GENERATIONS COLLIDE – THE NEED FOR THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES TO ADAPT TO THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

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Canada

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INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Armed Forces is an institution that places tremendous emphasis on attracting, recruiting, training, educating and retaining people that have the right attributes for military service. Military service is unique amongst all other forms of employment in Canada in that it is the only one in which its members "…may not withdraw or withhold service when working under the authority of a lawful command, including commands that place them in harm's way in support of the defence of Canada and its citizens."[1] This obedience to lawful authority that may result in a soldier's injury or death is a principle known as 'Unlimited Liability' and it forms one part of the 'Social Contract' between the nation and the members of its military. On the other side of the contract "…the nation commits to providing fair treatment, fair and equitable compensation and a broad spectrum of support for the individual and his or her family."[2] What constitutes the appropriate level of fairness, equitability and support for CAF members has changed over time. Evolution in societal norms and values have provided much of the impetus for such changes, as have the evolving needs of the CAF and the men and women who serve within it.

A significant demographic shift is underway in Canadian society; a shift that will continue to fuel the evolution of societal norms and values. This shift is driven by a new generation of workers, the 'Millennial Generation', who are coming of age and entering the workforce in increasing numbers. As these younger workers join the labour force, members of the 'Baby Boomer Generation', the largest ever generation in Canadian

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[1] Department of National Defence, B-GL-005-100/FP-001, *Military Personnel Management Doctrine* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2008), 2-2.
[2] *Ibid*, 2-4.

history[3] and one that has had such a dominant role in shaping Canadian institutions and society, is slowly exiting it. The Millennial Generation (or Millennials) refers to the cohort of Canadians born from the year 1981 to 2000. This generation followed Generation X (born between 1965-1980), which, itself, had followed the Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964). The birth years that define these cohorts are somewhat variable in the literature, however, for the purposes of this paper the birth years of these generations will be as defined above.[4,5]

Much has been written about the Millennial generation and the impact that they are likely to have on the workforce and on societal values more broadly.[6] Alternately described as being either more socially conscious ('Generation We') or narcissistic ('Generation Me') the characteristic values of this generation are still in dispute. What is not in dispute, however, is that this generational shift in the labour force is likely to impact employment practices and workplace dynamics as the expectations and values held by Millennials collide with the existing employment cultures set by the generations that preceded them. Adaptation by employers and these new workers will be necessary, and the Canadian Armed Forces as a unique employer with a powerful organizational culture will most certainly not be immune to the pressures to adapt. The challenge that the CAF will face is the management of this change while retaining the core values and

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[3] Statistics Canada, "Figure 2: Portrait of generations, using the age pyramid, Canada 2011," last accessed 12 May 2015, http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-311-x/2011003/fig/fig3_2-2-eng.cfm

[4] Pew Research Centre, "Millennials in Adulthood: Detached from Institution, Networked with Friends." (March 2014), 9.

[5] Leesa Tanner. "Who are the Millennials?" (DRDC CORA TM 2010-284, Defence R&D Canada, December 2010), 10.

[6] Although by no means scientific, a Google search conducted on 7 May 2015 of the terms 'Baby Boomers' and 'Millennials' gave results of 10,500,000 and 12,700,000 respectively; 21% more results for 'Millennials'. A second search for 'Baby Boomer Generation' and 'Millennial Generation' yielded results of 1,120,000 and 1,860,000 respectively; 66% more results for 'Millennials'.

ethos that are essential to the institution and to the profession of arms in Canada. In fact, the CAF must quickly understand and then adapt to the expected impacts of this evolution in Canadian labour force demographics and generational values as its "command and leadership climate, its policies, organizational expectations and general character are all products of the Baby Boomer cohort."[7]

A 2014 study noted, "there has been no research considering the confluence of generational differences and shifting demographics in the labor force."[8] The aim of this paper is to somewhat close this research gap with regards to the likely effects on the CAF that are precipitated by the evolution in Canadian labour force demographics and generational values. The analysis in this paper is structured in three distinct sections. The first section includes an examination of the characteristics of the Millennial generation, the demographics of the Canadian labour force and the Canadian Armed Forces. This examination will set the conditions for the analysis of the second component, which focuses on the challenges faced by the CAF in recruiting and retaining Millennials. The third, and final, section of this study is focussed on personnel practices and policies that should be considered by the CAF to address some key concerns and to position the institution as an employer of choice for the Millennial Generation.

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[7] M.N. Popov, "A Confluence of Factors: Canadian Forces Retention and the Future Force." (Joint Command and Staff Course Paper, Canadian Forces College, 2011), 41.
[8] Sean T. Lyons, Eddy S. Ng, and Linda Schweitzer, "Changing Demographics and the Shifting Nature of Careers: Implications for Research and Human Resource Development." *Human Resource Development Review* 13, no. 2 (2014), 182.

DISCUSSION

Section 1 - Characteristics and Demographics

It is suggested that generational cohorts display unique characteristics and values that differentiate them from other cohorts. These unique differences are due to the cohort being "shaped by the same times and influenced by the same social markers."[9] In the case of the Millennial Generation the presence, nature and extent of these differences is disputed. Some studies have indicated that members of this generation are more socially conscious, "more community oriented, caring, activist, civically involved, and interested in environmental causes"[10] than the generations that preceded them. Other studies present a contrary view, with a 2012 study drawing on "two large, nationally representative samples of American young people"[11] concluding that "more recent generations evidence lower level of community feeling as seen in less intrinsic and more extrinsic life goals, less concern for others, and lower civic engagement."[12] Figure 1 (below) provides one summary of the generational differences, highlighting the events that have shaped each generation, the characteristics valued by each generation and the traits likely to be exhibited at work by members of each generation.

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[9] Mark McCrindle, "Generations Defined." In *The ABC of XYZ*. n.p. University of New South Wales Press, 2010, 2-3.
[10] Jean M. Twenge, W.Keith Campbell and Elise C. Freeman, "Generational Differences in Young Adults' Life-Goals, Concern for Others, and Civic Orientation, 1966-2009," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 102, no. 5 (2012), 1046.
[11] *Ibid*, 1046.
[12] *Ibid*, 1060.

You're a...	Traditionalist	Baby Boomer	Generation X	Millennial
If you were born...	between 1925 and 1945.	between 1946 and 1964.	between 1965 and 1980.	between 1981 and 2000.
You're shaped by...	World War II, the Depression, and a traditional family structure.	television, the Cold War, student activism, youth culture, the FLQ crisis, feminism, space travel, and stay-at-home moms.	the energy crisis, technology's first wave, fall of the Berlin Wall, music videos, AIDS, working mothers (latchkey kids), and rising divorce rates.	explosion of technology and media, 9-11, the Columbine shootings, multiculturalism, and a variety of family structures.
You value...	respect, loyalty, and experience.	standing out, and recognition.	flexibility, honesty, feedback, and work-life balance.	strong leadership, concern for community, structure, fair play, and diversity.
On the job you are...	a disciplined, hard worker who appreciates order and a job well done.	a driven, service-oriented team player who doesn't want to be micromanaged. You live to work.	independent, self-reliant, unimpressed by authority and focused on self-development. You work to live.	self-confident, competent, optimistic, out-spoken, collaborative.
Your career motto is...	Seek job security.	Education plus hard work equals success.	Invest in portable career skills.	Multi-track or die!

Fig 1: Generational Characteristics

Source: Alberta Learning Information Service,
http://alis.alberta.ca/ep/eps/tips/tips.html?EK=7380.

The Millennial Generation differs significantly from those that preceded it due, in part, to its immersion in a technological environment. Millennials have grown up with the ubiquity of technology to the extent that the very way they process information may now be different from the generations that preceded them. The term "Digital Natives" has been coined to reflect the Millennial Generation's innate familiarity with technology,

and, as they "have been networked most of all of their lives, [Digital Natives] have little

patience for lectures, step-by-step logic, and "tell-test" instruction."[13]

Although there is not yet a commonly accepted set of values held by Millennials

there is concurrence on the key expectations they hold regarding their careers and their

employers. In her book, *Generation Me*, sociologist Jean Twenge suggests that American

Millennials will find "rigid schedules stifling" and will "appreciate flexible schedules and

independence."[14] This conclusion was replicated in a 2013 study of Canadian post-

secondary students (based on survey data from 2007) that found that the most desirable

job characteristic for Canadian Millennials was "flexible working conditions" and that

their top career goal was to "balance personal life and career."[15] Indeed, there is a

considerable body of research that has "documented increases from generation to

generation in the importance of work-life balance."[16] Thus it can be safely concluded that

the critical considerations influencing the employment choices of Millennials are the

degrees to which prospective employers can offer flexibility at work, and, most

importantly, work-life balance.

As the Millennial Generation continues to join the Canadian labour force their

presence in increasing numbers are altering its demographics. The influence of Baby

Boomers will wane as their numbers decrease due to retirement, with Millennial

influence growing as the size of that generation comes to dominate the workforce.

Statistics Canada reported in 2012 that the Millennial Generation represented 23.7% of

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[13] Marc Prensky. "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants." *On the Horizon* 9, no. 5 (October 2001), MCB University Press, 3.

[14] Jean M. Twenge, *Generation Me* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 218.

[15] 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): 347-349.

[16] Lyons et al, 188.

the Canadian labour force aged 15 and older (with three more years of growth to go), as compared to 32.7% for Generation X, 31.9% for Baby Boomers and 16.2% for the Traditionalist Generation.[17] This demographic shift in the workforce is anticipated to result in Millennials representing 75% of the Canadian workforce by the year 2028.[18] Other than the sheer size of their expected share of the workforce, there are significant demographic differences between the generations. These differences are manifested in four particular areas that are likely to have bearing on the efforts by the Canadian Armed Forces to attract and retain Millennials, namely: level of education, gender balance, ethnic diversity, and increasing urbanization.

The first of these demographic differences between to be examined is the level of education. Enrolment in universities and colleges has doubled in Canada since 1980 and "post-secondary education has become the dominant mode of moving from mandatory schooling to the labour market."[19] Indeed, post-secondary education has become so important that, in 2006, 29% of young adults aged 25-34 had a university degree and 23% had a college diploma compared to just 18% and 16% of adults aged 55-64.[20] The second factor is the increased representation of women in the workforce. The proportion of working-age women in the labour force continues to grow, with Statistics Canada reporting in 2014 that 61% of women aged 15 and over were in the Canadian labour force, growing from less than one quarter in 1953 (aged 14 and older at that time), 50%

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[17] http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/generations-workplace-united-states-canada Note: the figures do not add to 100% as there are not seasonally adjusted.
[18] Ray Williams. "Like it or not, Millennials will change the workplace," The Financial Post, 16 September 2013. http://business.financialpost.com/2013/09/16/like-it-or-not-millennials-will-change-the-workplace/
[19] Karen Rebecca Foster, "Disaffection rising? Generations and the personal consequences of paid work in contemporary Canada," *Current Sociology* 61(7) (2013): 935.
[20] Statistics Canada, "2006 Census: Educational Portrait of Canada, 2006 Census, National Picture," last accessed 12 May 2015. http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-560/p8-eng.cfm

in 1975 and 57% in 1993.[21] The proportion of men in the 2014 labour force, according to the same report from Statistics Canada, was 68%. This trend towards gender parity in labour force participation has made it increasingly challenging to achieve an adequate work-family balance as "[t]he responsibility for child rearing…is acutely felt by young families seeing to raise children and nurture two careers"[22] The third demographic factor is the increasing ethnic diversity of the workforce. Between 1996-2006, the number of Canadians reporting to be a member of a visible minority grew 59%, and its workforce has grown by 76%.[23] Immigration to Canada accounted for 53% of the growth in the Canadian labour force from 2010 to 2011.[24] This suggests that those organizations that are recognized as an employer of choice by visible minorities will have a comparative advantage in the competition to attract and recruit new members from those communities. The fourth factor is increasing urbanization. The growth of urban centres in Canada has been a long-running trend, with the urban proportion of the Canadian population growing from 54% to 81% in the 70 years between 1941 and 2011.[25] Immigration is a significant contributor to this trend as well, with most immigrants to Canada (91%) settling in metropolitan areas and more than 63% of them choosing just three urban centres: Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.[26] Therefore, compared to the generations that preceded them, the Millennial Generation in Canada is the most educated, most urban, most equal in terms of gender, and the most diverse in terms of ethnic background. It is from this demographic that the Canadian Armed Forces draws its recruits.

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[21] Foster, 934.
[22] *Ibid*, 934.
[23] http://www.labour.gc.ca/eng/standards_equity/eq/pubs_eq/eedr/2006/profiles/page06.shtml
[24] Lynne *et al*, 192.
[25] http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo62a-eng.htm
[26] http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/young-suburban-and-mostly-asian-canadas-immigrant-population-surges

The Canadian Armed Forces has representation from each of the three principal generational cohorts that comprise the Canadian workforce. However, the relative size of each cohort within the CAF differs considerably from that of the rest of the Canadian labour force. This is due to a number of factors such as variations (sometimes wide variation) in levels of recruiting from year to year, a compulsory retirement age of 55 (now 60) which limits longer service, and bottom-up career progression that is exclusively internal to the institution. This latter factor has the effect of 'locking-in' the effects of personnel policy (such as recruiting levels or force reductions) well into the future. Figure 2 (below) provides an excellent example of the effects of these factors on the CAF workforce.
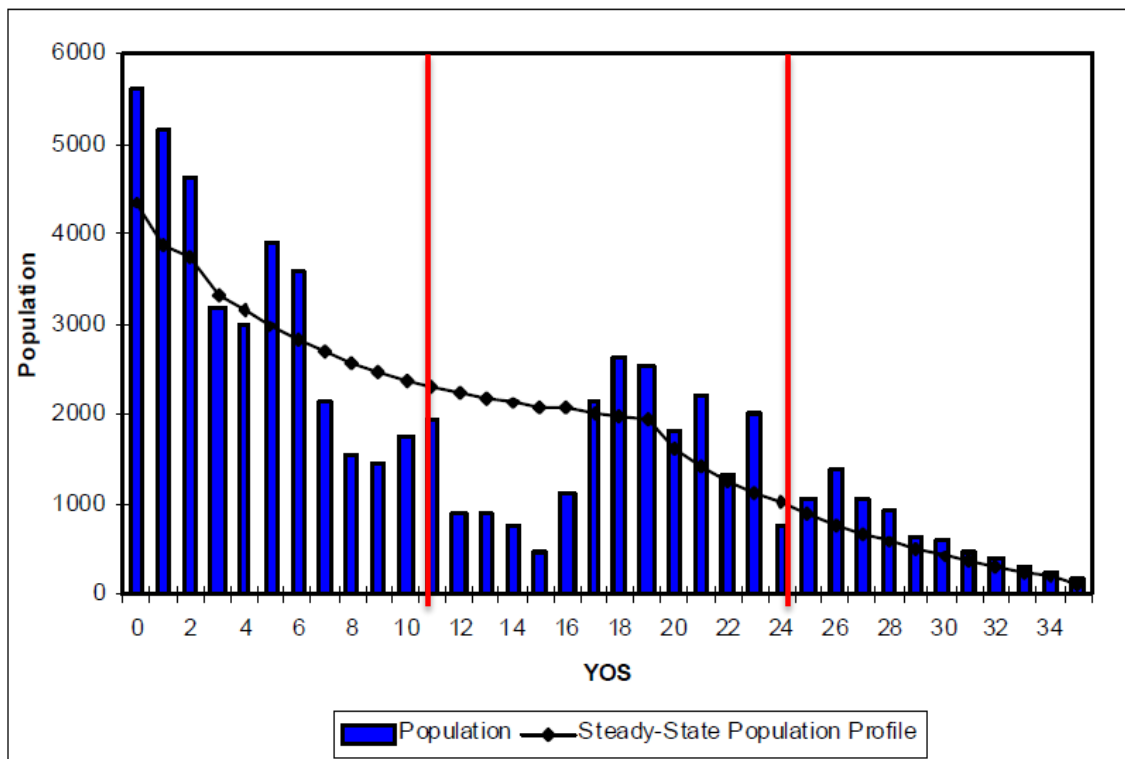

Figure 2: CAF Steady-State Population Profile and Current Population Profile 2007-2008

Source: *Retention in the Canadian Forces*, 3.

Due to Government direction to drastically downsize the CAF, a significant reduction in recruiting took place in the 1990s. The average yearly intake of recruits dropped to only 1400, as compared to the period of 1982-1990 when the annual intake was 4500 recruits per year.[27] Coincident with this reduction in recruiting the Canadian Government also instituted the Forces Reduction Plan (FRP). This plan, in effect between 1992-1998, offered significant financial incentives to CAF members to leave the military.[28] Principally as a result of the FRP there is now a demographic 'hole', shown in Figure 2 in the 12-16 years of service (YOS) range. As most CAF members join between the ages of 18-24[29,30] this demographic gap corresponds with the tail-end of Generation X. This also had the effect of increasing the average age of the CAF from 29 years of age in the mid 1990s to 36 years of age in the early 2000s.[31] This increase in average age implies that the relatively greater number of older CAF members would exercise a comparatively greater amount of influence on the institutional culture than would otherwise have been expected in the absence of FRP. This is likely to contribute to a more significant clash between those CAF members of previous generations and the growing number of Millennials who, in 1999, immediately following this period of CAF contraction, first began arriving at recruiting centres across the country. When recruiting levels surged from 2004-2014 to grow the CAF from 60,000 to 68,000, most new

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[27] I.A. Collin, "Canadian Forces Age Profiles," DOR(CORP) Research Note RN2003/02, Directorate of Operational Research, Department of National Defence, (May 2003), 6.

[28] National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman, "Unfair Demand to Repay Overpayments Made Under the Forces Reduction Program," last accessed 12 May 2015. http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-reports-stats-investigations-force-reduction/report.page

[29] Carol Stoker and Stephen Mehay. "Recruiting, Advertising and Marketing Strategies in All-Volunteer Force Nations: Case Studies of Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States," Naval Postgraduate School, Monterrey, California, December 2011: 58.

[30] David R. Mann. "Why We Fight: Understanding Military Participation over the Life Cycle," *Journal of Human Capital* 6, no. 4 (2012): 289.

[31] Collin, 6.

members joining the institution would be Millennials. This surge in recruiting accelerated the generational shift that was already underway within the CAF with the result being that Millennials already outnumber Boomers and Generation X.

Section 2 – Recruiting and Retention

A significant proportion of Canadian Millennials (28.9% in one 2007 survey of post-secondary students) indicated a preference for employment in the public service and government.[32] This same survey also found that the Canadian Forces placed in the top 10 of preferred government departments/institutions.[33] This is a positive result, as the CAF must recruit about 4,300 people annually to maintain its Regular Force strength of approximately 68,000, with a steady attrition rate of about 6%.[34] To date the CAF has been successful at achieving its intake requirements by relying on its traditional recruiting target of white males between the ages of 18-24 coming from rural areas or from urban areas with less than 100,000 people.[35] A factor contributing to young men joining the military is the fact that they seem to "receive a large positive, nonpecuniary reward from military service: a "patriotism effect" [with] young men aged 18-20 receiv[ing] significant nonpecuniary rewards from military service".[36]

While successful in achieving its overall recruiting targets, the CAF has had only limited success in attracting more women and visible minorities. Assigned the long-term representational goals within the Regular Force of 25.1% women, 11.8% visible

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[32] Ng, *et al* 345.
[33] *Ibid*, 346.
[34] Chief of Review Services. "(1258-186) Evaluation of Recruiting and Basic Military Training." Department of National Defence, November 2012: 8.
[35] Stoker and Mehay, 58.
[36] Mann, 302.

minorities, and 3.4% aboriginals, the proportion of each of these demographics actually

serving in the CAF in 2011 remains quite low (13.68% women, 3.86% visible minorities,

and 2.16% aboriginal)[37] thus perpetuating their traditional under-representation in the

CAF. The very poor result regarding representation of visible minorities is a particular

concern. The challenge appears to be the ability of the CAF to initially attract sufficient

numbers of recruits from these communities vice their retention in the military as "visible

minority respondents actually indicated less likelihood to leave [the CAF] within the next

three, and particularly the next 5 years."[38] A recent study of the Australian Defence Force

(ADF) found similar results in that "[r]ecruits born overseas had greater odds of first-

term completion"[39]

As the CAF has had difficulty in recruiting more women and visible minorities,

the increased levels of post-secondary education amongst Millennials may also be acting

negatively on recruiting. Unlike the civilian sector "the military values only the human

capital obtained while in the military: military experience and pay grade. With this wage

specification, the military implicitly discourages well-educated people or people with

significant civilian experience from joining the military's enlisted ranks."[40] Many

occupations in the CAF still require only a high-school education, potentially dissuading

those with post-secondary education from considering a military career. An additional

consideration may also be that spouses or partners of prospective recruits are increasingly

likely to have post-secondary education themselves. This education was likely obtained at

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[37] Canada (2012), 26.
[38] Irina Goldenberg, "Diversity and Employment Equity in the CF: Results of the 2005 Your-Say Focus Section for Visible Minorities and Aboriginal People." Centre for Operational Research and Analysis, Defence R&D Canada, DRDC CORA TR 2006-22, (November 2006): v.
[39] Phillip J. Hoglin and Nicole Barton. "First-term Attrition of Military Personnel in the Australian Defence Force," *Armed Forces & Society* 41, no. 1 (2015), 61.
[40] Mann, 290.

some expense and with the intent of obtaining employment in a related field. Frequent postings between bases across Canada, many of which are rural or semi-remote, are likely to hinder the career aspirations of spouses. Indeed, the spouses of CAF members are more likely to be unemployed as compared to the spouses of public servants or police officers.[41] With two-person careers now the norm, the likelihood that spouses/partners of CAF members will be unemployed or underemployed may also discourage potential applicants from joining the CAF.[42]

Compared to other organizations, the military has unique characteristics that complicate recruiting and retention. These characteristics include "organizationally specific training; higher-than-average costs of turnover; [and] unique consequences associated with poor selection, classification, and training"[43] Indeed, as mentioned previously, military organizations tend to value only the human capital gained through service within the organization. Therefore, as advancement within the CAF can only be done from the bottom-up, with little to no opportunities for initial entry at intermediate stages, there is an absolute requirement for the retention of enough high-quality individuals to ensure the viability and renewal of the progressively more senior echelons of the service. At the same time as the CAF needs to ensure balanced progression of individuals through the organizational hierarchy, the future security environment is becoming more complex. This complexity includes new threats (such as cyber, asymmetric and hybrid warfare), increased governmental oversight, and reduced budgets,

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[41] Kerry Sudom, "Impact of Military Life on Families and Singe Canadian Forces Members: Current State of Knowledge and Research Gaps," DGMPRA TM 2012-008, Defence R&D Canada, (May 2012), 7.

[42] Julie Coulthard and Jason Dunn, "Canadian Forces Spousal/Partner Employment and Income Project: Research Framework and Methodology," DGMPRA TM 2009-012, Defence R&D Canada, (September 2009), 27.

[43] Katheryne E. Dupré and Arla L. Day, "The Effects of Supportive Management and Job Quality on the Turnover Intentions and Health of Military Personnel," *Human Resource Management* 46, no. 2 (Summer 2007), 186.

all of which complicate CAF efforts to adapt to their environment. During unstable

organizational times such as what the CAF is presently experiencing "…the retention and

health of personnel takes on increased importance."[44]

       With the necessity for the CAF to retain its members established, what factors

affect the turnover decisions of CAF members? The CF Retention Model (Fig. 3)

developed by Villeneuve, Dobreva-Martinova and Currie is an empirically-tested

predictive model of turnover intention of CAF personnel. This particular model identified

three inter-related factors (Career Satisfaction, Procedural Justice and Work-Family

Balance) that, through their effects on other factors, form the basis upon which turnover

intentions of CAF personnel are influenced; two of these factors, career satisfaction and

work-family balance, are of particular importance with respect to the turnover decisions

of Millennials in the CAF. Procedural justice, which is defined as "the perceived fairness

of means used to determine the amount and distribution of resources among employees"[45]

does not appear to be of greater or lesser importance for Millennials as compared to

previous generations and, as such, will not be examined.

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[44] Dupré *et al*, 185.

[45] Nancy Otis and Michelle Straver, "Review of Attrition and Retention Research for the Canadian Forces,"
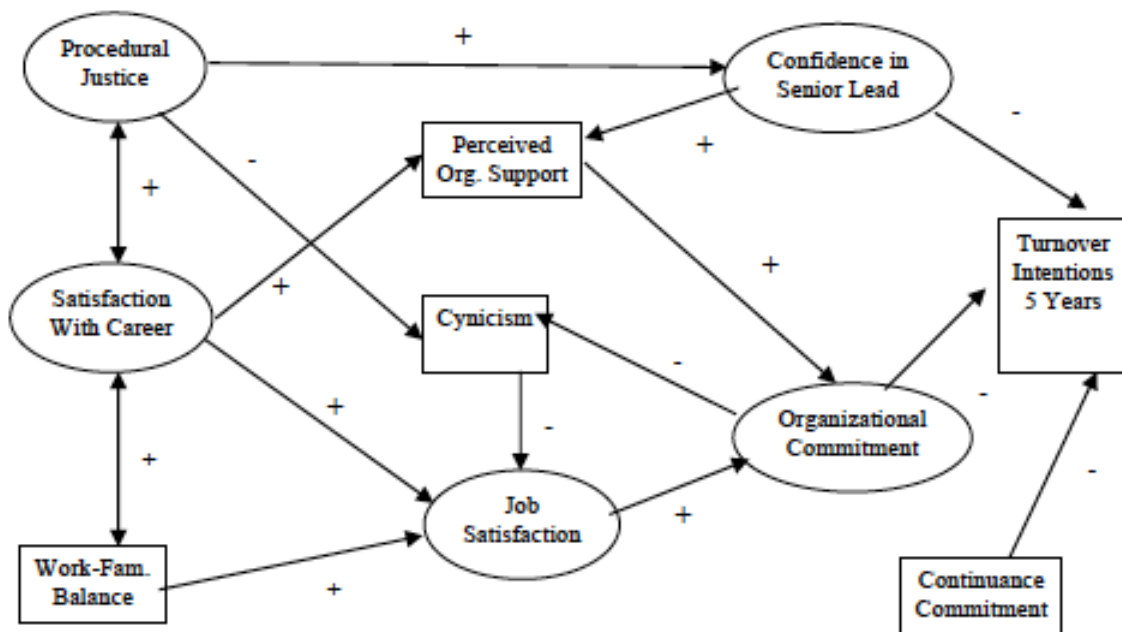Technical Memorandum, DRDC CORA TM 2008-030 (October 2008): 15.

Figure 3: Simplified Retention Model, Review of Retention and Attrition Research for the CF.

Source: *Review of Attrition and Retention Research for the Canadian Forces*, 16.

Work-family balance is the first factor to be examined. The military and the family have both been described as "greedy institutions that compete for the commitment, loyalty, time and energy of their members."[46] With this in mind it is not surprising that the 2005-2007 exit surveys of CAF personnel indicated "family issues as the primary factor influencing members' decisions to leave the CF."[47] Indeed, being able to have "work-life balance…significantly predicted turnover intentions after controlling for job satisfaction."[48] Studies of Israeli military personnel have drawn similar conclusions with "[i]mportance of family support for the soldier as a central factor

[46] Meytal Eran-Jona, "Married to the Military: Military-Family Relations in the Isreal Defence Forces," *Armed Forces & Society* 37(1) (2011), 19.
[47] Otis and Straver. 14.
[48] Dupré *et al,* 194.

influencing willingness to serve, satisfaction with service, and the ability to perform duties."[49] Thus, empirical evidence shows that work-family balance is a critical factor influencing turnover intentions of military personnel. As mentioned earlier, work-family balance is also one of the foremost concerns of Canadian Millennials. With the average age of marriage in Canada the highest ever at 31.1 for men and 29.1 for women,[50] and Millennials now dominating the CAF labour force among the group with 0-16 years of service,[51] it is very likely that a significant number of Millennials in the CAF are, or will soon be, faced with critical life decisions regarding work-family balance. The CAF should be prepared in advance to respond to these decisions as "[e]mployees report that the ability to balance work with personal and family responsibilities is an important part of their decision to remain with an organization."[52]

The second factor to be examined is that of career satisfaction. The first group of Millennials that joined the CAF will likely enjoy increased opportunity for advancement due to the demographic 'hole' left in the wake of FRP. For those who joined the CAF as NCMs in 2000, 70% of them should attain the rank of Sergeant (Sgt), and 40% should attain the rank of Warrant Officer (WO).[53] For the cohorts that enter in 2001 and 2005, there is a significant drop in these figures with only 45% of each of these cohorts expected to reach the rank of Sgt, and only 20% the rank of WO.[54] This trend holds true for officers as well, with 75% of those who commissioned as officers in the CAF in the

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[49] Eran-Jona, 20.
[50] Arti Patel and Rebecca Zamon, "Marriage and Millennials: Why do Generation Y Couples Say 'I Do' To Matrimony," *The Huffington Post,* Last updated 18 February 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/02/14/marriage-and-millennials_n_2615839.html
[51] Assuming that age 18 is the age at which anyone could first join the CAF, 1999 would be the first entry year and the year 2015 marking 16 years of service for those who joined at the earliest time.
[52] Dupré *et al,* 189.
[53] L.F. Kerzner, "A Comparison of Career Prospects in the Canadian Forces (1995-2020)" ORD Project Report PR2001/06, Department of National Defence (April 2001), 12.
[54] *Ibid*, 13.

year 2000 expected to attain the rank of Major and 22% of them expected to attain the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel (LCol).[55] For those that commissioned in 2003 the odds of attaining higher rank are much reduced, with only 40% expected to reach the rank of Major and 10% expected to achieve the rank of LCol.[56] The group that commissions in 2005, just two years later, also expect reduced promotion forecasts as only 32% of this group are expected to reach the rank of Major and only 9% the rank of LCol.[57] With relatively fewer opportunities for advancement through promotion it is possible that those Millennials who joined later may experience reduced levels of career satisfaction. Efforts within the CAF to encourage retention of the Millennial generation will need to account for this demographic characteristic. The likelihood of promotion would not be the only factor influencing Millennial perceptions of career satisfaction. The Millennial generation values work that provides meaning and purpose suggesting a greater need for the CAF to ensure a good person-job fit, not just initially with selection of military occupation, but throughout the length of each individual's service. Of note, the CF Retention Model, identifies career satisfaction and work-family balance as each having a positive influence on job satisfaction. This reinforces the results of a study of U.S. Army personnel that found that "job satisfaction was one of the most important predictors of soldiers' intentions to remain in the Army."[58]

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[55] Kerzner, 20.
[56] *Ibid*, 20-21.
[57] *Ibid*, 21.
[58] Dupré *et al,* 189.

Section 3 – Suggested Improvements to Personnel Policies

As shown above, there are a number of factors that influence the decisions of Millennials to join, to stay or to leave the CAF. Traditionally, recruiting and retention efforts have principally been focussed on ensuring sufficient numbers of personnel within the CAF. However, the generational shift and concurrent shrinking of the size of the Canadian labour force suggests that this traditional approach may not continue to be successful. The Millennial Generation differs from preceding generations in its demography and in its expectations regarding work. Within the military these differences are even more pronounced as "[t]he expanded participation of women in the labor force and evolution of new family models, such as a "double-career" family and single-parent family, have presented the military with new challenges, thus intensifying the conflict between the armed forces and the families of military personnel and the conflicts within the families themselves."[59] In addition to the unique conditions of military service, such as frequent postings, lengthy absences from family, and reduced personal freedoms as compared to civilian employment, Millennials within the CAF are likely to soon face two other pressures. First, career satisfaction may suffer due, in part, to a lack of promotion opportunity. Second, pressures on work-family balance are likely to increase as this cohort reaches marriage and child-rearing age. Of note, the previously mentioned nonpecuniary reward of military service enjoyed by men "though still positive, is much smaller [as they age]."[60] This suggests that other benefits of military service would need to take on an increasingly important role in retaining men in the military as they age. Thus, if the CAF truly wants to retain the best and the brightest of its Millennial cohort it

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[59] Eran-Jona, 22.
[60] Mann, 302.

will need to adopt measures that address these two concerns. Ideally, the measures selected would not only improve retention but would aid recruitment as well by serving to highlight to prospective recruits that the CAF is a progressive employer that values its members. There are three measures that, if adopted by the CAF, could position it favourably as an employer of choice for potential Millennial recruits while also satisfying the needs of its current members. These three measures are: increased individual choice in career management, sabbaticals or career break, and improved childcare.

The first measure the CAF should consider is increased individual choice in career management. Dissatisfaction with postings was found in the CF Attrition Information Questionnaire (CFAIQ) to be a main reason influencing a member's decision to leave the CAF.[61] The most frequent comments provided by CAF members in the CFAIQ were about the negative effects of postings on "their children's education and their spouse's career…[and] the desire to have more control over where they were posted."[62] With two-career families the norm amongst Millennials, providing increased choice regarding location and timing of postings should help alleviate some of the pressures generated by military service. Of course, increased individual choice in career management extends beyond just the subject of postings and would encompass decisions regarding career path, succession planning, and the speed with which an individual is able to advance within the organizational hierarchy. Increased choice would provide the CAF with better means to match service needs with the desires of its members. This would benefit individual CAF members by ensuring better person-job fit, while also benefitting the CAF by increasing the likelihood that its members are satisfied in their

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[61] Otis & Straver, 13.
[62] *Ibid*, 13.

jobs, increasing productivity as well as retention. Job satisfaction is key as it "has been linked to turnover intentions, in that dissatisfaction with work causes employees to consider the possibility of quitting."[63]

The second measure that should be considered by the CAF is the possibility of a sabbatical or career break. The availability of such a program would provide an option to CAF members to focus on personal needs (such as education, family, community service, travel, etc.) that would otherwise go unfulfilled or that could only be pursued by an individual choosing to release from the CAF. Such a program could be designed in many different ways. For instance, it could be time limited (i.e. with a fixed number of years) or indefinite, it could be fully or partially paid, or members themselves could fund these periods by choosing to receive reduced pay over a period of time with the difference being 'saved' and then subsequently 'returned' to them as their pay during their sabbatical period. Such a program could involve obligations to serve for fixed periods of service upon completion of the sabbatical, and options could exist for individuals to choose one or several breaks over the length of a career. While this appears to be a radical idea that could not work in a military organization, pilot programs are already being run in the United States.

The United States Navy was the first service to institute this pilot program, known as the Career Intermission Program. This program, which began in 2009 and has been extended to 2015, allows eligible personnel to take leave from the Navy for up to three years.[64] Those selected for the program receive a paid move to a location of their choice,

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[63] Dupré *et al,* 188.
[64] Military.com, "Vice-Admiral: Navy Should Expand Sabbatical Program," Last accessed 12 May 2015. http://www.military.com/daily-news/2015/01/03/vice-admiral-navy-should-expand-sabbatical-program.html

receive a monthly stipend during the period that they are away, retain health and dental care benefits and continue their career path when they return to active service. While this pilot program is quite small, involving only 75 people (including officers and sailors, men and women), the individual reasons for participating in the program provide it with tremendous legitimacy. Some of the reasons cited for participation in the program include: medical/humanitarian volunteer work, to start a family, to further their education, to assist family or dependants who are undergoing lengthy medical treatment, and "to be a stay at home dad while spouse was on surgical residency at Yale." The US Air Force is now currently planning to implement a similar program.[65]

A career intermission or sabbatical would likely appeal to everyone in the CAF In the case of Millennials, this option could serve to mitigate the demographic bulge due to the recruiting surge thus alleviating career satisfaction concerns resulting from lower promotion prospects. Importantly, this program may be a particularly useful tool to attract and retain women. Women release from the CAF at higher rates than men, frequently for family reasons[66], so a program such as this could be an attractive option for women to better achieve work-family balance and reduce their rate of release from the CAF. The end result would be increased retention of women, increased female representation at higher ranks (as releases would be avoided thereby permitting longer service) and the creation of a new recruitment tool to encourage women to join the CAF.

The third measure that the CAF should consider is improved childcare. Focus groups with CF members have found that "today's military family is much less portable,

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[65] Jennifer H. Svan, "Air Force to test sabbatical program for limited number of airmen," *Stars and* Stripes, last accessed 12 May 2015.
http://www.stripes.com/news/air-force-to-test-sabbatical-program-for-limited-number-of-airmen-1.283424
[66] Otis & Straver, 20.

that is, that families were no longer traditional (e.g. male breadwinner) and that family considerations…often outweighed career considerations."[67] At present, it is the member's responsibility to arrange for childcare in the new location whenever they and their families are posted, imposing a significant source of stress on military families.[68] Given the need for the CAF to relocate its members to meet service needs, it is incumbent upon the CAF to address this concern. This is especially important for the CAF because "when an employee feels that work is interfering with family, job satisfaction is generally reduced"[69] and it has already been demonstrated that job satisfaction and work-family balance drive decisions regarding release from the CAF.

The Unites States, once again, provides an excellent model for how to address the childcare concerns of its military families. The U.S. military offers a range of programs and subsidies, including child care centres on their bases that cater to the particular needs of military families.[70] The provision of childcare on CAF bases, along with a childcare subsidy or allowance, would alleviate or remove a significant source of stress felt by CAF members and their families, possibly enhancing their commitment to the institution and facilitating their mobility between geographic postings. Should the CAF adopt such measures it would also send a powerful message to existing and prospective members of the CAF, particularly women, that the organization is, indeed, an employer of choice.[71]

[67] Sudom, 16.
[68] Telah Morrison. "Striking the Balance to Become an Employer of Choice: Solutions for a Better Work-Life Balance in the CF." (Joint Command and Staff Program Paper, Canadian Forces College, 2011), 57.
[69] Dupré *et al,* 189.
[70] Morrison, 58-61.
[71] Chantal Fraser. "Diversity Recruiting: It's Time to Tip the Balance." *Canadian Military Journal* 13, no.4 (Autumn 2013), 33.

CONCLUSION

There is a significant demographic shift that is underway within the Canadian labour force as the Millennial generation increasingly replaces workers from the preceding generations. This shift is not simply one of age, with a younger generation replacing an older generation, but is, instead, a shift characterized by fundamental changes in the composition of the labour force itself. The Millennial labour force is one that is ethnically diverse, gender balanced, urban and dominated by those with post-secondary education. Their expectations of employers emphasize work-family balance, flexibility and personal fulfillment. Those employers that can match these expectations will be rewarded with a motivated and engaged workforce with low turnover rates. Many civilian employers have already recognized this and are focused intently on how to win the war for talent, attracting and retaining the skilled individuals that they need to ensure their commercial success.

The generational shift in the labour force is clearly evident within the Canadian Armed Forces as well, with Millennials already the majority of CAF members. However, the shift within the CAF is not fully reflective of what has occurred in the labour force more generally, as the CAF is not representative of women and visible minorities, and still traditionally attracts recruits from rural areas and with lower levels of education. This poor match between recruiting results and the demography of the Canadian labour force places the CAF at a significant disadvantage. This disadvantage will be manifested by an increasing inability to attract recruits from across the breadth of Canadian society, thus limiting the likelihood of getting the best and brightest Canadians into uniform. This disadvantage can be corrected by making the CAF more responsive to the Millennials'

desire for increased work-family balance and flexibility. Although driven by Millennials, changes within the CAF that improve work-family balance and flexibility, such as the three particular measures recommended in this paper, will benefit all members, regardless of the generation to which they belong and make the institution stronger.

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