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TRUST AND MILLENNIALS:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE 21st CENTURY PROFESSION OF ARMS

by

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Biography

Lt Col Colin J. Sindel entered the Air Force in 1994 as a graduate of the Texas A & M University ROTC program. He began his career as a Special Operations Weather Officer with assignments at the 75th Ranger Regiment, Fort Benning, Georgia and 16th Special Operations Wing, Hurlburt Field, Florida. After graduating from flight school as a KC-135 Combat Systems Operator, Lt Col Sindel served in various operational flying assignments at RAF Mildenhall, United Kingdom and Grand Forks AFB, North Dakota. He then attended the intermediate developmental education program, Advanced Studies of Air Mobility, at Fort Dix, New Jersey and upon graduation served as an Air Mobility Liaison Officer to III Corps, 1st Calvary Division and 4th Infantry Division at Fort Hood, Texas. Following this assignment, he served as a Strategic Mobility Planner at the Joint Enabling Capabilities Command, U.S. Joint Forces Command, Suffolk, Virginia. Next, he took command of the 5th Expeditionary Air Mobility Squadron at Al Mubarak Air Base, Kuwait. Following his command tour, Lt Col Sindel served as the Executive Officer to the Eighteenth Air Force Commander at Scott AFB, Illinois. Most recently, Lt Col Sindel served as military assistant / trip coordinator to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense at the Pentagon. He is currently a student at the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.
Abstract

One of the key components to U.S. national security and defense is the Profession of Arms: the military professionals who execute the military instrument of power. Trust is an essential element to the effectiveness of the Profession of Arms. Recent incidents ranging from ethical and moral misconduct to mis-use of taxpayer dollars have created an environment of “distrust” thus negatively affecting how Millennials, the next generation of military professionals, view the Profession of Arms. In building and shaping this next generation of fighting forces, Department of Defense (DoD) leadership must understand the concept of trust as well as Millennial’s expectations of trust in order to facilitate an effective Profession of Arms. By fully understanding trust and Millennial’s views on trust, DoD leadership can develop a strategy to build and maintain trust among our nation’s future military professionals. This paper addresses this sometimes complex topic of trust and Millennials through examination of current literature on trust and Millennials and analysis of current and relevant perspectives on trust using focus group research methodology.
Trust is critical to the functionality of the Profession of Arms. Sometimes difficult to define, trust in the U.S. military can be the difference between successful military operations on one hand and front page news stemming from misconduct on the other. In a 2012 Secretary of Defense memorandum covering Ethics, Integrity, and Accountability, Secretary Leon Panetta proclaimed that “trust is foundational to the Department of Defense’s (DoD’s) ability to protect our Nation.” In that same year, then Army Chief of Staff, General Ray Odierno stated that “our profession is built on the bedrock of trust.” General Odierno further articulated the importance of trust in the Profession of Arms by advocating that trust must exist “between Soldiers; Soldiers and Leaders; Soldiers, their families and the Army; and finally between the Army and the American people.” In the 2012 white paper, “America’s Military: A Profession of Arms,” Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Martin Dempsey emphasized that “trust is earned not given, through deeds not words. It extends laterally and vertically, both ways. Trust is inherent in the strength of our collective character.” Most recently, in one of his final actions, outgoing Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel challenged the Profession of Arms to “do better” because “when senior leaders forfeit this trust through unprofessional, unethical or morally questionable behavior, their actions have an enormously negative effect on the profession.” The topic of trust has captured the attention of senior Department of Defense leaders for good reason.

Millennials, the next generation of military professionals, will play a critical role in future U.S. national security. In building and shaping the 21st century fighting force, DoD leadership must understand the concept of trust as well as Millennial’s expectations of trust in order to facilitate an effective Profession of Arms. By fully understanding trust and Millennial’s views on trust, DoD leadership can craft a strategy to build and maintain trust among our nation’s future fighting force. This paper addresses this sometimes complex topic of trust and Young
Americans through examination of current literature on trust and analysis of current and relevant perspectives on trust and Millennials using focus group research methodology.

**The Current Environment**

A 1975 Gallup Poll survey indicated that only 20% of young Americans had trust and confidence in the Profession on Arms. Arguably, these low numbers stemmed from the improper handling and subsequent fallout of the Vietnam War. Young American’s views on trust and confidence in the U.S. military steadily increased over the next 30 years. In 2001, a Harvard University survey revealed that 75% of college students trusted the U.S. military. However, in a similar survey in 2014, only 47% of college students trusted the Profession of Arms. Several events across the Department of Defense serve as contributory factors for this loss of trust between young Americans and the Profession of Arms. First, a 2005 State Department outbrief to the United Nations Committee against Torture on the failures at Abu Gharib prison concluded that U.S. military leadership at all levels “violated the[ ] standards of trust.” Next, several high profile senior military leader’s unethical acts ranging from infidelity to misuse of taxpayer dollars has captured much media attention. In 2007, an Air Force bomber jet inadvertently loaded with six nuclear warheads flew halfway across the United States. The Air Force disciplined 70 personnel stating that an “erosion of adherence to weapons handling standards” had occurred. Finally, as of September 2013, 16 U.S. Navy commanding officers have been relieved of command. According to the Commander, Surface Forces, the majority of the firings were due to “personal misconduct” ranging from “inappropriate relationships” to “loss of confidence” in a commanding officer’s leadership ability. The culminating effects of these events have resulted in an environment of “distrust” thus negatively impacting how Millennials view the Profession of Arms.
What is Trust?

In order to properly examine the topic of trust as it relates to Millennials and the Profession of Arms, a clear definition of trust must first be established. For example, Bennis and Nanus advocate that “trust is hard to describe, let alone define. We know when it’s present and we know when it’s not, and we cannot say much more about it except for its essentiality….”¹⁴ According to the Webster-Mariam dictionary, trust in its simplest form is “assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something” or “one in which confidence is placed.”¹⁵ Interestingly, this basic definition implies that, at a minimum, trust requires two entities; that is, two people or a person and something else such as a group or organization. In other words, trust requires a relationship between these two entities. The Ken Blanchard Company, a premier global leadership development firm, further codifies trust “as the primary factor in how people work together, listen to one another, and build effective relationships.”¹⁶ Blanchard’s definition suggests that trust is a key component in building relationships: individuals-to-individual and individual-to-group or organization. Dr. Dale Zand, professor of management at New York University’s Stern School of Business, defines trust as a “willingness to increase [one’s] vulnerability to another person whose behavior [one] cannot control….”¹⁷ Moreover, Dr. Zand introduces the idea of vulnerability with respect to trust. That is, a level of risk is involved when one trusts another person or organization. For this reason, Carolyn McLeod, a professor of philosophy at Western University, claims “trust is important but also dangerous” because trust involves the risk that the people or organization we place confidence in will not be there for us.¹⁸ McLeod emphasizes that “what we risk while trusting is the loss of the things that we entrust to others, including our self-respect, perhaps, which can be shattered by the betrayal of our trust.”¹⁹ Finally, world-renowned leadership expert, Stephen Covey, argues that “trust means confidence…when you trust people, you have confidence in them—in their
integrity and their abilities.’” As such, for purposes of this paper, trust is defined as “assured reliance on the character, ability, and strength of a person, group or organization.”

**How trust works (the importance of trust)**

Using the definition above, this research will examine why trust is important and how trust works. Most people agree that trust is important to any organization. Bennis and Nanus suggest that “trust is the lubrication that makes it possible for the organizations to work.” The best way to understand why trust is important is to think about the alternative, that is, the ramifications that exist if trust is not present in an organization. The outcomes of distrust are endless and negative as already highlighted in this paper. Rocke advocates that “trust performs an indispensable function; [trust] is a concept upon which the practice of effective leadership depends.”

Yet, how does trust really work? In an attempt to better understand trust from an organizational behavior perspective, Roderick Kramer, professor at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, codifies trust in two distinct organizational theories: psychological and choice behavior. In a psychological state, trust can be thought of as a cognitive process where a “perceived vulnerability or risk is derived from [one’s] uncertainty regarding the motives, intentions, and prospective actions of others on whom [one] depends.” In contrast, a choice behavior perspective suggests that using rational choice theory, “decisions about trust are similar to other forms of risky choice where individuals are presumed to be motivated to make rational, efficient choices to maximize expected gains or minimize expected losses from their transactions.”
Covey however looks at trust from a different perspective. He contends that many people “think about trust in terms of character—of being a good or sincere person or of having ethics or integrity.” Yet, Covey suggests that character is only half of the equation. Competence, one’s “capabilities, skills, results, and track record” are equally important to the trust equation. Practically speaking, Covey ascertains that “people trust people [and organizations that] make things happen.” Moreover, he stresses that “character is a constant; it’s necessary for trust in any circumstance. Competence is situational; it depends on what the circumstance requires.” As such, any distrust or environment of untrustworthiness is “always a failure of one or the other.” Although trust has different connotations to different people, one thing is certain: trust is essential for healthy relationships no matter if the interaction is between two people or an individual and an organization.

**Trust Models and Concepts**

Similar to the endless terms and definitions describing trust, an equal number of trust models and concepts exist providing ways to better understand this idea of trust. For example, Gareth Jones and Jennifer George, both management professors at Texas A&M University’s Graduate School of Business, advocate that the “experience of trust is determined by the interplay of people's values, attitudes, moods and emotions.” In their evolution of trust model, they articulate that in a “social situation” or relationship, “each party [or organization] tries to understand the other party [or organization’s] expectations, needs and goals.” In doing so, Jones and George propose that “values provide standards of trust that people strive to achieve in their relationship with others, attitudes provide knowledge of another person’s trustworthiness, and current moods and emotions are signals or indicators of the presence and quality of trust in a relationship.” The evolution of trust begins when the parties “have a strong confidence in
each other’s values and trustworthiness, have favorable attitudes toward each other, and experience positive affect in the context of the relationship.” Based on the proper aligning of values, attitudes, moods, and emotions, the trust experience will evolve into distrust, conditional trust or unconditional trust. Jones and George propose that unconditional trust should be the goal of both individuals and organizations as this trust experience “can fundamentally change the quality of the exchange relationship” and “involve a mutual identification.”

Denise Rousseau, professor of Organizational Behavior and Public Policy at Carnegie Mellon University, et al suggest that a “phenomenon as complex as trust requires theory and research methodology that reflect trusts’ many facets and levels.” As such, she and her team stipulate that “trust takes different forms in different relationships—from a calculated weighing of perceived gains and losses to an emotional response based on interpersonal attachment and identification.” For instance, calculus-based trust occurs when the “trustor perceives that the trustee intends to perform an action that is beneficial.” Using the calculus based form of trust, individuals or organizations often “trust but verify” in order to achieved desired outcomes. Relational trust stems “from repeated interaction over time between trustor and trustee. Reliability and dependability in previous interactions with the trustor give rise to the positive expectation about the trustee’s intentions” and thus an emotional aspect to this form of trust. Finally, institutional-based trust can set conditions for “formulating both calculus-based and relational trust” thus “sustain[ing] further risk taking and trust behavior.” Rousseau et al conclude that “conceptualizing trust in only one form in a relationship risks missing the rich diversity of trust…” thus neglecting to fully understand it’s true nature.

Covey utilizes his “5 Waves of Trust” model to practically depict the “interdependent nature of trust and how it flows from the inside out.” Covey advocates that just as a wave has a
“ripple effect” in a body of water the effects of trustworthiness can propagate outward positively impacting people, groups and organizations along the way. The first wave, self trust, is anchored on the core principal of credibility. Covey characterizes this most important wave as the “confidence we have in ourselves—in our ability to set and achieve goals, to keep commitments, to walk our talk—and also with our ability to inspire trust in others.” Trustworthiness must begin with us as leaders, supervisors, and as people that care. Second, relationship trust constitutes “how to establish and increase ‘trust accounts’ we have with others.” This wave describes how one’s behaviors and actions influence relationships and thus trustworthiness. Third, the organizational wave encompasses how leaders “focus on internal stakeholders” to establish trust in their organization. Covey stresses that the “key principle underlying this wave is alignment [which] helps leaders create structures, systems and symbols of organizational trust.” Market trust, the fourth wave, deals with “branding” or an organization’s reputation. In essence, like people, all organizations have a reputation or “brand” which translates into trustworthiness to external stakeholders. Overtime, this “branding” or a solid reputation builds loyalty between people and organizations. Finally, the fifth wave, societal trust, fits squarely on the principal of contribution. In this last wave, Covey suggests that as people and organizations exist in an environment of trustworthiness “there’s more for everyone. We have more options and opportunities. We interact with less friction, resulting in greater speed and lower cost.” No matter what type of relationship, individual to individual, individual to organization, or organization to organization, trust matters. Leaders must embrace the fact that establishing and developing trust is the single most important step to achieving both personal and professional goals.
Millennials and Trust

Building upon the concept of trust, this research will now turn to better understanding young Americans - the Millennials. Specifically, this research will assess how Millennials view trust and what Millennials value. According to Diane Spiegel, founding partner of The End Result Partnership, a leading national corporate training and development firm, many Millennials “have been raised to be skeptical…[thus] trust is workplace currency for them.”53 Like money in a bank, trust increases or is “earned” overtime. Yet, once distrust occurs, “the currency’s value drops significantly” among Millennials.54 Furthermore, Speigel suggest that since trust is foundational for Millennials “fully investing [oneself] will pay dividends” to building relationships with Millennials.55 Citing a 2000 poll where 64% of 18-24 year olds stated that “most people are just looking out for themselves” and 54% said that most people “would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance,” Dr. Jean M. Twenge, Professor of Psychology at San Diego State University, concludes that “Generation Me trusts no one.”56 As such, she articulates that Millennials reside in an “individualistic world where the prevailing sentiment” is that of untrustworthiness or “Do unto others before they do it to you.”57 Dr. Brenda Moore, associate professor at Texas A&M University – Commerce, School of Social Work, characterizes Millennials as potentially “not hav[ing] basic literacy fundamentals and critical thinking due to excessive information availability.”58 This bombardment of endless information from multiple sources creates an environment of fluidity and non-permanence which tends to de-emphasize the concept of trustworthiness among Young Americans.

Every generation values certain things. Millennials are no different. In order to build trust among Generation Y’ers, leaders must understand what Millennials value, care about and what motivates them. First, Millennials value transparency in a relationship and thus in the
workplace. Speigel defines transparency as “open, allowing light to pass thorough, clearly recognizable as what [a person] really is.”

As such, transparency supports “openness, communication, and accountability” in a relationship. Transparency sets the conditions for honest and accurate dialogue in the workplace. Speigel emphasizes that “one can establish a sense of trust up front by being transparent.”

Next, Millennials desire “authentic” communication in the workplace. Twenge stresses that Millennials “see their directness as an asset … for instant feedback that’s straightforward and uncomplicated…” Moreover, she ascertains that “previous generations were unconcerned about seeing someone else’s ‘core self’ but for GenMe ‘not being yourself’ equates to being somehow unwhole and false.” Authenticity coupled with transparency in a relationship reveals vulnerabilities thus enhancing trustworthiness.

Third, Millennials tend to resonate with a collaborative type working environment. Neil Howe and William Stauss, authors of Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation, submit that because of their upbringing and education Millennials are often “drawn to circles and cliques.” Spiegel argues that Millennials “count on their networks to sort [information] out and help with problem solving. When [Millennial’s] can't make sense of [something] or determine its validity, they send it out to their networks and have faith in those they trust.” Arguably, a collaborative type work environment requires even greater trust among individuals and organizations to facilitate open dialogue, ease of information flow, and creative, innovative thinking to achieve desired outcomes.

Finally, Millennials are generally characterized as a risk adverse generation. Howe and Strauss contend that “for Millennials, the edifice of parental care is like a castle that keeps
getting new bricks added….“66 The sheltering provided by parents, schools and society at large during childhood and adolescence has stifled Millennials desire and ability to take risk. Moreover, Spiegel points out that Millennials take fewer risk “because they do not have experience failing and are worried that they [will not] know how to navigate a situation in which they are not successful.”67 Reluctance to take risks can directly influence Millennials’ trust in a relationship or organization. In sum, Millennials portray certain characteristics like any other generations. As such, leaders must recognize the “uniqueness” of Millennials in order to truly connect and develop trust.

Deciphering Perspectives on Trust

In order to explore the concept of trust and how the Millennial generation views trust in today’s Profession of Arms, two different groups were intentionally selected to serve as participants in two separate focus group studies. Research methodology details and focus group questions are found in Appendix A.

Millennial Focus Group

Millenials defined trust and thus the concept of trust in many different ways. For example, participant responses included “having faith in your fellow man,” “believing that someone or some organization has your or the mission’s best interest at heart,” and “placing value on someone’s or an organization’s reliability.” One participated stated that “the trustworthiness of a person or organization is really based on if they keep their word.” Another individual responded that he formulates trust “on someone’s every day actions…if you can’t trust someone on the small things then you cannot trust them with million dollar systems.” Finally, one individual believed trust “is the sum of a person’s actions over time.”
Some participants felt trust took time to build while others thought trust is assumed. For instance, one participant stated that he “has complete confidence in someone or something until it is proven otherwise.” Another participant had “inherently more trust in military members than people on the street” because he knows military members “hold certain values…values that he shares as well.” Several participants voiced concerns that “if we really trust someone, then why do we verify?” Moreover, several individuals felt that “verify is just a safety word so people do not have to trust you.”

All Millennial focus group participants believed trust is a requirement for relationships in the military. However, in reality, they believed this concept of trust and relationships was more complex. For example, one participant stressed that ideally he “would like to be able to trust [his] leadership implicitly. Yet, he believed this is just not reality….but because the job does not work without trust, [people] learn to trust certain people in certain times, but not all the time.” Another participant believed people “compartmentalize” trust in a relationship by stating that “I trust you and work hard for you because you are my boss and I believe you are doing the right thing for the squadron, for the Air Force, but I do not have to trust you as a friend.”

The majority of the focus group participants believed Millennials still have the same perspective on trust as previous generations. However, all participants agreed that “exposure to social media is definitely higher and more pervasive” for the Millennial generation. One participant commented that the “problems of trust have always been there, now it is just more visible due to the media.” Citing a recent ethical mis-step by a senior military leader, one individual proclaimed that “it used to be that just the one guy who had a bad commander got jaded, now we all hear all about it and we all get jaded by one person’s experience.”
The Millennial focus group offered several “improvement areas” to build and maintain trust in the Profession of Arms. All participants unanimously agreed that greater transparency is required to strengthen and maintain trust. Greater transparency not only means more effective communication but taking the time to explain and “tell people your thought process.” In other words, Millennials desire to be told “why.” Several participants highlighted the link between perception and credibility stating that “actions yield reality…..the only way you can trust someone is to watch how they act every day.” Lastly, one participant boasted about the best commander she ever had stating that this commander “took the time to know things about me….she genuinely cared about my life.”

Overall, the Millennial focus group had a somewhat “pessimistic” view about the concept of trust. Most if not all of the Millennials surveyed had a bad “experience” that broke trust. For example, one individual cited a former commander who on her first day on the job “walked her in the squadron, handed her a beer and stated ‘Welcome to the Air Force’…she thought…this is how it is?” Another participant felt the Air Force as an institution had broken trust during a recent Reduction in Force board where “good people were cut.” Now, he followed-up, the Air Force says it “needs more people…..so we need to increase manning?” Yet, another participant highlighted the poor relationship he had with his flight commander who had a “reputation for being shady…..the way he handled some things made him untrustworthy.” One participant summed up the feelings for the group: “we learn want not to do, how trust is lost, instead of what to do” in order to strengthen and maintain trust. In closing, one Millennial put it best stating that “trust is definitely a fading value among your officers and enlisted.”
Air War College Focus Group

The Air War College focus group provided similar views of the definition of trust with some additional unique perspectives. For example, responses included “relying on others to uphold certain basic standards, or core values,” “one’s ability to delivery on his or her promises,” and “relying on someone to have the honesty and integrity to do the right thing.” Several participants highlighted that trust involves both reliability and predictability. One individual noted: “I can trust someone even if I don’t agree with their ethics, it’s about their predictability….about me knowing what they will do.” Several individuals felt there were “different levels or degrees of trust.” One individual commented that trust is both “physical and relational…..one has trust in an institution like a bank as well as a person.”

All participants felt trust was a requirement for positive and healthy relationships. Several individuals believed that “in a military organization we are obligated to follow orders whether I trust you or not I am obligated to do what you ask.” Another participant recalling an untrustworthy supervisor stated “we just have to learn to work with them the best you can.” Several individuals agreed that “you can have a relationship without trust…..it simply becomes a relationship built on predictability and consistency.” One individual stressed that “these types of relationships are painful, unproductive, and inefficient, but it’s still a relationship.” One individual commented that in a healthy relationship built on trust “there is an element of risk…one has to have a willingness to be vulnerable.”

Air War College participants offered several ways to develop and maintain trust among Millennials. First and foremost, almost all individuals surveyed believed transparency is essential to building and maintaining trust. Reflecting on a recent issue he had in his squadron
one individual emphasized that “honesty and communicating he had his people’s best interest” at heart went a long way in building trust. Another participant echoed that leaders “must be able to relate to [people’s] challenges and fears.” Several individuals believed “empowering people” strengthened trust. Like the Millennials surveyed, Air War College participants agreed that when able, by telling people “why” they are doing something creates buy-in and “gives them skin in the game.” Furthermore, empowerment provides an opportunity to mentor people. Finally, most participants felt that “being vulnerable” often encourages people to be “more willing to open a dialogue with you.” Participants emphasized that Millennials “live in a different culture than [they] grew up in” thus it’s imperative they really get to know Millennials in order to connect and lead them.

Findings and Recommendations

Millennials are no different than any other generation. Millennials want to be led, they want to be thanked, they want to be “part of something bigger than themselves” and above all they want to be valued. Yet, all these things cannot occur without the concept of trust intact.

But, how do we regain, maintain, and build a Profession of Arms built on trust?

First and foremost, trust must start with each and every individual in the Profession of Arms. That is, each military member must possess a personal desire and commitment to “lead oneself” first. One cannot establish a trusting relationship if he cannot first “get his own house in order.” The Air Force Profession of Arms Center for Excellence defines professionalism as “the art of leading oneself.” Professionalism must be the foundation that trust is built upon. Professionalism requires the self-reflection and self-awareness to ask the tough questions: “What am I doing and what should I be doing” and the capacity to follow-up by making any necessary
changes. Professionalism demands that each member fully embody the core values of his respective service. For example, just think what would occur if an Air Force member used the core value of “integrity first” as a “litmus test” prior to an action or decision. Arguably, on the grander scale, an unethical thus poor decision such as infidelity or mis-use of taxpayer dollars might have never happened. Practically speaking, truly “living out” the Profession of Arms’ core values all but guarantees an environment of trustworthiness.

Second, as the results of the focus groups demonstrate, the concepts of predictability, consistency and reliability increase trustworthiness. These characteristics fit squarely under the context of credibility. Credibility is essentially the “yardstick” that measures one’s trustworthiness. Kouzes argues that someone might be “clearly competent, dynamic and inspirational,” but the credibility check can be summed up in one question: “Do I trust this person?” As such, leaders must strive daily to ensure their words, actions and behaviors emulate credibility. Kouzes offers a set of three questions that provide a baseline to facilitating trust: (1) “Is my behavior predictable or erratic? (2) Do I treat promises seriously or lightly? and (3) Am I forthright or dishonest?” Credibility fosters trust thus creating healthy relationships. Without fail, people will follow credible leaders because they trust them.

Third, as highlighted during the focus groups, an emotional side of trust exists dealing with vulnerability and risk taking in a relationship. Emotional intelligence or the “understanding of our emotions and that of others and recognizing their importance and their role in the relationship” is a critical component in building relationships. However, recent research suggests that emotional intelligence “by itself is inadequate and inefficient because it is not followed up by any type of behavior.” Dr. Casey Mulqueen, Director of Research & Product Development at TRACOM Group, a leadership behavior consulting company, proposes that
behavior intelligence is more important because it represents the “outward actions that others notice and respond to and [thus] create[s] objective, measurable benefits.”73 Furthermore, Mulqueen stresses that “by learning and practicing these behaviors, individuals can increase their EQ—their emotional awareness and attitudes...because our attitudes and thinking are heavily influenced by what we do—our behaviors.”74 By utilizing the behavior intelligence model (Figure 1) and thus understanding the interaction between emotions and corresponding behaviors, leaders can unequivocally build trust in their relationships and organizations.

The final area in maintaining and building trust is communicating via transparency. Again, feedback from both focus groups highlighted the need for transparency in developing trust. Moreover, as discussed in the literature review, transparency is a concept that Millennials value. In “Trust: The Critical Factor in Leadership,” author Terry Wilson advocates that “one way to build trust with people is to speak with transparency.”75 Wilson contends that “when spoken authentically, communicating the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ illustrate a leader’s willingness to have tough conversations and demonstrates the human side of one’s own authentic perspective.”76 Furthermore, leaders must understand that communication is a two way phenomenon either spoken, written, email, or text. Sometimes just taking the time to listen to others’ inputs versus “having all the answers” builds trust and creates buy-in. For example, Wilson argues that “leaders who inquire about others’ perspectives and extend trust to others’ expertise can earn trust back” thus developing the relationship.77
Conclusion

Warren Buffet said it best: “Trust is like the air we breathe. When it is present nobody notices. When it isn’t, everybody notices.” Millennials have noticed the eroding concept of trust in the Profession of Arms. Countless adverse events of the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century and the first decade and a half of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century have created an environment of “distrust” for the nation’s future fighting force. Regaining, maintaining, and building trust must be a top priority for the Profession of Arms. Organizations like the Air Force’s Profession of Arms Center for Excellence and other similar groups in the Department of Defense are doing the right thing by working to institutionalize trust and ethics in the military ranks. Each and every member has a part in this endeavor by exemplifying military core values and professionalism each and every day. This quest will not be achieved by accident but only by deliberate and purposeful planning and steadfast execution. Whatever the case, we collectively as a Profession of Arms cannot get this wrong. Trust must be regained and “fused” into our every being. Without trust, the effectiveness of the Profession of Arms and the ability for the DoD to execute its mission is at risk.
Figure 1: By understanding the behaviors or outcomes that result from emotions, leaders can better influence and develop relationships thus building trust.
Appendix A – Research Methodology

The focus groups conducted supporting this research were accomplished in accordance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol and approval. According to Henrique Freitas, visiting researcher at University of Baltimore’s Merrick School of Business, a focus group is a type of qualitative research method that is “particularly suited to be used when the objective is to understand better how people consider an experience, idea, or event because the discussion in the focus group meeting is effective in supplying information about what people think, or how they feel, or on the way they act.” As such, the first focus group comprised of eight randomly selected instructors from the Air Force Officer Training School at Maxwell AFB, Alabama. This focus group was made up 26-29 year old Millennials and consisted of six males and two females from a cross section of Air Force specialties. A second focus group was also conducted using eight students from the Air War College at Maxwell AFB, Alabama. Similarly, this focus group consisted of six males and two females from a cross-section of Air Force disciplines; however, participants ages ranged from 39-50 years old. Each focus group was asked a series of questions relating to the concept of trust, how they viewed trust, how trust has affected them and in what ways trust can be built and maintained. In addition to gaining a better understanding of the concept of trust and how Millennials view trust, the second focus group of an older generation facilitated a comparative analysis of trust between these two distinct groups.

Focus Group Questions:

1. How would you define trust?
2. How has trust played a part in your life to this point?
3. Why is trust important to you as an Airman?

4. Is trust a requirement for building relationships in the military?

5. Have you experienced untrustworthiness in a supervisor? Commander?

6. Do you think Millennials have a different perspective of trust than other generations, if so, in what way?

7. How can we maintain and build trust between the U.S. military and Millennials?
Notes


8 “Know Your Customer: Key Findings and Insights from our Survey of Young Americans’ Attitudes Toward Politics and Public Service,” Institute of Politics, Harvard University, November 2014, 6.


13 Ibid.


19 Ibid.


24 Ibid., 571.

25 Different from Kramer and Covey, Zand characterizes trust into three inter-related components: information, influence, and control. For example, Zand believes “the flow of accurate, timely information is critical to a productive relationship” and thus showing and developing trust. Next, influence reflects “the sources of information and how that information alters behavior.” In essence, transparency in people, groups, and organizations yields trustworthiness. People, groups and organizations that sincerely listen and act upon inputs create an environment of trust. Finally, control refers to the “regulation and limitation of another person, [group, or organization’s] behavior.” Zand emphasizes that control is the most challenging component of trust because “it depends on what others will do in the future when leaders are not present.” In general, when leaders are not present or when they delegate tasks to others, vulnerabilities can increase as control decreases. These vulnerabilities increases actually serve as a means to develop and strengthen trust. See Zand, 91-93.

26 Covey, 29.

27 Ibid., 30.

28 Ibid., 30.

29 Ibid., 30.

30 Ibid., 32.


32 Ibid., 535.

33 Ibid., 535.
34 Ibid., 536.
35 Ibid., 537.
36 Ibid., 537.
38 Ibid., 398.
39 Ibid., 399.
40 Ibid., 399.
41 Ibid., 399.
42 Ibid., 400.
43 Ibid., 401.
44 Covey, 33.
46 Ibid., 34.
47 Ibid., 34.
48 Ibid., 233.
49 Ibid., 34.
50 Ibid., 35.
51 Ibid., 275.
52 Ibid., 274.
54 Ibid., 38.
55 Ibid., 39.
57 Ibid., 36.
60 Ibid., 13.
61 Ibid., 13.
63 Ibid., 39.


70 Ibid., 109.


73 Ibid.


76 Ibid., 51.

77 Ibid., 51.

78 Ibid., 51.


