REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188

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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 09-03-2012	2. REPORT TYPE Student Research Paper	3. DATES COVERED (From - To) Oct 2011 - Mar 2012

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
Generational Leadership in the United States Marine Corps	N/A
	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	N/A
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
	N/A
6. AUTHOR(S)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
Fitzsimmons, David, M, Major USMC	N/A
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	N/A
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
	N/A

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
USMC Command and Staff College 2076 South Street, MCCDC, Quantico, VA 22134-5068	N/A

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
N/A	N/A
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)
	N/A

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

N/A

14. ABSTRACT

There are currently members of three generations on active duty in the United Sates Marine Corps and another only a few years from enlistment age. Oftentimes leaders find difficulty identifying with the Marines in their charge and wonder why the Marines do not share the same vision as the leader. The problem may lie in generational differences that create confusing communication and unnecessary tension in the operating environment. Leaders can eliminate some of this confusion and tension through an understanding of generational differences. The Marine Corps could increase effectiveness and efficiency by practicing generational leadership in the workplace and training leaders to understand the importance of cross generation communication and motivation.

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE	UU	34	Marine Corps University / Command and Staff
Unclass	Unclass	Unclass			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code) (703) 784-330 (Admin Office)

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8/98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Generational Leadership in the United States Marine Corps

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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AY 11-12

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Date: _9 March 2012_

Executive Summary

Title: Generational Leadership in the United States Marine Corps

Author: Major David Fitzsimmons, CG-3

Thesis: The Marine Corps could benefit from increased effectiveness and efficiency by practicing generational leadership in the workplace and training leaders to understand the importance of cross generation communication and motivation.

Discussion: There are currently members of three generations on active duty in the United Sates Marine Corps and another only a few years from enlistment age. Oftentimes leaders find difficulty identifying with the Marines in their charge and wonder why the Marines do not share the same vision as the leader. The problem may lie in generational differences that can create confusing communication and unnecessary tension in the operating environment.

Leaders can eliminate some of this confusion and tension through an understanding of generational differences. In the major tasks every military faces of recruiting, training, motivating, evaluating, and retaining service member, there are generational disconnects. By understanding the character of the problems they face, leaders can begin to formulate solutions to accommodate generational differences.

Conclusion: Understanding subordinates is something every good leader should strive to do. The Marine Corps makes significant efforts to understand ethnic backgrounds, respect religious traditions, and provide equal opportunity regardless of gender. MCWP 6-11 *Leading Marines* should be expanded to acknowledge generational differences. It should also include the importance of recognizing and overcoming generational differences between leaders and Marines.

Marine Corps leaders should expand their knowledge of generational differences, so they can better understand the motivations of the Marines in their charge. This can help build relationships that strengthen unit cohesion and support mission accomplishment. In this time of transition and fiscal responsibility, the Marine Corps will have to evolve processes and focus on keeping core talent within the organization. Understanding the evolution of generations will help the Marine Corps evolve and create an advantage to recruit, train, motivate, evaluate, and retain the current and next generations of Marines.

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Preface

Serving as the Executive Flight Line Division Officer in Charge at Marine Helicopter Squadron One, I observed behaviors from my Marines that I just did not understand. They did not seem to share my views on why certain processes and policies were important. I had difficulty explaining my point of view to them. For a long time I wondered why they just did not "get it".

One day I was talking to a former fleet squadron commander and he proposed the trouble I was having was a generational conflict. I was immediately interested in the topic as he explained the theory to me. It seemed as though I had a new avenue by which I could attempt better interaction between my Marines and myself. Simply understanding that they see the issues fundamentally different than I did was a step in the right direction.

This led to my interest in the topic of Generational Leadership and the possibilities it held for a better leadership philosophy. As I have explored the research on this topic I have found that truly understanding another generation might never happen from the perspective of a leader. However, recognizing this limitation opens the door to working through the challenges and having a better mutual understanding between generations.

Finally the research has opened my eyes to a significant challenge facing America's all volunteer force. In a future where unemployment does not influence recruiting, the Marine Corps could have a huge challenge in recruiting and retaining top people to serve in the Marine Corps and stay beyond their first enlistment.

<u>Introduction</u>

The US military spends a lot of time and energy to find efficiencies and improve its

organization. Through the years, training and awareness programs have been implemented to

highlight gender, cultural, and recently sexual orientation sensitivities. These training programs

are an effort to build a more cohesive and effective work force. One item that has emerged in

recent years is dealing with generational differences in the workplace. The Marine Corps could

benefit from increased effectiveness and efficiency by practicing generational leadership in the

workplace and training leaders to understand the importance of cross generation communication

and motivation.

Generational Leadership is a broad label and encompasses numerous defining

characteristics, so to simplify one can look at the two parts individually and then recombine.

Leadership, defined by the Marine Corps, is the inseparable relationship between the leader and

the led.[1] The use of the term "relationship" in this definition makes it key when one tries to

consider all of the elements that go into a relationship. One of those elements could be

generational differences. According to Jean Twenge generational differences include world

events, social trends, economic realities, and behavioral norms that one experiences during their

youth that shapes how one sees the world.[2] Recombining these two concepts creates a working

definition. Generational Leadership is incorporating how others see the world within the

relationship between leaders and followers.

What does the Marine Corps have to gain from consideration of Generational

Leadership? The importance of leadership cannot be overstated in the Marine Corps or US

Military as a whole. The 2011 National Military Strategy concludes that leadership will be the

key to American Military success in the global environment of the future.[3] With declining

budgets and expanding requirements there are not many other options as useful and cost effective

as making better leaders. The Marine Corps has prided itself through the years on its ability to

train Marines to be exceptional leaders. This process of training leaders is ever evolving and is

expanded and refined continually. MCWP 6-11 *Leading* Marines teaches that "Marine leaders

use every element of our leadership foundation at their disposal."[4] Teaching leaders about the

general communication styles and motivations of different generations can expand the Marine

Corps leadership foundation. This leadership awareness can provide a necessary advantage in

today's competitive environment.

<u>Understanding the Generations</u>

The first step to effective leadership between generations is an understanding of who

makes up each generation. Generations are studied and categorized by many demographers and

writers. The classification of dates and names are relatively the same with some minor

disagreement.   Most seem to agree that the experiences that a person grows up with are a large

factor in generational differences. The specific date a person was born does not precisely

determine what generation they belong to as much as the collective shared experiences that

person had during a lifetime. It was World War II and its aftermath that separated the

Traditionalist generation from the Baby Boomers. The perspectives of experiencing the war or

the economic postwar boom are more important than having been born in 1945 versus 1946. As

most generational theorists are in relative agreement on dividing lines between generations,

Lancaster and Stillman deal specifically with generations in the workplace. Because of that,

their set of definitions will be used for purposes of this paper.

Lancaster and Stillman define the Generations as follows. The Traditionalist generation is comprised of people born between 1900 and 1945. The predominant conditions that shaped them were the Great Depression and two World Wars. The Baby Boomer generation is comprised of people born between 1946 and 1964. The major influences in the Boomer generation include the advent of television, the civil rights movements, and the Korean and Vietnam wars. Generation X includes people born between 1965 and 1980. Generation X has been influenced by the technology explosion and 24 hour media coverage around the world. The Millennial generation includes people born between 1981 and 1999. Millennials have also seen technology expand at a furious pace and are influenced by 9/11, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the internet.[5] Lancaster and Stillman stop with the Millennials, but the next group has been refered to as the Linksters. Linksters were born 2000 to present. Many experiences and events that will shape the Linksters have yet to happen, but the most likely dividing line is children born after or who do not remember 9/11/2001.

Before examining each group, it is appropriate to identify and focus more closely on the generations currently serving in the Marine Corps. The generations currently serving are the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and the Millennials. Using the Marine Corps Almanac to separate Marine populations by age, one finds the following. Marine Corps Officers are comprised of Generation X (50 percent), Millennials (42 percent), and some top-level officers from the Baby Boom generation. Marine Corps Enlisted are predominantly from the Millennial generation (86 percent) with senior enlisted from Generation X (12 percent) and very few Baby Boomers.[6] Military age requirements and mandatory retirements simplify the generation dynamic for the armed services. The civilian world can face four to five different generations in the same workplace vice two to three. As a result the two most prominent generations in the Marine

Corps are Generation X and the Millenials, and all are likely to be executing policy created by a Baby Boomer. To relate this to a business environment, the Marine Corps top management are Boomers, upper and middle management are Generation X and the workforce are Millennials. The Linksters should also merit some consideration at this point since they are only a few years away from being old enough to serve in the military.

The first generation to examine is the Baby Boomers. Named for the population boom following World War II, the Baby Boomers are an exceptionally large generation. One can describe the profile of this generation using the categories previously used to define generational differences; world events, social trends, economic realities, and behavioral norms. This generation has been shaped by world events like the Korean and Vietnam wars, civil rights protests, Woodstock, and Watergate. Boomer social trends included the invention of television and the television culture. Society's norms changed with rock and roll, free love, and political awareness at the national level. Boomers experienced positive economic conditions and grew up in an era of expanding consumer goods and purchasing power. Behavioral norms in this generation included higher education for the masses, protesting for change, and socially acceptable divorce. The changes from the time of Traditionalists were drastic, comparing youthful times of relative peace and prosperity to their parents' World Wars and Great Depression.[7]

These experiences and the number of members in the generation have shaped the way Baby Boomers act in the workplace. This generation's size has created a significant element of competition and has shaped the work ethic of Baby Boomers. While they are generally considered optimistic in what they can accomplish, there is an underlying need to excel and distinguish oneself from peers. They are concerned with how to get ahead and have often put

work before family to do so. The boomers also saw protest and revolution change the world around them and thus believe it possible to change the world, or at least the organizations around them. The results are a population that often focuses on work first at the expense of a personal life because they believe they can change the organization for the better.[8]

The next is Generation X, named likely for the lack of creativity of overworked Boomers and Traditionalists. This generation was shaped by world events such as the end of the cold war, the space race, and the invention of computers. Social trends for Generation X revolved around negativity reported 24 hours on CNN. Gang violence, AIDS, famine abroad, and child abduction are some of the many stark realities Generation X faced. Generation X saw a more diverse range of the economy with tough conditions in the 70s and excess in the late 80s and 90s. Behavioral norms for Generation X created independence and skepticism.[9] This generation came home to empty houses and apartments, while their parents worked into the night, to watch the negativity on TV while preparing their own dinner.

Generation X brought their skepticism into the workplace and questioned authority at every turn. Ironically, a generation of latch key kids finds family time more important than work. Generation X workers often take the stance that if their work is done, there is no reason to stay at the office late into the evening. Generation X is also known to have little loyalty to a particular employer and is focused more on building their personal experience level than building skills for a specific company. Generation X brought technology to the workplace like never before. While boomers implemented the first computers in the office, Xers better understood technology as they evolved with it during their youth. The result is a group of independent, technologically able, skeptical workers that will get the job done on their schedule to allow time to go home and have a personal life.

The Millennial Generation is named for the new millennium that closed out the birth dates for this generation. The Millennial generation has been shaped by world events such as the Oklahoma City Bombing, 9/11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the birth of the Internet. Social trends for Millennials revolve around technology, from game systems to smart phones, with every conceivable social interaction that could be modified by technology. Economic realities were more positive for Millennials who saw the excess of the 90's balanced out and the good economy of the early 2000s. Behavioral norms for Millennials challenged many previous boundaries and brought tolerance mainstream. Traditional family, race, religious, and sexual roles became nebulous and Millennials paid little attention to behaviors once considered outrageous. The dawn of the information age combined with a technology explosion have created a generation more quickly informed and connected than any previous generation.

In the workplace Millennials bring three generations of knowledge with them on their smart phone with the omniscient Google at their fingertips. The traits passed to the Millennials from the previous generations have made them realists. This realist attitude, combined with available technology that has kept them connected makes them collaborative in the workplace. This collaboration happens instantly with peers through text message and email, allowing Millennials to be more open to new ideas. Millennials are exceptional multi-taskers, and look for efficiency in the workplace. Like Generation X, Millennials place importance on getting the work done on their own schedule and having time for family. Unlike Generation X, Millennials are not as independent and often look to peers for concurrence.

The last generation to consider is the Linksters. Depending on the source, Linksters can be born as early as 1995.[10] However, most generational theorists use 2000 as the dividing line. Using either number means Linksters are just about to enter the workplace and little is known

about how they will communicate and assimilate to the work environment. What will be

important to them for motivation and how can one make the most use of their talents? Only time

will tell. The one important factor for the military is that Linksters were born after or probably

don't remember the September 11th attack. This perspective could affect the Linksters'

motivation to serve in the military or fail to see the importance of the war in Afghanistan.

Another group of people to consider in generational leadership is Cuspers. Cuspers are

not a generation, but the people who transition between the generations. Cuspers were born in

the last or first years of a particular generation. They are noteworthy because they can often

provide translation between the generations. A Generation Xer born in the late 1970s might have

the technology experience of the Millennial generation, but also identify with the social norms of

Generation X. Because Cuspers bridge the gap between two generations, they are a great

resource for mediating, translating, and mentoring.[11]

Why Generational Leadership?

Today's military leaders face the same basic tasks and challenges as their predecessors.

They need to recruit, train, motivate, evaluate, and retain military service members. While the

tasks have not changed, the people, tools, and methods for accomplishing these tasks have

evolved with the times. The social and behavioral norms of people have changed and evolved

through the years. What may have been unacceptable or taboo to a Baby Boomer, might be an

ordinary daily event for a Millennial. Tools such as computers, social networks, smart phones,

and internet have evolved through the life of the Generation X and Millennials. These

generations, who have seen technology since birth, are more capable and comfortable with using

it in the workplace. New methods of communication, training, and task organization have also

changed dramatically through the years. With all this change, there is a need to understand the perspective of each generation to lead effectively. Bridget Hamacher concludes "Understanding, recognizing, and embracing how different generations view the world around them will assist leaders at every level in leading their people – our most important asset – and therefore, capitalize on their strengths and skills for mission effectiveness and accomplishment."[12]

Most leaders can probably agree that at one time or another they have wondered why their group of subordinates just "doesn't get it." Possibly referring to a mentality about their job, lack of performance, or a negative response to what should have been a good deal. The disconnect or as Lancaster and Stillman call it, a clashpoint,[13] is where generational leadership may apply. It is often easy to spot a disconnect and clashpoint, but not as easy to explain why it happened or what can be done to prevent it from happening. The Marine Corps would likely refer to these clashpoints as internal friction. According to *Leading Marines,* vigorous leadership best overcomes internal friction.[14] A leader with a understanding of generational differences could be quicker to identify internal friction and be better equipped to respond and prevent it in the future. Unfortunately, *Leading Marines* makes no mention of generational concerns, or how leaders should address them.

Generational disconnects are often the result of failure to see a different viewpoint. Since generations have had different experiences that shaped them through a lifetime, they can look at the same set of circumstances and seem them differently based on that generational experience. An example of possible disconnect between Boomers and Generation Xers has to do with reports of status, of current conditions. While Boomer commanders like to have status updates and reports to show productivity, Generation Xers view the same reports and updates as a distraction from the overall task at hand. Another example is when a leader assigns a project to be

completed by a team. Generation Xers might see this as the leader not trusting them to accomplish the task without help. Conversely, Millennials might see an opportunity to work with their peers, collaborating to complete the project. When one steps back and looks at all of the possibilities for disconnect, it is astonishing how many daily interactions can be perceived differently by each generation.

When considering leadership styles and techniques, military leaders have the added complexities of rank and command. In many situations the autocratic style of military leadership does not allow for other influences to affect how to lead troops, perhaps most obviously in combat. It is a matter of leaders directing tasks and subordinates accomplishing the mission. If a Generation Xer tells a Millennial to take a hill or capture an enemy position, there will not likely be a generational disconnect. It is in the overall leadership approach that generational leadership has value. If through solid leadership the Generation Xer builds a positive relationship with his Millennial troops, they will be interested in accomplishing the mission because of the character of that relationship, not just because the Generation Xer is of higher rank.

Generational Disconnects in the Military

Recruit, train, motivate, evaluate, and retain military service members. Five tasks that are common to all military services and have not changed with the different generations. The challenges these tasks provide leaders of today can be overcome by taking a generational leadership approach. By looking at each task in the light of a different generation's view, it is possible to suggest ways by which each task can be accomplished more effectively.

Recruiting has been a military challenge since the United Sates discontinued the draft in 1973. What motivates a young man or woman to volunteer to serve their country with the

possibility of death as a reward? By looking at this from the perspective of the last four

generations, one can see very different reasons.

The Traditionalist grew up in a time of war and poor economy. The military was a

calling to serve and be a part of the greater good. It was also a way to provide a future for their

families through a steady paycheck and education benefits. Baby Boomers were much harder to

recruit. The majority of Boomers expected higher education and questioned their government,

two items that likely left doubts about serving in the military. The draft during the Vietnam War

showed how tough it was to get Baby Boomers to sign up for military service. Generation X was

likely a difficult generation to recruit. A generation that seeks individuality and independence,[15]

the military is the opposite of the type of career path you would expect a Generation Xer to

choose. Then comes the Millennials, a generation who witnessed school shootings and 9/11 in

their youth. Recruiters could once again use patriotism and security for their recruiting pitches.

Post 9/11 patriotism, combined with Millennials need to work as a team, makes this generation

more suited to the military than their skeptical Generation X predecessors.

Throughout the years a patriotic sense of duty has been key to recruiting, but an approach

that understands its audience adds to its effectiveness. Beyond patriotism some of the services

have taken a different approach. The US Air Force and Navy have started advertising the

opportunity to work with advanced technology as an incentive to join their respective services.

This is a clear attempt to capture the attention of a new audience and appeal to the Millennial

Generation.

Training is the next challenge the military faces on a daily basis. Once the recruits arrive

someone has to train them. While there will never be a replacement for the physical fitness

training needed by the Marine Corps or other services, the academic and technical skill training programs can be adjusted to reach the target audience.

A particular example is currently unfolding throughout the Marine Corps. It is a shift from paper copy texts and manuals to electronic media. Many a student has complained since the beginning of electronic text about being unable to read from a computer or just wanting a hard copy of a text. This is a generational issue. Generation Xers grew up with paper textbooks and rarely a computer in the classroom until possibly high school. Millennials were the first to have electronic learning tools in primary school through college. They are therefore more likely to accept using electronic texts as a primary training aid.

The next challenge to consider is how different generations learn. According to Jennifer Deal the majority of Generation X and Millennials prefer learning skills on the job while their Boomer predecessors preferred classroom instruction.[16] Discussion groups are also a favorite of Boomers that does not translate well to the younger generations. Feedback during training sessions had a different connotation to each generation as well. Boomers did not want feedback during the training process and likely see it as a negative indicator. Generation Xers and Millennials both prefer immediate and continuous feedback during training. One item that has slowly evolved differently among all three generations is peer interaction and feedback during training. Boomers rated it last in their preferred methods of learning, while Generation Xers rated it in the middle of their preferences, and Millennials prefer it second only to on the job training.

Another training generational disconnect involves the use of simulators. While some consider them to be expensive video games not worth their cost, others would call them an

invaluable training tool. A Baby Boomer or Generation Xer might think there is no replacement for the experience of doing a live training exercise, but a Millennial will likely see the value in an electronic simulation of that training exercise. The disconnect is rooted in the training syllabus. Training plans and requirements were developed and written by Boomers and Xers. Due to the absence of devices or limited belief in the value of simulators, these generations have not relied heavily on the use of a training simulator.

Motivation is a key component of any military unit and a concern of leaders everywhere. To be able to motivate, one has to be able to identify with subordinates and clearly communicate with them. This could be considered the toughest part of generational leadership and has the highest probability for disconnects.

Communication is perhaps the most common area to experience a generational disconnect. The language used by different generations often has different meanings and can present a challenge. Beyond that is the intent of the message. While language might be clear, non-verbal messages might be received differently than intended. The meaning each generation assigns to words is different and based in the experiences each generation has endured.[17] The word "owned" has different meanings depending on the generation using it. If a Boomer said they "owned" something, it would imply possession or legal rights to that object. When a Millennial says they "owned" something it usually refers to defeating or dominating the object or action. If the words are expressed clearly, but the meaning is misunderstood, effective communication is not possible.

Relating to subordinates is another extremely common area for generational disconnect. What is important to a Generation Xer might not be the least bit important to a Millennial.

Consequently when trying to motivate a subordinate with an incentive that one might personally deem beneficial, the subordinate might have no interest in the incentive or even be insulted by it. If a leader thought a subordinate was doing well on a project and offered to allow that subordinate to work on a team with his peers to expand the project, there could be very different reactions. A Generation Xer would likely see this as an indicator that he was not doing well and the leader was taking away his independence on the project. Conversely, a Millennial might be happy to share his work with peers and appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with a team to expand and improve the project.

"Why" is the ultimate question when it comes to identifying with a different generation. Why do they value different things? Why do they act a certain way? Why can they not do things the same way as previous generations? The problem lies in the very thing that makes them different. The values each generation has are based in their experiences and as the world has evolved, values have changed. Identifying with a different set of values is quite possibly the greatest challenge leaders can face in today's workplace.

In the Marine Corps, and the American military at large, evaluation is important and often used to show indicators of success to superiors. Evaluation is also another challenge to generational leadership since each generation needs a different type and frequency of feedback and evaluation. Boomers are used to formal feedback given at regular intervals and not necessarily on a frequent basis. Generation Xers want more feedback and in a less formal manor.[18] Generation Xers are very independent, but have a need for frequent feedback to ensure they are on the right track. Millennials have raised the bar even further, wanting immediate feedback, and do not require a formal session to receive it. Both Generation X and the Millennials tend to see through the Boomer style of mixing praise with criticism as a method of

softening the blow.[19] It becomes a challenge for leaders to balance daily operations with providing honest and critical feedback to subordinates in a way that does not alienate them.

Between motivation and evaluation there is another sub category of military tasks, namely, to reward. Whether in the form of a medal, a letter of commendation, a day off, or just a pat on the back, official recognition is needed by all generations. While every generation needs to be recognized, each one has a different idea of what that recognition should look and feel like. Lancaster and Stillman use the example of a weekend business trip to a sunny location to illustrate the point. After a solid work performance, a Boomer leader offers the Xer subordinate a spot on the company trip to a conference in a sunny town. The Boomer views this as a good deal and a chance to network and get ahead. The Xer looks at this as time spent away from family and an obligation, not a reward. This illustrates how a leader's good intention to reward a subordinate who is doing well can do more harm than good.

Retention, the last task to be discussed, is affected by many things. Generational studies show that from the time of the Traditionalist in the workplace, loyalties and institutional retention has changed dramatically. A Traditionalist would spend a lifetime working for an institution because of loyalty and gratitude for the opportunity to work. Boomers stayed with institutions because they had worked their way up the ladder and were not willing to start over with a new institution. Generation Xers and Millennials have different views on remaining with one career much less one institution. This presents a significant problem to the military structure of career paths and retention.

In the military one's occupational specially is assigned out of basic training and stays the same for most people throughout a career. While there is opportunity for lateral moves and

temporary assignments, the majority will remain in the same career field for the duration of their time in the service. The retirement benefits of the military are also creating a generational disconnect. The average Millennial sees little benefit in remaining beyond a first enlistment if they have not committed themselves mentally to the prospect of 20 years of service. Generation Xers are more interested in building resumes than remaining with on institution, and Millennials want to have parallel careers to suit their multitasking abilities.[20] The Marine Corps occupational specialty design is not expansive enough to accommodate Xer and Millennials who need to branch out their career paths.

<center>Implementing Generational Leadership in the Marine Corps</center>

The Marine Corps leadership training model has been recognized by *Fortune 500* companies as an effective way of making leaders. Now it is time for the Marine Corps to look back to business and recognize the value in training Generational Leadership. Companies like IBM and Deloitte LLP have published references for managers regarding generational differences in the workplace. IBM's reference concludes that, "effective managers of today are adopting new leadership styles that promote innovation and collaboration throughout the organization. By engaging a multi-generational workforce, innovation can be increased." [21] Likewise, Deloitte's publication stresses the importance of "partner[ing] with all of our people regardless of generation to build a future that will benefit all of us," will provide "sustainability of our business enterprise, and the healthy returns to the business over the long term." [22] The Marine Corps could benefit from further research and evaluation of these differences and create a training program for Staff Non-commissioned Officers and Officers that highlights key challenges leaders face with respect to generational differences. The tasks military leaders have

of recruiting, training, motivating, evaluating, and retaining are the starting point for this awareness and can be further refined to include all aspects of leading Marines.

Recruiting future Marines will require a shift in approach to identify with the Millennial and Linkster generations. The US Army has evolved recruiting efforts with each generation in an attempt to identify with the target audience. The "be all you can be" slogan was directed at individualistic Generation Xers, the "Army of one" slogan at Millennials who want to make a difference at the individual level.[23] The Marines have not changed the famous slogan "The Few, The Proud, The Marines" for different generations and have always relied on the sense of being an elite service as the draw for new recruits. Time will tell if this can continue to work for the Marine Corps, but consideration should be given to a more generational approach when actually sitting down with a recruit.

By the time they are ready to enter the workforce, Millennials and Linksters have more technology experience than Boomers or Xers can imagine. Incorporating this technology can become an effective recruiting tool for the Marine Corps. The prospect of being a Marine Rifleman is a tough thing to sell to most optimistic 18 year olds looking to find themselves and direction. Increased presence of the Marine Corps in social media and through on-line experiences can help recruiters connect with this audience. Information currently on-line for prospective recruits should be expanded and more options explored for interactive recruiting. The current process leads to the inevitable "contact a recruiter" where the prospective recruit must give his information and wait for a phone call. If the recruiting process included more computer based interactivity it might be quicker and cost recruiters less time in the office. Prospective recruits could fill out applications, schedule physicals, and interact in chat rooms

with other prospects from their area. The website might also have an on-line recruiter who could answer questions and chat without an office visit.

Millennials and Linksters want a social and environmentally conscious career that still allows them to remain flexible and connect with family. This is a tall order for the Marine Corps with aging facilities, rigid schedules, and long deployments. The focus of recruiters should be in line with the progress of the military with respect to social issues. The ability to make a difference in the life of an average Afghan is not something to be treated lightly. This type of recruiting might help a Millennial look past some of the perceived negatives.

Simple technology benefits can also be included to replace older, less attractive benefits. The benefits of a commissary or exchange are hardy attractive to a generation that can buy anything on Amazon and have it delivered to their doorstep. It would make more sense to offer free wireless internet in all barracks as an incentive. A smart phone for every Marine could also be a benefit for Millennials and Linksters that would benefit units as well as the individual Marines.

Training procedures and materials have evolved in the Marine Corps with the introduction of technology. This practice needs to continue, Millennials and Linksters learn in different ways than the Boomers and Xers. They prefer more on the job experience and learning through doing. This could benefit Marine Corps training programs by reducing classroom time and requirements. Millennials also prefer to learn in a small work group environment. The individual attention and instant feedback are key to these small working groups vice large group classroom instruction. The Marine Corps already has robust on the job training programs. From helicopter mechanics to infantry riflemen, Marines teach by doing in most cases. The benefit of

learning by doing instead of spending time in an anonymous classroom can be incorporated into recruiting as it has in the past.

Technology in training will also be key to training the next generations and keeping them both interested and motivated. Digital simulations are a valuable resource when live training is costly or impractical. The Marine Corps needs to make better use of the number and type of simulation trainers in all career fields and keep the technology current. At HMX-1 the helicopter mechanics have a VH-60 interactive trainer that exactly replicates actual helicopter systems. The interactive training gained from this single piece of equipment is often cited as the most helpful training aid and experience new mechanics have while learning. The trainer is not, however, included as part of the official training syllabus. Marines and other military leaders need to look at the value gained from a technologically advanced simulator and correct training syllabi to include more focused simulation training.

An example is AH-1W training events for firing a TOW missile. In the training syllabus, when a live missile is not available the student flies the training flight and talks through the process but does not have any live ammunition to employ. The same event could be conducted in the simulator where the student could fire an unlimited number of missiles and truly master the process despite the lack of a live misslie. There are currently simulator events for student pilots in many areas, but syllabi often get delayed due to lack of live training resources. Leaders should be more flexible in allowing simulated events to qualify in place of live training requirements.

Motivation is a large concern for leaders of different generations than their subordinates. How can they relate to and communicate with another generation? The answer is not a mystical

as some would think. Relating to a younger or older generation is always going to be difficult. Where a Boomer experienced free love and civil protest, Generation Xers lived through the radical 80s and excess of the 90s. These two groups likely will not see eye to eye on things because their perspectives are different. That is Okay. It is important for leaders to understand they do not necessarily see a situation the same way as a subordinate. Once they understand this, they can be open to the idea that a different approach may be needed to motivate.

Motivation can be linked to respect in the workplace; respect for leaders, peers, and the task at hand. Different generations view what is respectful differently and often clash over this issue in particular. If leaders broaden their perspective to see things from the other generation's view point they may find that respect is a two way concept that can lead to motivated Marines.

Most Boomers work from the principle that time and seniority are what one needs to be respected in the work environment. Since they have been in the Military Service the longest, it makes sense they are the highest ranking and should be treated with respect. Conversely, Generation Xers believe that respect is gained by doing a good job and contributing to the organization. In military terms the Xers would value a billet or position over a rank or seniority. This concept is clouded even further when Millennials enter the picture. Millennials, like Xers, believe personal contributions should be a larger part of respect in the workplace than seniority. They also believe that face to face interaction and direct communication is not disrespectful when dealing with superiors. Millennials think it is their place to question and comment on the ideas and assignments of their leaders. When dealing with any of these three ideas of why someone is respected, there is no intentional disrespect inherent in the concept, but different generations often take offense to the different ideas and have difficulty motivating and maintaining the respect needed to motivate.

Motivating Generatipon Xers involves understanding their skeptical viewpoint. Just because a Boomer leader has seniority, does not make him the duty expert in the eyes of the Xer. It is important to show Xers that the Boomer's idea or assignment is relevant and important to the Generation Xers development. If a leader can show the Xer that they will benefit and gain experience from the task, it will be more appealing. Generation Xers are incredibly independent and often prefer to work individually. They should be assigned tasks that can be done individually, or given individual parts of a group task that can be combined after the work is done. Generation Xers will also want to be recognized or rewarded for the task accomplished. It does not need to be extravagant. A verbal recognition in front of the Marine's peers is often enough to recognize the Generation Xer. If the Xer has put in extra time to accomplish a task, an afternoon off is an easy reward that tells the Xer that his work was appreciated.

Motivating Millennials involves understanding their multitasking, technologically advanced mindset. Millennials are also skeptical of seniority by position and prefer a skill-based leadership structure. Beyond the Gen Xers, Millennials like to work as part of a group. Leaders should consider themselves to be coaches of the group. Millennials think most things are a discussion and have been asked their opinion throughout their childhood by their Boomer parents. The leader of the group of Millennials should recognize this and not be offended when an assignment is met with discussion of how to accomplish any tasks and what importance they have. This is not a sign of disrespect from the Millennials, just their operational norm. If the leader takes the time to discuss the task, he may explain why the task is vital, or he may learn a new way to accomplish the task. The Millennial is not trying to insult the leader by offering alternative methods of accomplishing the task. Their multitasking brains are just trying to find the most efficient way to spend their time working.

Motivating Linksters will be another challenge. Time will tell how they will respond to authority and what they will view as criteria for leadership roles. Their Generation X parents' skepticism will likely be continued, along with the multitasking of their older siblings and relatives of the Millennial generation.

Evaluation is a regular event within the Marine Corps and the military writ large. From scores on the rifle range, to Basic Skills Tests, to annual proficiency and conduct ratings, Marines are constantly evaluated. It is how these evaluations take place, and what their relevance is that can cause disconnects between the generations.

When it comes to Generation X, evaluation should involve direct feedback, positive reinforcement, and be commensurate with performance. The Generation Xers want direct feedback without the Boomer approach of starting with a positive, then criticizing, then finishing with a positive. The Xer does not want to waste time on the positives when they could be learning about the deficiencies. Straightforward direct feedback is preferred, but the complexity arises because they still want positive feedback. This is a basic difference from Boomers. If a Boomer is doing well, no news is good news. If the Generation Xer is doing well, no news leads to questions about whether they are doing a good job or not. The concept of measured feedback relates to Generation Xers work ethic. Johnson and Johnson state this principle best, "reward winners with your time."[24] If one has superstars that do 80 percent of the work and the lesser performing individuals that do 20 percent of the work, rewarding the superstars with feedback and time interacting with the leader will pay bigger dividends then spending more time with the marginal performers trying to get them to be superstars.

Millennials want a lot of feedback and evaluation like Generation Xers, but they are not as direct about it and credibility is more heavily weighted. The Millennial wants positive feeback, but beyond that, they want to know how their effort affected the organization as a whole. Giving feeback that is hollow will only cause the Millennials to question the leader's credibility. Millennials, much like all generations should, need a clear picture of what is to be accomplished, what is expected of them personally, and feedback along the way. Think of Millennials as interactive. Give and take is the norm for them, vice their Generation X predecessors that want to take a task and run with it by themselves.

With both Generation X and the Millennials formal evaluations at annual or semi-annual intervals seems outdated. These reports and processes are constructs of the Boomer generation and do not provide the younger generations with the frequency or volume of feedback that they prefer. Take a proficiency and conduct report for a Lance Corporal. This Marine receives a proficiency mark and a conduct mark twice a year.[25] Four numbers to tell him how he is doing over the course of 365 days. Now assuming this Marine's Officer in Charge (OIC) counsels him and explains the marks, it still amounts to relatively little in the way of feedback for the Marine to know how he is doing. When one adds the complexities of command averages and individual prejudices on grades and now those numbers might not represent that Marine's performance accurately. The Marine Corps should review the Pro/Con process and expand the categories of feedback and the frequency of the report. It is also incumbent on leaders to understand the viewpoint of younger generations and not view increased feedback as "coddling", but as a valuable tool in motivating Marines.

Retention is a concern for all of the military services and should be an effort focused on the Millennial generation, looking forward to the Linksters. Baby Boomers are at the end of

their careers in the military and many who want to stay are at the point where that needs to be approved by Congress on a case-by-case basis. Generation Xers are also deeply vested in the Marine Corps. Most Generation Xers have likely already determined if they will remain in the Marine Corps or transition to civilian life. The youngest Xer by the above definitions was born in 1980. That would make them either an officer with around ten years, or enlisted with around fourteen years in the military. In either case they do not constitute the greatest retention target. This leaves the Millennials and looks forward to the Linksters.

Millennials have already been described as a group who do not value time in an organization as a qualifier for position or authority. This construct is very much the opposite of military structure. Millennials also value individual contribution to the greater good and this trait in particular can be used by the military to retain them. Millennials want to multitask and "build parallel carreers".[27] Millennials are also loyal to concepts and beliefs over institutions.

The Marine Corps can use many Millennial qualities to their advantage when it comes time to convince Millennials to stay. First is rewarding ability, not seniority, as a key to retention. If re-enlistment and officer career retention become a more fairly evaluated process, the best Marines will be selected and both the Millennial and the Marine Corps will benefit. Second, individual contributions, when warranted, should be more readily rewarded with commendation or medals that help to make that Marine more competitive for retention and add to the Millennial's sense of personal contribution. Third, lateral moves and parallel jobs should be more readily accepted and encouraged. For example, at a squadron a young Corporal is an excellent communications Marine and works on the computer system. This Marine likes his job but also wants to be a plane captain / aerial observer and fly on the squadron aircraft. The flight line division and the S-6 arrange for this Marine to train as a crew chief during work hours when

he is not needed in the S-6 and now there is another qualified flight crewmember. The Corporal is happy because he gets to do two different jobs and the squadron benefits from a Marine cross trained in two valuable skill sets.

Millennials have a strong sense of diversity and are morally and environmentally responsible. Starting with diversity, it is imperative the Marine Corps break down the barriers to diversity, such as fully integrating women in all occupational specialties. The Baby Boomers, and, to a lesser extent Generation Xers, still have many diversity barriers. The repeal of "don't ask, don't tell" was a tremendous concern for the Boomer Generals dictating policy, but it was a very minor event for the Millennials who are most affected by it. Millennials want and expect diversity of culture, religion, race, gender, and sexual orientation. To retain them in the military, the Marine Corps will need to break down more diversity walls and truly open up to the social norms Millennials have always known. Beyond diversity is moral and environmental responsibility. The Marine Corps should be finding ways to innovate and operate in more environmentally friendly ways. Taking advantage of clean energy initiatives and green building standards, the Marine Corps can construct an environment that benefits the earth and the Marine Corps, and entice Millennials to remain in the organization.

Conclusion

Understanding subordinates is something every good leader should strive to do. The Marine Corps makes significant efforts to understand ethnic backgrounds, respect religious traditions, and provide equal opportunity regardless of gender. *Leading Marines* should be expanded to acknowledge generational differences. It should also include the importance of recognizing and overcoming generational differences between leaders and Marines.

Marine Corps leaders should expand their knowledge of generational differences, so they can better understand the motivations of the Marines in their charge. This can help build relationships that can strengthen unit cohesion and support mission accomplishment. In this time of transition and fiscal responsibility, the Marine Corps will have to evolve processes and focus on keeping core talent within the organization. Understanding the evolution of generations will help the Marine Corps evolve and create an advantage to recruit, train, motivate, evaluate, and retain the current and next generations of Marines.

Notes:

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[4] United States Marine Corps, MCWP 6-11, *Leading Marines* (27 Nov 2002), 30

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[12] Bridget V. Hamacher, *Different Generations and the Challenge of Leadership – Does this Matter?* (Masters Paper, Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College, 2011), 23

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