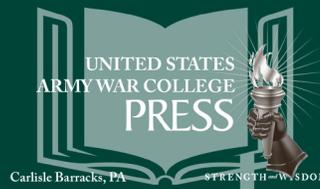


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The Future Security Environment: Why the U.S. Army Must Differentiate and Grow Millennial Officer Talent

Colonel Michael J. Arnold



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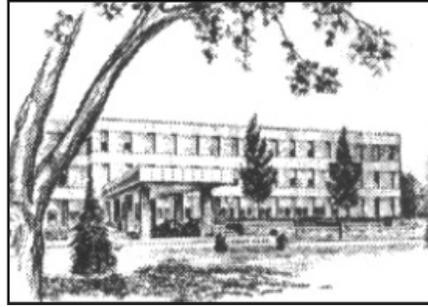


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**THE FUTURE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT:
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AND GROW MILLENNIAL OFFICER TALENT**

Colonel Michael J. Arnold

September 2015

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PREFACE

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MICHAEL ARNOLD is currently assigned to the J3 Directorate at the Defense Logistics Agency at Fort Belvoir, VA. He was commissioned in the U.S. Army in 1993 as a logistics officer. His first assignment was in Germany, where he deployed to support peacekeeping operations in Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR in Bosnia Herzegovina. In 1997, he was assigned to Fort Eustis, VA, where he deployed to support Operation DESERT THUNDER in Kuwait and then supported Exercise "Bright Star" in Egypt. In 2006, Colonel Arnold was assigned as the Chief of Plans and then as Battalion Executive Officer in the Republic of Korea. In 2008, he deployed to Iraq and focused on the "Responsible Drawdown of Forces." Upon redeployment, he served as the Professor of Military Science for the Army Reserve Officers Training Corps Program at San Diego State University, San Diego, CA. In 2011, Colonel Arnold was assigned as Battalion Commander for a U.S. Army Strategic Seaport in Beaumont, TX. Upon completion of command, he served as the Assistant Chief of Staff for Logistics for the 2nd Infantry Division in the Republic of Korea. Colonel Arnold holds a master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University and is working on a Ph.D. from the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego.

SUMMARY

The dynamic nature of the future security environment necessitates better retention of diversified talent among officers from the Millennial Generational Cohort. Although the U.S. Army has done well to attract a diverse and talented group of junior officers at commissioning, a revision of the Army's Personnel System that incorporates a more personalized management approach could help to motivate and retain millennial officers and better prepare them for senior leadership. Lieutenant colonels and colonels must provide the transformational leadership and innovation needed to create the intrinsic value that millennials seek in their profession. In order to explore what is most appealing to talented millennial officers and what is most effective for the Army, this Carlisle Paper will explore, as its methodology, the salient features of leadership theory, the characteristics of the Millennial Generational Cohort, and what senior leaders must do to improve attraction, motivation, and retention of millennial officers in the U.S. Army.

THE FUTURE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT: WHY THE U.S. ARMY MUST DIFFERENTIATE AND GROW MILLENNIAL OFFICER TALENT

Introduction.

The Army periodically has struggled with the retention of talented junior and mid-grade officers. Most recently, the Army grappled with how it could retain the broad types of talent it needed to conduct complex operations in remote parts of the globe while confronting many ideological threats. At one point in its history and after considerable analysis, the Army came to a troubling conclusion: “Since it could not motivate the highly educated work-force it was seeking, it would have to settle on simply educating the motivated people that it could attract.”¹ The report was produced during the Vietnam War in 1968. This approach had the effect of shifting the Army’s strategy away from incentivizing the retention of young officers with ambition, innovative ideas, an entrepreneurial mindset, and adaptive leadership traits to a strategy where the Army simply focused on the mass production of a large quantity of homogenous officers to progress through the ranks.

More than 50 years later, the Army faces a similar problem—how does it retain the best and brightest of its junior officers to grow and develop into the senior leaders it will need for tomorrow’s security challenges? This Carlisle Paper will begin by outlining a modest policy proposal in the Army’s Personnel System that will enable it to create a more personalized management system by identifying and matching junior officer talents with the skills it needs in multiple career fields. It will then provide a brief description of the leadership theory that underpins the proposed policy recommendations. Third, it will explain why the difficulty in retaining talent has been exacerbated by officers from the Millennial Generation and how differentiating talent will better align their initial experiences with their workplace expectations. Finally, this Paper will conclude by highlighting how this policy could increase the retention of a broader range of talented young officers and better position the Army for the complex and uncertain security settings those officers will likely inherit as future senior leaders.

Methodology.

The research for this Paper is underpinned by more extensive studies on “talent management” conducted by the U.S. Army’s Office of Economic Manpower and Analysis and the Center for Army Leadership. This Paper, however, focuses on specific policy recommendations that will enable the Army to differentiate talent within the first 5 years of active duty service by creating a more effective retention program for junior officers that will then foster the growth of a much larger requisite variety of junior officer talent as those officers ascend to the roles of senior leaders. In order to provide specific recommendations, this Paper used numerous “over time” generational studies and surveys to compare and contrast the general traits, behaviors, and preferences of millennials with other generational cohorts.

These types of studies attempt to assemble data across time in order to isolate generational differences from age differences. The trends from this research were then cross-referenced with two specific surveys of exiting junior officers to ascertain any correlation between the broad groupings of millennials with those millennials serving in the U.S. Army. At the outset, the author recognizes that there is a dearth of knowledge regarding specific causal data for departing junior officers, as there is little information available from any formal exit interview process.

The Problem: Does the Army Really Have a Junior Officer Talent Retention Issue?

There has been significant renewed interest in revisiting and revising the Army's current personnel system over the past 5 years. Volumes of literature and many impassioned pleas advocate everything from a total revision of the entire Department of Defense Personnel Management System because it "bleeds talent," to maintaining the status quo as "ignorance and arrogance" causes numerous misunderstandings about the effectiveness of the current system.² To be sure, any effective personnel system in today's complex and uncertain security environment will need to grow officers who will have a varied set of leadership competencies. Gone is the era where a production line approach to managing officers and "treating them as interchangeable parts" will be effective.³ Although the retention of junior officers, per se, is not a new challenge for the U.S. Army and has been present episodically since World War II, today's issue of appropriately managing and retaining talent beyond the 4-to-5-year Active Duty Service Obligation (ADSO) has been exacerbated by shifts in workplace attitudes among the Millennial Generational Cohort.⁴

A primary challenge faced by the Army when considering how it retains talent is not simply ensuring it has the right number of officers, but also determining whether it has the right type of differentiated talent to meet challenges beyond the junior officer level. When analyzing continuation rates at the 5-year point for millennial officers who were commissioned between the years 1998 and 2007, there is a slow upward trend from about 68 percent retention in 2003 to just over 80 percent in 2012. Despite the retention crisis that occurred in the 2007⁵ timeframe, where the Army predicted "a shortfall of over 3,000 officers in the senior Captain and Major ranks," more recent data indicate that the Army is successfully meeting the 80 percent retention rate guidelines for promotion to the rank of major.⁶ This quantitative evidence that the Army is meeting its retention goals leads one to contend that the problem lies elsewhere.

If the problem isn't the **quantity** of officers maintained after the initial ADSO, many contend it is the **quality**.⁷ Numerous headlines and scholarly research projects issue dire warnings that the Army is "losing the best and brightest," and that some of the Army's current practices may be engendering talent flight for those who feel their talents and skills can be better used in the private sector.⁸ Although it certainly has lost junior officers to attrition, there is no way to currently determine if the Army lost the "best and brightest" because there is no detailed record keeping of which specific types of officers are categorized as the best and brightest. Furthermore, it is problematic to assume the Army is losing only its top talent when it has no clear way of holistically defining talent. To better capture the breadth and depth of needed talent for future requirements, the

Army should be able to better identify what specific aptitudes, interests, motivators, and skills it has among the junior officers in its ranks and in which positions those attributes would serve the Army best. The approach should not be to propose new personnel policies towards retaining only the top percentage or **best** junior officers, but to create a policy that assists the Army in analyzing the entire junior officer workforce to see where the specific types of talent it has already recruited can continue to best serve both the Army and the individual.

The Army currently relies on an officer distribution system that prioritizes assignments by matching “the Army’s mission requirements and unit needs . . . [with] positions by skill, either one grade up or one grade down.”⁹ In accordance with recommendations from the 1980 Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA), the current Officer Personnel Management System does, in fact, balance vacant positions, unit priorities, and available officers in an effort to meet the annual “Army Manning Guidance.”¹⁰ However, the process for evaluating and assigning talent primarily “hinges on broad sets of information about an Officer” compiled from data on the Officer Evaluation Report (OER), the Officer’s Record Brief, a Department of the Army Photo, and one’s assigned branch and rank.¹¹ This system does not adequately identify a more comprehensive set of data about an officer that could be used to find future positions that “best fit” the officer’s talents. In fact, the current system largely ignores specific talent sets, defined as a “unique intersection of skills, knowledge, and behaviors” present in each individual officer, because “it currently lacks effective mechanisms for revealing and capturing those talents (or the demand for them).”¹² This reality is not an indictment for all the human resource specialists who currently serve in the Army’s Human Resources Command (HRC), but is indicative of a system that needs better inputs at the junior officer level to match talent with needs.

Implementing some minor changes within the system, with input from lieutenant colonels and colonels, could not only improve the Army’s ability to see its on-hand quantity of differentiated talent, it would also create an environment where junior officers could become more excited about retaining their commitment to serve because their career goals would be significantly better aligned with the needs of the Army. The notion that in order to adhere to the Army value of Selfless Service, one must follow a specified career path that first and foremost meets the needs of the Army, while placing personal goals and desires second, is foolish and outdated. Personal goals, career aspirations, and the needs of the Army need not be mutually exclusive. A more satisfied workforce could potentially increase the Army’s return on its investment and reduce the costly use of additional incentives to entice officers to stay.

The Solution: Differentiating Talent within the first 5 years.

Instead of continuing to rely on an industrial-era personnel model that focuses on the production of a “one-size-fits-all” operational and command-focused officer, perhaps it is time to consider approaches that recognize and cultivate a wide array of junior officer talent.¹³ The disillusionment of many talented junior officers, who have voted with their feet over the past decade, coupled with a security environment that now, more than ever, demands innovation, entrepreneurship, and adaptive leadership in an economy

that struggles to afford a large constabulary ground force mandates change in the Army's personnel system.¹⁴ The Army should consider ways to "differentiate talent" rather than settling on an assembly line approach to officer development.¹⁵ The overarching tenet of this research, which stresses the differentiation on company-grade officer "talent" within the first 4-to-5 years of their Active Duty Service Obligation, is nested as a subcomponent of "talent management" research already conducted by the U.S. Army Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis (OEMA). Michael Colarusso and David Lyle, who authored *Senior Officer Talent Management: Fostering Institutional Adaptability*, stress that, in order for differentiation to be successful, any system must:

rest on three legs: redesigned OERs; comprehensive periodic assessments of each officer [using the] Individual Development and Employment Assessments (IDEAs), and a talent management information system that captures the results and renders them truly useful to officers, commanders, and HR managers alike.¹⁶

Although aligned with Colarusso and Lyle's general recommendations regarding senior officer talent management, this analysis suggests that some form of periodic talent assessments must occur in the first 5 years (and the corresponding "apprenticeship phase") of an officer's early development.¹⁷ Not only would these assessments be an effective retention tool during an officer's initial tour of duty, they would also be better indicators of future potential well before initial ADSO times expire and before the Army further invests in officers by promoting them to the rank of major. To be clear, however, the proposed initial assessments, nested within battalion and brigade-level "Junior Officer Developmental Programs" discussed in this research would not need to be incorporated into the more formalized IDEA framework that Colarusso and Lyle propose. Since the primary purpose would be to simply gain context for what useful talents an individual junior officer possesses before having the option to separate from the Army, the Junior Officer Developmental Programs recommended here would differ from the more formalized processes and procedures highlighted in the IDEA concept.¹⁸

The assessments conducted within the early career timeline would benefit the junior officer by providing not only a broader understanding of career options prior to the ADSO date, but also valuable information on how one learns and develops. It would also serve the Army well by providing far greater detail on future potential and employment opportunities beyond the junior officer's two to three evaluation reports. The Army would now have a broader set of tools to ascertain who it needs to retain and who it should allow to depart.

Reform Recommendations.

While considering ways to address the limitations of the Army's current personnel system, a series of reforms aimed at differentiating junior officer talent ought to be considered. The results could increase the Army's ability to "unlock the latent productive capacities of its (junior officer) workforce" and may also stem the tide of many disillusioned millennial officers who choose to depart at about the 4- or 5-year mark.¹⁹ The following recommendations are offered to begin the discussion about how to identify and track junior officer talent for future career opportunities:

- Know what talents the Army needs: The office of each U.S. Army Branch Chief, together with members of the U.S. Army's Human Resources Command, should assemble a Task Force to develop an "Army Career Interest Inventory" identifying aptitudes, interests, motivators, and skills required for each of the multiple, sustainable career fields at the direct, organizational, and strategic leadership levels. Once established, the framework could be provided to officers prior to commissioning and used as a benchmark to assess the officer's "best fit" continually within the first 4 to 5 years of service (and later in periodic comprehensive assessments at key "career crossroads").²⁰
- Know what talents the Army has: Empower senior officers at the battalion and brigade levels to implement formalized Junior Officer Developmental Programs for all assigned lieutenants and captains.²¹ These programs, using specifically designed aptitude testing developed by leading experts in industry, would help senior officers gain focus on developing comprehensive assessments of each officer's propensities, interests, motivators, and skills. The data from these periodic multi-source talent assessments would be submitted to HRC along with the Company-Grade Officer Evaluation Reports (Department of the Army Form 67-10-1). These assessments would offer collaborative, nonbinding recommendations on potential career paths that are the "best fit" for the individual officer. A by-product of this process would be to wrest some control of future officer assignments away from HRC and put it in the hands of each junior officer and those who provided the direct counseling, coaching, and assessment.
- Create a collaborative system to match needed talents with on-hand talents: Using the HRC web-based "evaluation entry system" as an interface, task HRC to compile the periodic "talent assessments" and use them as a more rigorous qualitative indicator of the best career fit for individual officers. The "talent" data from these reports could then be used, prior to the end of the initial ADSO, to re-evaluate, negotiate, and match the most optimal career opportunities of the individual officer with the needs of the Army. Having some career flexibility at this early point in an officer's career would be an amazing incentive and would also serve as a formidable retention tool.

Battalion and brigade commanders are a linchpin to the success of this endeavor because they have the deepest and most personal understanding of each of their assigned junior officer's talents. In an effort to increase the breadth and depth of talent the Army needs for a complex and uncertain security environment and to better accommodate the shifting preferences of millennials, it is time that the Army takes steps to create a more personalized management system. Senior officers have an obligation to set the conditions for the future by inspiring young leaders to use their wide array of talents in ways that are far greater than merely operational and command focused. If successful in this modest endeavor, the Army can build a much broader talent bench for the Army's future senior leadership positions.

Sound “Leadership Theory,” Not Mentorship: The Supporting Elements of This Policy.

Over the past decade, public esteem for America’s Armed Forces, to include the U.S. Army, has been consistently held high among all professions. The latest Pew Research Report for Religion and Public Life indicates that “Americans continue to hold the military in high regard, with more than three-quarters of U.S. adults (78 percent) saying that members of the armed service contribute “a lot” to society’s well-being.²² However, some cracks in the Army’s foundation have begun to surface during more than 13 years of high operating tempo war. In recent annual surveys on leadership, the Army has recognized that the “develops others” competency is one of the core leadership foundations most in need of improvement. Annual surveys, known as the “Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership” (CASAL), indicate in findings:

While leaders’ commitment to the Army is at an all-time high, perceived reciprocal commitment from the Army has degraded to the point that almost 50 percent of leaders do not believe the Army is as committed to them. . . . Tracking reciprocal commitment provides early warning to senior leaders of the potential cascading effects of uncertainty on lower morale, loss of quality leaders, and lack of unit cohesion. [Although] leaders lead their subordinates well, more attention is needed on developing them to be the leaders of the future (coaching, counseling, mentoring, listening, [and] sharing).²³

The best way for the Army to demonstrate its commitment to developing future leaders, and as a by-product to stem the tide of departing quality junior officers, is to formalize flexible Junior Officer Developmental Programs that empower leaders at the battalion and brigade levels to categorize and record aptitudes, interests, motivators, and skills of junior officers, while providing needed coaching and counseling responsibilities. This process, accomplished in concert with HRC, would not only allow senior leaders to develop their subordinates, but would also present opportunities to gather much more intimate and informed first-hand knowledge about their junior officers, ultimately enabling the Army to align better the talents of individual junior officers with the needs of the Army in subsequent assignments. In order for this process to be successful, the Army will need to ensure its senior leaders are better grounded in the fundamental principles of leadership theory and less reliant on “faddish solutions reducible to a buzzword like mentoring.”²⁴

The Army’s leadership manual, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-22*, stresses that leaders must:

invest adequate time and effort to develop individual subordinates . . . and act as stewards of the profession . . . [to] ensure that leaders in the future sustain an Army capable of performing its core functions.²⁵

The Army produced this regulation to underscore the importance of the development process and the leadership responsibilities of senior leaders. However, it alone does not provide a sufficient body of knowledge of the theoretical underpinnings of leadership principles that senior leaders need to understand more fully and practice to

coach, counsel, and develop their subordinates effectively. Just as junior officers entering the Army have numerous talents, skills, and behaviors, so too do senior leaders. Some well-rounded, successful senior leaders may not have the requisite skills to foster well-run junior officer development programs. Keeping this in mind, the Army must recognize that senior leaders may need to supplement their years of practical leadership application with periodic educational opportunities that provide a more thorough theoretical framework for leadership and developmental tasks. Periodic reviews would provide Army leaders with a much better perspective of their roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, it would enable them to apply both the “art” and “science” of leadership.

While implementing development strategies, it is important to highlight the differences between leadership and authority, adaptive and technical problems, and transactional and transforming (transformational) leadership. Many senior leaders have seen these terms, but have rarely had the opportunity to delve into a deeper understanding of these concepts. While not intended to be fully comprehensive, the subsequent portion of this Paper will clarify some of these foundational concepts.

It is important, however, to stress that the Army should consider adding additional opportunities for leadership theory education to senior officers, perhaps during Intermediate Level Education (ILE) and Senior Service College (SSC) opportunities, in order to make the Junior Officer Developmental Programs more effective.

The Army defines leadership as “the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.”²⁶ However, a broader application differentiates leadership from authority by taking out the “prominence and dominance” often equated with leadership and focusing on the process for which a leader “mobilizes people to meet adaptive challenges.”²⁷ The Army, with its structured chain of command, is best suited to deal with technical problems; those problems where “knowledge about them has been digested and put in the form of a legitimized set of known organizational procedures guiding what to do and role authorizations guiding who should do it.”²⁸ However, emerging trends indicating challenges with the development of subordinates, and having an impact on the Army’s ability to differentiate talent effectively at the junior officer level, indicate that senior leaders have an adaptive challenge; a problem where “no adequate response has been developed, no expertise can be found, and where there are no established procedures that will suffice.”²⁹

In order to maximize the effectiveness of dealing with adaptive challenges, senior leaders will need to differentiate between transactional and transforming (transformational) approaches to leadership. The former concept describes “the relations of most leaders and followers . . . [one where] leaders approach followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for another.”³⁰ The latter concept, is more complex and entails that:

The transforming leader recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower. But, beyond that, the transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result . . . is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents.³¹

This short description of sound leadership principles is what Army leaders at battalion and brigade levels ought to be well versed in to implement developmental programs effectively for their junior officers. First, having a solid understanding of the theoretical tenets of leadership, dovetailed with one's own personal leadership experiences, will improve the coaching, counseling, and development strategies of senior leaders, which will then lead to greater opportunities for the Army to gain comprehensive assessments of each junior officer's aptitudes, interests, motivators, and skills. What this might look like in practice for Army battalion and brigade commanders is that, during these assessments, they ask open-ended questions and probe deeper into the core concerns of their junior officers, hoping to gain clarity on what they value, appreciate, and struggle with in their current functional roles. Then, by implementing some flexibility in the assignment process and giving some control of job placement to these senior officers, the Army could better differentiate talent and determine "best fit" for specific career fields. Finally, better informed career placement recommendations could lead to higher satisfaction rates among junior officers who would be engaged in a reciprocal decisionmaking process regarding their careers.

It is important to note, however, that in order to realize the specific policy goals outlined in this research effectively, leaders should avoid the tendency to couch the implementation of any battalion or brigade junior officer development program as an organizational **mentorship** program. Although mentorship is also something senior leaders should aspire to do with their junior officers, the formal meaning, which describes the process as a "voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person of greater experience and a person of lesser experience that is characterized by mutual trust and respect," should be differentiated from formalized junior officer developmental programs.³² With the goal of attaining a more refined data set of each junior officer's aptitudes, interests, motivators, and skills for talent differentiation, the developmental relationships proposed in this research are intended to be unlike the classic mentorship process because the developmental relationships are formalized and evenly implemented for all junior officers in every battalion and brigade. Conversely, the mentorship process is described as:

a naturally occurring behavioral phenomena . . . that may form either within the chain of command or outside formal assignments. These relationships develop when the junior (or less-experienced) responds to the positive leadership and example of the senior (or more-experienced) and both choose to continue the relationship.³³

With these differences in mind, it is clear that the Army should ensure these two disparate processes are delineated. "Close differentiation of mentoring, coaching, and counseling is important to our soldiers' growth and development" and is paramount to the successful implementation of this policy.³⁴

Generational Cohort Studies and the Impact of Millennial Officers.

There has been great debate on the efficacy of generational cohort studies in the field of leadership theory due to potential limitations on differentiating data between

large groups of people. Despite much improvement in data collection processes, where newer studies assemble data across time in order to isolate generational differences from age differences, there still remains a “within and between analysis” (WABA) problem. WABA problems exist in research where too much variation within a certain population may skew the aggregation of data. In essence, there become so many exceptions to the rule that the central premise starts to fall apart. Since generational research relies on the aggregation of large populations of individuals into cohorts; Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials, for example, these studies could fall prey to WABA issues.³⁵

Having recognized this potential flaw at the outset and considered that reported data illustrates only broad generalizations about large cohorts of people, the data are still applicable for this research because they can show implications and trends for junior officers from the millennial cohort serving in the Army. The literature on generational research has grown exponentially over the past decade, with numerous scholarly articles published in psychology, sociology, business, management, and leadership theory journals. Also, much interest has been garnered from the corporate sector, which has been very interested in adopting specific recommendations to better accommodate and retain talented young members of their workforce and to market products for a growing segment of people. Although the U.S. Army is clearly different from the corporate sector, there is a clear benefit for the Army to examine some of the more recent studies and trends of the millennial generational cohort, as they provide significant indicators of shifting workplace preferences that may impact the retention of junior officers in the Army. In no way does this research advocate that radical changes should be made in the culture or values of the U.S. Army. Above all else, all members of the profession of arms should embrace the tenets espoused in the Army’s leadership doctrine. However, understanding millennials’ workplace preferences will allow senior leaders to be more effective in “unlocking the latent productive capacities of its (junior officer) workforce” and adopting policies that will benefit the Army’s junior officer workforce.³⁶

In pop culture and in various media outlets, millennials, those who were born roughly between 1980 and 2000, have been characterized as “needy, entitled, confident, assertive, overly casual, and narcissistic.”³⁷ It is important to put some of these superficial stereotypes aside to uncover a deeper contextual understanding of millennial behavior. For this, one must look at the educational, political, economic, and social contexts common during the formative years of millennials growth into adulthood. As an example, “this generation has been shaped by . . . helicopter parents, frequent positive feedback and reassurance, significant leaps in technology, and political and economic turmoil.”³⁸ As such, it isn’t hard to imagine why their workplace attitudes and desired job characteristics are quite different from other generational cohorts (Gen X and Baby Boomers).³⁹

Recent empirical data on workplace preferences indicate that millennials are seeking “good work-life balance, meaningful work, and sufficient attention and recognition.”⁴⁰ Since the Army has not instituted any formal “exit interview” process, this research relies on similar correlated data from two independent surveys; one conducted by Tim Kane in 2010 and another conducted by Sayce Falk and Sasha Rogers, also in 2010. Each of these surveys interviewed 250 junior officers who had departed the Army and concluded, among other things, that junior officers were “dissatisfied with the personnel management system . . . [which leads to] job dissatisfaction because of lack of quality

developmental experiences.”⁴¹ The results of many of these “over time” studies seem to correlate with data collected in the two surveys of departing junior officers.

However, it must be acknowledged that the limited scope of junior officer participants in these two surveys may bias the results. To be sure that there is higher correlation, the Army should implement procedures to capture work preference data at the 4-year mark from a more representative overall population of junior officers. However, one aspect of this limited data that dovetails nicely with the proposal to create junior officer development programs is that during these leader-subordinate engagements, lieutenant colonels and colonels would be providing junior officers with the same “rich feedback, individual attention, praise, guidance, and direction” that millennials are seeking.⁴² By applying tenets of transformational leadership in a more personalized management approach, senior officers would be fulfilling a need that many millennials feel is important in the workplace. Although the correlation of workplace preferences between the larger group of millennials and junior Army officers is nascent, the potential impact for further research and refinement is paramount in the Army’s endeavor to better differentiate talent.

CONCLUSION

In order to be effective and to provide meaningful change, any proposed mechanism for revealing and recording junior officer talents would have to have a series of specific outputs leading to desired outcomes. First, in an effort to better understand generational and cultural perceptions of subordinate leaders, the Army ought to provide educational opportunities to officers at the battalion and brigade levels on leadership theory and transformational leadership practices. Second, the Army should implement flexible developmental programs at the battalion and brigade levels, with specific identified outputs, that require senior officers to counsel, coach, and professionally develop junior officers. Third and simultaneous to the implementation of flexible development programs, the Army should require each responsible senior officer to compile and report specific talent data gleaned throughout the development process to the Army’s HRC. This will enable the Army to gain an intimate knowledge of each individual (junior officer). The implementation of this simple process will be a win-win for the Army and for junior officers. On the one hand, it will entice longer-term affiliation and commitment within the profession of arms by giving junior officers greater flexibility and say in their career choices. On the other, it will provide the Army with the requisite variety of competitive young officers needed to increase the “breadth and depth” of its talent pool for future senior leadership positions. Additionally, those officers found to be uncompetitive for any identified career paths could be let go at their ADSO date. This could be a powerful step in discerning which individuals possess the talent best suited for duty beyond the ADSO date and which individuals the Army should allow to depart.

The 2014 QDR characterizes the future security environment as “dynamic and unpredictable,” and encompasses the need to “innovate and adapt to meet future challenges.”⁴³ If innovation and an adaptive culture are the overarching goals, the Army would be well advised to consider adopting this policy proposal so that it can create a more personalized personnel management system. This methodology has strong potential to

springboard multiple types of talent throughout the Army in ways that are much deeper than the current operational and command focus. The complex and uncertain security environment outlined in several U.S. National Security Documents not only require the U.S. Army to manage differentiated talent, but also to unleash it!

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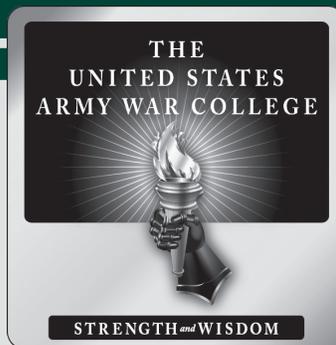
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