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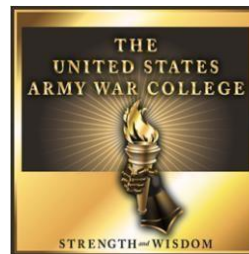
The Millennial Challenge:  
Evaluating the Assimilation of  
Millennials into the Army Officer  
Corps

by

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# The Millennial Challenge: Evaluating the Assimilation of Millennials into the Army Officer Corps

(6422 words)

## Abstract

The millennial generation has created and will continue to generate unique challenges for the Army. For example, how is the U.S. Army officer corps changing its institutional and cultural behaviors to best assimilate the millennial generation? Is the Army officer corps keeping enough quality officers to lead our tactical formations in the future? What are the trends the millennial officers are showing in their service and can the Army learn from the millennial perspective? This paper examines these questions by researching specific characteristics of the Army officer corps and the millennial generation. The research builds through a survey conducted by millennial Army officers that give insights into areas of commonality and areas of conflict. Areas of commonality include the Army as a purpose-driven profession, evaluation criteria, career path focused on development, professional education and duty position experience for growth, compensation, inclusion, and finally, customs, norms, and values. Areas of conflict are the Army's reliance on evaluation reports, lack of mentorship, limited civilian education opportunities, and work-life balance struggles. The paper concludes the millennials appear to be content and generally optimistic with their service in the Army.

## **The Millennial Challenge: Evaluating the Assimilation of Millennials into the Army Officer Corps**

The millennial generation is having a significant impact on the current and future business sector.<sup>1</sup> These impacts are driving corporations to change their approach to recruitment, retention, training, and daily work behaviors of this newest, and ever-growing presence in the business environment. Is the Army preparing for this same generational impact? The simple answer is yes. As part of our nation's profession of arms<sup>2</sup>, the Army continues developing strategies and processes that does take the millennial generation characteristics into consideration. This paper will focus on the assimilation of Generation Y into the U.S. Army officer corps.

The millennial generation has created and will continue to generate unique challenges for the Army. For example, how is the U.S. Army officer corps changing its institutional and cultural behaviors to best assimilate the millennial generation? Is the Army officer corps keeping enough quality officers to lead our tactical formations in the future? Should there be concern in the development of future Battalion and Brigade commanders? What are the trends the millennial officers are showing in their service and can the Army learn from the millennial perspective?

To help answer these questions, this analysis has four distinct sections. First, the essay describes the Army officer corps along similar characteristics, give some context for the professional environment millennial officers find themselves. Second, the essay offers a helpful understanding of the millennial generation. The third section compares the first two sections through analysis of a general survey completed by a small section of millennial Army officers. The paper will examine areas of conflict and of

commonality between the millennials and the Army officer corps. Finally, the paper will present some recommendations for the Army and the generation Y officers to consider.

### US Army Officer Corps

The U.S. Army is a considerable sized 'corporation' at over a million service members, almost half in which are active duty.<sup>3</sup> The US Army would rank number two on the 2017 Fortune 500 list of most employers.<sup>4</sup> Walmart is the only company that has more employees at well over two million.<sup>5</sup> The active duty army officer corps is roughly 16% of the total active Army.<sup>6</sup> 87,000 active duty officers is an enormous population of personnel to manage. Without specific data, we can use the previously referenced demographic statistics from Statistic Brain to figure out the number of Army officers per generations.

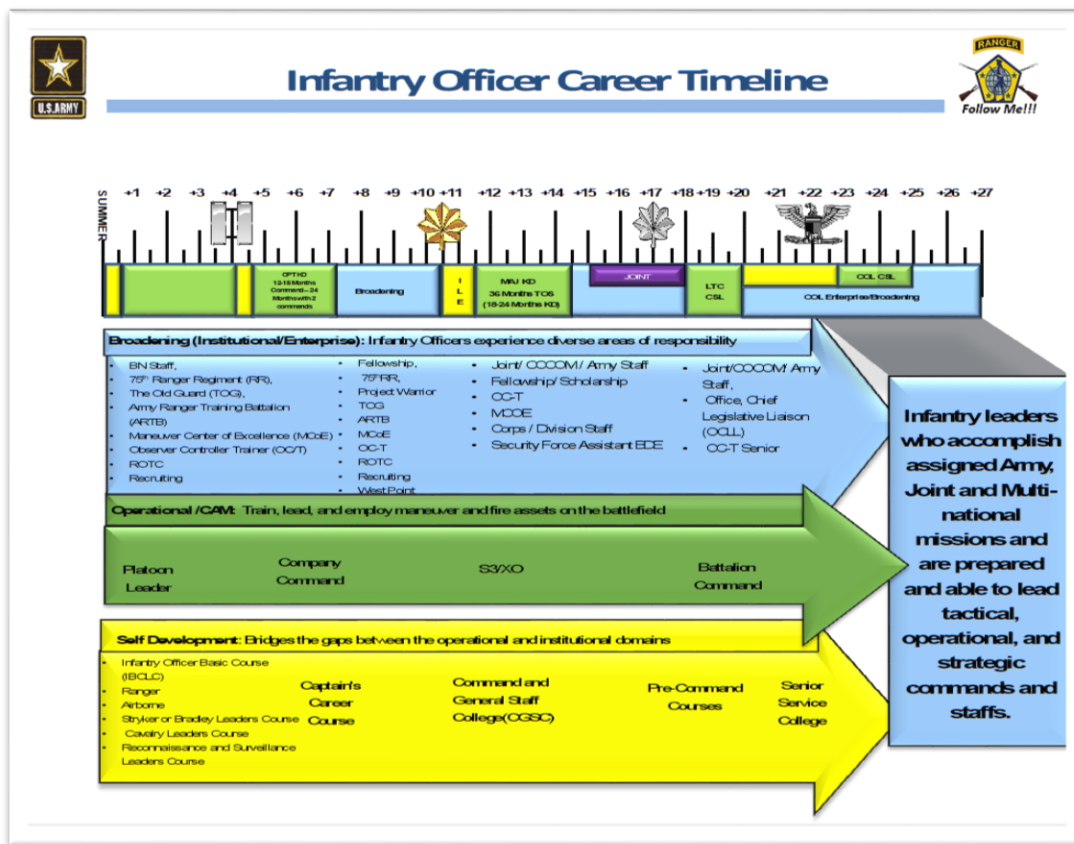
Statistics Brain states that 73% of the entire active Army is millennial, 18% is Generation Z, and 8% is Generation X and older.<sup>7</sup> This eight percent is important as they are the most senior decision makers, both in the officer and non-commissioned officer ranks. Since Generation Z is age 22 now, we can assume those number roll into the Generation Y category since Gen Z officers just now beginning to earn their commissions. According to Statistics Brain age distribution, I deduce roughly 90% of the active Army officer corps are millennials, nearly 79,000 millennial officers.<sup>8</sup> According to Fortune magazine, that would put the Army officer corps at the 79 of 500 for employees.<sup>9</sup> In order to manage such a large organization, the Army uses an enormous collection of doctrine, policies, regulations, and other publications to give law, order, structure, process, and other management tools for the institution.

This paper examines a few aspects of the Army officer talent management process that may be valuable comparing to the millennial characteristics. Career path, training and development, evaluations, and mentorship. The essay will explore other areas such as compensation and culture. All of these aspects except compensation and culture will be based on the Department of the Army Pamphlet or DA PAM 600-3 titled Commissioned Officers professional development and career management.<sup>10</sup> DA PAM 600-3 is not prescriptive but does provide the basis for how the Army manages the officer corps.<sup>11</sup>

The U.S. Army Talent Management Strategy of 2016 end state is to be “a ready, professional, diverse, and integrated team of trusted professionals optimized to win in a complex world.”<sup>12</sup> The Army defines talent as the combination of three aspects; skills, knowledge, and behaviors.<sup>13</sup> The Army’s talent management is a systems based approach and is seen as an investment for the institution.<sup>14</sup> “By better understanding the talent of our workforce and the talent needed by unit requirements, the Army can more effectively acquire, develop, employ, and retain the right talent and the right time.”<sup>15</sup> The following aspects we will discuss focus on the later part of the previous statement, retain the right talent at the right time.

The career path or timeline for an Army officer is a very deliberate process. Below is a chart of a generic infantry officer’s career path or timeline. Each branch or functional area (FA) has a generic timeline that articulates the major goals for the officer. Each branch or FA is the proponents for deriving these goals.<sup>16</sup> Time in grade (or rank) is a key indicator for promotion along with the specific training and development requirements, which the paper will discuss shortly. Promotions are

decided through a centralized process<sup>17</sup> to ensure equality and the correct distribution of officers based on Army's needs. Using the chart below to describe, promotions are managed by the year group the officer is in. As the year group enters their fourth year, or four years' time in grade, a centralized board meets to decide whom will be promoted to captain. Likewise, six years' time in service as a major to be considered for promotion to lieutenant colonel, and finally another five years for promotion to colonel. These are not fixed standards but set up by the Army based on needs.<sup>18</sup> Early and delayed promotions are rare but do happen.



Infantry Officer Career Timeline<sup>19</sup>

The Army looking to find opportunities to help younger officers make time for unexpected, potentially life changing situations. The Army is introducing a brand-new

program called the career intermission pilot program.<sup>20</sup> This congressionally authorized program is designed to give a break in service, not to exceed three years. This break in service places the officer on an individual ready reserve status who may be recalled to active duty in time of need. At the end of the determined break in service, the officer will report back to active duty in their status prior to their break. This pilot program right now only allows for twenty officers per year.

Leader development and training is a career long endeavor. The Army believes leaders are training through three types of experiences.<sup>21</sup> First is professional or institutional training. Institutional training is principally experienced through formal educational programs. Second, operational training is primarily experienced through the assignments and execution of duty positions throughout the Army. These experiences allow the officer to build off the formal education and gain experience in executing what they learned. Finally, the officer is encouraged to self-develop to learn leadership and improve their skills.

Training and leader development is a very large and extensive area. Training is primarily professional schooling, civilian education, and operational assignments. The professional schooling is designed to prepare the officers for increased responsibilities and understanding of how the Army functions.<sup>22</sup> Each officer will have a series of Army schools to attend throughout their career. These schools give the baseline knowledge the Army proponent decides is beneficial for the officer based on their rank and branch/FA.<sup>23</sup>

Civilian education is a much different type of education. Advanced degrees are not needed unless their branch or more likely, functional area directs it. If decided, the



Army will send the officer to obtain that degree to be employed in the field of work.

Other opportunities to obtain civilian education through Army funding are the advanced civilian schooling program, fellowships, and scholarship.<sup>24</sup> Officers need to compete for these opportunities as not all officers get the opportunity to attend.

Branch proponents manage operational assignments to ensure proper distribution of officers by skills and grade.<sup>25</sup> There are many different types of assignments for officers to have during each assignment. The two critical types we will discuss are key developmental and broadening. Key developmental (KD) are designated by the branch or FA proponent. "A KD position is one that is deemed fundamental to the development of an officer in his or her core branch or FA competencies or considered critical by the senior Army leadership to provide experience across the Army's strategic mission."<sup>26</sup> KD positions become critical for career progression. If an officer does not complete the KD position, they are placed at risk for continued promotion or other opportunities.

Broadening assignments are designed to allow the officer to gain experiences outside of the normal branch and FA path.<sup>27</sup> This is the variety that becomes officer specific along their personalized career path. Some example experiences are working with a civilian company, working with another service or U.S government department, or another country's military.<sup>28</sup> Ultimately, "the result of broadening is a continuum of leadership capability at direct, operational, and strategic levels, which bridges diverse environments and organizational cultures."<sup>29</sup> The infantry officer chart earlier provides some options for an infantry officer.

The Army is developing a new interactive process for the officer as millennials are very comfortable with this computer interface style. The intent is to be more integrated with the assignment process and reduce any potential talent gaps in the force.<sup>30</sup> This program is called assignment interactive module 2.0 (AIM 2). This internet based program will aid the proponents and personnel managers to more accurately place the right officer with the right skills or talents at the right time. The officer will need to be active in managing their information and give information that will be used to develop the assignment options and decision. The current technique is an email or phone call to the assignment manger giving limited information for the manager's decision. The officer has little visibility on the options and the managers only have the officer's assignment history and evaluation reports.

The Army officer evaluation report is an assessment or report card for the officer. This evaluation report gives the centralized assignments and selection boards an assessment of the officer's performance in that position and their potential for future service in the Army.<sup>31</sup> DA PAM 623-3 is the Army publication that manages the process and development of the final report. Specifically, this paper will address the two major inputs to the report and the importance the Army places on the officer evaluation reports (OER) themselves. These two inputs find the millennial officer potentially at odds between their generational characteristics, which will be discussed shortly, and the Army institutional processes.

The two major inputs to the OER come from the rated officer's rater and senior rater. The rater is the rated officer's immediate supervisor and the senior rater is the supervisor's supervisor. The rationale is the rater has the best perspective to evaluate

the rated officer's performance during that rated period. The senior rater provides the assessment of the officer's potential for continued service in the Army. A completed OER should provide the rated officer and the greater Army a snapshot of how well the officer did and what the prognosis is for future assignments in the Army.

The Army values these reports significantly. If the senior rater does not believe the rated officer meets the demands of future positions, this will certainly affect the Army's decision to give certain assignments, promotion, and even retention of the officer. OERs received for KD positions are valued highly also. The proponent wants to see which officers performed well in their identified critical position as well as the senior rater's opinion of the officer's future execution of the next KD position.

Career paths, promotions, assignments, leader development, evaluations are all great topics for officers to discuss with mentors. The Army defines mentorship as "mentorship is the 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."<sup>32</sup> Mentors have a big role in developing leaders in the Army. Sharing experiences and giving recommendations ensures professional knowledge extends throughout the institution.<sup>33</sup> The mentee officer also has a role in the relationship. They must be engaged, seek out information, and have a desire to mature and grow. "Soldiers can increase their chances of mentorship by seeking performance feedback and by adopting an attitude of lifelong learning."<sup>34</sup> Mentorship is a significant aspect of the training and development of officers.

The military is very transparent when it comes to compensation. An example is the military compensation website that calculates the regular military compensation

(RMC).<sup>35</sup> On the Department of Defense military compensation website the millennial can input their minimal information (pay grade, years of service, marital status, filing status, and location) to receive their compensation feedback. As a single second lieutenant, immediately upon active duty, the compensation is nearly \$55,000. A single captain with six years (one year after service academy requirement) makes over \$94,000. At retirement eligible age of 20 years active service, a single lieutenant colonel makes over \$134,000. For these three calculations, common entries were Fort Bragg as the duty location and a single member household were used. The RMC will fluctuate based on changes to the handful of variables inputted. This simple compensation calculator as well as other benefits like retirement, thrift savings, and others are available for anyone to explore their benefit options. State tax withholdings, commissary privileges, and other veteran and active duty incentive programs provide additional compensation.

The military culture is unique to that of the civilian sector. The military achieves its goals through “socialization, structure, discipline, and constant training”.<sup>36</sup> The culture uses a mindset based on the warrior ethos and tries to instill it into each of its members.<sup>37</sup> The Army defines the warrior ethos as “I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade.”<sup>38</sup> The Army also uses their seven core values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage<sup>39</sup> to generate commonality. Some other terms common to the military culture is “obedience, discipline, self-sacrifice, trust, and courage”.<sup>40</sup>

Based upon the Army’s leader development, opportunities for decision making, culture, and other management opportunities discussed above, Army officers are often

sought for strong foundational competencies. A good summation of the type of leaders the military produces is a study on military experienced CEOs. The Journal for Financial Economics concludes CEOs with military background tend to be less involved in fraud and the firms with military experienced executives perform better in stressful times.<sup>41</sup> This study also stated that the military background provides more realistic experiences than that of MBA programs and other training.<sup>42</sup>

### The millennial generation

Millennials, or Generation Y (GEN Y), are individuals born mostly to the Baby Boomers and born between 1980-1996.<sup>43</sup> The range is important as a start point for showing the generational limits. To generally understand how the millennials fit into the generational sequence, there are four other generations commonly used in the research: Baby Boomers (1946-1964)<sup>44</sup>, Generation X (1964-1979)<sup>45</sup>, and the developing generation, GEN Z (1998-2016).<sup>46</sup> Before we discuss the specific characteristics found within GEN Y, the paper offers a brief look at the what preceded the millennials and what is coming after.

Generation X is the smallest generation<sup>47</sup> at is characterized as a cynical group. They grew up placing friends over family, rejected rules and institutions, and had to learn how to adapt to the technological boom.<sup>48</sup> Personal life is of greater importance than their work life. Generation X members are more entrepreneurial compared to earlier generations. Finally, based on their generation upbringing, they value marriage and children, often delaying those two commitments to ensure the timing is right.<sup>49</sup>

Generation Z is characterized by being less optimistic and patriotic than their predecessors.<sup>50</sup> As seen with the millennials, diversity is rising within Generation Z.

From race to sexual orientation, to dating habits, Generation Z is the most diverse generation.<sup>51</sup> Other self-identifying characteristics are loyalty, empathy on social issues, open-mindedness, and they have a drive to succeed.<sup>52</sup> This generation is just now entering the workforce and there is much to learn about them and their characteristics.

Shifting focus specifically to millennials, early research of GEN Y, scholars and corporate leaders had a very negative perspective of the millennial behaviors. Initial beliefs of millennials, they were self-centered, disloyal, lazy, and entitled.<sup>53</sup> As further research studied millennials, especially as they are progressed through their 20s, many of these beliefs are being debunked.<sup>54</sup>

The millennials are currently between the ages of 23 to 38. Millennials are the largest generation by population<sup>55</sup> and are fully affecting the workforce by making up the largest segment of the U.S. workforce.<sup>56</sup> The chart below from Gallup shows a snapshot of Generation X to Generation Y shifts. These shifts will help guide the discussion on millennials.



Gallup's "Big Six" Functional Changes<sup>57</sup>

Dr. Sharon A. DeVaney, Ph.D. Professor Emeritus, Purdue University describes millennials generally as entitled, optimistic, civil minded, received close parental

involvement, they value work-life balance, impatient, able to multitask, and are team oriented.<sup>58</sup> Another characteristic to the millennial generation is their push to be inclusive, as they are the most diverse generation to date.<sup>59</sup> Deloitte points out millennials are much more interested in “cognitive diversity” and the different thoughts and opinions brought about by the differences in backgrounds. Collaboration is very much part of the generation’s DNA.<sup>60</sup> They wish to form teams, gain an understanding of each members’ perspective, and then develop solutions that will make their team, business, or corporation better.<sup>61</sup>

Millennials believe the reason they are in the organization is to have a positive impact. Talent management practices make a real impact on the millennials as well as within the overall culture of the organization to which they belong. Joan Snyder Kuhl highlights three key areas that may cause some conflict in organizations if left unaddressed; “culture, management style, and investment in training and development”.<sup>62</sup> Kuhl believes a positive on-boarding process is vital.<sup>63</sup> This positive experience assists in retention by reducing rapid job change desires.

Kuhl discusses training, development, and talent management approaches that highlight some millennial employee trends. Millennials desire continuous feedback not the common periodic performance review. Millennial employees seek advancement for increase development and are sometimes troubled by the rigid corporate ladder. The millennials prefer a career path but desire flexibility in the pace of the progression.<sup>64</sup> She believes “for the millennial generation, advancement is more about accelerated growth than ego and power.”<sup>65</sup>

Two other characteristics that millennials portray deserve mention; financial compensation and retention. Mixed opinions on these two topics appear in the literature. On one hand, the millennial generation does appear to be more purpose driven and desires to make their organization a better place, but, on the other hand being well compensated is important.<sup>66</sup> Pay, advanced education, and training are all critical components to the compensation. If the millennial appreciates the compensation they receive, retention is more likely to occur.

As for retention, there is a belief the millennials are always job searching. Three factors contribute to this belief that millennials are “job hopping”. First, millennials prefer to keep their options open, they do not want to get tied to a specific company.<sup>67</sup> Second, if the millennials do not feel as their organization is investing in them, they will look to leave.<sup>68</sup> Third, recent Pew research shows that this job hopping phenomenon is primarily in the less educated, rather than in the more educated segments of the GEN Y population.<sup>69</sup> Pew claims both near term and long term retention in companies with millennials is actually better than with Generation X employees.<sup>70</sup>

In sum, the millennials are a large, diverse, and educated generation.<sup>71</sup> They seek appreciation, they demand more mentorship and development, and they want a prosperous purpose in their job. They struggle to conform to previous traditions and models and exercise other facets, especially the digital world. Millennials may have some unrealistic expectations on work-life balance and career advancement, at least that is where some potential friction lies with the corporate or Army world they are living in. Another area is the millennials do not always understand or appreciate the professional etiquette or norms within the organization.<sup>72</sup>



### Comparison and scholar contribution


The millennials are crucial for the success of the Army officer corps. They are currently the bulk of the junior and mid-grade officers. They will connect the Generation X officers to the upcoming generation Z officers. They will assume responsibility of commanding battalions and brigade over the next five years. Within the next decade, millennials will begin to enter into the senior executive positions as general officers. Ensuring the GEN Y characteristics are nested well with the Army culture will decide the long-term impact of the Army by whom will assume those battalion and brigade command positions. To discover the millennial's opinion of their assimilation into the Army officer corps, a survey was selected to identify the conflicts and commonality in a few areas.

The methodology used in this analysis was to identify principal characteristics or attitudes of millennials and compare those traits to the characteristics of the Army officer corps, looking for either clashes (most negative extreme) or congruence (most positive extreme). After combining personal experiences with the existing scholarship, nine areas emerged. The next step was to determine how the millennial officers might perceive these areas. These ideas led to a survey that asked for a millennial officer's perspective. The survey asked the officers how the Army was doing in these areas. The questions sought to identify a trend, not identify specific factors.


To address the original research questions stated in the introduction, the survey needed to address opinion of the specific traits, the likelihood of the officer remaining in their basic branches for command purposes, and the officer's desire to remain in the Army long enough to be eligible for battalion command. As a result, the survey

consisted of 20 focus area questions and 6 demographic questions to enable sorting and other analysis. The survey was an anonymous, all volunteer, and distributed to multiple different units and organizations. The units included a medical battalion, a military intelligence brigade, and military police battalion, and infantry battalion, and the maneuver captain's career course. The research sought out the opinions of officers with experience in the operational forces, not those of initial entry officers. 124 total responses were recorded, 113 respondents met the requirements of the survey, millennial commissioned officers.

There is both conflict and commonality on the millennial assimilation into the Army officer corps. The simple chart below categorizes the areas in commonality or conflict based on the millennial officers' responses to the survey. The remaining paper will discuss these in some detail and give some areas to sustain and ways to mitigate the conflict, if possible.



## The Millennial Challenge



**Areas of Commonality**

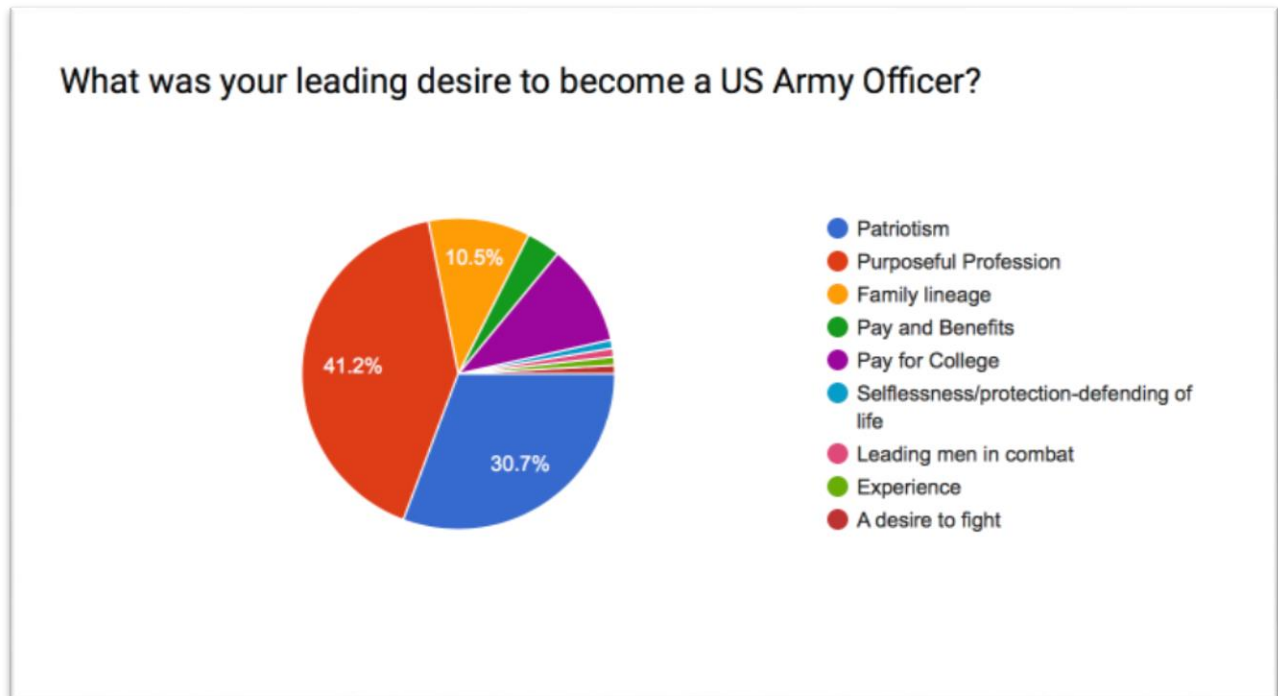
- The Army is a purpose driven profession
- The attributes and competencies as evaluation criteria
- Career path focused on development
- Professional education and duty position experience for growth
- Compensation
- Inclusion
- Customs, courtesies, norms, values

**Areas of Conflict**

- The annual officer evaluation report and the reliance on centralized board proceedings
- Junior officer mentorship
- Civilian education incorporation in career path
- Work-life balance/integration

The first focus area examined why the officer joined. Respondents overwhelmingly placed 'purposeful profession' and 'patriotism' as their number one reasons for joining at over 75%. Respondents validated that the millennial generation looks to be a part of something bigger than themselves.

Two other responses achieved over ten percent each, paying for college and family lineage. Paying for college was a principle factor for twelve millennial officers. Fiscal aid is a practical rationale for why one would join the Army officer corps as the millennial generation has a lot of college debt.<sup>73</sup> This is certainly a quality recruitment tool for millennials but of these twelve officers, only three said they believe they will remain in the service to retirement eligibility. This trend shows the short term 'investment' the fiscally driven millennial is making to begin their adulthood.



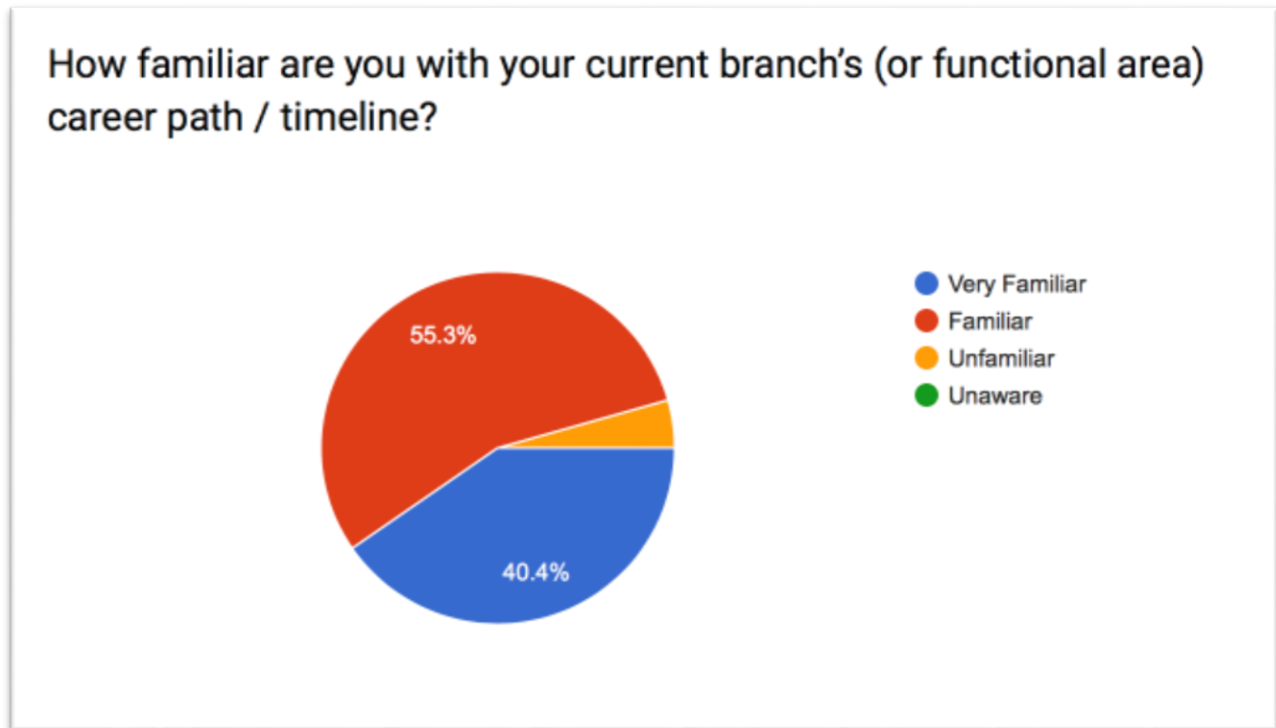
The second option to obtain ten percent was family lineage. Only twelve respondents placed family lineage as their principle reason for joining. This does not

confirm an impression that this is a 'family profession'. The term family profession is generated from the belief that many of those currently serving are from families with close family members as veterans. This question was not followed up with a demographic question seeking a binary response of yes or no to see if other millennial officers had family lineage in order to gain more insight into this impression. This family lineage is a potential research topic to see if the Army is becoming less connected to the American population – is military service becoming more contained to veteran families? An additional note of this segment was their opinion of their service meeting their expectations was generally neutral with no responses being either very satisfied or very dissatisfied.

The second commonality topic is the OER evaluation criteria. Although the millennials are not comfortable with the use of the OER as the paper will discuss shortly, they are overall pleased with the criteria. Respondents were extremely positive in the six evaluation criteria the Army selected in 2014 to be the preponderance of the evaluation. Each of the attributes and competencies received the highest percentage of 'very satisfied'. This is a very positive sign that the millennial generation is at least comfortable with what is evaluated.

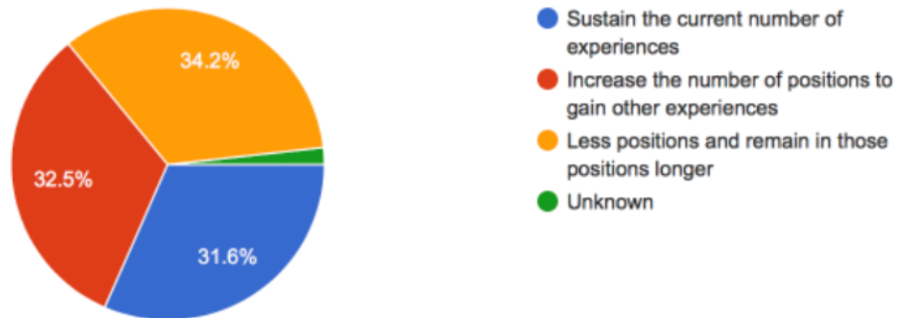
The third commonality was a defined career path. Over ninety-five percent of the millennial respondents were familiar or very familiar with the defined career paths for their career progression. This is very positive and is clearly something that is being discussed at many levels within the Army as an institution. Sustaining this education and communication from senior year of commissioning source through service initial entry and ultimately personalized at the unit level is critical to ensuring our officer corps

understands their career options and timeline. A major trend is all but four of the respondents are or will use this timeline and career path for future career decisions.



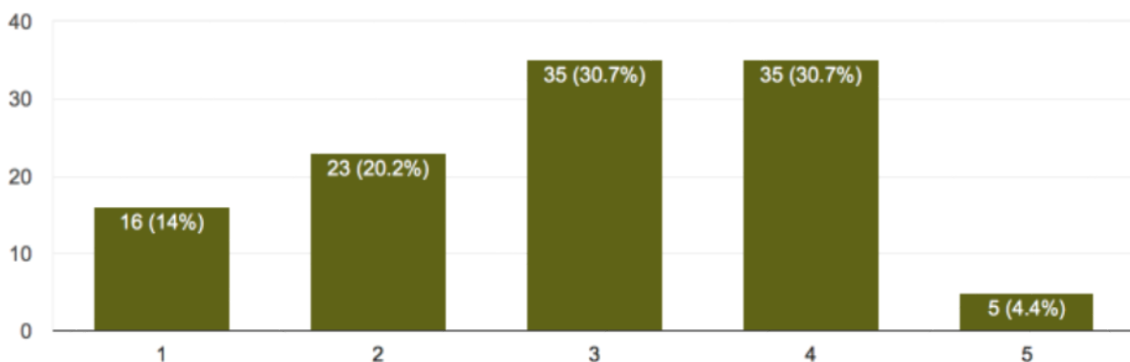
A supporting question to career paths was that of operational development. This question tried to address the millennial generation characteristic about changing jobs often. In the responses to the question, we find a relatively one-third, one-third, one-third split in total and generally amongst ranks. By achieving this general neutrality, my analysis makes me believe the Army does a good job with giving multiple jobs (duty positions) per rank and per duty assignment. Additionally, the multitude of jobs at each duty location supports the professional development and training desired by the millennials. With “job-hopping” built into the talent management system, the non-key developmental positions should be considered as training or preparatory positions for the KD positions.

What is your opinion with the number of duty positions/jobs you have an opportunity to have during each duty location assignment?

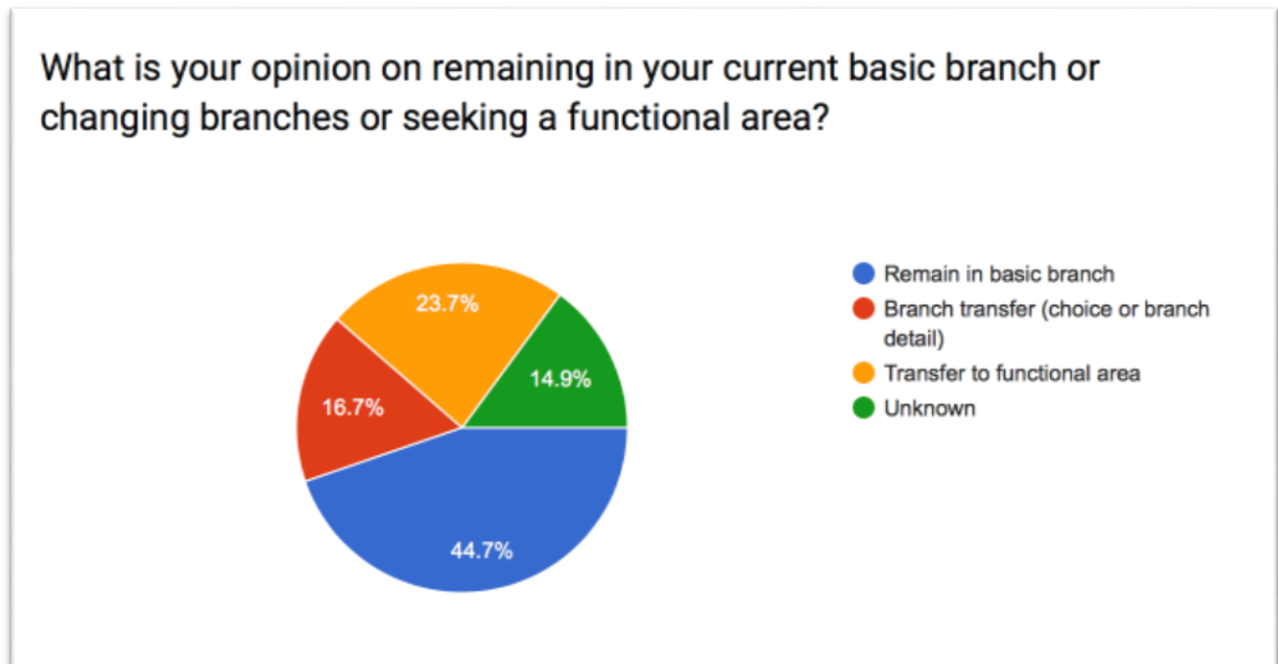


As part of the focus area on career paths, respondents trended favorably for professional education opportunities available to officers over their careers. This trend parallels their assessment of their career paths.

What is your opinion with the civilian education opportunities along your desired Army career path?



When exploring the likelihood of an officer staying in his or her basic branch or seeking other opportunities, three sub-trends became noticeable. The first appears to be a genuine 'unknown'. The officers who selected unknown if they will change appear to have a positive experience and state that they will mostly stay in at least through their company command tour. This shows they will likely remain in the Army but are just uncommitted on their current specialty.

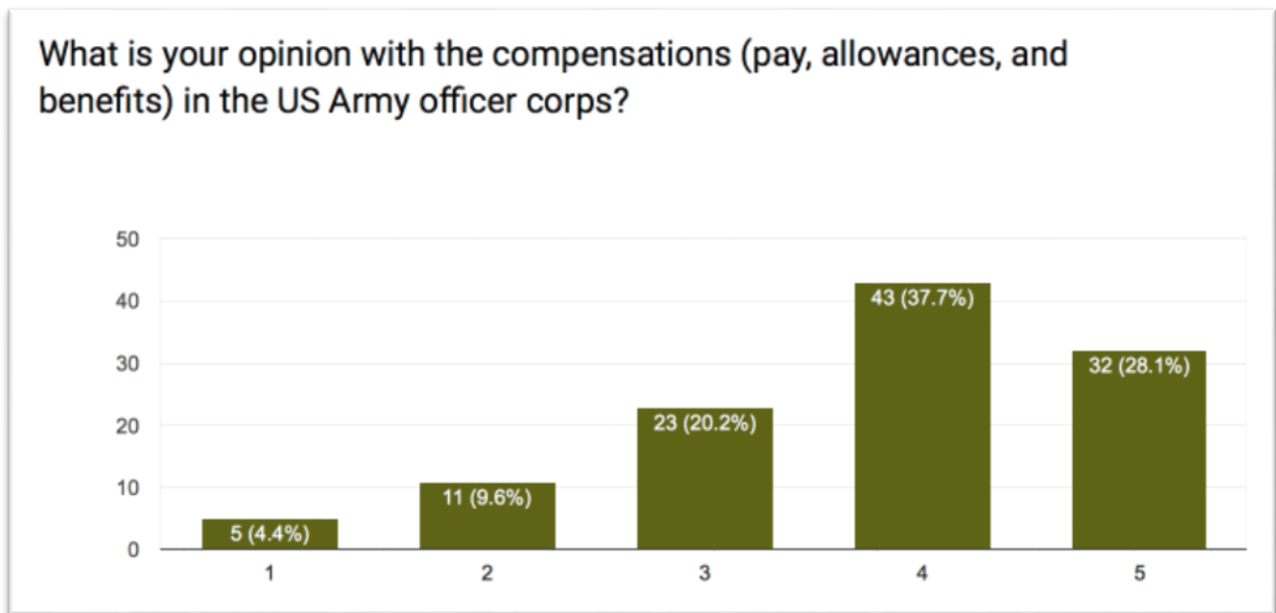


The second sub-trend is a little subtler. Of the eighteen officers that will branch transfer, only two state they expect to reach retirement age and eight are unknown. These responses show that officers may not be pleased with the branch detail program<sup>74</sup>. The branch detail program directs officers to serve in one branch until they become a captain and then they are directed to change to another branch. This change is known by the officer at the time of commissioning.

The third sub-trend comes from the group of officers wanting to transfer to a functional area. Only four of these officers specifically said they will not reach the

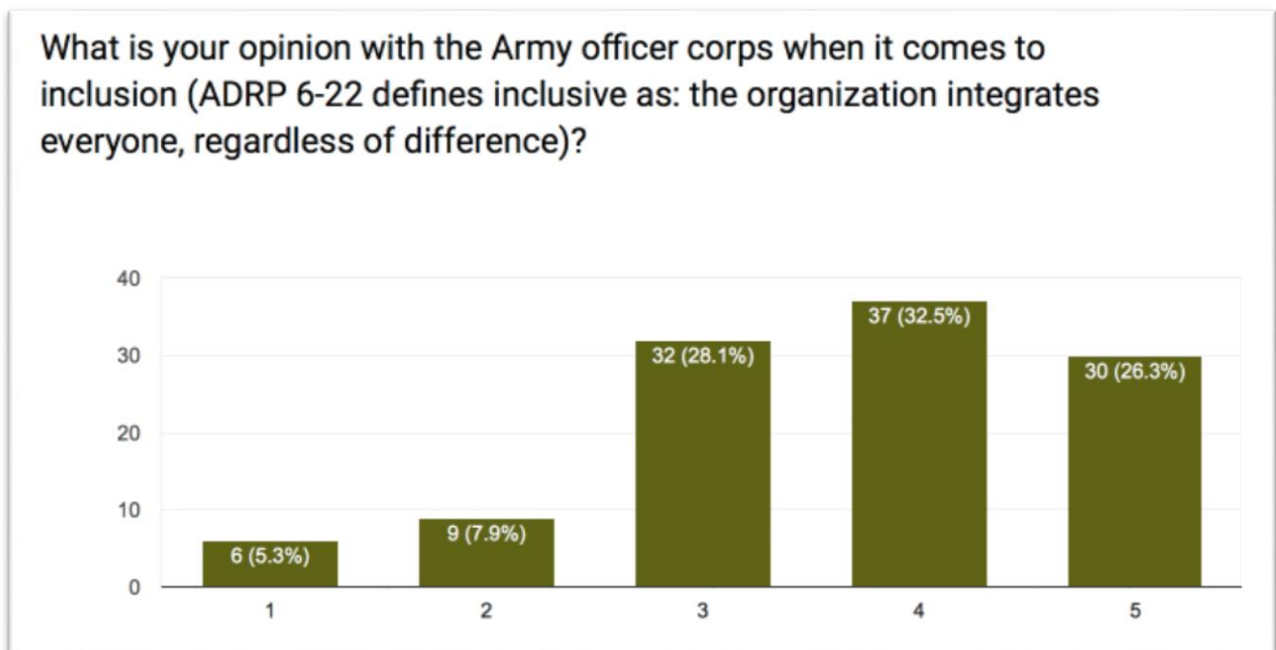
required transition point in their timeline before leaving the Army. The other sixteen and the six unknowns say they want to remain in the Army long enough to obtain the prerequisite positions and time of service to make that transition. This trend is positive that both the officer knows what they want to do professionally, and they appear to understand the requirements to achieve it.

The next area of commonality is compensation. Although there is some mixed research on millennials desire to have both purposeful and high paying jobs, this was important to seek clarification. Millennials trended positively to pay and allowances. This provides some understanding of the pay tables and with their understanding of the career timeline, millennials can see their financial future. As Nysha King points out, “cash is king” as it was the leading priority when a millennial was considering a new job in the civilian sector.<sup>75</sup>



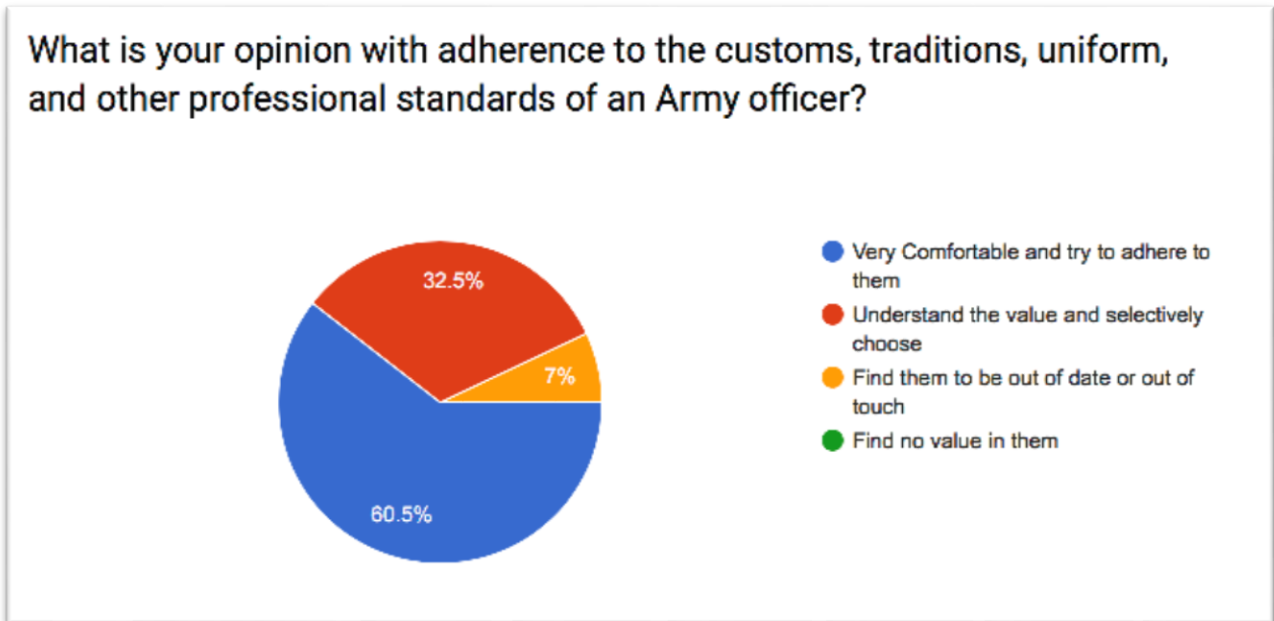


The sixth commonality area was inclusion. The Army defines inclusion simply as the organization integrates everyone, regardless of difference.<sup>76</sup> The response was mostly positive. Ninety-eight millennials felt that their organization was inclusive or neutral. Of the fifteen officers that did not believe their unit was inclusive, fourteen were lieutenants and one captain. This is a positive grade for the Army. Inclusion for millennials is a major characteristic and the Army appears to be addressing their concern. The survey did not have any demographic questions that would allow exploration of gender, race, sexual preference or any other statistical data that may find areas of potential concern. Overall, millennials are comfortable with officer corps' inclusiveness.



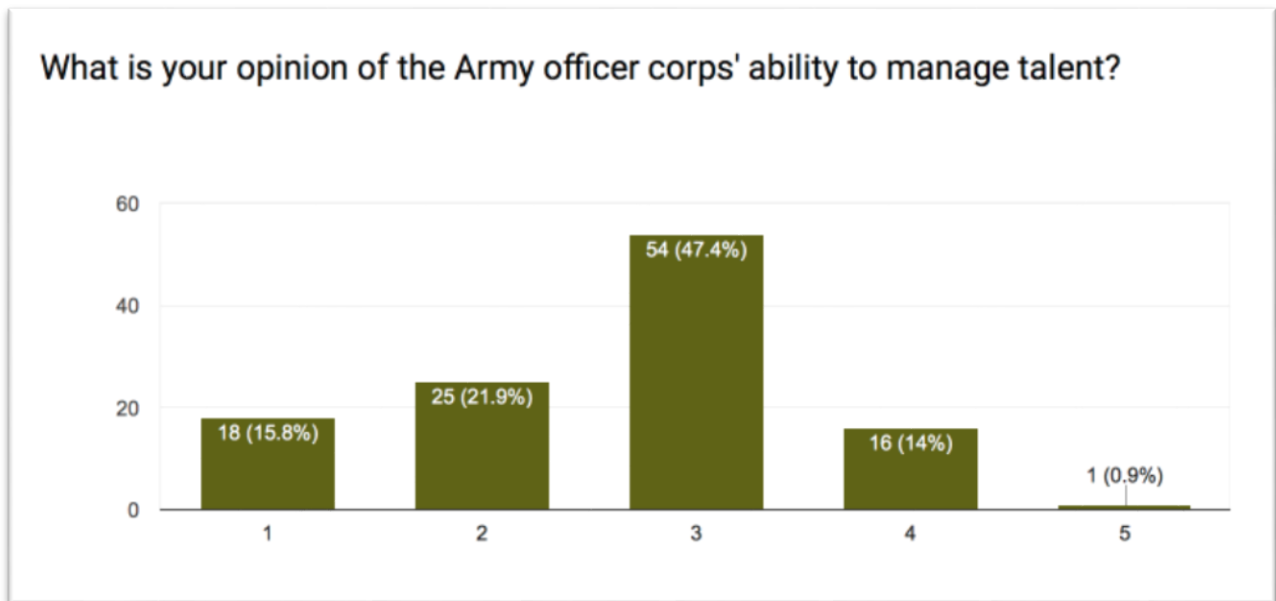
The final commonality area was adherence to customs, traditions, uniform, and other professional standards. Research of millennials made professional assimilation and acceptance of these norms not preferred or at least not important amongst this

generation. This survey finds the contrary. Sixty percent of the millennials stated they were very comfortable and try to adhere to the professional norms. Only seven percent found them to be out of date or out of touch.



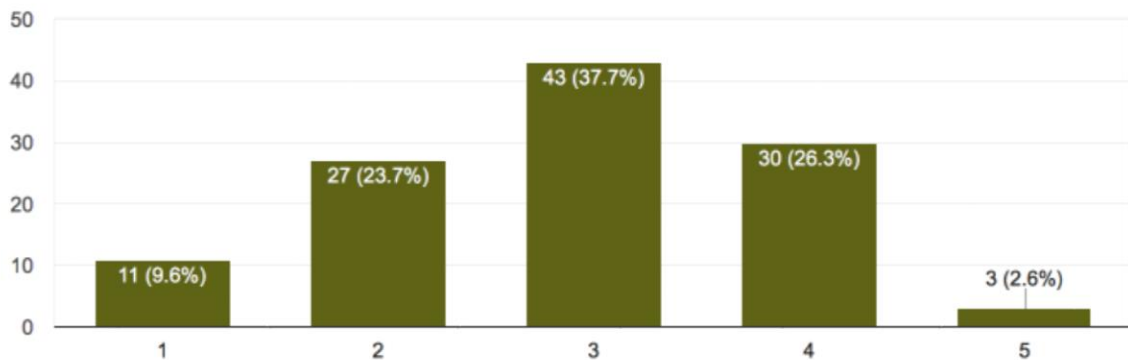
The opinions of millennial officers were positive for the most part but there were a few areas of conflict. The first of these areas is Army officer talent management. This focus area involved eight questions to try to capture the opinions of how the millennial generation grades the Army on its talent management. Specifically, to the grander question if the Army manages its talent well, a large majority of the respondents had a neutral to very negative opinion. This trend is consistent with the millennial desire to managed and developed individually. Only one officer was very satisfied with the Army talent management. It appears that there is some mentorship occurring, but not at the quantity or quality the millennial officer desires. Sixteen officers believe the Army talent is a 4 or 'satisfied', and most officers believe they will remain in the Army at through their company command (roughly 8 years) or even until they are retirement eligible.

This sub-trend can certainly be a focal point for future research and dive further into the correlation of talent management and career duration. This is likely a generational concern, not a pay grade or experience specific issue as this was not apparent in the data.



Continuing to study the talent management focus area, the officer evaluation report topic was surveyed and in some detail. Seventy percent of the respondents were neutral or uncomfortable while only thirty percent presented a more acceptable level of importance. This area is in direct conflict between the Army centralized management process and the millennial generation characteristics. As discussed earlier, the OER continues to be a primary indicator of the officer's potential and performance. The Army promotion and selection boards place an enormous weight on these reports. The respondents presented the trend of displeasure with this level of importance placed on the OER.

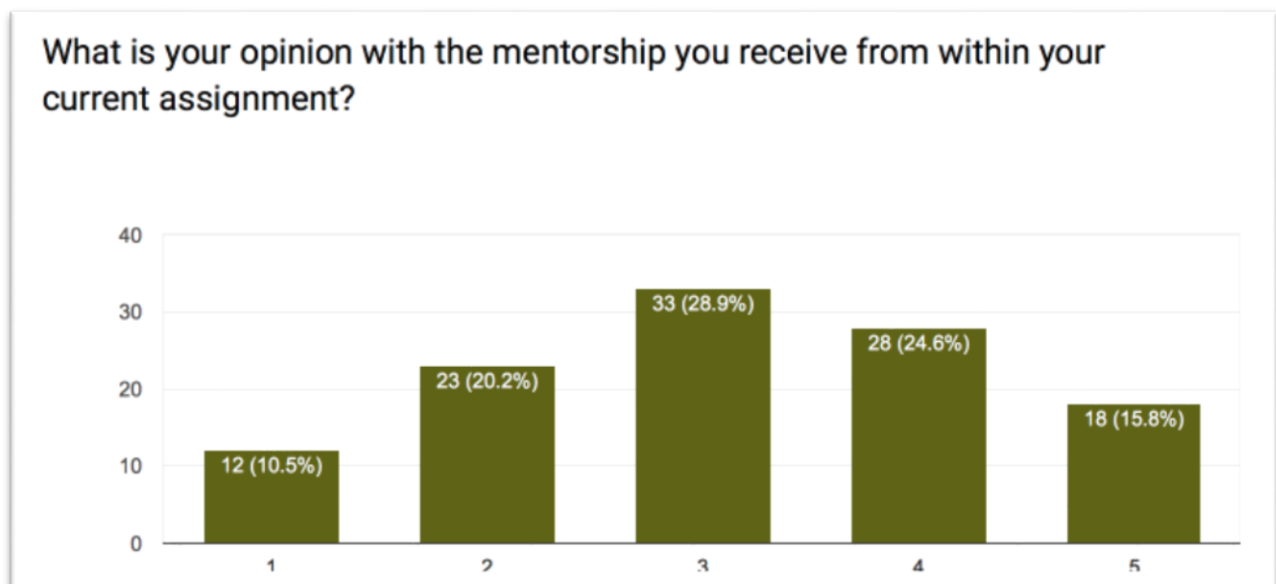
What is your opinion of the current Officer Evaluation Report (OER), DA Form 69-10, as the best tool used to determine an officer's promotion and command potential?



Like the general talent management question previously discussed, the more acceptable the officer was with the weight of the OER, the more likely they were to remain in service beyond initial obligation and their expectations were being met more positively. Conversely, the eleven millennials that were very dissatisfied with the OER weight trended to be 'dissatisfied' with the Army living up to their expectations. This is a clear area of divergence between the officer corps and the millennial generation.

The second area of conflict is mentorship. Of all the areas either of conflict or of commonality, this area has the most even response average across the spectrum. Even meaning that a generally equal number of millennial officers are satisfied and not satisfied. Exploring the numbers based on rank, a sub-trend appears. The longer you are in, the more satisfied you get with your mentorship experience. Sixty-six percent of the millennial majors scored very satisfied and nearly eighty percent of the captains had a neutral to very satisfied opinion on their mentorship experience. Without further

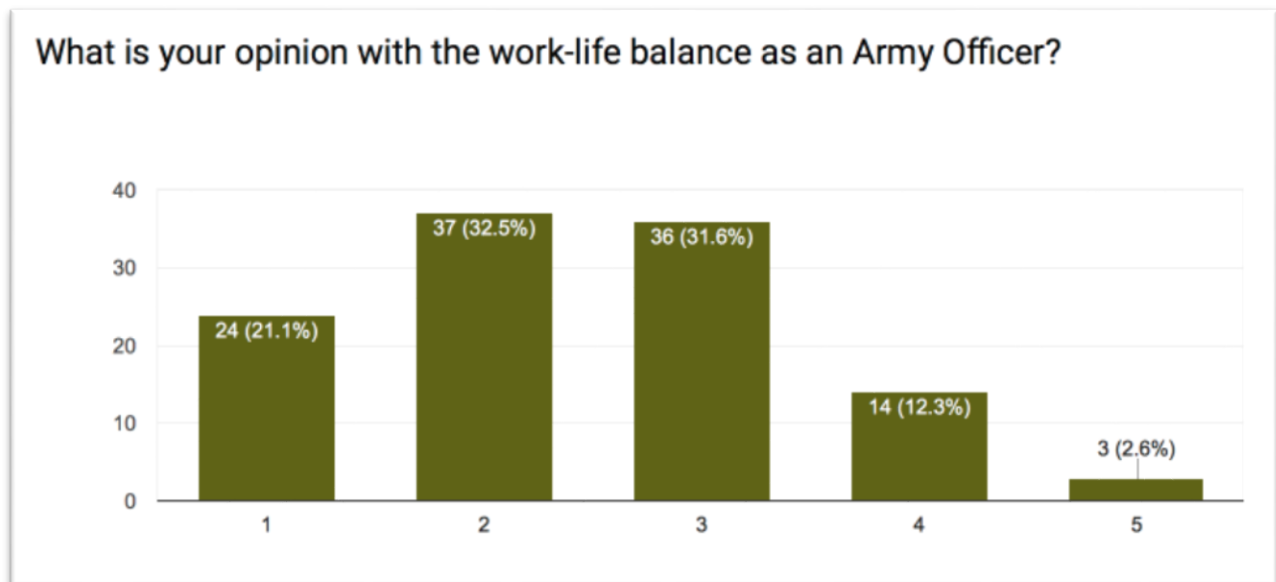
research, my experience leads me to believe this is twofold. First, the time in service assist in tempering the expectations. Second, the millennial officer believes they know what their specific mentorship needs are and works with leaders to just address those needs. Of the fifty-three lieutenants, only four stated they are very satisfied and nine said they were satisfied. That is only a twenty-two percent positive mentorship experience for lieutenants. Again, experience may help in expectation management but initial entry and first assignments are vital to improving this opinion.



Third area of conflict is civilian education. There was a marked neutral opinion amongst the millennials concerning the civilian education opportunities. One may conclude this result is a generational issue of wanting more civilian education opportunities, not that it is purely an exposure or knowledge of the opportunities already available.

The last focus area of conflict is work-life balance for an Army officer. Striking this balance is a very important characteristic for the millennial generation. Finding that balance appears to be a struggle for most millennial officers based on this survey.

Eighty-five percent responded with a neutral to very disappointed across all ranks. Validating the importance of this characteristic in the millennial generation, GEN Y officers will remain in to retirement eligible age if they feel they are satisfied with this work-life balance by a two to one rate. No officers that stated they were satisfied or very satisfied with their work-life balance believed they would depart after their initial obligation. A strong sign that units who provide this workplace environment will likely retain millennial officers.



### Recommendations and conclusion

As Deloitte contends, “Millennials want to be all in, and their rising status as leaders combined with their work and development preferences are evolving the cultural norms for organizations today. Millennials are “transforming the status quo by seeking purpose in the organizations they serve without sacrificing the flexibility to be who they are at work and live fulfilling lives outside of it.”<sup>77</sup> As demonstrated through the survey,

this is generally what the millennial officers are doing. Millennials appear to be in the Army for the greater good, are in favor of clear standards and criteria, and want to have time and compensation to enjoy life while not on duty.

Gallup provides the current Army leadership some very simple ways to deal with this generational transformation.<sup>78</sup> Make sure the millennials understand their purpose in the organization. They are looking to develop their strengths, with help from their “coach”, not their boss. Additionally, Deloitte would add to communicate more with the millennials with clear, concise, and direct language.<sup>79</sup>

The Army should continue to improve on the work-life balance when possible but look at another aspect – “work life integration.”<sup>80</sup> This is very consistent with our mission command principles and the increasing technological integration for our communication systems. Deloitte mentions loosening the tether as a method to improve the organization. A controversial monograph by professors Peter Wong and Stephan Gerras from the Army War College challenged the Army to look at all the tasks asked of our junior officers.<sup>81</sup> Deliberate and conscientious review of the ‘must do’ needs to be completed and prioritization at every level must be established. This will free up the time for formations to improve, more time for the mentorship the millennials desire, and potentially more work-life balance.

The millennials do have some concessions to make. Managing the talent of such a large, educated, and capable corps’ is challenging. To remain fair, the OER will likely remain a critical aspect of this. In most, if not all of the selection board results, the Army human resource analysis bears that the officer’s performance matters. Millennials need to focus on their personal and organization’s performance.

Additionally, the survey identified many areas that led to potential recommendations for future research. As already listed within the analysis, five initial research questions are posed. Is there a widening gap in veteran family service over those who do not have family influence to serve? Does the Army still need a branch detail program with the success of other personnel management techniques? Is there a true talent management correlation to career duration? How can the Army build upon the career path model success by increasing civilian education opportunities? Are functional areas gaining a more positive opinion from battalion and brigade commanders as they are the primary career counselors that advertise and promote functional area opportunities?

There are two other areas that often came up during the socialization of this research project that this research did not address. Spouse involvement in career planning and decisions would be a fascinating topic. The research could study multiple aspects that impact spouse's desires to remain connected with the Army. Spouse preferences on locations for family welfare. Spouse work, education, and professional impacts due to changes in duty locations. Do assignment preference forms matter in the assignment process or does it lead to unintended spouse and family disappointment? Spouses have a great impact on the happiness of the Army experience and are often most affected by the work-life balance struggles.

The second area for further research is the apparent growth in home-school families. Is the perceived growth in the number of Army home-school families on par with the rest of the U.S.? Is it consistent with the other services? Can the Army assist the families by establishing Army post resource centers and training? Is this an



indictment on the Department of Defense schools or those in the surrounding areas of military installations? Is it a result of the frequency of relocation so often and the desire for consistency in education?

The Army officer culture and the millennial generation seem to have blended quite well over the past decade. The Army's changes provide an environment through evaluation standards and professionalization appears to be a solid foundation for the millennial culture. The millennials appear to be content and generally optimistic with their service in the Army. Assimilation is a process ensuring the best officers are there to command battalions in the future must remain a priority.

## Endnotes

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<sup>3</sup> *National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2017*, Public Law 114–328—DEC. 23, 2016, 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, (Dec. 23, 2017), 130 STAT. 2000, (<https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ328/PLAW-114publ328.pdf>).

<sup>4</sup> Fortune, "2017 Fortune 500 List," <http://fortune.com/fortune500/list/filtered?sortBy=employees&first500>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Brain, "Demographics of Active Duty U.S. Military," <https://www.statisticbrain.com/demographics-of-active-duty-u-s-military>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Fortune, "2017 Fortune 500 List."

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, December 3, 2014), 19, <https://www.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/376665.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 1.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 15-19.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Army Human Resource Command, Officer Personnel Management Directorate, Infantry Branch Home Page <https://www.hrc.army.mil/content/Infantry%20Branch%20Home%20Page>.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Army Human Resource Command, Officer Personnel Management Directorate, Career Intermission Pilot Program Webpage, <https://www.hrc.army.mil/content/Career%20Intermission%20Pilot%20Program%20-%20CIPP>.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, 5-6.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 31-33.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 12-13.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> U.S. Army Human Resource Command, Officer Personnel Management Directorate, "Assignment Interactive Module 2.0 (AIM 2), 2, <https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/assets/directorate/OPMD/What%20is%20AIM%202.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Evaluation Reporting System*, Department of the Army Regulation 623-3, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, November 4, 2015), 1-3.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-22, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, August 2012), 7-11.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 7-12.

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Department of Defense Military Compensation Webpage, "Regular Military Compensation(RMC) Calculator," <http://militarypay.defense.gov/Calculators/RMC-Calculator>.

<sup>36</sup> S.A. Redmond, S.L. Wilcox, S. Campbell, A. Kim, K. Finney, K. Barr and A.M. Hassan, "A brief introduction to the military workplace culture," *Work* 50 (2015), 17, <https://content.iospress.com/download/work/wor01987?id=work%2Fwor01987>.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>38</sup> U.S. Army Webpage, "Warrior Ethos", <https://www.army.mil/values/warrior.html>.

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<sup>40</sup> Redman et al, "A brief introduction to the military workplace culture," 14.

<sup>41</sup> Efraim Benmelech and Carola Frydman, "Military CEOs," *Journal of Financial Economics*, no. 117.1, (2015), 58, [https://ac.els-cdn.com/S0304405X14000932/1-s2.0-S0304405X14000932-main.pdf?\\_tid=5f552517-6d7c-4444-b73a-4f246a5c7aeb&acdnat=1523808510\\_6c337ad98cf352c236bdc5d3fc0d25e2](https://ac.els-cdn.com/S0304405X14000932/1-s2.0-S0304405X14000932-main.pdf?_tid=5f552517-6d7c-4444-b73a-4f246a5c7aeb&acdnat=1523808510_6c337ad98cf352c236bdc5d3fc0d25e2).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Gallup, "How Millennials Want to Work and Live," 4, <http://news.gallup.com/reports/189830/e.aspx>.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Libby Kane, "Meet Generation Z, 'the millennials of steroids' who could lead the charge for change in the US," *Business Insider*, (December 4, 2017), <http://www.businessinsider.com/generation-z-profile-2017-9>.

<sup>47</sup> Sharon A. DeVaney, "Understanding the millennial generation," *Journal of Financial Service Professionals* 69, no. 6 (2015), 12, <https://eds-a-ebSCOhost-com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=317b23b4-fad8-4ae5-bfeb-0b43921009d6%40sessionmgr4009>.

<sup>48</sup> Lisa L. Schlitzkus, Kimberly D. Schenarts, and Paul J. Schenarts, "Is your residency program ready for Generation Y," *Journal of Surgical Education*, Volume 67, no 2, (March/April 2010), 109, [https://ac.els-cdn.com/S1931720410000668/1-s2.0-S1931720410000668-main.pdf?\\_tid=a9f60841-8710-4404-b948-98d8f3d8f35c&acdnat=1523809946\\_aaa72ab26ee977552e8de924d7e83f93](https://ac.els-cdn.com/S1931720410000668/1-s2.0-S1931720410000668-main.pdf?_tid=a9f60841-8710-4404-b948-98d8f3d8f35c&acdnat=1523809946_aaa72ab26ee977552e8de924d7e83f93).

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<sup>54</sup> Joan Snyder Kuhl, "Investing in millennials for the future of your organization," *Leader to Leader 2014*, no 71, 26, <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/doi/epdf/10.1002/ltl.20110>.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 519.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 520.

<sup>62</sup> Kuhl, "Investing in millennials for the future of your organization," 26

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>66</sup> Gallup, "How Millennials Want to Work and Live," 2-3.

<sup>67</sup> Evan Hackel, "Why does training mean so much to Millennials" *Foundry Management and Technology* 145, no. 11 (November 2017), 28, [http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/ps/i.do?p=GRGM&u=duke\\_perkins&id=GALE%7CA517442020&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon](http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/ps/i.do?p=GRGM&u=duke_perkins&id=GALE%7CA517442020&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon).

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<sup>78</sup> Gallup, "How Millennials Want to Work and Live," 2-3.

<sup>79</sup> John Kador, "The millennial mindset", 14, <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/process-and-operations/us-cons-millennial-mindset.pdf>.

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