http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/39458/helicopter-parents-should-you-take-cover

"Digital Natives,"[13] who have grown up "connected" in the high-tech world of the internet, mobile phones, and social media.

It would be irresponsible to consider Millennials a purely homogeneous cohort, comprised of a consistent, rigid set of characteristics, motivations, and perceptions. "…the millennial generation is not a homogeneous cohort, and their vales and attitudes may differ by race, gender, and socioeconomic backgrounds."[14] Research however, indicates notable trends which can be used to differentiate this generation, *in general*, from its predecessor cohorts. This paper makes no attempt to be exhaustive, or all-inclusive, in its characterization of Millennials. It will focus on a few key, commonly-cited characteristics that pertain to the *recruiting* and *retention* aspects of HRM policy.

Countless lists of Millennial characteristics have been generated, some of which paint a cynical, distrustful, even apocalyptic picture of a near-future world led by Generation Y. "…they have been raised with increased self-esteem, narcissism, and a sense of entitlement."[15] Others are more positive in their outlook, and focus on the unique skills and capabilities of Millennials, and exude optimistic forecasts of the future outputs, both societally and economically, of the *most* ethnically-diverse, educated, and technically savvy generation which ever existed.[16]

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[13] Marc Prensky, "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants," *On the Horizon* 9, no. 5 (2001): 1. http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf

[14] Ng, Eddy S.W., and Charles W. Gossett. "Career Choice in Canadian Public Service: An Exploration of Fit With the Millennial Generation." *Public Personnel Management* 42, no. 3 (2013): 354.

[15] Ng, Eddy S.W., and Charles W. Gossett. "Career Choice in Canadian Public Service: An Exploration of Fit With the Millennial Generation." *Public Personnel Management* 42, no. 3 (2013): 338.

[16] Mike Rickheim, "Capturing the Minds and Hearts of Millenials," *Profiles in Diversity Journal* (November/December 2011): 76.

> Millennials feel empowered to do anything they want, and they have great expectations for fulfillment and meaning in their work . . . are also constantly looking for ways to lead more purposeful and interesting lives, and seek out intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards…Many are said to have a desire to 'save the world.' [17]

While some research indicates stark differences between Millennials, and its predecessor generations, others highlight similarities with nuanced differences which have resulted from the unique external environmental factors which bring context and experience to Millennials' lives. "With this generation comes not only a set of new skills for a new age, but also a set of values important for the future of the world."[18] Most argue that the professional interaction, through professional development and mentoring by previous generations, will be key to successful integration of Millennials into the workforce, and in particular, into the ranks of the most senior levels of organizations.

> Millennials are coming of age in challenging conditions, and they are constantly innovating to make their mark on the world…By being more collegial and candid with Millennials, we can encourage them to make the best choices for themselves, and in turn we can learn a great deal by better understanding their values and aspirations. Indeed, doing this might produce the greatest generation of leaders the world has ever seen.[19]

Sociologist Reginald Bibby defends the cohort, disputing the natural, historic tendency for adults to worry about teenagers' futures, and highlights some general characteristics of Millennials, which he proffers, will maintain them in good stead in the future. Among several observations, Bibby submits that Millennials uphold positive basic values (e.g., trust, honesty, concern for others, hard work, etc.), "supremely" value

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[17] Ng, Eddy S.W., and Charles W. Gossett. "Career Choice in Canadian Public Service: An Exploration of Fit With the Millennial Generation." *Public Personnel Management* 42, no. 3 (2013): 339.
[18] Margery Kraus, "How Boomers can Mentor Millenials," *Diplomatic Courier*, September 10, 2013, 50. http://www.diplomaticourier.com/news/topics/economy/1737-how-boomers-can-mentor-millennials
[19] *Ibid.*

interpersonal relationships, have much closer ties to their parents than previous

generations, and maintain optimistic outlooks for themselves and the future, in general.[20]

Talent Management – A Wicked Problem

Professor of Public Administration, Ted Glenn, refers to the concept of "Talent

Management," [21] coined by Chambers et al for McKinsey & Company, describing it as a

comprehensive HRM methodology that "…integrates the core human resource functions

of attraction, retention, development and transition…"[22] Glenn identifies six key

functions of HRM, namely: *recruitment*, *retention*, *development*, *workforce planning*,

performance management and *transition*, stressing the need for the close integration of

these factors.[23] Important is the implication that grand HRM policy, and resultant

programs, should not be developed independently along each of these functional lines,

given the critical interrelations and interdependencies among the HRM functions. Rather,

HRM policy should be looked at holistically, as a policy system. Indeed, given that the

process of framing recruiting and retention problems is indistinguishably connected with

the process of developing solutions, and the deep interconnectedness of all HRM

functions, makes Talent Management a "wicked problem,"[24] requiring a comprehensive

and coordinated approach be taken across all facets of HRM. That said, this paper will

limit its scope of analysis on only the aspects *recruitment* and *retention*.

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[20] Reginald Bibby, "Canada's Emerging Millenials," *Transition* (Fall 2009): 2-5.
[21] E.G Chambers, M. Foulon, H. Handfield-Jones, S.M. Hankin, and E.G. Michaels III, "The War for Talent," *McKinsey Quarterly* (August, 1998): 1.
http://www.executivesondemand net/managementsourcing/images/stories/artigos_pdf/gestao/The_war_for_talent.pdf
[22] Ted Glenn, "The State of Talent Management in Canada's Public Sector," *Canadian Public Administration* 55, no. 1 (March 2012): 26.
[23] *Ibid*., 29-32.
[24] Andrejs Skaburskis, "The Origin of 'Wicked Problems'," *Planning Theory & Practice* 9, no. 2 (2008): 278.

Employer Knowledge Framework

Cable and Turban propose a HRM framework contextualizing *employer knowledge*, which can be used by organizations to better understand their external environments; specifically what potential recruits believe and perceive about the organization and their resultant behaviour which may affect the organization.[25] Such knowledge informs recruitment and retention policymaking to give organizations a competitive advantage in their quest to attract and retain talent. The researchers highlight the functions of recruiting and retention as complementary HRM functions, which directly affect all other organizational HRM functions - so much so that many organizations have drastically apportioned HRM budgets in their favour:

> "…recruitment represents the beginning of the employer relationship, and therefore affects the success of subsequent human resource management practices such as selection, socialization, and training…many firms are increasing their recruitment budgets and now spend approximately 31% of the human resources budget on recruitment and retention."[26]

Thus, the premise of Cable and Turban's framework is based upon the simple notion of balancing employer knowledge and employee knowledge: "…organizations must understand the beliefs of their targeted applicants before they can decide what types of recruitment interventions and investments will return the greatest value."[27] Defined as "…the beliefs that a job seeker holds about a potential employer,"[28] employer knowledge

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[25] Daniel M. Cable, and Daniel B. Turban, "Establishing the Dimensions, Sources, and Value of Job Seekers' Employer Knowledge During Recruitment," *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management* 20. (2001): 117.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] Daniel M. Cable, and Daniel B. Turban, "Establishing the Dimensions, Sources, and Value of Job Seekers' Employer Knowledge During Recruitment," *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management* 20. (2001): 118.

[28] *Ibid.*, 115.

consists of three dimensions, namely "employer familiarity", "employer reputation", and "employer image".[29] Based on the fact that the CAF maintains the monopoly of the legitimate use of armed violence, the past decade in Afghanistan which expanded citizenry engagement and intense media coverage of the CAF, it is assumed that Millennials have a basic level of existential familiarity with the CAF as an institution. Thus, the dimension of "employer familiarity" and its pertinence to will not be analyzed in detail. Similarly, the dimension of "employer reputation" will not be considered at length, given the generally positive perception of the Canadian public towards Canadian soldiers, who remain in the top six of most trusted professionals.[30] The dimension of "employer image," and its relevance to Millennial recruitment and retention, will comprise the primary basis for analysis here forth. Defined as "…the set of beliefs that a job seeker holds about the attributes of an organization.."[31], employer image, according to the framework, includes the three aspects of: *employer information* (i.e., objective characteristics of organizations, such as its policies, procedures and norms, etc.), *job information* (i.e., specific attributes of the job recruits will perform, including job title/description, remuneration, advancement opportunities, etc.), and *people information* (i.e., attributes of organizational members).[32] While there is a paucity of literature specific to the CAF, along these aspects of the framework, Ng and Gossett do provide extensive survey-based research exploring the "fit" of the Canadian PS with the Millennial generation, highlighting trends which will be extrapolated to a CAF context.

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[29] *Ibid*., 124.

[30] Ipsos Reid. "Life-Savers, Medical Professionals Top the List of Most Trusted Professionals." Last modified 16 June 2012. http://www.ipsos-na.com/news-polls/pressrelease.aspx?id=5663

[31] Daniel M. Cable, and Daniel B. Turban, "Establishing the Dimensions, Sources, and Value of Job Seekers' Employer Knowledge During Recruitment," *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management* 20. (2001): 118.

[32] *Ibid*., 126.

DISCUSSION

Modern recruiting policy and programs should focus on employer knowledge, as perceived by potential Millennial recruits, so as to harmonize CAF attraction messaging with the characteristics, values and motivations of the cohort. CAF recruiting and retention policy and programs should also evolve based on evolving understanding of Millennials, to ensure the CAF is perceived as an "employer of choice" indefinitely. This evolution is likely to involve innovative changes and modernization of extant policies, in accordance with business best-practices, to ensure the CAF remains competitive as an employer. While recruiting will remain the focus of discussion, the recruiting and retention HRM dimensions necessarily go hand-in-hand, given that attraction of the "best" recruits is only relevant if the CAF is able to "retain" them for LTE contracts. This is especially true given that the CAF has, and is likely to continue to have, a "closed" HRM system, whereby executives of the organization (i.e., senior officers) are exclusively developed *internally*. HRM systems used in the corporate world and other PS organizations are typically more "open", allowing for lateral and upward migrations of executives *between* different organizations.

Employer Knowledge

Based on a survey of over 19,000 university students, Ng and Gossett concluded that the Government of Canada is generally considered an "employer of choice" by Millenials:

> "…there appears to be good person-organization fit between the career goals, aspirations, and work/life choices and the characteristics of public service and

government jobs. This is encouraging given the projected shortage of skills, and the government will have to compete with private sector employers in the war for talent."[33]

This *preferred* status of the PS cannot be automatically extended to the CAF without any further consideration. Historically, the CAF has not necessarily been perceived in this favourable light, which is why it is even more important to establish Talent Management system that clearly leverages extant attributes that appeal to the Millennial cohort, and modernizes other *less-attractive* policies:

> … the CF continues to operate somewhere between the preferred status of 'employer of choice' selecting from amongst 'the best and the brightest' and the pessimistic 'employer of last resort' forced to choose the best of the desperate.[34]

Ng and Gossett's research determined the top five career goals for the Millennial cohort include: *balancing career and personal life*, *furthering education*, *building a sound financial base*, *contributing to society*, and *working internationally.*[35] These goals can be analyzed across the employer knowledge dimensions of employer information, job information, and people information.

Employer Information

In terms of desirable employer characteristics, Millennials who prefer the PS rate the following as most important: *high ethical standards*, *social responsibility*, a

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[33] Ng, Eddy S.W., and Charles W. Gossett. "Career Choice in Canadian Public Service: An Exploration of Fit With the Millennial Generation." *Public Personnel Management* 42, no. 3 (2013): 353.

[34] Alan Okros, "Becoming an Employer of Choice: Human Resource Challenges within DND and the CF," In *The Public Management of Defence in Canada* (Toronto: Breakout Education Network, 2009), 163.

[35] Eddy S.W. Ng, and Charles W. Gossett, "Career Choice in Canadian Public Service: An Exploration of Fit With the Millennial Generation," *Public Personnel Management* 42, no. 3 (2013): 347.

progressive work environment, an *inclusive work environment* and *diverse colleagues*.[36]

Those who lean towards private sector employment highlight the following top employer

characteristics: *innovation*, *industry leadership*, *financial strength*, *high ethical*

standards, and *attractive location*.[37]

Reflecting upon the CAF's unique structural elements (e.g., organizational

structure, hierarchy, contractual obligations, training and development programs,

intrinsic/extrinsic rewards systems, etc.), it is suggested that detailed knowledge of the

next generation's characteristics and preferences (i.e., having employee knowledge) can

be used to frame Millennials' employer knowledge of the CAF; this will enlighten HRM

policy and workplace practices to attract and retain talent. Using Blain's list of Millennial

characteristics as a basis for analysis, it is clear that the CAF has several features which

symbiotically can attract Millennials, and leverage their unique talents to benefit the

organization. Already, current CAF recruiting messages capture many of the key findings

of Millennial research literature:

> There is no career more *challenging* or *rewarding* than serving in the Forces. You
> will have the privilege of *defending our country*, being part of history-making
> events, and *helping those in need* – both in Canada and *around the world*…You
> will obtain *world-class qualifications* ... You will *visit more places* than most
> people see in a lifetime ... you will be part of an amazing *team of people* dedicated
> to defending Canada, protecting our interests and *contributing to international*
> *peace and security* [italics added for emphasis][38]

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[36] Ng, Eddy S.W., and Charles W. Gossett. "Career Choice in Canadian Public Service: An Exploration of Fit With the Millennial Generation." *Public Personnel Management* 42, no. 3 (2013): 339.
[37] *Ibid*., 348.
[38] Canada. Canadian Forces, "Life in the Forces," last accessed 10 May 2014, http://forces.ca/en/page/lifeintheforces-75

Furthermore, the fact that such Millennial-focused messaging is increasingly promulgated "online" via the CAF's website, Twitter page, and other social media platforms (e.g., the Canadian Army's Facebook page) are all positive examples of recruiting efforts which align with the Millennials' IT-based information-gathering preferences.

Millennials who are more inclined towards the PS also prefer a "progressive" work environment (e.g., openness to differences) and "conservative" work environment (e.g., job security and clear reporting relationships).[39] While the CAF's policy emphasis on *uniformity* may preclude it from being considered in the former category, it certainly meets key aspects of the latter work environment that is sought by Millennials:

> …students choosing public service were more likely to prefer a progressive working environment and a conservative working environment…federal agencies such as the Canadian Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the Office of the Auditor General may be seen as more conservative in nature… 'conservative' was consistent with their interest in job security and clear reporting relationships.[40]

Job Information

According to Ng and Gossett, Millennials' do maintain as a career goal, the desire to build a sound financial base[41] which speaks to an extrinsic (e.g., monetary) reward outlook. However, this goal is counter-weighted with a strong desire for a balance between career and personal life, which speaks to intrinsic and non-monetary factors,

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[39] Ng, Eddy S.W., and Charles W. Gossett. "Career Choice in Canadian Public Service: An Exploration of Fit With the Millennial Generation." *Public Personnel Management* 42, no. 3 (2013): 352.
[40] *Ibid.*, 352.
[41] Ng, Eddy S.W., and Charles W. Gossett. "Career Choice in Canadian Public Service: An Exploration of Fit With the Millennial Generation." *Public Personnel Management* 42, no. 3 (2013): 347.

such as balanced workload allocation and sharing, flexible work schedules and other

arrangements such as increased vacation time, and flexible work locations. When

studying the job information sub-dimension amongst Millennials, Ng and Gossett found

"the most commonly selected desirable job characteristic across the cohort was 'flexible

working conditions.'"[42]

The military has in the recent decades made notable improvements to its pay and

benefits policy, which has ensured that remuneration is highly competitive. Furthermore,

long-serving members of the PS (including the CAF) enjoy generous pension plans upon

retirement, something which is certainly attractive to a demographic who aims to create a

"sound financial base." Opponents argue that intrinsic flexibility in HRM policies is far

more important for retention of the current generation than antiquated financially-

focussed pension schemes:

> "…nowhere is there a military-style 20-year retirement framework that distorts career decisions, and no one offers the security of lifetime employment. Instead, Silicon Valley attracts talent because it knows the importance of flexibility."[43]

In terms of working conditions, the PS has positioned itself to also garner

attraction from Millennials by demonstrating flexibility through policy expansion that

recognizes the intrinsic work benefits this cohort seeks:

> "The 2025 workforce will need more collaboration, relaxed rules and improved face-to-face communication…Increased scheduling flexibility, sabbaticals and phased retirements will be more and more appealing…"[44]

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[42] *Ibid*., 349.

[43] Tim Kane, "Why Our Best Officers are Leaving," *The Atlantic*, 4 January, 2011, 8.

[44] Laura Putre, "The March of the Millennials - Your Hospital Staff in 2025: The Same, Only Different," *Hospitals and Health Networks* (September 2013): 38.

The notion of *work-life balance* has spawned policy initiatives within the PS, such as "Flexible Work Arrangements" (FWA), which includes programs such as Part-time work, job-sharing, flexible work hours, compressed or variable work weeks, and teleworking.[45]

CAF members benefit from normal working hours and annual vacation time that is comparable to or better than many other Canadian employers, which supports the notion of work-life balance. "When not participating in a training exercise or operation, most military members work a regular eight-hour day with plenty of time after work to spend with family or friends."[46]

Whereas the CAF has not implemented, via formal policy, such FWA as the PS and many corporations, there are examples of lower levels of management implementing FWA-like arrangements with individuals under their command, normally on a temporary basis, to accommodate special needs of personnel (e.g., family, child care provisions, reduced commuting, etc.). The CAF could benefit from the attraction and retention of Millennial talent, by following best business practices, transforming its extant informal FWA into formal policies allowing individualized HRM by leaders, on a case-by-case basis. With handsome remuneration, and a wide array of extrinsic and intrinsic benefits not consistently found among other employers (e.g., healthcare and fitness programs, family resource centres, etc.), the CAF certainly remains competitive as an employer. Adding FWA to its policy and program 'toolbox' could further improve the CAF's overall competitive advantage in specifically attracting Millennials.

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[45] Chantal Fraser, "Diversity Recruiting: It's Time to Tip the Balance," *Canadian Military Journal* 13, no. 4 (Autumn 2013): 32.
[46] Canada. Canadian Forces, "Life in the Forces," last accessed 10 May 2014, http://forces.ca/en/page/lifeintheforces-75

When one considers Millennials' career goal of furthering education, the CAF is arguably second-to-none. With programs such as the Regular Officer Training Plan, among others, whereby full university scholarships are awarded to officer-candidate recruits, and similar fully- or partially-compensated post-secondary and post-graduate education programs for senior members, the CAF maintains robust policy and resourcing in this area, which undoubtedly will give it an advantage in recruiting and retaining *education-hungry* Millennials.

Finally, given its fundamental role, the CAF is naturally bestowed with a standing mission set which all but guarantees its workforce will continue to conduct Defence and security tasks, across the spectrum of conflict, at home and *abroad*, facts which can be marketed to Millennials who seek to *contribute to society* and who value *working internationally.* In this period following the CAF's decade-long mission in Afghanistan, it is natural to expect that recruiting and retention of Millennials will be adversely affected. While history has demonstrated that there is likely always to be future "international" employment opportunities for CAF members, it remains to be seen, based on government foreign and domestic policy priorities, coupled with the uncertainties of the current and future security environment (FSE), to what extent the CAF will next be deployed internationally *en masse*, when this would happen, and for how long. Therefore policymakers may have to seek out other innovative HRM policy options to attract and retain talent during periods when the CAF is expected to be primarily at "home."

People Information

Millennials who prefer the PS as an employer, desire of their colleagues: *inspiring colleagues*, an *inclusive work environment*, *diverse colleagues*, *community involvement*, and *support group networks*.[47] One relatively simple manner in which the CAF could leverage this information is tied directly to recruiting staff. As part of HRM policy, the CAF could require the specific selection of recruiters who embody these desirable characteristics (e.g., appointing ethnically- and culturally-diverse recruiters who have relevant, *inspiring* operational experiences that attracts today's youth.) Extant community engagement programs, and the CF mentorship program, are also likely to bolster recruiting and retention of Millennials.

Employee Knowledge

Ng and Gossett's findings regarding Millennials are supported by myriad literature pertaining to Millennial characteristics, values and motivations. Alicia Blain[48] offers five overarching characteristics of Millennials, which she posits will profoundly affect the workplace and business processes of the future: *technological savvy*, *team orientation*, *experiential learning*, *diversity*, and *empowerment*. [49]

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[47] Ng, Eddy S.W., and Charles W. Gossett. "Career Choice in Canadian Public Service: An Exploration of Fit With the Millennial Generation." *Public Personnel Management* 42, no. 3 (2013): 348.

[48] Alicia Blain is the CEO of "The Millennial Lab," a consulting, training and research company.

[49] Alicia Blain, "The Millenial Tidalwave: Five Elements that will Change the Workplace of Tomorrow," *Journal of the Quality Assurance Institute 22, no. 2*. (April, 2008): 11-12.

Technological Savvy

As the government's most technologically equipped and dependant entity, the CAF certainly maintains an advantage over the PS (and many other sectors which are not technologically-oriented) in attracting Millennials, who only know a technology-filled world:

> The word technology has no real meaning to them…they have no concept of life before technology…it is simply part of their life…This is a generation that expects to be always connected.[50]

At the same time, future technological advancements (e.g., highly networked weapon systems) will require CAF personnel at all levels who possess technological competence far beyond that of the current generations. Advertisement of the CAF's *high-tech* working environment, will not only attract Millennials, but is also likely to aid in retention, given the military's continued desire to obtain and maintain innovative and leading-edge systems to maintain its own "competitive advantage" over potential adversaries. Successful demonstration of the CAF as a technologically-enabled "employer of choice," supported by policies that encourage the full-scale penetration of modern technology into basic workplace HRM and business practices, will be essential in retaining Millennials.

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[50] Alicia Blain, "The Millenial Tidalwave: Five Elements that will Change the Workplace of Tomorrow," *Journal of the Quality Assurance Institute 22, no. 2*. (April, 2008): 11-12.

Team Orientation

Historically, the military is widely-recognized as a team-oriented institution, with varying degrees and types of teamwork across and between each of its different environments.[51] This aspect of the institution will be attractive to team-oriented Millennials. This said, the team-orientation and collaborative nature of Millennials also extends heavily to their decision-making processes, which is at odds with traditional military notions of decision-making and accountability that are centred on specific, appointed individuals. This could pose a problem for the CAF, if Millennials are unable to align their collaborative decision-making approaches with hierarchical structures and decision-making processes. This may create retention pressures as Millennials progress in rank and positional authority and maintain a hesitation towards individual decision-making and responsibility, known hallmarks of military "command authority" and "accountability." Arguably, more so than in the corporate-sector, where many organizational structures have become "flattened" and "organic" in recent years, the CAF may face great challenges in making Millennials "…comfortable with individual decision making and personal responsibility."[52] Conversely, the CAF might need to change to its Talent Management policies to enhance participatory and collaborative decision-making and embrace concepts such as collective (versus individual) responsibility.

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[51] Note: The CAF has four distinct environments: Army, Navy, Air Force, and Special Forces
[52] Alicia Blain, "The Millenial Tidalwave: Five Elements that will Change the Workplace of Tomorrow," *Journal of the Quality Assurance Institute 22, no. 2*. (April, 2008): 12.

Experiential Learning

Citing the prevalence of today's sophisticated video games, which require complex problem solving and decision-making, Blain argues that Millennials accept intermediate failures, and see them as opportunities to improve themselves to meet the challenges of getting "to the next level." Thus, she argues, Millennials are not prone to disappointment after failure, and are more predisposed to *try repeatedly* until successful.[53] Thus, the CAF can use this employee knowledge to frame HRM policies and programs in such a manner as to encourage self-development and experiential learning through *non-catastrophic failures*.[54] Thus, certain historical "zero flaw" HRM policies, commonly perceived to be reflective of a "no fail" military culture, could be made flexible to better accommodate the development style and values of the Millennial generation. Creation of a culture that is more accepting of certain "failures," and HRM policy which articulates that such failures need not necessarily [negatively] impact long-term careers success, is likely to attract Millennials, who are always willing to learn and "try again."[55] Opponents of any relaxation of strict standards-based HRM policies might argue that given the CAF's role and the risks involved in its missions (e.g., to human life), that standards must be maintained. Creating flexibility in HRM policies to allow for "forgivable" mistakes, and create an environment of professional experiential learning and development through such failures, need not compromise the integrity of standards, but could go a long way in attracting and retaining individuals away from the private

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[53] *Ibid*.

[54] Non-catastrophic failures are defined by the author as those which do not result in significant financial/material/human/legitimacy losses to the organization or lead to mission failure.

[55] Alicia Blain, "The Millenial Tidalwave: Five Elements that will Change the Workplace of Tomorrow," *Journal of the Quality Assurance Institute 22, no. 2*. (April, 2008): 12.

sector, where job security and career progression might be based solely on the "bottom

line" and internal competition, and may be less tolerant of mistakes.

Diversity

Certainly from a Talent Management policy perspective, the CAF, in accordance

with federal laws and government policy (e.g., Employment Equity Act.) formally

welcomes and encourages diversity in its workforce:

> The Forces… welcomes applicants from all genders, religions, ethnicities and
> sexual orientations. All members work together as a team and the Forces has a
> zero tolerance policy against discrimination of any kind…The Forces respects and
> accepts cultural dress and traditions and has adapted uniform standards to
> accommodate various beliefs and practices as part of its commitment to reflect
> Canada's unique diversity.[56]

While the CAF promotes an ethnically diverse workforce, recruiting initiative have

historically missed the targets set out by government policy towards minorities, including

women, aboriginals and other visible minorities.

> The targets were last updated in 2010 and aimed to have 25.1 per cent of the
> military represented by women, 11.8 per cent by visible minorities, and 3.4 per
> cent by Aboriginal Peoples. .. Yet in an audit conducted last year and only
> recently made public, defence officials complained the revised goal for women "is
> unattainable without the imposition of significant measures."[57]

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[56] Canada. Canadian Forces, "Life in the Forces," last accessed 10 May 2014,
http://forces.ca/en/page/lifeintheforces-75

[57] Lee Berthiaume, "Canadian Forces to reduce 'unattainable' targets for recruitment of women,
visible minorities," *National Post*, August 18, 2013. http://news.nationalpost.com/2013/08/18/canadian-forces-to-reduce-unattainable-targets-for-recruitment-of-women-visible-minorities/

Although the CF is a more diverse environment now than any other time in its history, by

no means does it represent the level of diversity that the majority of Millennials expect in

the workplace:

> This is the most ethnically and racially diverse generation ever …30% of
> Millennials is ethnically or racially diverse. The expectation is that if you include
> the immigrant population, that number may rise as high as 50% in the future ...
> This is a group that will not only be happy seeing diversity in an organization but
> will almost demand it.[58]

Diversity therefore, is a critical consideration for future CAF HRM policy for three key

reasons. First, demographic shift within Canada means that a greater number of

Canadians, and by extension Millennials, come from diverse groups. Thus, the CAF has

no choice but to tailor policies to attract and retain subsets of the cohort, whose

ethnic/cultural needs might be deviant from the cohort as a whole, and who have been

shown *not* to prefer the PS to begin with: "…visible minorities were less likely than other

designated groups to prefer public service."[59] Second, the Millennial generation's greater

desire for a diverse workplace, will exert pressures on the CAF to demonstrate the

institution is attractive to the "best and brightest" from the *entire* cohort. Third, some

argue, that while certain common characteristics exist across most Millennials, the

generation are also "diverse in their attitudes, thoughts, perspectives and styles"[60]

implying that flexibility of thought and management innovation will be required by CAF

managers. This may imply a break from extant models of HRM "equity" based on

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[58] Alicia Blain, "The Millenial Tidalwave: Five Elements that will Change the Workplace of Tomorrow," *Journal of the Quality Assurance Institute 22, no. 2*. (April, 2008): 12.

[59] Eddy S.W. Ng, and Charles W. Gossett, "Career Choice in Canadian Public Service: An Exploration of Fit With the Millennial Generation," *Public Personnel Management* 42, no. 3 (2013): 346.

[60] Mike Rickheim, "Capturing the Minds and Hearts of Millenials," *Profiles in Diversity Journal* (November/December 2011): 76.

"homogeneous" treatment of recruits and employees, towards a more bespoke form of

"Talent Management" (i.e., on an *individual* basis). This is indeed a notion which

arguably the military institution, whose overall HRM policies are premised upon

uniformity, is not yet prepared to fully embrace. Could and would the CAF ever move to

individually-negotiated, or multi-tier recruiting contracts and retention benefits? Such

models, although applied successfully in the corporate world, are unthinkable to many,

given the distinct departure from CAF norms of consistency and transparency.

Since Millennials are comprised of a greater demographic of minorities, the CAF

should be increasing its policy and program targets regarding diversity, rather than

decreasing them. It is therefore disconcerting that the CAF has seemingly "abandoned"

previous *ambitious* recruiting targets, in light of its past failures to attract greater, more

representative numbers of diverse recruits. Dr. Christian Leuprecht calls for an opposite

approach to policy, recognizing that the CAF has no other choice but to become more

diverse:

> 'This is not just spreadsheets of multiculturalism and you fill in the numbers and
> hope to meet the targets,' …Adding more women and visible minorities will be
> increasingly essential if the military is to remain at its current strength…given that
> its 'traditional' recruiting pool – young, white men from rural communities – is
> shrinking.'

Empowerment

While one could argue that empowerment represents an *attractive* trait for future,

innovative CAF leaders, it also presents complexities in the current military context,

given Millennials' sense of entitlement and distinctive opposition to the notion of "paying

their dues" prior to advancement.

> This has been an extremely pampered, protected, and child-centred generation… Millennials had parents that were very involved in their upbringing and structured a lot of their young lives. Millennial parents have encouraged their children to question everything…They want to use their creativity, ideas and education to contribute to the success of the organization…[61]

Such perceptions challenge military norms embedded into the culture and context of

basic training, and various historical and ceremonial aspects of the profession which are

linked to ideas such as "rite of passage," which may not be perceived as pragmatic to

Millennials.

> …Millennials tend to be hungry for praise, impatient with certain processes, super connected to IT, eager to advance and insistent on a balance between their work and their personal lives. They will balk at long meetings and excessive paperwork. They will flout workplace rules they view as rigid and still in place 'just because that's how we've always done it.'[62]

The rank and progression structure of the military, is relatively rigid, which can be argued

is a disadvantage of CAF Talent Management policy, and is likely to adversely affect

both recruitment and retention of *ambitious* Millennials who have high expectations for

[rapid] advancement. This said, particularly in the officer corps of the CAF, junior

leaders are empowered with large personnel and fiscal authorities, soon after

commissioning, enabled within a system of mentorship by senior leaders. This

empowerment is further expanded through contemporary military management practices

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[61] Alicia Blain, "The Millenial Tidalwave: Five Elements that will Change the Workplace of Tomorrow," *Journal of the Quality Assurance Institute 22, no. 2*. (April, 2008): 13.
[62] Laura Putre, "The March of the Millennials - Your Hospital Staff in 2025: The Same, Only Different," *Hospitals and Health Networks* (September 2013): 40.

such as "Mission Command" which encourage decentralization of decision making to the

lowest levels, in accordance with broad commanders' vision and intent statements. As

Blain argues, such forms of CAF policy that enable empowerment will resonate well with

the cohort, who seeks responsibility and to make an immediate difference:

> They are very confident in their abilities and want to make an impact in the
> organization as soon as they start …They want to be of value and they need to
> feel their input is meaningful … Millennials will look to their managers for
> guidance and leadership and also for challenging work assignments that they feel
> they can do.[63]

Retention

Given the aforementioned "closed" nature of the CAF's HRM system, the CAF is

by design, highly dependent upon LTE contracts, as described by Gramm and Schnell.[64]

> We propose that an HRM practice will complement LTE-contract offers if it
> raises the return to the firm's LTE commitment by reinforcing workers' reciprocal
> commitment to long-term employment, by eliciting commitment behaviors from
> employees, or by reducing the costs associated with constraints that LTE contracts
> impose on the avenues available for varying staffing levels as well as the firm's
> discretion to terminate bad hires.[65]

Unlike in the rest of the PS and the private sector, all recruiting of military personnel

takes place at the *lowest* (entry) levels of both the non-commissioned, and commissioned

rank scales. At face value, this rigid HRM structure, based on exclusively *internal-*

generation of executives through progressive, rank-based hierarchal promotion and

appointment, will not be attractive to many Millennials, who are pre-disposed to the

[63] Alicia Blain, "The Millenial Tidalwave: Five Elements that will Change the Workplace of Tomorrow," *Journal of the Quality Assurance Institute 22, no. 2*. (April, 2008): 13.
[64] Cynthia Gramm and John F. Schnell, "Long-Term Employment and Complementary Human Resource Management Practices," *Journal of Labor Research* 34, (2013): 120.
[65] *Ibid*., 122.

notion of multiple "careers" with multiple employers. "…loyalty to one employer is a foreign concept to Millennials, who expect to have between 2-6 employers in their lifetime." [66] Such a reality could present an HRM crisis for the CAF who depends of LTE contracts to fill the ranks of its most senior executives. Fortunately for the military, it is common practice, as part of its HRM professional development program, for individuals to change positions every few years, which is akin to changing "jobs" every few years, something which seems to resonate with the Millennial cohort. Thus, if HRM policy continues to support continual job rotations (i.e., even in light of the budget constraints and high cost of military postings), the concept of "multiple careers" *within* the CAF could be marketed to Millennials, and therefore aid in both recruiting and retention of talent. If however, is the CAF is unable to generate an internally-grown executive cadre because of high Millennial attrition rates, the CAF may need to explore more radical policy options, such as external recruiting of its most senior executives.

In a survey of West Point graduates, to determine the major factors leading to early military retirements (i.e., before "full-career" service) of senior officers, Tim Kane discovered that the "talent crisis" surrounding retention in the military is not a by-product of "cultural" factors, nor were lucrative, "greener" (i.e., financial) pastures in the private sector the primary reason for departures. Instead, he overwhelmingly found that entrenched HRM policies within the US military enabled a [dissatisfying] bureaucratic culture, vice a true meritocracy.[67] Further, Kane unearthed the consistent view that innovation and flexibility, hallmarks of competitive advantage within the private sector,

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[66] Jessica Hubbard, "Meet the Millenials," *Finweek*. 29 August, 2013, 43.

[67] Tim Kane, "Why Our Best Officers are Leaving," *The Atlantic*, 4 January, 2011, 2.

were virtually absent, or at least discouraged by military HRM practices of promotions,

job postings, and retention incentives.

> …the reason overwhelmingly cited by veterans and active-duty officers alike is
> that the military personnel system – every aspect of it – is nearly blind to merit.
> Performance evaluations emphasize a zero-defect mentality, meaning that risk-
> avoidance trickles down the chain of command…According to 9 out of 10
> respondents, many of the best officers would stay if the military was more of a
> meritocracy.[68]

Ultimately, Kane's argument centres upon the lack of "entrepreneurship" and innovation

within military HRM, contrasting this critical weakness with that which corporations

encourage and embody. Ng and Gossett's research complements this concept, by

identifying "innovation" as the second overall desired employer characteristic (across

both public and private sectors) among those Millennials surveyed.[69]

> In America today, capitalism is entrepreneurial: our economy is defined by
> individuals failing or succeeding on the strength of their ideas. Crucially, the
> military has not recognized this shift…It still treats each employee as an
> interchangeable commodity rather than as a unique individual with skills that can
> be optimized.[70]

Kane makes a number of pragmatic recommendations to address the military

retention problem, which have a nexus to the Millennial cohort, such as: relaxation of

strict time-in-service requirement for various ranks which could allow those who want to

specialize and remain in lower ranking positions to do so, but at the same time, provide

opportunities for the superior performers to progress at faster-than-traditional rates of

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[68] Tim Kane, "Why Our Best Officers are Leaving," *The Atlantic*, 4 January, 2011, 3.
[69] Ng, Eddy S.W., and Charles W. Gossett. "Career Choice in Canadian Public Service: An Exploration of Fit With the Millennial Generation." *Public Personnel Management* 42, no. 3 (2013): 349.
[70] Tim Kane, "Why Our Best Officers are Leaving," *The Atlantic*, 4 January, 2011, 5.

promotion. [71] Kane also suggests the creation of "…an internal job market may be the key to revolutionizing military personnel."[72] In line with the notions of individualized recruiting and an "internal job market," Kane proffers the concept of modernizing military recruiting policies to allow for "headhunting," a common practice in the private sector.[73]

CONCLUSION

Just as private sector corporations will compete rigorously to hire and retain the *right* talent for the *right* jobs at the *right* time, so too will the CAF compete in the "war for talent" for the same cohort of Millennials. To ignore this increasingly competitive environment, could result in shortages of skilled workers in the CAF in the coming decades, undoubtedly a condition which will adversely impact the institution's ability to successfully achieve its critical objectives. All employers, who seek to become or remain "employers of choice" for the next generation of skilled works and executive leaders, must consider making extant *rigid* HRM policies more *flexible* to accommodate the diverse needs and skillsets of the Millennial generation. Attraction and recruiting of talent will necessarily go hand-in-hand with talent retention, and undoubtedly traditional HRM policies will need to be developed and exercised holistically, in accordance with the best business practices of "Talent Management."

While the CAF already exhibits numerous employer characteristics and HRM policy structures which ought to make it an "employer of choice" for Millenials, the

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[71] *Ibid*., 3.
[72] *Ibid*., 7.
[73] *Ibid*., 9.

exodus of Baby Boomers and the commensurate increase in competition for the most educated, diverse, and technologically savvy workforce ever, will mean that the CAF will need to do more than just the status quo, to ensure it *remains* competitive. Using research literature about Millennials, HRM concepts and principles from the business world, and Cable and Turban's framework for employer knowledge, the author analyzed the unique characteristics of the Millennial cohort, juxtaposing them with those of the CAF, along the *employer information*, *job information*, and *people information* dimensions. In doing so, it was demonstrated that an astute understanding of how potential employees view the CAF (i.e., employer knowledge) and the unique characteristics of this Millennial cohort (i.e., employee knowledge) can inform policymakers in developing policy and programs that symbiotically match CAF and Millennial needs, to ensure successful future recruiting and long-term retention of talent. Some examples of extant policies and programs within the CAF have been identified as being *misaligned* with the specificities of the Millennial cohort. Such knowledge can inform HRM policymakers' decision-making to enable modernization of policy to align with the needs of the Millenials.

In order to gain and maintain a competitive recruiting and retention advantage, and to maintain the manpower required to achieve its future strategic and operational objectives, the CAF is likely to have to embrace an unprecedented level of organizational flexibility to *accommodate* this new workforce.

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