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SQUARE PEGS AND ROUND HOLES: EARLY ATTRITION IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

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ABSTRACT

The Canadian Armed Forces is currently seeing higher than anticipated numbers of soldiers leaving the military early in their careers, with most of them leaving for voluntary reasons. Early attrition hurts the organization because the training cost for each recruit has not been recovered through service and the departing soldier needs to be replaced with a new recruit. Further, the experience gained by this soldier is not passed on as part of the organizational culture, leading to less experienced leaders at all levels. By assessing the demographic and organizational factors behind early attrition, this paper will suggest measures the Canadian Armed Forces can implement to reduce early attrition and mitigate the net loss of this training over time. Suggested measures are aimed at two principle strategies: reducing the dissonance between what the recruit expects to experience as part of their working environment as well as reducing the dissonance between what the organization believes it is receiving in each recruit. These suggestions are not intended to be implemented without additional empirical study; however, are made in the hopes that a deeper quantitative analysis can be conducted in the future.

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) faces a significant challenge in its recruiting, training and attrition. The number of personnel leaving the CAF has been tracked for many years; however, the environment for recruiting has changed since the end of the war in Afghanistan. With lower prospects of exciting deployments and their associated financial benefits, the CAF faces a potential ‘brain drain’ of experienced leadership departing at higher than expected rates. Soldiers who joined for adventure and operational employment may be frustrated by a perceived lack of activity, training to the peak of capability and then remaining in a state of readiness with lower prospects of deployment. The CAF makes an investment in each of its personnel through the training they receive from recruitment through to operational employment, with the goal of recovering this investment through employment over the term of the soldier’s first enlistment. This paper will address the suggestion that, with increased difficulties in recruiting suitable applicants, the CAF should put in place measures to reduce preventable attrition in order to recoup this investment beyond the first contract period.

The cost of attracting and training replacement personnel is not simply monetary; the military cannot source leadership from outside the organization. Therefore, it takes time to ‘grow’ a leader from within. Some attrition is unpreventable, such as acute injuries during training. It can even be desirable, such as attrition resulting from enforcement of training standards. Preventable attrition can result from sources such as failing to maintain adequate fitness or soldiers voluntarily releasing, with a multitude of factors behind their decision. For recruited officers and Non-Commissioned Members (NCMs), the factors affecting their reasons for release may be different. Officers who enlist under Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP) have university academic standards they must maintain, while NCMs generally proceed through

the training system more quickly, without pauses for academics during the school year. Recruits undergoing basic or trade-specific training belong to the Basic Training List (BTL) and are not generally accounted for in the statistics that assess the military's functional capabilities; the Trained Effective Strength (TES) is the measure of military personnel strength. Recruits who reach the point at which they can be employed within their occupation are said to be at their Operationally Functional Point (OFP). With strong correlation between job satisfaction and retention, a faster progression through the training system may result in higher potential retention.¹ For this reason, the time spent on the BTL before reaching their OFP is worth examining in more detail. Officer recruits who spend longer in the training system before arriving at their operational units may therefore be less likely to identify with their chosen occupation until later in their career. Both officers and NCMs undergo further occupation-specific training later in their careers to provide them with the skills they require to perform at the next rank and professional military education to add to their professional skill sets.

To simplify the classification of personnel, certain generalizations will need to be established. For the purposes of this paper, the terms “soldier” and “recruit” are meant to apply equally to officers and NCMs of all environments (Royal Canadian Navy, Canadian Army and Royal Canadian Air Force). Instances where a distinction exists between officers and NCMs or between environments will be specifically stated as such. A “soldier” is someone who has completed their training and is employed in an operational position at a unit. A “recruit” is someone who has received an offer of employment and is at some stage of the training system prior to operational employment. Finally, an “applicant” is someone who has submitted an application to enroll but has not yet received an offer of employment. “Operational unit” is

¹ Glen T. Howell, Susan Massie and Glen Budgell, *Qualitative Analysis of 2014 CAF Retention Survey Data* (Ottawa: Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis,[2015]).

meant to identify the units where a soldier is employed following training, whether that unit is deployed overseas or within Canada; soldiers are performing their assigned functions as part of the TES and not still counted on the BTL.

A significant portion of this paper will be dedicated to analyzing the reasons behind early attrition and making recommendations to limit it in the future. To answer the problem of early attrition, the question of what constitutes a successful recruit must first be established. The present challenge of changing demographics needs to be explained in the context of CAF recruiting and attrition. Further, the reasons for early attrition, particularly preventable early attrition, must be explored. Research questions that will be addressed in this paper are as follows:

1. What constitutes a successful recruit? This question requires an exploration of the investment made in each recruit from attraction through training and the potential influences that key demographics, individual attributes and motivation may have on predicting recruit success. In answering this question, the concepts of human capital theory will be related to military training and education, including the ways the investments are measured and the effects early attrition can have on overall military strength.
2. Why do soldiers leave before completing their first enlistment period? This question requires an examination of how various factors are reflected in annual attrition statistics, with a view to suggesting trends in why soldiers fail to complete their first contract. This question will be addressed by comparing observations from the US military, Australian military and the police services to see what similarities may exist

in the demographics and cognitive trends that may be applicable to a Canadian military context.

3. What measures can be put in place to limit early attrition? This last question will form the bulk of the third chapter, with an examination of how the factors that influence soldiers leaving the organization can be rectified.

Human capital theory has been chosen as the basis for the analysis; it provides the relevant balance of training investment in soldiers throughout their enlistment period. Factors related to organizational culture, such as the time required for the organization to imprint its culture on the membership and the potential factors that impede or permit such imprinting will be addressed. Comparison with relevant allies, such as the United States and Australia will permit a military-to-military analysis, while differences in public sector employment models and for-profit human resources management will also be addressed. By also comparing human capital theory with the methods the CAF currently uses to attract, train and retain personnel, potential improvements will be identified.

Although the CAF has tracked demographic trends in responses to surveys, including trends along lines of rank (officers vs. NCMs or further broken down by rank category), by sex, by age and by years of service (YOS) statistics listed will be for all categories of military members unless stated otherwise. Although completion of service as a reason for release has been shown to be much lower for NCMs (8% of all releases than for officers at 33%)², the demographic trends and statements in this paper are meant to apply to all ranks and trades unless specifically identified. Officer applicants have different educational and experience requirements that potentially add an element of preventable attrition; however, academic failures represent a component of attrition comparable to a training failure in another rank. This paper is

² S. Latchman, M. Straver and J. Laplante, *Canadian Armed Forces Attrition* DGMPPRA, [2015]).

meant only to address attrition in Regular Force (Reg F) personnel, as the Primary Reserve (PRes) is recruited differently and has different conditions of service (not subject to postings, present in urban centres, etc).

Limitations of this paper will include the difficulty in obtaining recent research data from government sources. Due to translation delays required by the Official Languages Act, a great deal of potentially valuable research data is unavailable, meaning the most recent annual reports date from 2012/13. Also, this research is not meant to be predictive; attrition rates may be different from official projections, so recommendations will be difficult to quantify. This paper is meant to provide a qualitative analysis of factors affecting preventable attrition and not a holistic examination of the recruiting, training or employment systems of the CAF. It is intended to provoke discussion and further quantitative research to verify the recommendations made, not to provide definitive proof of causal relationships between factors and attrition. Research material was primarily found through the Canadian Forces College Information Resource Centre and its associated online search resources, although DGMPPRA was contacted directly to determine what unpublished material might be made available for an internal author. With a primarily Canadian focus, a literature review for Human Capital Theory provided good background material and a review of previous research from the Canadian Forces College gave some context to help frame the research questions and ensure that the paper did not duplicate previous work. In particular, Otis and Straver's Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) research review completed in 2008³ provided a starting point for what attrition and

³ Nancy Otis and Michelle Straver, *Review of Attrition and Retention Research for the Canadian Forces* (Ottawa: Defence Research and Development Canada, [2008]).

retention strategies had been examined in the past. Lastly, a civilian perspective on existing research was obtained through the Mishra and Mishra literature review.⁴

Solving the problem of early attrition can be looked at from two perspectives: reducing the recruitment of unsuitable candidates or increasing the retention of successful soldiers that continue to hold value for the organization. This paper will look at both perspectives, with a view to making recommendations that may improve the overall effectiveness of CAF personnel policy. Retention of suitable personnel can be seen as more important than sheer numbers of recruiting of new people; retaining one sergeant with ten years' experience can be seen as a more efficient solution than recruiting a number of new personnel and training them in the hope that one would remain in the service long enough to replace that same sergeant from ten years ago. A simplistic solution would be to extend the mandatory service length of initial contracts in order to derive more operationally functional time from each recruit. What this paper will demonstrate; however, is that imposing additional restrictions on the soldier's employment is unlikely to result in a more motivated soldier. Looking at demographic shifts and what soldiers want from the organization they serve, a more complex series of recommendations will be made.

⁴ Shivani Mishra and Deepa Mishra, "Review of Literature on Factors Affective Attrition and Retention," *International Journal of Organizational Behaviour & Management Perspectives* 2, no. 3 (July-September, 2013), 435-444.

CHAPTER ONE – FUNDAMENTALS OF HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Overview

This chapter will explore the principles of Human Capital Theory and how they can be applied to the problem of preventable attrition in the CAF. A brief description of the basics of Human Capital Theory will be followed by differentiation between general and specific skill sets and the conditions under which an organization would invest in its workforce. Descriptions of attrition and its relevant components, such as preventable/non-preventable attrition and the role motivation plays in retention will also be discussed. Current demographic trends will be examined to see how the recruit of the future can be defined, attracted, trained and finally retained. Lastly, the concepts of Person-Job Fit and Person-Organization Fit will be examined in relation to retention factors for trained soldiers.

Theoretical Foundations

Human Capital Theory contends that employee learning capacity is of comparable value to the other resources used to produce goods and services.⁵ Investment in training then is an investment in the firm's increased production as a result of more well-qualified employees. In a larger sense, a more well-educated populace better prepares the workforce, boosts productivity in all industries and has additional positive social effects for the nation.⁶ Human Capital Theory has been criticized for seeming to support capitalist exploitation of the workforce, in that employers invest in their employees only to boost profits. This criticism has gone so far as to

⁵ Fredrick Maya Nafukho, Nancy R. Hairston and Kit Brooks, "Human Capital Theory: Implications for Human Resource Development," *Human Resource Development International* 7, no. 4 (2004), 545-546.

⁶ Ibid., 546

draw comparisons with slavery in that humans are considered part of the means of production.⁷ Nevertheless, Human Capital Theory is relevant to the current CAF situation because of the significant investment that must be made in training each recruit to perform their specific job and to inculcate them into the military culture. Further, the professional military education (PME) that each soldier receives over the course of their career represents an ongoing investment in that soldier. From the moment of enrolment, a recruit is exposed to the military environment, requiring them to be integrated into the social behaviour that will allow them to thrive. This will include the roles, responsibilities and tasks that the military society requires and can resemble tribal behaviours, particularly when it comes to the unwritten behavioural cues and social hierarchy in play. In a more formal sense, they are undergoing training that prepares them for their specific occupation but also for the larger military profession throughout their career. Because PME represents a specific skill set (similar to police forces) where the knowledge gained is non-transferrable to outside agencies, outside hires are ineligible for leadership roles. An outsider would lack the formal PME and the informal credibility that comes with having served within the organization over time. The impact of general and specific training will be explored more in the next section.

Training and Development

Across most industries, employees require training in both general skills (which are applicable to all workplaces and are therefore transferable to another company or industry) and specific skills (which apply to only their current occupation). Becker suggested that employers always have an incentive to invest in specific training, as this improves employee performance.⁸

⁷ Emrullah Tan, "Human Capital Theory: A Holistic Criticism," *Review of Educational Research* 84, no. 3 (September, 2014), 412.

⁸ G. S. Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

General training would not be conducted in a competitive market, because employees could transfer these skills to another firm before the company can recoup the benefit of their training. Human capital costs would vary based on employee training and experience, in that a more experienced employee would be worth more in salary costs. Wage negotiations are used as the metric for human capital in most cases, as worker costs and their effect on profit are easily measurable; this metric is less useful in the public sector. In a military context, wages are fixed and therefore government must provide alternatives to wage incentives to retain personnel in a competitive environment. Further, because military leaders cannot be recruited from outside the organization but must be grown from within, the competitive labour market moves only outward, with no direct replacement of experienced personnel who choose to leave. Internally-sourced leadership is the only suitable way to generate leaders because of the specific skills granted in the course of training and professional education. The military requires a degree of experience and credibility that cannot be transferred in from an exterior organization; a leader with ten years' experience must be grown over the course of ten years rather than being simply an outside hire, similar to police officers. The characteristics of the military lifestyle involve a culture that makes professional competence an essential element in the performance of leadership functions.⁹ The concept of unlimited liability makes professional incompetence a risky venture and, given the ability to develop leaders internally, an unpalatable option.¹⁰ Retaining personnel therefore becomes a question of balancing general and specific investment in the organization's human capital. Kessler and Lulfesmann contend that once an employee has completed their training, they enter a bilateral monopoly relationship with the employer, where the mutual benefit is

⁹ Department of National Defence, *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations* (Ottawa: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, 2005), 60.

¹⁰ Ibid.

dependent on the continuing relationship between the two parties.¹¹ If an employer is looking to eliminate an employee (unpreventable attrition) then the company must accept the associated cost of training their replacement. For the employee seeking to leave (preventable attrition) the investment in general skills may be transferable but they must accept a lower wage potential due to requiring retraining in new specific skills for their next job.

These factors can be related to the first research question of what constitutes a successful recruit. Under the conditions described above, the CAF makes an investment in each recruit's training and education that is paid back over a period of working time once they have reached the occupationally functional point. To maximize the return on this investment, the CAF can take measures to increase the chances of recruit success in training and reduce the chances they will leave before the end of their first contract period. Nevertheless, some soldiers will choose to leave at any point along their career progression; examining why these soldiers leave earlier rather than later is the second research question.

Attrition Effects in the CAF

Attrition is a normal part of any workplace; however, the degree of attrition and its causes can vary according to the time period of employment and the industry. Attrition in the CAF has been shown to have several peaks: a steep one in the first year and others at periods thereafter that correspond with contract renewal dates.¹² The Director General of Military Personnel Research and Analysis (DGMPRA) studies have shown that up to 9% of currently serving members intend to release in the next year (responding *definitely yes* or *probably yes* to this question when surveyed).¹³ What is not reflected in this question; however, is the net loss of

¹¹ Anke S. Kessler and Christoph Luelfesmann, "The Theory of Human Capital Revisited: On the Interactions of General and Specific Investments," *The Economic Journal* 116 (October, 2006), 904.

¹² Latchman, Straver and Laplante, *Canadian Armed Forces Attrition*, 3

¹³ I. Goldenberg and J. Laplante, *2014 CAF Retention Survey: Research Highlights* (Ottawa: DGMPRA,[2015]).

investment when these trained soldiers release from the military; although recruitment replaces the individuals, the investment in training must be redone. Contract lengths for CAF members vary by trade, with the length dependent on the time required for recruits to complete their training and begin to be employed at operational units. For some occupations, this initial contract period (when the contract is known as a Variable Initial Engagement, or VIE) is as low as three years. It is expected that the work the soldier is able to accomplish between the end of their training period and the completion of their VIE adequately compensates the CAF for the initial recruiting investment. For the purposes of this paper, a successful recruit can therefore be seen to be a soldier who completed their initial term of service and remains in the CAF for a subsequent contract; service beyond the VIE represents a net positive investment for the CAF.

In a competitive environment, military experience can be a valuable asset for an employer looking to add personnel with general skills such as discipline, responsibility, leadership and ethical training.¹⁴ When one looks in detail at the reasons soldiers would consider leaving the CAF, the following responses were cited as the most influential for those intending to leave within the next five years: Job dissatisfaction (28.1% of all responses), geographic instability (22.0%), career progression (20.1%), postings (17.6%) and lack of meaningful work (14.2%). All of these elements are within the CAF's ability to control, whether through policy decisions or more consistent provision of job information.

Early attrition related to person-job fit and person-organization fit can be compared to a sense of mutual frustration; the recruit has not been provided with the experience he expected, or the organization has not received the soldier it thought it was recruiting. With the net loss of experience through attrition (an experienced soldier is replaced by a new recruit who requires years of training) it is in the CAF's best interests to ensure that preventable attrition is kept to a

¹⁴ Martin Birt, "Looking to Hire? Consider a Veteran," *Financial Post* September 18, 2014.

minimum, with the goal of increasing the number of successful recruits. Alleviating the sense of mutual frustration could be linked to the third research question, which asks what measures can be put in place to limit preventable attrition.

Demographic Factors

Employee motivation plays a role in human capital investment. The current model of recruiting, training and retention is based on previous generations' responses to motivation; studies have shown that the current generation (known as Millennials) and the one that follows (the Post-millennials) are motivated by different factors than previous generations. Wilcox has determined that Millennials have five interrelated sources of influence:

Parents. Boomers, the parents of Millennials, are often accused of living vicariously through their children. Not only do they schedule the lives of their children, they participate in them. As a result, they have formed close bonds with their children and have become valued confidants to them. This leads to a potential difficulty for CAF recruiters as Boomers tend to have little firsthand understanding of the military.

Technology. Millennials have grown up with computers and the internet and their culture and attitudes have been moulded by them. For many, the computer has replaced the television. As a consequence, recruiting programs designed to attract Millennials must take technology into account. The Internet must therefore be seen as a critical avenue of communication and made use of in recruiting programs.

Economy. Millennials have lived most of their life in relatively trouble-free economic times. As a result, the military, a safe haven during times of low employment and economic recession, has lost its cachet, although the recent economic downturn may moderate this to some degree, particularly if it continues.

Education. The level of education achieved by an individual is often used as a predictor of the level of success he or she will achieve in life. It should therefore not be surprising that the pursuit of higher education (college or university) is a matter of considerable importance to Millennials and a significant competitor for military recruiting, particularly of the 'best and brightest'. Given the increasing costs of higher education, a continued emphasis on educational and training opportunities within the CAF should prove effective in attracting Millennials to the CAF.

Media. Millennials have had access to an ever increasing number of media venues, and through them to the world. The media has been referred to as being “inescapable, omnivorous, and self-referring”. Millennials recognize that much of what is carried in the media is shaped to provide shock value to reporting, and this they would readily suggest that they do not trust the media. Nonetheless, they are ready to admit that the media has a tremendous influence in shaping their culture.¹⁵

These attributes combine to create a generation that tends to be skeptical of authority, impatient and demanding clarity from those around them.¹⁶ Projecting even further forward, the post-Millennial generation is expected to have more expectations on the provision of information and the digital means of delivering this information. The traditional classroom model is obsolescent when:

The internet is a source of information for most Boomers, a source of knowledge for most GenX but the key means for how Millennials engage with each other and the central medium through which post-Millennials are engaging life.¹⁷

It is easy to observe that, given the factor of impatience, Millennials and post-Millennial applicants are likely to experience frustration with the recruiting process. The potential for delays and progressive steps that must be achieved for recruitment run counter to the multi-tasking and immediate characteristics these generations value. These factors must be considered when examining the way recruiting, training and retention efforts are conducted as well as potential improvements to their delivery. The requirement to attract personnel has been described as “a war for talent”¹⁸ where the military must compete for the best-quality applicants with both private and public organizations.

Job Fit as an Attrition Factor

¹⁵ Andrew Wilcox (2001), “Recruiting the Millennial Generation: A Study of Attitudes, Values and Beliefs” As cited in: Defence Science Advisory Board, *Recruiting the Millennial Generation* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence,[2013]).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Alan Okros, *Slide to Unlock: Implications from Harnessing 21st Century Competencies Project* (Ottawa: Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis,[2015]).

¹⁸ S. A. Stumpf and W. G. Jr Tymon, "Consultant Or Entrepreneur? Demystifying the 'War for Talent'," *Career Development International* 6, no. 1 (2001), 48-56.

In the ‘war for talent’, the previously mentioned surveys identified areas where soldiers are dissatisfied with the CAF lifestyle and intend to leave; to retain these personnel, the reasons behind the intentions need to be examined in more detail. Schreurs and Syed identify a number of variables that would affect a soldier’s intention to remain with the military, including Person-Job (PJ) fit and Person-Organization (PO) fit. Many of the CAF attrition survey categories can be grouped under these two headings.

Heading	Factors affecting decision to leave the CAF	% reported
PJ	Job dissatisfaction	28.1
	Career progression	20.1
	Lack of meaningful work	14.2
	Better job	9.2
	Unit leadership	7.2
PO	Geographic stability	22.0
	Posting	17.6
	Pay and benefits	12.1
	Better salary	11.7
	Senior leadership	9.3
	Other	5.3 or less

Figure 1 - Person-Job Fit and Person-Organization Fit

Source: (Goldenberg and Laplante 2015)

Weak PJ and PO fit have been shown to be linked with a higher likelihood of attrition, but PJ fit is a stronger predictor than PO fit.¹⁹ In the CAF context, this could be extrapolated to indicate that soldiers see the lack of satisfaction with their job as a more relevant reason to leave the CAF than an overall lack of fit with the military environment. When dealing with preventable attrition, this would mean that efforts to retain personnel could be weighted

¹⁹ Michelle-Louise Mary MacArthur, "The Association of Person-Environment Fit and Work-Related Attitudes for Canadian Forces Personnel" (Master of Arts in Psychology, Carleton University, 2012), 20.

primarily at soldiers who may be dissatisfied with their occupation rather than the military lifestyle in general. Although it would remain important to engage all potential avenues to encourage retention, including those dissatisfied with the military lifestyle, the potential return on such efforts would be lower. Therefore, under Human Capital Theory, increasing the investment in employees who have a low PJ as a retention effort would have a higher return than investing in employees having a poor PO fit.

CAF applicants have a series of expectations regarding their future employment. These expectations are informed through any previous experiences they may have had with a structured environment (such as cadets, scouts, school teams, etc), family and social inputs, as well as the information provided by the recruiting centre prior to enrolment. Likewise, the CAF has certain expectations of its recruits, including how to behave during training, what to bring for training and what to leave behind (including electronic devices like cell phones), the timetable they are expected to follow, and the standard of performance they are expected to maintain.²⁰ In terms of training approach, the method used to reach new recruits may cease to be appropriate for the trainees. In the past, it was assumed that recruits needed to be broken down to their most basic form, then rebuilt into the image the CAF requires of a soldier; this assumes the recruit brings nothing of value for their military career and that any worthwhile skills will be given during training.²¹ The independence and confidence valued by more recent generations does not lend itself well to this learning model. Recruits are subject to disciplinary action for demonstrating too much independent action during early training phases; they are expected to be full consumers of training, not arriving with valuable skills already. The dissonance between the current

²⁰ "Joining Instructions - Basic Military Qualification and Basic Military Officer Qualification," Department of National Defence, last modified 17 November, accessed January 3, 2015, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/training-establishments/recruit-school-joining-instructions.page>.

²¹ Okros, *Slide to Unlock: Implications from Harnessing 21st Century Competencies Project*, 25

training model and generational information processing has been related to how well future recruits will be integrated into the military lifestyle.²²

Organizational Culture as an Attrition Factor

Beyond the functional specific skills that recruits need to learn, cultural norms are being imprinted on recruits from the time they arrive at the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School (CFLRS) until the end of their career. More recent generations have been seen to be resistant to the full internalization of organizational culture.²³ It is possible to measure the imprinting of organizational culture through the concept of organizational commitment. Organizational commitment has been defined as “an internal force (mindset) that binds an individual to a target (social or non-social) and/or to a course of action of relevance to that target”.²⁴ Two important aspects of organizational commitment are relevant to CAF attrition: affective commitment, which represents the individual’s desire to remain part of the organization, and normative commitment, which is the individual’s sense of obligation to the organization. When examining soldier attrition, it therefore becomes important to look at the soldiers’ reasons for leaving and determining how the affective and normative commitment factors may have influenced their decision to leave. When surveyed on reasons why soldiers would be influenced to stay in the CAF, the most significant factor was job satisfaction (14.2% of respondents cited related reasons) which would link with affective commitment. Slightly below this response level were normative commitment factors such as job security (10.2%), pension (8.7%) and pay 8.6%).²⁵ Strong identification with a military culture and with the CAF would likely increase affective commitment. Given the close statistical response numbers, it is

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ J. P. Meyer, *Commitment in a Changing World of Work* (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 40.

²⁵ Goldenberg and Laplante, *2014 CAF Retention Survey: Research Highlights*

worth examining both affective and normative commitment factors with a view to improving the imprinting of military culture on soldiers. By imprinting more organizational culture onto its new members, the CAF may have greater success at retaining members longer.

Summary

In the context of Human Capital Theory, the military culture could be seen to be a general skill because military training (leadership, discipline, attention to detail) makes workers with military experience sought-after employees for civilian companies. In order for applicants to make a decision that represents a full understanding of the negotiation inherent in Human Capital Theory, they must be well informed as to the value of the general and specific training they receive as part of their employment. The provision of accurate information from the recruiting system is therefore a key component of ensuring the mutual employment agreement is entered into properly. This information need not come from solely recruiting centre staff, but also from community representatives, guidance counsellors and school academic advisors.²⁶

The CAF's investment in its personnel is recovered over time in service past the OFP. When the soldier does not serve sufficiently long for the CAF to recoup this investment, the net loss is more than just that one soldier – it can also be related to the costs associated with training that soldier's replacement earlier than necessary. Affective and normative commitment factors can be related to a soldier's desire to serve longer, therefore these factors should continue to be tracked as a means to determine which soldiers may be susceptible to early attrition.

Preventable attrition is at least partly explained by a mutual frustration over expectations; recruits were expecting a different job or environment when they enrolled and the CAF was expecting a different product when it offered the applicant employment. The generational shift from GenX to Millennials and then to Post-millennials has the potential to deepen the dissonance

²⁶ Defence Science Advisory Board, *Recruiting the Millennial Generation*, 14

with inefficiencies in the recruiting system and with the expectation that they would set aside existing experiences and submit to a ‘breaking down and rebuilding’ style of training. The preceding chapter has begun to answer the first two research questions of what constitutes a successful recruit and why soldiers leave before completing their first contract. A more detailed examination of how other nations have faced similar challenges for their own militaries, as well as a civilian comparable, will provide additional context for how the CAF could choose to react to the preventable attrition problem.

CHAPTER 2: ALLIED MILITARIES AND PARAMILITARY COMPARABLES

Overview

The preventable attrition problem is far from unique to the CAF. A significant weight of literature exists to support comparable discussions in the United States military on the difficulty in attracting, training and retaining sustainable levels of military personnel. It had been thought that concurrent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan would adversely affect recruiting and retention; however, the economic downturn starting in 2008 has somewhat mitigated this factor.²⁷ The size of the US military provides a difficult basis for comparison with the CAF; however, the fundamentals of recruiting and attrition are studied much more frequently in the US, making related information more prevalent. This section will include information regarding predictors of early attrition in the US military, particularly related to recruit demographics and assessed motivational factors. In order to provide further examples of how Allied militaries have observed similar problems, Australia is also included. The size and composition of the Australian military is similar to Canada's, making it a more approximate comparison for the effects small changes may have on the human resources. Lastly, an example from a study of police academy attrition in the US is included to show the similarities and differences between military and paramilitary elements. This selection of cases is deliberately limited; it is beyond the scope of this paper to conduct a holistic review of the attrition and retention factors applicable to all other countries. By selecting the US, Australian and police academy examples, I intend to identify some comparable factors that may be applicable to the CAF's context. The

²⁷ Lawrence Kapp, *Recruiting and Retention: An Overview of FY2011 and FY2012 Results for Active and Reserve Component Enlisted Personnel* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service,[2013]).

following table is intended to show the relative sizes and recruiting versus attrition situations each of the examined militaries face:²⁸

State	Size of Active Duty Military	Number of Annual Recruits	Annual Rate of Attrition
Canada	68,000	4338	7.6%
United States	1,326,273	177,000	15.4%
Australia	57,982	4900	9.3%

Figure 2 – Relative Size of Military Forces

Source: see footnote 28, below.

The United States Military

The size of the US military means a great deal when it comes to dealing with personnel. An order of magnitude larger than the Canadian military, the US is reducing its size but still requires vast inputs of personnel annually to remain healthy.²⁹ Total strength of all branches of the US military is over 1.3 million active duty forces, compared the CAF's 68,000.³⁰ In 2015, US active force recruiting goals were set at 177,000 personnel and several services struggled to meet their targets.³¹ With over 200,000 personnel leaving the active duty branches of the military each year, the US is experiencing an annual net loss of personnel.³² When significant numbers of new recruits, across all services, fail to pass their training or leave before the end of their first enlistment period, the organization must replace these personnel losses more quickly

²⁸ This data was gleaned from several sources. For Canadian information: Military Workforce Modelling and Analysis Team, *Annual Report on Regular Force Personnel 2012/2013* (Ottawa: Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis,[2015]).. For US information: United States Department of Defense, *2014 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community* (Washington, D.C.: Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense,[2014]).. For Australian information: "Number of People Leaving ADF on the Rise," ABC News, last modified April 24, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-03-16/adf-confirms-military-exodus/3893826>.

²⁹ Michael Cohen, "Despite 'Historic' Cuts, the US Will Still have 450,000 Active Duty Soldiers," *The Guardian* February 25, 2014.

³⁰ "Department of Defense (DoD) Releases Fiscal Year 2017 President's Budget Proposal," last modified February 9, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/652687/department-of-defense-dod-releases-fiscal-year-2017-presidents-budget-proposal>.

³¹ "Who Will Fight the Next War?; Civil-Military Relations," *The Economist*, Oct 24, 2015, 2015, 25.

³² United States Department of Defense, *2014 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community*

than it intends, placing even greater demands on the recruiting and training systems. The US military has experienced different working conditions, deployments and personnel policies than the CAF; however, some comparisons can be drawn regarding how retention efforts have been received.

Predictors of Success

Several US studies have examined the ways success on basic training can be predicted, including cognitive testing and physical fitness assessments. Looking at predicting successful recruits has merit because it has the potential to weed out unsuccessful recruits before any investment is made. An evaluation of self-confidence has been shown to predict success early in the training program, but the predictive relationship decreased over time, measured from 0 days of service to 1400.³³ Education is also often cited as a predictor of success, with higher educated recruits more likely to remain in the military through basic training and to continue to serve for longer periods.³⁴ This may be related to a more informed view of their role, and in a larger sense, the role the military plays in American society, but it could also be viewed as a form of organizational familiarity. Recruits who continued in structured academic environments longer (demonstrated by completing high school or some post-secondary education) may be more likely to adapt more easily to the structured environment the military provides. Lastly, initial assessments of physical fitness have been shown to provide a link to recruit performance, although this link is primarily in the physical completion of tasks and not necessarily a larger

³³ Jennifer Lee Gibson, Joy Hackenbracht and Trueman R. Tremble, "An Event History Analysis of First-Term Soldier Attrition," *Military Psychology* 26, no. 1 (2014), 64. Assessing a candidate's motivation is certainly a subjective matter, but if the correlation between motivation to succeed and longer term retention is valid, then a screening process combined with an educational process may be a method to improve retention. I intend to explore this in greater detail during Chapter 3 when I address suggestions to limit preventable attrition.

³⁴ Steven C. Marsman Col (sel, "Recruiting for 2030: Is the US Air Force Getting the Recruits it Needs for the Future?" *Air & Space Power Journal* 23, no. 3 (Fall 2009, 2009), 43.

person-organization fit.³⁵ A separate study examined the use of a psychological test known as the Assessment of Individual Motivation (AIM) as a predictor of recruit success up to the one-year point in their careers. It found that the application of AIM screening would drop overall attrition by 3% by eliminating recruits who scored poorly on evaluation of their Adjustment, Agreeableness, Dependability, Leadership, Physical Conditioning and Work Orientation.³⁶ This successful screening was said to work independently of aptitude test criteria because, although aptitude test acceptance scores may change from year to year, the AIM model assesses different attributes and would therefore remain constant. One of the most comprehensive studies of the factors affecting early attrition found risk factors such as demographic predictors, psychosocial factors (such as moral character, pre-enlistment job experience and aptitude test scores), mental health factors, general health factors and physical fitness to be the most relevant when considering early attrition.³⁷ Relating this information back to the original research questions, the research described above appears to indicate some areas where additional screening measures could potentially increase the quality of applicants, increasing the potential for those applicants to successfully complete their terms of service and remain beyond their initial contract. In this case, the investment made early in the application process to screen out unsuitable candidates is recovered later in the process when those soldiers do not require replacement after their initial contract period. On the other side of the equation is the requirement to increase the incentive for personnel to remain in the military once fully trained and employable.

Incentive Programs

³⁵ Although this potential relationship would be an interesting area for further study. It is possible that recruits who begin at a higher level of physical fitness, demonstrating a healthy lifestyle, tend to adapt better to the military environment.

³⁶ Stephen Stark et al., "Optimizing Prediction of Attrition with the U.S. Army's Assessment of Individual Motivation," *Military Psychology* 23 (2011), 198.

³⁷ Joseph J. Knapik et al., *A Review of the Literature on Attrition from the Military Services: Risk Factors for Attrition and Strategies to Reduce Attrition* (Aberdeen, MD: US Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventative Medicine,[2004]).

In the post-Vietnam era, the US military transitioned from a national service-based force to an all-volunteer force. With low morale and a poor civilian view of the role of the military, the 1973 decision to transition to an all-volunteer military was seen as controversial. With such a poor view of the military as an employer, its ability to recruit quality personnel was questionable.³⁸ During conflicts in Afghanistan in Iraq, personnel shortages were limited through a variety of retention incentives and those who could not be convinced to stay were subject to measures such as forced re-enlistment, known as “stop-loss”, which prohibited members from leaving the military.³⁹ Increased deployment tempo and reduced time spent at home during “dwell periods” placed additional strain on the military’s ability to retain personnel. The use of the stop-loss policy peaked in 2005 at over 15,000 personnel - a significant number of those would have been redeployed overseas to make up for lower recruitment and voluntary retention.⁴⁰ As an alternative to compulsory retention, the US military expended considerable effort toward incentive programs that would encourage personnel to remain for additional periods of service.

The voluntary incentive programs vary depending on occupation and rank, but have included cash re-enlistment bonuses, priority selection for choice of posting, priority selection for additional educational opportunities, and priority selection for special forces training.⁴¹ When cash bonuses for an additional three-year commitment can reach \$72,000 for first-term enlisted soldiers, the attraction to re-enlist can be considerable. For officers, the retention problem was primarily addressed by looking at the number of junior officers leaving after their initial contract period, offering cash bonuses and education options. Critics of the incentive

³⁸ Richard W. Stewart, ed., *The United States Army in a Global Era, 1917-2008*, Vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: US Army Centre for Military History, 2009), 370.

³⁹ Josh White, "Soldiers Facing Extended Tours," *The Washington Post*, sec. A, June 3, 2004.

⁴⁰ Tom Vanden Brook, "DOD Data: More Forced to Stay in Army," *USA Today* April 23, 2008.

⁴¹ Jim Tice, "2016 Reenlistment Campaign: 50K Soldiers Needed," *ArmyTimes* November 23, 2015.

program have cited the incentives offered as failing to target the most desirable attributes, with only 2.9% of eligible personnel citing a cash incentive as the most desirable option, where over 20% sought more predictable deployment schedules.⁴² More notably, 95% of those accepting the incentives chose the cash option, with the perception that there were too many restrictions and ‘red tape’ that would limit the opportunities associated with other incentives (2.1% selected their choice of posting, less than two percent selected graduate education and less than one percent selected language training).⁴³ One study that supported the use of cash incentives for re-enlistment found that the utility of cash incentives declined for longer terms, hypothesizing that caps on the amount of the bonuses make a shorter term enlistment more desirable and that soldiers would continue to re-enlist only as long as the bonuses were available.⁴⁴ In a resource-constrained environment, the use of cash incentives could prove to be prohibitively expensive way to retain personnel. Essentially, most soldiers who intend to leave would be leaving whether they received a bonus or not and soldiers who intend to stay would be paid a bonus they didn’t need as a motivator to stay. In human capital terms, the bonus deepens a financial investment for many soldiers that receive no additional training benefit from that expense. For the soldiers who take the bonus as a sufficient incentive to remain serving, that motivator runs entirely counter to the affective commitment the organizational culture would seek to reinforce.

The US military experience with its recruiting and attrition situation provides the CAF with an example of what can be done with the significant application of financial resources. Although the CAF does not have the resources to conduct similar programs to what was done in the US, it can take several lessons about cognitive screening and the potential pitfalls of cash

⁴² LTC Michael J. Slocum, "Maintaining the Edge: A Comprehensive Look at Army Officer Retention" (Masters of Strategic Studies, US Army War College, 2012), 24-25.

⁴³ Ibid.26

⁴⁴ Beth J. Asch et al., *Cash Incentives and Military Enlistment, Attrition and Reenlistment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation,[2010]).

retention bonuses as examples of what may be worth further consideration for application in a Canadian context.

The Australian Military

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) recruits significantly fewer personnel than the US (as shown in the table at the beginning of this chapter) but the Australian example is much closer in scale to Canadian statistics and the length of service (three to six years for a first contract period) is comparable to how the CAF operates. A successful recruit, in the terms described at the beginning of this paper, is also comparable in that the imprinting of organizational culture has been accomplished over the three to six-year enlistment and the soldier is choosing to re-enlist for an additional term of service having reached their occupationally functional point. For these reasons, the ADF has been included as an example of how another military deals with similar recruiting and attrition challenges.

A detailed study of early attrition in the ADF found that 31% of recruits fail to complete their first contract and identified some predictors of early attrition that could be applied to the screening process.⁴⁵ This study found that some demographic factors gave higher likelihood of successfully completing their first contract, such as race/ethnicity/country of origin and education.⁴⁶ Further, aptitude and cognitive testing (through psychologist interviews) were shown to be effective predictors of lower performance and a corresponding lower incidence of completing the first contract period.⁴⁷

Labour Market Competition

⁴⁵ Philip J. Hoglin and Nicole Barton, "First-Term Attrition of Military Personnel in the Australian Defence Force," *Armed Forces and Society* 41, no. 1 (2015), 43.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 59 Australian-born aboriginals were only 66% as likely to complete their first contract as non-Aboriginals and recruits from outside Australia were 23% more likely to complete their contracts as native-born Australians.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 59-60

With significant numbers of soldiers who are leaving the ADF going into construction industries, the presence of a competitive labour environment can be seen to be a factor in attrition.⁴⁸ For soldiers seeking to leave early in their careers, the competitive work environment could provide an opportunity to use the general skills acquired during their military service, even if their specific skills are not going to be relevant to their civilian work. With a resource-based economy similar to Canada's, the Australian labour market is a good comparable when looking at why soldiers would voluntarily leave the military early in their careers.

ADF soldiers may be tempted by higher wages in their resource sector, just as CAF soldiers are tempted by higher wages in the security or resource sectors. Understanding that many ADF soldiers leave early in their careers because of medical, voluntary or administrative reasons, poor job fit and poor organizational fit have been cited as underlying factors.⁴⁹ (Thomas and Bell 2007) These factors could potentially be screened out using better education of what the job environment entails and what the military lifestyle is like. This may reduce the number of recruits who find, in the course of their training, that they are unhappy with their enlistment choice. The situation above corresponds closely with the first research question of what constitutes a successful recruit. A competitive labour market can exacerbate the shift of soldiers with transferable skills to the civilian workforce but instability in the labour market can contribute to better recruiting and retention efforts, as the ADF saw during a recent period of economic instability.⁵⁰ In order to smooth the peaks and valleys in economically-driven recruiting and retention, the ADF could seek to improve recruit performance in training and improve education on job conditions prior to enlistment. These two methods could improve the

⁴⁸ *Number of People Leaving ADF on the Rise*

⁴⁹ Keith Thomas and Steve Bell, "Competing for the Best and Brightest: Recruitment and Retention in the Australian Defence Force," *Security Challenges* 3, no. 1 (February, 2007), 100.

⁵⁰ Sean Parnell, "Swollen ADF Puts Brakes on Recruiting," *Australian, the* (05/31, 2011), 6-6.

chances for a recruit to be motivated and successful through the first phases of training and therefore be more inclined to remain after the first enlistment period, regardless of the economic situation.

Recruiting Challenges

Compounding the attrition problem for the ADF is underperformance in recruiting, which limits the ADF's ability to replace those soldiers who are choosing to leave at any stage in their careers. In the mid-2000s, with annual recruiting running at roughly 80% of targets, the ADF experienced difficulty in attracting high quality applicants.⁵¹ In studying the use of incentives to encourage re-enlistment, Australian research found similar conditions to the American research in that monetary bonuses were of limited utility compared to non-monetary incentives (such as better stability, education options and better housing).⁵² Targeting high school leaving students with a 'gap year' program was also attempted, highlighting education on defence careers and encouraging recruitment of women and identified minorities. This \$3 billion (\$AUS) program generated inconclusive results with smaller than planned subscription rates but was never fully implemented because of cost considerations.⁵³ Recruiting numbers continued to be below targets; however, reduced attrition compensated for the limited new recruits. This demonstrates the cost savings that can be present when preventing attrition reduces the need to recruit and train replacement personnel – a strong example of keeping personnel longer rather than training more recruits to fill the same positions. This could be relevant for the CAF in representing a short-term option for dealing with recruiting gaps, but is not likely to be sustainable in the long term, with fewer recruits entering the system year after year.

⁵¹ Thomas and Bell, *Competing for the Best and Brightest: Recruitment and Retention in the Australian Defence Force*, 99

⁵² Ibid., 115

⁵³ Parnell, *Swollen ADF Puts Brakes on Recruiting*, 6-6

A trial program, where recruits have an opportunity to experience military lifestyle with a lower obligation for service afterwards can represent an opportunity for both parties (the recruit and the military) to assess whether they fit well together. For recruits, this program allows them to experience the training (and potentially a preview of the cultural lifestyle) they would be subject to for the remainder of their time in service. Likewise, this trial period allows the military to assess whether the recruit has the requisite skills and motivation to be a suitably successful soldier beyond the period of the trial.

Police Academy Attrition

Outside of the military, other workforces face similar recruiting and attrition factors. The police services have similar requirements to build talent from within (rather than lateral hiring from outside the organization) and can have similar work conditions, where location transfers and unpredictable hours can bring additional personal stresses to the workers. Police forces require similar skills and cognitive attributes, meaning applicants go through a series of physical and psychological screenings prior to enrolment. Examining the way police academies conduct screening prior to enrolment and a longer term evaluation during early training may give additional areas where the CAF could improve the quality of recruits it brings in as well as better predict the success for those it enrolls.

Differences in Training

One problem with the comparison of a police academy with the military is that military forces tend to spend a significant amount of their time training (in both individual training/education and collective training environments), with a lower percentage of time spent on operations (performing those skills taught during training and education). Police forces, on the other hand, train primarily early in the career arc, with post-academy field training acting as a

probationary, on-the-job training period when a new police officer joins their first department. Although different jobs and police forces vary, the emphasis on education past the functional point for police officers (other than special tactical teams) appears to be primarily in e-learning and self-directed training rather than time spent away from performing policing duties. This represents a significant difference in the institutional approach to training investment; specific skills are taught at a distance, limiting interaction with other officers and therefore the socialization effects that could improve a police officer's identification with the organization. The ability to work within a group environment nevertheless plays an important role in the screening for police academies. Screening pre-enrollment for socialization skills and cognitive abilities would therefore be relevant to longer term police suitability. A study of US police academy candidates that emphasizes the important attributes of being able to integrate into group norms, to handle stressful situations and adapt to changing situations may have similar utility in identifying suitable candidates for military service.⁵⁴ Educational requirements for police force recruitment, such as a college-level police foundations course, or an equivalent, may assist in ensuring police recruits have high PO fit prior to enrollment.

Screening procedures

With both physical and psychological screening processes, police services aim to weed out unsuitable applicants on a number of different attributes. With months of training to graduate as a police officer, multiple different psychological tools can be used for identifying potentially unsuitable candidates, with a view to screening them out of the academy with a “multiple hurdle” approach that identifies the most suitable candidates who remain.⁵⁵

Educational factors, such as the completion of a four-year degree program prior to police

⁵⁴ Lauren P. Hewgley, "Cognitive, Personality, and Biodata Predictors of Police Academy Attrition" (Master of Arts in Industrial-Organizational Psychology, Middle Tennessee State University, 2013), 5.

⁵⁵ Ibid.5

training, and experiential factors (having worked in a field other than policing) were found to be predictors of better chances of completing the police academy training.⁵⁶ Providing additional screening weight to pre-enrollment experiences could deliver higher-quality recruits than the basic requirement of a high school diploma, not just in having a better educated trainee police force, but also in a higher likelihood of completing the training. Conversely, police academy trainees who enter with prior police experience were found to integrate less well into the academy environment, with frustration over failing to perform at the same level as younger, less experienced recruits.⁵⁷ This could represent a relevant point of comparison for the CAF in that older recruits who are less physically fit (representative of current CAF demographic trends) may find it difficult to complete the training and may experience lower person-organization fit. Although the data in the referenced studies are specific to US police academies, the screening procedures (including interviews, cognitive screening and physical screening) are common to most police agencies in Canada and the US. Cognitive screening for compatibility and suitability in dealing with the public is of particular importance for police officers who could expect to be in daily contact with vulnerable members of society.⁵⁸ (Canadian Psychological Association 2013) Police applicants all undergo physical fitness testing prior to enrollment and significant physical challenges during training.⁵⁹ Although rates of performance during basic training will vary depending on the police academy, the universality of physical fitness testing demonstrates the weight this attribute is given in the screening process. For soldiers whose socialization into the military culture is so critical to ensuring positive affective and normative

⁵⁶ Benjamin Wright, Mengyan Dai and Kathryn Greenbeck, "Correlates of Police Academy Success," *Policing* 34, no. 4 (2010), 632.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 633

⁵⁸ Canadian Psychological Association, *The Pre-Employment Clinical Assessment of Police Candidates: Principles and Guidelines for Canadian Psychologists* (Ottawa: ,[2013]).

⁵⁹ Wright, Dai and Greenbeck, *Correlates of Police Academy Success*, 626

commitment, additional time to conduct effective cognitive screening, with an emphasis on resilience and teamwork would be worth additional research.

Summary

These three comparable cases represent how other organizations have dealt with similar recruiting and attrition challenges. Each organization has slightly different working conditions, demographic factors and outward pressures that encourage attrition and has developed strategies that suit their conditions. When comparing the US military to the CAF, the scale of the US military is an order of magnitude larger and the resources at their disposal are similarly immense. In terms of personnel management, the US military has explored bonuses, non-monetary incentives and other methods to encourage longer retention. Simultaneously, it has explored the use of cognitive tools to assess factors such as a recruit's motivation with the goal of screening out unsuitable candidates early in the enrollment process; this limits the expenditure on recruits who are less likely to be successful in basic training. The US approach could be summarized by saying that it looks at more efficient recruitment and bonuses for retention as the methods to improve early attrition.

The ADF has demonstrated that it seeks to recruit more efficiently but has shown that it is taking advantage of opportunities to reduce recruiting burdens at the expense of long-term personnel sustainability. This provides an example of a risky action that the CAF may be tempted to take in favourable labour market conditions but would present problems if implemented at the expense of a longer term attrition-management strategy. A positive point of comparison is that the ADF found similar improvements to the potential for recruits to remain longer if they felt successful in their basic training and if they had more information about their chosen occupation. These two factors may also be applicable to the CAF situation in improving

recruit confidence prior to training and providing additional occupational and lifestyle information through the recruiting process.

Lastly, the police academy provides an example of an organization with comparable demographic makeup, needing similar screening prior to entry and also unable to hire external leadership. Police academies have experienced similar problems with early attrition, using physical and psychological screening to weed out unsuitable candidates and track under-performers. The measurement of physical fitness prior to enrollment and continual testing during early phases of training could provide a relevant point of comparison with the CAF, based on the police academy's example. Similarly, a longer-term psychological screening process that takes into account changes in recruit performance/attitude from initial interviews could be of value.

The three examples above were chosen to demonstrate ways other organizations deal with their own early attrition situations, whether that involves more rigorous screening prior to enlistment, tracking during early training or incentives at contract exit periods. In all of the cases above, comparable factors for the CAF exist that are worthy of further examination and placement in a CAF context. This is the purpose of the next chapter, which will attempt to answer the third research question of what measures can be put in place to limit preventable attrition.

CHAPTER 3 – POTENTIAL MITIGATION STRATEGIES FOR THE CAF

Overview

The situations described in Chapter 2 highlight similar attrition and retention conditions to those being experienced by the CAF. Although organizational-specific factors such as work conditions and deployments may not be fully comparable from each case to the CAF, there are similarities that allow for some generalizations to be made. According to Human Capital Theory, the investment the organization makes in its employees can be recovered over time in service to that organization; training specific to that organization is particularly valuable because the organization needs to provide that same training to any potential replacement personnel.⁶⁰ In the CAF's case, the socialization and military-specific skill set acquired through experience prohibits outside hiring of leadership.⁶¹ The organizational culture requires credibility earned through training in that collective environment, essentially imprinting the organizational culture onto each individual as they progress through training in general skills to training in their specific occupation. If attrition occurs too early in the soldier's career, there is a risk that the costs associated with that soldier's training are not recovered through service, burdening the recruiting and training systems with a larger number of replacement personnel. Further, high turnover could have a negative effect on organizational culture because fewer experienced personnel remain to train and develop the new personnel, demonstrating the skills they have learned over their years of service. This supports the feeling of belonging to the organization polled in CAF retention studies⁶² and could indicate an area where improvements in

⁶⁰ Kessler and Luelfesmann, *The Theory of Human Capital Revisited: On the Interactions of General and Specific Investments*, 904

⁶¹ Although some specialist officers, like Legal and Medical Officers, can be hired with existing qualifications and begin their careers as Captains, these specialists generally act as advisors when not performing their specialist duties – they are generally not employed in leadership roles where institutional credibility is key.

⁶² Howell, Massie and Budgell, *Qualitative Analysis of 2014 CAF Retention Survey Data*, 20

organizational culture could assist in reducing attrition. The CAF may be able to reduce attrition by reinforcing these elements of the organizational culture, including the socialization of norms and building a sense of belonging where the individual feels connected to the larger organization.

Each applicant at the recruiting centre has a set of expectations regarding their new career (such as their work conditions, salary and organizational support) that is informed by their own experiences, biases and by the information provided to them by the recruiters. The CAF also has a similar set of expectations of the recruit, including their capabilities, motivation, and willingness to accept the military environment. During this chapter, two major mitigation strategies will be suggested for consideration to reduce early attrition. Neither of these strategies are intended to have quantitative analysis in the scope of this paper; however, they provide suggestions on reducing the mutual frustration that may be present in a relationship where a new soldier is not getting the experience they expected as a result of their recruiting process and the CAF is not getting the type of soldier they expected based on the screening and training processes.

The first strategy is focused on soldier perceptions of the CAF environment. As was shown in Chapter 1, poor PJ and PO fit are significant sources of early attrition. The CAF Recruiting website provides significant information online on what to expect during basic training, but it is possible that applicants are less well-informed about what their working conditions will be like once they have reached their OFP and are working in their post-training environments. With a more realistic idea of what work and life conditions can be expected, they can make a more informed decision about whether the CAF is a good fit for them. In addition, making occupational transfers easier may assist in keeping soldiers who have a low PJ fit but still retain a higher PO fit. Finally, the military lifestyle will be examined in a demographic

perspective; the dual-income household is now the Canadian norm but the military lifestyle of frequent postings in isolated areas is not conducive to family environments. Although the majority of recruits are single, anecdotally the three to five-year initial contract period is a timeframe when many young soldiers find partnership or marriage (given the age of most recruits and their lifestyles following training). Therefore, although family-related attrition factors may not appear to be relevant for the 74% of recruits who are single on enrollment,⁶³ it is not unreasonable to expect that significant numbers of these personnel would be in a relationship when their initial contract period is complete.⁶⁴ Lastly, the internal messaging on CAF missions will be examined to see how soldier perceptions of the operational tempo and providing additional meaning to training could be leveraged to potentially reduce attrition.

The second strategy looks at CAF perceptions of the recruits it is bringing in. A study that looked at Canadian Army combat arms training (infantry, armour, artillery and engineers) found that staff perceived recruits to be resistant to discipline and that soldiers who voluntarily released were poor quality recruits.⁶⁵ If this perception is accurate, the CAF may not be doing enough to screen out less-suitable applicants or socializing them to the environment they can expect. This strategy will involve an examination of factors such as more rigorous physical and psychological screening during the application process. During the period that the CAF was heavily engaged in Afghanistan, some screening criteria, such as physical fitness testing and security clearances, were delayed until after enlistment in order to permit faster entry for applicants. Although there was an increase in the quantity of recruits brought in using less

⁶³ Military Workforce Modelling and Analysis Team, *Annual Report on Regular Force Personnel 2012/2013*, 23

⁶⁴ Of the total CAF population, 60% are married or in a common-law partnership and only 22% are single (the remainder are either separated/divorced or recorded as “other”). Anecdotally speaking, the formative years of a soldier’s early career tend to be when they find relationships and many marry, bringing the 74% single on enrollment much closer to the 22% overall single among the CAF population. Data taken from: Ibid.

⁶⁵ Karen Koundakjian, *Army School Retention Strategies: Findings from Six Canadian Forces Combat Training Centres* (Ottawa: Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis,[2012]).

stringent recruiting criteria, there was also an increase in the number of releases over the same time period.⁶⁶ As demonstrated in Chapter 2, other organizations have examined ways to screen for characteristics like individual motivation, physical fitness and teamwork; refining the CAF selection criteria to screen out less-suitable candidates may have a net positive effect by reducing the numbers who do not complete training or, having completed training, are less likely to remain in the CAF. This strategy will also look at the demographic factors of the millennial generation and how the CAF could temper its expectations in view of the population from which it can draw its recruits.

Soldiers Not Getting What They Expect

Among personnel who released in 2012/13, 2096 were Privates (Ptes) or Corporals (Cpls), the ranks most likely to still be in their first contract period. Of those 2096 personnel, 69% released for voluntary reasons and only 10% had completed their terms of service. In the same time period, 265 officers at the ranks of Officer Cadet (OCdt), Second Lieutenant (2Lt), or Lieutenant (Lt) were released. Of those 265, 68% were voluntary releases and 22% had completed their contracts.⁶⁷ These numbers could lead to a conclusion that members are unhappy with their choice to join the CAF or with their specific occupation. Potential applicants walking into a recruiting centre are not necessarily fully-informed as to what their lives will be like in the CAF. Recruiting personnel have tools such as occupation-specific videos at their disposal to demonstrate what the specific job skills are and how the training would unfold; however, there are still significant numbers of recruits who decide to leave as a result of poor job fit. This could indicate that the information being provided is either not representative of daily

⁶⁶ Military Workforce Modelling and Analysis Team, *Annual Report on Regular Force Personnel 2012/2013*, A-13

⁶⁷ Ibid. These statistics reflect the following CAF release items: Misconduct, Unsatisfactory Service, Medical, Voluntary, Service Complete, and Death. When reporting these statistics, soldiers can only receive one release item, therefore a soldier who chooses not to re-enlist after their terms of service are complete would be recorded as Service Complete, and not Voluntary.

duties or is not fully understood. Recruits may not be getting the work experiences they were expecting, and the time taken to get through the recruiting system may be a similar dissatisfier.

Recruiting System Delays

The millennial and post-millennial generations have been characterized as being impatient and pressured.⁶⁸ Delays in the application process are therefore likely to be received poorly by Millennials, who have been raised to expect timely reactions from large organizations but also from the post-Millennial generation who are even more likely to grow up with a perceived sense of control over their environment.⁶⁹ The CAF recruiting system has several steps that are sequentially completed, which includes the CFAT (Canadian Forces Aptitude Test), medical examination, medical file review, criminal record check, reliability check (for security screening purposes), interview and finally a wait to be called if the applicant is selected for employment. This process can take roughly six months to complete, but delays in bottleneck activities such as the medical assessment and security screening can mean an additional period of over two years before an applicant's file can proceed to the next step of the process.⁷⁰ To maintain the interest of the truly best and brightest potential applicants, the CAF needs to consider streamlining the recruiting process in order to be faster and more transparent, with the understanding that these improvements may involve an additional allocation of resources. A frustration with bureaucratic delays that begins at the recruiting centre could lead future recruits to reconsider their options when it comes to joining the CAF. The information above leads to the conclusion that, in order to ensure that future generations of potential applicants remain interested in pursuing a military career, the length and complexity of the application process is an area where improvements could be made.

⁶⁸ Defence Science Advisory Board, *Recruiting the Millennial Generation*, 4

⁶⁹ Okros, *Slide to Unlock: Implications from Harnessing 21st Century Competencies Project*, 14

⁷⁰ Defence Science Advisory Board, *Recruiting the Millennial Generation*, 10

Postings

The annual movement of personnel can mean significant upheaval of not only the military member, but also their immediate families. Reducing that negative impact on the family is listed as the most important way the CAF could convince members to remain serving longer.⁷¹ Canadian demographics indicate that dual-income families are now the norm, increasing from 36% to 69% since 1974. Further, the availability of a stay-at-home parent has decreased from 47% to 18%.⁷² With these demographic conditions, the CAF posting model that moves personnel with very limited consideration for spousal employment would benefit from further review.⁷³ Among the entire CAF population, the number of married or common law members increased over the past several years for both officers and NCM rank groupings; although 74% of both officer and NCM recruits were found to be single, the trend for more married personnel is growing.⁷⁴ The CAF tends to concentrate large numbers of personnel outside major urban centres that limit spousal employment opportunities, especially for spouses with skills and experience above entry-level positions. Bases such as Petawawa, Gagetown, Cold Lake, Shilo and Gander are distant from cities that might provide a more supportive family environment. This likely increases the burden for childcare and could make CAF members less flexible when it comes to working hours and short-notice deployability. A former CAF Ombudsman's report highlighted the additional pressures faced by military families and made recommendations on

⁷¹ Howell, Massie and Budgell, *Qualitative Analysis of 2014 CAF Retention Survey Data*, 44

⁷² "Number of Dual-Income Families Doubled since 1976, StatsCan Report Finds," CTV News, last modified June 24, accessed Apr 13, 2016, <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/number-of-dual-income-families-doubled-since-1976-statscan-report-finds-1.2438072>.

⁷³ Members choosing to move without their family may do so for up to five years throughout their career, however this option places further stress on the family as well. Members who refuse a posting, regardless of the location, are likely to suffer career limiting implications from this decision.

⁷⁴ Military Workforce Modelling and Analysis Team, *Annual Report on Regular Force Personnel 2012/2013*, 23

how altering the CAF posting cycle could improve family dynamics.⁷⁵ Examining the implementation of these recommendations, specifically the modernization of CAF relocation procedures, benefits and other family-associated policies would at least demonstrate to CAF members that their families are being considered in the organizational investment in each soldier. In addition, the investment in family-focused programs and policies could help to improve affective commitment in that the soldier trusts the CAF to act more in the interest of the larger military community rather than in a purely self-serving sense. Lack of trust in the organization has been cited as a major factor in attrition and improving how the CAF deals with families beyond the military member themselves could assist in demonstrating that it is willing to make an investment in improving this trust. Although personnel statistics indicate that recruits tend to be single more often than experienced soldiers, commitment to personnel and their families represents an investment in organizational culture that may assist in influencing more junior personnel to stay in the CAF for a longer period.

Poor Person-Organization Fit

In addition to improving the quality of life for soldiers' families, the difference between recruit expectations and reality deserves further attention. When studying the reasons applicants seek out military employment, the intrinsic reasons for joining the CAF, such as personal pride and to serve one's country have been shown to significantly outweigh the extrinsic ones, such as pay and benefits.⁷⁶ In that same study, it was shown that challenging work and career opportunities are similarly valued. When these ambitions are frustrated by delays in the training system or by a perceived lack of meaningful work, serving soldiers can be discouraged from

⁷⁵ Pierre Daigle, *On the Homefront: Assessing the Well-being of Canada's Military Families in the New Millennium* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence/Canadian Forces Ombudsman,[2013]).

⁷⁶ Nancy Otis, *2014 Canadian Armed Forces Recruiting Survey: Research Highlights* (Ottawa: Defence Research and Development Canada,[2015]).

remaining in the CAF. In these cases, there may be a low PO fit if the soldier was recruited with the idea of a dynamic, operations-based work environment only to discover a less exciting, garrison-based workplace in the post-Afghanistan CAF. A more realistic job preview has been studied to see whether more accurate information on work conditions and the specifics of military life could be provided. Based on this study, it is possible that soldiers may have made different occupational choices or plans regarding whether to join the CAF if they had been provided more accurate information up front.⁷⁷ In that same study, it was reported that personal contact with a serving member, optimally in the same chosen occupation, would have been a good source of information to help them make a decision. It is possible that being uninformed as to the specifics of their jobs may contribute to low PJ fit and being uninformed about the military lifestyle in general could contribute to low PO fit. Applicant contact with serving personnel outside the recruiting centre, ideally in their occupations of interest, may assist in providing this ‘reality check’ and may have the potential to reduce attrition based on these two factors.

Poor Person-Job Fit

Soldiers have expressed a desire for more active employment, including international deployments and challenging training rather than static work environments.⁷⁸ In an uncertain operational environment, where the government may not be deploying large-scale forces in the same manner as during the timeframe these soldiers joined, it may be challenging to replicate the operationally-focused work environment without a deployment on the horizon. Demographic info shows that the next generations of CAF soldiers will expect to be told not just ‘what’ needs

⁷⁷ Manon LeBlanc, Lisa Williams and Trista Takacs, *Realistic Job Preview: an Examination of the Canadian Forces Recruiting Information Sources* (Ottawa: Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis,[2012]).

⁷⁸ Howell, Massie and Budgell, *Qualitative Analysis of 2014 CAF Retention Survey Data*, 61

to be done, but also ‘why.’⁷⁹ To internal leadership, this requirement to justify training or order may be perceived as challenging authority; however, this represents a method of integration into the organizational culture. The next generations of CAF soldiers may be less likely to accept the culture that is imposed on them and more likely to integrate their own values into the overall whole as part of the socialization process. When a soldier leaves early in their contract period, this socialization process may be incomplete. Maintaining soldiers’ interest longer in their initial contract period, either by delivering soldiers to operational units (rather than centralized training institutions) for on-the-job training in realistic work environments may be one method to contribute to faster socialization into the organizational culture and to reduce the perception of a static training environment for new soldiers. This recommendation corresponds with one proposed by Okros, where he suggested that sampling of workplace environments could contribute to better PJ fit.⁸⁰ This could reduce the dissonance between expectations based on information received during the recruiting process and the actual work environments experienced through training and service. In addition, this early exposure may assist in identifying soldiers who have a high PO fit but a low PJ fit.

Job dissatisfaction is the most commonly cited motivation for soldiers who choose to leave (28% of survey respondents)⁸¹, but is also the most applicable factor for personnel who choose to stay.⁸² For soldiers with a high PO fit but low PJ fit, the CAF has the opportunity to salvage the general training (and some aspects of the specific training) the soldier has received by facilitating an occupational transfer. These transfers allow the organizational to retain the soldier in a different occupation that may provide them with a more satisfying experience.

⁷⁹ Okros, *Slide to Unlock: Implications from Harnessing 21st Century Competencies Project*, 27

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Latchman, Straver and Laplante, *Canadian Armed Forces Attrition*

⁸² Howell, Massie and Budgell, *Qualitative Analysis of 2014 CAF Retention Survey Data*, 19

Occupational transfers represent a loss of some trade-specific skills, but retain the CAF-specific and general skills that the organization has invested in that soldier. By streamlining the occupational transfer process, the CAF could potentially demonstrate a greater organizational commitment to the individual soldiers. Further, the occupationally transferred personnel would likely be more informed as to the work conditions of their new occupation (as an internal audience, rather than an outside hire) and could be more capable of making an educated choice than a new recruit. For new recruits, it has been shown that personal contact with recruiters is a more effective means of informing applicants about the military environment than watching videos or reading pamphlets.⁸³ Clearly, the quality of communication matters for applicants seeking additional information to make an informed career decision. Recruiter quality and incentives to fill spaces in designated trades could erode the quality of communication with the applicant; however, information only from online sources or material provided in the recruiting centre allows for only one-way passage of information and does not allow for a dialogue to take place. In situations where soldiers are already familiar with the military environment and seeking to make a change to a new occupation, the available information is significantly greater than a new applicant speaking with a recruiter or watching an occupation-specific video. These experienced soldiers therefore have the benefit of greater knowledge when making the choice to change occupations than what new recruits have and may be more likely to select an occupation that fits them than a new applicant. Job dissatisfaction following an occupational transfer compared to the pre-transfer occupation would need to be studied to find the empirical data that supports how much information is gathered during early years of service. Giving new applicants a chance to gain some practical experience in a potential occupation may be useful to bridge this gap between applicant expectations and operational employment conditions.

⁸³ Otis, 2014 *Canadian Armed Forces Recruiting Survey: Research Highlights*

Trial Period Before Obligation

It has been noted that millennial and post-millennial generations may have difficulty making a life-long decision on the occupation they would like, preferring to ‘try-before-they-buy’.⁸⁴ The ADF did not fully implement its ‘gap year’ program but saw positive results in the limited roll-out; with a potential application to the CAF, a similar program may be worth additional research. This option may be beneficial to both parties, as the recruit would have the option to assess the choice to join based on the newly acquired experience of training in a realistic environment and the CAF would have the opportunity to assess their recruits over a longer period of time, applying the additional cognitive and physical testing methodologies that have shown to be helpful in screening out less suitable candidates in other organizations. By implementing a trial period before any obligation on either side, the CAF may be able to reduce early attrition based on both poor PO and PJ fit. The ADF’s experience with the gap year program indicates that a full year period may be too long (and costly); however, the opportunity to discover over eight weeks that a recruit has poor PJ fit, rather than three years, is worth further examination.

⁸⁴ Okros, *Slide to Unlock: Implications from Harnessing 21st Century Competencies Project*, 24

CHAPTER FOUR – RECOMMENDATIONS

The CAF Not Getting What It Expects

Just as applicants have their vision of how the CAF may provide them with a valuable and rewarding career, the CAF has expectations of each of its recruits. These are expressed in the common elements of organizational culture, described as the Military Ethos. These values of unlimited liability, fighting spirit, discipline, teamwork and physical fitness are core to the CAF identity and essential for any potential soldier.⁸⁵ The differences between the traditional CAF recruiting model and the Millennial and post-Millennial generations may pose a cultural challenge for the CAF. In order to continue to recruit at a sustainable rate, the CAF may need to adapt certain recruiting and training methodologies to fit the new generations without losing the fundamental values of the Military Ethos. To some, adapting these methodologies may seem sacrilegious or as a watering down of training standards. What is suggested here, however, is that adaptation is a necessary step to ensuring sustainable personnel management into the future. Future generations are not motivated the same as those of the past, so new methods are required to continue to achieve positive results.

Training Methodology

The Millennial and post-Millennial generations are being told to expect to work for many more employers, each for a shorter term, than their parents and grandparents did. Although this may be true for significant numbers of these generations, some research has shown that the next generations are still motivated by similar goals: “steady employment, respect, good pay, chance for promotion and opportunities for self-development and improvement.”⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the new generations have shown tendencies of self-confidence and skepticism in the face of

⁸⁵ Department of National Defence, *Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada* (Kingston, Ontario: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, 2009), 27-28.

⁸⁶ Okros, *Slide to Unlock: Implications from Harnessing 21st Century Competencies Project*, 19

authority (regardless of actual capability) that run counter to previous generations that tended to be more accepting of external authorities.⁸⁷ With a more confident, less deferent recruit group, the stereotypical military education model of “break them down, then build them back up”⁸⁸() may no longer be suitable. The digitally native generations have grown up in an environment where online, distributed and individualized learning is much more the norm than previous generations. It is recommended that the CAF be cautious in representing itself as a high-tech organization in its recruiting documents aimed towards Millennials. Given the pace of technology and the relative difficulty the CAF has had in integrating new technology into the workplace, Millennials may feel as though they have been sold a false bill of goods when they arrive in their operational units to find antiquated equipment and methodology. Digital natives are likely to want a more agile, tech-savvy organization than the CAF can reasonably provide. For this reason, the CAF could reconsider this recruiting message.⁸⁹ The traditional subject matter expert (SME)-delivered group training may be less effective in delivering the required information – not because the SMEs are less capable of providing it, but because the new generations are less capable of processing information in this manner.⁹⁰ In addition, future recruits are likely to arrive older, with a perception that their existing skill set is relevant to the military environment. By breaking down recruits prior to building them back up, the stereotypical military training model assumes that recruits arrive with no useful skills.⁹¹ This bias ignores potentially beneficial experiences and may serve to alienate recruits who arrive with transferrable general skills. In the context of Human Capital Theory, the current CAF model is inefficient because recruits arriving with transferred skills are still subject to the same training as

⁸⁷ Defence Science Advisory Board, *Recruiting the Millennial Generation*, 4

⁸⁸ Brian Mockenhaupt, "The Army we have," *The Atlantic*, June, 2007, .

⁸⁹ Okros, *Slide to Unlock: Implications from Harnessing 21st Century Competencies Project*, 25

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Mockenhaupt, *The Army we have*

all others. Although there is an argument that could be made that socialization occurs as a result of the common training experience, the investment in skills that the recruit already has means that the benefit of bringing in experienced recruits is lost. To better align organizational training objectives with recruit cohort abilities, the training methodology may need to be adapted to include adult learning strategies that better integrate existing skills. As a further potential action, the increasing use of pedagogical tools such as collaborative learning may be worth examining as an alternative to the standard lecture-demonstration in order to ensure maximum understanding of the training material.

Cognitive Testing Over Time

It has been suggested that deeper selection criteria are required to ensure better PO and PJ fit, with the CFAT and interview being inadequate to determine whether a candidate has a high potential for success in a given occupation.⁹² If a deeper assessment process were able to occur over time, it may be possible to better fit a recruit with an occupation that would hold their interest for a longer period of time. As was shown in the police academy example, longer assessment timelines could provide a more accurate idea of whether a recruit has the right capabilities and attitudes to fit in to the organization. Further, an interview-based tool similar to the US Army's Assessment of Individual Motivation (AIM) could be explored to assist in screening out recruits who would likely perform poorly; at the minimum, this tool could assist in identifying recruits who may require additional counselling to reach the required standard. Under current policies, the CAF is responsible for recruits from the time they sign their attestation papers to join. The period of time it takes to complete basic and occupation-specific training will vary; however, a training period before a soldier reaches their OFP may be an

⁹² MacArthur, *The Association of Person-Environment Fit and Work-Related Attitudes for Canadian Forces Personnel*, 93

opportunity for an organizational-centric version of the ‘try-before-you-buy’ suggestion previously mentioned. If the no-obligation trial period were to be available for both sides, with the CAF and the recruit having the ability to opt-out of their relationship up to a certain point in the training, both sides would have an opportunity to assess their mutual suitability. This may assist in reducing instances of poor PO fit because the CAF would have the ability to better assess recruit capabilities before they progress too far into the training system. Although one interpretation of this suggestion could be that the opt-out constitutes increasing early attrition, an important fact to consider is the amount of investment made up to the time of the opt-out point; by cutting its investment in a shorter timeframe, the CAF has less to recover. The net effect of this suggestion would require further study. Nevertheless, it may provide a means to increase recruit chances of success if they are assessed in an obligation-free environment over a longer term.

Physical Fitness Testing

One of the fundamental values of the CAF is physical fitness.⁹³ It has been shown that current and coming generations will continue to be less physically fit than their predecessors and the CAF may be placed in a situation where an insufficient number of applicants meet the prescribed fitness standard. Under the current recruiting scheme, Regular Force recruits are not assessed prior to enlistment; they are given a set of qualifying criteria that will be tested on arrival at Basic Training; however, recruits can still enlist without having been tested.⁹⁴ Once at Basic Training, recruits who fail to meet the physical fitness standard can be placed in a remedial fitness program to assist them in attaining the basic standard prior to commencing their professional training. Between 2006 and 2011, 1160 recruits who failed their initial fitness test

⁹³ Department of National Defence, *Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada*, 28

⁹⁴ Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School, *Joining Instructions - Basic Military Qualification and Basic Military Officer Qualification*

were placed in a special Warrior Fitness Training Program (WFTP) for up to 90 days in order to develop their health and fitness levels to an acceptable standard prior to proceeding with their training. Although the program has been judged to be successful based on the number of WFTP trainees who were later able to achieve passing performance on their annual fitness evaluations, there are still some concerns about the long-term health changes these soldiers have made.⁹⁵ A comparable study in the US Army showed injury rates during basic training for recruits who failed their entry physical fitness test were 1.5 to 1.7 times higher compared to those who were successful.⁹⁶ In this study, recruits who were assessed to require additional fitness training before beginning their basic training were significantly more likely to either be incapable of completing the training or be injured in the attempt. The soldiers who are kept separated from progressive training groups for longer periods, there can be a tendency for these personnel to represent a group of 'bad apples' that provides a negative motivator to the remainder of the trainees around them.⁹⁷ In terms of what potential benefit the WFTP provides, the recruits who continue training after completing WFTP must be balanced against the additional cost of the program (salaries for the unfit recruits, salaries for the trainers and supervisors, costs to house and feed the WFTP recruits and even the cost to develop and administer the program). WFTP also represents an additional investment in each of its attendees that increases the necessary recovery time for the CAF. Although each successful candidate from WFTP means one less replacement personnel required from the recruiting system, a quantitative analysis of the net benefit of this program compared to a physical fitness screening would be worthwhile. One

⁹⁵ Michael Spivock, Patrick Gagno and Daryl Allard, *Warrior Fitness Training Program Follow-Up* Canadian Forces Director General Morale and Welfare Services, [2013]).

⁹⁶ Joseph J. Knapik et al., "Increasing the Physical Fitness of Low-Fit Recruits before Basic Combat Training: An Evaluation of Fitness, Injuries, and Training Outcomes," *Military Medicine* 171, no. 1 (Jan 2006, 2006), 45-54.

⁹⁷ Koundakjian, *Army School Retention Strategies: Findings from Six Canadian Forces Combat Training Centres*, 11

method to achieve this would be to reinstate and track the results of fitness testing at recruiting centres, prior to enlistment. Although this means an additional step in the recruiting application process, the fitness test can be administered by recruiting staff on-site and may be useful to reduce organizational investment costs, both in training and in the potential pension implications for those recruits who are injured in the attempt. It is beyond the scope of this paper to look at the nature of injuries suffered as a result of poor fitness on enrolment; however, it could be proposed that the additional medical pension cost of injured recruits is likely to exceed the cost of physical fitness assessment prior to enrollment.

Mental Resilience Training

Just as recruits of newer generations will have different physical capabilities from previous generations, the CAF will need to address how well prepared these generations are regarding mental resilience. It has been suggested that the demographics of the Millennial and post-Millennial generations will see them less capable of handling stresses imposed by authority figures – that their desire for control will make these personnel less capable of functioning when situations are out of their control.⁹⁸ Without a quantitative analysis of how much attrition can be attributed to stress-related factors, it would be difficult to quantify how many recruits might be retained as a result of this program. Some introduction to basic resilience theory is completed during Basic Training; however, a more practical assessment over time may also be achievable.⁹⁹ With motivation as a measurable factor prior to enlistment and during the training periods, it can be possible to assess how well the recruits are integrating into the military culture and may be possible to identify recruits who need additional support during the training process. Using cognitive testing, such as a series of counselling sessions and interviews during training, the CAF

⁹⁸ Okros, *Slide to Unlock: Implications from Harnessing 21st Century Competencies Project*, 14

⁹⁹ D. Craig Aitcheson, "Building Resilient Warriors: Taking the Canadian Army's Resilience Training Beyond the Classroom" (Advanced Operational Art Fellowship, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2012), 39.

undertakes an additional general investment in each of the recruits. The bilateral trial period suggested above would provide an opportunity for the CAF to train and assess recruits' mental resilience over time, determining whether some recruits may be unsuitable for further training before incurring additional investment costs.

Summary of What Soldiers Expect

Using Human Capital Theory, the bilateral relationship between employer and employee involves mutual investment.¹⁰⁰ The CAF invests in its personnel through training, and the soldier invests in the CAF through internalization of the organizational culture, becoming a part of something greater than the individual. This shift from extrinsic motivation (the additional value of general skills training in case of release) to intrinsic motivation (a sense of belonging to the CAF) is key to understanding the changing motivations toward early attrition. In the timeframe of the first contract, it may be difficult for a soldier to have fully internalized the CAF culture, therefore the relationship is weighted towards extrinsic motivation and deriving benefit from training. In summary, the CAF could examine the following recommendations in order to improve the dissonance between soldier expectations and military life, with a view to reducing voluntary early attrition:

1. Provide a more realistic job preview, including contact with personnel serving in their occupations of interest, to allow applicants to make a more educated choice about their occupation.
2. Streamlining the recruiting system to reduce delays in processing applications.
3. Improving the policies affecting postings, including the associated benefits and family consequences.

¹⁰⁰ Nafukho, Hairston and Brooks, *Human Capital Theory: Implications for Human Resource Development*, 546

4. Providing a more dynamic working environment, including earlier exposure to operational conditions rather than training conditions.
5. Facilitate easier occupational transfers for soldiers who still wish to serve, but in a different occupation.

Summary of What the Organization Expects

Human Capital Theory contends that the organization invests in general skills for its personnel primarily in a non-competitive market, rather than training its employees in marketable skills for their competitors.¹⁰¹ With the CAF, economic factors can play a role in how many and what quality of recruits it sees. Although, the organization is unlikely to change its recruiting and training strategies sufficiently often to compensate for labour market conditions. The CAF, therefore, has to understand who its target recruit is, what skills they require in order to function in their chosen occupation and what may motivate those recruits to stay long enough to recover the cost of their training. As indicated above, the CAF's expectations regarding recruit characteristics is likely to undergo demographic shifts and the training system may be ill-equipped to deal with the particularities of Millennial and post-Millennial generations. The following suggestions are given as ways the CAF could seek to reduce dissonance between what it expects of its recruits and what it is actually receiving:

1. Examine current training methodologies to see whether greater emphasis can be placed on collaborative learning, leveraging new pedagogical tools.
2. Introduce a bilateral 'try-before-you-buy' option where the CAF can screen out recruits who demonstrate poor socialization into the organizational culture and

¹⁰¹ Kessler and Luelfesmann, *The Theory of Human Capital Revisited: On the Interactions of General and Specific Investments*, 904

recruits can assess their own suitability for further employment. This could assist in weeding out personnel susceptible to PO fit-related attrition in the future.

3. Reintroduce physical fitness testing prior to enrollment to reduce the need for additional training programs aimed to improve fitness after enrollment.
4. Introduce a more holistic training program aimed at mental resilience, including practical assessment of recruit cognitive abilities and performance under stress.

CONCLUSION

The CAF is at a turning point in its history, after having completed a decade-long mission in Afghanistan and awaiting a new defence policy that will define how the CAF fits into Canadian society for the near future. With additional funding unlikely, the CAF will be looking to achieve efficiencies in any areas possible. Early attrition represents a drain on the recruiting and training systems because it forces the CAF to replace personnel too early in their career – effectively trading an experienced soldier for several new recruits that require significant investment over the next few years. When these recruits leave the CAF before the training investment can be recouped, even more personnel must be recruited and trained to replace them. Rather than continuing under conditions that allow soldiers to leave with a net loss in training investment, the CAF can make adjustments to policies and structures that would encourage more soldiers to stay beyond the period of their initial control.

The recruit's expectations for the CAF can be better harmonized with the reality of the work experience they will receive. Likewise, the CAF can alter its expectations for its recruits. Some might argue that altering CAF expectations constitutes a lowering of standards; however, this alteration is related to accepting the new reality of what recruits are bringing as assets and potential liabilities. Whether the CAF likes it or not, generational differences mean that current generations are not likely to be motivated by the same methods that motivated past generations. Rectifying the dissonance in expectations between what the recruit expects of the CAF and what the CAF expects of its recruits would require measures that run the gamut from a shifting of perceptions to institutional policy changes. The recommendations made above are not meant to be all-encompassing, nor are all of them likely to be implementable simultaneously. What they

represent is a series of measures that would benefit from empirical study to determine which would have the best impact on reducing early attrition.

To answer the identified research questions, a successful recruit is one whose training investment cost is recovered through service past the OFP. To generalize, a soldier who continues serving beyond the period of their initial contract is a successful recruit. A soldier who releases prior to that contract expiry or who chooses not to enlist for a second contract period is unsuccessful because their training investment is not recouped through service past the OFP. Soldiers leave for a variety of reasons, but the most commonly cited ones can be traced to two factors: a dissonance between what they expected when they joined their job (poor PJ fit) and dissonance between what the organization expected of them (poor PO fit). Rectifying this dissonance may be helped through implementation of the measures described above; however, there is a need for both sides to recognize the dissonance in expectations between what recruits expect of the CAF and what the CAF expects of its recruits.

Canadian society has changed markedly in the family dynamic, demographical makeup and the physical/psychological conditioning of its people. Not every young Canadian is well suited to serve in the CAF, and not every young Canadian has the desire to do so. As an example, soldiers with families are less likely to be willing to move often than they may have been in previous generations where spousal employment was less prevalent. It is incumbent on the CAF to find those who are capable and willing to serve, and keep them serving long enough to maximize the investment. More than the simple financial aspect of longer service, of greater importance is the impact on organizational culture. With less annual turnover, the CAF has an opportunity to deepen the socialization effect on its personnel, building a more inclusive, team-driven organization. While the CAF cannot control the economic or social factors that bring

recruits in or drive soldiers out, it must position itself to make best use of the opportunities that present themselves.

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