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## POLICY REFORM: RECRUITING TARGETS MEET THE MILLENNIAL REALITY

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**JCSP 42**

***Exercise Solo Flight***

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## **POLICY REFORM: RECRUITING TARGETS MEET THE MILLENNIAL REALITY**

*Occasionally in history, massive demographic change combines with relentless technological change and, within a generation, society altogether changes. Today we are living in such an era.*

- **Mark McCrindle**

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), like all people based organizations, is in a constant state of self-renewal through hiring and recruiting initiatives that are designed to secure the future of the institution. Currently in Canada, there is a demographic shift underway with more people leaving both the Public Service and the CAF compared to the number joining. As Baby Boomers continue to retire, and Generation X moves into middle management and more senior positions, Millennials are now the target audience to fill the resulting vacancies. A recent announcement by the Minister of National Defence states the CAF will embark upon a recruiting campaign and, like any recruiting/marketing campaign, the level of success will be determined by how well the CAF can get the targeted audience to identify with the institution through values and norms and inspire them to join.<sup>1</sup> Similar circumstances exist for the public service with the Treasury Board President stating the Public Service needs reforms to attract Millennials.<sup>2</sup> This presents an opportunity to create a comprehensive policy reform designed to target this demographic to meet the future labour needs of both the CAF and the Public Service. The intent is not to do a comparative analysis between Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials, but

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Okros, "Becoming an Employer of Choice: Human Resource Challenges within the DND and the CF" in *Public Management of Defence in Canada*, ed. Craig Stone (Toronto: Breakout Educational Network, 2009),162.

<sup>2</sup> "Public Service needs reform to attract millennials," *CBC Radio The Current*, February 19, 2016. <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-february-19-2016-1.3454910/public-service-needs-reform-to-attract-millennials-says-scott-brison-1.3455028>.

rather to focus on their societal views and examine how this has shaped their beliefs and employment expectations.

This paper will present the empirical evidence that describes the millennial generation and the evidence that defines their values, influences, and motivations. In doing so, it is necessary to understand who they are by exploring the social environment of their formative years, with an emphasis on technology and how that has shaped their views of the world. This paper will illustrate the career aspirations of this cohort and show how to best align these aspirations with that to which the Public Service and CAF offers. And finally, this paper will discuss how the Walt and Gilson policy analysis model as a theoretical framework can be applied to the hiring and recruitment strategies of the Public Service and CAF in order to meet targets.

## **DEFINING THE MILLENNIAL COHORT**

The degree to which hiring and recruiting strategies is successful will depend on the organization's ability to recognize the importance of values, norms and social trends in policy creation, specifically as it relates to the Millennial generation. Technology and social media have defined, influenced, and developed this cohort like no other and adapting to it is fundamental for organizations if they are to be successful to source, attract and hire the best talent.

While Millennials have been defined and categorized as a demographic unlike any other, empirical evidence suggests their outlook and employer expectations challenge the traditional labour demographic due to the rapid advancement of technology and the proliferation of social media.

Millennials tend to be defined as people who are concerned with their own careers, rather than the organization; who are not loyal to organizations (but may be loyal to individuals, like their bosses); who are individualists rather than team

players and as such are likely to want to move jobs frequently in search of new challenges.<sup>3</sup>

According to Statistics Canada, see Table 1, the Millennial cohort currently makes up the largest generation currently employed in the Canadian workforce and that number is expected to grow as Millennials continue to become of age.<sup>4</sup>

	Millennials	Generation X	Boomers	Pre-Boomers
Born	1981-2000	1966-1980	1946-1965	Before 1946
Age in 2015	15-34	35-49	50-69	70 and older
Population	9.5M	7.2M	9.5M	3.9M
% of Population	27%	20%	27%	11%
% of Labour Force	37%	31%	30%	1%
Households in 2015	2.8M	4.1M	5.6M	2.1M
% of Households	19%	28%	38%	15%

**Table 1: Statistics Canada (population) and Environics Analytics (households)**

Source: Statistics Canada

Defence R& D Canada characterizes Millennials, also known as Generation Y or Generation Me, as the cohort following Generation X who was born from 1981 until 2000. Millennials share some of the same employment expectations as previous generations but have “their own unique characteristics and a distinctly different work style”<sup>5</sup> as they go about achieving results. “Specifically, the Millennials prioritized balancing personal life and career, pursuing further education, and contributing to society as their top career goals.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Alison Macleod, “Generation Y: Unlocking the Talent of Young Managers”, Chartered Management Institute, London, 2008, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Scott F. Graham, “Millennials are now the biggest generation in the Canadian workforce”, *Canadian Business*, June 2015.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Eddy S.W. Ng and Charles W. Gossett, “Career Choice in Canadian Public Service: An Exploration of Fit With the Millennial Generation”, 337,

“This cohort has grown up in an era characterized by globalization, rapid technological advancement and increasing diversity.”<sup>7</sup>“The Millennials formative years have been heavily influenced by their families, technology and the uncertain times during which they have been growing up.”<sup>8</sup> World events that have shaped this generation include natural disasters, global warming, 9/11 and the rising threat of terrorism. But perhaps the most defining characteristics of the Millennial generation is their life long exposure to and use of technology. It is the means by which this generation connects with society “as it now seems almost mandatory that teenagers possess at least one personal electronic device.”<sup>9</sup> Millennials are well informed on global issues as their world is shaped through the use of “social Media which are powerful tools for raising awareness and spreading the word for social action, political involvement and protests.”<sup>10</sup> “Researchers have suggested that the Millennials, to a great extent, perceive themselves as global citizens who are connected with peers from every walk of life who are accessible by a click of a smartphone...and thus approach their environment from a global perspective.”<sup>11</sup> The political power and cascading effect of social media cannot be ignored; social media has become not only an essential element to the Millennial way of life but also a means by which to achieve social connection.

Social media has also played a pivotal role in the way Millennials interact with and perceive the world;<sup>12</sup> many within this cohort believe that “technology will be at the centre of

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

<sup>8</sup> Leesa Tanner, “Who are the Millennials?” Defence R&D Canada, Centre for Operations research & Analysis, December 2010, 29.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> Jean M. Twenge, “Does Online Social Media Lead to Social Connection or Social Disconnection”, *Journal of College and Character*, Volume 14, No. 1, February 2013, 17.

<sup>11</sup> Alan Okros et al, “Surfing the Digital Tsunami: How the Post-Millennials will be Key in Adapting to the Future”, 102.

<sup>12</sup> Deloitte Consulting, “Who Are the Millennials? A.k.a.Generation Y”, Deloitte Development LLC 2005, 2.

their lives over the course of their careers and see social networking technologies as tools for increasing their productivity.”<sup>13</sup> Millennials may see it this way however, experts may not agree. Psychology professor Jean Twenge from San Diego University postulates that this rapid technological change in such a short period has affected Millennials who have not known anything other than the internet and social media. Her question, do online social media lead to social connection or social disconnection deserves some consideration. Twenge asserts that “empirical research on the effect of social media and the internet is still in its infancy...however the research that does exist is fairly consistent: it suggests that social media may lead to more connections but shallower connections.”<sup>14</sup> Social media tends to act as a prism whereby any tendencies toward antisocial behavior or a social disconnection are correlational to existing personality traits.<sup>15</sup> If evidence supports social disconnection, then the organizations that seek to create connections through the use of social media will not achieve the success nor will they meet their hiring goals.

The traditional productivity among Baby Boomers and Generation X will be challenged by Millennials as they seek to change the “workplaces that have cultures based on the styles and preferences of Baby Boomers and their World War II generation parents.”<sup>16</sup> Text messaging podcasts, blogs, and social networking sites will replace traditional workplace practices and enhance the opportunities for creativity while pursuing more managerial style flexibility in day to day activities. Included in this analysis is the requirement for Government organizations to review its structure which is traditionally based on a hierarchical system or chain of command; it

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<sup>13</sup> Jeanne C. Meister and Karie Willyerd, *The 2020 Workplace: How Innovative Companies Attract, Develop, and Keep Tomorrow's Employees Today*, Harper Collins, New York, NY, 2010, 97.

<sup>14</sup> Jean M. Twenge, “Does Online Social Media Lead to Social Connection...”, 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>16</sup> Claire Raines and Arlene Arnsparger, “Millennials at Work”, [www.generationsatwork.com](http://www.generationsatwork.com), 8.

is a structure that will not necessarily fit with the expectations of Millennials. Millennials will have expectations that include managers who are willing to: “help them learn, believe in them, tune into their technology, connect them, let them make it on their own, tell them how they are doing, be approachable, plug in to parents, be someone to believe in.”<sup>17</sup> In keeping with this theme, research conducted by Ng and Gossett determined those who chose public service listed “five leading characteristics of a top employer including: high ethical standards; social responsibility; progressive work environment; diverse workforce; and environmental responsibility.”<sup>18</sup> Assessing the opportunities within the public service against this list, these become marketable assets that could be used to attract Millennials. The programs that exist as characteristics of the federal public service include a well-established ethics program, and a social responsibility to the tax payers who fund public service. Mandated by legislation, diversity and employment equity are tenets within the employment practice of both the Public Service and the CAF. The realization for hiring agencies is to understand is that Millennials are informed, and they “check out a company carefully before going to work there in search of integrity, openness, community service, and greenness.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, defining Millennial perspectives and assessing the impact of technology and social media are important aspects to understanding what motivates and influences this cohort who are mentored and managed by Baby Boomers and Gen X.

## **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS**

Employment opportunities with the Public Service is at a cross roads that brings with it the opportunity to transform the way in which it employs its public servants. Similar to the

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Eddy S.W. Ng and Charles W. Gossett, “Career Choice...”, 348.

<sup>19</sup> Claire Raines and Arlene Arnsperger, “Millennials...”, 12.



challenges of the Public Service, military recruiting has failed to meet its hiring targets with approximately 2000 and 7000 job vacancies in the Regular and Reserve force respectively. For both organizations, the multigenerational workforce is transitioning to where Millennials are set to occupy the positions however, this generation is not necessarily making public service their first employment choice.

According to Scott Brison, Member of Parliament and president of the Treasury Board of Canada, the demographic reality of the Public Service is that fact that there are more people retiring than are joining and those who are joining are doing so approaching career mid-life with an average age of 37 years. Similar circumstances exist for the CAF confirmed by both the 2002 and 2006 Auditor General reports which state the CAF has been unable to meet its recruiting targets. The generation that forms the largest labour market is the most “educated, informed and globally connected generation but are somewhat skeptical about public service.”<sup>20</sup> Research conducted by the Deloitte Consulting group confirms this generation seeks meaning employment where they can do meaningful work and make a difference in the global issues that have influenced and shaped their values. They work well with friends or in a team environment; they are collaborative, are comfortable with change and seek to make a difference.<sup>21</sup> Research completed by Cone Inc, contends Cause Branding is an effective way to reach millennials; “cause branding is a business strategy that integrates a social issue or cause into an organization’s brand equity and identity.”<sup>22</sup> The study further defines the cause interests for the Millennial generation whether acting as consumers or employees and “causes that topped the list

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<sup>20</sup> “Public Service needs reform to attract millennials,” *CBC Radio The Current*, February 19, 2016. <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-february-19-2016-1.3454910/public-service-needs-reform-to-attract-millennials-says-scott-brison-1.3455028>.

<sup>21</sup> Deloitte Consulting, “Who Are the Millennials...”, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Cone Inc., “The 2006 Cone Millennial Cause Study: The Millennial Generation: Pro-Social and Empowerment to Change the World”, 2006, 1.

include: education, poverty, the environment and health and disease.”<sup>23</sup> Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and government are among the best organizations that offer the opportunity to Millennials to work where they will have the large scale or global impact they seek by working on issues they define as important including climate change, equality and justice, or the global refugee crises.<sup>24</sup> The task to attract individuals into public service is to market the organization as one where having this impact can in fact be realized.

A challenge exists with the current top down or hierarchical organizational structure that exists in the Public Service and the CAF and how this hierarchy can work against the values Millennials have come to expect in their work environment. According to Don Tapscott, one of the world’s leading authorities on innovation, media and the economic and social impact of technology, Millennials “want freedom in everything they do, the freedom of choice to the freedom of expression.”<sup>25</sup> and Millennials expect more flexibility in employment; more opportunities to go in and out of government; no desire to be trapped into a “lifelong” career; the desire to transition from NGOs to the private sector to the public sector; and to build their experience and develop talent while at the same time achieving their goal of performing meaningful employment.

It is important to note also that “differences in work values exist between public and private sector employees.”<sup>26</sup> Those who choose public service are often “employees who value intrinsic rewards (meaningful and interesting) work over extrinsic rewards such as money and

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>24</sup> “Public Service needs reform.....

<sup>25</sup> Claire Raines and Arlene Arnsparger, “Millennials...”, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Eddy S.W. Ng and Charles W. Gossett, “Career Choice...”, 340.

prestige.”<sup>27</sup> Millennials want to feel valued and that they are contributing to work that makes a difference but do recognize the importance of job security, benefits, and a government pension. However, they do not want to join an organization and feel trapped in a job that will deny them the opportunities they seek. Working in a variety of employment environments will be the norm for this generation seeking to transition easily from say an NGO to the public sector to the private sector gaining valuable and transferable experience that could benefit each of the employers in an innovative and creative way. In short, the millennial generation sees career mobility as an important aspect to their overall employment objectives.

Government is a complex organization that is a top down in structure. The layers of bureaucracy and complexity create an employment environment that is in direct contradiction to what the millennial generation seeks in an employer. Millennials want a work environment that encourages collaboration and team work; they do not see a firm structured schedule that ties them to employment that restricts their ability in any way.<sup>28</sup> Linda Duxbury, a professor at Carleton University agrees that it is imperative to develop and action plan to support getting more Millennials into public service and direct attention to the processes that are in place that making hiring people difficult and that make *treating people well* difficult.<sup>29</sup> The discussion needs to centre on hiring processes as a starting point followed by the removal of hiring barriers and artificial qualifications. For example, the social policy surrounding bilingualism stands as a national unity issue but does not necessarily need to be the central issue in hiring processes, especially for entry level positions.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 340.

<sup>28</sup> “Public Service needs reform....

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

A second consideration is the public perception of federal government institutions. Although beyond the scope of this paper, Duxbury contends the public service is portrayed by the media as an expensive governmental organization. Work needs to be done to change that public opinion so that it can be seen as an asset and an organization of which Canadians can be proud and one that the Millennial cohort seeks to join. Public opinion is also a significant challenge for the CAF. Large scale and complicated procurement projects, the recent report related to the sexualized culture with the CAF and the treatment of veterans has a negative influence and adverse effect as the CAF embarks upon recruiting.

The CAF is currently below its desired end-state for total Regular Force manning of 68,000 +/- 500 due to higher than forecasted attrition and other factor. Measure will continue to be applied to increase production and limit voluntary attrition in order to re-establish the CAF to its authorized strength as soon as practical. The Department is in a period of profound change. Consequently, it is expected the civilian full time equivalent (FTE) will ebb and flow and the approved FTE ceiling may not be attained in the near term.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the anticipated challenges, the following tables, Table 2 and Table 3 summarize National Defence's total planned human resources for the next three fiscal years.

<b>National Defence's Total Planned Human Resources</b>			
	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>
Military – Regular Force	68,000	68,000	68,000
Civilian	24,418	24,418	24,418
Total	92,418	92,418	92,418

**Table 2: National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces 2016-2017 Report on Plans and Priorities**

Sources: Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff Group / Chief Military Personnel Group / Assistant Deputy Minister (Human Resources – Civilian) Group

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<sup>30</sup> Canada. “2016-2017 Report on Plans and Priorities”, National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, 2016.

The CAF is currently below the Government of Canada directed target of 27,000 average paid strength for Primary Reserve, due to higher than forecasted attrition and challenges in meeting recruiting quotas. Measures will be taken to improve success in recruiting and reduce voluntary attrition where possible.<sup>31</sup>

<b>National Defence's Total Planned Human Resources for Reserve Force Personnel</b>			
	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>
<b>Primary Reserve</b>	27,000	27,000	28,500
Cadet Organization Administration and Training Service	8,000	8,000	8,000
Canadian Rangers	5,000	5,000	5,000

**Table 3: National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces 2016-2017 Report on Plans and Priorities**

Source: Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff Group

The present day challenges actually date back to the 2002 Report of the Auditor General of Canada that addresses the recruiting and retention challenges. At that time, the main observations contained in the report were that “the forces do not have enough people in most of its military occupations...and despite efforts, recruiting is below targets.”<sup>32</sup> Specifically the report states that over 3000 positions remain vacant including engineers, vehicle technicians, weapon technicians, doctors, and dentists. Retention remains a challenge as more people are expected to leave than can be replaced with the current intake.<sup>33</sup> In addition, the report outlines the requirement for experienced personnel; the department did not produce data that would provide reasons for leaving the CAF thus were not in a well-informed position to design programs that would address retention issues.<sup>34</sup> The 2006 Auditor General report contained important changes namely, by 2005, “it had stopped the decline in the number of people trained and available for duty but has been able to increase that number by only about 700, despite

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Canada. “Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons”, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, April 2002, 1.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

having recruited about 20,000 new members into the Regular Force.”<sup>35</sup> This limited recruiting progress remains a challenge as the CAF attempts to attract suitable candidates in a very competitive labour market. The unique aspects of military service focus in a specific demographic as “National Defence targets Canadians aged 16 to 34 who are physically fit and inclined to join the military”<sup>36</sup> thus drawing from the Millennial labour pool resulting in a greater recruiting challenge.

### **WALT AND GILSON MODEL**

There are challenges for both the CAF and the Public Service in meeting their labour requirements. The Walt and Gilson, see Figure, model offers a potential solution providing a comprehensive framework to navigate through the policy environment. Extending policy beyond the content of recruiting/hiring reform to include the actors (policy makers, bureaucrats, stakeholders, and Millennials), the process of how to source, attract and hire in the context of the current labour market is necessary. Walt and Gilson argue that a “focus on policy content diverts attention from understanding the processes which explain when desired policy outcomes fail to emerge.”<sup>37</sup>

The Walt and Gilson model could prove to be a very effective means for both the Public Service and the CAF to develop the recruiting/hiring and retention policy that would serve to accommodate the needs of both organizations while incorporating the employment aspirations of the millennial generation. Defining the elements of the Walt and Gilson model and applying

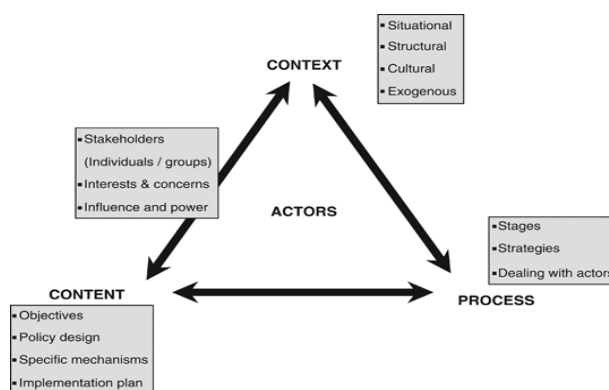
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<sup>35</sup> Canada. “Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons”, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, May 2006, 47.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>37</sup> Walt, Gill, and Lucy Gilson. "Reforming the health sector in developing countries: the central role of policy analysis." *Health policy and planning* 9, no. 4 (1994): 354.

them to the case of millennial recruitment in the Public Service and CAF will reveal the complex set of interrelationships. Although no more importance is placed on any one of these elements, actors by their very nature are central to the policy analysis.



**Figure 1 – Walt and Gilson Triangle Framework**

Source: Ditlopo et al. *Analyzing the implementation of the rural allowance in hospitals in North West Province South Africa*, 83<sup>38</sup>

Understanding the Millennial world and how they value technology and interpret social media needs to be incorporated into strategies designed to appeal to Millennials and to promote the Public Service and the CAF as an employer of choice. Public perception and the media will influence Public Service and CAF hiring and recruiting strategies; work must be done to influence that perception in a positive manner and promote the institution as one that inspires confidence and competency among the Canadian population. The nature of policy design will determine the levels of success in reaching hiring and recruiting targets with diversity, employment equity and other regulative components affecting the objectives and outcomes. Although beyond the scope of this paper to discuss incorporating technology and social media into hiring and recruiting strategies, there is a need to form the process aspect by enhancing the

<sup>38</sup> Prudence Ditlopo et al., “Analyzing the implementation of the rural allowance in hospitals in North West Province South Africa,” *Journal of Public Health Policy* 32, no S1, 83.

employer brand as author Andy Headworth notes “having little or no ‘real’ employer brand can really impact the success of your recruitment activities.”<sup>39</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Public Service and the CAF needs to create policy that promotes hiring processes that are efficient, that identify realistic qualifications for entry level positions and that create the employment environment that appeals to Millennials. The current demographic shift in the Public Service and the CAF is creating an immediate requirement to reform hiring/recruiting policy in order to be successful in meeting targets. The importance of technology and social media cannot be ignored and should be a key consideration in policy reform to attract, recruit, hire, and retain this cohort using the tools that are common place and widely accepted in their daily life. In short, the key is to target Millennials in the virtual world where they reside.

This also presents a unique opportunity for the Public Service and the CAF to work collaboratively to establish policy that will meet the employment expectations of Millennials. The diversity of employment opportunities that exists within the public sector appeal to this generation who is expected to transition from private sector to public sector on a regular basis to satisfy their desire to make a difference and complete meaningful employment. Understanding Millennials is critical and the unique characteristics of this cohort and incorporating their values and beliefs into the work environment.

The strategic benefit is the level of experience they will bring to each organization they choose to join. The Walt and Gilson model provides the means to address the intricacies of each

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<sup>39</sup> Andy Headworth., “*Social Media Recruitment: How to successfully integrate social media into recruitment strategy*”, Kogan Page Limited, London, UK, 2015.



organization and a method to focus on the other elements of critical importance beyond the policy development itself. The end product will promote the federal government as an employer of choice, appeal to the Millennial demographic and close the hiring gap that has been identified over the last decade.

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