Star Techs: The Next Generation

How the Canadian Artillery can adapt to best incorporate future generations.

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One cannot avoid the seemingly incessant slander perpetuated through various media platforms on young generations, painting an ominous portrait of millennials and more recently, the post-millennials as lazy, entitled, and coddled.  This has, for good reason worried older generations within the Canadian Army (CA) and Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA) who carefully work to protect tradition, culture and climate within their profession of arms. Being skeptical and cautious of generational trends is common and careful generational analysis is an important step in how we design training and how we lead in the RCA.  There is no turning away from the fact that the "millennial" generation dominates the workplace and their successors, "the post millenials" are soon to do the same.  So as the continual bombardment of news stories, viral internet soundbites and memes offer the portrayal of the entitled, over protected and over connected young generations of today, leaders must, as the old adage goes, provide sound solutions to these perceived problems and be a steward of the profession of arms and, as such, must "constantly act to align cultural assumptions, values and behaviours with professional ideology"[1] With careful analysis, the RCA will only require minor adjustments to its current practices to successfully incorporate future generations of gunners.

Prior to offering recommendations, it is critical to define, in detail the characteristics of the generations we are discussing.  Generations are one way to group age cohorts,  they are often considered as the average period between the birth of parents and the birth of their offspring, typically referring to groups born over a 15-20 year span.  Since the dawn of civilization, people

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[1] Okros, Dr Alan. n.d. "LEADERSHIP IN THE CANADIAN MILITARY CONTEXT," 10.

have identified generational cycles as a force of history and the master regulators for social change.[2]   An example of this, discussed largely in this paper is the millennial generation, which is currently the youngest adult generation.[3]   Common monikers of this generation are the "Net Generation", "Generation Y", the "Google Generation", and "Echo-Boomers."   The millennial generation is often considered to start as early as 1979 and as late as 1987, and finishing as early as 1994 and as late as 1999.  The post millenials, or "Gen Z" is reported as starting as early as 1995, with some anecdotal reference to starting as late as 9/11 (2001). For the purposes of clarity of this paper, and in line with the majority of popular research, we will consider millennials as those born between 1978 and 2000 and post millenials as those born from 2000 onward.[4]

In order to truly define which factors to discuss, one must differentiate between "age differences" and "generational differences." Age differences, for instance could simply be current fashion choices, innocuous rebellious attitudes or music choices while generational differences are not the same attitudes displayed differently, but are considered more revolutionary changes.[5] These generational differences are factors that play a significant part of defining the millennial cohort, such as the fact that millennials grew up in a time of economic prosperity, when children were a cultural focus of society, being micromanaged by parents and guardians often referred to as "coddled and confident"[6]  Since it unlikely that these traits can be erased completely within a

[2] Strauss, William, and Neil Howe. 1998. The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy. 1 ed. New York: Broadway Books. 58.

[3] Fry, Richard. 2018, "Millenials projected to overtake Baby Boomers as America's largest generation." Pew Research Center. Para 1.

[4] Sommer Kehrli, and Trudy Sopp, 2006. "Managing Generation Y: Stop resisting and start embracing the challenges Generation Y brings to the workplace," *Human Resource Magazine* 51.

[5] Bélanger, Julie, Psalm Lew, Canadian Defence Academy, and Canada, eds. 2011. Developing the next Generation of Military Leaders: Challenges, Imperatives and Strategies. Kingston, Ont: Canadian Defence Academy Press. 2.

[6] Zemke, Ron, Claire Raines, and Bob Filipczak. 2013. Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Boomers, Gen Xers, and Gen Yers in the Workplace. 2nd ed. New York: American Management Association. 145.

generation, the RCA must find opportunity in generational differences and adjust to work with

who is walking through the recruiting centre doors.

Aside from being "coddled" other common criticisms of the millennial generation is that

they are lazy, entitled and selfish.  This belief was thrust into the spotlight early in this decade as

it made the cover of Time Magazine titled "The ME ME ME Generation, Millennials are lazy,

entitled narcissists…"  Perhaps hand in hand with the aforementioned traits is the characteristic

that they are outspoken.  They want to have a voice in the workplace and desire to communicate

openly and regularly with their superiors and seek close relationships in a team-oriented, inclu-

sive workplace driven by near-peer approval and interaction.[7] An Ernst and Young survey of

business professionals found that millennials scored the lowest in leadership ability, In the same

survey, it was also suggested that they would be good leaders by the year 2020 so it's a reasona-

ble assumption to believe that they were scored lower in leadership due to their young age and

experience.[8]  Finally, perhaps connected to their desire to learn and progress, they are less loyal

to their positions, showed by a relatively high job-change rate.[9]

Identifying characteristics of millennials is useful for leaders in the RCA as we are on the

cusp of millennials assuming key leadership positions, we must also prepare for the future gener-

ations of post millennials to be prepared for the inception of this generation's idiosyncrasies in

the coming years.  The post millennials, much like the millennials come with a variety of nick-

names as well.  Generation Z, The 0 Generation, Gen 2020 are the most common.[10]  They share

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[7] Myers, Karen K., and Kamyab Sadaghiani. "Millennials in the Workplace: A Communication Perspective on Millennials' Organizational Relationships and Performance." *Journal of Business and Psychology* 25.2 (2010): 225–238. *PMC*. Web. 28 April, 2018.

[8] Association for Talent Development (ATD) Staff, "Managing through the ages" TD Magazine, January 2014.

[9] Henry G. Jackson "Millennials @ work," HR Magazine, May 2014.

[10] Holton, Tara & Fraser, Brenda, 2015 "Generation Z and Technology," Defense Research and Development Canada., 5.

some of the same characteristics of millennials, specifically utilizing technology with a similar consistency, or perhaps at an even greater scale. This generation has grown up in a wireless society seeing communication as instant and transportable with new instant messaging internet applications and the creation of smart phones. With these changes in technology come changes in how one regularly communicates. Text messaging, instant messaging and photo messages are more common than e-mail which is referred to as the post millennial generation's "snail mail." As a result of these short messages and the popularity of microblogging, this generation has shown a difficulty in drafting longer documents.[11]

This most notable descriptor of millennials and post millennials is their technological connectedness. This characteristic is approached with some caution as many senior leaders are echoing the thought "if you emit, you die" a catchphrase made popular by former US Deputy Secretary of Defence, Bob Work.[12] This is very real concern of cyber warfare and information security however some hold the view that technology is not going away and we must emit, and learn to do so responsibly, intelligently and with a low signature. Future leaders are "techno-savvy," they grew up in the age of technology where a computer was in the hands of almost every child. In 2006, three out of four teenagers were on line, and 93% of those ages 15-17 are computer users.[13] The impact of this hyper-connectivity is that technology has allowed them to be connected beyond their close community but rather to a global connection.[14]. It also allows

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[11] Ibid., 5.

[12] Deputy Secretary of Defense Speech Remarks to the Association of the U.S. Army Annual Convention As Delivered by Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work, Washington, D.C. , Oct. 4, 2016 https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/974075/remarks-to-the-association-of-the-us-army-annual-convention/ accessed on 21 April, 2018.

[13] National Academy of Sciences. Ready or Not. 2.

[14] Espinoza, Chip, 2012, Millennial Integration: Challenges Millennials face in the workplace and what they can do about them. 132.

for easy adjustment to new software and technological platforms that are "tools of the trade" for the nearly every Gunner.   One of the results of their global connectedness, is that diversity has become the norm.[15]  With this trend evolving, it is likely that the global connection to social and professional networks will deepen and allow for new ways to interact.[16].

Along with the aforementioned characteristics that are commonly in question by senior generations, there are a number of undoubtedly positive features associated with millennials and post millennial that need to be exploited.  Millennials show a preference for meaningful work opportunities that allow them to progress in their careers. They are interested in learning at work so they can make a valuable contribution to their job.  Millennials and post millennial are a generation of "digital natives" and have high knowledge of technology. Furthermore, Despite the common negative portrayal of future generations, millennials appear to be a more civic minded, morally grounded, and selfless generation than any in the past 40 years.[17] They have shown a steady decline in negative youth trends from crime, drug use, teen pregnancies and abortion to low test scores and lack of goals.[18]   In an interview with "Task & Purpose,  retired US Air Force Colonel, Mike LaFeve, said he does not worry about millennial's motivation for joining the military stating "The ones that join the military, their motivations are the same as mine [were]. They're kind of universal, tried-and-true."[19]  He also goes on to point out perhaps the most signature positive trait that will allow these future generations to work effectively in uniform, was that their level of bias towards race and sex is "profoundly, exponentially lower than the biases I grew up

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[15] Holton., 5.
[16] Espinoza, 133.
[17] Howe, Neil, and William Strauss. 2000. Millennials Rising: The next Great Generation /by Neil Howe and Bill Strauss ; Cartoons by R.J. Matson. New York: Vintage Books. 19.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Sicard, Sarah. "4 Ways to manage millennial in the military." taskandpurpose.com. https://taskandpurpose.com/lead-millennials-military/ (accessed April 14, 2018)

with…They're incredibly accepting of diversity."[20]   The research backs up this notion, not only are Millennials the most diverse generation to date, they are the most accepting of ethnicity and this trend will only grow with post-millennials.[21] Millennials and post millennials being welcome of diversity and team-oriented are key attributes of the leaders the Canadian Army is looking for. In the CAF's defence policy, it states that the new policy direction on Recruitment, Training and Retention includes specific direction to prioritize diversity and inclusion in the Canadian Armed Forces.[22]  This policy plans to fully leverage Canada's diversity and will promote diversity and inclusion as a core institutional value across the defence team.[23]  It is a reasonable supposition that future generations of leaders should fall into these roles easily, having been raised in a climate of inclusion.  This will make for healthy work environments and embracing diversity will enhance military operational effectiveness by drawing on all of the strengths of Canada's population.  A Defence team composed of people with new perspectives and a broader range of cultural, linguistic, gender, age, and other unique attributes will contribute directly to efforts to develop a deeper understanding of our increasingly complex world, and to respond effectively to the challenges it presents and future generations should have a much easier time with this notion.[24]  The CAF are increasingly being called upon to conduct a wider array of missions, from full spectrum warfare to disaster relief, and to coordinate with a more diverse representation of

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[20] Ibid.

[21] National Academy of Sciences, Generation Y: The Millennials...Ready or Not, Here They Come, 5. "GENERATION Y: THE MILLENNIALS," 3.

[22] Canada, and Department of National Defence. 2017. *Strong Secure Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy.* 104

[23] Ibid. 23

[24] Ibid. 23

players than ever before.[25] Future generations' fondness of working in teams and collaborating is also something that translates well to the becoming future leaders of the Canadian Army, as not only do all individuals need to be prepared to work in their current position, but identifying, training, coaching and mentoring future leaders is required to ensure the future success of the RCA.[26]

Working in teams is incredibly important as gunners' roles have evolved over the years, shifting from a war-focus only to a focus on management and technical skills.[27] Future genera-tions also have a higher expectation for career development, 82 percent of millennial respondents who were unhappy with their jobs noting that "career paths advanced too slowly where they work." It was recommended that to accommodate this new sentiment, a job rotation program be offered to enhance skill development and provide a breadth of knowledge gained from a variety of positions.[28] This is something that already exists in the RCA, offering opportunities for ad-vancement and courses, changes in position, trade "streams," organization and location often throughout one's career. The RCA embraces the concept of "boundaryless careers," different than the "up or out" policy of other militaries, the CA policy allows for growth and development beyond solely upward mobility. "Boundaryless careers" allow employees to gain a diversity of experiences in a variety of areas, something commonly referred to as "specialty courses." This flexibility of "boundaryless careers" and job rotation is key for young employees, more than

[25] Lindsay, D. R., & Foster, C. (2011). Preface. In J. Bélanger & P. Lew (Eds.), Developing the next gen-eration of military leaders: Challenges, imperatives and strategies. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Canadian De-fence Academy Press.

[26] Training for land operations. B-GL-300-008-FP-001. 2010. 1-6-1

[27] Kummel, Gerhard. 2003. "A Soldier is a Soldier is a Soldier!" Caforio, Giuseppe. 2006. *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military*. New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers. Pp. 417-433

[28] Stillman, David, and Lynne C Lancaster. 2014. *The M-Factor: How the Millennial Generation Is Rock-ing the Workplace*. Place of publication not identified: HarperCollins e-Books.181

their older coworkers and may be the key to counter the "disloyal" quality that was mentioned of younger generations towards their employment. These generations are also one of the most educated generations with an inherent love for learning.[29] The profession of arms is distinguished by the concept of service before self, and the acceptance of the notion of unlimited liability[30] throughout history, it has been a unique calling, soldiering 'requires peculiar qualifications of understanding and soul.'[31] In a 2015 scientific report by Defence Research and Development Canada Members of CAF and civilian organizations from these younger generations desired to have a "useful life" and wanted to "make the world a better place." They both communicated a willingness to work for a comparatively small salary, in harsh conditions, and for lengths of time away from family in order to help someone they do not know.[32] Young generations overwhelmingly favour these traditions and values which the army culture is rich with but army leaders and trainers must take the time to pass on these traditions, rituals and values as well as their deeper meanings to this next generation. Finally, the mission command philosophy translates well for millennials and post millennials. Incoming generations demand the "why" more than previous generations. They want the this not due to distrust, but rather to fully understand the background of the problem or situation.[33] When possible, leaders in the RCA must show these new generations of leaders where, how and why their mission fits in the context of the overall campaign. By doing this, leaders will be able to satisfy the ingrained curiosity by showing them how they will contribute to the bigger picture.[34]

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[29] National Academy of Sciences, Generation Y: The Millennials...Ready or Not, Here They Come, 5.
[30] strong, secure engaged p. 122
[31]Clausewitz, Carl von, Michael Eliot Howard, and Peter Paret. 1989. *On War*. First paperback printing. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press. 138.
[32] Holton. 19.
[33] Sommer and Sopp, "Managing Generation Y".
[34] National Academy of Sciences, Generation Y: The Millennials" 11.

Both of the positive and negative qualities of generations, however must be analyzed to understand how this will impact leadership and training in the RCA. The opinion that new members of the RCA must adapt to how things have always been is not a comprehensive approach to including age cohorts into our organizations. The majority of the negative generational differences can be adapted with small adjustments to how we operate in the RCA and a deliberate approach to professional development.

A reoccurring criticism of youth is that they are overprotected and coddled. This is considered a result of the involvement of parents in the lives of millennials and post millennials. They often enroll their children in numerous activities and attempted to ensure success by negotiating with teachers, coaches, professors and employers.[35] A result, as mentioned is that they need to be heard and receive feedback which is often viewed as a high-maintenance attitude.[36] The RCA should leverage this desire for feedback and find opportunity by building on the culture of coaching. Many young people thrive on collaborative work and support from colleagues, but we've yet to optimally figure out how to build a culture that helps existing employees to coach new ones. This coaching methodology should be specific and perhaps deviate from some of the current definitions of coaches that exist today. A preferred definition is that "coaching is the process whereby one individual helps another: to unlock their natural ability;…to increase their sense of self-responsibility and ownership of their performance."[37] This relationship will allow coaches to frequently communicate the impact and contribution the individual is making to

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[35] Strauss, William, and Neil Howe. 1998. The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy. 1 ed. New York: Broadway Books. 58.

[36] Tyler, Kathryn The Tethered Generation, *HR Magazine* 52 (May 2007). https://www.shrm.org/hr-to-day/news/hr-magazine/pages/0507cover.aspx. Accessed 28 April, 2018.

[37] Scales, Peter. 2013. *Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill/Open University Press. 129.

the organization, and allow them to feel like a contributing member of the team, which is commonly one of the desires that are so commonly seen with new generations. This should be considered a one-on-one intervention in which an individual works to improve a specific personal, interpersonal, or skill area, working with a facilitator in the chain of command to make personal change.[38]

Along with coaching, leaders in the RCA need to act as mentors. Currently, formal mentoring in the RCA is often reduced to counseling sessions on performance or career advancement rather than fully extracting all that can come from a mentor-mentee relationship. A mentor is a counselor, adviser and teacher who usually works in a one-one-one relationship with a protege, they are "someone available for the performer to learn from."[39] Mentoring programs "can shorten learning tracks, speed up managerial advancement, and build the next generation of leaders"[40] Millennials count on experienced, hands-on leaders who earn their respect by recognizing their potential and teaching them by showing them how to increase their performance, they are not enamored by position or title. This relationship requires regular interaction and feedback as almost all of the millennial generation literature addresses the importance of mentoring and seeking advice and feedback on the simplest of issues a result of being raised in an era of "active parenting."

Throughout the ages, war has been the occupation of young generations and it is clear that it is the best interest of the RCA to appreciate generational differences and to adapt and the develop the skills to turn this realization into opportunity. Careful investment into the human

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[38] Anderson, Donald L. 2017. Organization Development: The Process of Leading Organizational Change. Fourth edition. Los Angeles: SAGE. 231.

[39] MacLennan, Nigel. 2017. *Coaching and Mentoring*. 45.

[40] Stone, Florence M. 2004. The Mentoring Advantage: Creating the next Generation of Leaders. Chicago: Dearborn Trade Publishing. ix.

capital of the RCA will pay dividends in battle and leaders must learn to leverage the changing characteristics of future generations to successfully merge the best of the future generations without sacrificing important traditions forged throughout history.

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