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The New Zealand Army conducts military operations in various countries worldwide. The contrast in cultural differences is something soldiers must be able to navigate through and communicate within. Soldiers must possess intercultural communication competence to operate in this environment. Millennial soldiers grew up with technology, their lack of face to face interaction has caused a significant lack of interpersonal communication skills. These basic skills are critical engaging across cultural boundaries and achieving mission success on security and stability operations. The USMC Recruiting Command has a communication training package that would be suitable to inject into the NZ Army.

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**TRAINING MILLENNIAL SOLDIERS FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION
COMPETENCE**

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

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Executive Summary

Title: Training Millennial Soldiers for Intercultural Communication Competence

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Thesis: There is evidence to suggest that millennials have a decreased ability to effectively communicate interpersonally which has and will continue to have detrimental effects on the NZ Army. The paper will discuss how the reliance on technology has contributed to this negative effect and conclude with recommendations for an interpersonal communication training package that draws from best practices used in successful programs around the world.

Discussion: The purpose of this research is to identify ways in which an increased reliance on technology of the millennial generation has affected their ability to communicate interpersonally and to explore how this lack of interpersonal skills negatively impacts mission effectiveness. The NZ Army regularly deploys to environments where intercultural communication is required, and soldiers must be able to appropriately and effectively communicate across boundaries on a daily basis in order to achieve mission success.

Conclusion: The USMC provides a comprehensive interpersonal communication training package to recruiters; this package is recommended as a model that should be incorporated into the training for NZ warriors of tomorrow.

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Preface

I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots. Albert Einstein¹

Technically, I could be classified as a Millennial depending on what research you use; however, I do not identify with the majority of their traits. As a Private soldier in 2001, I deployed to East Timor as part of the Civil Military Affairs Platoon. We were based in a remote village and our role was to engage with, gain the trust of, and win the hearts and minds of the local population. We did this solely by interacting and communicating with locals, often without an interpreter. This was in a time before anyone had cell phones, and there were no computers, internet or phones for our tour, we got by with face to face interactions. Our mission was deemed a success.

I have in more recent years witnessed a trend of soldiers who go out on patrol, stand back from the local population and just look forward to getting back to their X-Box. These engagements are not successful, and it is obvious these soldiers are disinterested and unsure how to engage. This, combined with my observations as a company commander of soldiers who were addicted to their smart phones, sitting in a lunch room with 30 soldiers all on their phones, not one reading a paper, talking to another, or aware of their surroundings, totally immersed in their phones. This degradation of interaction and basic skills is of concern to me, as we are an Army that often deploys to a location where engaging and communicating with the local population is not only important for reputation but critical for mission success.

I would like to thank the New Zealand Defence Force for giving me the opportunity to study at the Marine Corps University. The University and faculty have helped me grow and learn more than I thought possible in such a short time. A special thanks to Lauren Mackenzie, PhD for mentoring and guiding me through the MMS process and to Wilson for supporting me from home.

1.0 Introduction

In a country, full of civil unrest and heading toward independence, there sits a small district with no infrastructure, no electricity, houses made of mud and straw, and only word of mouth for news. Citizens of this district live in fear of militia and armed soldiers raiding their village, killing their families, and burning their houses. They do not speak English, yet to add to their stress, a large English-speaking military unit arrives and occupies their village. Militaries worldwide are faced with this situation all too often; the way in which the military engages and interacts with the local population is key to the success of their mission and the safety of the villagers. The ability to communicate effectively across cultures is a vital skill of any soldier in today's world.

Interpersonal communication has been an essential part of building relationships since the start of time. The way in which individuals interact with each other and within society is key to understanding one another and building rapport. This task becomes increasingly difficult when engaging with people from another culture. The lack of a shared language and shared cultural traits makes it even more important for people to possess well developed interpersonal skills. The New Zealand (NZ) Army interacts on a regular basis with people from many different cultures in many different environments, and soldiers are required to develop relationships with different people in order to achieve their mission. A significant portion of the NZ Army's personnel deploying on operations are from the Millennial generation or Generation Y. Generation Y are considered to be born between 1978 and 1997. This generation, also referred to as the "net generation" or the "tethered generation" has grown up with technology and relied heavily on it for everyday life.² This reliance on technology is at the detriment of other key soft skills required to work in today's society. There is evidence to suggest that millennials have a decreased ability to effectively

communicate interpersonally which has and will continue to have detrimental effects on the NZ Army. The paper will discuss how the reliance on technology has contributed to this negative effect and conclude with recommendations for an interpersonal communication training package that draws from best practices used in successful programs around the world.

1.1 The Emergence of Technology and Generation Y

Generation Y has grown up with technology; they have seen the change from home computers to lap tops through to personal mobile devices such as smart phones. This development and the ability to be connected at all times has shaped this generation's values, attitudes, and beliefs.³ The generation, often referred to as "generation me" is not afraid to share their entire life via the internet, some claiming millennials have multiple identities, or the ability to renew and modify one's identity easily.⁴ They have complete lives within social media websites, often communicating with "friends" they have never met face to face. Research conducted into millennials' social media use identified both positive and negative impacts. The positive impacts are: sense of community, means to socialize, sense of optimism, resourcefulness, and raised self-esteem.⁵ However, the dark side of this usage can have a negative impact on a person's psychological, emotional and physical well-being as well as their social development.⁶

Growing up "bathed in bits" has made them great multi taskers: most millennials can quite comfortably conduct numerous different activities at once, easily shifting focus from one task to the next. This ability to switch focus faster does not make them better thinkers than members of previous generations, nor does it make them able to think critically.⁷ This reliance on technology is actually degrading the generation's ability to think critically within a situation. This generation would rather "google" than think about the issue⁸: this in itself has a negative impact on the military when soldiers are presented with a situation that they

need to solve without technology. In addition to degraded thinking skills, the millennials are suffering from a lack of traditional interpersonal communication skills, and the effects are felt throughout society. Communication and social interaction skills are defined as a set of behaviors or sequence of behaviors that a person exhibits or can exhibit, for example: asking questions or making eye contact. Whether these skills are perceived to be appropriate, effective, and successful is a matter of competence.⁹

1.2 Historical Overview of Intercultural Communication in the NZ Army

One of the key outputs of the NZ Army is peace keeping. This requires soldiers to engage with different personnel from different cultural backgrounds. Historically, NZ has excelled in this area,¹⁰ engaging with different cultures and building different relationships comes easily to most New Zealanders who come from a culturally diverse country. In 1999 the New Zealand government sent a Battalion size force to East Timor as part of a United Nations authorized multinational force named International Force East Timor (INTERFET) to restore peace and security to the country. This commitment went from 1999 to 2002, seeing NZ Naval, Air and land forces deploy to support INTERFET then United Nations Transitional Authority East Timor (UNTAET). The force that deployed initially deployed to fight a conventional war, if required. As the operation progressed and peace began to be restored, the force was redistributed to adapt to the task.¹¹

The Mortar Platoon was reorganized as a Civil Military Affairs (CMA) Platoon. This was done during the second rotation. The commander of the fifth rotation (NZBATT5), Lieutenant Colonel Lofty Hayward, identified the key to success in this situation was to bridge the gap between military and the local population by using the CMA Platoon.¹² This was previously the Mortar platoon that had received limited language and cultural training during pre-deployment training. The platoon was made up predominantly of Generation X soldiers, coming from an era where smart phones did not exist, the internet was not in

everyone's living room and communal living was a way of life. Soldiers shared bed rooms, common rooms, and living spaces, spending time playing sport, playing games, or watching TV together to pass time. This is contrast to Generations Y and Z who tend to revert to their cyber network of friends at any opportunity.

The dawn of the digital era occurred during the late 80's early 90's, making millennials digital natives and older generations immigrants. Generation X are often referred to as digital immigrants as the digital age took hold during this generation's upbringing.¹³ Generation X soldiers grew up in families and a society where spending time together and interacting with people was the norm, and interpersonal skills were well refined due to the upbringing and requirement to engage face to face with people. Generation X adapted the new technology into their lives as it advanced. This group of soldiers that formed the CMA platoon of NZBATT 5 were highly successful in the tasks set out for them. As stated by Lieutenant Colonel Hayward, potentially overachieving what was required, the unit was able to engage face to face with the local community, a community where English was not spoken and where a traditional home was made of mud.

The Generation X soldiers were able to build relationships with villagers and gain trust, aiding in the development of the local district.¹⁴ The unit identified and completed a variety of tasks, always in conjunction with the local community. Tasks included rebuilding classrooms, medical clinics, constructing village notice boards, repairing and upgrading village water points, running a district football competition, and running training for the local communities. All of these tasks led by soldiers who did not necessarily have the hard skills required but had well developed soft skills that allowed them to interact with the different cultures, build rapport and trust, and get the local community to assist willingly.¹⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Hayward identified that although the tasks the unit conducted were not necessarily

military, they went a long way to rebuilding the district and bringing peace and security to the country; the overall mission of the force.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Preview

With the established background into the types of employment the NZ Army has historically faced and will continue to face, this paper will look at the Millennial soldier, his characteristics, and their reliance on technology, and it will hone in on their lack of interpersonal communication skills. The paper will then look at how this increased reliance on technology and lack of interpersonal skills have a negative impact on mission success and the development of intercultural competence within the military. The paper then continues by examining what other organizations, schools, and militaries are doing to address the communication issue of Generation Y and concludes with a recommendation for the NZ Army to ensure that Generation Y and Z soldiers are appropriately trained and mentally equipped to engage with a variety of cultures face-to-face in the future.

2.2 Millennial Characteristics

Howe and Strauss describes generations as a cohort-group of people whose length approximates the span of a phase of life and where peer personality defines boundaries.¹⁶ Basically a generation is a group of people who come of age at a similar time and who have shared life experiences. There are currently four generations that make up the work force: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z. Each generation has its own set of characteristics and values, which often collide between the generations. Generation Y, also referred to as the millennials, the net generation, and the echo boomers were born between 1978 – 1997, coming of age in some way at the turn of the millennium. Currently the largest generation in the United States, they are different from any previous generation as

they grew up in an age where technology and the internet were readily accessible. They are bathed in bits, owning numerous mobile devices, from lap tops, iPhones and iPads, they have the ability to surf the web, take photos, get GPS coordinates and update their social activity anywhere, anytime.¹⁷ Generation Y experienced significant world events during their upbringing which has shaped the way they view the world today. They have grown up with the Gulf War, the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, mass school shootings, and the Exxon Valdez oil spill. This seemingly unlimited access to seemingly limitless amounts of information is what has led to the “smartest” generation characterization.¹⁸

Lynne Lancaster and David Stillman have studied the Millennials and identified seven trends that make up Generation Y: parenting, entitlement, meaning, great expectations, the need for speed, social networking and collaboration.¹⁹ Similar trends were identified by Diane E Spiegel, as she explains the helicopter parents in her book *The Generation Y Handbook*. The helicopter parent is one who pays extremely close attention to their children to the point of interfering in their work and college professional relationships.²⁰ According to Spiegel, the millennials have grown up with this parenting and expect their leaders and supervisors to take over this role, constantly giving them feedback and coaching.

Social networking is a key aspect of the net generation that is causing concern worldwide. The millennials have grown up with information available in an instant, and this has taught them to communicate differently from previous generations. They post, chat, make friends, blog about all sorts of topics without ever meeting people face to face.²¹ Jean Twenge acknowledges these traits and suggests that Smartphones are destroying a generation. She looks at Generation Z, which she refers to as the “iGen” and suggests that they are addicted to their devices, which is causing higher rates of depression and suicide.²² Statistical studies have spiked with regard to this generation feeling lonely, not spending time with friends and

not going on dates. Twenge notes that the addiction to smartphones has created a generation with limited experience in face-to-face interaction and persistent struggles to engage interpersonally.²³ CEO and founder of Face Book, Mark Zuckerberg identified that social media was taking over people's lives. He announced changes to Face Book in January 2018 that cost him financially. The changes will ensure people use Face Book for 'meaningful interactions', his intent being to bring people together.²⁴

2.3 Millennials' Lack of Interpersonal Skills

There is no debate that the millennials are technologically savvy and this brings many positive aspects to the workplace. However, this tech savviness brings some negative aspects to the workplace as well. A survey conducted by PWC identified that this technologically savvy generation avoids face time, with 41% surveyed saying they prefer to communicate at work via a device, as opposed to face to face or over the phone.²⁵ This observation is echoed by Giles Slade in *The Big Disconnect*.²⁶ Slade explains how technology is making the world a lonely place. Although it does not necessarily target millennials alone, it identifies that the reliance on technology in society is at the detriment of face to face engagement and relationships. Slade also states that the digital evolution in our brain is increasing social isolation and the ability to seek out interpersonal relationships, which is causing an increase in depression and a society that depends heavily on technology for companionship.²⁷

Diercksen, DiPlacido, Harvey and Bosco predicted that there would be a decline in interpersonal skills due to the heavy reliance on smartphones. This lack of interpersonal skills has a negative effective in the workplace; such as relationship building, the transfer of knowledge, and open work discussions.²⁸ This lack of personal communication skills or "soft skills" has been identified throughout numerous studies. Bruce Tulgan, author of multiple books regarding soft skills training, identifies that there is an "ever widening" soft skills gap in the work force brought in with young employees.²⁹ Lindsey Pollack, author of *Becoming*

the Boss, also identifies that face to face interaction does not come naturally to Generation Y as they were brought up around technology. She provides a guide for millennials in leadership positions with one chapter dedicated to communication.³⁰ Meola conducted research and identified the same issue and recommended Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) for millennials. The recommendation is for millennials to participate in training with horses in order to help develop their self-awareness, self-confidence, leadership and communication skills. She believes that this will teach millennials the soft skills required to fit into the workplace.

2.4 Negative Impacts on Mission Effectiveness

The increased reliance on technology by millennials – comes at a cost – specifically a decreased ability to communicate in person. This lack of basic skills is having a negative impact on work forces and militaries worldwide. The authors of *Military of Millennials* identify how millennials are a generation of knowledge sharers, which could be harmful to the military, operations, and to Generation Y's subordinates. The authors characterize millennials as technologically savvy, open minded, able to multi task but suggests they are unprepared for command.³¹ This concern is also felt within the US Coast Guard where they have noticed that there is a heavy reliance on technology to communicate, often circumnavigating the chain of command.³² In a military organization that operates within chains of command, this trait will have negative impacts on operations.

Major Andrew Stipp writes about his observations as a company commander in the article “Leading Soldiers With-Not Primarily Through-Communication Technology”. Major Stipp's soldiers would rely on their cell phones as their “power bases” and not engage in face to face interaction. He would ban cell phones during work hours to encourage soldiers to develop the necessary communication skills to deal with real life situations, a situation like the one he found himself in, having to tell a soldier's mother that the boy had passed away, a task that could only be done face to face.³³

The amount of time millennials spend online masks the fact that they have a deficit in interpersonal skills, and the ability to manage and negotiate conflict. This will affect the military's ability to do its job of winning hearts and minds, a key role for NZ soldiers on operations.³⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hill echoes this and states how interpersonal engagement is an indispensable warrior skill. He argues that today's world is a culture of engagement requiring good interpersonal communication skills to survive. The warrior of today must operate in the human domain and must engage with other cultures interpersonally in order to succeed.³⁵ Colonel McFarland supports this and highlights the need for cultural education. He addresses the fact that mission success is often significantly affected by a soldier's ability to interact with local individuals and communities.³⁶ The Department of Defense has identified the importance of intercultural competence with regard to improving mission effectiveness and has established Culture Centers around the U.S. for all branches of service. The Defense Language and National Security Education Office offers a website to share all services, training, and educational resources.³⁷ Dozens of intercultural communication books have emerged over the past several decades to acknowledge the importance of this essential skill. Inherent to intercultural communication competence is being able to interact effectively and appropriately verbally as well as nonverbally.³⁸ In the realm of leadership, researchers with *The Globe Study of Culture, Leadership & Organizations* surveyed thousands of managers and CEOs in 62 different societies to examine attributes of leadership and identified that good communication skills are key to leadership effectiveness and are valued universally.³⁹ The importance of Intercultural Communication Competence has been identified in studies worldwide and serves as a reminder that this capability needs to be deliberately trained and developed regardless of age or career field.

2.5 Current Practices to Manage the Millennials

As previously mentioned, many organizations that have identified the lack of interpersonal communication skills in millennials have suggested training – such as Equine Assisted Learning programs or cultural training. The United Kingdom Ministry of Defence has produced a guide for leaders that highlights the importance of interpersonal communication for a leader. The guide highlights the need to be understood, have good nonverbal communication, and negotiating skills. It emphasizes the need for a leader to develop themselves and others; leaders should build teams and empower their soldiers, all traits that require good personal communication skills.⁴⁰ The Romanian Military have identified the same issue and have investigated ways in which to best train their soldiers for stability and support operations. They require their soldiers to be have good intercultural communication competence in order to be successful.⁴¹

The need for generational culture training has been identified by the US Air Force as well. In her article *Gaining the Edge*, Lieutenant Colonel Kay Smith reviews the different generations and recommend that the US Air Force recruitment personnel conduct generational cultural training in order to better understand and recruit the millennials.⁴² Lieutenant General Van identifies a similar need for the US Army, suggesting that cultural awareness training and negotiation training is conducted for the millennial generation.⁴³

Civilian organizations have also identified the issue and provide a variety of training to overcome the lack of interpersonal communication skills being seen in today's society, with training packages which are designed and developed to specially target the millennial generation.⁴⁴ The US Marine Corps identified that everyone communicates but few connect. In order to get more Marines to connect, Captain Bailey suggests the Marine Corps must conduct interpersonal skills development training whilst at The Basic School in order to overcome some of the challenges that the millennials are faced with. The author suggests that

the Marine Corps Recruiting Command's *Marine Corps Communication, Coaching and Counselling* (MC3) training package be implemented.⁴⁵

3.0 Impacts on Mission Effectiveness from the Reliance on Technology

The reliance on technology is not limited to Generations Y and Z; many of the generations have some sort of reliance on technology. The difference with Generation Y and Z is that this reliance has been with them since birth; therefore, unlike the older generations, they have had no time to develop the necessary basic soft skills to adapt to a situation where technology is not available or when required to engage face to face. This lack of soft skills is affecting not only work forces, but also schools and society. Relationships are a key aspect of any work force, and the inability for millennials to build and develop relationships has been noted. One of the key reasons for this inability to build relationships is a lack of interpersonal communication skills. If employees and supervisors do not engage in effective communication, performance may suffer and conflict may rise. The other issue in the workforce is that the millennials do not have the soft skills or emotional intelligence to see how they are being perceived by other generations as they continually look at their smart phones. Being able to communicate effectively is key in the work place as it is the only way to share knowledge between generations and employees.⁴⁶

The effects of technology and the millennials is affecting schools as well. The emotional attachment to smartphones is preventing students from focusing in the classroom, and their inability to communicate face to face is having a detrimental effect on learning from older generational teachers. The millennial student's primary communication skills rely on text or email as opposed to face to face engagement, therefore the traditional lecture style teaching is not to the taste of the millennials. Some schools have taken a "flipped classroom" approach to make the most of their time with millennial students. They provide the course

material electronically then hold a Socratic style class, where students are forced to discuss and share their thoughts, assisting the development of the interpersonal communication skills as well as their academic ability.⁴⁷

There are also negative side effects felt throughout society and communities. Face to face engagement has declined. People often waste time on the internet or their smart phone without positive purpose, surfing the net, watching YouTube and playing games. This is often at the expense of quality family time, attending events, or being physically active, and playing sport. Current research suggests that 18 – 33 year olds are prone to feelings of anxiety and inferiority by being exposed to friends' social media feeds. The fear of missing out or FOMO is becoming more prevalent as people constantly check social media and realize they missed out on an event. Psychologists suggest this could be a form of cognitive distortion which leads people to believe that their friends do not like them.⁴⁸ Additional negative effects felt throughout society are the rise in cyber-crimes, particularly cyber bullying, and in numerous cases this has led to children committing suicide. Although technology has advanced the world and been a large player in globalization the negative effects are not only being felt in the workforce; societies, schools, and militaries are currently dealing with the dark side of the net.

4.0 Skills Required for Soldiers Operating in a Multi-Cultural Environment

In order for a CMA element or any military element to engage and interact with members of another culture, the soldiers require good soft skills. The primary criteria for Intercultural Communication Competence are appropriateness, following relational and social expectations and norms; and effectiveness, achieving one's goals. Mindfulness is another important aspect when communicating across cultural boundaries. The person must be mindful of their own cultural communication assumptions, cognitions, and emotions whilst

becoming attuned to the other culture's assumptions, cognitions, and emotions.⁴⁹ In order to achieve intercultural competence, research indicates that there are five key components an individual must master: motivation to communicate, an appropriate amount of cultural knowledge, appropriate and effective communication skills, sensitivity, and character.⁵⁰

An individual must be *motivated to communicate* in person, face to face. The person must want to engage and not do so due to their role in the military. Motivation is one of the key competencies and the easiest to understand. The person must be motivated to go outside their own personal boundaries when engaging with other cultures and must be enthusiastic to understand and communicate.

The second key element is the ability to *acquire and understand cultural knowledge*, also known as cultural metacognition. Culture is an integrated system of socially acquired values, traditions, language, rules, and behaviors within a society.⁵¹ The individual must have a good understanding of not only their own culture but that of the community they are engaging with. Acquiring new cultural knowledge requires an individual to be self-aware, to conduct their own learning and be adaptable. Cultures can be learned and shared, one of the best ways to understand a culture is to be immersed in that culture. By being immersed in the community the soldier will have learned first-hand the beliefs and values of that population, something that is key to Information Operations.⁵²

With an understanding of the culture, the soldier must possess the third component: *communication skills* to be interculturally competent. Good communication skills refer to the ability to be able to listen, observe, interpret, analyze, and apply certain behaviors to a particular situation. Good communication skills in one culture do not necessarily mean that those skills will be good in another culture. The effective communicator must be able to adapt their skills as appropriate to interact effectively with someone from a different culture. The lack of communication skills identified in the millennial generation will hinder its

members from being interculturally competent (especially if they spend more time looking at screens than at people) unless these skills are developed.

The fourth component is *sensitivity*. With the motivation, knowledge and skills the individual needs to have the sensitivity to apply these appropriately. Sensitivity in relation to cultural interactions involves the individual being flexible, empathetic, patient, curious about the other culture, comfortable with others, and open to diversity. The soldier must be sensitive to others and also to the culture itself. They must be tolerant of ambiguity and not get frustrated when an encounter or behavior seems strange or different to their own culture. A truly sensitive communicator will move beyond the basics and display a positive attitude toward the group that is different from his own.⁵³

The final component that displays intercultural competence is *character*. Character is a combination of qualities that distinguishes one person from another. A person to be of good character generally displays traits, such as: integrity, honesty, loyalty, self-sacrifice, accountability and self-control.⁵⁴ If a person is perceived to be of bad character the chance of success when communicating will be limited.

To be a competent communicator across different cultures an individual must possess all five key components. As identified, Generation Y soldiers do lack the interpersonal communication skills to be interculturally competent; fortunately for the millennial and mission success, this component can be trained.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 What Skills are Required

Of the five key components required to possess intercultural communication competence, the key component significantly lacking in the millennial generation is “communication skills”. The other four components can be trained through various pre-deployment trainings; however, communication skills need to be mastered early and

developed throughout a soldier's career. Based on the work of Brian Spitzberg, it is recommended that soldiers be required to be trained in five components of interpersonal communication: *alter centrism, coordination, composure, expressiveness, and adaption*.⁵⁵

Alter centrism are those behaviors that show that the soldier is interested in, concerned about, and paying attention to the person they are interacting with.⁵⁶ This is a skill that will take time for some millennials to master, as their tendency is to multitask with technology and personal communication, often coming across as not paying attention or focused on the person they are engaged with. Appropriate body language, maintaining eye contact, asking questions, and active listening are all indicators that someone is paying attention to another. The millennial can be taught all these skills.

The second communication skill that should be trained is conversational coordination, or the ability to make conversation flow. This requires the communicator to create smooth initiation, conclusion, and transitions between conversation topics. They must avoid interruptions, provide feedback cues, and transition with ease between themes.⁵⁷ Being able to ensure that a conversation flows smoothly is a key skill that must be trained in order to allow for a relaxed encounter that does not feel forced or unwanted.

The third communication aspect that millennials must be trained in is composure whilst conversing with other cultures. The soldier should reflect calmness and confidence in their demeanor, avoiding ticks, twitches, and nervous movements, appearing relaxed and comfortable in the environment.⁵⁸ A soldier that is composed whilst communicating will come off as self-confident, assertive, and in control of the situation, making the local population feel at ease and relaxed.

The fourth aspect, expressiveness, must be trained but employed with given consideration to the local culture. Expressiveness is the ability to adjust one's vocal tone and pitch, use appropriate gestures, smile, and display both verbal and non-verbal feedback

during the engagement.⁵⁹ Being able to effectively express oneself during an engagement where the same language is not spoken is a key skill for soldiers to gain trust and build rapport with the local population.

The final aspect of communication skills that millennial soldiers must master in order to have intercultural communication competence is adaptation. Adaptation involves different aspects, the first being that the soldier is able to subtly change their behavior to be like that of the culture they are immersed; the ability to mirror the cultural behaviors and norms. The second aspect of adaptation is the ability for the soldier to keep their verbal and non-verbal actions consistent whilst maintaining personal alter centricism, coordination, composure and expressiveness. To be fully proficient at intercultural communication the soldier must be able to maintain a balance between their own goals and behaviors with that of the other person, so as not to be egocentric.⁶⁰ In order to communicate effectively and appropriately across cultures, millennial soldiers must be trained and proficient in these skills. Once developed, these skills must be maintained through ongoing training and education.

5.2 How to Train these Skills

The US Marine Corps identified that Marines working at recruiting stations required additional skills in order to engage with and recruit American youths, the Generation Y and Z of society. In consultation with previous recruiters, recruiter instructors, recruiter school instructors, and national training team members, the Marine Corps developed and implemented the Marine Corps Communication and Consulting (MC3) package. A four-day professional training program designed to leverage and enhance the communication and sales skills of Marine recruiters.⁶¹ The MC3 package is broken down into two main parts: communication skills and consulting skills. The effective communication skills aspect teaches essential soft skills required in all Marines and Soldiers. The module is broken down further into “build rapport” and “listen with purpose”.

MC3 defines building rapport as developing a relationship through interpersonal skills in order to facilitate trust and an honest exchange of information. MC3 stresses that it is important to build rapport immediately and keep doing so during the engagement. The guide has a subsection of building rapid rapport where they teach Marines to look for visual cues in order to build rapport quickly. This could be a sports team on the person's T-shirt, food they are eating or an item they are carrying. MC3 states that in order to build rapport, you must find common ground, demonstrate Corps values, and match and mirror. The recruiters are taught about what is not appropriate whilst building rapport, such as inappropriate words, humor, or sexual references, intimidation, and sounding robotic.⁶²

The ability to *match and mirror* someone's gestures, stance, and mannerisms puts people at ease. Research suggests that if someone mirrors another's actions, the person being mirrored feels like they have something in common and it becomes easier to like the new person, building trust and rapport subconsciously.⁶³ Building rapport is an essential basic skill for anybody that lives and works in a community, and it is even more important for soldiers who deploy to another country with a different cultural background and different language. The ability to build rapport with the local population will help develop trust and develop relationships when challenged with the language barrier and time constraints.

The second key aspect of communication that MC3 teaches is *listen with purpose*. Marines are taught to focus attention to gather information and build relationships in order to ensure understanding. Listening with purpose should be conducted throughout the engagement. MC3 teaches four key areas: listen to understand, listen for facts and feelings, listen to build trust, and observe body language.⁶⁴ The individual must listen to understand, to ensure the message they are receiving is the same as the message that is being sent. Often soldiers make assumptions and fail to clarify or confirm what they have heard, leading to miscommunications, errors, and on operations, potentially the loss of life. Being an active

listener and confirming the message is a key skill to have when operating in a multi-cultural environment, where words, phrases, and gestures often have different meaning.

When engaged in conversation, the listener should ensure they are listening for facts and feelings. This is key when attempting to illicit information for a military operation. The listener should listen actively, this is another way to build trust with the speaker. Whilst listening the soldier must also observe the body language of the speaker, looking for clues about how they feel, so the soldier can respond accordingly. The course explains how physical distractions, personal biases, snap judgements, and thinking ahead are bad traits of a good listener and should be avoided. Although these soft skills appear simplistic, they go against many of the millennial's characteristics, and learning these skills may be difficult for a generation that multitasks, is ever surrounded by distractions, and needs information immediately.⁶⁵

The second half of MC3 is directed at sales and consulting; however, the skills taught - purposeful conversation skills - are relevant for the growth and development of the interpersonal communication skills of the millennials. The "consultative selling skills" is broken into six parts: engage, explore, enable, gain commitment, respond to objections, and respond to disinterest.⁶⁶ The engagement aspect is the ability to open a conversation to align on an agenda and value of the conversation. The way in which MC3 teaches to engage is by transitioning to business, stating the agenda and why it is important, and by testing for yes, a means to ensure that the listener buys into the conversation and agrees with what you have said.⁶⁷

The explore component focuses on asking questions to understand needs and motivators and to gain a comprehensive and shared understanding of the needs and motivators. This is done by asking questions, both open and closed questions to explore the needs and motivators of the other person. Often the explore part of a conversation can fail

when a soldier asks too many of one type of question, asks random questions, or talks more than questions and listens.⁶⁸ The explore aspect of an engagement is key when dealing with a different culture, by exploring what motivates the individual or what their needs are, the soldier can better understand their culture.

The third aspect is *enable*. This element is about addressing the needs and motivators identified whilst exploring.⁶⁹ Once identified, the soldier can then demonstrate how the military unit can create the desired change. This could be anything from the security of a village to safe drinking water. The fourth aspect of MC3, *gain commitment* is more relevant to recruiting, however this aspect could be modified for NZ purposes to “obtaining buy in” or support from the other person. This is important for a military to ensure that the villages they are located in actually support them being in that location.

The fifth and sixth elements: *respond to objections*, and *respond to disinterest*, are again aimed at a potential recruit, however the skills taught are relevant for millennials to learn.⁷⁰ It is important that when dealing with rejection or disinterest the soldier asks questions to understand, that they respect the opinion of the other party, and that they state the value of continuing to converse. The soldier should then go back to the explore element. The six elements of MC3 consultative selling skills are all key soft skills that should be taught to the millennial soldiers in order for them to get buy in from local people of another culture whilst on military operations.

The “build rapport” aspect of MC3 is the crucial training required for millennials to develop alter centricism, coordination, composure, expressiveness, and adaption skills to make them effective communicators in today’s society. The two parts of MC3 blend together as the soldier is required to use the communication skills to then engage, explore and ultimately gain commitment from the local population. Although these skills will aid the soldier whilst

communicating across cultures, they are also basic skills that will assist them in every engagement they have face to face, either in a work, social, or family environment.

The NZ Army currently does not specifically teach interpersonal communication skills during its initial training courses. Leadership skills are taught, including “self-lead”; however, neither of these courses cover the interpersonal communication skills required for millennial soldiers.^{71, 72} The MC3 training package should be modified slightly and taught throughout the NZ Army. For enlisted soldiers the initial communication aspect should be taught as soldiers enter recruit training. The package should be taught in the classroom and scenarios should be played throughout the recruit training to further develop the basic skills. Once the soldier is on his first leadership course they should be taught the second aspect, consultative selling skills. The skills taught in this module will aid the soldier in leadership roles but also on military operations whilst engaging with different and often multiple cultures. For officers, the complete package should be taught during their first year of training at Officer Cadet School (OCS), in the classroom and scenarios should be played throughout the year in order to develop and enhance these basic interpersonal communication skills.

6.0 Conclusion

In summary, this paper looked at a historical example of a NZ military operation and highlighted the importance of the civil military affairs element and its ability to engage with the local population, which was found to be a key reason the mission succeeded. The paper then reviewed the characteristics of the millennial generation, highlighting their reliance on technology and accompanying lack of interpersonal communication skills, along with implications. The paper examined different ways in which other organizations are managing deficient interpersonal skills among millennials. In addition to its positive impacts on society, technology has also created serious negative impacts. Intercultural communication

competence was also discussed, along with the skills required for soldiers to thrive in a culturally complex environment. The paper closed by identifying the particular skills that should be required training for millennials with a recommendation of incorporating MC3 to teach those skills.

Generation Y and Z make up a significant proportion of the modern military; these are generations raised with ever-present technology at their fingertips, which often isolates them from navigating the complexities of face-to-face interaction. They often have groups and friends on-line they have never met in person. Due to this reliance on technology and declining face-to-face social interaction, the generation has not acquired many basic interpersonal communication skills. They prefer to engage with their smart phones as opposed to people standing next to them. This lack of traditional communication skills is having negative effects worldwide across corporate, military, and civil society. Research has recommended various methods for managing the lack of soft skills in millennials, and many organizations are implementing diverse training packages and communication methods.

For an organization such as the NZ Army which conducts military operations around the world from the Pacific to the Middle East, a soldier must not only be able to communicate in person with their peers, but they also must possess intercultural communication competence; the ability to understand and engage with different cultures without disrespecting or offending the person. This comes predominantly through a soldier's ability to communicate appropriately and effectively with mindfulness. Soldiers must utilize alter centricism, coordination, composure, expressiveness, and adaption whilst communicating. These skills are not automatic for the millennial generation.

In order to ensure that the NZ Army consists of soldiers capable of communicating across different boundaries, it should implement the Marine Corps MC3 training package into recruit and officer training and then continue to develop these skills throughout the soldiers'

or officers' careers. By investing time in training the millennials to communicate effectively and appropriately, the NZ Army will reap the benefits when deployed to an environment where success depends on civil military interaction. These basic skills will set up the warriors of today and tomorrow for success as they attempt to win the hearts and minds of a nation in disarray.

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