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AN IMMEDIATE CHALLENGE: IDENTIFYING POLICY SOLUTIONS IN A MULTI-GENERATIONAL CAF

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Exercise Solo Flight

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EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

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IN A MULTI-GENERATIONAL CAF**

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In many ways, the success of a new employees performance in any organization is linked to the onboarding process. While this process includes significant HR contributions, an employer's attention to generational and cultural differences may play a greater role in the long-term success of its employee. In the last decade, organizations have had to learn and adjust to the many differences that come with a multi-cultural and multi-generational workforce.¹ Rapid changes in the makeup of organizations are exacerbating those differences, or at least their perceptions and thus understanding the expectations of various age groups is paramount.² The Forces are not isolated from this problematic since there are currently three distinct generations making its demographics, each with their own peculiarities, expectations, and values. While the Baby Boomers are within their last decade of employment in the CAF, the Generation X (Gen X) members will succeed them but not without contest from the Generation Y (Gen Y), also called the Millennials. Some argue that the three generations' interests conflict while others present that the differences are quite minor and "more myth than reality."³ A variety of opinions exists regarding both intra and intergenerational differences. Considerable commonalities in research help us better analyze the issue.

Like all organizations, understanding the generational dynamics is extremely important for the Canadian Armed Forces. Enjoying significant support and appreciation from the Canadian population, the Canadian Armed Forces must remain an employer of

¹ John Benson and Michelle Brown, "Generations at work: are there differences and do they matter?" *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 22, no9 (May 2011), 1843.

² David McGuire, Rune T. By, and Kate Hutchings, "Towards a model of human resource solutions for achieving intergenerational interaction in organisations," *Journal of European Industrial Training* 31, no 8 (2007), 592.

³ Frank Giancola, "The Generation Gap: More Myth than Reality," *Human Resource Planning* 29, no 4, 32.

choice if it wants to sustain its capabilities and fill its ranks with quality personnel. Furthermore, since differences in approaches and attitudes “can potentially result in intergenerational conflict that compromises organizational performance,”⁴ it must ensure that it sets its policies accordingly. While arguing that the inter-generational differences are very specific, this essay will aim to assess those generational variances, their implications on the Canadian Armed Forces, and assess policy opportunities that would improve attraction and employment of all three generations. Since in many cases policy analysis and formulation are often considered “wicked problems”, the Galt and Gilson model⁵ will be used to analyze the main components of this issue and the relationships between them.

First, a brief review of the model will be presented to frame the discussion. Second, the three generations currently working in the CAF will be described, along with whether the perceptions of their values and needs are valid or not and how they differ between generations. Third, since the challenge for any organization is “to design a workplace which enables communication and knowledge transfer,”⁶ this paper will then investigate possible policy solutions and workplace adjustments that would allow for an effective integration of the various generations present, addressing the content and process. The focus of the policies will seek to optimize the talents of all age groups, reconcile differences, educate and develop all members, use the diversity for everyone’s

⁴ James Bennett, Michael Pitt, and Samantha Price, “Understanding the impact of generational issues in the workplace,” *Facilities* 30, no 7/8, (2012), 280.

⁵ Gill Walt and Lucy Gilson, “Reforming the health section in developing countries: the central role of policy analysis,” *Health Policy and Planning* 9, no 4, (Oxford University Press 1994), 354.

⁶ James Bennett, Michael Pitt, and Samantha Price, *Understanding the impact of generational issues...*, 282.

advantages, and adjust the organization's culture. This essay will be based on empirical studies and research from various sectors, including the US Army, the Canadian Armed Forces, the Public Service, and private industry.

The Walt and Gilson Model

In a paper arguing the neglect of some facets in analyzing health industry policy, Walt and Gilson proposed a triangle framework. Since policy formulation tends to vary according to the nature of the policy and the structure is it built in, this triangle ensures that the focus is not solely on the policy content but also on the processes, the context, and more importantly on the actors and their linkages to the other components. Without guaranteeing that the "wicked problem" can be resolved, the Walt and Gilson Model ensures that all aspects are considered, thus permitting to either bound the problem to ease its complexity or illustrate its intricacies.

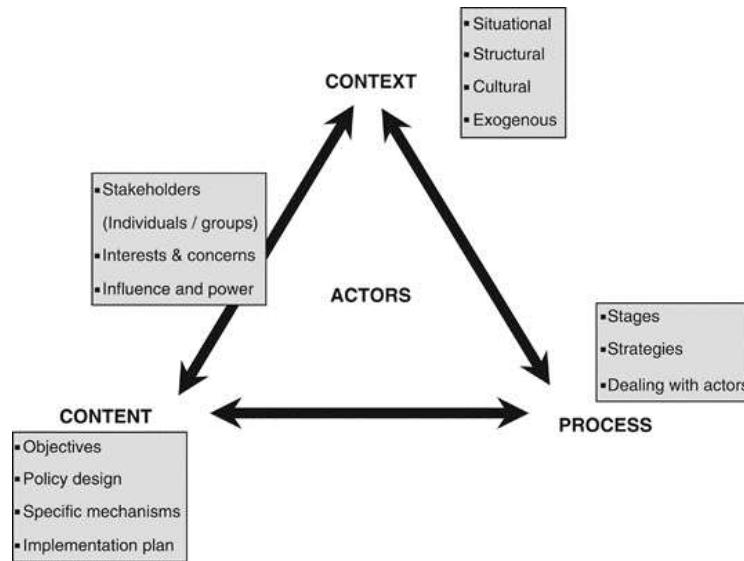


Figure 1 - Walt and Gilson Triangle Framework

Source: Ditlopo et al. *Analyzing the implementation of the rural allowance in hospitals in North West Province South Africa*, 83⁷

In the case of this essay, the influx of Gen Y into the workforce creates a situation that the Canadian Armed Forces must consider carefully, for culture and workforce reasons particularly. By its sheer size, the events and circumstances that have surrounded its upbringing, the lack of Gen Xers, and the increasing retirements of Baby Boomers, this latest generation will look forward to filling the leadership gaps.⁸ Each generation, with its own values and expectations, the military culture, the Canadian culture, and the political environment create the backdrop to which the CAF must assess its policies. The intricacies of the relationships and interdependencies make this a difficult problem to solve, and thus to prevent delving too far into the depth of a wicked problem, the policy

⁷ Prudence Ditlopo et al., "Analyzing the implementation of the rural allowance in hospitals in North West Province South Africa," *Journal of Public Health Policy* 32, no S1, 83.

⁸ Jessica Brack, "Maximizing Millennials in the Workplace," UNC Executive Development 2012, UNC Kenan-Flager Business School, 2012, 2.

exploration, the process and content, will be limited to those policies that the Forces can control.

The Context

As stated earlier, the Baby Boomers generation has started to leave the workplace, their older members having reached the CAF Compulsory Retirement Age (CRA) approximately a decade ago. They are being replaced by the Millennials. The three generations Baby Boomers, Gen Xers and Millennials present in the organization, and the differences in values, likes and dislikes have the potential to disturb the current workforce strategies.⁹ With the digitization of the environment and its rapid progression, and the likelihood that a fourth generation will come into the workplace before the Gen Xers retire, understanding and planning for intergenerational differences is key.¹⁰ As the workforce goes through this generational transition, the CAF are also readjusting their effective strength following a decade-long involvement in Afghanistan. As times of reorganization can contribute to intergenerational conflicts and misunderstandings,¹¹ it enhances the need to address the issue. Furthermore, Saba argues that intergenerational considerations have increased recently because of an additional factor: the incoherence in management styles between organizations themselves.¹² Finally, if “managers do not understand [the] value similarities and differences they could be setting themselves up for

⁹ Melissa Wong et al., “Generational differences in personality and motivation: Do they exist and what are the implications for the workplace?” *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 23, no. 8 (2008): 879.

¹⁰ Alan C. Okros, “Slide to Unlock: Implications from the Harnessing 21st Century Competencies Project,” Report submitted to Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis, March 2015, 6.

¹¹ David McGuire, Rune T. By, and Kate Hutchings, “Towards a model of human resource solutions. . . , 593.

¹² Tania Saba, “Les différences intergénérationnelles au travail: faire la part des choses.” *Gestion* 34, no. 3 (2009): 25.

failure or loss of valuable employees.”¹³ All of these elements highlight the importance to grasp the problem correctly

The Generations

Most organizations’ workforces are not homogenous and are made up of ranges of groups.¹⁴ For this essay, generations will stand for groups and thus must be defined. Generations “represent a unique type of social location based on the dynamic interplay between being born in a particular year and the socio-political events that occur throughout the life course of the birth cohort, particularly while the cohort comes of age.”¹⁵ They are also likely to develop distinct preferences towards work and what they desire from work.¹⁶ There are some disagreements to the boundaries of each age group but Kaifi’s delineations seem to represent the mean. Thus for this paper, the Baby Boomers are those born between 1946 and 1964, the Gen Xers between 1965 and 1980, and the Millenials are those born after 1980.¹⁷ It is important to note though that the characteristics of each generation do not apply uniformly across the generation spectrum;

¹³ Julie Cogin, “Are generational differences in work values fact or fiction? Multi-country evidence and implications,” *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 23, no 11, (June 2012), 2271.

¹⁴ John Benson and Michelle Brown, *Generations at work...*, 1849.

¹⁵ Julie Ann McMullin, Tammy Duerden Comeau, and Emily Jovic. "Generational affinities and discourses of difference: a case study of highly skilled information technology workers1." *The British journal of sociology* 58, no. 2 (2007): 299-300.

¹⁶ Melissa Wong et al., *Generational differences...*, 879.

¹⁷ Belal A. Kaifi et al., “A Multi-Generational Workforce: Managing and Understanding Millenials,” *International Journal of Business and Management* 7, no 24 (2012), 88.

as with any groups, generations are not perfectly homogenous.¹⁸ To help understanding each generation, a brief description of the various generations follows.

Baby Boomers are the largest cohort in the workforce.¹⁹ They have been influenced by John F. Kennedy, contraception, television, the Beatles, the Swinging 60s and the Cold War.²⁰ The Vietnam War, civil rights riots, and the sexual revolution also affected them. They grew up embracing entitlement and expecting the best from life.²¹ The Boomers value hard work, company loyalty and they currently generally occupy more senior positions. They are service-oriented team player who enjoy group discussions, view work from a process-oriented perspective, do not want to be micro-managed, seek long-term employment and believe that achievement comes after “paying dues.” Although they have embraced technology, Boomers consider it as “artifacts of organizational structure.”²² Baby Boomers tend to respect authority and hierarchy because they were brought up in such a work environment;²³ they live to work.

The members of the Generation X are much smaller in number.²⁴ They grew up during the Cold War, the energy crisis, the increased visibility of AIDS, were influenced by Margaret Thatcher, Francois Mitterand, Star Wars, rock music, the emergence of the

¹⁸ Camille Kapoor and Nicole Solomon, “Understanding and managing generational differences in the workplace,” *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes* 3, no 4, (2011), 309.

¹⁹ Melissa Wong et al., *Generational differences...*, 879.

²⁰ James Bennett, Michael Pitt, and Samantha Price, *Understanding the impact of generational issues...*, 281.

²¹ Julie Cugin, *Are generational differences...*, 2272.

²² Belal A. Kaifi et al., *A Multi-Generational Workforce...*, 89.

²³ Camille Kapoor and Nicole Solomon, *Understanding and managing generational differences...*, 309.

²⁴ Tania Saba, *Les différences intergénérationnelles au travail...*, 26.

European Union and car travel.²⁵ They witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. Their life was surrounded by family and societal insecurity and their parents experienced the first rounds of “mass corporate layoffs.” It also marked an era of increase in “nuclear families.” Further, unlike previous generations, both parents often work. Technologically wise, they experienced the beginnings of the Internet, the presence of personal computers at home and at school²⁶ and thus are more technologically savvy than their predecessors are. They value flexibility, honesty, continuous and immediate feedback, work-life balance, autonomy, and independence. They have begun to enter the ranks of senior management, view work from an action-oriented perspective, are unintimidated by authority, and work to live. In a study of the Australian Defence Force, it was found that Gen Xers “would be more likely quit [sic] if they were not satisfied in their job compared to Boomers.”²⁷ This is consistent with research in the private sector.

Computers, the Internet, mobile phone, instant messaging, gaming, global warming, Facebook and other social media heavily influenced the Gen Yers. The events of September 11, 2001, the Columbine shootings, multiculturalism, various family structures, and the accessibility to air travel shaped their upbringings.²⁸ They have been socialized in a digital world, continuously connected to a source of information and entertainment and are therefore adept at multi-tasking. They are the “most affluent

²⁵ James Bennett, Michael Pitt, and Samantha Price, *Understanding the impact of generational issues...*, 281.

²⁶ Julie Cugin, *Are generational differences...*, 2272.

²⁷ John Benson and Michelle Brown, *Generations at work...*, 1846.

²⁸ James Bennett, Michael Pitt, and Samantha Price, *Understanding the impact of generational issues...*, 281.

generation, raised in a time of economic expansion, prosperity, and violence.”²⁹ This generation was also deemed to have been raised by overbearing and highly protective parents nicknamed “helicopter parents.”³⁰ They have developed strong leadership abilities, a concern for the community and social responsibilities, including an awareness of the national diversity. Research points to them as being optimistic, confident, outspoken, collaborative, and realistic.³¹ They desire mentor-like managers, value work-life balance and flexibility, having input in the decision-making, and are viewed as job-hoppers; variety of employment is important and work is not everything. Since they will likely form the backbone of the CAF for the next two decades, their influence towards CAF culture and policies is significant; any realignment needs to appeal to the Millennials. But change cannot be created to satisfy only that generation.

The Canadian Armed Forces

Before proceeding with any policy analysis for the CAF, it is essential to review the generational mapping of its personnel and its motivations, understand its demographics and attraction as an employer. This will allow for a better comprehension of its members, their potential differences, and the policy impacts they may have. As stated earlier, the Baby Boomers are in the latter stage of their career, occupying for the most parts the key leadership positions within the organization. The Gen X cohort, already forming a lower workforce in the general population, is included in the Forces Reduction Plan (FRP) bubble, which affected its relative strength. Some of its members

²⁹ Julie Cogin, *Are generational differences...*, 2272.

³⁰ Alan C. Okros, *Slide to Unlock...*, 13.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

have acceded to senior appointments and the majority of its remainder is found in middle management. The final group, consisting of the Millennials, is either new recruits, junior members and leaders, and is gaining in experience. Some of its higher performers have already reached similar positions as the Gen Xers, in the middle management spectrum.

Although the number of years of service (YOS) is not completely linked to the generations, there exists a strong enough correlation between the two to warrant an analysis. Assuming that new recruits join at 20 years of age, it would mean that the Baby Boomers have between 31 and 40 YOS, the Generation X between 15 and 30, and the Gen Yers up to 14 years of service. As Figure 2 and 3 show, there is a gap at the boundaries between the generations X and Y, which highlights the potential for leadership roles for the more junior personnel and the need to retain Millennials and future generations in the CAF.

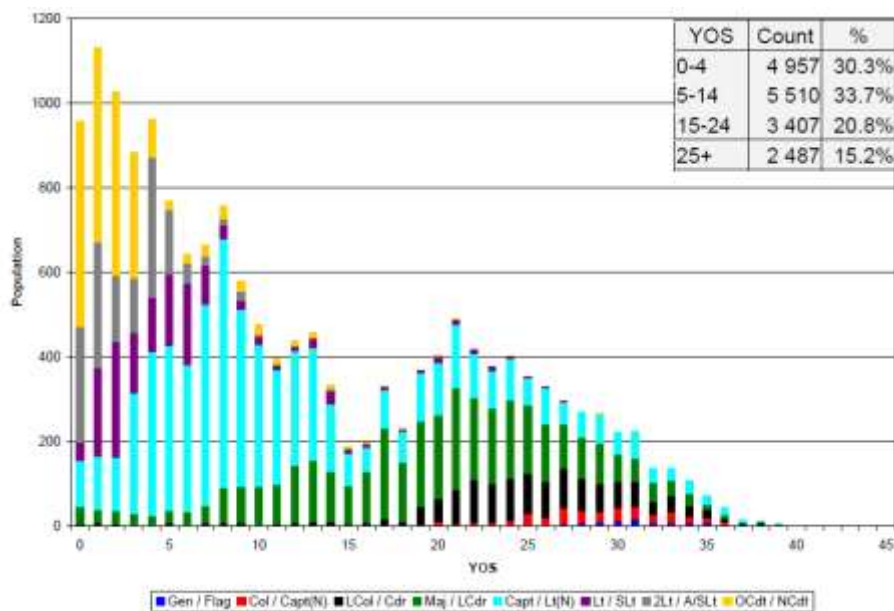


Figure 2 – Officer Population by YOS and Rank as of 31 March 2011

Source: M.A. Jacula, “Two Factor Theory for innovative retention in the Canadian Armed Forces,” Canadian Forces College, 7 July 2014, 18³²

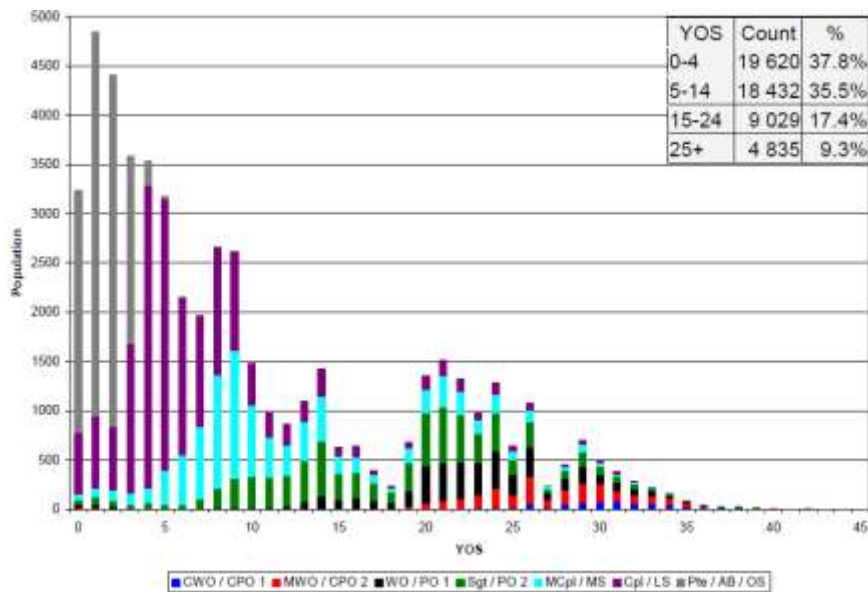


Figure 3 – NCM Population Profile by YOS and Ranks as of 31 March 2011

Source: M.A. Jacula, “Two Factor Theory for innovative retention in the Canadian Armed Forces,” Canadian Forces College, 7 July 2014, 19³³

³² M.A. Jacula, “Two Factor Theory for innovative retention in the Canadian Armed Forces,” Canadian Forces College, 7 July 2014, 18.

The context of policy analysis is also enhanced by using data stemming from the retention surveys conducted by the CAF. Although five years old, the 2010 CF Retention Survey was further analyzed to highlight factors influencing “stay and leave” decisions. When asked what factors were contributing to a “stay decision” and what changes could persuade someone to stay, the results showed a clear generational delineation.

Theme / YOS	0 – 4 YOS	5 – 14 YOS	15 – 24 YOS	25+ YOS
First Theme	Pay and Benefits	Pay and Benefits	Job and Career Satisfaction	Job and Career Satisfaction
Second Theme	Job Stability and Security	Job and Career Satisfaction	Pay and Benefits	Pension
Third Theme	Job and Career Satisfaction	Job Stability and Security	Pension	Pay and Benefits

Figure 4 – Top three reasons for remaining in the CAF by YOS³⁴

Theme / YOS	0 – 4 YOS	5 – 14 YOS	15 – 24 YOS	25+ YOS
First Theme	Family Considerations	Family Considerations	Pay and Benefits	Choice of Postings
Second Theme	Choice of Postings	Pay and Benefits	Family Considerations	Geographic Stability
Third Theme	Pay and Benefits	Choice of Postings	Choice of Postings	Pay and Benefits

Figure 5 – Top three suggestions to improve retention by YOS³⁵

While there appears to be some generational distinctions, pay and benefits seem to be an important factor. Without delving into retention issues, looking at the reasons for exiting the Forces could highlight some direct links to generational desires and thus policy issues. Although the retention surveys do not provide a generational output and are limited in the diversity of the sample, they do show some of the main reasons for exiting the Canadian Armed Forces. As Michaud and Goldenberg have synthesized, more than a

³³ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁴ Karen Koundakjian and Irina Goldenberg, “Factors Influencing Stay and Leave Intentions: Qualitative findings from the 2010 Canadian Forces Retention Survey,” DGMPPRA TM 2013-007, July 2013, 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

quarter of personnel voluntarily leaving the CAF do so for one of the following reasons: time available to spend with family, the feeling of accomplishing meaningful work, time available to maintain personal relationships, the effects postings have had on the ability to maintain family stability, the career management system, the effects of posting on the opportunity to settle down, the difficulty in meeting service requirements to personal circumstances, and recognition received at work. It is possible to group those factors in three larger groups: family considerations, work-life balance, and work,³⁶ which seems to relate well to the generational affinities and the descriptions of the various generations.

These values must be represented within the CAF. As a well-publicized entity of the Government, the Canadian Armed Forces will continue to face scrutiny. Although it currently enjoys high levels of public support, it must purport values making it an employer of choice. Because of perceptions of higher ethical standards, more inclusive workplaces, greater social responsibility, and progressive working environment, Millennials consider the public service as the top preferred employer³⁷ and the CAF as the ninth government agency/department. Whether the Forces truly encompass those characteristics is a matter of perception in the same manner as the various generations evolve in the workplace with their image or reputation and their perception of the workplace.

³⁶ M.A. Jacula, *Two Factor Theory* . . . , 49.

³⁷ 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), 345.

Generations and the workplace

To establish and maintain high-performing teams and satisfy the workforce across all three generations, it is essential to understand the generational differences within the workplace. Earlier this paper presented characteristics the various generations possess and aspects they value. Those traits, motivators, and beliefs must be correlated with the workplace to gain a better appreciation of potential friction points. Although it could be argued that bounding this part of the analysis risks trivializing the “wicked” aspect of the problem, it must be done if only to restrict the analysis to a palatable length. Thus, this essay will look at factors that have already appeared important and supplement them with others that have transpired through the literature: work-life balance, professional development, career progression, need for recognition, autonomy at work, stability, work atmosphere, and technology. The second part of this section will review perceptions of the various generations as those perceptions, at times, influence policy-making.

Empirical studies demonstrate that not only is work-life balance important, it is so for all generations. Having paid their dues and remained loyal, the Baby Boomers desire balance to transition towards retirement and enjoy more leisure activities.³⁸ Recognizing the importance of work-life balance, they also prefer to work remotely.³⁹ Several researchers consider that they make excellent mentors.⁴⁰ Shaped by their experiences growing up, the Gen Xers value stability with their family life and therefore wish flexibility in their employment to support their teenage kids and take care of their parents.

³⁸ Tania Saba, *Les différences intergénérationnelles au travail...*, 36.

³⁹ Belal A. Kaifi et al., *A Multi-Generational Workforce...*, 89.

⁴⁰ Melissa Wong et al., *Generational differences...*, 880.

As stated earlier, they are action-focused; therefore, they have little tolerance for bureaucracy.⁴¹ As for the Gen Yers and their career desires, furthering their education to remain employable is extremely important. They believe that they “will be promoted to a leadership role at a younger age than their parents were.”⁴² They therefore seek work-life balance to pursue additional studies and perhaps raise their young children. Millennials are also more inclined to demand the things that they desire.⁴³ Despite this sense of confidence, they are not as independent as the Gen Xers.

In a review of motivational factors across generations, Appelbaum et al. found that “contrary to common perceptions, four out of five motivational factors selected as being the most important were identical for both cohorts [Baby Boomers and Gen Xers] including a stable and secure future, a high salary, a change to learn new things, and variety in work assignments.”⁴⁴ This suggests that the differences in motivation might not be as marked as popularly believed. Wong et al., built on Appelbaum’s study and examined six motivational drivers across generations: desire to take responsibility and have authority (power), commitment to work, job security, promotion prospects, personal growth, and affiliation to the workplace.

Summarily, the greatest inter-generational difference was between the Baby Boomers and Gen Y. Employees from different generations were found to be motivated

⁴¹ Camille Kapoor and Nicole Solomon, *Understanding and managing generational differences...*, 309.

⁴² Lauren Stiller Rikleen, “Creating Tomorrow’s Leaders: the Expanding Roles of Millennials in the Workplace, Boston College Center for Work & Family, Executive Briefing Series, 5.

⁴³ Camille Kapoor and Nicole Solomon, *Understanding and managing generational differences...*, 314.

⁴⁴ Steven H. Appelbaum et al., “Generation X and the Boomers: Organizational Myths and Literary Realities,” *Management Research News* 27, no 11/12 (2004), 10-11.

to a different degree by three factors: affiliation, power, and progression. On the other three, there were no significant differences across generations. Further Wong noted that Gen Xers and Millennials were more ambitious and had a “tendency to enjoy working with demanding roles and targets to a greater degree than Baby Boomers.” Contrary to expectations, Baby Boomers were the least affiliative and the least focused on career advancement.⁴⁵ Perhaps this is due to where they are in their career. The largest effect size was observed on the power aspect, where Gen Xers and Baby Boomers were more likely to be motivated by the exercise of authority while Millennials seemed to be more motivated by career progression than the other cohorts are. Although Millennials are inherently desiring opportunities for professional development, Gen Xers are equally so. When it comes to career advancement, the Gen Yers have the highest anticipations, and all generations equally expect recognition and stability in the workplace.⁴⁶ Although there are some particular differences, generations also value many of the same aspects. Wong’s research is corroborated by the Environics work, which shows that the “Millennials are seeking many of the same work factors as Gen X and Boomers did before them.”⁴⁷

Perceptions

Since perceptions are very personal, cultural, and generational, they sometimes cloud the policy-analysis process and therefore the way individuals of the same workforce work together. Regarding generations and expectations, most employees have diverse and strong opinions. For example, Rikleen concluded that while “many managers

⁴⁵ Melissa Wong et al., *Generational differences...*, 885-887.

⁴⁶ Tania Saba, *Les différences intergénérationnelles au travail...*, 30-35.

⁴⁷ Alan C. Okros, *Slide to Unlock...*, 18.

believe that Millennials are primarily focused on money, Millennials report themselves as more focused on meaning.”⁴⁸ Albeit at a different level, the same conclusion was found regarding levels of responsibility: Gen Yers want to feel a sense of accomplishment while older generations believe that the Millennials seek high levels of responsibility. This highlights a communication gap that needs to be filled not only for policy-analysis purposes but also for success in the workplace.

Lester et al. used generational cohort theory to analyze whether generations actually desire different things and the surrounding context. Based on that theory, they believed that the greatest differences would include: technology, face-to-face communication, email communication, social media, formal authority, and enjoyment at work.⁴⁹ These factors also seem to conform to the generic stereotyping. Their research found that differences occur in two generic areas: technology/communication and authority/work culture.

Although all three generations understand the value of technology, disagreements sometimes occur regarding the use of emails and social communications: Baby Boomers and Gen Xers value these modes of communication less than the Millennials. Further, while the Boomers rely more on face-to-face communication, Generation Y workers see

⁴⁸ Lauren Stiller Rikleen, *Creating Tomorrow's Leaders...*, 5.

⁴⁹ Scott W. Lester, et al., “Actual Versus Perceived Generational Differences at Work: An Empirical Examination,” *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 19, no 3, (2012), 345.

it as a means of maintaining an effective exchange of information.⁵⁰ Gen Xers place less value on technology than both the Boomers and Millennials believe they hold.⁵¹

Every generation cohort values formal authority equally but the concept of formal authority differs by generation. As an example, Boomers value professionalism to a higher level than Gen Xers. Lester theorizes that this difference might be attributed to a desire for independence by that generation and its style of interaction. Regarding continuous learning, Gen Yers value it more than the older generations perceive. In the same vein, Boomers value teamwork, flexibility, and enjoyment at work to higher degrees than younger generations believe them to hold.⁵²

Although Lester's research confirms that generational stereotyping is very much alive, the actual differences are more minute than perceived. However, those actual differences can influence perceptions, thus affecting how members interact in the workplace, and reinforcing the stereotypes. The inter-generational differences are not so large that they cannot be addressed. In fact, the research shows that there are actually more similarities than actual differences. Not only does this highlight the need for adequate communication strategies between generations, it also provides evidence that it is important to recognize the actual differences to build a positive and productive organization.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 349.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 350.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 351.

Workplace Structure and Policy Implications for CAF

Having completed the analysis of the actors and the context, this next section will look at the generational implications on the CAF workplace and the policies that could facilitate this workforce transition and position the Forces as an employer of choice for current and future generations. The focus will be on characteristics and traits discussed in previous sections, along with challenges and opportunities.

First, it is important that the CAF recognize the differences in expectations and values of the various generations, their similarities, and the various life stages each cohort currently is. As the largest GoC's department, its policies and evolution will certainly come under governmental and popular scrutiny, and should certainly consider implementation costs. However, the latter falls outside the scope of this paper and will be omitted.

The Canadian Armed Forces must, or at least appear, to be respectful and inclusive of all members of the Canadian population. Current policies address discrimination, harassment, diversity, and ethical behaviour. Although the CAF have suffered some backlashes recently,⁵³ the hierarchy has acted to identify the issues and reiterate that all members of the CAF deserve a healthy environment to work in.⁵⁴ Not only is this environment required for members of the CAF to blossom and perform

⁵³ Noémi Mercier and Alec Castonguay, "Our military's disgrace," *Macleans*, Last accessed on 05 May 2015, <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/our-militarys-disgrace/>

⁵⁴ Department of National Defence. "Chief of the Defence Staff Message to Members on the External Review of Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces." Last accessed on 05 May 2015. <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=chief-of-the-defence-staff-message-to-members-on-the-external-review-of-sexual-misconduct-in-the-canadian-armed-forces/i7kv5fnr>

effectively, it is also necessary to attract new recruits, irrelevant of their age. Actively promoting the health of the workplace through, and monitoring social media messages, would also benefit the CAF. As Okros points out, it might not be the actual environment but the perception of the environment that could prove detrimental.⁵⁵ As social media are playing a larger role, especially with the younger generations, the messages spread over the various boards and editorials should be reviewed and evaluated.

To date, the CAF have yet to address the diversity aspect adequately. Targets for visible minorities and women established since the enactment of the Employment Equity Act have not been reached. As Ng and Gossett point out, people interested in public service employment expect a more diverse workforce⁵⁶ and yet visible minorities “were less likely than other designated groups to prefer public service.”⁵⁷ Therefore, the CAF must increase their policy efforts on the subject. Perhaps better recruiter selection, increased community engagement, and improved internal mentorship programs could be implemented, as they would easily fit into existing policies and practices. Perhaps the Forces could also include a cultural intelligence component to the training spectrum, which could also serve as foundation for additional and more specific training before deployments.

Since it has become omnipresent in today’s world, the technological aspect cannot be overlooked. It was demonstrated that although every generation uses technology and social media, they do not do so in the same manner. Therefore, the Forces must continue

⁵⁵ Alan C. Okros, *Slide to Unlock...*, 21.

⁵⁶ Eddy S. W. Ng and Charles W. Gossett, *Career Choice in Canadian Public Service...*, 352.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 346.

to embrace new technologies but perhaps at a more rapid pace and/or different fashion than it has been doing. For example, although the Forces have linked computer networks and applications with Voice-over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP) phones, it has yet to introduce simple chat systems. This feature would cater to employees who prefer this form of communication for quick and simple queries. Chat programs are already used extensively in operational command posts. When combined to the employee's calendar, it would indicate whether the employee is present or busy, and prevent undesired interruptions. Policy could be simply amended to include this electronic tool, or a similar one.

Other technological changes could be made to facilitate mentorship opportunities (communication applications in meeting rooms), group work collaboration (Wi-Fi network in specific areas), and work-life balance (telework). Proper training and education would also have to be part of this technological turn. Since this could require significant funds, and given the current project approval process, the Forces need to address the technology component soon and convey the message appropriately to prioritize this activity. Handing over this project to a multi-generations team would also address the desired characteristics discussed in a previous section.

When considering team collaboration and orientation, the CAF's team-oriented structure suits well all generations, even though Gen Xers are more independent. The ideas of small-team tasks and project collaboration will also appeal to the younger generations. The wide application of the team concept clashes with organizational and cultural structures though. The hierarchic structure of the Canadian Armed Forces and the

traditional commander-centric concept of decision-making are not aligned with the Millennials' preferences for consultation, broad collaboration, and accountability.⁵⁸ The open sharing and collaboration create a problem on the specific idea of accountability: culturally individuals are responsible and not groups. The Forces must therefore investigate where and how they could integrate collaborative decision-making and emphasize the "mission command" principle, as well as study how military culture is inculcated to new recruits. Furthermore, education will need to take place for all generations to understand that collaboration does not mean responsibility avoidance. Future personnel evaluation systems will also need to acknowledge this new approach.

Another important facet to intergenerational differences must be considered: authority. Although already presented from the hierarchic aspect earlier, the subject encompasses more than just that perspective. Generations view and seek authority differently. Superiors, peers, and subordinates alike, based on their knowledge, position, and/or effectiveness, will increasingly represent authority figures. This puts more emphasis on fairness and transparency but also on informal leadership. Mentorship becomes an essential tool not only to link the various generations but also to facilitate career progression, cultural adaptation, organizational improvement, and the likes. The Canadian Armed Forces must improve its mentorship program, perhaps to reflect the public service one, and investigate the appropriateness of 360-degree feedback, or similar tool, to the entire workforce.

⁵⁸ Alan C. Okros, *Slide to Unlock...*, 26.

Work-life balance, also referred to as flexibility, is another subject that surfaced in many studies. The advent of technology and the competitive culture of the CAF have contributed to extend work hours and impeded on other critical aspects of one's life: family, leisure/fitness, and education. In general, members of all three generations are prepared to work the adequate amount to contribute to the institution; they each desire more flexibility in doing so. As presented in Okros' research, focusing on achievements instead of ways to achieve the desire objective would be beneficial to the younger generations. This would also cater to the Gen Xers' desire for independence. The idea to work remotely should also be explored. Although control policies would need to be developed, that aspect should not detract the exploration of the ideas. Considering the current organizational culture of the CAF, significant work and narrative shaping would need to occur.

It becomes quickly obvious that a significant amount of training and professional development will be required to understand the generational differences, change the organizational culture, and understand the policy-making processes. Building on the existing CAF professional development structure, additional courses or streams could be developed to address generational dynamics and workforce adjustments. In addition, financial support and time allocations should be formalized to solidify the importance of continuous improvement and prevent work from overtaking time dedicated to this pursuit. While still on the education topic but from a recruitment perspective, better equivalency recognition policies should be instigated. Educational institutions and workplaces have expanded their programs, leading to a workforce with more diversified

background. Formal training could then be streamlined and potential savings, both from financial and time points of view, achieved.⁵⁹

Finally, career management, progression, and rewards structure could be amended to adapt to the personnel currently employed and prospective recruits. When considering the whole of the workforce, not every member is enticed by climbing the “corporate ladder” although contributing positively and being recognized for the efforts expended are values sought by every generation. Room for lateral progression to recognize achievements and expertise should be made in the CAF career management policies. This would not be detrimental to ones seeking hierarchical status, such as the Boomers. When combined with more flexibility in career management options, such as location and employment fields, career management policies could improve the quality of life of military members, meet generational expectations, and possibly reduce costs.⁶⁰

Conclusion

The arrival of the Millennials into the workforce has sparked the interests of many individuals on how to accommodate and collaborate with this generation that is perceived as dramatically different from the previous ones. Analyzing the characteristics, the values, and the needs of the Baby Boomers, and the Generations X and Y is an interesting endeavour. Using the Walt and Gilson model, it was possible to gain an understanding of the breath of the problem facing organizations and the important role actors play in the policy analysis process. Looking at the three generations currently present in the CAF

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

workforce, they are not as dissimilar as it is often perceived. Certainly, there are differences but research has shown that it is often the generational perspective on the values more than the values themselves that differentiate the generations. As generations are shaped by their experiences, they bring those experiences, along with strengths and weaknesses to the workplace. Recognizing the relevance of change, adapting to the changes, recognizing the generational needs, and building on the strengths of members from all three generations is critical to the success of any organization that wish to prosper. In the current environment, flexibility, communication, organizational culture and structure, increase in collaborative enterprises, and education seem to be key areas on which workplaces need to focus their efforts.

In spite of its high organizational inertia, the Canadian Armed Forces need to rapidly focus its attention towards adapting its structure and policies if it wishes to promote a workplace that reflects Canadian society, remain an employer of choice, and be in position to conduct its given mandate effectively. While it is important that the Forces acknowledge the differences in reviewing, it is equally important that they also focus on commonalities when reviewing and developing policies. Improved communications will prove crucial in this endeavour and members of all three generations must be involved in creating a strong future for the CAF's workplace environment. By embracing the future workforce demographics and the changes it requires, the Canadian Armed Forces will be able to not only employ the best but also maximize their work and do so in a positive manner.

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