No Longer High Fliers? An Exploration of Discipline, Identities and Gender Issues while Navigating out of the RAF

Thesis

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Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher’s website:
http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.000136a7

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No Longer High Fliers?  
An Exploration of Discipline, Identities and Gender Issues while Navigating out of the RAF

by

Caroline Micklewright

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy the Department of People and Organizations (DPO) Open University Business School (OUBS)

Supervisors

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Dr. Cinzia Priola

April 2021
Abstract

Annually over 12,000 military personnel leave the Armed Forces; many face tough challenges as they attempt to reintegrate into civilian life. While research has shown that most transition successfully into a second career, less is understood about how the decision to leave affects relationships or the subsequent adaptation to civilian life; even less is understood about women’s experiences. This thesis addressed this gap through a longitudinal study exploring the lived experiences of 20 Royal Air Force personnel, seventeen women, including myself, and three men, as they leave military service.

The thesis presents a deeply personal study of transition collected through a series of 41 interviews over two years and is supplemented with autoethnographic reflections. The aim is to understand how disciplinary social forces influence the transition process from the perspective of transitioning military personnel. Theoretically, it adopts a Foucauldian-inspired poststructural approach, drawing on the concept of ‘disciplinary power’, identity theory and poststructural feminism to analyse how subjectification occurs through social relations in a hegemonic masculine culture and how this affects the transition of both male and female personnel. The research addresses the following research questions: Why do personnel feel conflicted about leaving the RAF? How does military service affect gendered identity as individuals re-enter civilian life?

The thesis provides theoretical, empirical, and practice-based contributions to the transition experience. From a theoretical perspective the research demonstrates how gendered power relations and discipline can combine to obscure gendered behaviours from the subject and encourage wicked problems. From an empirical perspective, the relationship between military and civilian is revealed as ambiguous and fluid, and how masculinities and femininities can be transformed, resisted, or sustained through narrative identity work and institutionalized practices learned in a male-dominated organization. Finally, several practice-based contributions emerged addressing the gendered nature of previous research into veterans transition.
Dedication

I dedicate this to all past, present, and future service personnel; may our voices make the challenges and joys of transition to civilian life easier to meet.

_Lest we forget._

_Per Ardua Ad Astra._
Acknowledgements

I would like to start my thanks with my academic supervisors their patience, understanding and encouragement. When I embarked on this research project, I had no concept of how challenging it would be for my family or me and that I have finished it at all is in no short part due to their encouragement and dedication. To Dr Caroline Clarke, who first gave me this opportunity and whose expertise and knowledge has helped guide my studies, broaden my thinking, and improve my grammar. To Dr Cinzia Priola, whose unflinching and honest feedback has enabled me to raise my standards and develop a critical approach to my research which would not have been possible without her support. That both my supervisors have faced their own challenges throughout my studies yet have remained steadfastly engaged and supportive is testament to their commitment to academic endeavor for which I, and others that follow, will always be grateful.

To the participants thank you for sharing your stories and adding your voices to those that have gone before. Together, we have laughed and cried, been angry and joyful, outraged, and calmed. I am grateful for your honesty and for allowing me to share some of your most vulnerable moments, and I am humbled by the trust you placed in me to share your transition journeys. I hope I have done you justice.

To my friends who have shown generosity and kindness, which has lifted my spirits during the hardest moments of my transition. To Gill, Sandy, and Helen, Kirstie, Maria and Phillipa, who have always been there; to Sally and the Bryant’s Acre Crew; The Merry Wives of Wittering and your amazing proofreading skills; to the Gang of Four, you all welcomed me with open hearts. To Carlos, Akash, and Marco, may you continue to inspire those you meet; thank you for letting me share your PhD journey.

My parents, my in-laws for their support and my children, who have rarely complained that mammy is working again. However, my husband has been my stalwart and has supported my studies, and it is to him that I owe my biggest thanks. For the cups of teas, the dinners made, the washing and the ironing, the cleaning of muddy boots and of course, more proofreading. For all the compromises and the debates, we did this together.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Opening Remarks

This thesis provides an exploratory narrative analysis and autoethnographic account of transition out of the Royal Air Force (RAF) into the civilian world. The work takes a socially constructed view of identity against a critical understanding of disciplinary power, exploring how individuals subjectively construct their identity through transition. The thesis adds to organizational studies by exploring the relationship between serving personnel and the military institution as they leave the organization. It also adds to the military transition literature by focusing on female veterans, which are often overlooked or marginalised within the literature, which focuses on a dominant Army centric male/masculine performative model and a binary understanding of veteranhood defined in terms of ‘success’ or overshadowed by a stigmatization of PTSD, homelessness, or criminality (Iversen, Nikolaou, Greenberg, Unwin, Hull, Hotopf, Dandeker, Ross, and Wessely, 2005; Green, Emslie, O'Neill, Hunt, and Walker, 2010). The aim of this thesis is to address the lack of research into female veteranhood and veterans complex relationships with the RAF and wider society by asking the following research questions: Why do personnel feel conflicted about leaving the RAF? And how does military service affect gendered identity as individuals re-enter civilian life? It does this through a longitudinal study of 20 participants which spanned two years and includes an autoethnographic account of the authors own transition experiences. The research questions for the autoethnographic account were adapted to take account of the first-person context and were as follows. Why was I conflicted about leaving the RAF? And how has military service affected my gendered identity as I re-enter civilian life? Throughout this thesis, my unique contribution to knowledge demonstrates that even what are described as successful transitions out of the military environment require ongoing, recursive identity work which for women can be especially challenging as social relations test their gendered notions of identity in both the military and civilian environments.

1.2 Research Context

This thesis seeks to explore why many serving personnel find it difficult to leave the Armed Services and how their gendered identity effects their subsequent adjustment to civilian life. A profoundly personal study it contains an autoethnographic account of my transition and follows 19 other participants over two years, attempting to understand how military culture can influence behaviours. Contextual understanding of military life is crucial to the interpretive position taken in this thesis (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) and this chapter aims to provide a brief overview of some of the more significant
social influences and organizational changes that occurred during the collective service of the participants, along with a brief outline of the thesis structure.

1.3 Socio-political military setting

By detailing some of the significant Defence policy changes that have occurred over 30-40 years, it is hoped to provide the ‘drumbeat’ for the political, cultural, and societal changes that have influenced the participants’ military service (Dandeker, 2001). In situating the participants against this backdrop, it is important to note only three joined the RAF during the height of British military engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan, with the majority joining before these conflicts. For many of the participants, their cultural and societal experiences of the military were founded against the backdrop of The Cold War, The Troubles in Northern Ireland, and limited conflicts, in terms of personnel and length, that took place in The Falklands, The First Gulf War, The Former Yugoslavia, and Sierra Leone. The longest-serving participant of this study joined the Women’s Royal Air Force (WRAF) in 1977 and served 35 years. The most recent joined the RAF in 2007 and served just under ten years.

1.3.1 Policies and Practices

Table 1 provides a brief outline of military conflicts and personnel policy changes since the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Policy Change</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Troubles (Northern Ireland)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1968 - 1998</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Falklands War</td>
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<td>1982</td>
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<tr>
<td>Options for Change</td>
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<td>1990</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex Discrimination Act</td>
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<td>1990</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Gulf War</td>
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<td>1990 - 1991</td>
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<td>The Bosnian War</td>
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<td>Amalgamation of Services</td>
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<td>1992 - 1994</td>
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<td>The Kosovo War</td>
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<td>1998 - 1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBQT Rights</td>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
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<td>2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Iraq War and Insurgency</td>
<td></td>
<td>2003 - 2011</td>
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<td>Libya</td>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>Syria</td>
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<td>2014 - ongoing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Women in Combat Policy Change</td>
<td></td>
<td>2016</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Conflicts and Policy Changes

Sources: (Taylor, 2010; C. Taylor, 2011; Park, Lavallee, and Tod, 2013; Duffin, 2014; HM Government, 2015; Lang, 2015; Cabinet Office and National Security and Intelligence, 2017)

1 Options for change was seen as an opportunity to restructure the Armed Forces in the post-cold war era reaping “the peace dividend” and make financial savings (Taylor, 2010, p. 8)
participants joined the RAF. This list is not complete or comprehensive but is reflective of the conflicts and policies which were discussed by the participants in relation to their service.

1.3.2 Options for Change

Post-1990 and the collapse of the Soviet bloc ‘Options for Change’ delivered a restructuring of the Armed Services which resulted in an overall personnel reduction of 18% (Taylor, 2010), this trend has continued within the RAF seeing regular personnel reduced by 70% from 93,000 in 1985 to 32,820 in 2020 (Defence Statistics, 1992; Ministry of Defence, 2020). The decrease in military strength is a consequence of several factors (including): Defence Reviews, threat assessment against the UK, and the introduction of neo-liberal policies such as contractorisation and recognition of market forces in the Defence industry (Erbel and Kinsey, 2015).

![UK Regular Forces Chart](chart.png)

**Chart 1 UK Regular Forces 1975 – 2020.** Sources: (Defence Statistics, 1992; Ministry of Defence, 2020).

Defence reviews have fundamentally changed the way the military operates, with contractors playing a sizeable part of delivering capability, resulting in a significant reduction of the military workforce. Concerning this study many of the policy decisions surrounding the Defence Reviews, especially contractorisation and reductions in personnel, were specifically referred to by the participants as instrumental, but not necessarily critical factors in their decision to leave the RAF.

“I suppose everybody says that the Air Force has changed phenomenally. It’s not the Air Force I joined up, but I just don’t, I don’t particularly like what it stands for any
more or what it is doing to its people and so it's not, it wasn't the Air Force for me."
(Karen)

1.3.3 The Sexual Discrimination Act

The Sex Discrimination Act was introduced in 1975 to protect women in civilian occupations; however, the military was exempt from this Act and continued to discharge women for becoming pregnant until 1990. The Crown exemption² detailed in Section 85 (4) of the Sex Discrimination Act (Government UK, 1975) states that the Act does not apply to:

(a) the naval, military or air forces of the Crown, or

(b) any women's service administered by the Defence Council

and was challenged in 1990 by the Equal Opportunities Commission on behalf of two members of the forces nursing service. Their challenge was successful and resulted in the MOD amending its policy to allow women who become pregnant to remain in service, 25 years after the act was incorporated into civilian law (Wilkinson, 1994). Little is mentioned about this policy change in official histories (Royal Air Force Museum, 2019a) or how it effectively resulted in only unmarried or childless women being able to contemplate a career across all three services for decades after such barriers were removed in civilian life (Acker, 2006; Sheritt, 2013) or how the effects of this policy have endured to this present day.

1.3.4 The Amalgamation of the Services

Post-World War Two, all three services had separate arms for women: the Women's Royal Navy Service (WRNS), the Women’s Royal Auxiliary Corps (WRAC), and the Women’s Royal Air Force (WRAF). Members of the WRAF were considered regulars in contrast to the WRNS and WRAC whose female ranks remained auxiliaries³. The decision to classify members of the WRAF as regulars was an attempt to achieve parity with male members of the organization in recognition of the crucial role women played in defending the nation between 1939-1945. Although women undertook initial training separately, they completed their professional training and worked alongside their male colleagues thereafter. In 1949 up to 80% of roles within the WRAF/RAF combined force were open to women, with women taking the same oath as their male colleagues and ostensibly working to the same

² Crown Immunity applied to the Equal Pay Act 1970 (Hansard, 1995) although does not apply now; Crown privilege in respect of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1975 continues to apply to the Mod in the UK but the Act is not recognised on operations abroad (Health and Safety Executive, 2020).

³ Non-regular service personnel who support military activities on a part-time/full-time basis but do not undertake the full responsibilities of a regular.
conditions of service and disciplinary codes (Sheritt, 2013). The WRAC was the first service to amalgamate female and male service personnel by disbanding in 1992; the WRNS followed in 1993, which, in response to falling recruitment, also opened more opportunities to women by enabling them to serve at sea, albeit on non-combat ships (WRNS, 2020). In 1994, the WRAF was the last of the services to disband. Although the Army was the first of the services to amalgamate it still took until 1996 for jobs available to women to rise from 47% to 70% and the Army continued to train men and women separately until the early 2000s, unlike the RN and RAF who combined initial training in the 1970s and 1980s (Sheritt, 2013; Royal British Legion, 2019; WRNS, 2020). Despite these changes gendered policies and behaviours remained across the three services, for example, women were remained restricted from combat operations and as this was often a prerequisite for promotion, it hampered their ability to reach higher levels within the organizations (Duncanson and Woodward, 2016).

![Percentage of females serving chart](chart2)

**Chart 2 Percentage of women serving 1943/1944 – 2020.**

*Sources: (Sheritt, 2013; Defence Statistics, 1992; Defence Statistics, 2020)*

### 1.3.5 LGBTQ+ Rights

As a result of legislative and European pressures, military law was also amended to accept the LGBTQ+ community without discrimination. Before 2000, the UK military’s version of the US policy of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ in relation to homosexuality, resulted in a ‘don’t fear it, don’t flaunt it’ policy, which encouraged individuals to prioritise their service identity over their sexual one (Dandeker, 2001). This effectively asked personnel to hide their sexuality in order to conform to dominant heterosexuality (Acker, 2006). While changes in how the military viewed the LGBTQ+ community in the early 2000s resulted in the resignation of senior staff (Gilligan, 2000), today military personnel openly march at Pride and the Forces
have regularly won awards for their supportive working environment (Norton-Taylor and Dyer, 1999; Bindel, 2012; Tucker, 2015;). However, issues remain with 25% of complaints received by the service ombudsman being related to bullying, harassment or discrimination (Service Complaint Ombudsman, 2020).

### 1.3.6 Flexible Working

Other changes to military policy include the recognition of parental rights and the introduction of flexible working policies, introduced in 2015, for both regulars and reservists, reflecting a more family-friendly approach to military life, see Appendix 1 - RAF Work Life Balance Summary 2017. Men, as well as women, have begun to take up these opportunities which include flexible working, compressed hours, transferring of leave to a serving spouse or civil partner and taking career intermissions (MoD, 2020b). Unlike the changes in policy already discussed it can be argued that accepting flexible working patterns was ‘voluntarily’ introduced in response to changing social expectations as opposed to being legally forced upon the services. However, the military organization remains slow to change as can be seen from its policies towards women in combat.

### 1.3.7 Women in Combat

In 2010 a report commissioned by the Secretary of State for Defence concluded that women could be excluded from close-combat roles because the effectiveness of mixed-gender teams could not be assessed in a combat environment as it was not possible to replicate such conditions safely (MoD, 2010). This decision was made based on an understanding of cohesion and combat effectiveness defined in the Equality Act 2010 (HM Government, 2020) which continues to exempt the Armed Forces from aspects of the Act on the grounds of combat effectiveness:

Cohesion. Joint Doctrine Publication 0-01 defines moral cohesion as: “a source of moral fortitude to fight and to keep on fighting...Cohesion occurs when individuals want, or are encouraged, to work together, normally to share tasks, provide each other with support and to achieve a common enterprise. Moral cohesion depends on cultural solidarity, shared experiences, a common sense of worth, appropriate discipline and an expressed collective identity, which is sustained by shared common values and standards. It embodies genuine and deep comradeship that endures, notwithstanding violence and fear of death and injury.

Combat Effectiveness. The ability of a unit/formation/ship, weapon system or equipment to carry out its assigned mission, role, or function. The cohesion of a unit is a vital factor in its combat effectiveness (DCDC, 2014; MoD, 2010, Annex B).
The findings of the 2010 report were reviewed in 2014 and recommended further research which aimed to inform a decision in 2016 (Tri-Service Review, 2014). In 2016, the ban on women in ground close combat was lifted effectively ending any remaining officially recognised gendered policies in the UK Armed Forces, meaning all roles are now open to women, except Roman Catholic Priests (MoD, 2016).

Since 2016 several women have completed their training to join their male colleagues in front line combat units (RAF, 2020a). However, women have been attached to front line regiments and working alongside their male colleagues for years (King, 2016) including flying combat missions over hostile territory. For example, the first female combat pilot qualified in 1996 (Royal Air Force Museum, 2019a). Although these policy changes aimed to improve the opportunities of women serving in the military, as they brought policies in line with broader society and international trends⁴, the cultural and structural legacies which segregated occupational specialisations along traditional gender lines remain consequential and persistent on the ground, air, and at sea (Acker, 1990; Woodward and Winter, 2006; Priola, and Brannan, 2009). For example, within the junior ranks, masculine specialisations such as engineering attract higher pay scales than traditional feminine occupations such as caterers or stewards. While at the officer level, although such distinctions are removed exceptions include aircrew, special forces and doctors whose higher salaries, it is argued, reflect associated dangers inherent in their roles or difficulties

⁴ The UK was the last member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, consisting of 29 countries, to lift the ban on women undertaking close combat roles.
in recruitment (MoD, 2013). These policies are not just a reflection of market forces; the RAF has to compete for specialists and talent as do other sectors, but by rewarding traditional divisions of labour they reinforce masculine norms, acknowledging the graded order of professional specialisations within the armed forces which further buttresses regimes of inequality (Acker, 2006). As a result, divisions of labour along gendered lines remain a legacy issue across all three services.

1.3.8 Diversity within the Regulars and Reserves

A review of defence statistic reveals that as 1 October 2020 11% of the Armed Forces were female, 10% of the RN and Army were female rising to 14.9% in the RAF, Chart 4. Within the reserve forces, Chart 5, these figures increase to 15%, possibly in response to more flexible working practices offered, notably the RAF has a significantly higher percentage of female reserve personnel at 23.2% compared to 15% in the maritime reserves and 14% in the Army reserves (MoD, 2020c). The significant differences between regular and reserves numbers suggest there is a risk the Reserve forces could become a 21st century replacement for the WRAC, WRNS and WRAF, enabling the Armed Forces to present a more diverse and inclusive workforce without changing its core culture and the power relations that continue to privilege the masculine over the feminine (Pullen, Rhodes, and Thanem, 2017).

![Chart 4 Percentage of Females in the Regulars 1 October 2020](MoD, 2020c)
Indeed, although the number of women serving is steadily growing, the level of representation has been slow to be replicated at higher ranks. For example, in 2011 5.5% of senior RAF appointments, OF-6 and above, were filled by women rising to 7.8% by 2017 (RAF MoD 2017b; Khadim, 2011). These low percentages persist despite higher levels of representation in the officer corps across all three services in the regulars and the reserves, Chart 6.

Further examination of gender differences across the Armed Forces also reveals that between the ages of 25-39 a higher relative percentage of women leave the services than

---

5 Of the 12 individuals identified as female out of 153 positions, at least 3 are reservists or hold honorary rank reducing the number of regular senior female officers to less than 6%.
their male colleagues (Defence Statistics, 2014). While a percentage of these figures can be explained by contracts coming to an end or individuals reaching their pension points\(^6\), peak outflow also coincides with women’s childbearing age (Bewley, Ledger, and Nikolaou, 2009). See (Khadim, 2011) Appendix 3 - UK Regular Forces intake and outflow by age and gender, FY 2010/2011.

Although the RAF has traditionally been better represented in respect of gender diversity than both the RN and the Army, it falls behind with BAME representation. In 2020 2.8% of its regular personnel identified as non-white compared to 13% in the Army and 4.6% in the RN (Defence Statistics, 2020). While there are several social reasons and recruiting explanations behind these figures, including Gurkhas in the Army numbers; for example, all three services have set a target to improve diversity representation by increasing intake of female personnel to 15% and BAME personnel to 10% by 2020. As of 1 April 2020, the number of new female recruits was 12.6%, while the BAME target was 11.7%. The BAME figures were assisted by a policy change relaxing the rules of residency, which increased the numbers of recruits coming from commonwealth countries (Defence Statistics, 2020) but the UK military continues to struggle to attract BAME candidates. Research in Australia suggests support from BAME communities and family gatekeepers is significant factor in recruitment (Smith and Rosenstein, 2017) and this is also recognised in the UK context. The difference in available figures between regulars and reserves, officers and other ranks, and across the three services in respect of gender and ethnicity suggests increasing recruitment and retention of minority personnel requires an intersectional appreciation to understanding normative behaviours and inequalities (Sasson-Levy, 2017). This approach would provide a broader conceptualisation of how gender and ethnicity impacts recruitment, service life and transition informing how policies and programmes can be adapted to improve gender and ethnic relations (Eichler, 2017).

While it is accepted the combination of policy directives discussed here has altered some of the normative discourses prevalent in the UK Armed Forces, and to some extent forced cultural change, there is also recognition that more must be done to improve military culture for all who serve in it. A report commissioned by the Chief of the Air Staff\(^7\), Air Chief Marshal Wigston, described the

> “leadership of the RAF, Army and Navy as a ‘generation not used to having people from other diversity groups serving alongside them’ and says their behaviours are ‘shaped by an Armed Forces of 20 years ago.’” (Nicholls, 2019, p. 1).

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\(^6\) Individuals become eligible for an immediate pension.

\(^7\) In civilian terms the CEO of the RAF.
The ACM’s remarks could be conservative as the effect institutional processes and socialisation can have on behaviours in the military context is well documented (Connell, 2008; Thornborrow and Brown, 2009) but remains under studied in relation to minority groups in the UK despite evidence from the US that this is an area that should be explored (Lundquist, 2008; Burk and Espinoza, 2012). As a result, several initiatives have/are taking place including a report on gender and ethnicity yet to be published (MoD, 2020d) and an inquiry held by the Defence Committee into the women in the Armed Services: entitled From Recruitment to Civilian life (Defence Committee, 2020). However, there remains a need to understand how institutional processes and relations of power affect all members of the services (Foucault, 1991; Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998; Lukes, 2005) and applying Goffman’s (1961) concept of Total Institutions to the UK military environment can help this to be achieved.

1.4 Total Institutions

As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, the military is considered a gendered institution, but its classification as a total institution (Goffman, 1991), one which controls the activities of its members professional and social lives with a singular aim, also needs to be debated in order to understand the power of military socialisation on individual identity (Grey, 2005; Brunger, Serrato, and Ogden, 2013). This section provides background on Goffman’s Total Institutions (1961) and how the military can be positioned within the concept as it can share a number of ‘totalising’ features such as singularity of aim and separation from wider society (Goffman, 1991).

In terms of explanatory reach, total institutions have extended across a range of disciplines such as sociology (Scott, 2010), management (Moore and Grandy, 2016) and criminology (Connor, 2010). Often it is applied to the darker side of organizational life, such as genocide in Cambodia (Clegg, Pina e Cunha, and Rego, 2012) or the Holocaust (Martí, Fernández, and Levi, 2013). Crossing professional boundaries, the concept has been applied to prisons (Brown and Toyoki, 2013) and the maritime environment (Theotokas, Lagoudis, and Kotsiopoulos, 2014). However, Goffman’s concept can be poorly used, with researchers taking the extremis version and applying it without fully understanding its limitations. For example, some academics state why an organization resembles a total institution but fail to offer an analysis of ‘missing’ aspects or the implications of these differences (Durant and Knottnerus, 1999; Clegg et al., 2012), including rarely considering broader social contextual or temporal conditions. Critics of Goffman also noted his construction of a formal organizational concept omitted ideological power or political influences which could create alternative subjectivities in respect of agency (Ritzer, 2011). Furthermore, Goffman was selective excluding agentic elements of inmate/patient therapy (including): group therapy,
art and dance, patient newspapers and an element of self-government which contributed to feelings of empowerment, as opposed to the self-mortification he privileged (Gambino, 2013).

Nevertheless, total institutions remain useful in understanding institutional life, and the concept has been refined by scholars who suggest considering the entry conditions of members – volunteer/compulsory, the organization’s purpose, and the types of internal social control in place that reflect levels of individual autonomy (Davies, 1989). Theotokas et al., (2014), also suggest exploring the impact of teamwork and the influence of control based on expertise rather than legitimate or coercive power; reflecting that “some institutions are far more total than others” (Theotokas et al., 2014, p. 328). Goffman himself suggested totalising features can vary across institutions, while others are more consistent. Two constant features he noted were that of a single controlling authority, which presides over the domestic and professional, and the bureaucratic management of large numbers of people who are treated the same, and work under a strict schedule designed to achieve the institutional sanctioned goal (Goffman, 1991). These features create a disciplinary framework designed to reinforce behavioural norms and further organizational aims, including variously rewarding and punishing behaviours facilitated through a combination of panoptic control and surveillance of the self as means of disciplinary power both actual and imagined (Foucault, 1994; Thornborrow and Brown, 2009).

However, the assumption that institutional members unreflexively ‘allow’ the organization to mould behaviours and identity should be challenged from a critical perspective. Indeed, the implications of agentic possibilities within membership of a total institution have often been overlooked, both in Goffman’s writings and subsequent academic interpretations (Scott, 2010; Gambino, 2013). For instance, Clegg et al., (2012) argue how unreflective obedience is not theoretically convincing, as to obey requires an individual to understand and understanding requires the assignment of meaning, which in turn produces reflections and patterns as opposed to random behaviour. They argue the organization’s role in constraining and directing behaviour can occur because individuals recognise something within the organization that reflects their situational positioning or aspiration. Indeed, the latent agency of Goffman’s inmates and subsequent complex but subtle power relations within the confines of total institutions risk being ignored as a result of focusing on the repressive nature of regimes. Butler (2004) also argues that within a poststructuralist paradigm agency is an enactment not a possession, and this enactment reproduces and contests stable identity categories which constitute the subject. This creates space for alternative subjectivities to be considered as each performance is unique (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). Moreover, recognising the multi-dimensional elements of agency, its temporality as part of social engagement informed by the past, present, and future
possibilities means agency becomes more than instrumental decision making or the recognition of habitual actions which support the status quo (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998).

The critical approach used by scholars has produced research which opens alternative perspectives, through which we may view institutional life. Tracy’s (2000) study uses life onboard a ship to show how behaviours and identity can be shaped as life at sea reproduces a separation from society as described by Goffman (1961). The organization’s culture of discipline, including rules of behaviour and spatial separation between crew quarters versus front of house, mirrors many of the features he describes. However, Tracy also recognised agentic resistance as crew members found ways to defy totalization by making fun of passengers and belittling the corporate cultural narratives (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Godfrey, 2016). Scott (2010) takes a different approach and successfully reconceptualizes the theory by developing the idea of reinventive institutions. Here voluntary membership results in a less oppressive environment compared to total institutions but fosters Foucauldian versions of regulation and discipline which affects individual performances. Drawing on Coser’s (1974) greedy institutions, she notes that within a power dynamic between coercion and volunteerism, physical confinement is absent and symbolic boundaries are enacted through disciplinary mechanisms which the individual willingly accepts as a means to achieve liberation and empowerment. This is reinforced by divisions between insiders and outsiders which create “institutions without walls” as individuals strive towards aspirational selves “willingly discard[ing] their old selves in the hope of finding something better” (Scott, 2010, p. 218-219).

1.5 The Military as a Total Institution

Military organizations are by their nature separate from wider society; they are distinct physically in terms of their locations, which can, in the case of RAF stations, be isolated, and by their access which precludes members of the general public from entering their boundaries (Goffman, 1991; Morgan, 2006; Herman and Yarwood, 2014). Surrounded by high walls or 6-foot fences topped with barbed wire they are cut off from broader society, while armed guards at entrances and exits control access. Within the confines of the military base daily tasks are undertaken staffed by a mixture of military and civilian personnel socialised in the ways of military life through training and reinforced through repeated exposure (Bamberger and Hasgall, 1995; Hale, 2008; Vest, 2014; Bagby, Barnard-Brak, Thompson and Sulak, 2015; Adey, Denney, Jensen and Pinkerton, 2016). In this respect, military personnel can live cocooned from but not entirely cut off from day to day concerns of civilian society (Hyde, 2015) with relatively stable normative values contained within the group maintaining an element of ontological and identity security, providing recognition and a sustaining function (Davies, 2007; Jackson and Mazzei, 2012).
As a result, Goffman’s theory of a total institution remains relevant in helping to explore the relationship between the military and identity and its reliance on othering to create a bounded institution (Morgan, 2006). Continuing to apply Goffman’s theory to the military, albeit updated to reflect current thinking, provides an opportunity to expand organizational theory which has a tradition of looking at the military through a positivist and gendered lens (Higate and Cameron, 2006; Horton et al., 2014). A subjective appreciation of the military in relation to total institutions explored with due consideration of gendered behaviours, their binary, oppositional and hierarchal natures exposed beyond homogenous understandings will it is hoped to reveal an alternative view of the military. Reflecting a position of ambiguity and paradox where military identity, rooted in governmentality and social order (Foucault, 1991, 1994), is at once homogenous and stable yet multiple, fluid and flexible (Knights and Clarke, 2014) could offer richer and diverse possibilities of understanding military identities (Hearn, 2003). It is proposed that these values and norms, acquired through prolonged exposure to the military environment can manifest as challenges in ameliorating into civilian life once military service has ended (Eichler, 2017; Albertson, 2019) and has been explored conceptually in the idea of the civil military gap.

1.6 Civil Military Gap

The concept of the civil-military gap was first introduced by Huntington in the 1950s in relation to US military and civil relations (Kurth, 2010) and is defined here as “the social distance that can arise between the Armed Forces and civilians from a lack of contact and shared experiences, and the implications for mutual understanding and support” (Hines, Gribble, Wessely, Dandeker, and Fear, 2015, p. 692). The concept was originally based on a coherent and mutually reinforcing western civil and military identity which Huntington revised in later works to reflect a less coherent perspective but still rested on a military identity which reflected an idealized professional US identity incorporating “Duty, Honor and Country” (Kurth, 2010, p, 333). Whilst problematic in terms of its limited world view, Huntington’s concept was developed by Janowitz, who argued that the military must adapt to social changes to be effective. It has been further updated in “Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security” edited by Feaver and Kohn, 2001 (in Davies, 2003) who argue mutual separation between the military and civil society continues to have policy implications.

In the UK context, there remains a lack of understanding between the government, the public and the military which continues to have implications across policy, funding and social relations (Davies, 2003; Neilsen, 2012; Hines et al., 2015). Furthermore, the reduction in the size of the military, coupled with a visible lack of military personnel in day to day public
Life has resulted in the Armed Forces becoming ‘unseen’, creating a hidden world which is often misunderstood and set apart from civilian life (Dandeker, 2001). For military personnel, deliberately initiated into and then operating in this ‘obscured world’, wider society can become distant, populated by the ‘other’, unknown and different. For civilians, this separation also creates an ill-defined or stereotypical ‘other’ coupled with a lack of general knowledge of how the contemporary military operates and little understanding of its primary drivers (Siebold, 2007; Hines et al., 2015; Redmond et al., 2015).

Military identity has been traditionally aligned with notions of masculinity, strength and bravery (Woodward and Winter, 2004), and is formed in a space and reproduced consistently as ‘different’ to the absent civilian (Nicholls, 2019; Cook, 2019). This space extends beyond barracks, bases or camps to permeate through all aspects of military life from the home to the office, 24 hours a day, on or off duty (Goffman, 1991; Herman and Yarwood, 2014). Theorists of civil-military relations call the institutionalized mindset created in this environment as one which supports the “functional imperative” of its role (Dandeker, 2001; Egnell and Alam, 2019, p.6; Nicholls, 2019). This position is required, it is argued, to achieve the discipline, loyalty, obedience, physical and mental strength to create the ‘warrior’ which supports unit cohesion through self-sacrifice, courage, integrity and demands high moral standards (DCDC, 2014). While this discourse maintains control and legitimacy over military personnel and the society they represent (Dandeker, 2001; Egnell and Alam, 2019b) it fails to address why military personnel periodically engage in illegal and morally indefensible actions (Connor, 2010). Moreover, it is used by military personnel to justify retaliation against what they see as attacks on their sense of selves and to maintain the status quo which privileges existing power relations (Lukes, 2005; Holyfield, Cobb, Herford, and Ogle, 2019).

In this way, the soldier, sailor and airman/airwoman are different to civilians who can often regard the commitment given to the military and the behaviours which support it as old fashioned or disquieting (Egnell and Alam, 2019). However, these understandings are contextually influenced and continually shifting within the organization (Greenwood, 2016) and outside. Indeed, it can be argued that the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts confused civilian perceptions as to whether military personnel should be viewed as hero, victim or villain, resulting in a view that the majority of veterans had been damaged by their service career (Duffy, 2015; Hines et al., 2015; House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016). Sympathies for injured personnel have gained credence through charities like Help for Heroes and The Invictus Games (“Help for Heroes,” 2018; “Invictus Games,” 2018). Such narratives reproduce military personnel as victims of conflict, a characterization which has been supported by numerous academic studies in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Mobbs and Bonanno, 2018). This ambiguity is reinforced as evidence emerges of
occasions when military personnel fail to live up to the standards by which they are measured, from Bloody Sunday (BBC, 2019), to Abu Ghraib (Connor, 2010). These cases provide examples of how the consequences of conflict can reverberate across military, political and social divides and how past conflicts can continue to influence gendered thinking (Richter-Montpetit, 2016) political and military strategies, and how the military is viewed by the society it serves (King, 2013). Indeed, recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have generated something of a crisis of confidence in military circles bringing into doubt the leadership and training of military personnel (Ledwidge, 2011; BBC, 2015) and potentially creating a stigmatized identity in the eyes of the public (Toyoki and Brown, 2014).

Today military intervention in conflicts remains mired in powerful moral discourses (Foucault, 1994) and Just War Theories (Moseley, 2020), with reactions to Syria and continued conflict in Yemen reflecting the social and political moral ambiguities of engaging in conflict of any kind (BBC, 2015). Such ambiguities and contestations can affect how military personnel are perceived by the general public and is consistent with the socially constructed view taken within this research (Berger and Luckman, 1966). Furthermore, the framing of the military through a diverse set of competing and conflicting discourses can be seen to influence how individuals negotiate their transition into the civilian world (Suchman, 1995; Eichler, 2017).

1.7 Veteran Community

The final piece of contextual information provided within this chapter concerns the veteran community, its changing demographic and influence on the collective identity of British Society. Military veterans in the UK are defined “as anyone who has served for at least one day in Her Majesty’s Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations” (Ministry of Defence, 2017, p. 2). However, many younger service leavers do not necessarily consider themselves as veterans, associating the term with older veterans and those who served in the World Wars, choosing to identify themselves as ‘service leavers’ instead (Burdett, Woodhead, Iversen, Wessely, Dandeker, and Fear, 2013). In 2016 the UK Government estimated that there were 2.5 million veterans in the UK and that by 2028 this will reduce to 1.6 million (MoD, 2019b). Fewer veterans combined with a reduced military footprint mean a decreasing number of people have lived experience of life in the British Forces (Hines et al., 2015). Aside from the significant reduction in overall numbers, it is important to note how the average age of veterans will change. In 2016 just under half, 49%, were 75 and over, while

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8 “The principles of the justice of war are commonly held to be: having just cause, being a last resort, being declared by a proper authority, possessing right intention, having a reasonable chance of success, and the end being proportional to the means used” (Moseley, 2020).
37% were of working age (defined as 16-64). Over the next decade, the balance of these figures will change with the number of veterans over 75 continuing to fall and 44% of veterans being of working age. The percentage of female veterans is also projected to change, increasing from 10% in 2016 to 13% in 2028 (MoD, 2019b). Furthermore, if the Armed Forces achieve their goals in respect of gender diversity, this number will continue to rise over the coming decades (Defence Statistics, 2020).

These figures suggest that despite a reduction in overall veteran numbers, the potential amount of ex-service personnel in the workplace is set to remain significant. For example, 14,310 people left the Armed Forces between 31 March 2019 – 31 March 2020, many of who will be seeking to embark on a second career (Defence Statistics, 2020). Additionally, having been involved in armed conflict for over a decade at the beginning of this century, a significant percentage will have experienced the extremes of military life compared to a more benign peacetime environment. While all service personnel receive support during transition out of the military, this support overwhelmingly involves professional retraining for civilian life with a focus on successful transition to civilian employment, as opposed to the broader social and emotional effects of transition (CTP, 2017; MoD, 2017). Although recent studies have begun to focus on this gap in the military’s resettlement programme more remains to be done (Brunger et al., 2013; Caddick, 2017; Harvey, Hatch, Jones, Hull, Jones, Greenberg, Dandeker, Fear, and Wessely, 2011). Furthermore, research in the US has suggested that female veterans experience unique challenges on transition, including health and mental health needs (Burkhart and Hogan, 2015), access to health care, lack of childcare and opportunity for employment (Szelwach, Steinkogler, Badger, and Muttukumaru, 2011; Brooks, Dailey, Bair, and Shore, 2016), and challenges relating to incorporating a different position within the family and society (Leslie and Koblinsky, 2017; Hendricks-Thomas, Hunter, and Williams, 2020). In the UK context research on female veterans is limited but has noted they are more likely to commit suicide than their civilian peers (Bergman, Mackay, Smith, and Pell, 2017), experience feelings of loss, failed belongingness (Jones and Hanley, 2017), and mental health issues (Edwards and Wright, 2019).

1.8 Thesis Structure

Chapter one of this thesis has set the scene of this research by describing the demographics, policy changes and institutional dynamics that contribute to military life. Chapter two provides the theoretical background to this study drawing on Foucault's (1980, 1991, 1994) theory of disciplinary power and Lukes (2005) and Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan's (1998) four dimensions of power. Chapter three, the literature review is divided into three parts with part one providing a background to identity studies in management
research from a poststructural perspective as a whole concept, not a separate social and individual identity, but a multifaceted and socially contingent concept (Mead, 1934; Gecas, 1982; Giddens, 1991). The second part discusses gender through the lens of organizational life. Traditional concepts of the masculine and feminine binary are explored and theorised with a clear distinction made between the biological male and female and gendered behaviours (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004; Priola, 2016). These notions will then be further explored in respect of gendered identities in organizations using poststructuralist ideas of gender fluidity and performativity (Butler, 2004). Part three brings theories of identity and gender together in the context of the RAF drawing on both military and civilian research in the fields of organizational studies and gender, through which a contemporary understanding of military life will be explored (Goffman, 1991; Higate, 2001; Butler, 2004).

Chapter Four details the methodology where the subjective and constructionist perspectives of this research are outlined along with a detailed explanation of the research design, methods and the narrative analytical approach taken. Findings are split across two chapters: Chapter Five Belonging and Betrayals and Chapter Six Beginning Again. Here detailed narrative analysis explores the transition journeys of the 19 participants through the lens of disciplinary power. Chapter Seven contains the autoethnographic account of my transition journey, again explored from the perspective of disciplinary power. Finally, a discussion and conclusion will draw the thesis to a close.

1.9 Summary

Differences between the Armed Forces rhetoric of fairness and equality compared to restricted opportunities, hyper-masculine working environments and structural barriers to promotion have historically severely restricted women’s ability to rise through the ranks of the organization (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011; Defence Statistics, 2014). The recent removal of gender restrictions in the military may well support the organization’s discourse of gender equality; however, the Armed Forces remains an organization which operates through a legacy of gender inequality (RAF, 2019a). Changes to the Armed Forces demographics over the last half-century, the end of conscription, reduction in size and changes in respect of women and the LGBQT+ community has, it can be argued, fundamentally changed the structure, organizational culture, and discourse of the military institution. However, the military struggles to adapt to societal changes including, making space for people who combine work with family responsibilities and connecting and informing the public of its roles. Moreover, the military’s capacity to call on the support of its members, and the wider public, rests on its ability to maintain and reproduce its moral legitimacy to support its strategic aims (Costas and Kärreman, 2013), which is threatened by its inability to adapt to changing societal norms.
It has been suggested that issues regarding diversity and recent conflicts have threatened the moral legitimacy of the military internally and externally. The effects of this can be seen in the government’s limited engagement in Syria (set against the global political climate), the wider public’s view of the military, and indeed the military’s ability to recruit and retain personnel (Hines et al., 2015). However, as an agent of the state, the military’s narratives of patriotic nationalism embedded within commemorative events, such as Remembrance Sunday, produces a discourse that is difficult to criticise and makes untangling the myths of heroism associated with military institutions from the lived experiences of today’s service people, problematic (Millar, 2015). It is within this complex, conflated and shifting military, political and social context that participant’s transition from military to civilian life is explored.
2 Theoretical Framework Discipline and Resistance

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the theoretical background to this research by drawing on Foucault's theory of disciplinary power, resistance and the relations of power that act to create a disciplined self (Foucault, 1991; Foucault, 1994). Foucault's theoretical framework is complimented by incorporating Lukes' three dimensions of power (Lukes, 2005; Lukes and Kearns, 2006; Dowding, 2006) and Hardy's fourth dimension (Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998), to provide a deeper appreciation of how not all social relationships or social actors produce and are subject to equal power relations (Dowding, 2006). Contained within these readings it is recognised that opposition to power is crucial in Foucault's understanding and incorporated into both Lukes' and Hardy's scholarship. The aim is to further understanding of how disciplinary relations and social normativities can help shape identities as they are reinforced or contested, through conscious and unconscious thoughts, discourses and behaviours (Foucault, 1980; Goffman, 1991; Giddens, 1991; Bell, 1999; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Brown, 2015; Laney et al., 2015). For the purposes of this work, power can be understood from a Foucauldian perspective as emerging from the bottom up rather than through a top-down hierarchical framework. In this sense power flow through social relations in the same way blood flows through capillaries, influencing all aspects of organizations (Foucault, 1980). However, this is understood alongside Lukes concept of power, recognising individuals are "able to make or receive … change, or resist it" (Lukes, 2005, p. 69) as such, while disciplinary power can secure compliance, there is greater complexity to be explored. This complexity can be found in the effects power has on identities through transformative possibilities, cultural specificity and how individuals make reasoned judgements. This understanding of identity recognises how our sense of self is influenced by dominant discourses and the meanings individuals attach to them, allowing power to operate productively and constructively through subjects (Foucault, 1991, 1994; Lukes, 2005).

2.2 Power and Discipline

Foucault's work on disciplinary power remains influential in the field of management and organizational studies as explorations continue into the interrelations between politics, power, society, and personal freedom (Maravelias, 2018; Raffnsøe, Mennicken and Miller, 2019). During his genealogical period Foucault (1994) challenged the status quo by deconstructing traditional normative views of history, to understand how present systems of governmentality and the powers that support it came into existence (Raffnsøe et al., 2019). Governmentality, "the way in which the lives of individuals are rationally
administered and regulated at a distance” (Knights and McCabe, 2003, p 1588) and three main types of power; Sovereign, Judicial and Disciplinary were the products of this interrogation. These powers are interdependent and interwoven acting through organizations to control the population at the behest of the state. Governmentality encompasses the political, the economic, and moral, all providing support and continuity for each other and creating “a particular way of exercising power” (Foucault, 1994, p.48). Maravelias (2018, p.334) describes governmentality as:

“the complex of ideas, calculations and strategies through which diverse authorities – big capital, political institutions, medical authorities, and so on – attempt to act on individuals and populations for the sake of achieving certain ends.”

This definition helps explain how Foucault links topics such as the law, medicine, prison systems, the military and sexuality, to demonstrate how the art of government is supported by the “principles of its rationality” (Foucault, 1994, p.213). It is described by Foucault not as a singularity, but as relations of power which denote the multiplicities of its nature, its networks, and interrelations (Foucault, 1991; 1994). This allows control of the population to be exercised through a combination of economic, juridical, political, and scientific developments including the penal system which Foucault uses as his instrument of description with regards disciplinary power (Foucault, 1994, 1991). Foucault’s interest in the prison system was based on studying practices, as opposed to institutions or ideology, through which he aimed to understand the conditions that were in place which enabled certain practices to become normalised. He achieved this by studying “places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect” and how the practice of imprisonment became to be accepted as the “principle component of the prison system, thus coming to seem an altogether natural, self-evident, and indispensable part of it” (Foucault, 1994, p. 225).

It is this idea of what is taken for granted that Foucault interrogated to understand how one practice becomes dominant over others, to the extent that it became seen as the natural solution to a problem. Foucault’s works attempt to breach what is self-evident by delving into history, not as a historian would, to catalogue and trace the past, but to interrogate it rediscovering the pathways that lead to the privileging of processes and practices. He aimed to consider the ‘truth criterion’ that societies are built on, reflecting and opening up to inquiry the “the ideal types”, created by a historical interpretation of the past (Foucault, 1994, p. 231). Foucault’s early work focused on the ‘ideal types’ designed to subjugate subjects that have no recourse to resistance outside of the power relations through which they are constituted. This position was cast as deterministic as it left subjects devoid of agency; however, Foucault’s concept of power always contained an understanding of
resistance, arguing that without resistance, there are no power relations and that there cannot be relations of power without freedom (Lynch, 2011). “Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (Foucault, 1990, p 95). As a result, it can be argued he came to soften his view, acknowledging that subjects can deploy agency as relationships are constantly being transformed, power is not absolute, and through resistance, power relations can be altered. To suggest otherwise, as has been implied, would undermine his argument that power can constitute and be productive (Lukes, 2005; Heyes, 2011).

It is this flexibility that has enabled Foucault to remain relevant, despite criticisms such as the absence of theoretical considerations or frameworks to aid analysis on motivations for behaviours; political incentives behind individual acts of resistance; or how individuals support, reproduce, or contest normative discursive practices or prevalent hierarchical power dynamics. Indeed, Foucault has been heavily criticized for failing to explain how or why prevailing discourses originate and the impact of societal instability on their power and reach; for example, the link between dominant discourses and how women are perceived in society (Newton, 1998; Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999). However, his position regarding oppression can be applied to various situations and the absence of a framework for understanding the relative constitution of relations between power and subjectivity was, for Foucault, not a fault in his work but a deliberate choice based on his philosophical approach (Raffnsøe et al., 2019). Foucault answered criticisms of Discipline and Punish by stating he never wrote it as a critique of modern society, although that is how many readers interpreted the work. Rather, Foucault argued “what I’ve written is never prescriptive either for me or for others – at most, it is instrumental and tentative” (Foucault, 1994, p. 240). Foucault’s aim, therefore, was to encourage a continuum of ideas through which power and politics can be challenged and as a result remains relevant (Gordon, 1994).

Indeed the application of Foucault’s theories has led academics to create theoretical conceptualizations which are, in turn, a recognised product of their interpretations (Knights and Wilmott, 1989). For example, through challenging power, the importance of discourses are recognised as representations of the forces of power through which the subject becomes subjugated and can be used to help explore how a coherent and autonomous understanding of ourselves and others is attempted (Knights, 2002). Moreover, Foucault’s theorizing has assisted critical military scholars including Victoria Basham, Kevin McSorley, and Paul Higate in their research (Powel, 2017), which has provided insight into this closed institution. Their use of Foucault stems from the military being regarded as a “foundational laboratory of disciplinary power” (McSorley, 2014, p. 116), a place where the docile bodies of recruits become subjugated to the functional imperatives of the military organization (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009; Higate, 2013). However, this perspective potentially
reproduces early understandings of Foucault’s work which views power as a dominating and coercive force which takes little account of a subject’s active participation; subjects are seen as victims instead of agents. To counter this, context and temporality are required, which recognizes subjects as unstable and that fluctuating relations of power can influence in different ways at different times so that it becomes conceivable that multiple conditions of possibility can be at play (Raffnsøe et al., 2019). It is for these reasons that Foucault’s writings are open to interpretations and scholars (Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998; Lukes, 2005: Dowding, 2006) are acceptable as complimentary theoretical and conceptual additions. Although it should be noted that while Foucault sees power working through people, Lukes’ work rests on notions of sovereign power, ideological manipulations, and the objective interests of social actors (Abraham, 2016). However, before these dimensions of Power are considered, a closer examination of Foucault’s Disciplinary Power is required.

2.3 Foucault’s Disciplinary Power

Foucault's (1991) theory of disciplinary power recognises the hold power relations have over consciousness and the corporeal. This is set against the rise of an (illusory) Western view of autonomy and freedom concerning the self, in contrast to the uncontested, visible, and servile consequences of sovereign power which came before. Foucault provided a timeline around the 18th century for the shift in emphasis between sovereign and disciplinary power, describing sovereign power as absolute, unidirectional, and working from the singular sovereign to the people. Power from this perspective is uncontested and relies on the enactment of punishment as a public spectacle for its dominance. In contrast, disciplinary power is described as part of a collective theoretical understanding encompassing morality, the economic, and the political, which creates regimes of truth as a means of control. Disciplinary Power is considered bi-directional between the governing body and the people, creating governmentality that rests on the rationality found in the development of the law, mercantilism, medicine and power/knowledge relations (Foucault, 1980; Feder, 2014). For example, sovereign power was, and in some countries continues to work, in a top-down hierarchical manner that subjugates the population. Remnants of this can be seen in UK society where members of the Royal Family continue to act as military figureheads and are often seen at national events wearing military uniforms as a marker of identity and status (Hale, 2008; Brownson, 2014). This is a present-day manifestation of combined governmentality and sovereign power with Royal ascent providing continuing moral authority and legitimacy of the state. In contrast, disciplinary power, as a key component of governmentality, can be seen to act insidiously and ubiquitously, operating internally and externally of the consciousness to create a productive body. This productivity is achieved through the subjection and domination of the subject
using various mechanisms and techniques which enable the body and soul to be trained, tortured, moulded, and shaped (Foucault, 1991).

“Discipline, isn’t the expression of an ideal type’ (that of ‘disciplined man’), it’s the generalization and interconnection of different techniques themselves designed in response to localised requirements (schooling, training troops to handle rifles)” (Foucault, 1994, p. 231-232).

Discipline operates then not by restricting people’s actions but by encouraging certain behaviours, legitimized through knowledge/power relations (Knights and Wilmott, 1989), creating docile bodies (May, 2014). It is for these reasons that power cannot be regarded as distinct from politics or dominant interpretations of rationality (Flyvbjerg, 1998 in Lukes, 2005).

Foucault (1991) developed his theory of disciplinary power through a series of mechanisms consisting of space, activity, time, and techniques of hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement, and examination. Combined these mechanisms and techniques support modern subjugation and can be transposed onto all variations of organizational life, including but not limited to corporate entities, prisons, and the military. Indeed, while any organization can deploy these techniques to create ‘useful’ subjects, Foucault specifically referred to military barracks as a site where disciplinary power can have formidable effects (McSorley, 2014) as “[d]iscipline is successful because of the combination of hierarchical observation, normalizing judgements and examination” (Foucault, 1991, p. 170). For example, Foucault discusses in great length the layout of a military camp; its rows of tents, their orientations and views, which produces a spatial ‘nesting’ of hierarchical surveillance, creating a panoptical environment “of eyes that must see without being seen” (Foucault, 1994, p. 171-2) and a place where “supervisors [are] perpetually supervised”. There is “no zone of shade” (Foucault, 1994, p. 177) in Foucault’s conception of a military camp and no place to be unobserved. Through the outcome of this hierarchical observation, the effects of disciplinary power can be observed as a “constant pressure to conform to the same meld …. so, they might all be like one another…. Creating a constraint of conformity that must be achieved …. In short it normalizes” (Foucault, 1994, p. 183).

By applying Foucault’s theory to the military, it can be appreciated how disciplinary power acts to link productive forces together, not to reduce them, but to bind them together and to multiply them into an effective fighting force. Forces are understood here as resources: people, time, and materials that are managed and organised to maximise efficiency, productivity, and military effect which can have disciplinary effects on both military personnel and the civilian population (Foucault, 1991). “Discipline increases the forces of
the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)” (Foucault, 1991, p. 138). The military therefore provides an ideal site to interrogate disciplinary power as the “measured combination of forces” (Foucault, 1991, p. 166), which is produced through disciplined regimes and requires a precise system of command. This is typified by the hierarchical structure of military ranking and supported, less conspicuously but just as powerfully, by the dominance of certain professional specialisations. For example, membership of specialist groups, such as aircrew in the RAF or special forces within the Army and RN, exemplify relational concepts of hegemonic masculinity that legitimizes the subordination of others (Messerschmidt, 2019) and are only achieved after a rigorous selection and training regime through which Foucault’s mechanisms and techniques of power are applied (King, 2015). The concept of hegemonic masculinity encapsulates the ideal and most socially valued form of masculinity which is contextually situated and culturally dominant (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Subjects employed in specialisations that reflect these ideals become productive because of behaviours shaped through mechanisms and techniques of power found in military life, achieving elite status as they are awarded pilot wings or special forces beret to become productive. It is this usefulness, in support of the organization, that allies them to their subjugation (Foucault, 1991).

“we must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘exiles’, it ‘represses’, it……. For the disciplined, “no detail is unimportant, but not so much for the meaning that it conceals within it as for the hold it provides for the power that wished to see it.” (Foucault, 1991, p. 140).

Understanding the productive nature of power allows us to recognize that power does not reside in the institution or organization but in the multiple forces that operate within it, their interfaces, and exchanges (Lynch, 2011). These relationships work through “disciplinary coercion … the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination” (Foucault, 1991, p. 138). This powerful phenomenon can, in part, explain the sacrifices individuals are willing to make towards achieving organizational goals and success (Fleming and Spicer, 2004). However, discipline can also be targeted at individual behaviours which have been deemed unacceptable and in need correction and the military provides an ideal site to understand how the enactment of disciplinary power can affect relations of power and consequently, individual identity (Giddens, 1991).

### 2.4 Mechanisms of Power

The next section discusses Foucault’s (1991) mechanisms and techniques of power within the military environment as discipline makes individuals, regarding them as both objects
and instruments of its exercise by ingraining itself into every aspect of their “bodies and
inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and
everyday lives” (Foucault, 1980, p. 39).

2.4.1 Space

Physical space is understood by Foucault as a means of control (Foucault, 1991). For example, the decision to site RAF bases away from centres of populations was often a result of the inherent dangers and noise associated with the early days of flying aircraft. Moreover, it also had the effect of isolating organizational members from nearby towns and villages reinforcing separation between military and civilian (Brunger et al., 2013) while also meeting one of Goffman’s (1961) criteria of a total institution as social and professional lives are combined. However, even when bases are remote and physically enclosed there is not always a neat singular demarcation between civilian and military spaces as individuals, military and civilian, often travel between the two blurring lines of separation (Basham, Belkin, and Gifkins, 2015) and reducing institutional effects (Scott, 2010).

2.4.2 Activity

The fences and armed guards that surround military bases create an enclosed site where activities can be easily managed (Goffman, 1991). This management of activity affects both professional and social lives, through the compulsory attendance required at bi-weekly squadron physical training sessions to formal and informal social activities which helps demonstrate how power disciplines the mind and the body (Trethewey, 1999). The ‘battle rhythm’ of weekly or monthly meetings and annual events such as Dinner Nights provide a structure to military life as rules concerning uniform, deportment, and compulsory training, such as combat skills or fitness testing are undertaken. All of these activities contribute to building and communicating identity within organizations and are part of a deliberate policy of socialisation into military life (Godfrey, Lilley and Brewis, 2012; Caddick, 2017).

2.4.3 Time

Activities are extensively and rigidly controlled through the third mechanism of disciplinary power, time. The regular schedule of meetings and activities, although not unique to military life, possess cultural associations. For example, in the military punctuality is perceived as a virtue and lateness a character flaw. Foucault understood the control of time as being achieved through appreciating it as moving forward, progressing, and producing incremental development of skills towards a goal. In military terms, this could be applied to
training exercises building up to an operational deployment⁹ (Coupland, 2015) or drill practice in preparation for an annual parade through the local town. Such events allow the consideration of several different forces; for example, time becomes divisible, intimately manageable, and measurable in terms of operational success or the delivery of a faultless parade.

### 2.5 Techniques of Power

The three techniques of power necessary to create an efficient and effective organization are hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement, and examination (Foucault, 1991). The military's approach to physical fitness provides a useful illustration of how these techniques can be corporally operationalized, demonstrating how the body

> “is directly involved in a political field; [how] power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs …the body only becomes a useful force if it is both a productive body and a subjugated body” (Foucault, 1991, p. 25-26).

#### 2.5.1 Hierarchical Observation

The Armed Forces have stringent fitness and health requirements which individuals must meet to enable the military to achieve its objectives (Mod, 2020). To facilitate this a specialisation exists to manage the fitness of organizational members. These specialists, known as Physical Training Instructors (PTIs), are required to maintain elevated levels of fitness, this not only requires high levels of self-discipline but creates a physical prowess which is regarded as a masculine trait which exceeds the feminine (Holyfield et al., 2019). The need for physical fitness creates an organised and embodied gendered discipline, subject to the observation of all, through which hyper-masculinity is constructed, performed (Coupland, 2015) and controlled (Flyverbom, Christensen, and Hansen, 2015). On completing specialist training, technologies of power are further enacted as PTIs are awarded the rank of corporal as opposed to the lower rank of SAC (Senior Aircraftman/woman), to assume a legitimate status of authority within the organization (Suchman, 1995). PTIs are supported in their authority by policy, military law, and cultural normativities (RAF, 2020b), which create an environment where unfit PTIs are undesirable. In this way, the PTI’s behaviours are controlled, self-monitored and self-evaluated as much as the people they are examining; they become the observed and the observer, the architect and the builder of their subjugation (Foucault, 1994).

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⁹ Being sent into an active theatre of war or operational environment.
2.5.2 Normalizing Judgement

The ability of organizations to constitute identity through normative behaviours and cultures is well documented (Goffman, 1991; Scott, 2010; Kenny, 2016) and organizations that shape the norms and beliefs of its members do so by internalizing them into the very sense of who they are, they become self-managing (Peters and Waterman, 1982). Within the military, maintaining physical fitness standards, adjusted to age and biological sex, is a normative requirement for all service personnel which imposes homogeneity across ranks and can be considered a core cultural value. Fitness standards in the RAF are used to judge a subject’s attitude and are included in annual performance assessments and act to encourage obedience and self-regulation as a manifestation of organizational control (Kornberger, Brown and Clegg, 2010; Koerner, 2014). The official position is that this serves to encourage personnel to keep fit because of the health benefits (RAF, 2020c); however, social pressure to maintain fitness is high and personnel are encouraged to take part in various physical activities from inter-station games to representing the RAF in tri-service competitions. Often personnel who achieve this level of competition are rewarded and given time off work to train or attend these events while personnel who fail to meet fitness standards are judged as lacking and face disciplinary action.

2.5.3 Examination

The expectation that military personnel are to be fit and train regularly is intertwined with governmentality, technologies of power, and technologies of the self which induce the self-discipline required to maintain fitness levels (Clarke and Knights, 2015). The annual fitness test is a core part of military life and those who do not meet the standards must attend remedial classes to increase fitness to correct their behaviours and become productive once again. If, after a third examination, the standard still cannot be met, the individual will receive a recommendation to be discharged from the organization (Foucault, 1991). In this way discourses around fitness are used to divide the labour force, classifying and ranking personnel (Townley, 1990, in Raffnsøe et al., 2019) based on a power knowledge strategy which infers greater knowledge to the PTI and fitness policies (Knights and Wilmott, 1989) which assess fitness levels to prescribe individual value (Heyes, 2011).

“the power of the normalization imposes homogeneity; it also individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render differences useful by fitting them one to another.” (Foucault, 1994, p. 184).
Examination then becomes “a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, classify and to punish” (Foucault, 1994, p. 184). By making physical fitness a condition of employment and an ever-present visible and observable indicator of an ideal military identity, fitness, health and the self-discipline required to maintain standards becomes embodied within the corporeal becoming a core part of a subject’s identity (Trethewey, 1999; Coupland, 2015; Maravelias, 2018). By aligning fitness with competence and promotability, through which individuals can be ranked, the military provides a site where the mechanisms and techniques of power combine and panoptic control creates subjects who are "self-monitoring, developmental, the object at the intersection of numerous vectors of management and coercion and, most of all, useful, productive" (Heyes, 2011, p. 162; Foucault, 1994).

Normalised behaviours governed by powerful relations and mechanisms and technologies of power, can signify and control ways of being. “It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection” (Foucault, 1994, p. 187). This is how discipline can make individuals (Foucault, 1994) and behavioural signifiers are reproduced as identity is transformed (Gordon, 1994; Foucault, 1991, 1994; Heyes, 2011) and social actors are rewarded or punished accordingly (Bergstrom, Hasselbladh, and Kärreman, 2009). However, although Foucault (1991) argues disciplinary power is productive and can create useful but docile bodies he does not recognize disciplinary power as totalising - he acknowledges the presence of resistance through individual agency.

2.6 Resistance

Indeed, resistance to power is one of the key elements of Foucault's understanding of power and discipline, to the extent that reading his work is not complete without understanding how resistance, as a productive or as a restraining force is ever-present, wherever relations of power occur (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2009). For example, research has challenged the idea that strong corporate cultures with all-powerful management produce employees that passively accept their mandates (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Rather, power has been described as being dependent on resistance which has multiple, mobile and temporal points which act as a foothold for power (Sheridan, 2005). For instance, while discourse can act as an "ordered set of polemical and strategic facts" (Foucault, 1994, p. 3) they can also mean different things for different people at different times. Although Foucault has received criticism for a lack of nuance in his writings which can appear to reify discourses and fail to appreciate how individual sensibilities and responses can operate, alternative readings and applied approaches have shown that how individuals interpret discourses can be key to creating sites where alternative possibilities can be considered (Casey, 1995; Alvesson and
Karreman, 2000; Thomas and Davies, 2005; Lapointe, 2013). Such alternative possibilities and the potential of agentic choice, if one first is open to change, are implicitly bound within the dynamics of power relations and can be considered an outcome of resistance against mechanisms and technologies of power (Clarke, Brown and Hailey, 2009).

Further criticisms were raised by Newton (1998) who argues Foucault’s assumption that workers’ identities are so vulnerable and fragile they are easily manipulated by the disciplinary techniques and mechanisms of control found in organizations. Newton questioned the supremacy of attempting to secure a valued identity over material conditions that conflict with a sense of justice concerning inequality and exploitation. For example, coercive control failed to produce the planned for results outlined in Ezzamel and Willmott’s (1998) study of factory workers as identities, related to friendships, were put above rewards related to management’s concept of teamwork and productivity. Examples such as this demonstrate that resistance occurs as individuals become alienated or marginalised by the relations of power that surround them and can engage in numerous strategies to achieve physical, emotional or symbolic relief from discipline and control (Brown, 2006) such as humour, whistleblowing (Jermier et al., 1994 in Brown 2006; Godfrey, 2016), and cynicism (Fleming and Spicer, 2003). That there are potential limits of resistance and that the controls may be replaced with something equivalent is recognised (Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998); however, opportunities for change can nevertheless be created through discourses of resistance and action (Lynch, 2011). Resistance, power, freedom of thought and bodily expression can be equivocally linked (Rainbow and Rose, 2003; Oksala, 2011) and within organizations, new experiences and more meaningful identities can create opportunities for positive change (Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998).

2.7 Opportunities

Despite the criticisms aimed at Foucault regarding his lack of nuance (Newton, 1998; Lukes, 2005), he did discuss resistance to the beliefs and principles of normativities as a productive force (Gabriel, 1999; Knights and McCabe, 2000; Pullen and Rhodes, 2014), which could create both positive and negative subjective consequences (Feder, 2014). For example, in the positive sense and relevant to Foucault, gay pride could only have emerged through resistance to homophobia. Alternatively, in the negative, sense resistance to dominating power can also create an arms race of knowledge/power relations as individuals counteract rituals of truth that support normative values (Feder, 2014). Foucault's position, however, maintained that “knowledge does not strip away the effects of power to reveal the truth [rather] knowledge only manages to embody new and different forms of power” (Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998, p. 459). This, along with his position that power is inescapable, puts him at odds with the view that you have to stand outside the power dynamic to resist it.
and also has given rise to suggestions of essentialism (Newton, 1998). That Foucault prioritises power over subjectivity has also been used to debase his arguments (Heyes, 2011) but, for Foucault, opportunity comes with freedom and agency, understood as the “capacity to act on one’s own behalf, drawing on beliefs and desires that are properly one’s own” (Heyes, 2011, p 167). This should not be confused with the idea of a fully autonomous self, which Foucault regarded as illusory, rather agency is seen as a way to stabilize meaning as a result of the dynamic and changing relations of power that surround us (Dreyfus and Rainbow, 1983; Knights and Clarke, 2017).

2.8 Freedom

From a Foucauldian perspective, freedom involves a subjectivity that realises acquiescing to normative behaviours and thought structures are likely, but not necessarily inevitable, since resistance is always a possibility (Foucault, 1991). Foucault viewed complete freedom, the idea that anything is possible, as implausible (Oksala, 2011). In this sense, autonomy should be considered fleeting and momentary; not a finished state or a “state of being but a way of being in relation to ourselves, to others and to our world” (Mendieta, 2011, p. 112). This represents a freedom for change in contrast to a freedom from a constraining force (May, 2014). While understandings of freedom can be debated from many perspectives, here it can be thought of as being akin to resistance against determination. This is different (but not necessarily separate) from other concepts such as political freedom which includes, for example, free expression. Foucault's position was situated in an analysis of the historic, used to understand the constraints these placed on the present, in terms of how we behave and think, so that we could see past them to alternative possibilities and facilitate change (May, 2014). This is a reading of Foucault that incorporates morality and ethics, which gives subjects the space in which they can “shape and craft their relations to self and others with respect to institutionalized demands” (Weiskopf and Willmott, 2013, p. 473).

It is within this conceptualisation of freedom that Foucault’s description of power as a creative force can be understood, and agency is revealed as creativity manifests subconsciously/consciously in behaviours and discourses (May, 2014) as individuals embody, challenge, and reconfigure meaning (Knights and Clarke, 2017). The power to govern continues to exist as it contains within it a freedom of choice for those who unconsciously, consciously, or tacitly support it. Not only is freedom seen as subjective where normativities regarded as necessities can suddenly be recognised as contingencies, but our experiences are also relational, existing and re-authored through time and different power/knowledge relations and different forms of knowledge (Foucault, 1994; Shortall, 2012). There is a choice in accepting or rejecting normative behaviours that can give
individuals a sense of power and freedom; however, reasoned decisions based on transactional realities can be difficult and come at a cost as valued aspects of identity are put aside (Lukes, 2005; Connor, 2010; Caddick, 2017). While the uncertainty this creates may cause dysfunctional anxiety, identity fluidity can also be a source of creativity and opportunity (Gabriel and Carr, 2002) as individuals negotiate new and different subjectivities.

2.9 Transactional Realities

What Foucault describes as ‘transactional realities’, have been described by Giddens as an “effort bargain” (Giddens, 1991, p. 23) reciprocal arrangements regarding the exchange of labour for instrumental benefit. Accepting transactional realities are not independent but are a product of the relations of power that constitute social groups, their value can be recognised as subjective (Foucault, 1994), materialistic as well as tangential. This means that power relations can mould behaviours, impart self-awareness, and shape identities but these may not operate the same way outside of the subject’s environment or for each subject (Lukes, 2005; Obodaru, 2017). Through the transactional realities of organizational life, individuals can negotiate a balance between self-reflective cynicism and acceptance of normativities, enabling a sense of productive harmony to be experienced. Collinson (2003) argues there are three main types of subjective responses typically found in organizations who act to shape, examine and judge members identity. The responses vary on a spectrum from those who are conformist and can be considered to identify strongly with the organization through to those who are resistant and strongly oppose the preferred dominant identity type. Those who are ‘dramaturgic’ adopt a more cynical and flexible position which enables them to feel they are retaining elements of their ‘real self’ while recognizing the performativity of their behaviours.

However, such relationships should not be considered frozen; rather, they are in a state of constant flux as resistance, acceptance and forces of power interact, limiting possibilities and creating opportunities (Warhurst, 2011). While the desire for ontological security can support an acceptance of transactional realities for instrumental benefit and self-assurance, changing social realities may trigger reflexive questioning of the mechanisms and techniques of power that support the taken-for-granted status quo. These fluctuating dynamics can lead to conflict in a subject’s sense of self if the individual does not feel able to “make a difference” or find meaning (Giddens, 1984, p. 14), triggering resistance. Research has identified feelings of dis-harmony as sites which offer rich potential for understanding how and why identities are construed and different possibilities emerge (Clarke, Knights and Jarvis, 2012; Clinton and Guest, 2014) as transactional realities are renegotiated. This has consequences in terms of employee retention and identity.
management which has generated other theoretical research into dimensions of power and social relations.

2.10 Dimensions of Power

While Foucault (1980, 1991, 1994) remains foundational in understanding power in relation to this thesis Lukes’ (2005) and Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan's (1998) scholarship on dimensions of power adds depth by allowing a rich picture to be developed regarding the motivations, consequences and application of power in contemporary organizations. Lukes' original Three Dimensions of Power described here as Resources, Access, and Hegemonic Processes, aims to address issues of relativism lacking in Foucault’s work by debating what is meant by power, domination, freedom, and reasoning. This analysis allows perspectives and nuances to be applied to power in respect of individuals conscious and unconscious reasoning while presenting the possibility of denying them the privilege of understanding their behaviours. Lukes' (2005) work builds a picture which acknowledges not all social relationships are equal and that individual relationships with power are complex, multifaceted, contextual and can be both resigned to and enthusiastically accepting of domination, depending on culturally relevant values and belief systems (Dowding, 2006). Furthermore, Lukes situates his work on power by acknowledging power does not have to be enacted and that it can be exercised to advance and enhance the interests of others as well as dominate. Hardy’s added fourth dimension, described as the Relational Approach, allows the complex and multidimensional to be observed in even more detail through the lens of empowerment, how power works and its limitations. By introducing this relational element rather than focusing on sovereign power it is able to act as a bridge between Foucault and Lukes (Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998).

2.10.1 Resources

In this functional first dimension that Lukes (2005) explores, power is linked to resources, their control and the knowledge needed to effectively wield power to achieve effect. This view of power incorporating a behaviouralist approach that focuses on visible decision making is always observable and which many people cannot see beyond; it is blind to political bias and relies on conflict as a necessity for power to be exercised. This perspective prohibits the idea that interests might be unspoken, hidden, unconscious or even that the holder of power might be mistaken about their benefits (Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998; Lukes, 2005).
2.10.2 Access

The second-dimension concerns access to power and attempts to account how agendas can be controlled to the benefit of one party over another by denying participation. Drawing on Bachrach and Baratz’s (1970) work, the mobilization of bias is introduced into the decision-making process. This process privileges particular individuals or groups politically, albeit not necessarily intentionally, neither does it assume the anticipated outcomes will be produced (Lukes, 2005), but it has been specifically aligned to maintain the status quo, through the idea of non-decision making (Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998). Noting non-decision making Lukes (2005) suggests that while relevant to any discussion on power, accounting for the absence of decisions which deny possibilities is challenging, for how is the researcher supposed to become aware of behind the scenes influencing and agenda setting. Lukes also argues that although conflict can act as a signifier of power, its absence does not necessarily signal genuine consensus. Rather, he suggests power exercised can work in such a way as to prevent conflict from arising in the first place.

Moreover, consent can be conditional and has limits, so that ‘command’ is qualified by the dominator’s legitimacy from the respect or fear of the commanded and their understanding of what is reasonable about their values. Furthermore, the second dimension of power considers the possibility of the more dominant party losing advantage, as effects are countered by extending membership within the decision-making process to bring about change (Hardy and Redivo, 1994). The second dimension of power also begins to illuminate some of the complexity involved in power relationships demonstrating analysis should involve both decision making and non-decision making. However, Lukes continues to argue for greater nuance noting that the absence of conflict does not necessarily confer consensus. He also regards this second dimensional view as being too constrained by behaviourism, too focused on individual acts of influence at the expense of recognizing pervasive societal and cultural influences. Finally, he regards Bachrach’s and Baratz’s conception lacking because of their insistence on visible protests being required for non-decision making to be effectively used as a mechanism of power rather than recognizing the hidden effects of manipulation and authority.

2.10.3 Hegemonic Processes

Central to Lukes’ (2005) third dimension of power is the notion that, due to its relationship with other disputed terms such as freedom, authenticity (being true to oneself) and autonomy (thinking for oneself), it remains contested. Add to this cultural relativity, rationality and judgement and the complexity of power increases as scholars are induced
to make value judgements and comparisons to something else, an indeterminate other (Taylor, Rockefeller, Gutmann, Habermas, Walzer, Wolf, and Appiah, 1994).

This analysis led Lukes to conceive of power as existing in a moral, political and value laden realm upon which it is dependent. Lukes furthers the discussion in this dimension by arguing that power is not contingent on conflict but can be exercised through decision-making to avoid the need for conflict to arise (Lukes, 2005). In this instance power is used to form peoples’

“perceptions, cognitions, and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they view it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial” (Lukes, 2005, p. 28).

Power is therefore cultural and bound up with social normativities that actively maintains and recreates the status quo throughout generations and, while this can lead to inertia, it does not necessarily equate to acceptance (Moore, 1993). Compliance occurs because it is both forced and coerced and can be beneficial and detrimental for the dominated and the dominator alike (Weber in Lukes, 2005). From this perspective power can be used to manage meaning and legitimate demands (Pettigrew, 2007) preventing others from making challenges. However, resistance is possible as less dominant groups can manage meanings to challenge the status quo (Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998); that domination can be challenged and resisted through actions adds a deeper and richer understanding to power dynamics (Barbalet, 1985, Lukes, 2005). The third dimension of power therefore considers nondecision-making beyond behaviourism, recognises institutional power and how demands can be ignored through the exercise of power. Lukes incorporates in his understanding of power the cultural relativity of values, how inaction is as viable as action and the importance of the unconscious. But it is the hidden and subversive nature of power concerning domination through the knowing/unknowing self-disciplining subject that allows an understanding of power beyond conflict and beyond obvious counterfactuals to be considered. This argument moves the theoretical understanding of power from a functional or behavioural perspective found in dimensions one and two and adds a critical element which sees power not relying on conflict but on domination to prevent conflict.

2.10.4 Relational Approach

Lukes originally stopped at the third dimension but has recently revisited his theory to expand on Hardy’s fourth dimension (Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998; Dowding, 2006). Other significant contributors include Foucault (1991, 1994); and scholars who have applied
these theories in organization studies Knights and Wilmott (1989); Kerfoot and Knights (1993); Alvesson and Willmott (2002). The fourth dimension draws on Foucault’s theorisation that relations of power affect all subjects through disciplinary power, regardless of status, and that individuals are socially construed with multiple identities reliant on social recognition (Foucault, 1991; Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998). It also recognises the limitations to resistance in that, as networks of power provide subjects with meaning and value, rejecting these networks can come at personal cost which can affect an individual’s sense of self as they reject the basis of their own subjectivity. Furthermore, the path of resistance is neither smooth nor comes with a guarantee of change as existing power relations often colonize alternative discourses becoming stronger as a result (Clegg, 1989; Knights and Morgan, 1991; Alvesson and Willmott, 1992). Nevertheless, Knights and Morgan (1995, p. 194) have reflected on one of Foucault’s affirmative aspects of power relations, noting how a positive sense of self-discipline can transform “individuals into subjects who secure their sense of identity, meaning and reality through participating in [certain] practices.” However, it should also be recognised attempts to secure identity are “invariably self-defeating as they are reliant on the unpredictable and uncontrollable other (Knights and Clarke, 2017).

2.11 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of disciplinary power and the mechanisms and techniques that Foucault (1980, 1991, 1994) associated with it. This was supplemented with a review of the dimensions of power and how access, resources and subjective normativities dominate conceptions of power. As a complex and multi-dimensional concept, power has been theorised from the perspective of mainstream academia in terms of functionality; critically, in terms of viewing it from the perspective of the disenfranchised or marginalised, which viewed power as oppressive and reductive; and poststructurally by introducing positivity into power relations (Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998; Lukes, 2005). While Foucault argued power could bring opportunity, he chose to say less about the consequences or how it was enacted at the level of the individual (Lukes, 2005). Lukes’ three dimensions of power can assist in reframing the self-disciplinary effects of power helping to understand how it works in the organizational context; how power can be wielded deliberately and or unconsciously and what the effects can be on individual identity.

Foucault (1994), Lukes (2005), and Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan (1998) detail how power can be achieved and enacted through control of the decision-making process, incorporating non-decision making, and resistance to power within their theorising. The concept of self-discipline can be seen to rest on the legitimacy of the social and cultural normativities that support it, but, through interrogating power dynamics and relations of power, the hidden
effects of complex and divergent interests associated with power and control can be better understood. Furthermore, although power can be a contested term of which disciplinary power is merely one facet, it is recognized that disciplinary power can be effective due in large part to its obscurity; moreover, by exposing how self-discipline functions as a mechanism or technology of power, we can see how it can be challenged or subverted. In the next chapter different possibilities of identity and meaning are considered and discussed in relation to these various aspects of power (Foucault, 1991; Knights and Morgan, 1995; Lukes, 2005).
3 Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the literature on identity and gender in relation to this study, including a discussion on gendered organizations. For the purposes of this work the concept of identity takes a Foucauldian perspective by recognizing how our sense of self is influenced by dominant discourses and the meanings individuals attach to them, allowing power to operate through social relations rather than structures (Foucault, 1991). As the literature on identity is progressively growing (Brown, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2017) only concepts considered to be significant to this study are discussed in depth. These include what is understood by identity, what is meant by identity work and how these fit with the concepts of self-discipline, gender the military and liminality. The concept of liminality is used to explore how subjects transition between what social psychologist call different social identity status’ (Turner, 1982; Gabriel, 1999; Beech, 2011; Mcdonald, 2013) but is used here in a way which regards liminality as a culturally specific experience that offers possibilities for understanding identity as fluid and ongoing, rather than a journey from one concrete state to another (Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016, 2020).

Gender is approached from a poststructural perspective that accounts for the cultural meanings associated with gender relating to masculine and feminine behaviours, as opposed to biological differences (Priola, 2016). Gender is explored with a critical approach to the masculine and feminine binary, influencing power relations operating within organizations and how individual gendered identities are socially perceived. The debate will incorporate theorisations of gender as ‘essentialised’ and assigned by biological sex to a more fluid understanding, where performative practices are considered as shifting, multiple, learned, and enacted (Priola, 2016). This will be followed by a discussion into gendered perspectives of organizational life (Acker, 1990; Grey, 2005) and how these understandings can influence ways of being, future possibilities and how through gendered practices and behaviours (Alvesson and Billing, 1992; Acker, 2012) individuals become a party to their own subjugation (Foucault, 1991; Roberts, 2005; Ravasi and Canato, 2015).

Finally, there is a review on how military identity is theorized in the literature from a gendered perspective (Higate, 2001; Duncanson and Woodward, 2016) which explores the processes of identity construction within the military environment. By applying Foucault’s theorization on identity, disciplinary power and resistance (Foucault, 1991; Foucault, 1994), the conditions and consequences of a gendered military identity (Goffman, 1991; Giddens, 1991; Bell, 1999; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Brown, 2015; Laney et al., 2015) are studied as actors engage in identity work (Beech, Gilmore, Cochrane, and Greig, 2012; Clarke et
al., 2012; Coupland and Brown, 2012) and embodied strategies (Knights and Clarke, 2017) to navigate transition out of the military (Goffman, 1990b; Pullen and Rhodes, 2014). This study also intends to engage with critical thinking by incorporating the embodied and historical contingencies of organizational life (Knights and Clarke, 2017).

3.2 Part One - Exploring Identity

That identity continues to be a popular area of research proves its resilience, or seduction, as a research subject, with scholars continuing to explore complex power relations, subjugation, and institutional effects (Alvesson, Ashcraft and Thomas, 2008; Brown and Phua, 2011; Knights and Clarke, 2018; Ashforth, Moser, and Bubenzer, 2020; Kärreman and Frandsen, 2020). In relation to this study identity can be thought of as the meaning individuals attach to their selves incorporating the ability to think reflexively, that is ‘that which turns back upon or takes account of the self’ (Holland, 1999, p. 464), whilst acknowledging recognition is also required from others (Knights and Clarke, 2017). This approach supports the decision to follow a socially constructed view of identity, since societies and individuals are believed to be too dynamic, versatile, and nuanced to support an essentialist or deterministic ontological view. This, coupled with an individuals’ need to be valued and recognition that agency, as an act of individual will, is more than a possibility, reinforces a socially constructivist view of identity and its contingent nature (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002; Brown and Toyoki, 2013).

Adopting a Foucauldian perspective allows an understanding of how “people are formed within, and come to identify with, dominant discourses or systems of thought, which make available certain subject positions and self-understandings” (Kenny, Whittle and Willmott, 2011, p. 14). That these positions can be both liberating or dominating locates concepts of agency and autonomy in a poststructural framework that eschews determination and essentialism whilst recognizing the potential influences of central discourses and power/knowledge regimes (Lukes, 2005). Contained within this understanding of identity is also an acknowledgement that attempts to secure meaning are themselves contingent, as they are reliant on the confirmation of the “unpredictable and uncontrollable approval of significant others” (Knights and Clarke, 2018, p. 147).

3.2.1 What is identity

Identity studies allow an appreciation of how people’s sense of ‘who they are’ is embedded and reliant on social relationships, how this sense of being exists beyond ourselves and is based on collective understandings which are shaped by reproductions of power through gender, ethnicity and class (Corlett and Mavin, 2015). The study of identity can provide an
awareness of the behaviours and motivations that affect how decisions are made and by recognizing organizations and their associated values, norms, and meanings as sites of power can also help explain how individual identities are shaped (Foucault, 1991; Lukes, 2005). These are identities which are multiple, fragile, stable or insecure, coherent and/or fractured (Scott, 2010; Knights and Clarke, 2014; Pullen and Rhodes, 2014; Ramarajan, 2014; Brown, 2019, 2020). Identity can also be characterized by aspiration or even fantasy (Ekman, 2013; Brown, 2015). As such, identity is changeable and fluid: it can be repaired, maintained, revised, or even reclaimed (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). This creates conditions for a ‘self’ which integrates a capacity for reflexive thinking (Brown, 2015) but is socially contingent (Knights and Clarke, 2017) in relation to others and how others react to them (Creed and Scully, 2011). Identity also features an understanding of the cultural meanings associated with gender relating to masculine and feminine behaviours, as opposed to biological differences (Priola, 2016). These cultural meanings - what it is to be female, male, or something different, are also contingent on the affirmation of others, which itself can be unpredictable, resulting in a potential fragility as this requires continual social support for its validity. In this way, identity is always in a state of becoming (Knights and Clarke, 2017) and dependent on socially available categories, which are local, historical, and cultural (Clegg, 1989; Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002).

Accepting identity as multiple and changing recognises that power does not reside in an institution or structure but as a complex arrangement of social forces, which allows consideration of how power serves to both limit and offer possibilities (Foucault, 1991). This view supports the concept of identity as fluid and helps explain why people seek a sense of coherence in terms of their sense of selves as they attempt to secure their identities (Clarke et al., 2009; Swann, Johnson and Bosson, 2009). Coherency, however, can be difficult to achieve in the face of changing power relations (Gabriel, Gray, and Goregaokar, 2010) with research suggesting insecurities can arise from the absence of a consistent core (Collinson, 2003). This can create an uncertain position which can be further explained through an understanding of the self which differentiates between the ‘I’ of the present and the ‘me’ of the past, where in order to access the present, one must rely on memories of the past that function as a socially dependent but partial "memory image…within the experience of the individual" (Mead, 1934, p.176/7). Such partial memories can result in inconsistencies being introduced and incorporated into accounts of the self, allowing paradoxes to be absorbed through contradictory sensemaking frameworks and producing identities that could be considered stable but not necessarily coherent (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009). The ‘image’ or the idea of the self that is produced in response to changing circumstances becomes part of the subject’s considerations when faced with either a new or similar experience. Yet as they are also partial, necessarily limited, contingent on time, experience, and malleable based on changing and nuanced meanings in the present, which themselves
are socially variable (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002). This means identities can be difficult to grasp at any given moment as “We always risk understanding who we just were, rather than who we are now” (May, 2014, p. 80). From this perspective and theorised using Foucault’s (1991), disciplinary power, identity regulation and self-discipline enable identity to be conceptualised as fluid but fragile and at times contested, with no distinction being made between the concept of private and public identity, or an authentic public self. Rather, identity is viewed as multiple and part of a socially contingent and supple whole that must be continually reproduced to be effective (Giddens, 1991; Mead, 1934). That people are compelled to protect and crave relational links between concepts that support their identities, despite their paradoxes and inconsistencies, also helps to explain their resilience (Webb, 2006; Alvesson et al., 2008; Watson, 2008; Brown, 2015).

In accepting a position of subjectivity where normative behaviours are influenced by shared frameworks but are also contingent on fluidity and ‘Othering’ (Van Gilder, 2019), essentialist views become unsustainable. ‘Othering’ involves defining ‘who I am’ through ‘who I am not’, creating an identity that is different to the ‘Other’ (Bhattacharya and Elsbach, 2001; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). This theoretical understanding of identity enables the perceived solidity of normativities and associated identities and behaviours to be recognised as enduring sources of power but ones that can also be fleeting, fragile, and subjective (Brown, 2017). Thus, social life offers potential for robustness through shared normative frameworks, which become threatened with dissolution if the powerful relations that support them are challenged or replaced by the unknown or the hidden. This can help explain defensive ‘othering’ where different subjectivities are reduced to maintain the hierarchical status quo (McInnes and Corlett, 2012; Coupland, 2015; Godfrey, 2016; Corlett, McInnes, Coupland and Sheep, 2017) often as a result of a perceived threat to status or access to power (Elsbach and Kramer, 1996). Following this argument, rejecting normativities could be hazardous (Butler, 1993) as it can unsettle the status quo on which power rests. For example, the maintenance of normativities, through day-to-day actions and discourses, shapes identity by supporting consistency and coherence but their rejection or even acknowledgement, aside from demonstrating the potential for individual agency, could also offer alternative possibilities which may de-stabilise existing power relations and consequently threaten identity security (Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998; Lukes, 2005).

Such a perspective recognises the fluid and multifarious nature of identity, in contrast to traditional fixed identities concepts, where behaviours are wedded to binary concepts. For example, biological gender and the values, meanings, and behaviours culturally inscribed and traditionally associated with masculinity and femininity (de Beauvoir, 1949; Knights and Kerfoot, 2004) no longer need to be regarded as rarefied, yet they continue to shape organizational life (Zimmer, 2016; Knights and Clarke, 2018). They do this through
expressions of dress, manners, and understanding of appropriate roles (Davies and Thomas, 2002; Hughes, 2004; Davey, 2008; Nkomo and Rodriguez, 2019). Recognizing this, there remains a debate as to the extent people unthinkingly accept their circumstances and to what degree they can fully control the context of their lives, conditional as they are on resilient societal influences, normativities, and judgemental evaluations (Foucault, 1991; Howard, 2000; Brown, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2017).

The manner of thinking described here has allowed researchers to consider identity as chosen or ascribed; fragile or generally stable; adaptive or fluid; motivated, or not, by positive meaning; and framed, or not, by a desire for authenticity (Brown, 2015). As an explanatory tool, researchers have attempted to recognise the contingent and contextual nature of identity while trying to avoid stark binary distinctions (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002; Brown and Toyoki, 2013), allowing identity to be regarded as socially contingent “meanings attached to the self” (Gecas, 1982, p. 1). This recognises individual agency in terms of subjects asking and answering questions regarding who they are and who they want to be, which in turn can govern behaviours (Alvesson et al., 2008) and encourage resistance to normative ways of being through identity work. However, this position also recognizes social influences on identity by incorporating a reading of Foucault (1991, 1994) that acknowledges agency can be achieved through self-reflection (Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998). Furthermore, in organization studies, it is important to move away from dichotomies to understand freedoms and how subjects can employ indirect agency in their performativities (Raffnsøe et al., 2019).

3.2.2 Behaviours and Ways of Being as Identity Work

Identity work can be thought of as behaviours and associated ways of being that an individual performs in an attempt to conform to, or contradict, a set of socially contingent normative frameworks that are often associated with traditional concepts of gender (Butler, 2004). Although understandings of identity work continue to be adapted in light of different conceptualisations and applications, identity work can be considered to consist of unconscious and conscious actions performed to engage “in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness” (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p. 1165). When attempting to understand the complex, subjective and contextual nature of identity and how it is constituted, its influences, linguistics, and performances should be seen, if not as symbiotic, then at least interwoven (Linstead and Pullen, 2006); moreover associations with discursive patterns should be recognised as subject to interpretation (Butler, 1993; Clarke et al., 2009). Indeed the forms performances, signifiers, discourses, and narratives can take, remains relevant to understanding subjective behaviours within the organizational environment.
(Brown, 2019, 2020). This can create a fragility and insecurity in relation to identity that reflects the demands of the modern workplace (Knights and Clarke, 2014). It can therefore follow that the socially contingent nature of identity results in a concept of self-identity which:

“… is not something that is just given, as a result of the continuities of the individual action system, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual.” (Giddens, 1991, p. 52)

However, when attempting to understand the effects of identity work limitations in respect of its agentic nature should be considered (Casey, 1995; Fleming and Spicer, 2003) alongside cultural relativities and the desire to be recognised by the unpredicatable other (Knights and McCabe, 2003; Lukes, 2005). It is the unpredictable other (Knights and Clarke, 2017) that can present challenges to successfully achieving some range of consistency through identity work, especially if the Other considers the behaviours to be cynical or strategic (Scott, 2010), since the observer of performances can often be more attuned to identifying inconsistencies than the actor (Goffman, 1990b). While rejection or doubt could potentially threaten the development of emerging identities, identity play “defined as people’s engagement in provisional but active trial of possible future selves” (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010, p. 10), may offer a safe space for experimentation. In this space, divergent or diverse identities can be tested by incorporating an element of fantasy that can also support feelings of distinctiveness and security. Playing with different identities can also be beneficial as provisional qualities require less commitment and present less risk as individuals contemplate different ways of being (Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016; Ibarra and Obodaru, 2020).

During periods of change, understanding which elements of an individual’s sense of self are retained and maintained through identity work and which are discarded, as they are no longer consistent with the dominant ‘regime of truth’, can help illuminate the relations of power embedded in organizational life (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Aker, 1990). It is for these reasons that coherence, credibility and consistency concerning identity performances are of particular interest as a modification of behaviour could signal a change in understanding in relation to the self and surrounding normativities, local, cultural and historical (Conroy and O’Leary-Kelly, 2014). Indeed, although the achievement of a secure identity has long been considered unachievable (Mead, 1934; Watts, 1951) the possibility of “reasonable stable selves” (Giddens, 1991, p.54) recognises periods in individual’s lives where a sense of coherence and consistency is maintained, despite or because of dominant power relations, even if behaviours or discourses may appear inconsistent, as individuals can incorporate contradicting viewpoints (Clarke et al., 2009).
Scholars have used the concept of liminality (Turner, 1987) to study this period of what has been described as transition as notions of the self are adjusted in response to dynamic power relations and changing dominant social normativities. Although reflective of Social Identity Theory and often theorised as linear, the concept of liminality has been developed to reflect a more fluid and dynamic perspective (Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly, 2014). This fluidity can help illuminate aspects of performativity and signification (Butler, 1997) during major life events such as occupational changes.

3.2.3 Liminality

The concept of liminality is used in anthropology to explore changes in status brought about by the biological tempo of life, such as moving from childhood to adulthood. These identity states are culturally recognised as inclusive concepts reflecting socially prescribed normative lay ideals, as opposed to fluid and contingent identities (Turner, 1987). This view was mirrored by many of the participants, who describe transitioning from military to civilian life as if moving between two fixed points, albeit accepting that this can involve a lengthy period. The perspective taken in this research reflects that of Ibarra and Obodaru's (2016, 2020) research, which regards liminality as a culturally specific experience that offers possibilities for understanding identity as fluid and ongoing and requiring constant revision, rather than a journey from one concrete reified state to another.

Furthermore, by recasting the ‘liminal’ as a variable process, it can be applied with conceptual flexibility to the experiences of contemporary career and life narratives. Liminal progression can be theorised as “a process, a becoming, … even a transformation” (Turner, 1987, p. 4) and is useful to understand identity transformation and associated ritualized experiences, as performances that aim to seek an elusive social acceptance and confirmation (Knights and Clarke, 2018). In this way liminality provides a conceptual framework that has been harnessed to develop an understanding of transitional events related to identity reconstruction (Beech, 2011), work-related identity loss (Conroy and O’Leary-Kelly, 2014; Kulakarni, 2020), motherhood (Ali, Hall, Anderson, and Willingham, 2013) and the retirement of professional athletes (Wylleman, Alfermann, and Lavallee, 2004). By focusing on work-related identities research has shown that the transition process can be problematic with individuals experiencing anxiety and conflict in respect of their sense of self, perhaps brought on by a change in values, status, or expected behaviours (Hoyer and Steyaert, 2015).

Within this framework, while identity work is regarded as continuous, it is during transition that its formations and how it is presented can become increasingly significant as the subject engages in new or different types of ‘identity work’ to socially negotiate passage through
identity transition (Beech, 2011). For many, this negotiation is regarded as an opportunity for self-reflexivity as individuals attempt to re-narrate their biographic understanding of their historic, present, and future selves, potentially considering aspirational ideals while maintaining or continuing with social life (Giddens, 1991).

### 3.2.3.1 ‘The Liminal Period’

The ‘liminal period’ is described a period of transition when a subject is neither one thing or another when one is moving ‘betwixt and between’ different dominant identity constructs (Turner, 1987; Ybema, Beech and Ellis, 2011). While Turner (1987, p. 5) described the transition process as having three stages: “separation, margin (or limen) and aggregation”, which are explained below, this thesis understands the concept as fluid, with the stages merging and melding into each other, eddying and flowing through the transition process (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010), without ever being resolved. Nevertheless, incorporating Turner’s descriptions the separation stage can be thought of as involving symbolic behaviours and performativity (Butler, 1993) signifying the detachment of the individual from the social structure, for example handing in a uniform that is associated with a certain role or organization. This can take place over time with, for example, different parts of the uniform being relinquished over months or even years. During the second stage, the limen, which can occur concomitantly and be a reoccurring experience rather than a fixed episode, the individual becomes ambiguous, losing attachment to the attributes that previously defined a significant part of them, such as polished shoes or neat hair, but has yet to take on new attributes that represent a promised future. The third phase, aggregation, is explained by Turner (1987, p. 5) as when one becomes consummated or re-constituted; the individual regains a sense of stability in “accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards”. It is this stage of liminality that is especially theoretically, as in this thesis ‘stability’ is understood as an illusionary ideal that is constantly sought through identity work and the social confirmation of others (Knights and Clarke, 2017) as well as being ephemeral and remaining dependent on what is considered culturally normal (Dickerson, 2010).

In saying this however, in times of change identity work can be undertaken to negotiate social relations and if accepted by Others can help regain a sense of stability both emotionally and socially (Knights and Clarke, 2018). Still, this process is not necessarily smooth; the conflict triggered by a self-reflective recognition of difference between one’s self-perception and one’s socially accepted identity may trigger further self-adjustment as individuals realise there is a lack of continuity between the two (Corlett and Mavin, 2015). This leads to further questions regarding what, consciously or unconsciously, galvanizes individuals to resist or accept organizational, cultural, or social normativities and activate or maintain identity work that does/does not conform to normative standards (Giddens, 1991;
Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002). During this period, an individual can orient themselves towards dealing with a threat to a valued identity while continuing with and potentially exposing “habits and routines” that they have used as a defence against their anxieties (Giddens, 1991, p. 39; Gabriel, 2000; Hoyer and Steyaert, 2015). However, as befitting their new socially contingent status these practices may no longer be valid, creating tensions and conflicts in the sense of self as adjustments are made (Ibarra, 1999; Hoyer and Steyaert, 2015). This dis-continuity can cause individuals to seek ways to sustain social acceptance of certain behaviours that are perhaps less/more appreciated in some environments than others, leading to an ongoing affiliation with a historic identification or seeking an alternative through which social confirmation can be sought (Walsh, Pazzaglia, and Ergene, 2019; Weller, Clarke, and Brown, 2021; Kulkarni, 2020).

Resistance can arise when there is a disjuncture between an individual’s sense of self and new cultural norms as they attempt to reconcile competing demands (Toyoki and Brown, 2014). Whilst accepting transition is an ongoing process, research in this area suggests that success and the extent of continuing fluidity or disjuncture can be linked to the individual’s biological, mental, and or emotional condition (Beech, 2011). As a result, a career transition that is approached and managed positively can have different outcomes to one that is approached with pessimism (Gabriel et al., 2010; Lapointe, 2013), which is negatively reinforced as the subject becomes unwilling, or unable, to adjust behaviours. This can be experienced as an extended, recurring, or even perpetual liminality (Thomas and Davies, 2005; Herman and Yanwood, 2014; Ybema, Beech and Ellis, 2011; Söderlund and Borg, 2018) as opposed to a state which generates less anxiety where “identities may be stable without being coherent” possessing consistent core statements which are not necessarily unified (Clarke et al., 2009, p. 341).

3.3 Part Two - Exploring Gender

The cultural norms that configure women as “nurturing, emotional, supportive and intuitive, and men as rational, competitive and analytical” (Brannan and Priola, 2012; Priola, 2016) are embedded in the western psyche and reproduced in traditional behaviours of organizational life (Irvine, Vermilya, and Vermilya, 2010). This reflects a view which considers gender to be part of “contingent socio-political system” as opposed to a fixed inherent characteristic (Butler, 1997, p. 181). Simone de Beauvoir (1949) for example, argues that gender is a learnt behaviour that should not be considered natural but a “socially produced pattern of meanings that distinguish the masculine from the feminine” (Pullen and Rhodes, 2008, p. 7). She understood these behaviours as social relations of power, describing how gendered inequalities are embedded and how women have always been defined relative to men, bearing no individual autonomy, and relegated to the identity of the
‘Other’ as a way of ‘marking’ hierarchical difference. The pervasive idea that man is superior to woman has been repeated and reinforced throughout history in the traditional fields of religion, law, and science (de Beauvoir, 1949) and although there are exceptions, such as in literature with George Eliot or on the battlefield with Hannah Snell who fought at the Battle of Devicotta in 1749, women often had to take on the appearance, behaviours, and persona of men to succeed (BBC, 2014; The National Army Museum, 2020). Gendered normativities are also reproduced in the workplace; for example, attributes of efficiency linked to the scientific management of Taylorism are now recognised as heavily masculine (Fleming and Spicer, 2004) and although women entered the workforce in significant numbers in the early part of the 20th century, they rarely occupied positions of authority or power. This was partly because the barriers scientific management presented which privileged rationality over emotional empathy (Flyverbom et al, 2015; McClellan, 2020). At this time, women were regarded as homemakers, and if they were to enter the workforce, they were usually restricted to nurturing, interpersonal or administrative roles, reflecting stereotypes associated with gendered actors (Treanor and Marlow, 2021). This reflected a deep-seated understanding of traditional gender roles epitomised to some extent by women’s subjugation and never-ending repetitious housework which, like the labours of Sisyphus, had the oppressive effect of denying them access to public life, where their talents and efforts could be demonstrated (de Beauvoir, 1949; Britton and Logan, 2008).

In the early part of the last century, traditional normalised gendered standards of behaviour were only challenged at exceptional periods, such as during times of war, where labour shortages necessitated women to take up roles traditionally assigned to men, in factories, on the land, and limitedly, within the Armed Forces (Tuten 1982, Campbell, 1993, Goldman and Stites 1982, Treadwell 1954 all in Segal, 1995). Whilst these shifting social realities proved only temporary in the face of masculine resistance (Sheritt, 2013), they did pave the way for feminism to take shape by challenging inequalities and resulted in the marriage bar, which enforced married women to leave the workplace, being lifted across many occupations (Dwyer, 2006). However, the number of women entering the workforce remained subordinated comparative to men and they continued to be concentrated in lower-paid occupations that conformed to conceptions of women’s work (Maitlis, 2009; Roberts and Coutts, 1992). This helped to maintain women’s position in the workplace as ‘outsiders’ or ‘strangers’ (Hughes, 1945 and Simmels, 1950 in Zimmer, 2016) for most of the last century reinforcing conditions for the masculine and feminine binary to be perpetuated.

### 3.3.1 Masculine and Feminine Binaries

The traditional masculine ideal in the Western world has been described as white, middle class, heterosexual, rational, forceful, available, dedicated, and unencumbered by family
responsibilities (Bem, 1977; Acker 2006; Britton and Logan 2008) and is presented in contrast to the ‘Other’, the traditional feminine ideal which focuses on nurturing, emotionality and providing a supportive role to the family (Priola and Brannan, 2009; Priola, 2016). This masculine and feminine binary continues to be used to describe behaviours which can be divided along gender lines (Priola, 2016) with associated expectations creating ‘inequality regimes’, that tend to disadvantage female and male individuals who do not conform to the ideal (Acker, 2006, 2012). Indeed, the masculine hegemonic ideal - ambitious, successful, unencumbered - remains prevalent in many occupations and industries (Treanor and Marlow, 2021) and means that as a group, men continue to be the main beneficiaries of such thinking (Walby, 1990).

A poststructuralist perspective aims to challenge, even collapse clear cut binary definitions that can act as a technology of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1991), by regarding concepts of masculinity and femininity as temporal, multiple, malleable, and fluid (Borgerson and Rehn, 2004). For example, gendered qualities described in terms of a hierarchy, with the masculine regarded as superior is especially prevalent in occupations, where rationality or physical strength is admired, indeed required as an operational necessity, and has for many years been used to support divisions of labour along gendered grounds (Cawkill, Rogers, Knight and Spear, 2009; Tri-Service Review, 2014). Indeed, gendered divisions “continue to polarise relations between the sexes in ways that generally subordinate, marginalise or undermine women with respect to men” (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993) while limiting and shaping the ability of organizations to achieve gender equality through discourses of power (Wadham, Bridges, Mundkur, and Connor, 2018). Despite equality laws the binary relationship between genders continues to obstruct the development of sexual equality as gendered distinctions remain prevalent,continuingly affecting the workplace demographic in respect of the wage gap, occupations and promotion prospects (Priola and Brannan, 2009; Acker, 2012) shaping and reshaping prevailing discourses (Kerfoot and Knights 1993; Knights 2015).

However, it is also recognised that hegemonic dominance is not guaranteed, as no technology of power is totalising in its effects (Foucault, 1991; Brown, 2006) and the idea that binary definitions are unhelpful as they perpetuate a hierarchal and oppositional position between the genders has been the focus of both Acker (1990) and Butler's (2004) scholarship on gender issues. Butler's (1993) work, which argues artificial binary distinctions between masculine and feminine stifle other potentialities, has led to a theoretical focus away from difference between the genders to a fluidity, allowing other possibilities to flourish. Viewing gender differently, so that it is not hampered by binary distinctions that privilege normative values which favour men over women, allows behaviours to be revealed. Once revealed the subtle and complex ways gendered
experiences and performances lead to inequality can be challenged (Pullen et al., 2017). However, the gender binary is only one aspect of social relations that can act as barriers for women in social and professional life. Gloria Jean Watkins writing as belle hooks (1981) in “Ain’t I a Woman”, provided a different perspective to that of a homogenous female identity rooted in white middle-class, by focusing on the challenges that faced black women. Arguably, this has helped lead the way to different views relating to womanhood and the concept of intersectionality, introduced by Crenshaw in the late 1980s, attempts to reflect how gender, race and other features of identity can interrelate in women’s lived realities (Snyder, 2008; Khan, 2018). Indeed, the emergence of nuanced and flexible feminist perspectives has enabled wider and more diverse gendered perceptions to be considered, introducing possibilities regarding how socially contingent disciplinary techniques (Foucault, 1994) such as discourses and behaviours constitute and reconstitute gendered identities (Knights and McCabe, 2003; Fleming and Sturdy, 2016).

The complexity involved in gender studies suggests the gender binary is an inadequate concept to understand the relations of power active within the social world. Whilst this makes studying gendered organizations, with their deeply embedded discourses cultures and behaviours challenging (Linstead and Brewis, 2004), alternative theoretical perspectives could provide a framework for a non-confrontational non-hierarchical approach. These include, but are not limited to, a focus on the dissolution of gendered boundaries (Linstead and Pullen, 2006; Knights, 2015) and binary thinking (Borgerson and Rehn 2004; Knights and Kerfoot 2004; Linstead and Brewis 2004), and the introduction of intersectional perspectives (Davis, 2008; Acker, 2012; Corlett and Mavin, 2015). Moreover, it has been proposed that by considering gender, conditions of subjectivity and discourses, it may be possible to provide an opportunity for a language of equity and equality concerning gender studies to develop (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993; Wilson, 1996). However, this is difficult to achieve in practice, when gendered behaviours and structural imbalances are so deeply ingrained (Bailyn, 2003), pervasive, routinised and normalised that they can defy recognition (Linstead and Pullen, 2006) or are wrapped in a discourse that gives the appearance of neutrality (Acker, 1990).

3.3.2 Socially Contingent

Butler’s (1993, 2004) work calls for gendered identity to be seen as socially contingent, dependent, citational, and demonstrate agency (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). Through this understanding, the construction of the masculine and feminine divide is neither neutral, static, nor definitive but dependent on place and time, and differences are contextual, temporal, and socially constructed (Priloa and Brannan, 2009). However, gendered narratives are a political tool, and traditional gendered assumptions and discourses
continue to affect organizations (Acker, 1990), as people constitute, reconstitute and legitimize practices to create truth regimes that stifle alternatives, often in oppressive ways (Foucault, 1991; Brown, 2006).

Within ‘gendered organizations’ (Acker, 1999) the masculine ideal has been used to define the most efficient and effective employee and is arguably one of the factors which have left women, with their socially constructed responsibilities for looking after family, less able to assume additional responsibilities (Gatrell, 2011; Wadham et al., 2018). Although the consequences of this can impede women’s capacity to reach higher levels of management it is often assumed in the literature that men unproblematically reproduce the ‘ideal worker’ stereotype, sacrificing personal time with family or friends to work longer hours to achieve success (Acker, 1990). This is not necessarily the case as both women and men may conform to traditional feminine/masculine ideals in order to support valued notions of themselves, such as good mothers or male breadwinners, they may do so reluctantly (Collinson, 2003; Laney, Hall, Anderson, and Willingham, 2015). Moreover, although behaviours which support valued identities do not necessarily suppose intentionality, there is evidence that social pressures induce people to knowingly make choices and reproduce normalised behaviours and actions to fortify their own gendered beliefs. In this way they can willingly subjugate themselves (Lukes, 2005; Kornberger and Brown, 2007; Brown, 2019) despite recognizing the potential for negative consequences (Butler, 2011; Fotaki, 2013). Such behaviours demonstrate how gender can be self-regulated and ideal standards are in a constant state of becoming (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993; Knights and Clarke, 2017), reproduced and reinforced (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Fotaki, 2013) through people, using disciplinary power mechanisms and techniques (Foucault, 1991) found embedded in social relations.

3.3.3 Doing Gender

It has been argued that femininity is a learned process of becoming rather than one inherited or essentialised from birth (de Beauvoir, 1949; West and Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1993, 1997, 2004). This learned process produces a performativity of gender where ‘doing gender’ “involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine” (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126). Performativities are “ritualised repetition[s] of conventions” (Butler, 1997, p. 144) that are a reflection of situated experiences and forces operating through relations of power that reflect or reshape the normalisations, values, and beliefs shared across a culture (Foucault, 1991; Taylor, 2011). These behaviours create a condition of possibilities (Butler, 1993, p xxv) as they reproduce or resist gendered stereotypes, constraining individual choices, as well as offering opportunity for creativity.
(Kerfoot and Knights, 1993). This performativity of gender can also be anticipatory, producing behaviours aligned with expectations of particular genders which Butler (1993) argues are not just an outcome of socialisation but of cyclical performativity (Hey, 2006).

Whereas Foucault (1991) discussed reflexive behaviours as a means to demonstrate agency Butler (1993) locates the agency of a ‘subject’ in gendered performances to demonstrate that the ‘subject’ existed (apriori) before it came into contact with a particular prevailing discourse. Butler argues that signification is not seen as a founding act but a regulated repeated process that both conceals and enforces rules that govern what is constituted. She suggests ‘re/signification’, enacted through signs or symbols, can provide new meaning (Hey, 2006) and that identity formulation can operate through multiple intersectional aspects such as race, ethnicity, or class. For example, in terms of performative signification and a desire to fit in, gendered behaviours become reproduced - reinforcing behaviours as “people have a gender which rubs off on the jobs they do. The jobs, in turn, have a gender, which rubs off on the people that do them” (Cockburn, 1988 p. 38 cited in Britton and Logan 2008). It is within signification, its repetition and possibility of variation, that agency can be found and by viewing gender this way, possibilities become viable, as the rules of re/signification, not only restrict but reveal alternatives. These options can contest binary definitions and allow multiple versions of masculinity, femininity, and non-binary behaviours to occur outside of biological gender (Butler, 1993). For example, historic and social conditions of gender have created different dominant discourses, which can help in understanding that they, and the normalised practices they produce, are not all-encompassing (Gherardi and Poggio, 2001). In this way resistance to the prevailing dominant views can be appreciated and the possibility of subjective self-reflection can create or recreate alternatives (Foucault, 1991).

Höpfl’s (2003) research on women and the military body and Dellinger’s (2004) research on accountants at two publishing houses is illustrative. Höpfl’s research demonstrates the extremes of gendered behaviours in the military context, the importance of group belonging and how military discipline can produce complex outcomes. In Dellinger’s research men and women conformed to and resisted gendered stereotypes, with their performances indicating the importance of behaviours in signifying group belonging regardless of gender (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Indeed, due to the gendered nature of many jobs, such as nursing, for instance, individuals can both ‘do’ and ‘undo’ gender in response to expected behavioural norms, regardless of their biological sex (Pilgeram, 2007; Mcdonald, 2013). However, organizations that continue to privilege certain behaviours affect an individual’s potential to be successful based on their ability to deliver a performance that is consistent and coherent with the ‘ideal’ gendered construct of their cultural context. This can result in those that do not or cannot reproduce the ideal being disadvantaged (Hultin and Szulkin,
In this sense what is ‘done’ can also be potentially ‘undone’ (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1997; 2004; Pullen and Knights 2007; Pullen and Rhodes, 2014). However, this ‘undoing’ can represent a danger to the status quo, leading to opportunities as well as entrenchment or intimidations from those whose identities may be threatened (Petriglieri, 2011). Furthermore, the failure to reproduce normative gendered behaviours can mean leaving oneself open to judgement against prevalent social and institutional tenets (Foucault, 1991; Butler, 2004) and while successful performances can lead to instrumental benefits, the repetition of these behaviours can also leave a residue of emotional contradictions and costs (Butler, 2004; Linstead and Pullen, 2006) which can have consequences for the individual and the organization. As a result it is argued that not all “women [or men] experience their womanhood [manhood] in the same ways [and that what] is oppression in one context may be a privilege in another” (Samuels and Ross-Sheriff, 2008, p. 6).

3.3.4 Gendered Organizations

Acker’s (1990, 2006) theory of a gendered organization developed due to persistent inequalities in the labour market despite increased representation of women in traditionally masculinised occupations, such as banking, and young women outperforming men educationally (Poggio, 2000). Acker defined a gendered organization as one where,

“advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine” (Acker, 1990, p. 146).

Theories relating to how organizations are gendered started to emerge in the late 1970s and early 1980s when it became recognised “that available discourses on organization were ‘grounded in the working worlds and relations of men’” and how gender, body, and sexuality are part of the processes of control in organizations (Dorothy Smith, 1979 in Britton, 2000 p. 418). These processes of control are legislative, social, and economic and obscure gender and sexual inequalities “through a gender neutral, asexual discourse” (Acker, 1990, p. 140) while Kanter (1977), had hoped increasing the numbers of women within organizations would help reduce gendered inequalities, Acker (1990) writing from her 1990’s view noted that despite increases little was achieved to reduce masculine domination. This is still reflected today in the UK veterinary services where 80% of students are female but the profession remains entrenched in a prevailing masculine ethos and ideology, with men still holding the majority of senior positions (Irvine et al., 2010; Knights and Clarke, 2018). The veterinary profession in not alone in this imbalance with similarities
found across careers such as academia where women continue to be underrepresented at senior levels of organizations (Misra, Lundquist, Holmes, and Agiomavritis, 2010), even when female employees exceed male members (Clarke and Knights, 2019). This underrepresentation has been attributed to the structurally masculine logics and privilege embedded within organizations (Acker, 2006) where dominant groups, considered homogenous, may gain a certain amount of anonymity and privilege (Kanter, 1977) in opposition to the ‘Other’ who is not seen to ‘fit’ (Treanor and Marlow, 2021). The ‘Other’ is often but not exclusively the more visible token female who is significantly more likely to be awarded stereotypical characteristics and as a result attract closer scrutiny (Nelson, 2019).

Even in occupations traditionally considered feminine and dominated by women such as nursing, teaching or social work, men remain advantaged and continue to occupy more senior-level positions than their female colleagues (Williams 1992; Britton and Logan 2008). That these outcomes are intimately bound in relations of power explains their gendered hierarchal order which produce and reproduce, hegemonic masculinity (Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998; Foucault, 1994). Acker’s (1990) argument that formal and informal policies and procedures labelled ‘neutral’ frequently default to or benefit the masculine explains this dominance, demonstrating gender is “a foundational element of organizational structure and work life” (Britton, 2000), which is "present in [its] processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power" (Acker 1992, p 567). The behaviours this environment encourages are constructed along gendered lines symbolically reproduced through discourses, culture, behaviours, and agentic choices that reinforce and sometimes resist the divisions that reproduce and reify gender inequalities and structural imbalances (Linstead and Brewis 2004; Prividera, 2006). For example, the dominant masculine order of privilege in academia is reflected in everyday practices that become invisible because of their ubiquity such as the continued use of terminology such as research ‘fellow’, ‘masters’ and ‘bachelor’ degrees.

This may help explain why, despite increasing numbers of women in organizations the focus on surface level sexist practices has obfuscated embedded structural gendered social relations and imbalances perpetuating inequalities (Zimmer, 2016). Moreover, as manifestations of gendered privilege, used as a pervasive and enduring disciplinary organising force (Kenny and Fotaki, 2015; Van Gilder, 2019), they remain influential since they reward individuals who follow and endorse them (Acker, 1990; Priola and Brannan, 2009; Knights and Clarke, 2018). This, according to Connell, "is not necessarily what powerful men are, but what sustains their power and what large numbers of men [and women] are motivated to support.” (Connell, 1987, p. 185). In this environment, it is likely women and men who do not conform to the ideal worker will have little access to decision making and continue to be disadvantaged (Acker, 1990; Lukes, 2005) even as they support
the system and relations that disadvantage them. For instance, studies into conversation analysis have revealed how gender affects turn-taking and topic setting in meetings (Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998; Dowding, 2006), stifling and reducing female participation which can act to reinforce dominance and submission (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Acker, 1990; Britton, 2000). In the military environment the feminine ‘Other’ is regularly presented as a threat to military effectiveness in order to enhance masculine privilege (Cohn, 2000; Goldstein, 2018; Van Gilder, 2019). Indeed, traditional masculine behaviours and the associated rewards for success, money, and status, are embedded in a masculine culture epitomised by greedy institutions (Coser, 1967), who demand an individual’s time and efforts as though they are unencumbered. As a result, many organizations continue to privilege one-dimensional hegemonic masculine practices that reproduce the status quo in terms of organizational life, instead of challenging it and providing alternatives (Leung, 2011). In such environments, working from home or self-managed flexible hours have not been deemed acceptable, and the challenge therefore, for organizations and individuals is how to balance social expectations of parenthood, and other traditional caring roles, against the demands for instrumental outputs (Priloa and Brannan, 2009; Gardner and Blackstone, 2013; Radcliffe and Cassell, 2015). Furthermore, even when they are recognised as unjust, they may be encouraged, essentialised and reified to the extent they appear impregnable even if they have serious health implications for individuals straining to achieve unrealistic goals (Gatrell, 2013). That these health implications are seen as an issue for the individual to resolve is an outcome of the gendered nature of the organization and the controlling discourses within it (Wadham et al., 2018). Moreover, research has shown that even when fluidity and multiplicity in gendered practices and discourse are recognised the feminine continues to be relegated (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004) reflecting the depth and power associated with the gender binary.

3.3.5 Gendered Behaviours and Outcomes

The embeddedness of the gender binary as a cultural norm can help explain the persistence of societal inequality between men and women and masculine and feminine practices (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Irvine, et al., 2010). An example of how gendered behaviours in everyday social relations have been shown to have serious consequences in terms of women’s ability to achieve career success, whilst maintaining dominant masculine advantage, is found in networking (Ibarra, 1993). Research has shown that both women and men self-segregate into gendered networks that exacerbate women’s difficulties since they lack social connections at the higher levels of the organization (Hultin and Szulkin, 1999), this can restrict access to more senior male and white-dominated members of the organization (McGuire, 2002; Greguletz, Diehl and Kreutzer, 2019). Studies have also found female managers and academics utilise informal networks considered essential for
achieving success, such as those found on the golf course or in the bar, less readily than their male colleagues (Cannings and Montmarquette, 1991; Williams, 1992; McGuire, 2002; Derks, Ellemers, Van Laar, and De Groot, 2011; Fotaki, 2013; Archer, 2013). Further, research has also highlighted how some women hesitate or choose to disengage from organizational politics as they view such activity as unfeminine and unsavoury since it is often associated with aggressive, competitive, and instrumental masculine practices (Greguletz et al., 2019). In Davey’s (2008) study women draw on the reasonableness of their actions in contrast to the emotional side of men’s politically driven behaviours, which the women regarded as irrational and benefiting the individual, as opposed to the organization. One example given was the perceived child-like and immature behaviour of a male boss engaged in power plays by publicly asserting his control over some office space and chairs. This was used by the women to justify their lack of engagement in formal and informal organizational politics while they seemed blind to, or accepting of, the detrimental effect this may have on their career (Davey, 2008).

The refusal to engage in organizational politics is just one example of how women “collude with and resist their own marginalization”, another is their inclination to work harder than their male peers to avoid the risk of being side-lined (Fotaki, 2013, p. 1251). That they do this while still taking on the majority of unpaid childcare and other domestic responsibilities demonstrates how such activities remain predominantly gendered (Bem, 1977; Acker 2006; Britton and Logan 2008; Huffman, Craddock, Culbertson and Klinefelter, 2017). Moreover, it has also been suggested that women who adopt an alternative approach, mimicking masculine behaviours in organizations, reinforce masculine ways of being, and perpetuate the gender binary (Simpson, 1998; Acker, 1990; Trethewey, 1999; Burchell, Fagan, O’Brien, and Smith, 2007). The effects of these behaviours can disempower individuals, regardless of their capabilities or efforts, as they become party to their own subjugation reinforced by gendered behaviours that act as techniques of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1991). However, while understanding this means that changes to practice can be made to redress gender and ethnic disparity in organizations and society (Simpson, 1998; Poggio, 2000) the challenge lies in the complex intersectional web of power relations, which can be difficult to unpick (Britton and Logan, 2008). This includes understanding and accepting that gender is not a binary distinction (Linstead and Brewis 2004; Butler 2011; Knights 2015). For example, recognizing that gender is not a binary concept coupled with changing definitions of masculinity, femininity, or somewhere in-between, can break down cultural norms and stimulate debate towards a more inclusive thoughtful discussion. This, it has been suggested could lead to a position where gender is no longer considered relevant in organizations (Linstead and Brewis, 2004). The desire to reach this position is reinforced by understanding that individuals learn behaviours as a consequence of the power relations within organizational life (Acker, 1990; Trethewey, 1999). Indeed, considering femininity as
learned, a process of becoming, rather than innately inherited from birth (de Beauvoir, 1949), supports the call for the oppositional nature of relations between man and women to be discarded. Nevertheless, gendered behaviours remain persistent (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004) and continue to be performed and studied in oppositional and hierarchical ways (Van Gilder, 2019); moreover, while the idea of gender neutrality appears to offer a solution to gendered practices and power relations the enduring evidence of inequality regimes (Acker, 2006) suggests otherwise. As a result there is a need for intersectional research to question assumptions that organizations that present as gender neutral will lead to greater equality (Nkomo and Rodriguez, 2019).

3.3.6 Problematizing Neutrality

It is suggested the dominant power structures that reproduce and reify gender inequalities in organizations (Linstead and Brewis 2004) largely continue to prevail as they are regarded as neutral and natural, as opposed to a reflection of an existing social order which privileges the masculine (Harding, Ford, and Fotaki, 2012). This occurs because as Acker (1990, p. 142) states "gender is difficult to see when only the masculine is present” both demographically in respect of numbers of men present in a workplace and in terms of how work is organised through masculine practices. As a result, hidden and enduring masculine power structures (Acker, 1990; Kerfoot and Knights, 1993) that persist as control mechanisms (Foucault, 1991; Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998; Lukes, 2005; Dowding, 2006). For example, studies have revealed that organizational logics and structures influence the segregation of women within roles considered more ‘feminine’, such as secretarial or administrative jobs (Britton and Logan, 2008), which also come with a concomitant lack of pay and responsibility and higher level of insecurity (Treanor and Marlow, 2021). Indeed, the predominance of normalised dominant masculine structures and subjectivities built into organizations through job design, wages, authority, and power can lead to gender blindness where neutrality is assumed (Linstead, 2000). But this neutrality is often an illusion as Acker (1990) and de Beauvior (1949, p. 15) have argued, "man represents both the positive and the neutral". As a result applying the oppositional and conflicting gender binary to organizational life, where masculinity represents the positive or neutral and femininity represents the negative, discourages more complex considerations (Knights, 2015), producing and reinforcing gendered behaviours and negative outcomes rather than moving past them. This idea of neutrality also encourages organizational demographics and gendered segregation to be an outcome of individual agency and choice as opposed to the result of powerful social relations and organizational logics and structures, further stifling debate and maintaining the status quo that continues to privilege dominant normativities (Walby, 1990; Lukes, 2005).
The next section explores the military and gendered military identity seen from an academic and social perspective. It will provide a basis for understanding identity transformation from within a military context, its possibilities, limitations, and the role that self-discipline plays in the process (Foucault, 1991; Lukes, 2005).
3.4 Part Three - Exploring the Military

Research into military identities has historically been embedded in a functionalist and positivist approach that often fails to describe lived experiences (Higate and Cameron, 2006; Woodward and Jenkings, 2011). Examples include psychometric evaluations and measuring military competencies (Johansen, Laberg, and Martinussen, 2013; Johansen, Christian Laberg, and Martinussen, 2014) and military professionalization and divergence/alignment with civil society through the concepts of institution versus organization (Moskos, 1977). Higate and Cameron (2006) argue this approach occurs as a result of the positivist leaning and binary views of most military researchers, coupled with the likelihood that both the researchers and participants of military studies are male (Green et al., 2010; Godfrey and Brewis, 2018). Thornborrow and Brown's (2009) paper on identity within the British Army's Parachute Regiment broke away from this epistemological tradition and has become influential in helping to understand the military environment through qualitative research. It has facilitated a different and more nuanced approach to military studies, the legacy of which can be found in the works of Woodward and Jenkings (2011), Walker (2012) and Hawkins (2015). Moreover, through its focus on the hyper-masculine world of the Parachute Regiment, Thornborrow and Brown's (2009) paper has been cited in research from competence, expertise, professionalism and kinship (Grimell, 2015), aspirational identities (Gill, 2015), discipline and routines (Brown and Lewis, 2011) to transparency and power (Flyverbom et al., 2015), indicating the potential reach scholarship into military organizational culture can have outside its disciplinary boundaries. Studies into transition are dominated by the US and also follow this quantitative approach (Eichler and Smith-Evans, 2018) although some UK studies are emerging and take a qualitative approach they are nevertheless Army focused (Atherton, 2009; Green et al., 2010).

As the majority of research into the military reflects the biological and masculine dominance of the institution (Iversen et al., 2005; Morgan, 2006), few studies attempt a pluralistic or holistic approach to gender, including possibilities outside of the dominant masculine (Hyde, 2015). This leaves research into the military environment open to accusations of being blind to feminine behaviours (Walker, 2012), which reify gender (Walker, K, 2012) or subdues the possibility of multiple and changeable masculinities and femininities. Much of the literature reproduces a specific army centric and masculine view of military life (Godfrey and Brewis, 2018; Shields, Kuhl, and Westwood, 2017), which, even when it attempts to be representative of women or the other services, is often reductive, allowing masculine perspectives to dominate in a way which does not consider or problematise other perspectives (Green et al., 2010; Caddick, 2017; Goldstein, 2018). This excludes the experiences and differences found in the Royal Navy and RAF as well as discounting more nuanced understandings of masculine and feminine practices that can be found across all
three services (Van Gilder, 2019). As a mechanism of disciplinary control, the narratives produced through these papers reflect a “strategic, persuasive, and deeply ideological” perspective which has historically viewed women’s participation as problematic having “material implications for women and all things feminine in the military” (Holyfield et al., 2019, p. 168).

However, there are examples of research which indicate multiple (military) masculinities (Hale, 2008; Kachtan and Wasserman, 2015) and there are signs that research is broadening by incorporating feminist perspectives into critical military studies in a less deterministic way (Duncanson and Woodward, 2016). This has been achieved through explorations of the lived realities of serving female soldiers (Sjoberg, 2010; Doan and Portillo, 2017) and research into why barriers remain to women’s full integration, despite changes to governmental policies (Cohn, 2000; Goldstein, 2018). The next part of this chapter critically reviews the academic literature across four main themes which regularly feature in military research; they are the military as a gendered institution; hegemonic military masculinity; binary divisions; and the concept of the disciplined military subject.

3.4.1 The Military as a Gendered Institution

Despite the integration of women into the Armed Forces the military largely remains a site where “masculinities are constructed, reproduced and deployed” (Morgan, 2006, p. 444) through relations of power (Foucault, 1991; Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998; Dowding, 2006). Indeed, Higate (2003) argues there is a multiplicity of masculinities within military organizations which are overshadowed by a limited view of a hyper-masculinity. He notes this restricted perspective is reductive, as it eschews alternatives which could act to support one, or possibly many, hegemonic determinants (Connell et al., 2005).

The RAF has historically been more open to female recruits than the RN and Army (Sheritt, 2013) and as a result has benefited from a reputation for meritocracy similar to that of the USAF (Lundquist, 2008). In the UK this reputation was supported by MoD policies on equal pay, which reinforced the egalitarian reputation of the organization, but masked inherent and limiting masculine practices. Indeed, the argument that the RAF provided a place where women could succeed on a level with their male colleagues was, and to an extent, continues to be based on an illusion of neutrality demonstrated by how few women reach the highest ranks (Acker, 1990) see Appendix 2. This situation was historically supported by an appraisal system that rated performance and promotion possibilities on descriptions of physical military bearing, rewarding those whose physical appearance closely matched
the alpha-male military ideal (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009). Today, secondary duties, are still used within the reporting system to demonstrate capacity for promotion to the next rank. This represents an unambiguous disadvantage for personnel, mainly women, who bear the brunt of family responsibilities, such as childcare, as these caring roles mean they have less spare time to devote to secondary duties and are therefore unable to demonstrate ‘capacity’ (Bem, 1977; Acker 2006; Britton and Logan 2008; Huffman et al., 2017). The effectiveness of the meritocratic illusion lies in the argument that all personnel are treated equally regardless of gender. Indeed, although institutional mechanisms and apparatus within the military have the potential to provide women with positions of power, influence and apparent ontological security (Foucault, 1991; Regan de Bere, 2003), these possibilities rest on the acceptance of masculine logics that fail to recognise women’s continuing responsibilities in the home or more feminine management and leadership styles (Burchell et al., 2007; Nelson, 2019). In this way, performance appraisals act as a disciplinary technique of power that reinforces the requirement to deliver, or at least give the appearance of delivering, the required operational effect regardless of personal cost, the result of which can encourage women to mimic masculine behaviours (Trethewey, 1999).

3.4.2 Hegemonic Military Identities

The second theme identified in the literature concerns discourses of hegemonic military identities that act politically to support persistent masculine dominance and can have strategic consequences in terms of gendered possibilities (Woodward and Winter, 2004). Despite different emerging representations, military identities continue to be perceived as homogenous and include conceptualizations of bravery, courage, strength, self-discipline, self-sufficiency, dedication, loyalty, and masculinity (Higate, 2003; Woodward and Winter, 2004; D. I. Walker, 2012; MacMillan, 2018c). A military identity is one that is arguably imbued with status, value, and a sense of purpose (Brunger et al., 2013), while the military body is represented as one that is able to take orders, willingly subjugate the self (Foucault, 1991) and as it possesses a propensity for violence, is rarely portrayed positively (Woodward and Winter, 2004; Woodward and Jenkings, 2011). It has been further argued that pervasive masculinisation in the military environment is based on its associations with binary, mutually informing, opposing meaning systems. These dualistic concepts are then mapped onto gendered positions where men and masculinity are more strongly associated with war, strength, comradeship, uniformity, aggressiveness, autonomy, and competitiveness. This is in contrast to women and femininity which have historically socially been constructed as peaceful, weak, civilians, diverse, defendable, a distraction, or unable.

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10 Activities often performed in an individual’s spare time to support sporting or social clubs related to the RAF for example, the station football or hockey club.
to perform militarily (Kovitz, 2003). This has been argued to perpetuate and sustain the military as a place where traditional ideas of hegemonic masculinity are accepted (Higate, 2003b; Godfrey et al., 2012; Cooper, Caddick, Godier, Cooper and Fosey, 2018) and helped to maintain the military as an institution where masculinities are situated as hierarchically superior to the fragile and nurturing feminine Other (Howard III and Prividera, 2004).

Hegemonic masculinity continues to be symbolically embodied in the military environment through significations such as uniforms that “absorbs individualities into a generalized and timeless masculinity while also connotating a control of emotion and a subordination to a larger rationality” (Morgan, 2006, p 444; Ainsworth and Hardy, 2004). Uniform, often designed around the male form, also act to devalue female participation as it is often ill-fitting for the female shape and can cause injury, for example, body armour shaped and fitted for the male form causing back problems in women (Nelson, 2019). Such details provide some insight into the socially constructed meaning of soldiering, not merely a discursive tool, but as an activity that results in equipment being designed for the male body (Gatens, 1996) to the detriment of the female and how this acts to subjugate and reinforce masculine domination (Treanor and Marlow, 2021). In this way, male subjects can become more readily useful and productive through effective military discipline and training (Foucault, 1991; Kovitz, 2003; Morgan, 2006) than their female counterparts. This impression continues to reify a neo-Jungian cultural image, discounted by some, but which is still widely regarded as universal, aspirational, and inevitable within the military context (Connell, 2005).

Understandings of the masculine/feminine binary which sustain the masculine as the status quo have been used to problematise gendered identities and inform decision making and female participation within the military environment (Woodward, 2003; Woodward and Winter, 2004; Duncanson and Woodward, 2016; Doan and Portillo, 2017) and continue to reproduce and reinforce gendered inequalities as performances that privilege masculinity (Acker, 1990; Higate, 2003a). These privileges are manifested through a variety of disciplinary mechanisms and techniques of power (Foucault, 1991; Eichler, 2017), including the management of activities through divisions of labour (Tri-Service Review, 2014; MoD, 2016); normalizing judgements which are symbolically manifested in cultural narratives which privilege acts of bravery and self-sacrifice by male members of the organization; hierarchical observations which continue to be dominated by masculine ideals of leadership; and examination that links promotion prospects to capacity without taking into account childcare and other domestic responsibilities, which remain predominantly gendered (Acker, 1990; Simpson, 1998; Trethewey, 1999; Burchell et al., 2007; Huffman et al., 2017).
However, despite the influence of a hegemonic and homogenous masculinity the contemporary military culture does not necessarily provide neat masculine representations of divisions of labour, symbolism, interactions, processes, and social structures (Acker, 1990). Indeed, the military provides a site for multiple masculinities, often resting on norms associated with specific ranks, specialisations and or branches of the Armed Forces (Higate, 2003b) and an emerging recognition of the feminine (Eichler, 2017). Green et al's (2010) research into emotional distress and the acceptance and portrayal of a more vulnerable masculinity (Higate, 2001, Brownson, 2014; Green et al., 2010) is complemented by a growing body of work that explores women, femininity and gender in the military through a critical lens (Bulmer and Eichler, 2017; Eichler, 2017; Wadham et al., 2018). Many of these studies incorporate the female perspective (Boros, 2019) which regards gender as a “constitutive element of social relationships” allowing new perspectives of military identity to be explored (Eichler, 2017, p. 675; Bulmer and Eichler, 2017). Furthermore, as restrictions on women serving on the front line have been lifted a more inclusive debate about gender is possible and the position that women have always been capable and involved in of warfighting re-emerges as part of the debate (King, 2015). There is also an argument that the influence of corporeal discourses, intimately bound with hegemonic military masculinity, are lessening as technological advancements reduce the body’s importance (Cohn, 2000; Zalewski, 2017; Goldstein, 2018). However, such arguments appear to be blind to the masculine nature of such technical jobs (Hatmaker, 2013) and even as the military attempts to soften its image, demonstrated by recruitment adverts for the Army (Army, 2017), it does so against a backdrop of hegemonic masculinity and a paternalistic culture that reinforces traditional masculinities, reproducing a narrative of belonging and control (Ashforth et al., 1989; Foucault, 1991; Lukes, 2005). As such, these tolerances of alternative masculinities continue to function within an organization whose hierarchy subordinates masculinities that do not align with the ideal (Hearn, 2004; Weller, 2017).

### 3.4.3 Female Warriors

Despite the battlefield’s association with masculinity of the kind described by Woodward (2003) as a performative space where ‘real’ men are made, it can also be argued that war was never exclusively the province of men (Morgan, 2006; Goldstein, 2018). Anthropological evidence cited by Kovitz (2003) demonstrates that women participated in combat just as ruthlessly as men, dispelling any essentialised notion they innately lacked the required disposition to fight. For example, the Amazon River was named after the Tupinamba women warriors in north-eastern Brazil, whilst Tongan woman engaged in wars of succession to further their own political interests (Kovitz, 2003). In contrast, during the First World War, although women were conscripted into military service in Germany and the
UK, in both countries they were classified as non-combatants, with the defining characteristic being that they were not permitted to fire a weapon (Tuten 1982, Campbell, 1993, Goldman and Stites 1982, Treadwell 1954 in Segal, 1995). These different perspectives and delamination of roles highlight the socially constructed nature of gendered divisions of labour within western military policy (Goldstein, 2001; Sjoberg, 2014).

Indeed, the argument that women are unable or unwilling to take part in combat is as fallacious as the idea that all men are innately willing and capable of conducting violent aggression (Kovitz, 2003) and demonstrates the problematic idea of essentialised gendered behaviours (Knights and Clarke, 2017). Anthropological studies on the South American Yanomamo tribe demonstrated boys as young as eight tried to escape practice duels and adult men within the tribe were induced to go to war, encouraged by their elders, social conventions, and hallucinogenic drugs. Throughout “history, individual men have attempted various means of evasion that have included flight, prison, self-mutilation, feigning illness, insanity or sexual deviance, hiring surrogates, going AWOL\(^{11}\) or even committing suicide” (Kovitz, 2003, p. 5). Today troops may not be given extra rations of rum before combat, like Canadian troops in the First World War, but they are given instrumental benefits in terms of enhanced pay supported by symbolic representations of their bravery and status in the shape of medals. Such examples demonstrate there is evidence to counter essentialist views of male aggression (Kovitz, 2003) and that ‘aggression’ needs to be buttressed through an established order. Indeed, the singular revisionist perspective, which privileges military masculinity and limits or erases accounts of women during war, continues to control the conversation and affect military operational structures and scholarship today. The narrative performances that sustain hegemonic military masculinity act to create an environment which limits possibilities and conceal inconvenient truths, such as women being asked to leave the service when pregnant, which remain airbrushed out of official histories as they contradict the current narrative of equality and diversity (Dawson and Sykes, 2019; Royal Air Force Museum, 2019). These sanitizing of official histories are themselves exercises in power (Dawson and Buchanan, 2005; Buchanan and Dawson, 2007) and re-emerged in official definitions that privileged hegemonic masculine practices that were used to support why homosexuality could lead to dismissal (Hines et al., 2015) and women were restricted from combat roles (Cawkill et al., 2009). However, the temporal nature of decision making (Lukes, 2005) is reflected in contemporary definitions used to guide policy which recognise to achieve operational effectiveness, there is a need to have a socially cohesive, diverse, and resilient workforce rather than a purely effective fighting force (Siebold, 2007; Bridges, 2009; McGregor-Smith, 2007).

\(^{11}\) Absent WithOut Leave.
2017) and this has supported policy changes to facilitate women into the front line (MoD, 2016).

3.4.4 Being a Woman in the Military

Resistance to women in the military, especially in officially sanctioned combat roles, can be understood as an outcome of the masculine status quo and privilege, which needs to be constantly proven to maintain its hierarchal position (Cohn, 2000; Goldstein, 2018; Holyfield et al., 2019). This threat to masculinity’s dominance often leads to or is supported by accusations of female unsuitability for military life. For example, in the New Zealand Army where the leadership approaches of female officers were criticised for being too bubbly, too smiley, and too friendly with their troops (Nelson, 2019). Indeed, female members of the military, even as they battle for equality and survival, risk their military identity being overshadowed by other aspects of their lives which are presented in such a way that foregrounds their femininity and concomitantly their incompatibility with military life (Howard III and Prividera, 2004). This is furthered by a narrative that presents women as incapable of aggressive violence or unsuitable for military life means women continue to face prejudice and discrimination due to their gender (Sjoberg, 2010; King, 2015).

The consequences of this are that women find themselves having to consider the results of their behaviours in doing and undoing gender (Butler, 2004) in a way that their male counterparts do not. For example, by keeping relationships professional to protect their reputations and maintaining their competency at all times (Goffman, 1990b; Butler, 2004; K. M. Walker, 2012; Brownson, 2014). For women in the military, leadership styles or even the suspicion of sexual activity with personnel under their command or their peer group can be framed as a lack of professional competence in a way seemingly not applicable to those men who also form part of these relationships. These relationships are further complicated by evidence suggesting servicewomen predominantly marry servicemen (Huffman et al., 2017). This demonstrates a complex and highly charged environment where female equality and equity can be hard-won, easily lost and is disciplined (Fournier, 1999) differently based on gendered assumptions of professional behaviours (Higate, 2001; Thornborrow and Brown, 2009; Walker, 2012; Brownson, 2014; Nelson, 2019). This is not to suggest sexual relationships by men do not occur and are not punished, but rather that it does not appear in the literature. The focus on women suggests that as a result of the onslaught of socialisation, initiated through training and reproduced throughout a service career (Suzuki and Kawakami, 2016; Godfrey and Brewis, 2018), it is not what women are that makes women’s presence in the military and on the battlefield contentious, but what they represent (Kovitz, 2003). However, there is evidence that dominant discourses appear to be adapting as illustrated by studies of female combat soldiers which noted that while
historically females were often discussed in derogatory sexual terms, a new and different category is emerging. This category recognises women’s competence in the field but suggests they are only partially accepted as combat soldiers (Höpfl, 2003; King, 2015) and are granted the status of honorary men, at the cost of their femininity (King, 2016). Conversely, research into US servicewomen demonstrated they can purposefully embody their identity as women by performative acts that enhance their physical appearance, such as wearing make-up or getting their hair done. However, to achieve and maintain credibility they have to balance these displays with masculine leadership skills and physical fitness (K. M. Walker, 2012). The paucity of research into females in the UK context makes it difficult to understand if these examples are cross-cultural. However, they demonstrate the complexity of the wider military environment and how some gendered behaviours are tolerated rather than accepted.

3.4.5 Binary Divisions

The third theme identified from the literature review concerns the use of binary divisions to theorise military life. These binary divisions draw on clear lines of demarcation between two social constructs, which are often formed in oppositional and hierarchical terms (Wadham et al., 2018) and run the risk of reifying and stymieing discussion while failing to reflect the lived reality of service personnel and veterans. The following section discusses these closely linked and interrelated binary constructs.

3.4.5.1 Civilian and Military, Superiority and Vulnerability

It has been argued that military identity is built on a hierarchal understanding that privileges the military over civilians and the male over the female (Goldstein, 2018). This separation is deliberately crafted during training and reinforced throughout a service career with social events, shared feeling rules and intense socialisation (Hochschild, 1983; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Godfrey and Brewis, 2018) that enable members of the organization to construct a significant source of self-understanding. As a disciplinary technique of power, the rituals of military life and the associated artefacts and narratives which encourage difference are reinforced through organizational stories of service and self-sacrifice. These mythologise acts of leadership, heroism and bravery (Godfrey et al., 2012) and are embodied through a physical appearance which reinforces uniformity and belonging (Butler, 2004). Difference to civilians becomes further embodied through increased fitness and the mortification of the body as it is uniformly shaped and weaponized, while the mind is fashioned and educated in the theories of leadership and war (Morgan, 2006). A threat to this identity has the potential to put at risk ways of being where masculinity, success, and conformity dominate (Goldstein, 2018).
The exclusive nature of military narratives and rituals reinforces difference between civilians and military personnel, constructing military as superior to the civilian Other (Coupland, 2015). Such discourses of superiority act as techniques of power (Foucault, 1991) and are reproduced in the literature as military participants describe roles similar to those found in civilian life but stress doing them in more arduous and difficult conditions than civilians, demonstrating a difference which is built on notions of increased military capability and resilience (Woodward and Winter's, 2004). That these acts are undertaken for the benefit of a wider military goal are narrated as a heroic sacrifice that support the idea of a valued self (Collinson, 2003). Additionally, as they are narratively reproduced for researches these stories reinforce hegemonic military masculinities which are contextually situated in individual materiality through the use of specialist equipment and skills (Woodward and Jenkins, 2011), however, they could also be read as a form of defensive othering (McInnes and Corlett, 2012) which acts to prop up a fragile self (Clarke and Knights, 2015).

While the narratives and performances that reinforce difference between military and civilian can have disciplinary effects on both parties (Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006), this hierarchical relationship can also be viewed from the ‘Others’ perspective:

“You can tell a squaddie a mile off, even in their civvies. Maybe it’s the uncompromising haircut, or the obscenely muscle-bound physique. It could be the air they give of slightly dangerous schoolboys on the rampage.” (Stone in Higate, 2001, p. 455)

Although said in relation to ‘squaddies’ in the 1940s, this quote remains relevant as to how normative understandings and discursive controls can constitute military personnel, creating an identity that is an act of power, as hierarchical conditioning is invoked in this case in favour of the civilian. The tone of the quote illustrates one of the paradoxes of identity surrounding sameness and difference (Knights and Clarke, 2017), where one attribute, an ‘uncompromising haircut’, indicates measured disapproval and is described in opposition to a less regimented, relaxed look. Relatedly, ‘obscenely muscle-bound’ is set against a more ‘normal’ physique, while the word ‘rampage’ infers the potential of violence. Yet this description is tempered by an acknowledgement that the soldiers are part of a disciplined military and only ‘slightly dangerous’ as they are held on a short disciplinary leash, in contrast to the speaker who, by implication, has more autonomy. They should be considered ‘schoolboys’, not soldiers, also acts to limit their threat, and undermine their identity, while the overarching theme highlights their difference to the civilian norm. Research has indicated little has changed, as soldiers remain easily recognizable in garrison towns as a result of an identity that “starts to push out” (Binks and Cambridge,
2018, p. 130) and is distinct in its performance compared to the civilian norm, through their uniformity, haircuts and physicality. Here we see the military self as a stigmatized identity (Goffman, 1990a; Toyoki and Brown, 2014) “an attribute that is deeply discrediting”, and reductionist in seeing an individual “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (Goffman, 1990a, p. 3).

Indeed, the somewhat illusionary effect of a hegemonic military masculinity can mask the vulnerability ex-service personnel can experience as they leave the Armed Forces. Although military personnel can see themselves as superior, calm, measured, and more ready and willing to take action and make decisions than their civilian counterparts (Walker, 2012), more ‘attached’ to doing as supposed to being (Woodward and Jenkins, 2011), there is often a nervousness and anxiety surrounding seeking employment in the civilian sector. This uncertainty appears to belay their narrative of superiority. The anxiety, experienced as a result of the uncertain responses of ‘Others’ (Knights and Clarke, 2017); a belief they may not fit into a new organization’s culture (Treanor and Marlow, 2021); or their skills will not be recognised; combined with studies that paint them as victims of their military service (D. I. Walker, 2012; Duffy, 2015; Mobbs and Bonanno, 2018) can all hinder transitioning personnel (Walker, 2012; Jones, 2013). However, the paradox of superiority and under confidence is rarely explored in the literature; neither does it appear that much research has been conducted in terms of how civilian employers have experienced employing veterans in their organizations or the benefits and challenges such employment can bring (Szelwach et al., 2011).

3.4.5.2 Serving and Veteran, Belonging and Excluded

When an individual joins the military they join a family (Maringira, Gibson, and Richters, 2015), ‘a band of brothers’, willing and able to die for each other (Kachtan and Wasserman, 2015; Shields et al., 2017). RAF flying squadrons still have positions that are filled by ‘squadron uncles’ (RAF, 2019b) which are designed to look after the welfare of young pilots and offer a softer management approach than the official chain of command. This represents a common approach in military life that legitimizes and creates a knowledge/power dynamic that reduces “the tension surrounding management and individual masculinities by simulating typically patriarchal, family-like relations where power is exercised for the 'good' of the recipient” (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993 p. 665; Foucault, 1966, 1994). Membership of this family constitutes an economy of power (Foucault, 1980) and a means of coercive control as norms and values are informally transmitted through peer pressure, which supports the “construction of subjectivity through socialisation and surveillance” (Higate, 2001; Grey, 2005, p. 97; Hogan and Seifert, 2010; Godfrey et al., 2012) and creates a sense of belonging that is carefully crafted as a function of disciplinary
power (Woodward and Jenkins, 2011). The wearing of a uniform is often raised as an important aspect of this sense of belonging and embodiment of identity which is tied to status and a sense of purpose (Brunger et al., 2013). When a service person leaves the military research into belonging has been explored through loss, in terms of status, sense of purpose, and identity (D. I. Walker, 2012; Albertson, 2019; Pronk, 2019); yet, the feeling of remaining connected to the military has been recognised as enduring, with military identity remaining an important part of an individual’s sense of self (Cooper et al., 2018). Such continued self-identification is not necessarily seen as historical as it can be continually reproduced through membership of veterans’ organizations, attendance at Remembrance Sunday services and signified through wearing pin badges, service ties and legitimized recently by UK government’s decision to issue a veteran’s identity card (Butler, 1993, 1997; gov.uk, 2020).

These continuing connections may help explain why research into emotional distress among veterans has revealed there is a reluctance to seek help, as this is perceived as a sign of weakness. Yet such reluctance exists alongside an acceptance of other veterans vulnerabilities due to an increased awareness of PTSD and other mental health issues (Green et al.'s., 2010; Walker, 2010; Palmer, Murphy and Spencer-Harper, 2017; Mobbs and Bonanno, 2018). This has led some to reframe admitting weakness and vulnerability into a sign of strength (Shields et al., 2017) and while such a turn arguably benefits the individual it also aids the military and government, potentially absolving them of the responsibility to induce change (Bulmer and Eichler, 2017). Moreover, most of the research into the mental health of veterans has focused on men, with little research into the needs of female veterans (Edwards and Wright, 2019). A rare piece of research into the experiences of female veterans highlights the after-effects to women’s mental health because of working in a disciplined and masculine dominated environment. The consequences include Post Traumatic Embitterment Disorder resulting from moral injury and Military Sexual Trauma, both of which contribute to a sense of betrayal felt towards the military (Edwards and Wright, 2019). This conflicts with the carefully narrated and reinforced sense of belonging they have been subject to throughout out their careers (Woodward and Jenkins, 2011; Shields et al., 2017; Grimell, 2019) and can make women especially vulnerable as they transition away from the ‘secure’ military environment.

### 3.4.5.3 Subjugation and the disciplined Subject

The final theme identified in the literature appears to take for granted military personnel’s willingness to subjugate themselves to a higher authority and views obedience as inviolable (Burkhart and Hogan, 2015; Suzuki and Kawakami, 2016). While it is accepted that
subjugation is embedded within the legitimacy of the organization, the capacity for individuals to question authority or negotiate conflict does not appear to be explored (Fleming and Spicer, 2003; Costas and Kärreman, 2013). Academic studies acknowledging resistance or questioning military discipline are rare, although some research has been conducted into the darker side of military life (Connor, 2010, Bakken, 2020) and there is evidence of how American conscripted soldiers resisted their military service in relation to the Vietnam war (Cortwright, 1990) alongside wider social resistance (Bibby, 1996).

One such study suggests reserve officers are more likely to disobey orders they regarded as “stupid or unethical” than regular officers (Hudlin, 1987 in Zelcer, 2012, p. 337) as they are less invested in the normative mechanisms of military power, but this is a rare example. Another exception is Godfrey and Brewis (2018), who explore military life from the perspective of soldiers memoires’. However, in these recognised polished accounts of military life resistance is discussed as a possibility by the researcher but appears absent in the soldier’s narratives, which reflect only the bonds that support and maintain the military way. Perhaps these partial accounts (Mead, 1934) detail as Godfrey and Brewis (2018) state only what the soldiers think we should know. As a result, they could be deliberately omitting evidence of resistance, as to include it would be considered disloyal to lost comrades, breaking the feeling rules and behavioural normativities of hegemonic military masculinities. In this sense, while illuminating they stymie alternative possibilities and as performances reproduce the warrior image which include heroic stories of individual lived experience not necessarily of fantasy but a different, albeit partial reality (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000; Riessman, 2008) which may assist in sustaining the author’s identity as a warrior while also continuing to strategize their subordination (Lukes, 2005; Contu and Willmott, 2006).

Research which reflects the ability of service personnel to resist the disciplinary effects of military life, including the feeling rules contained within service; or how they can renegotiate orders they do not want to follow or disagree with yet somehow maintain the presentation of a disciplined self is absent. Rather, the chain of command is regarded as sacrosanct, which is counter to Foucault’s (1991) argument that resistance is always present in organizations. Moreover, the act of leaving the Armed Forces is rarely recognised as an act of resistance to, or confirmation of, disciplinary power. Nor are the consequences of opposition interrogated in terms of emotional conflict between resistance and duty, creating a space of dis-identification where identity is in conflict with the organizational ideal (Costas and Fleming, 2009; Green et al., 2010; Caddick, 2017).

The transactional reality (Foucault, 1991) of military life, and the extent to which individual agency is relinquished for a sense of purpose or status, is rarely explored beyond the idea
of working-class white boys signing up to escape poverty and deprivation through the offer of being taught a trade or given job security (Hooper and Stephens, 1997). There is little evidence in the literature that supports contentions of female or male empowerment through service life (Brownson, 2014) and thereafter, yet Foucault's (1991, 1994) theory of disciplinary power contains within it the possibility of progression, resistance and alternative possibilities as much as subjugation. Indeed, there is little consideration that a career in the military has the power to transform regulatory discipline into a mechanism of personal advancement or support change in military and post-military lives (Grey, 2005) beyond tropes or narratives of the damaged or stigmatized (Goffman, 1990a).

3.4.6 Summary

This chapter provides an understanding of how an individual’s sense of self is contingent on identification with, and through the acceptance of, others, as well as being influenced by prevailing institutional normativities and disciplinary power (Foucault, 1991, 1994; Knights and Clarke, 2017). Such an understanding produces possibilities regarding identities, in that they can be multiple, shifting but co-existent, and they can be challenged, threatened, resisted, regulated, and residual (Tracy, 2000; McInnes and Corlett, 2012; Herman and Yarwood, 2014; Brown and Coupland, 2015; Clarke and Knights, 2015; Corlett and Mavin, 2015). Indeed, this multiplicity encourages a continual engagement in identity work, to sustain, challenge, and adapt identity in response to powerful contingent and subjective social relations (Foucault, 1994, 1991; McInnes and Corlett, 2012) which could trigger moments of reflexivity. It is through reflexive moments through which difference can be appreciated, consciously or unconsciously allowing the individual to reflect and question the norm permitting other possibilities to be explored (Foucault, 1991).

Gender was described as learned, contextual, temporal, and fluid, shaping behaviours while limiting and opening alternative performative possibilities (Butler, 2004, 2011). Traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity that operate in a hierarchical and binary opposition within organizations were shown to shape practices, understanding, behaviours, and identities (Acker, 1990; Knights and Clarke, 2018) while Butler's (1993; 2011) was used to challenge the oppositional and hierarchal gender binary, arguing it is no longer conceptually fit for purpose as a descriptive tool, because it lacks alternatives and fails possibilities. The persistent and dominant gendered representation of homogenous and hegemonic military identity was presented in contrast to the lived realities of personnel and veterans, producing a conflicting and contested environment for (gendered) behaviours to be understood (Higate, 2001; King, 2016; Bulmer and Eichler, 2017; Eichler, 2017). However, the ability of military institutions to masquerade as gender ‘neutral’ and resist change calls for greater awareness of the shadow structure within organizations which privileges men over women,
masculine over feminine (McGuire, 2002). The ubiquitous and pervasive nature of taken-for-granted masculinity and disciplinary power relations that operate in organizations was also discussed; however, it was noted that masculine domination is not an institutional inevitability, because it is performative and requires continual maintenance and reproduction to retain its default position (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993; Knights, 2015) and it is here that the opportunity for change resides (Foucault, 1991; Giddens, 1991).

3.4.7 Conclusion

By framing the literature review through three strands; identity, gender and the military, this chapter has examined, from a feminine perspective, how gendered identity manifests in the military environment as power works through social relations (Foucault, 1994). In understanding identity as socially contingent, fragile, and historically contingent (Knights and Clarke, 2014; Brown, 2019) how military identity came to be shaped as masculine at the expense of the feminine has been unpicked and understood (Woodward and Winter, 2004). This position has been further explored to understand the implications of this gendered shaping on the organization and the subject while recognising individual agentic choice and the challenges of resisting the powerful status quo (Lukes, 2005).

In combining these strands in a tripartite, gender in the military has been explored through a poststructuralist lens which has prepared the way for the findings of this thesis to contribute to theoretical, empirical, and practice-based knowledge. In doing so a gap in the literature concerning gendered military identity, the lived experiences of female personnel and the effect this can have on their transition journeys has begun to be addressed (Binks and Cambridge, 2018).
4 Philosophy, Design and Method

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into five main sections and begins by outlining the philosophical approach of the study before moving onto the research design, method, and analytical approach and finishing with a discussion on ethics. Firstly, different philosophical approaches are described including the perspective taken for this research. This is followed by the research design, which explains why an insider’s approach, the study of one’s organization or social group (Bryman and Bell, 2015), was chosen and discusses how the origins of this research are embedded in personal experience. Next, an outline of the methods used for data collection: the longitudinal element of the study; the choice of semi-structured interviews; and the autoethnographic element of the research are discussed. This is followed by a detailed description of how the interviews were critically analysed using narrative analysis. The chapter draws to a close by outlining the ethical stance taken in relation to the research.

4.2 Philosophical Approach

Ensuring a coherent ontological and epistemological approach is crucial to effective research design, strategy and method (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson, 2008). It is therefore important to understand how different ontological and epistemological positions can affect research approaches and outcomes. While ontology “is concerned with the nature of reality” (Wilson, 2012, p. 305) and how the social world is perceived, epistemology can be thought of as “the nature of knowledge” (Wilson, 2012, p. 302), what is, and what is not, acceptable as a form of knowledge. Ontological and epistemological perspectives affect what is regarded as knowledge leading to the use of different methodological approaches which are in turn privileged by particular disciplines and reflect distinctive philosophical positions.

4.2.1 Ontology

Ontology concerns the nature of reality which is explained here using two contrasting positions: positivism and social constructionism. Positivism reflects an objectivist approach that views reality as separate from social actors, including the researcher; reality is seen as external, detached, and fixed (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Positivism supports a deductive approach to empirical inquiry emphasizing theory by testing hypotheses to search for a single truth (Astley, 1985) and largely focuses on quantitative collection and analysis of data in a systematic, regimented and replicable manner that is used to support the legitimacy of
truth claims (Shortall, 2012). In contrast, researchers who follow a social constructionist approach reject a singular truth to give voice and legitimacy to the multiplicities of socially constructed views of knowledge (Denzin, 2009). Social constructionism aligns mainly with qualitative research, which supports an inductive or theory-building approach to the relationship between theory and data (Bryman and Bell, 2015). While interpretivism enables researchers to produce “reflexive narratives as opposed to explanatory models or theoretical propositions” regarded as part of a whole rather than an end in itself (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013, p. 75). Researchers who use this approach view reality as a manifestation of social actors’ perceptions, actions, interactions, and discourses through which meaning is made. In this sense, social reality is a creation of the individual subject, constructed and never constant but rather, kaleidoscopic, subjective, and emergent (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Included within this understanding is the position of the researcher and how their assumptions and research questions help shape methodological choices and subsequent analysis co-constructing meaning (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012; Hoyer and Steyaert, 2015).

Ontologically, this research originates from a subjectivist position, adopting a constructionist view regarding the nature of reality where social entities are co-construed through the relations, perceptions, and actions of social actors that give meaning. In this way, social entities, such as organizations, are not regarded as part of a rigid external reality separate from actors. Rather, organizations are part of a mutually constituent ever-changing and subjective lived reality of social actors, which are continually evanescent and revised.

4.2.2 Epistemology

In terms of understanding epistemology or what constitutes knowledge, the central argument concerns whether or not techniques used to study the natural sciences should be applied to the study of social worlds (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Even within the natural sciences, positivist views are open to interpretation, but are frequently considered to reflect a research approach which regards knowledge as concrete, observable, testable, and ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered. This is based on the idea that “the social world exists externally, and that its properties should be measured through objective methods” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p. 331; Torrance, 2008). This allows data to be validated and replicated, demonstrating reliability in support of a cumulative objective truth (Astley, 1985). Positivism rests on the notion that research is value-free and knowledge is arrived at by gathering facts which can lead to policy production (Bryman and Bell, 2015) based on a singular ‘truth’. However, it has also been argued that adopting a positivist approach may not be devoid of interpretative possibilities, as the removal of one’s self, and therefore one’s
Influences, from the research process is considered unrealisable (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000).

In contrast to positivism, an interpretivist epistemology involves accepting that what counts as knowledge does not need to rely on statistical data, that there is more than one truth, and that it needs to take account of individual lived experiences which can be used to understand society, organizations and its members (Alvesson et al., 2008). Interpretive research concerns the interplay “between individual emotion and motivation and the structure and culture of social systems (Neumann and Hirschhorn, 1999)” (Petriglieri, Petriglieri, and Wood, 2018, p. 487). It involves the subjective meaning-making of social action through phenomenological traditions and symbolic interactionism (Bryman and Bell, 2015) which recognise experiences, linguistic, and non-verbal communication as sources of knowledge. The intention is not to present a single social reality as privileged or definitive, rather the aim is to consider different fluid versions that reflect an indeterminate view of knowledge and the natural world (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

4.2.3 Philosophical Framework

This study seeks to understand the social world through a lens that represents and respects the experiences, ideas, and actions of participants, recognizing their voices as sources of knowledge (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000; Priloa and Brannan, 2009). This perspective leads to a subjectivist analysis of the organization and participants in contrast to the prevailing positivist nature of most military research (Higate and Cameron, 2006; Eichler and Smith-Evans, 2018). Furthermore, as this study focuses on an under-researched area, it was important to conduct an explorative study that seeks to understand why some individuals appear to easily leave the RAF, while others experience moral injury (Schorr, Stein, Maguen, Barnes, Bosch, and Litz, 2018). These apparent differing experiences support an ontology of multiple co-constructed social realities (Ravasi and Canato, 2013; Bryman and Bell, 2015) based (military) identities of sameness and difference created as a consequence of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1991, 1994).

Although this research philosophy regards the social reality of everyday life as assembled through shared assumptions and language, which can appear reified (Berger and Luckman, 1966). It also recognises how individuals are capable of fluidity moving between multiple social realities and adapting identity constructs to enable social relationships resulting in a variety of possibilities (Walliman, 2005; Hoyer and Steyaert, 2015). Indeed, the temporally driven changing and fluid nature of individuals’ perceptions of the RAF suggested a nuanced research philosophy was needed to understand the complex gendered lived realities of veterans in contrast to a large scale positivist approach which can mask
gendered differences (Iversen et al., 2005). Furthermore, although ambiguities and contradictions are omnipresent in interpretative organizational identity research, similar issues exist in all research (Ravasi and Canato, 2013). As such, the aim was to delve deeply into the personal lived experiences at a time of transition rather than develop an objective ‘absolute truth’. This made the development of a subjectivist, constructionist, and interpretivist research strategy appropriate (Blaxter et al., 2006).

4.3 Research Design

Reflecting on the chosen research strategy, a longitudinal study was designed to record and understand the fluid power relations in action between disciplinary normativities of the RAF and participants. A longitudinal study was chosen as they can help incorporate cultural and historical dimensions that can map changing narratives. They also allow more than brief interactions with participants enabling evidence of identity fluidity and the easing or re-enforcing of disciplinary effects of power to be noted (White and Arzi, 2005).

This approach led to an overall qualitative research design which embraced the possibilities of insider research (Bryman and Bell, 2015) through critical narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008; Fotaki, Long, and Schwartz, 2012) challenging what is taken for granted by others (Astley, 1985; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000), enabling disrupted normative behaviours to become windows into individual subjectivities (Humphreys and Brown, 2002; Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007; Hoedemaekers, 2010; Ravasi and Canato, 2013; Hoyer and Steyaert, 2015). This enables a focus on organizational dynamics, which are often unconsciously reproduced and reinforced through normative behaviours. In the military’s case, normative behaviours are unconsciously reproduced as a result of discourses of equality and neutrality which mask a gendered organizational culture supported by masculinised technologies of power, self-disciplinary frameworks, and hierarchical structures (Acker, 1990; Foucault, 1991; Gabriel, 1999; Vachhani, 2012). The insider approach also lent itself to a coherent design consisting of two methods: semi-structured interviews; and a reflexive autoethnography to explore my narratives used to negotiate disrupted multiple and temporal social realities and identity constructs. The following sections discuss the research design in more detail, beginning with the insider approach.

4.3.1 Insider Research

Insider research is understood as the study of ones’ organization or social group (Bryman and Bell, 2015) which develops an understanding of life from within (Ybema and Kamseeg, 2009a). Such an approach can produce unique insights into organizational life and ensure access to participants that would otherwise be difficult to obtain (Hammersley and Atkinson,
My background as a veteran was acknowledged from the outset, instantly affirming my insider status. This ensured my position was based on credibility, trust and founded on normative understandings with a similar moral and ethical outlook, part of the shared foundations of military life (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Any attempt to separate or distance myself from our shared past would have jeopardised this position and rapport was built by sharing personal information about myself with the participants, for example, that my husband was still serving and that for a part of the research period I was living on a military base. Furthermore, several participants were either known to me or knew me before the study, this gave me credibility which would normally be built into management research through the generation of a work role in the organization (Bell, 1999). As an insider, authority, integrity and mutual trust were intrinsic to my research, without which the participants may not have shared their experiences of vulnerability and uncertainty (Sampson, 2004). This was noted by two participants who stated they were unsure about taking part as the experience of leaving the RAF was extremely raw; however, they decided to participate because they wanted to assist with the research and abet change.

However, while insider research can be invaluable in eliciting a deeper understanding of a social environment than more detached observations allow, aligning oneself with any particular research position can also potentially limit understandings by blinding the researcher to other possibilities (Holland, 1999; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000). Additionally, as with autoethnographic research, it can be challenging to make what has become ‘normal’ strange in order to conduct critical enquiry (Brannan, Pearson, and Worthington, 2007). Potential disadvantages of insider research also include ‘over rapport’ or ‘going native’, as the researcher over identifies with participants failing to problematize their perspectives (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000). However, by acknowledging and challenging such behaviours, a deeper questioning of discourses, meanings, and implicit power relations (Foucault, 1994) can enable critical analysis. Moreover, although trust, credibility and shared meanings are integral to the research process, pre-conceived unchecked assumptions should be explored at every opportunity (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000; Blaxter, et al., 2006; Bryman and Bell, 2015).

### 4.3.2 Longitudinal Design

This study aimed to engage with individual participants and analyse their stories through developing a deeper relationship than would have been possible through a single interview (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This resulted in a longitudinal design being developed where participants would be interviewed three times. This would allow the complex processes of social life to be understood and a temporal order to be formed, which recognised and mapped change (Rajulton, 2001; Bryman and Bell, 2015) while incorporating a historical
and cultural dimension adding flavour and depth to the process (Lapointe, 2013). To classify as a longitudinal study, it has been suggested two or more consistent methodological data collection points are required with a significant amount of time lapse between them. The suggested time between these data points is 12-months as this is considered long enough to allow changes to settle (White and Arzi, 2005). However, because of a restricted time frame in which to gather data, difficulties in scheduling interviews and the decision to let at least six months pass after the participants’ exit date before scheduling a second interview, this ideal time frame was not always achievable. As a result, the shortest time between interview was seven months and the longest time 16 months. On average the time frame between interviews was 10.5 months, see Appendix 4. Finally, the time taken to transcribe the interviews meant the number of planned third interviews was reduced and the decision was made to combine the analysis for interviews two and three in the write up.

While building trust through longitudinal research can be advantageous as it can help in the development of a deeper relationship with participants, disadvantages include maintaining response rates, costs, time, and sustaining consistency (Holmbeck, Bruno, and Jandasek, 2006; Freedman, Thornton, and Camburn, 2016). There is also the danger that the relationship between the researcher and participants may not remain static but may have to be renegotiated each time (Bell, 1999). Nevertheless, response rates for this study were high, with contact being lost with only one participant; this was attributed to two factors: the original commitment participants showed towards the study; and the ease of contact through social media, primarily Facebook but also instant messaging and LinkedIn.

4.3.3 Critical Approach

Critical inquiry has been used as an umbrella term for a “wide spectrum of philosophical-theoretical perspectives where the values of the researcher are made explicit and called to legitimize the research process itself as a factor of both knowledge production and social change” (Neesham, 2018, p. 41). Critical inquiry forms part of the intellectual tradition which stems from the Frankfurt School of social theory. Its aims include moving away from structuralist, poststructuralist, and even some social constructionist approaches that claim to produce research that is descriptive, explanatory, but value-neutral to a form of critical inquiry which recognises values and value judgements as unavoidable and therefore political. While claims of neutrality can reinforce, or sustain the status quo, critical inquiry results in inherently political research, which through value judgements aims to challenge and disrupt the regimes of truth that can be found in organizational life (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2011; Neesham, 2018).
While perhaps appearing radical, critical approaches to research have been challenged as objectivists and essentialist in that they assume a ‘true’ self or society would emerge if the status quo was overthrown (Newton, 1998). Cognisant of this, it is recognised that while there is no singular truth to be discovered there are different ways of being, which can be explored through social relationships, subjectivities, and representations of powerful normativities. These can be experienced by individuals differently (Newton, 1998) through discourse, significations, and performativities (Butler, 1993). To achieve a critical approach various methods can be adopted to build an understanding of a particular cultural organization, these include using theorists such as Foucault (1976) or Bourdieu (1979) to shake up understanding and to build a broad interpretative repertoire (Alvesson, 2003) or distancing oneself from the research and changing the basis of interpretation, allowing the view of authority, assumptions, and neutral positions to be challenged (Ybema and Kamseeg, 2009). While this may lead to a conflict of ideas, meanings, and ambiguity, this is accepted as part of critical inquiry allowing reflexive and ironic thoughts to flow (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003).

4.3.4 Access

As discussed, insider status proved invaluable to gain access to organization members who were in the process or had recently left the RAF (Ibarra, 1999). Initially, access relied on personal connections, but to expand the participant pool an on-line Facebook Group for serving and non-serving female RAF personnel was joined and a message was posted explaining my research and requesting volunteers. In this way, social media proved crucial in recruiting the remainder of the participants and maintaining access to individuals who were geographically dispersed and prone to relocate. For example, since making initial contact in January 2016 and completing the final interviews in Summer 2019, at least four participants moved to a new house (one twice) and a further two moved over-seas due to their husband’s military postings. Although this was to be expected as participants moved out of, or into, military quarters, it demonstrates the transitional nature and geographical consequences of fluid military life (Adey et al., 2016). Such moves also served to highlight the nuances of individual narratives as each person’s transition was contextually distinctive with different circumstances shaping experiences.

4.3.5 Participant Selection

In total 19 participants were selected for the study. Initially, a mixture of males and females were recruited, and I decided that participants had to be in their final 12 months of service or have left the RAF within the previous six months, to ensure the transition process was still vivid. However, as the selection process developed and matured this timeline was
extended to include three volunteers who had left the RAF over 12 months previously. This emerging reconsideration was made as two potential participants had powerful stories and it became clear that although they had left the RAF over two years previously they were still transitioning, suggesting elements of perpetual liminality (Ybema et al., 2011) in contrast to Turner's (1982) more stepped and bounded process. As a result, the timeline that was imposed as part of the research parameters was deemed unnecessary artificial. Additionally, as most participant volunteers were officers, perhaps reflecting my officer status, and to explore a wider range of transition experiences, a participant who had left at the rank of Corporal on redundancy was included to provide a richer flavour to the research. However, as she had left five years previously, she was only interviewed once. The initial mixed approach to gender was also refined as the research developed and it was realised most research on veterans focused on men, however, as the three male participants had already been interviewed by this point it was decided to continue with their involvement.

The first nine participants were approached personally and asked to participate as I knew they were leaving the RAF. Their involvement was initially a matter of convenience sampling based on their accessibility (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008) in an attempt to facilitate face to face interviews (Irvine et al., 2010). Potential participants who lived more than an hour away were initially discounted as with two young children and a husband working long hours it was not feasible to travel further. This changed when a Facebook page for serving and ex-serving female RAF personnel was used to seek further volunteers and as many lived further away on-line interviewing was considered. A snowball technique was also adopted, where participants who met the criteria were asked to name others who would also be eligible (Blaxter, et al., 2006). This combination of approaches resulted in the selection of a further 10 participants, two of whom volunteered due to historic personal connections. Although these relationships had occurred over 10 years previously and are therefore considered distant, such loose connections reflect military life through which relational networks are developed via its closed environment and geographic centres (Coser, 1967; Goffman, 1991).

4.3.6 Biographic Information

Although more information about the participants was ascertained than is displayed in Table 2 Participant Biographic Details, certain features are not shared as to do so would jeopardise anonymity due to the limited number of women who have served in the RAF. For instance, in this fictitious example identifying a female Wing Commander as an ex-ranker, who undertook a role as Officer Commanding RAF Police at RAF Lyneham would immediately jeopardise her anonymity, as it is likely that few females would have held this role (Grinyer, 2009). As a result, a more general approach was taken to describing
participants. When discussing their rank, participants are called either officers or airwomen, and their specialisations are explained as either heavily masculine specializations such as engineering or one where more females were employed, such as administration. This decision was made as the RAF, like all military organizations, is dominated by the biological male; some specialisations are regarded as more ‘feminine’ than others (Treanor and Marlow, 2021).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Joined</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Reason for Leaving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lisa F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Pre 2000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Op¹²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Post 2000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Pre 2000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Retirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Post 2000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Pre 2000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Pre 2000</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>PVR¹³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annabelle F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Pre 2000</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Post 2000</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Pre 2000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Post 2000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicola F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Post 2000</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Airwoman</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>PVR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Post 2000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Pre 2000</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Pre 2000</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Airwoman</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Redundancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Post 2000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>PVR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Post 2000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>OP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Pre 2000</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Airwoman</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Retirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Post 2000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>PVR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Pre 2000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>OP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Participant Biographic Details

¹² Option Point – a break in your contract, tied to pension rights.
¹³ Premature Voluntary Retirement. Individuals PVR when they decide to leave the military outside of their contracted break clauses, potentially sacrificing part of their immediate pension.
For example, engineering trades, catering, and the police continue to be dominated by men, while support specialisations such as administration, certain logistic trades and air traffic control have comparatively significantly larger numbers of women present. As such, steps have been taken to generalise these details without losing contextual richness. The aim is to indicate the gender demographic within the individual workplaces as the participants referred to it. Issues around anonymity also resulted in generalisations regarding the participants’ length of service and their rank on leaving, while reference to specialisations has only been included if removing the reference would jeopardise meaning. Although this has diluted some of the richness from the study enough detail remains to enable a contextual picture of military life and transition to emerge (Alvesson, 2003a).

The average age of participants when they joined the RAF was 20, and their average age when they left was 42; the average time served exceeded 20 years. The longest-serving participant served 39 years and the shortest 10. The oldest participant was 55 and the youngest 29. Just over half joined before 2000 and 16 of the 19 voluntarily withdrew from service. Two participants, who retired, declined an offer to extend their service and one left on redundancy. The marital status of the participants is noted, as it was at the end of the study, as two of the male participants became engaged and married during the research period, while the marital status of the female participants remained unchanged. The spouses of all female participants were military or ex-military while the spouses of all male participants were civilians who had never served. The one divorced participant had been married to a male service person.

4.4 Method

4.4.1 Introduction

Several different data collection techniques were originally considered, including focus groups and online discussions. However, the main data collection technique of semi-structured interviews produced such a volume of data that additional methods were considered unnecessary. In total 41 semi-structured interviews were held with 19 participants over three years, producing over 2000 minutes of audio recorded data.

4.4.2 Semi-structured Interviews

From the outset there was a desire to keep the data collection method relaxed is it was felt this would elicit the most information from participants. This informal approach coupled with the exploratory nature of the research resulted in the selection of semi-structured interviews
as the main data collection method. The exploratory nature of the study meant the researcher was open to emerging possibilities and tangents, which had the potential to open different research avenues (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Davey, 2008; Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2009). When such occasions occurred, they were explored, as it was often considered a valuable divergence by both participants and researcher. Although this lengthened some interviews, this enabled flexibility and scope for elaboration which led to deeper explanations of the behaviours and outcomes (Blaxter, et al., 2006). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews have been noted to allow a more open-ended view of research, enabling the interviewer to ask general questions, vary their order, and use additional probes, allowing concepts to emerge out of the data as valuable sources of life histories (Plummer 2000, in Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000). This approach also signifies a more feminist approach to research, as rapport is built through a more conversational style of interview rather than a structured, hierarchal and exploitative relationship (Bryman and Bell, 2015) which in a more formal format could restrict participants’ narratives. Conversely, an unstructured interview could veer from the research aims altogether and was therefore rejected (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Rubin and Rubin, 2012). The intention was to co-construct the narrative and its meaning through detailed accounts rather than brief answers, teasing out dominant taken-for-granted discourses which required no further explanation, thus enabling a form of critical analysis (Riessman, 2008; Voronov and Yorks, 2015) whilst avoiding co-creation of a single dominant discourse that stifles conflict (Tracy, 2000; Brown and Toyoki, 2013).

Interviews were initially conducted in person due to the advantages described in Table 3, however, as the study progressed more reliance was placed on live video links such as Skype resulting from the participants being geographically dispersed across the country and moving overseas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement in verbal and non-verbal communication.</td>
<td>Set up and conducting the interview can be problematic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio recorded accurate information.</td>
<td>Some questions may be perceived as embarrassing and highly sensitive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility in delivering questions.</td>
<td>Transcribing and analyzing data are time-consuming and subjective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion is immediate.</td>
<td>The respondent may be unwilling to answer questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3  Face-to-Face Interviews*

(Wilson, 2012)
Video linked interviews are a form of communication offering many of the advantages of the telephone including saving costs, time, and flexibility (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004; Irvine et al., 2013) as well as circumventing the travel that in-person interviews would have involved (Hanna, 2012). An added advantage was the ability to audio record interviews directly to the computer, aiding transcription, as recordings did not have to be transferred from one medium to another. All interviews were audio-recorded with on-line participants assured video recordings were not taking place (Holck, 2016).

Some disadvantages of electronic interviews were encountered; these included being interrupted by family members, animals, and builders. Other disadvantages of remote interviewing include technical difficulties with software or connectivity, a reduction in visual cues and less conversational turn-taking; interviews also tended to be shorter than when conducted face to face (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014). The informality of the interviews also influenced the decision not to routinely take notes; although taking notes can assist in analysis, they can also detract from spontaneity and immediacy (Bryman and Bell, 2015). However, notes were made if something unusual or striking occurred.

4.4.3 Question Design

Questions were devised to develop an appreciation of participants' transitions and aimed to explore narrative storylines, starting from the decision to join the RAF through to the decision to leave and beyond. Based on guidance from Walliman (2005) questions were designed to be unambiguous yet open-ended, allowing for a variety of responses; leading questions were avoided. A mixture of techniques were used; the aim was to talk as little as possible and let the participants voice their thoughts and opinions (Bryman and Bell, 2015). As an integral part of the interview technique, probing and follow up questions were asked as laddering up and down was used to elicit a deeper understanding of the individual's value base, through questions that sought to understand 'why' and asking for examples of events (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). However, when the interview faltered for any reason, standardized questions and probes were prepared to help bring it back on track (Oppenheim, 2000; Wilson, 2012). A full list of questions and associated probes can be found at Appendix 5, Appendix 6, and Appendix 7.

The first interview focused on why the participants had joined the RAF, why they chose to leave and their expected civilian future. The second and third interviews queried participants' concepts of civilian and RAF life, drawing on these to understand elements of institutionalization and the process of transition. On occasion, the second and third interview questions were tailored to reflect the participants' changing contextual environment, such as living overseas, in married quarters, or their own home. Issues of
gender were deliberately not raised directly but rather allowed to emerge through the participants’ narratives. The aim of not asking gender-related questions was to ensure, as far as practicable, the participants were not influenced unduly by the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000) and as such, gender issues were only explored when the participants introduced them. It was not enough to assume shared assumptions were consistent; rather, co-constructions of individual meaning were actively sought or reconstituted. This was achieved by asking the participants to provide their interpretation of military life or member checking (van der Waal, 2009), for example, if the participants said something akin to “you know what I mean”, I would respond by saying, “I think so, but for the recording can you elaborate/give more detail”.

The interviews were concluded through an informal discussion, where the participant was asked if they would like to add anything further. This allowed participants an opportunity to reiterate anything they felt strongly about or to introduce a new issue enabling the interview to be drawn to a close in a measured manner (Opdenakker, 2006).

### 4.4.4 Interview Setting

Table 4 depicts whether the interview was conducted face to face or online. The location of interviews is important, and effort was made to conduct them on neutral territory so that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>14/06/2016</td>
<td>18/10/2017</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Face to Face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>14/06/2016</td>
<td>N/C</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>On-Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>27/06/2016</td>
<td>07/07/2017</td>
<td>17/07/18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>02/07/2016</td>
<td>06/11/2017</td>
<td>30/11/18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>14/07/2016</td>
<td>06/07/2017</td>
<td>12/06/18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>18/07/2016</td>
<td>03/10/2017</td>
<td>25/06/18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annabelle</td>
<td>15/07/2016</td>
<td>02/10/2017</td>
<td>19/07/18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>27/06/2017</td>
<td>13/06/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>17/10/2017</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicola</td>
<td>19/10/2017</td>
<td>05/06/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>30/10/2017</td>
<td>06/06/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>31/10/2017</td>
<td>16/11/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>08/11/2017</td>
<td>03/12/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>23/01/2018</td>
<td>20/06/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>18/10/2017</td>
<td>04/06/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>16/11/2017</td>
<td>05/06/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>09/01/2018</td>
<td>06/06/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>15/11/2017</td>
<td>06/06/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>20/11/2017</td>
<td>18/06/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Participant Interview Dates (N/C – non-contactable, N/A not applicable)
the interviewee was not encircled by social locations or relationships, which may influence or filter their perspectives (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000). Unfortunately, this was not always possible, and interviews were conducted in a variety of places including, an officers’ mess, cafes, public places, and participants’ homes. Due to the geographically dispersed nature of many participants, 32 of 41 the interviews were conducted by live video links,

4.4.5 Transcription

Transcription was carried out personally by the researcher and although lengthy and time-consuming the process enabled an in-depth knowledge of the data to be gained. Approximately one hour of recording took seven hours to transcribe (Opdenakker, 2006) with transcriptions being made verbatim. Pauses, hesitations and gestures were not noted, as this has more relevance to conversational analysis than narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008). See Appendix 8 for an example of the transcription. Had the transcriptions been outsourced, more interviews could have taken place, but the decision to transcribe the interviews personally was a result of several factors, including recognizing details contained within the interviews could be used to identify participants or third parties. Furthermore, the possibility of sharing the research with an ‘outsider’ and fear of losing ‘control’ of confidentiality emerged as an issue as a result of wanting to protect the individual as well as the RAF’s reputation (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Reflecting on this problem confirmed a residual allegiance to the RAF which is recognised as an effect of disciplinary control (Lukes, 2005), although loyalty did not prevent potentially negative data from being included in the study, as long as it presented no threat to anonymity.

Pseudonyms were also attributed during transcription to ensure the anonymity. A list of participants’ names and the given pseudonyms has been kept in a separate on-line secure file. During transcription, further generalisations were made regarding timelines, locations, and roles to protect participant identity. Unfortunately, this resulted in some extensive and rich narrative descriptions being excluded from the study. For this reason, it is noted how transcription and interpretation are not distinct phases of the research process as the final analysis was influenced by these decisions (Riessman, 2008).

4.4.6 Secondary Data

Although this study is primarily qualitative, some quantitative research has been analysed to provide background to the RAF. This includes statistical data collated by HM Government on organizational size and demographics, supplemented with more qualitative secondary
data consisting of resettlement magazines\textsuperscript{14}, policy documents and social media. These include documents on ethics, housing, dress codes and behaviour relating to the institutionalized nature of RAF life and are discussed in the context section of the introduction. By using such texts, it is intended to demonstrate how “[d]ocuments … do not simply reflect but also construct social reality” (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2006, p. 230). This is pertinent as the image of the RAF is reflected and reproduced through such means extending organizational discourses through documents and on-line content which can be accessed by the civilian population (Sillince and Brown, 2009). These can knowingly and unknowingly influence behaviours and the way that the self is presented through a collective understanding of organizational identity and legitimacy. Even against a backdrop of multiple claims, these documents enable multiple social realities to be appreciated, as opposed to an absolute comprehension (Chreim, 2005; Sillince and Brown, 2009).

4.4.7 Autoethnographic Research

The autoethnographic element of this research continues the embedded and critical nature of this project (Holman Jones, 2015) and takes the form of personal reflective notes containing contextual details extending empirical research into identity against the backdrop of a masculine institution (Learmonth and Humphreys, 2011). Autoethnographic research involves the researcher being deeply immersed in the social reality being studied and has been defined as reflecting “moments of qualitative inquiry” (Anderson, 2006, p. 474) which should take into account the limitations and the politics that are involved in this kind of research (Brannan et al., 2007). To be effective it has been suggested there are three criteria which autoethnographic research should meet. These include full membership of the research group, visibility of membership, and commitment to developing theoretical understandings of social phenomena (Anderson, 2006). In meeting these criteria reflexivity can require the researcher to inhabit two-worlds (Sherif, 2001), but these should not be regarded as having distinct artificial boundaries rather they are inseparable and fluctuating (Clarke and Knights, 2015). This can bring a sensitivity to meaning within the research process (Alvesson, 2003b; Samuels and Ross-Sheriff, 2008; Priola and Brannan, 2009; Brannan, 2015) providing an ability to contextualise and appreciate how individuals negotiate the research environment offering an outlet for the multifarious and conflicted identity narratives found within and between actors and organizations (Humphreys and Brown, 2002). In taking this approach it is hoped the lived experience of transition “explicitly contributes to the analysis” (Anteby, 2013, p. 1283).

\textsuperscript{14} Examples include Pathfinder and Civvy Street, designed to assist service leavers transition out of the military and are treated here as part of the organizational literature.
Learmonth and Humphreys (2011) debate practical aspects of autobiographical research by discussing its analytical (structured, embedded, and visible) versus evocative (emotional and cultural) nature. Indeed, while evocative research can be thought of as heartfelt, where the stories are left to speak for themselves, researchers can often exclude more analytical approaches for fear of jeopardising their authenticity. In combining the approach outlined by Anderson (2006), Learmonth and Humphreys (2011), and Holman Jones (2015) it is hoped to achieve a balance between evocative and analytical autoethnography. This is realised by allowing criticality and evocative narratives to be achieved by thinking from within (Ybema and Kamseeg, 2009) while avoiding charges of producing a novelistic account devoid of formal analysis (Learmonth and Humphreys, 2011). Contingent within this approach is the emotional labour involved in this kind of writing which has at times both stimulated and stymied the research process (Hochschild, 1983). Although autoethnography has a tradition of being used reflexively it is less common in military research (Higate et al., 2006) and this can be considered partly a result of a disciplined life formed in the military environment where to show weakness or emotion is considered an unacceptable breach of the ‘feeling rules’ associated with military life (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; Harris, 2002).

The emergence of reflexive research has developed with an abundance of definitions, applications, and understandings. In this thesis, the aim is to move beyond what Holland (1999) regards as a surface level reflexivity, which limits the researcher to recognizing their own and others restricted construct systems while not questioning the boundaries of that knowledge/understanding and power relations (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993). Potential weaknesses to autoethnographic methods are also acknowledged especially as I am engaged in insider research (see p 84). These concerns include recognizing the account presented by the author as just one of many possible versions and should only ever be considered partial, reliant as they are on recollections that they have reconstructed (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000). Furthermore, remembrances can be shaped to fit current understandings or influenced by current events, in ways that do not necessarily reflect or consider the different understandings of past cultural or environmental realities (Higate et al., 2006) and as a form of identity work (Learmonth and Humphreys, 2011) they can also act as self-serving public confessions (Coffey 1999 in Brannan, 2015).

4.5 Analytical Approach

4.5.1 Narratives

Telling stories has been part of human life for millennia and can come in many forms’ oral, written and physical (Franzosi, 1998). Stories have several characteristics that distinguish
them from narratives, these include; a beginning and an end, a series of events that are casually and temporally linked, boundaries and stable characters (Cunliffe, Luhman and Boje, 2004). Stories use both the sequencing of time, events and plot (the storyline), to enable sense to be made out of experience, creating a temporal unity (Ricœur et al., 1984). Conversely, narratives do not always have coherent plotlines or characters and by incorporating every day, technical and academic language it has been argued all discourses can in some way be considered narrative. From a poststructuralist perspective, the chronology of narrative is problematized by suggesting narratives are not fixed in time but are ongoing, dynamic, and capable of producing multiple understandings and interpretations. Ricœur’s work aimed to conceptualize time in relation to narratives beyond objective, chronological, measured, and subjective individual experience, to a place where the past and the future is recognised to be interpreted through present experiences (Cunliffe et al., 2004). Ricœur summarizes the position as follows: “Time has no being since the future is not yet, the past is no longer, and the present does not remain” (Ricœur et al., 1984, p 7).

Narratives can therefore be seen as an ‘organizing principle’ (Cortazzi, 2012) which allows objective understanding of time through measurement and subjective understanding through experiences. Narratives are performances through which individuals can construct identities by recounting past episodes and future imaginings to achieve a degree of coherency (McAdams and McLean, 2013). This is achieved by arranging characters and events in meaningful ways (Ricœur, 1988) but it is recognised that “The world unfolded by every narrative work is always a temporal world” (Ricœur et al., 1984, p. 3). As such, understandings are open to multiple interpretations, which are temporal, fluid, and dynamic as narratives are performances in the moment which combine variable past experiences, present multiplicities, and manifold futures. This means that narratives are created for particular audiences at specific points in time (Cunliffe et al., 2004) and can be used to reflect current zeitgeists, historical or aspirational cultural values and can be ambiguous (Gabriel, 2000; Cortazzi, 2012).

Narratives can reflect and shape identity as stories are told to influence how we are seen by others demonstrating agency, redemptive meaning through adversity (McAdams and McLean, 2013) and celebrate success as their authoritative voice is used to justify and guide actions (Cunliffe et al., 2004). Although narratives can be considered an example of identity work they are not always consciously told, but stories are nevertheless part of the process of “being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong” (Yuval Davis in Riessman, 2008, p. 8; Holman Jones, 2015). They can also be considered products of disciplinary power regimes and feeling rules of dominant discourses and normativities, which themselves are temporal but not necessarily always knowingly produced (Foucault, 1991; Hardy and Leiba-
Narratives can also be used by organizations to present preferred identities and are effective in building collective meaning (Cunliffe et al., 2004) as they are presented to create experiences for their audiences (Goffman, 1990b), which are in turn contextualised and interpreted by the listener (Ricœur et al., 1984). Moreover, narratives can provide insight into the human side of organizational and personal life which often stress values such as “love, dedication, patience, enthusiasm, sacrifice, struggle through hard work, and humour” (Cortazzi, 2012, p. 6). In this way, narratives are strategic, political, purposeful, and connected to the social world (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Chreim, 2005; Hoyer and Steyaert, 2015). Thus, the stories we tell can provide stability while remaining temporal and contextual, revising and editing the past and future in the telling to shape present identities and working to convince listeners of ‘truth claims’. Such storytelling can play an invaluable part in helping individuals’ question and confirm their place in the world in terms of their professional identity and self-understanding, as such events are formative and part of the social construction of identity (Cortazzi, 2012).

4.5.2 Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis can give researchers access to the cultural and social contexts of different communities and key events in individual lives. It allows the meanings of experiences to be conveyed by asking what is said, how, and by whom (Lapointe, 2013). Narrative inquiry can also be used to give voice to specific subgroups of people who are often silenced, marginalized or oppressed by disciplinary power (Lieblich et al., 1998; Cortazzi, 2012). Narratives can be analysed as performance in action (Riessman, 2008) and form part of performativities which aim to reproduce gendered behaviours (Butler, 2004). Consideration of which can produce an idiosyncratic, contextual, and temporal analysis (Cortazzi, 2012). It also enables 'trouble' to be located in the participants' narratives beyond the performance as they draw on resources to position themselves demonstrating instances of discontinuity which can be useful analytical opportunities (Morison and Macleod, 2013).

The sequencing of events also helps in distinguishing narrative analysis from other techniques as it encourages contextual understanding, allowing for a potentially more sensitive analysis than code-based studies, which can labour to make sense of the emotional aspects of storytelling (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000). Analysis from a poststructural perspective looks for multiple meanings, contradictions and dominant discourses that preclude other possibilities, as a means of studying power relations and exploring hegemonic storylines (Cunliffe et al., 2004). The approach adopted here recognises the limitations of narrative interpretation in that like understanding our own
identity, our appreciation of a narrative can only ever be partial due to the influences of temporality and our own experiences as “research itself is a negotiated narrative” (Cunliffe et al., 2004, p. 275).

Other potential dangers in the use of the narrative include overuse of the term from bullet points to entire life stories; and researchers should also be wary of the “the tyranny of narrative” (Riessman, 2008, p. 5), the positivist impression that there is only one single truth, a form of ‘narrative imperialism’ (Watson, 2009). This can be reproduced by individuals who may continue to be imbued with the authority and interests of the organization (Rodrigues and Child, 2008; Ravasi and Canato, 2013) as disciplinary effects continue to take hold (Foucault, 1991; Lukes, 2005).

Nevertheless, narrative analysis has been noted as a method that complements qualitative interpretative studies in organizational and identity research (Watson, 2009). Such studies provide harmony with a constructionist ontology where social reality is created, negotiated, and normalized through discourse. By analysing participant narratives and understanding individual subjectivity, the effects of organizational and social concepts of disciplinary power, the normative behaviours they encourage, and their controlling vocabularies become visible. This is important, as individuals are “embedded in social structures that define them in important ways” (Fotaki et al., 2012, p. 1108). Narratives can then assist with sense-making during life’s difficult periods while allowing the researcher to ask ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions of the participants (Hoyer and Steyaert, 2015). Researchers are therefore guided to consider for whom a particular story was constructed and for what purpose, what cultural disciplinary resources are taken for granted and what understandings are drawn on (Foucault, 1991). Why events are sequenced in a certain way, what plots are used, what is the aim of the story and are there any inconsistencies, including what is not told, that may suggest counter-narratives or alternative meanings (Cortazzi, 2012).

This approach permitted examples of normative discourses and disciplinary powers to be identified (Foucault, 1991) in the interviews as participants temporarily negotiated their sense of selves in response to probing questions. The longitudinal approach allowed the temporal influences of identity-related constructs, to be studied as self-referential narratives morphed in the telling. Such narrative assertions were also viewed critically as individuals embroidered assertions, for example, to bolster self-image according to a disciplinary power that is dependent on a specific audience (Glynn, 2000; Brown, 2004; Ravasi and Canato, 2013); present exaggerated narratives to impress the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000); or “get even” at the organization (Alvesson, 2009, p. 181).
4.5.3 Organizing the Data

To enable possible interpretations and abstractions to be considered, transcriptions were studied to understand how participants variously situated, accounted, and recounted their experiences (Riessman, 2008; Ybema, 2010). Adapting the method described by Ritchie et al (2003, 2019) (in Bryman and Bell, 2015) and incorporating Cortazzi’s (2012) and Ryan and Bernard’s (2003) iterative techniques the following process was developed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ser No</th>
<th>Narrative Analysis Coding and Conceptual Framework Process</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Data familiarization</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Returning to the literature to read up on emerging topics.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Such as belonging as a concept or the civil-military gap.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Critically question the data set, through a gendered lens</td>
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<td></td>
<td>which privileges hegemonic masculinity.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Conceptualization - creation of simple descriptive concepts</td>
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<td>mentioned by participants</td>
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<td>Repetitions</td>
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<td>The use of local expressions</td>
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<td>Metaphors and analogies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Transitions (between topics)</td>
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<td>Similarities and differences between participants</td>
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<td>Linguistic connectors</td>
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<td>Missing data</td>
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<td>Theory-related material</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Concept identification</td>
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<td>Collation of first and second order concepts using NVivo</td>
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<td></td>
<td>derived codebooks, concepts become more analytical.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Reviewing Concepts</td>
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<td>Taking an iterative approach concepts were cross-</td>
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<td>checked to confirm if they reflected the data and context.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Defining and naming concepts and themes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuous analysis and refining of concepts generating</td>
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<td></td>
<td>clear definitions and names.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Linking</td>
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<td>Identify patterns between participants and within</td>
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<td>individual subjective narratives including historical,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>contextual understandings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Produce the report</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selection of powerful excerpts, referring to the analysis</td>
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<td>of the research question and literature, producing an</td>
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<td>academic report.</td>
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Table 5 Data Analysis Process

As discussed although the identification of themes can rely on the researcher’s awareness of recurring ideas and topics, which itself can be influenced by their experiences (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000 in Blustein, Kozan and Connors-Kellgren, 2013), several tactics were used to broaden the analytical process. These included reading and rereading transcripts to highlighting key phrases as per the techniques outlined at serial 3 of Table 5. Concepts were confirmed by developing operational definitions of key impressions within the theoretical framework and literature review and interrogating the themes which emerged from the interviews (Riessman, 2008). It is believed this approach enabled themes to emerge out of the rich narratives whilst maintaining historical and contextual understanding strengthening their interpretation (Ybema, 2010). In this way, ‘coding’ took place and diffusion occurred to enable a semblance of structure to be placed on the data without losing the thread of individual narratives. This does not necessarily conflict with a constructionist view of reality but is rather a practical element of any research process (Brown and
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Humphreys, 2002; Clegg, Rhodes and Kornberger, 2007; Clark et al., 2010), which is supported by the contextual and embedded nature of the research strategy. Key to this approach was an acknowledgement that multiple interpretations exist and analysing them critically allowed these possibilities to be explored.

Finally, from a practical perspective, the challenges inherent in organising and analysing a large body of data were noted and experienced (Ravasi and Canato, 2013). To counter some of these difficulties, such as recreating similar themes or locating specific mentions within the data, NVivo was used as a collection and sorting tool to store the data. Although there is a debate regarding the usefulness and applicability of software in analysis (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008) the advantages of sorting and codifying data electronically was invaluable in supporting the iterative analysis and in terms of speeding up the process.

In total, the first set of 19 interviews initially produced 64 codes, reduced to 33 first-order concepts which were then consolidated into 8 second-order concepts and 5 aggregate themes. The second and third set of 22 interviews produced 59 codes, reduced to 37 first-order concepts, consolidated into 18 second-order concepts and 7 aggregate themes. Details of how these were operationalised and merged can be seen in Appendix 9 and Appendix 10 and were used to formulate the analysis and discussion in Chapter 5 and 6.

4.5.4 Autoethnographic Approach

Autoethnographic data was gathered throughout and was reflective, that is written after the event being described. It was also reflexive, meaning it is a study which takes account of the researcher within the investigative process (Humphreys, 2005). The aim was to present a reality which is a recreation of lived experiences, as reproduction is an “integral element of all academic writing whether or not it purports to be objective or subjective” (Higate and Cameron, 2006, p. 223). Here it is understood and accepted that social researchers are surrounded by their work; in this case, the military is still part of my lived reality at the time of writing. I am an insider researcher studying my social group (Bryman and Bell, 2015); I am an RAF veteran; I lived on an RAF base for a significant period of the PhD, and am married to an RAF officer. Discussing my background is not part of an attempt to reach a state of unbridled objectivity to claim validity, as in the arena of social research such a claim would be positivistic. Rather, as Higate and Cameron (2006, p. 223) argue, understanding my background as a researcher is part of a methodology which calls “for [a] transparency, honesty, and openness” which strengthens the research findings and demonstrates my ability to draw on multiple orientations (Ybema and Kamseeg, 2009).
4.5.5 Autoethnographic Collection and Analysis

Autoethnographic notes were collected throughout the study in both written and typed form. These notes explored my transitional experiences including an ongoing analysis of my relationship with the RAF, wider military culture, and civilian life which enabled reflection on my identity in transition (Holman Jones, 2007). The notes were written with a focus on emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) felt during transition and were used as windows to my subjectivity during analysis, enabling a greater understanding of my transition to be considered (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007; Hoedemaekers, 2010; Hoyer and Steyaert, 2015). Nvivo was not used, rather a more organic approach was adopted in one main sitting, following a largely linear timeline. This enabled an order of sorts to be imposed as the stories were gathered and sifted for inclusion. Thematic analysis was considered as a method of organisation but as the stories were selected an iterative process developed which supported narrative analysis (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). The decision to treat the data and analysis this way was in large part a result of the embodied difficulties in exploring such sensitive data, which was both physically and emotionally draining (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009; Clarke and Knights, 2015).

As a result, although painful in the doing, the autoethnographic chapter reflects some of the more intense moments of transition and follows a narrative story line. Using Microsoft word the notes were ordered from a temporal perspective and analysis was embedded alongside the extracts (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002). This was then refined, redrafted as part of the reviewing process which involved combing, sifting, and analysing the material. As the narrative emerged from the notes segments were re-ordered or amalgamated so that the narrative became coherent or if the analysis was found to be repetitive pieces were amalgamated or de-selected. This process aided a sense of security while expanding the data set for female veterans lived realities (Mottershead, 2019).

4.6 Ethics

This research has been conducted in line with The Open Universities Ethics policy, (see ethical approval documents reference HREC/2017/2486/Micklewright/1). Following the university’s guidelines before the commencement of data gathering, participants were provided with an information leaflet, a consent form and offered a copy of the transcript post transcription, see Appendix 11 - Consent Form and Appendix 12 - Information Leaflet for details. This was to alleviate the risk of infringing on ethical principles concerning participants’ knowledge of the research aim, their safety and privacy (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000). In the context of this research, ethical issues identified from the outset as particularly significant were confidentiality and anonymity (Blaxter et al., 2006).
Maintaining confidentiality was a key tenet of the research strategy designed to encourage participation and reassure individuals to speak openly. Participants were briefed as part of their induction to the project that their stories would not be shared directly with the RAF. However, no participant felt this was an issue. Indeed, two participants indicated strongly that their stories should be shared with the organization. As a result, the consent form was amended to ask participants if they were content to have their ‘stories’ shared anonymously with the RAF. This decision was made so that should the findings be shared directly with the RAF participant approval would not have to be sought retrospectively.

The idea of providing a pseudonym for the RAF was not considered, as without understanding the contextual environment of the participants the study would lose its context. Furthermore, one of the reasons for undertaking this study was to help address the gap identified in military studies which focus on the Army and presents a masculine perspective where female voices and the other services are all but non-existent (Higate, 2001; Walker, 2012; Brunger et al., 2013). When participants mentioned events or places that were common or ubiquitous to service life, such as training or mess life, these references were retained as much as possible in their original form. However, when third parties or specific events were mentioned, measures were taken to generalise information to maintain anonymity. Where it was felt this was not possible the data was excluded from the analysis. To facilitate reciprocity and trust all participants were informed that they would be told when, or if, any of the findings of this research would be published. As the research was funded by the Open University there has been no conflict of interest with regards to the military or the RAF.

4.7 Summary

The military environment deploys a deliberate binary distinction of insiders and outsiders, military and civilian, presenting a challenging environment for researchers to gain access (Higate et al., 2006). As an exploratory study taking a qualitative approach, the aim was to produce a deeply contextual piece of research, which used individual narratives and the autoethnographical voice as legitimate sources of knowledge. This epistemological stance sought to recognise participants while enabling the autoethnographical narrative and overall analysis to provide a critical view of identity transition during an emotive and intimate period of individual’s lives. Throughout the research process the importance of consistency and coherency between the research aim, the research design and the methodological approach was privileged (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

This chapter outlined the subjective ontology and interpretivist epistemology which constituted the philosophical framework of this research. This was followed by a description
of the research design and method which relied on the researcher’s position as an insider to gain access to participants enabling a critical interpretivist approach. A combination of semi-structured interviews and autoethnographic notes constituted data, explored through narrative analysis. Finally, this chapter outlined the ethical process that was followed. It is hoped that this research design enabled a unique insight to the military world, producing a level of critical scrutiny that develops understanding of the military and its veterans going “beyond front-stage and the level of image-production” (Alvesson, 2009, p. 180).
5 Belonging and Betrayals.

5.1 Introduction

Using the narrative technique of developing a story through a sequence of events, a beginning, a middle and an end (Cortazzi, 2012), participant’s transition is traced out of the RAF and into civilian life. This is analysed and discussed in relation to disciplinary power (Foucault, 1980, 1991,1994) and gendered behaviours (Acker, 1990; Butler, 2004). The analysis and discussion are divided into three sections: belonging, betrayals, and beginning again. The first chapter focuses on how the participants joined the RAF, demonstrating variations of conformity and autonomy, escape and affirmation. The second part moves the narratives forward to understand the conditions that drove the participants to exit the military. As the participants’ experience liminal aspects of transition (Turner, 1987), we see divergence between the military’s disciplined ideal (Higate, 2003a) and their self-reflective awakening to alternative possibilities (Foucault, 1980). The second chapter draws on the literature to understand how the participants reconstitute themselves in the present and considers how the acceptance, rejection or resistance to powerful disciplinary social relations can (re) define future possibilities (Foucault, 1991; Oksala, 2011).

5.2 The Joining Narrative - Belonging

The first interview question was designed to provide participants with a specific starting point to their narrative journeys (Riessman, 2008). The stories that emerged fitted into two broad narrative plot lines; firstly, joining the military represented an opportunity to reject the norms and confines of civilian life, while secondly, enlistment\(^{15}\) represented a continuance of a military life already being lived. While initially appearing distinct, analysis through a disciplinary lens revealed the two plot lines had similar origins, which intersected until their effects delivered almost indistinct productive and subjugated subjects (Foucault, 1991). The joining stories predominantly focused on the participants’ sense of belonging gained from the RAF and how the organization provided a pathway to valued aspirational identities by accepting the disciplined military ideal (Thomborrow and Brown, 2009). The following sections explore these origin stories noting how participants attempted to develop consistency in their telling (Fraher and Gabriel, 2014).

5.2.1 Family and Belonging

Prior to joining the RAF, many of the participants had been members of the RAF Air Cadets (RAF, 2018a), RAF University Air Squadrons (RAF, 2018b), Army University Officers'  

\(^{15}\) Enrolling in the Armed Forces.
Training Corps or were children (scaley brats\textsuperscript{16}) or grandchildren of those who had served. Through these various organizations and connections, participants spoke of belonging to the RAF before their enlistment (Vest, 2014; Albertson, 2019). Out of the 19 participants, 11 noted multiple family members who had previously served or were serving in the Armed Forces when they enlisted. In seven cases, the relative was a parent (on one occasion, both parents had served); in four other cases, the family members were grandfathers, uncles, or siblings. As a result, several participants regarded themselves as part of the wider military family prior to joining. One participant, Sarah, simply stated, “we have military blood so …”, the implication being it felt ‘natural’ for her to join the military. There appears to have been little opportunity or desire to consider alternative career paths for these participants, as their horizons were limited by the cultural normativities and social relations of military life (Lukes, 2005). The impression that emerges was the sense of belonging and oneness they felt within the extended military family (Ashforth et al., 1989; Horton et al., 2014) which was narrated as a part of who they were (Maringira et al., 2015):

“I come from a military family; my father was in the Air Force; my uncle was in the Air Force my stepbrother was in the Air Force” (Michelle)

“…any job that I thought about doing was always a job which you could do within the Air Force, and I couldn’t imagine not being in the Air Force. And therefore, part of the reason I joined the Air Force was because I didn’t know any different. ….” (Annabelle)

Although Sarah and Michelle talk about how ‘natural’ it felt to join, Annabelle, whose parents had both served, presented a more reflective position, “I didn’t know any different”. Looking back, she recognises how her lived experience as a child living on a military camp limited her possibilities (Lukes, 2005). In Foucauldian (1990) terms, as a young adult, Annabelle could not see past the disciplinary power relations that characterised her existence. These relations of power can partly explain how children of forces personnel, living in quarters, moving regularly and attending schools populated pre-dominantly by other military children, can be encultured into military life and, as through official military training (Godfrey and Brewis, 2018), can be construed in binary opposition to civilians from an early age (Basham, 2008). Such divisions, coupled with how the participants’ regarded the RAF as part of their extended family, can act to create a deep sense of belonging (Maringira et al., 2015; Shields et al., 2017):

\textsuperscript{16} A child raised in an RAF military family.
“When I first joined the RAF, I felt like I had found my family. I felt, I found my place which was lacking before, and I literally ended up finding my family in the RAF because I am now married. Had my son. So, it was like a place where I could belong.” (Amy)

“I just felt it was a real family atmosphere, you know, and you were looked after. I've had my moments - don't get me wrong - when they treat you just as a number but, generally speaking, that you know that camaraderie you get within the service you don't get anywhere else. It is completely different being a family you know…. a big family looks after each other, looks after their own” (Karen)

However, although these deep-rooted familial connections can suggest a romanticized view of military life (Higate, 2000; Goldstein, 2018), the relationship can also contain an acceptance of instrumentalism which acknowledges a level of pragmatism between the individual and the organization, “they treat you just as a number”, as opposed to conceptions of an unthinking cultural dopism (Brown, 2017). Nevertheless, these discourses of belonging and family should also be recognised as normative and cultural control mechanisms that help shape behaviours, including the participant’s decision to join (Foucault, 1994; Godfrey and Brewis, 2018). They also act as forms of identity work through which a coherent and consistent seductive life narrative can be drawn on to provide a sense of security in respect of one’s sense of self (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) during times of change.

5.2.2 Aspirational Identities

Another theme that emerged strongly from the narratives (Fraher and Gabriel, 2014) was the power of the imaginary demonstrated through future selves (Costas and Grey, 2014) and aspirational ideals associated with military identities (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009). The ideal military identity has been described as someone who is brave, courageous, self-disciplined, dedicated, and loyal (Higate, 2003a; D. I. Walker, 2012; Woodward and Winter, 2004); it is an aspirational identity which, for many, contained a sense of vocation in terms of a public service ethic (Dick and Cassell, 2004; Thomas and Davies, 2005; Flynn, 2007):

“I think it was probably what I was always going to do ….. I don’t really remember a time when I wasn't going to do it.” (Paul)
“I remember when I was 13 standing outside RE\textsuperscript{17}, … and saying to somebody “I am going to join the Air Force when I am older”. I remember that conversation, and that is all I was fixated on…. I was a geek, I was an air cadet, and I think I had watched the Battle of Britain\textsuperscript{18}” (Kim)

The concept of the military ideal was further reinforced by memories of seductive recruitment advertising; as described by Claire, who recalls a TV campaign which depicted an RAF aircraft being loaded with food for a humanitarian relief effort:

“Adventure, going round the world on the back of a Herc\textsuperscript{19}, anywhere, it just seemed really cool. It was a really dark picture; the lights were on in the background, and the team were loading the Herc, and it was just in the middle of nowhere …” (Claire)

The sense of adventure compliments societal concepts of military life depicted in films and books. Replace the 1969 film ‘Battle of Britain’ mentioned by Kim with films such as ‘Dunkirk’ (Nolan, 2017) or ‘1917’ (Mendes, 2019), and it can be appreciated how popular representations of military life can act as channels of distribution through which a moral concept of the self is interwoven and formed through societal and subcultural narratives. In contemporary recruitment literature, such concepts are recreated along with scenes of helping others, travel, adventure, and danger (Microsoft, 2017), which have been identified as reasons why people find the military compelling (MacMillan, 2018b) and which are inherently masculine as they reproduce the traditional alpha male ideal (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009). Yet, descriptions of life under fire or kinetic\textsuperscript{20} action (Brunger et al., 2013; Godfrey and Brewis, 2018) were mostly absent from the narratives at this point, even when participants were discussing inherently dangerous jobs:

“I just wanted to be a pilot; I didn’t realise they were going to pay me to be a pilot. I was so naïve I just thought they gave you food and accommodation and let you be a pilot.” (Jennifer)

Such childhood dreams produced coherency and consistency in the participants’ narratives, reinforcing their sense of belonging to the Armed Forces (Brown, 2017). But Jennifer’s reflectively narrated naivety (Fraher and Gabriel, 2014) and feminine suggestion of innocence regarding financial matters (Treanor and Marlow, 2021) are at odds with the lethal violence associated with the military (Godfrey and Brewis, 2018). The purpose of

\textsuperscript{17} RE - Religious Education.
\textsuperscript{18} The Battle of Britain (Hamilton, 1969).
\textsuperscript{19} Hercules aircraft. A transport aircraft used to move equipment and people.
\textsuperscript{20} Kinetic action is a euphemism for active warfare, usually including lethal force.
Jennifer’s story appears to foreground an innocent adventure of flying as opposed to any masculine notions of success, financial gains or status associated with being a pilot. However, Jennifer joined the RAF just as women were being accepted as pilots, and her excitement at the prospect of learning to fly should therefore be considered in this historical context (Raffnsøe et al., 2019). A career as a pilot provides a means to achieve status within the organization and difference from others, men and women, enabling Jennifer to elevate and distance herself from them by meeting ideals associated with the masculine military ideal; capable and brave (Grimell, 2015).

The military identity can be considered to be imbued with a status, value, and sense of purpose (Brunger et al., 2013) which is constructed in opposition to civilians who are portrayed as spending more time talking rather than doing. D. I. Walker (2012) uses this concept to demonstrate the superiority soldiers experience over civilians, a feeling aligned to the idea that military personnel are expected to hold a higher moral standard and physical fitness than their civilian counterparts (RAF, 2000). There was an inherent physicality associated with military life which was repeatedly mentioned and accepted as a condition of employment (Coupland, 2015) but which was also used to reinforce the difference between military and civilian (Sparkes, 2007; Maravelias, 2018). This helps fortify and shape a binary masculine/feminine distinction in the minds of military personnel where military equals strong and civilian equals weak (Woodward and Jenkins, 2011):

“You get told from like basic training like, you know, you are no longer a civilian, like civvy whatever! And it gets drummed into you, doesn't it, throughout your career you are different from them.” (Nicola)

This is a crucial technique of power (Foucault, 1991) enacted by the military, where identity is constructed around the civilian Other who is rejected and reduced. By presenting civilians as fragile beings, military personnel accentuate and prize physical prowess and mental resilience to become stronger. This chimed with the participants’ self-conceptions and aspirational military identities; “I was quite sporty, outdoorsy, quite fancied something adventurous” (Amy). The prospect of travel and adventure was mentioned regularly, with overseas postings and moving within the UK also being viewed positively. In this way, the participants embraced physical fitness standards and the disruption of military life as a necessary condition of military membership and legitimate governmentality rather than an embodied part of their subjugation (Coupland, 2015).
5.2.3 Achieving Legitimacy, Status and Purpose?

Various social and cultural experiences influenced the participant’s aspirations; as children living in a military environment; stories of adventure from family members and friends; popular films and TV shows; their own experiences in the Air Cadets and military conflicts on the news. These experiences reflected a morality and value that society continues to assign to the military and can be a powerful source of meaning and definition as a military career is imbued with purpose and value (Dutton, Roberts and Bednar, 2010; MacMillan, 2018a). For example, in her first interview, Jessica spoke of the pride she aspired to achieve through membership of the RAF:

“There was a Remembrance Parade at the Guild Hall … my brother was there with the Air Cadets, and I was there with the Girl Guides, and I felt really ashamed that the Girl Guides weren't marching, and I wanted to look like my brother in a uniform; smart, marching, and proud” (Jessica)

This statement enables an appreciation of Jessica’s connection to the RAF from childhood and how she saw RAF membership as a source of self-value (Connor, 2010; Creed, Hudson, Okhuysen and Smith-Crowe, 2014). In such instances, the importance of patriotism, duty and service should not be overlooked when attempting to understand how, through governmentality, organizations create discourses of legitimacy which command social value. For example, the links the Armed Forces have to the Royal Family assist in maintaining the legitimacy of the organization (Brown and Toyoki, 2013) and support notions of national identity as they represent the symbolical apex of the military hierarchy. Social value can also assist in the creation of an illusory and legitimate version of the self through association with an organization while also providing the subject with a sense of belonging and purpose (Ashforth et al., 1989) where there was once a ‘lack’ (Driver, 2009). It was this lack of value and purpose which encouraged Amy and Patrick to join the RAF:

“I didn't feel part of anything. It was very much; you are just there to turn up to work and go home again, and it was just sort of an empty existence I could see myself having at the recruitment company.” (Amy)

“I worked for a couple of different companies … and it was never a happy job. No one ever wanted to come to you for a good positive reason” (Patrick)

The negativity expressed in these two accounts demonstrates how the participants were unable to narrate an acceptable and credible understanding of themselves in the civilian
world (Alvesson et al., 2008), as they felt their jobs and associated identities lacked value and legitimacy in contrast to the disciplined military ideal (Foucault, 1991; Higate, 2003a).

5.2.4 Accepting Subjugation

The participants rarely associated joining the military with a loss of freedoms; indeed, their stories of joining were ones of opportunities and possibilities, not restrictions. While Foucault (1994) argued we are all subjugated by the social forces that envelop us, voluntarily joining an organization that amplifies these controlling forces in a way that is perceived to restrict our freedoms can be considered at odds with mainstream conceptions of the autonomous self in modern society (Scott, 2010). Indeed, many of the participants welcomed being held to account by the moral, ethical and legal considerations of military life such as the Queen’s Regulations (Ministry of Defence Air Force Board, 1999):

“I like the structured environment; I thrive quite well with structure, and I respect the idea of discipline and hierarchy and all that sort of thing, and I also loved the idea of serving Queen and Country. I am very much very patriotic and loved the idea of doing something that … I could feel really proud of.” (Jessica)

“…it was really just to join an organization that was kind of very disciplined that had a very strong patriotic vibe to it.” (Lisa)

This is in contrast to other accounts of military life where soldiers dismiss such patriotic ideals (Godfrey and Brewis, 2018) but appears to resonate in terms of how members of the Armed Forces maintain their legitimate place in society (Brown and Toyoki, 2013; Mottershead, 2019). There was also an economic feature of participants’ joining stories reflecting objective and subjective outcomes in terms of career results (Heslev, 2005). Although not a strong recurring theme, like the aspirational possibilities of military life and the need to belong, financial security was knowingly discussed and accepted as part of the process associated with securing employment and accepting military discipline (Giddens, 1991):

“I came to end of my degree, and I thought ‘shit I am going to have to get a job’.” (Alex).

“I had to make the decision whether or not I wanted to go for the job or the lifestyle; you know, as I said, I would very likely lose my currencies etc as a therapist… You know, get to travel, a permanent wage, ‘cause I was self-employed … and I actually
wanted to be a PEdO\textsuperscript{21} \ldots when I got the acceptance, it was for fighter control, and I had to make the decision whether or not I wanted to go for the job or the lifestyle \ldots and I chose the lifestyle \ldots I signed my death warrant from there really.” (Sarah)

Although it has been found that the state of the labour market affects recruitment, with more people joining during times of economic hardship (Hooper and Stephens, 1997), aspirational identity and a need to belong outweigh financial imperatives. Only Sarah seemed to reflect on the autonomy she lost by enlisting, the remainder of the participants appeared to accept the military’s controlling discipline as part of the effort-bargain (Giddens, 1991) demanded by the organization in exchange for status, purpose and legitimacy (Brown and Toyoki, 2013) through which they could secure their aspirational selves (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009).

5.2.5 Accidents, Denials, and Emerging Consistencies

Although there were many enthusiastic joining stories, some participants, like Sarah, were less positive and attempted to disassociate themselves from their decision to join up. These participants introduced a concept of “accidental joining” to their narrative as if the choice was made not because of their agency but somebody else’s idea. This could also be considered an act of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 2006; Rodrigues and Child, 2008).

“\ldots at school, I remember having a career interview, \ldots this guy asked, “well what do you want to do with your life?” And I have no idea really, and he said, “what do you like?” and I said, “well I like flying”. And he said “have you considered joining the military? Have you considered joining the RAF?” (Jennifer)

“I'd popped into the careers office in Leicester because I needed to speak to my dad [who was serving overseas]. I didn't have 10p, so I used their [the career's office] GPTN\textsuperscript{22} phone and whilst I was there, they said, “we have started recruiting for female aircrew -are you interested?” and I thought ‘well I have got nothing to lose.’” (Sally)

If understood as an act of denial (Binks and Cambridge, 2018), such statements may facilitate the blocking of the emotional conflict experienced by leaving the RAF, as it was never their choice to join in the first place. The narrative of “accidental joining” effectively granted permission to leave, helping to balance the emotional discrepancy between their desire to move on and the loyalty they feel towards the organization (Rodrigues and Child,

\textsuperscript{21}Physical Education Officer.
\textsuperscript{22}General Purpose Telephone Network.
The introduction of this narrative plot also allows the participants to re-construct their history, reducing their attachment to the organization and begin constructing a different identity, that is perhaps unsuited to military life (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010).

Participants’ joining narratives are crucial to understanding where they situate themselves emotionally in relation to their decision to leave the RAF and how they attempt to construct a secure, coherent, and consistent narrative of the self during their transition from military to civilian despite such attempts being forever illusionary (Watts, 1951; Knights and Clarke, 2017). The conflated and, at times, conflicting joining narratives could reflect the complexities found in appropriated selves constructed as a result of enculturation within the military institution (Grimell, 2015). Perhaps the ‘accidental joining’ narrative could be considered to demonstrate a nascent reflective agentic awareness greater than those who claimed joining was a response to an autonomous desire for excitement and adventure. However, exploring why participants joined contributes to understanding how the disciplinary powers that shaped their military service also influenced their desire to leave (Foucault, 1991; Grey, 2005; Lukes, 2005).

5.3 The Leaving Narrative - Betrayals

The reasons why a person leaves an organization and how closely they continue to identify with it has been shown to affect the transition process (Scott, 2010; Hennekam and Bennett, 2016), and narratives have proven useful to develop subjective understandings of participants’ motivations and influences (Ybema, Keenoy, Oswick, Beverungen, Ellis, and Sabelis, 2009b). The resultant stories can be variable and fluctuating reflections of knowing rebellion or gradual awakenings and opposition to military discipline (Foucault, 1994; Ybema, Beech and Ellis, 2011). The following section first demonstrates some of the totalising effects of military discipline before considering how individuals begin to question and resist the powerful social relations and normative behaviours they produce. Throughout, concepts of gender, discipline, and resistance intertwine to develop an understanding of how social forces can be revealed in stark clarity or, through their pervasiveness and ubiquity, remain unacknowledged and hidden (Lukes, 2005). Moreover, even as they are rejected or acknowledged, they continue to shape behaviours and identities in unforeseen ways (Miller and Rose, 1990, in Knights and McCabe 2003; Grey, 2005).

5.3.1 Totalising Effects

The flood of disciplinary frameworks and social relations (Coser, 1967; Goffman, 1991; Foucault, 1991) for which military life is known (Foucault, 1991; Giddens, 1991) produce
techniques of power that reproduce the status quo through a discourse of gendered service responsibility which privileges duty, loyalty, status, and ambition (Lukes, 2005; Coupland, 2015; Treanor and Marlow, 2021). Such dedication, sacrifice and service associated with this ‘call of duty’ are concepts embedded within the idealized identity of a member of the Armed Forces (Higate, 2003a) and the legitimacy of the organization (Shields et al., 2017). The combination of these forces helps to create a panoptic environment with totalising and subjugating effects on the individual (Goffman, 1991; Foucault, 1991; Scott, 2010), which will be explored in the next two sections through the corporeal (Pullen and Rhodes, 2008) and the powerful discourses of service and self-sacrifice associated with the ideal military identity (Foucault, 1991; Grey, 2005; Flynn, 2007).

5.3.2 Limits to Masculine Ideals of Success.

Lukes (2005) describes how power in organizations is controlled by access to decision making and, like many organizations, decision making in the military is controlled through access to a privileged hierarchical framework. This clear association between power, decision making, and rank (status and success) is fuel for individual ambition and explicitly materialises gendered behaviours as products of techniques of power; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and examination (Foucault, 1991). Achieving promotional success which supports attempts of securing credible and confirmed elite identity constructs (Alvesson and Robertson, 2006; Brown, 2017) can drive decision making, life choices and performative practices that have effects on women’s corporeal selves in ways that do not affect men (Linstead and Pullen, 2006):

“I’ve been repelling relationships because I knew that if I got into a relationship, that would be the end of my career” (Jennifer)

“I didn’t want to pitch up and be 2ic and go on maternity leave, I mean that doesn’t happen. That would make me feel really bad because I’d be like ‘I’m off again’ and letting the Squadron down” (Claire)

The 2ic jobs (and others like it) are recognised precursors for promotion and, in understanding this, Claire, like women in many professions (Gatrell, 2011; Gatrell, 2013; Treanor and Marlow, 2021), chose to prioritise her career and professional responsibilities above her maternal desires. In doing so, she conformed to the disciplinary expectations of an unencumbered worker. Her choice demonstrates the power disciplinary techniques, and normative behaviours can have on the corporeal and the seductive effects masculine concepts of success can have on decision making and self-categorization as a means of

\[23\] Second in Command (2ic). Deputy of a squadron or a wing, similar to a section or a department.
securing the self (Horton et al., 2014). However, achieving identity security is fraught with difficulties (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Brown, 2017) as it is dependent on the unpredictable Other (Knights and Clarke, 2014) and technologies of the self that enable a multitude of decision making possibilities (Clarke and Knights, 2015). Nevertheless, while all participants recognised the challenges of balancing conflicting demands of military and private life, it is acknowledged that no discourse is totalising (Foucault, 1991, 1994) and not all participants were prepared to prioritise their career:

“I’d always, always said that I didn’t think having children and being in the military was compatible. … I’d always sort of said that as soon as I’d had children, I would probably leave” (Emma)

By publicly asserting her priorities in this way, Emma may have been attempting to avoid the inherent tensions and demands associated with finding a balance between career and family (Kahn, Wolf, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal, 1964) and how she was viewed by significant Others. However, she appears to have mixed feelings about how this honesty may have affected her promotion possibilities:

“I sit here as a 16-year Flight Lieutenant, kind of going well … As a third tourist24, I think, ‘well could I have done more?’ But … I was always too honest with all of my reporting officers that I wanted to leave as soon as I had children. So, I always worked hard, I always did everything that was asked, but I never really got written up for that, … but then I always said I didn’t want to be a squadron leader, so … and they were all quite aware of that so maybe I should have kept my mouth shut a little bit. Not that I would have taken the promotion if I’d have been offered it, if that makes sense, … because I wanted to be a controller, I didn’t want to disappear into the deep dark hole of High Wycombe.” (Emma)

Emma’s reference to High Wycombe represents the exchange she would have made to achieve promotion by moving away from her valued operational job as an Air Traffic Controller to a desk job not involving aircraft. This positioning reproduces the masculine idealised military identity of one who ‘does’ as opposed to one who ‘does not’ (D. I. Walker, 2012); an example of othering which can act as an attempt to secure the self (Brown, 2017) and suggests something of the hierarchy within the hierarchy of the military organization. Furthermore, while Emma’s decision to prioritise family could be seen as a rejection of the organization’s totality and imply autonomy, it could also serve as an affirmation of its

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24 Military careers are measured in tours, especially in relation to achieving promotion. A first tourist is very inexperienced, while a third or fourth tourist is very experienced and should be either pushing promotion or seen as someone who has reached their rank ceiling.
demands as by refusing to combine the roles of motherhood and officer, she legitimises the organization’s need to have primacy over personal life (Coser, 1967, 1974) corroborating the belief that you cannot be a mother and an officer (Gatrell, 2013). Additionally, it could be argued that Emma self-regulates to performative rules about ‘doing gender’ (Butler, 1993), prioritising longed-for children reproducing and validating ideals of traditional femininity through which she can secure an alternative identity to her officer self; but which nevertheless removes her from the decision making process and societal life (de Beauvoir, 1949) a situation for which she expresses ambivalence (Davey and Arnold, 2000).

The multiplicities of influence and motivations contained within Emma’s story are complex and, at times, contradictory, perhaps representing some self-doubt or insecurity regarding her choices (Ybema et al., 2009). But her position “I wanted to leave as soon as I had children” contains a consistency maintained throughout her life story, which can be seen as another way she attempts to secure her sense of self (Casey, 1995; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Furthermore, refusing promotion, even if only imaginary (Costas and Grey, 2014), was a repeated narrative theme of the participants which appears to have acted as a protective barrier against a lack of promotion, supporting the decision to leave the RAF and providing a further means of securing the self, through alternative measures of success, as individuals experienced transition (Horton et al., 2014).

5.3.3 The Ideal Worker

The number of times a person is sent overseas in support of operations and/or is posted to different units plays a crucial role in understanding the institutional dynamic of military life and the effects of near totalisation (Goffman, 1991; Scott, 2010). While the frequency of postings and time away from home is dependent on branch, trade, and operational tempo, the demands on the individual and the family remain considerable (Hyde, 2015; Segal, Lane, and Fisher, 2015). Within this environment, the opportunity for couples (Hammer, Allen, and Grigsby, 1997; Radcliffe and Cassell, 2015), especially dual serving couples, to live together becomes a challenge as careers or service needs are prioritised (Huffman et al., 2017):

“We had two children - my husband was in the Army, so there was very little opportunity for co-location25. In fact, officially, I think it was four months in seven years we were at units which could be classed as co-location units.” (Sally)

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25 Co-location – couples being posted at the same unit or close enough for one to daily commute.
Such separations are not unusual in dual serving couples, and when children enter the family dynamic, the female partner often assumes the majority of caring responsibilities. Furthermore, the masculine military environment encourages women to take extreme measures as women overperform (Archer, 2013) and overcompensate for their family responsibilities (Henry and Treanor, 2010) and even the perceived failings of their peers (Brownson, 2014):

“If I had meetings, even overseas meetings, I was still breastfeeding, I took my daughter with me, and my parents would travel with me, and I would book a suite at whatever hotel was closest to wherever I needed to be. .... I would take my expressing bottles with me and just squeeze into the loo for 5 minutes and make sure I had breast milk to give her the following day” (Sally)

“So, I would volunteer for all the crappy jobs that no one else wanted to do. I really tried to juggle it, not letting anyone down.” (Lisa)

“I have always been one to go above and beyond; even when I’m paring it back, I will still go above and beyond. And I suppose the guilt that comes from that or feeling that you can’t fit everything in. ... I can remember times on a Friday afternoon when everyone else in the team had gone, ... and I'd still be there knowing I had childcare till 6 o'clock. ... You then find yourself in a position where you are choosing between work and children. And sometimes I would choose in favour of work. But I wouldn't feel good about doing that….” (Jessica)

These stories of self-sacrifice and martyrdom (Gjerde and Alvesson, 2020) show how Sally, Lisa and Jessica continued to present a preferred self of professionalism through which they had previously sought to achieve a sense of identity security (Learmonth and Humphreys, 2011; Clarke and Knights, 2015; King, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2017; Brown, 2017). However, in response to a threat against this preferred self, Sally uses the ensuing insecurities to author an account of the unfairness of her treatment to build a case supporting her decision to leave, demonstrating how she uses her moral position as an “expression of agency framed within relations of power” (Brown and Coupland, 2015, p. 1315):

“When I announced my pregnancy, my (female) Group Captain said, “Well Sally, I thought you were a career woman…..” and my male one star, whilst I was pregnant, was commenting on one of his other female Group Captains who had … arrived pregnant, saying, ‘I can't believe it’ and .... was making very derogatory comments within earshot of me... ... and knowing that I was going to be removed from the
In analysing this extract, the female Group Captain’s comment demonstrates the negative consequences of homosociality (Bird, 1996) and how disciplinary effects of professional judgements, related to the unencumbered idealised employee (Coser, 1974), can be reproduced regardless of the observer’s gender. This can damage women’s career prospects and cause anxiety as they cannot secure a valued identity through the affirmation of significant Others (Knights and Clarke, 2018). Couple this with unequal treatment in how personnel gaps in the team were negotiated reinforces the view that women were prohibited from having a successful career and taking on parenting responsibilities in the RAF. It is suggested these challenges to women in the Armed Forces continue because the policymakers, the people through whom power is enacted, recognise they cannot compete with and completely master (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004) the equally potent normative performativities of motherhood (Butler, 1993). In allowing women to be both mothers and servicewomen, the foundations of their hegemonic masculine privilege could be compromised (Goldstein, 2018), threatening the social order (Gatrell, 2011) and rendering many of the military’s disciplinary frameworks inconsequential.

As individual priorities change, social power dynamics shift, and the organization’s totalising reach can become less effective, resulting in participants challenging its authority, rejecting its influence (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Barbalet, 1985) and breaking from symbolic representations. Indeed, as seen in both Goffman (1961) and Foucault (1991), resistance will occur or even thrive in the most totalising of institutions (D. Taylor, 2011), and participants did not allow the disciplinary effects of power to go uncontested, often opposing the normative discourses of military life in numerous ways which are discussed next.

### 5.3.4 Opportunity Dying

Operating in a highly competitive environment, participants repeatedly complained about the capriciousness of the promotion system and having to compete for promotion against friends and colleagues they may have worked with for decades (Hammer et al., 1997; Radcliffe and Cassell, 2015). The perceived likelihood and uncertainty of promotion led many participants to reject institutional narratives of meritocracy and fairness and led to frustration and a decline in confidence. Reduced confidence has been shown to precede insecurities such as imposter theory (Clance and Imes, 1978), treated not as a pathological condition but as described by Knights and Clarke (2014) as a routine response to
unobtainable idealized or unwanted imaginary selves. The uncertainty surrounding promotion prospects and unknown variables affecting promotion was exacerbated by individuals being placed high on the promotion list one year only to drop the following year with little or no explanation. Alternatively, counter-intuitively, to be regarded as unpromotable one year only to be promoted the next.

“… I got the worst feedback for promotion possible from the year before I was picked up\textsuperscript{26} and went ‘fuck it’ I am not interested” (Claire)

In such an environment, attempting to achieve identity security through promotion success becomes unrealisable based as it is on the changeable Other (Knights and Clarke, 2017) and participants like Lisa directly associated this capriciousness with their status as a mother:

“Although they tried very much to accommodate me, the writing was on the wall. I wasn’t going to be promoted; I was very much seen, as you know, “She would be a very good officer if it wasn’t for the fact, she didn’t keep on having children” I felt that unspoken, and in fact, it was sometimes spoken …. My boss actually said, “You know you would have been a Squadron Leader by now if it wasn’t for the fact you had had children”. (Lisa)

In this quote, power can be seen to work through Lisa as she defends the organization “they tried very much to accommodate me”, despite also presenting, almost in the next sentence, evidence to the contrary. As Lisa works through the ambiguities in her narrative, she recognizes the lack of organizational consideration for childcare as a palpable inequity, and she comes to reconsider her loyalty to the organization (Elangovan and Shapiro, 1998).

“They wanted to post me away from my husband …., now there are no childcare facilities down [there] at all; there is no crèche, there is no nursery, and it’s weekend work and evening work, and I explained to them that I had a small child and that I would have to go there on my own because my husband was at High Wycombe and my desk officer said, … “You are really going to have to decide what you really want from the RAF and who is going to take the lead between you and your husband”, and it was that kind of comment and attitude that had started to chip away at my unwavering loyalty to the RAF.” (Lisa)

\textsuperscript{26} Achieved promotion.
Alternatively, for women who do not have children, the lack of promotion was often ascribed to an absence of opportunity. Within a hierarchal organization, promotion reduces as you rise up the command chain, while competition increases concomitantly. Although it was rare for female participants without children to suggest they were treated differently as a result of their gender, blinded perhaps by the discourse of equality and neutrality within the organization (Acker, 1990), many felt they were ‘stuck’ in middle management (Bardon, Brown, and Pezé, 2017; Gjerde and Alvesson, 2020). This meant they were powerless to progress, demonstrate their capabilities and, as a result, unable to secure their identities.

“The lack of opportunity once you get to be a 6/7-year Squadron Leader. The chances of promotion seem to be … I don’t know 4 in 200 every promotion board, … so for me, there is very little opportunity.” (Alex)

“We’re overborne27 with squadron leaders, there aren’t that many Wing Commander slots to go to … I was offered an extension, but there were caveats tied to it … which meant … I would automatically discount myself from promotion.” (Michelle)

The narratives presented by Michelle and Alex seemed to be of a future that offered no career progression but continued to be demanding (Coser, 1974). However, although alternatives such as career breaks were available, they were rarely taken up as many people expected they would have a detrimental effect on their career. Research into accountancy has shown similar results, with women taking career breaks being disadvantaged and the feminization of the profession being resisted by “complex patriarchal structures” (Roberts and Coutts, 1992, p. 391). These structures appear to have developed in response to women re-entering the workplace after childbirth to lessen the threat they presented to its professionalization and a perceived reduction in its status within society (Irvine et al., 2010; Haynes, 2017). Jennifer, the only participant to take a career break, provides an example of how such incentives worked in the military.

“I took my career break, and I was looking forward to finding out from the deskie where I was going next. I was looking forward to my promotion board. I was quite happy to go back for another year somewhere until I get that Wing Commander promotion or I … be offered Wing Commander promotion and then come back. It didn’t even enter my head … to leave the air force, not at all. I saw the career break as an offer from the air force to say, “We value you; we do want you back, we don’t want you to leave. Go away and do what you want to do as a family, and we look

27In this case too many squadron leaders for the number of squadron leader posts available. Being ‘overborne’ can happen at any rank.
forward to welcoming you back when you come back.” And I did not expect to find that I had been missed off the promotion board (Jennifer).

Jennifer explains how a senior member of the organization then attempted to cover up the prejudice, which resulted in her being omitted from the promotion board while simultaneously, and unashamedly, reinforcing the masculine logic that supported the original decision.

“He [a senior officer from manning] drove all the way up, met up with me and spent a couple of hours in my front lounge and drove away again. [He] tried to talk me out of wanting a retrospective board, ‘cause it would be embarrassing for them, wouldn’t it? And Service Complaint territory, I guess …and the Wing Commander said to me, “Do you really feel that you can be competitive with your fellow Officers who have not, who have not chosen to take a career break? And do you feel you have taken periods of maternity; it was your choice to have a family; it was your choice to take a career break. And do you really feel that you can be competitive? ‘cause I think what is best for you is to take a demanding staff tour to reprove yourself to the Air Force on return from your career break”, and that is what he had written on my jacket for the board, and that is why I didn’t get boarded.” (Jennifer)

Questions of legality aside, under such conditions of discrimination, abuse of power and correction, “I think what is best for you is to take a demanding staff tour to reprove yourself to the Air Force”, it can be seen how power acts not through the structures of the organization but its members (Foucault, 1991, 1994). Although the impact of parenthood and lack of opportunity emerged as themes, other issues were also raised and presented as unofficial promotion policies within the organization. These usually formed along dualistic tendencies which encourage the privileging of one characteristic over another (Knights, 2015), often presented as a threat to life in military discourses (Trewin, Ojiako, and Johnson, 2010; Holyfield et al., 2019) and included: not having served long enough, being too young/not experienced enough, being too old, not having enough time left in service to be productive in the next rank (Ainsworth and Hardy, 2004; R. N. Butler, 1989), not having the correct specialisations, privileging of certain masculine skills over others (Godfrey et al., 2012), not being well known or popular enough and internal branch/trade politics demonstrated through homosocial face fitting (Davey, 2008; Bird, 2016). Although the MoD has a procedure to deal with the administrative complaints (HM Government, 2017) that are generated as a result of these unofficial policies, there was a reluctance amongst most participants with a grievance to take this route, as they felt it futile, were too exhausted by the prospect of having to fight for their rights or were concerned how it would be perceived. “I’m not going to putting a service complaint or anything like that, no, because
that just comes across as bitter. I’m fucked off about it” (Kim). This position is considered to reflect performativity embedded in gendered disciplinary power relations, demonstrates a feminine passivity and lack of resistance which, once again, perpetuates the status quo, which benefits male members of the organization (Lukes, 2005). Even when women do take a less passive stance, they can come up against interminable sexist attitudes that privilege hegemonic masculinity at the expense of the feminine:

“...It also helped that I had a service complaint ongoing at the time for discrimination, so that kind of focused my mind slightly when I met with the Station Commander and senior officers in manning, who compared having a baby to having a hip replacement and who told me that I couldn’t expect, as anybody who took extended leave from the RAF, couldn’t expect to pick up where they left off in their career. So then, yeah, it became pretty easy to tell them to stick their job.” (Lisa)

The practices and attitudes described here by Lisa and Jennifer occur across many masculine professions and specialisations (Herman, Lewis, and Humbert, 2013) and has been argued to result from a combination of procedural and structural issues as well as individual orientations and perspectives (Liff and Ward, 2001). Together these factors may serve to obfuscate discrimination in the same way discourses of gender neutrality have been shown to hide gendered practices (Acker, 1990; Pecis and Priola, 2019).

5.3.5 No Longer the Ideal Worker

As discussed earlier, the 'ideal' worker is unencumbered by family and able to fully commit to the organization’s demands (Acker, 1990). Many of the female participants’ narratives contained stories of how they tried to maintain this impression by working harder or doing the jobs no one else wanted to compensate for being female or a mother (Misra et al., 2010). These next quotations contain the moments of ‘awakening’, as Annabelle and Lisa realise the consequences of their self-regulated subjugation (Watson, 2009; Wolf, 2019):

“I would scoop him up in the morning - sometimes he would let me get him dressed sometimes he would have a head fit, and I would just hand him over because I couldn’t spend the time ... And I’d just hand him over to someone … and say ‘your problem’: here is the child, here is the bag of clothes, and then I’d go to work. And it was like, ‘hang on a minute, I am not raising this child; somebody else is’, and I was getting shorter and shorter and crosser and crosser because I was more tired.

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28 Serving or former members of the UK armed forces can complain if they feel they have been wronged on a matter that arises when they are subject to service law. This can include bullying, harassment, discrimination and biased, improper or dishonest behaviour (HM Government, 2017).
Everything had to be done at 300 miles an hour because I was trying to juggle too much, my son was stressed, I was stressed” (Annabelle)

“and then slowly the realisation that it was very much one-sided, and that the expectation was on me to pull it out of the bag, that it became a bit easier actually to walk away because it was becoming a bit toxic” (Lisa)

These quotes show how power runs through people, not structures (Foucault, 1994) and through the acknowledgement of their subjugation to the organization, Annabelle and Lisa were able to oppose the demands of the greedy organization. However, their defiance was arguably a reaction to an equally demanding responsibility put upon them as parents, which they could not release themselves from and through which they appear to reify and essentialize discourses of women as primary carers (Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2009). The tendency of women to assume the responsibility of childcare is illustrated further in the following example as Sally is forced to face the conflict between her career, the primacy of her husband’s career and her family responsibilities (Hammer et al., 1997; Radcliffe and Cassell, 2015):

“My husband was starting his Advanced Staff Course; I conferred with my desk officer to see whether I could take a sabbatical. I was told actually I had an Out of Area29 coming up, and I never thought I would be that person, but I thought ‘no’. I’d got to that point, that as we discussed earlier, it is not tenable……. So, I elected at that point to say, well I am going to take my 44 option30. Because an Out of Area would have killed my family; maybe that is a strong word to use, but I don’t think that my husband and I could have sustained living apart again through that period of time dealing with the children.” (Sally)

Accepting the hierarchal position of her husband’s job over her own and the performative normativities of motherhood, Sally decided to leave the RAF. Although the conditions of her/their decision were not unconditionally accepted, the choice for Sally to leave the RAF was made as a result of a rational argument supported by her husband’s higher earning potential (Lukes, 2005) and gendered normativities surrounding childcare (Radcliffe and Cassell, 2015). There is evidence in Sally’s narrative that she struggled with this decision which triggered a resignification of the self, “I never thought I would be that person”, the person that lets the team down by not fulfilling their responsibilities (Milliken, Morrison, and Hewlin, 2003). In this story, Sally was no longer able to meet the expectations of the

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29 A six-month detachment overseas.
30 Option points - point in the contract which allows individuals to leave the RAF with a lump sum and an annual pension. 44 refers to the age of the individual.
organization and its demands of loyalty and commitment (Coser, 1967; RAF, 2000) and what it means to be a good team member (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail, 2006; Knights and McCabe, 2003; Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly, 2014) and fulfil her role. That the organization was making unreasonable demands of her family, expecting her to go OOA while at the same time asking her husband to undertake an intense year-long course, did not seem to occur to her, neither did alternative possibilities such as her husband deferring his course for a year. Sally’s acceptance of the legitimacy of the organization to make these demands, the prioritising of her husband’s job over her own, and her acquiescence to gendered norms regarding childcare can be seen as outcomes of the governmentality and disciplinary powers of the military institution and wider social life (Rose, 1989; Foucault, 1991; Grey, 2005).

This pattern was repeated in all the narratives of female parents except Jennifer, whose husband took the role of primary caregiver to their children and supported her during a demanding tour as she sought reward through promotion. As a dual serving couple, this was a decision they negotiated (Huffman et al., 2017); however, when that promotion did not materialise, Jennifer reconsidered her relationship with the RAF and subsequently found herself constrained by the same conditions of possibility that affected the other female participants (Lukes, 2005; Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2009).

“I’ve put my family second. And I am not prepared to do that if I am flogging a dead horse.” (Jennifer)

While Jennifer appears to suggest she would continue to prioritise career over her caring responsibilities if promotion was a possibility, the other female participants were unable to imagine or accept a future where they combined a successful career and cared for their children. Moreover, they looked to other successful women in the organization for inspiration and divided these successful, higher ranking, female colleagues into two groups; those who did not have children and were able to focus on their careers and achieve promotion success; and those who did have children but outsourced parenting responsibilities to achieve career success:

“There are people like Sarah who I have got regard for … and she did get to Wing Commander. And I think well she didn’t have children; she didn’t have a marriage; she could put everything into the job.” (Maria)

“But ok, I am looking at my peers, I am looking at my female peers, no let’s, let’s go one better: let’s look at the females who have made it to a decent rank, they have children. Do they see their children? No.” (Annabelle)
In both cases, by categorising their successful female colleagues as either childless or having employed carers Maria and Annabelle were able to explain their promotion challenges by othering their colleagues and securing their own identity through the narrative of an ideal mother. This discourse works to keep women subjugated (de Beauvoir, 1949) as their caring responsibilities eclipse their professional ones or they create a discourse of unachievable competency, an impossible to achieve imaginary self (Roberts, 2005) through which to measure themselves:

“\(I\) hadn't necessarily realised how life-changing having children was going to be. All of a sudden, you are a mum first. You weren't an officer first, you were a mum, then you were a wife then, third, you were the officer, and that is where the challenges come in.” (Sally)

The idealised expectations Sally associates with these competing identities leave her exposed and vulnerable (Gabriel, 2010) because she cannot hope to meet them individually, let alone collectively. Doing so is beyond the capacity of normal individuals (Knights and Clarke, 2014). In this understanding, a significant problem of military socialisation (Haynie and Shepherd, 2011) emerges against conflicting discourses and aspirational identities of professional competence and motherhood. Sally does not ‘see’ herself as normal (Herman and Yarwood, 2014; Mottershead, 2019); she is military, she is the product of a system which makes people stronger, better, more organised and more disciplined (Hultin and Szulkin, 1999; Woodward and Winter, 2004; D. I. Walker, 2012). Yet, she still prioritises and conforms to traditional gendered feminine roles, creating an unresolvable tension and a conflict in her sense of self which stymie’s aspirational hopes of achieving identity security (Ladge, Clair, and Greenberg, 2012) and, as will be discussed, has consequences during transition.

5.3.6 Work-Life Balance

The lack of work-life balance which is experienced as a result of conflicting identity ideals, was a recurring theme in the leaving narratives and is viewed as a threat to the organizational need for an ideal worker (Acker, 1990). Despite postings once offering excitement and operational detachments being discussed as hugely enjoyable experiences, the participants began to find them incompatible with their social responsibilities as parents or their aspirations to achieve a better work-life balance (Wolf, 2019). This desire to achieve a better balance between work and life can also be seen as a way to affirm a more feminine identity by rejecting masculine notions of professional success (Lewis, 2013):
“Moving around every couple of years it’s really exciting when you are young … and the possibility of going away … and then … you just get tired of running yourself around a bit, and you just want to settle …” (Nicola)

“. and suddenly I am full time at my own house …, and I got comfortable in my own house, I was hating the quarter …. I’m on good money [in the RAF], but then I balance that with the fact that I am going to get posted it could be High Wycombe. I don’t want to do that again; I want to be at home.” (Maria)

The conflict between home/work led all the participants to overwhelmingly choose home. A response which can be described as an anticipatory performative behaviour that conforms to gendered normativities (Butler, 1993,1997) and provides a coping mechanism against the threat of not being able to meet the military ideal (Petriglieri, 2011). However, such changing perspectives also dilute the disciplinary normativities of military life, creating alternative possibilities including the questioning of the organization’s legitimacy.

5.3.7 Questioning Moral Legitimacy

Rules and regulations, perhaps previously seen as trivial but on which bureaucratic organizations rely on for their ability to function, can become sites of stress and active resistance, especially when they are perceived as unjust (Judge and Colquitt, 2004):

“There was a particular incident over money for tea, coffee and biscuits that made me think ‘that is it I have just had enough of it’ … I thought maybe this isn’t good for me anymore” (Alex)

“you have got the wrong shirt on to wear a jumper, or you need to wear a tie ‘cause you have got this particular [shirt], or it’s cold, but you can’t wear a jumper because you haven’t got the tie … they [dress regulations] are bonkers. (laughter) … I always thought were stupid but now have really got silly, and again made me realise that yeah, now I am in my 40s …. I can pretty much dress myself how I need to.” (Matt)

Although these acts of resistance may appear minor, they reflect a frustration with the organization and its cultural control mechanisms which can be seen as the roots of a dis-identification with the organization and its associated identity (Costas and Fleming, 2009). Alex’s disquiet at the difficulties in getting funds allocated for hosting refreshments is at odds with the military’s presentation of itself as a ‘professional organization’ (Cabinet Office, 2010; Cabinet Office and National Security and Intelligence, 2017). For Matt, although dress regulations had not changed significantly during his service, his narrative suggests
his tolerance of them had reduced, signalling resistance to authority as uniforms act as a
technology of power, through which his behaviours could be observed and evaluated
(Foucault, 1991; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2009). These innocuous disparities can contrast
with the moral resistance to the legitimacy of the organization Nicola experienced during
her time as a recruiter for the RAF:

“And then you can see, you know, because you are watching someone’s face, when
you interview them, and you can see these 15, 16, 17-year-olds having to seriously
think about what how they would feel about taking someone’s life and I just thought
‘oh my God what am I doing’.” (Nicola)

Nicola’s concerns extended beyond recruiting to British involvements in conflict overseas,
which she began to view as counterproductive:

“…. but then when Syria was on the news a lot more, and you started seeing all
the children … and then I started thinking about bombing … and I didn’t become
a complete hippy, but in my head, I was finding it a little bit more difficult to be
okay with being within an organization that was doing something that I didn’t
really agree with anymore. … and then when I had put my notice in, it became
okay for me to have, it was like I felt disloyal …to have those thoughts so much,
and in the last 18 months, I kind of got more and more like it. More opinionated
and I felt like it was okay for me to; I wouldn't express those opinions in work,
but with my family and with friends, I felt like I could have those opinions,
whereas before, I didn't feel like I could. (Nicola)

In deconstructing Nicola’s narrative, many elements of organizational control become
apparent. She expresses discontent about the age people can join the military, and she
opposes the UK Government’s intervention in the Syrian civil war. Opinions she does not
feel able to share with her colleagues as they run counter to official discourses; as a result,
she was silenced (Clarke and Knights, 2015) through her fear of being judged as disloyal
(Foucault, 1991). She only feels able to voice her objections with family and friends outside
of the military but even then, as she tells her story, she qualifies it, drawing on her military
self “I didn’t become a complete hippy”, as she defines herself through not what she is but
what she is not in an attempt to secure her sense of self (Bhattacharya and Elsbach, 2001;
Mottershead, 2019). Nevertheless, she questions the moral and ethical stance of the
organization and differentiates her moral position (Kornberger and Brown, 2007; Weiskopf
and Willmott, 2013) as a means of separation. This was a technique used by several
participants as the interviews progressed.
5.3.8 Competing Normativities

In the participant’s narratives, the military, with its capricious and selfish demands (Goffman, 1991; Scott, 2010), becomes not a source of security but a threat to the integrity of the ‘other family’, the husbands, children and parents; or a barrier to reducing incongruities to a more ‘normal’ life which offers greater security, opportunity, autonomy and balance (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2009). With limited options for flexible working and a changing moral commitment to the organization, identity associations began to shift as the participants mobilized other social resources (Barbalet, 1985) and began to re-author a secure self away from the military (Ibarra, 1999; Fraher and Gabriel, 2014). An alternative view considers the organization’s inability to master the participant’s behaviours resulted in their banishment, as a result of them being considered unpromotable and/or in need of correction (Foucault, 1991; Knights and Kerfoot, 2004). In these circumstances, the cultural control mechanisms of the organization based on a discourse of equality, fairness, and loyalty (RAF, 2008) become untenable (Robinson, 1996; Clinton and Guest, 2014). Indeed, the absence of opportunities at the next rank presented a de facto reality, creating openings for alternative possibilities and opportunities outside the RAF (Lukes, 2005), which the participants re-authored as an expression of agency through their decision to leave:

“and I thought ‘you know what? I am going to leave because there is loads more out there that excites me’. " (Alex)

“I can do better than this. I can do more than this.” (Matt)

For many of the participants, key to the resignification from a loyal and dutiful member of the Armed Services to a self who had more decision making power (Lukes, 2005) was the need to protect their families:

“I cannot conceive of moving. My little girl was just about to start school in September … and I thought, ‘I need to spend time with her before she starts school’. Because I didn’t have a good connection with her and I need not to be moving schools, moving nurseries, moving house, moving job, finding new friends with my husband away overseas for a year….” (Jennifer)

Forgoing career for the family is not only gender-specific, as male interviewees also prioritised family relationships over work commitments. For example, the work/relationship conflicts Matt had witnessed his peers experience influenced his decision to leave before becoming an issue with his fiancé. This could be considered an anticipatory behaviour that goes against
the prevailing gendered view but is nevertheless self-regulating (Foucault, 1991; Butler, 1993; Higgins, 1996). While Paul was not willing to leave his daughter while he deployed on potentially dangerous operations:

“but this was the only occasion where I turned round and said ‘no’. I am leaving now, … even with my daughter being older, that [leaving on ops] becomes hard.” (Paul)

Nevertheless, for women in dual serving couples with younger children, balancing the demands of a military career and family life was often presented as a gendered impossibility as the majority of their narratives demonstrated the notion that parental responsibilities remained with them, rather than their partners (Moen and Sweet, 2002):

“it just reached a point … where it was completely untenable both holistically, mentally, financially and for the children, the key thing was it was crazy …. but I just felt my children need me and if I want to keep my marriage, then it is time to go”. (Sally)

“I tell you what mate - and you can frickin’ well transcribe this on the record, and it needs to be in big, bold letters for the flippin’ military to understand. You can’t be a mum in the Armed Forces; you can pay somebody else to be the mum for you, or you cannot be good in the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces does not allow you to be a mum and in the Armed Forces.” (Annabelle)

Annabelle and Sally demonstrate how they felt they faced a double bind of conflicting gendered expectations. As members of the military, they were expected to maintain standards consistent with the archetypical military identity of strength, dedication and loyalty (Higate, 2003a; Woodward and Winter, 2004; D. I. Walker, 2012; MacMillan, 2018a). An identity that continues to benefit men due to their assumed competence and ability to work long hours, unpredictable working routines and physical strength (Treanor and Marlow, 2021). Yet, as mothers, societal discourses continue to limit and relate to a set of prescribed gendered performative practices of caring and supporting their children at home (Sjoberg, 2010). These idealised gendered performativities of motherhood (Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2009) can also be seen as social control mechanisms (Creed et al., 2014) which the participants come to discuss further in the next chapter.

5.4 Summary

The inducement to look outside the RAF for employment or a different lifestyle is not always a result of dramatic incidents. However, feelings of betrayal can release the individual from the loyalty contract they have with the organization shifting, but not necessarily losing, the
close identification they have had with the organization enabling them to seek a sense of identity security elsewhere (Robinson, 1996) as participants begin to construct alternative aspirational identities (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009). Institutional ties, which were carefully crafted and reproduced through familial bonds, rigorous training systems, cultural discourses, friendships, camaraderie and behavioural norms, no longer constrain potentialities in a way that cultivates commitment to the organization and promotes self-sacrifice and service (Basham, 2008; Suzuki and Kawakami, 2016).

The normativities and powerful social relations of the military were not able to contain or constrain individual resistance (Toyoki and Brown, 2014) when they came into contact with a build-up of alternative forces, whether they were represented by family responsibilities (Moen and Sweet, 2002), individual success (Gabriel and Carr, 2002; Lukes, 2005; Coupland, 2015; Treanor and Marlow, 2021) moral divergence (Kornberger and Brown, 2007; Brown and Coupland, 2015). Under these circumstances, juggling children and work often pre-empts a decision for one or both partners to disengage from career ambitions, as coordinating childcare/schools/housing/postings can be problematic and opposed (Ishii-Kuntz and Coltrane, 1992; Moen and Sweet, 2002), this enables different potentialities to be realised (Lapointe, 2013; Vallas and Cummins, 2015; Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016). Unable or unwilling to conform to the hegemonic masculine normative behaviours (King, 2015, 2016) expected, the participants sought to secure their identity (Knights and Clarke, 2017) through alternative means. In this sense, the resistance that Foucault contends is always present in organizations became a site for individual agency in opposition to the effects of power which aimed to create a docile military subject (Lukes, 2005).

The frustration between what individuals felt they could achieve in the RAF compared to the civilian world resulted from the controlling influences of dominant masculine discourses (Foucault, 1991; Kovitz, 2003; Lukes, 2005). As the participants all chose to leave or not extend their service in the RAF, it can be argued that the military mechanisms and techniques of power failed in their endeavour to limit individual possibilities (Foucault, 1991). This culminated in the decision to leave, which the participants often authored to take back control of their lives (Coupland, 2015). The focus of the next chapter shows how they were merely exchanging one dominant discourse for another (Lukes, 2005) and how they would continue to attempt to secure their sense of selves through accepting and rejecting the military ideal.
6 Beginning Again

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores how the participants reconstitute their identities in response to disruptions to their sense of self as they temporally move away from regular service and associated military identity (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993). While in Belonging and Betrayals (Chapter 5), the participants resisted the disciplinary relations of the military to facilitate their transition; here, they draw on and reject their military selves to consolidate and provide coherence (Gill, 2015). Using varying technologies of the self, the participants reauthor their life narratives as performative identity work attempting to secure their sense of selves (Clarke and Knights, 2015) by reproducing and re-interpreting past events, adapting present understandings and aspirational futures. When incongruities are noted, the participants experience further disruption or periods of liminality, based on letting go or holding onto previously understood relatively secure identities, which previous research has been shown to encourage flexibility and/or reify ontological positions (Ybema et al., 2011). As the participants manoeuvre through transition, their accounts are variably blind to or demonstrate an increased awareness of, individual, organizational and societal influences, through which they attempt to “formulate, maintain, evaluate and revise self-narratives” (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Watson, 2008; Brown and Toyoki, 2013, p. 875). As the participants further negotiate their agency, while experiencing forces that remain out of their control, some appeared to significantly revise their attachments to the RAF. In contrast others remained locked into their disciplined selves, attempting to make sense of their indeterminate state and waiting for their ‘something new’ to begin (Beech, 2011).

6.2 The Transition Narrative – Beginning Again

6.2.1 Disrupted Identities

While most military transitions are described in the literature as successful, as measured through employment (Ashcroft, 2014), a percentage that struggle with transition process (May, Stives, Wells and Wood, 2017; Mobbs and Bonanno, 2018). Findings here suggest the transition process is more complex and less binary as even those who are regarded as successful experience significant and/or extended periods of disruption (Collinson, 2003; Binks and Cambridge, 2018; Albertson, 2019):

“when I first left, it felt like a bereavement, and I think I am now at the acceptance stage, and it took a long time to get there, and it was the whole waves crashing around you and finding which one you could dive beneath and going beneath that
wave and having that moment of respite before coming up again into the choppy waters (Sally)

“I guess realistically I am having the longest transition of exit known to man …” (Annabelle)

“I hope it fucking ends soon …. I am getting fed up of it now.” (Claire)

Whilst everyone experiences transition differently, an extended transition may raise doubts about the decision to leave, what Derrida calls the ordeal of the undecidable (Reynolds, 2021); it can also be a sign of a continuing unhealthy attachment to the organization (Ashforth et al., 1989). This can potentially lead to a difficult transition, but those who remain positive and recognise the decision point has passed (Lukes, 2005) may find their transition less problematic despite obstacles in their path:

Because it hasn't worked in the way that I had expected or hoped, there is that doubt. But the act of leaving was the right thing to do. (Matt)

Experiencing a disruption to a valued identity can be uncomfortable as adjusting to a different status can cause consternation and anxiety (Ashforth et al., 1989). For example, female participants with children found they had replaced their professional and parenting responsibilities (Duberley and Carrigan, 2013) with a motherhood role that lacked social value or personal satisfaction (Lewis, 2015):

“the biggest adjustment that I had to make was that I had left a career where I was an SME31, I knew my stuff people respected my opinion, people would seek me out for advice, people liked having me as a line manager, it was a good place to be, and I was now spending all my time with two people who hardly ever listen….” (Jessica)

A change in status from a wage-earning employee to a stay-at-home mother caused Jessica to create an affirmative narrative which acted to secure her RAF identity overlooking the negative aspects which influenced her decision to leave. In this way, Jessica creates a story of congruence to counter uncertainties related to her sense of self (Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006). For the women who left because they found it difficult to balance work with children, the conflict between their responsibilities of motherhood and professional selves took new shape, often remaining unresolved (Duberley and Carrigan, 2013). Even the most dedicated of mothers struggled to present themselves as ‘just a mother’ with the

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31 Subject Matter Expert – a recognised expert in an area, e.g., engineering or logistics.
associated loss of professional identity (Laney et al., 2015) and societal value (Butler, 1993; Choi, Henshaw, Baker, and Tree, 2005; Ali et al., 2013):

“I think I struggled mentally and emotionally with the transition, nothing to do with the Air Force, but just the thought of going from being fully employed with a wage and …. a purpose outside of the home to then become an … almost a nobody and I felt a bit of a nobody when I left” (Lisa)

“I did feel lost from a personal sense in that I was suddenly and it sounds awful, I was suddenly just a wife and a mother, and I didn’t have anything for that was me, and that sounds awful because you know it’s a very important job being a wife and a mother and you know I would never want to take away from that but at the same time having had a career as [well as] being a wife and a mother I suddenly didn’t know what was for me … and I guess I kind of lost that sense of self.” (Sarah)

The desire to maintain a valued self in response to the reduced status of motherhood often led the participants to position themselves as ex-military (Farmer, Yao, and Kung-Mcintyre, 2011) in an attempt to sustain a particular representation of their professional selves (Petriglieri, 2011):

“The conversation tends to go, oh what do you do? Oh, I am a housewife, but I used to be in the military.” (Emma)

All participants became aware of their changed status at some point during their transition, but only the mothers expressed a need to present a dual or triple identity combining their professional or military selves alongside motherhood (Leung, 2011). For many, this motivated them to follow new career paths towards new aspirational identities (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009) and produce various narrative strategies (Gabriel et al., 2010) as they adjusted to a new set of social relations (Petriglieri, 2011). For organizational purposes, the following two sections explore these strategies from two different perspectives; those who, to various extents, remained inside the military setting (from work and/or personal perspective) and those who are considered to have moved into civil society (by living and working in a civilian environment). However, this neat categorisation is recognised as an artificial construct as participants were not neatly contained by binary classifications and boundaries were blurred (Bulmer and Eichler, 2017).
6.2.2 Being a Veteran in the Military Environment

6.2.2.1 Reservists

The ability of organizational narratives to shape identity is recognised as influential (Brown and Humphreys, 2006), and the relatively more flexible Military Reserves, with its discourse of belonging and a sense of purpose associated with public service (Flynn, 2007), can pave the way for participants to regain 'lost' status while enjoying a better work-life balance (Gill, 2015; Griffith, 2009). However, regaining ‘lost’ status and achieving a better work-life balance than experienced in regular service relies on three unpredictable conjectures; firstly, that the participants will be able to regain a valued identity to counter the anxiety they have been experiencing, which is problematic as securing identity rests on the unpredictable other (Knights and Clarke, 2017). Secondly, it supposes that achieving a work-life balance is a possibility, rather than a fantasy that keeps subjects trapped in an imbalanced equilibrium (Bloom, 2016) and a belief that their ongoing identity disruption is only a temporary derailment (Gabriel et al., 2010). Thirdly it assumes the participants' negative behaviour patterns will not be reproduced as they attempt to prove their worth (Henry and Treanor, 2010). These assumptions are based on a fundamental misunderstanding of how power and relational hegemonic masculinities work to legitimise unequal gender relations (Messerschmidt, 2019), and, for those who are mothers, it ignores or is blind to the link between their underappreciation and motherhood status, which the organization has historically regarded as problematic (Herman et al., 2013). This devaluation is reinforced through enduring masculine cultures which define and reward dedicated workers (Hochschild, 1997; Glass, 2004) above those considered ‘the handmaidens of the institution’ (Parsons and Priola, 2013, p. 595). In this extract, Annabelle explains how she tries to sustain her military identity by joining the reserves but continues to find the hierarchical value system of the RAF at odds with an aspirational self that balances status, work and family (Choi et al., 2005):

“I didn’t want to leave. I didn’t tell anyone, it wasn’t on Facebook that I left ‘cause of course as soon as I left, I went straight back in again … as a reservist so that I could try and manage my life and my working hours. … …So I am getting paid 3.5 days a week, but … every single day is being effected by work … and I also kept running into “what does she know she is just a Squadron Leader” … and I just kept running into this wall and because I no longer had a career path or the desire to stay and behave myself for promotion I could see myself taking my “I don’t give a shit attitude” a little bit too far and was either going to cause myself a problem or cause my bosses a problem, and I would not wish to do either… work got a bit too much, and then it was the juggle again, and it was like woah no I am going back to where I was. I
have to stop altogether, and this time, I am able to mentally accept that I am a person and not a Squadron Leader…. I've had to sort of go, “you are not a real Squadron Leader anymore” … I know I should say I am a real Squadron Leader, but you are not … there is a difference between a reservist and a regular. I get to choose if I want to go and get shot at, but that is not what being in the military is about. You don't get to choose. You get told. So, somebody said to me, well, why don't you take a Wing Commanders … job, and I'm like, 'cause I wouldn't be a real Wing Commander. And then I suddenly realised actually it doesn't matter anymore. And I worked out that … nobody is going to write on your epitaph “was a great Wing Commander but a crap mother,” but that is probably what it would need to say, and I suddenly thought that is not what I want” (Annabelle)

The first point to note about this extract is how the normalizing judgements and hierarchical observations of the Armed Forces (Foucault, 1991) drove Annabelle’s dissonance (Petriglieri and Stein, 2012). By leaving the regulars and re-joining the reserves quietly, few knew she had transferred, and she felt those that did not know she was a reservist continued to treat her as a regular, while those that did know treated her differently. This deception was an attempt by Annabelle to negate the status drop associated with a transfer to the reserves, or in her own words, no longer being a ‘real Squadron Leader’. In doing this, she hoped to maintain her hierarchical position and secure identity; however, she found security continued to be beyond her reach (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004). Furthermore, her behaviour was self-defeating as Annabelle found herself working longer hours than she was being paid for, yet she continued to feel her skills and experience continued to be undervalued (Henry and Treanor, 2010; Parsons and Priola, 2013). Her recurring behaviours were a response to power relations, which initially drove her to leave the military. These relations of power include valuing the unencumbered ideal worker above all else and a hierarchy which places regulars superior to reservists (Acker, 2006, 1990). While this 'superior' position could be considered a defensive reaction to reservists, as they are not subject to the same disciplinary powers or judgement as regulars, and are therefore able to question military discipline in a way that regulars are not permitted (Foucault, 1991; Lukes, 2005; Zelcer, 2012), Annabelle was nevertheless further subjugated. As a result, unable to change either the organization or her behaviour, Annabelle left the RAF for the second time. In her narrative, Annabelle presents herself as rebellious but disciplined, morally courageous and self-sacrificing, deciding to leave the RAF not to be a problem and become a ‘good mother’ (Choi et al., 2005). However, in accepting that she cannot meet the greedy demands of military service (Coser, 1974), Annabelle reinforces masculine hegemonic military practices which discourage the feminine (Sasson-Levy, 2003; Partis-Jennings, 2019) and all the while undermines her efforts to secure her identity (Clarke and Knights, 2015). Viewed through the lens of disciplinary power, her actions can be seen as self-
disciplinary conforming response to the loosening of the disciplinary framework associated with her reservist service, which indicates a preoccupation with identity (Knights and Morgan, 1991).

As with Annabelle, joining the reserves was always part of Karen’s plan to achieve an ordered and smooth transition and can also be seen as an attempt to nullify any loss of status associated with leaving the regulars. Karen’s transition to the reserves was presented through her narrative as less problematic than Annabelle’s. This is an assessment supported by her ability to author counterfactual arguments to disciplinary power relations, which strongly reflected and reproduced the behavioural consequences of hegemonic military disciplinary frameworks and assertive performativity (Knights and Morgan, 1991; Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2009), which sustained her military identity (Van Gilder, 2019):

“I don’t like rudeness, but in my whole service career, I can probably count on one hand how many times I actually used my rank. Because I don’t think I need to ‘cause I think respect is earned. So … it’s good manners. I suppose that is what niggles me… it’s not that … they haven’t appreciated my rank because that doesn’t bother me. It’s the fact they haven’t treated me like a human being.”
(Karen)

Karen’s expectations of being treated like a ‘human being’ are conflated with how she feels she should be regarded because of her membership and rank within the Armed Forces. To Karen, her service and hierarchical position are so much a part of her that they are immutable, creating an essential self rather than a condition of military social order (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Suzuki and Kawakami, 2016). Although she believes she did not use her rank, she fails to recognise or appreciate how others treated her was embedded and embodied in every interaction causing her to internalize “the military’s masculine ideology and values” (Sasson-Levy, 2003, p. 440). To the extent when faced with perceived ‘rudeness’, the connection between her concept of ‘manners’, ‘respect’ and her position in the hierarchy remains hidden to the point she constructs alternative truths to sustain her belief (Lukes, 2005; Tracy and Trethewey, 2005):

“They treat you differently in uniform …. when I walk round in uniform, people react differently to me than when I am in civvies. And to prove a point, when I was walking up, two officer cadets walked past me, marched past me. If I had been in uniform, it would have been “morning ma'am”, ‘cause I was in civvies they weren't going to say anything. So, I turned round to them and said, “Good Morning, gentlemen, how
are you?” “Oh, Good Morning”. And it’s that. What difference does it make? I am exactly the same person. They are exactly the same people, so why is it they feel they have to acknowledge me because I am in uniform? Because that is the discipline, but surely when you are talking about courtesy, it shouldn’t make any difference. Unless they are told that when they are walking, they can’t say hello to anybody, I don’t know what the rules are. It might be don’t associate with the civvies. I don’t know.” (Karen)

This blindness towards the cadets conditioning, her expectations, and the automatic but unknowing reduction of the civilian and feminine is an outcome of military discipline, which could lead to future disharmony as Karen continues her transition (Siebold, 2007; Albertson, 2019). Yet Karen did not let her lack of signifying rank stop her from upholding military discipline and confronted the cadets, demanding to be acknowledged. This action demonstrates assurance, assertiveness, a continuance of her hidden military identity, and although it shows Karen possesses confidence, in or out of uniform, it is built on the relations of power associated with military discipline (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). Therefore, Annabelle’s and Karen’s narratives show how discipline works through people, not structures (Foucault, 1991; Lukes, 2005). While Annabelle’s military discipline became part of her narrative to justify leaving the reserves, Karen used her military discipline to sustain her position, demonstrating the limitations of reifying behavioural outcomes of military service, showing them as able to be both subjective and contextual (Sasson-Levy, 2003; Albertson, 2019).

6.2.2.2 The MoD civil servant

The MoD civil service offers an alternative to the reserves, enabling veterans to remain in a reasonably familiar environment, benefit from their economic capital and military experience, and feel like they are adding value (Ashforth and Mael, 1996). However, a familiar social environment, where past status’ are variably known and unknown, can produce confusion through social relationships with unpredictable and inconsistent Others (Knights and Clarke, 2017):

“I think it’s that, I think people are seeing me, civil servants are seeing me a Squadron Leader still. But I haven’t got the rank, and they are waiting for me to calm down, but I don’t think I can ‘cause this is me.” (Claire)
“the guy, who was a Squadron Leader, ... sent me both back barrels in an e-mail and copied my one star\(^{32}\) in... and I was backed into a corner and ordered to [do] something. ... But I got a very overly emotional response back, which really shocked me I wasn’t expecting that, and I don’t know if I would have got such an emotional response back had I signed as Squadron Leader Claire Jones. ... But it really upset me, so I spent most of Fri/Thurs night in tears, going, what have I done? ... I need to give it six months, I need to get used to them, they need to get used to me. I need to feel part of the team, but I am not convinced, right now, it’s for me in the long term. I don’t think I can be that mediocre and just accept that nothing is ever going to change because there is no will or desire to change it.” (Claire)

In this example, Claire is trying to make sense of the disparate ways she is being treated by her colleagues, unaware of her military background. Her civilian colleagues know and understand her as a veteran, while her military colleagues view her as a civilian. The conflicting value judgements and behavioural expectations placed on her by these significant but disparate Others cause anxiety (Grove, Lavallee, and Gordon, 1997) and insecurity (Knights and Clarke, 2018). From the civil service perspective, she is too military, too ‘gung-ho’, while from the military perspective, she is seen as a civil servant and therefore ineffective and without valued operational experience. She has also been unable to recreate a sense of belonging (Albertson, 2019), which may explain why she found it difficult to reconstruct a viable identity and holds onto idealized gendered aspects of her military self; driven and dedicated (Hoedemaeker, 2010) in contrast to the civil servant who lacks ambition. However, time appears to positively affect Claire as over a year later, and after a period where she had taken sick leave due to stress, she recounts an incident where she is ‘talked down to’ by a regular, but her response is somewhat different to the tears and self-doubt of her previous confrontation:

“I am at the stage now where I don’t feel the need unless it’s like some Flight Lieutenant twat the other day - I don’t feel the need, I’ve got Miss Claire Jones on my desk now [not Squadron Leader Jones] ... I could have chosen to not react, but I was triggered, and I’m like fuck this. You’re going to listen .... yes, he did; there was an absolute shift change in the meeting, my colleague noticed it as well. She said, “I wondered how you were going to play that”. I said, “I know you were; I couldn’t catch your eye”. And it was maybe unfair. I shouldn’t, it’s a bit like playing with a mouse, isn’t it. He was, he didn't know how to judge me, so he took me to be the lowest common denominator, rather than being ... I laid out my experience and my rank on the table. He was able to put me into a box in his own mind and go

\(^{32}\) A senior commander in the MoD (Civilian/Military).
ok. All of a sudden, the conversation got easier, now whether that is because he could equate to me as [a fellow officer], he may not have worked with the civil service before, or he was just being a knob. I don’t know.” (Claire)

Analysis from this exchange reveals how Claire has learnt how to strategically respond to the normalizing judgements and hierarchical examination of her colleagues and the military Other (Foucault, 1991; Collinson, 2003; Lukes, 2005). However, we continue to see hierarchical positioning reproduced as Claire, even though she hesitated in her narrative, draws on her military self to reduce the civil service, “he took me to be the lowest common denominator, rather than being …”, while also diminishing the Flight Lieutenant to a plaything. This exchange demonstrates the rapid and fluid way preferred identities can be measured and reinforced in the moment as a discursive strategy (Hochschild, 1997; Tracy and Trethewey, 2005). Claire strategizes her behaviours based on her new sense of belonging with the civil service (Knights and Wilmott, 1989; Roberts, 2005; Redmond, Wilcox, Campbell, Kim, Finney, Barr, and Hassan, 2015) and through this finds a way to adopt “a positive military veteran citizenship status” (Albertson, 2019, p. 256). However, although Claire’s narrative purpose was to show how she has moved on from her military identity “I’ve got Miss Claire Jones on my desk now”, it was her military identity, acting as an identity anchor (Fraher and Gabriel, 2014), which allowed her to assert her position. This was reinforced by the confirmatory responses of her colleague and the Flight Lieutenant, which enabled her to temporarily secure her identity in that moment (Knights and Wilmott, 1989) and in the retelling of the story helps construct her post-military self (Holyfield et al., 2019).

6.2.2.3 Defence Contractors

A third way veterans can remain in the defence environment is through becoming a defence contractor. Three of the participants took this route, drawing on their military and specialist expertise to sustain an element of identity security (Fraher and Gabriel, 2014):

“I suppose the benefit I am personally getting out of it is I am continuing what I did before, continuing my technical knowledge, using my technical expertise…. And I am probably just carrying on to a certain extent what I did in the Air Force, so I almost think of it in a way like another posting because I am still doing defence stuff, I am still doing RAF stuff, I am still doing specialist stuff, …. but I am still in transition, and I think in a way, in my head, I am still seeing this as another posting.” (Paul)

As with Annabelle, Paul attempted to distort his reality by tricking himself into believing he was undertaking another posting as an attempt to ensure a valued identity remains
“unaffected by actual social interactions” (Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006, p. 207). Unlike Annabelle, however, Paul acknowledges this dissonance which arguably placed him in a better position to deal with the social rejection of no longer belonging to the ‘military club’ (Albertson, 2019). In this next example, Paul explains how he often returned to military bases for commercial reasons, and while many of these encounters passed without incident, there were occasions where he found the military’s hierarchical positioning of contractors threatened his identity (Elsbach and Kramer, 1996). This he counters by reauthoring himself as the morally innocent injured party (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010):

“The one thing I have found difficult is I have been onto [camp] for an industry day, for a bid, and I honestly came out thinking I feel like the fricking enemy now because of the way it was managed … And I have been on other RAF bases and not had that … and I thought bloody hell … the way it was structured, “we are just going to give you a quick in-brief, we will take you round each site, and we will clear the building out before you get there, and you are not to do this and you are not to do that, don’t take photos, we will answer any questions when you get [back]” …. we just thought ‘bloody hell’” (Paul)

This adversarial treatment perhaps signified several different concerns, including security, commercial sensitivities as well as military hostility to civilianisation, but also acted to reinforce the difference between military and civilian by controlling behaviour and access (Foucault, 1991; Bhattacharya and Elsbach, 2001; Lukes, 2005; Basham, 2008). Although an apology was later received (as the personnel involved realised they had treated future industry partners poorly), Paul remained unsettled, and this incident helped him create a moral ambiguity towards the Air Force, which was further complicated when his employer requested he gain mess membership \(^{33}\) (Weiskopf and Willmott, 2013) in order to access military social and networking activities:

“So, I applied to mess membership, well the company wanted me to apply for mess membership. Actually, I had a slight problem with it……. and I got to the main gate, and I said can I have a pass to go the mess and they said, "you are going to have to get someone from the mess to escort you". So, I tried to get hold of the mess and no answer and all this sort of stuff, it just all fell into the too difficult thing, so I thought, sod your mess membership if I can’t even get [on]. I get it completely because I don’t have an ID card and therefore, they can’t just let someone on who is basically … but I had a letter to say …… the lady on the passes and permits … said to me

\(^{33}\) Membership of the Officers Mess, which provides single living accommodation for officers and a place for social engagements. Retired service personnel can get mess membership which enables them to continue attending social functions.
“you have got to realise that when you leave the Air Force, you are nobody”, and I just thought right ‘thank you’…Right, ok, got it, I’m off.” (Paul)

These conflicting loyalties between civilian and military (Redmond et al., 2015) created an identity disruption which in part explains why when Paul faced complications arranging his mess membership (Foucault, 1991; Lukes, 2005), he chose to distance himself from the RAF and gave him an ‘excuse’ not to comply with his new company’s request that he obtain mess membership (Collinson, 2003; Costas and Fleming, 2009). This enabled him to seek other means to secure his identity, including continued membership of more accessible military associations and family relationships (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002).

Marie also encountered disruptions to her identity during her time as a defence contractor. By being headhunted for a job she was told represented promotion, Marie was offered the chance to affirm her value denied to her in the RAF. Furthermore, her new position delivered the trappings of success; increased status, a company car, and good wages (Collinson, 2003). As a result, Marie was looking forward to the challenges of her new role and was able to maintain elements of identity stability through transition in a similar way to Paul by drawing on her power/knowledge relationships within a familiar environment (Knights and Wilmott, 1989; Watson, 2008). However, while Paul reflectively narrated his experiences, we join Marie earlier in transition as she anticipates starting her new job. Although nervous, she presents a confident self (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009), albeit one which suggests an awareness the privileges she experienced in the Air Force may not be duplicated in this familiar but different environment:

“the chap who I am going to directly work for is an American, and I like him we have hit it off, I’ve worked with him…. He knows what I like, and I know that he respects me. The main boss is a female, and I know that she took a shine to me, so I don’t feel uncomfortable, and if anything, it is an easy step, they are a civilian company, but they are contracted with the MoD, and I am going into a job that I very much understand, and I am going to be briefing the people that I used to brief when I was in the Air Force. So, all the real difference will be my attire and my nail varnish colour (laughter) and the fact that I hope that people will listen as much to me in this uniform (indicates civvi clothes) as much as they did in the blue uniform. But that will be up to me how I approach things, I’ve got no fears, I am not scared, but I think part of that is because I am going into the known and there is so much familiarity around me, I’ve got the best of both worlds in a way it is a good steppingstone.” (Marie)

In this quote, Marie draws on multiple discourses to counter her nervousness and maintain
consistency during this period of social change (Collinson, 2003). She is assisted in this by the mechanisms of power, space, activity and time, as familiar briefings maintain continuity of action and technologies of power which support normalized behaviours and hierarchies (Foucault, 1991; Lukes, 2005). Differences are made light of through reducing visible signifiers of power, uniform and gender, to inconsequential; however, Marie fails to recognise how military discipline and culture sustained her superior position in the military hierarchy (Redmond et al., 2015) and appears ambiguous or unaware of the importance of the significant Other in terms of securing identity (Knights and Clarke, 2014). Within months of taking up her new job, Marie found herself having to fight for the recognition and respect which had automatically been assigned as a result of her military rank, as she experienced a different but no less demanding gendered and greedy institution in this wider world of defence contracting (Coser, 1967; Acker, 1990):

“well, I am a lot better than I was at Easter. I was about having a nervous breakdown at Easter time. ... I'd been headhunted for this job, and I was really chuffed, and it was a job I thought I was really going to love; you know, having done it in the services already and then getting to be the head of department ... And all the money and the car and all the stuff but the reality was having been run by six servicemen in the MoD, between the three services, [it] was me plus one other and the one other, and this isn't me being rankest 'cause I came from the ranks myself; it was an ex-Army Warrant Officer WO1, .... really friendly on the outside but a bloody nightmare to work with.” (Marie)

Marie went on to elaborate:

“I'm not used to not getting on with people, that either work for me .... And I could just feel my hackles rising you know on the very first meeting and .... we got off to a really awkward, start.... So, on the day I started proper, and I was told he wasn't going to work for me I turned round to the boss and said "how's that going to work then? I'm in charge of the section, of two (laughs) and there was supposed to be at least four when I took the job on” and I said “he doesn't even work for me, ... I don't want to be doing this and having all the responsibility if he is then going to turn round and say well, I'd better check with Mark first or I don't fancy doing that”. And he said, “no that won’t happen”. But of course, it did. And it was just like form day one it was almost like every time, well in fact on day two he actually walked out on me and said he couldn’t work for me”. (Marie)

The emotional cost of this foray into the highly masculine, but not as regimentally
disciplined, world of Defence contracting affected her self-confidence and mental health (Priloa and Brannan, 2009). There is evidence in Marie’s narrative that she was more than competent to fulfil the responsibilities of her job and in recognition of this was given a pay rise at her six-monthly review. Yet both her concerns about her junior colleague’s proficiency and his tendency to circumvent her authority were dismissed and unofficially sanctioned by her boss. The company also relied on a combination of her disciplined military background (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009), loyalty to Defence as a whole (Partis-Jennings, 2019), and the rewards of the greedy institution to ensure that she remained compliant (Coser, 1967). Marie believed her treatment resulted from sexism and her two male protagonists’ (her boss and her colleague) service as non-commissioned Army officers. Considering these factors, Marie’s legitimacy and professionalism were nullified due to her gender, previous officer status, and RAF service in this organization with its embedded but hidden hierarchical hegemonic masculine processes and relations (Acker, 1990, 2012).

However, while attempts were made to strip Marie of her agency and keep her compliant, she countered by asserting herself both intellectually and emotionally, authoring a story which reapportioned blame for her failure to succeed wholly from her shoulders by sharing it with her colleagues and the corporate culture of the organization (Wolf, 2019). She achieved this by drawing on her military standards and status, directly confronting and questioning her senior management’s experience, competence and morality and resigning from the organization even when offered further financial compensation. Taking these actions demonstrated limits to her subjugation (Creed, DeJordy, and Lok, 2012).

6.2.2.4 Wives of ....

The final way participants remained in the military environment was through marriage where future possibilities appeared to remain limited due to the combination of disciplinary techniques of power, gendered normativities surrounding childcare and the temporality of military life (Burchell et al., 2007; Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998; Hyde, 2015; Lukes, 2005). In this environment, women accustomed to masculine behaviours of the professional military environment found adjusting to traditional gendered norms difficult (Butler, 1993):

“I have had forever of wearing a label and everyone knowing who everyone is and who so and so is, and the military is really bad at not just knowing who somebody is but knowing their pedigree. You walk into a room, and it’s like penis’s out on the
table; here we go, let’s measure it, the wives don’t do that. I mean, … I have got beautiful nails now [holds up painted fingernails] …. Hair, eyebrows, I am not doing the eyebrows, they can fuck that, I can’t get my head round that one … but nails and looking right. I always used to look at wives and go seriously? Do you really have time for that? But now I get it; it is the equivalent of having your own label.” (Annabelle)

This extract provides examples of multiple gendered realities within the military environment the rank signifying status (Redmond et al., 2015), the enclosed military bubble where reputation precedes physical meetings, the absurdity of masculine performativity; of ‘willy waving’ and the reduction of the feminine to the frivolous; “Seriously? Do you really have time for that?” (Van Gilder, 2019). The implication here is that serving women do not have time to do hair and make-up because their job is too important. A position which reinforces ways “that generally subordinate, marginalize, or undermine women in respect to men” (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004, p. 430) and in this context, Annabelle sets herself apart from her fellow wives (Pacholok, 2009) by enacting a form of intra-gender micro-aggression (Mavin, Grandy, and Williams, 2014; Mavin and Grandy, 2016). Annabelle’s narrative equates visible signifiers of rank to feminine ideals of beauty, making it acceptable for her to adopt what she considers tolerable feminine behaviours as she begins to ‘do’ gender in a different way (Butler, 2004). Within Annabelle’s reasoning, an acceptable hierarchy of beauty treatments appears to emerge and from this develops a transformation of the physical, the presentation of the self, within certain limits (Goffman, 1990b; Pullen et al., 2017). The hair, the fingernails become more feminine but not the eyebrows or toenails, enough for a different identity to be performed and gendered normative behaviours to be mimicked (Trethewey, 1999; Pullen et al., 2017) and hopefully accepted in a way that reinforces the binary hierarchical configuration of gender (Hancock and Tyler, 2007) but also helps Annabelle to ‘fit’ within her new environment.

Through Annabelle’s behaviour, we see her attempting to adapt to a different homogenic dominant identity but, her past and present clash, as she struggles to find an appropriate way to incorporate this new way of being with aspects of her military past (Wolf, 2019). She continues to face identity disruption as she is rejected by other wives, being on the receiving end rather than the protagonist of intra-gender micro-aggression (Mavin et al., 2014; Mavin and Grandy, 2016). For example, on one occasion, she was sarcastically called an ‘Air Commodore’, as she asked another wife not to take a drinks glass onto the dance floor. The implication was that by telling another wife how to behave, she assumed a rank and authority above her station (Foucault, 1991, 1994). In this context, Annabelle’s attempts at maintaining “a self-referential truth” through which she endeavoured to sustain her disciplined self, made herself unacceptable to others (Ybema, Keenoy, Oswick,
As a consequence, she strategizes the need to explain her previous military experience in an attempt to justify her behaviours and maintain legitimacy (Clegg et al., 2007):

“I do feel the need to tell them because otherwise, I feel like I would be lying to them. [other military wives] Almost you know not lying but misrepresenting myself almost.” (Annabelle)

Annabelle’s transformation is deeply performative (Butler, 1993). She becomes an adept cook and seamstress, highly prized and gendered talents in the seclusion of a military base. By adopting these skills, she offers services to other wives, the consequence of which is uneasy acceptability. However, she also knowingly militarises her domesticity through self-discipline (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009), combining gender role identities as a resource for her identity transformation (Leung, 2011):

“Fresh bread every morning and today I have done four kilos of apples for the freezer, plums are being stewed down, tomatoes that we bought several kilos of are being stewed down…. I have turned into a domestic goddess. And the ironing is done. (laughter) I have goals in life, you see, I do have a record <<>> on my wall when I first got here in the first two weeks I went “We’ve run out of toilet roll, the bathroom is looking a bit dirty as well, my son has run out of pants”. And I’m just like, “you lazy bitch, you have done nothing”, ... but there are things that have to be done routinely. So, I have an hour’s chores to do in the morning, which does mean the whole house gets done through the week. ..... Now then I have a spec chore to do every day, but people came out into my corridor and “Bloody Hell” ‘cause I’ve got a battle rhythm of the chores I do and where all the sports clubs and fitness things are … and then I have got my husband’s diary for the month, by week, printed of DII so I know where he is so I can fit stuff round him or flex stuff … and then we have got our month planner, which is already colour coded and (laughter) … it’s a bit like going into ops really, our corridor.” (Annabelle)

Through this narrative, Annabelle projects a disciplined image (Foucault, 1991) consistent with ideas of Berger and Luckman’s (1966) ethic of feminine gendered success, “I’m a domestic diva now”, which she has designed to counter insecurities about her sense of self (Collinson, 2003; Brown, 2015). In projecting this identity, she is attempting to elevate the value she places on activities she once regarded as feminine and therefore of less consequence (Burchell et al., 2007). However, in doing so, she attempts to incorporate her professional military self, signifying it through organizational charts, performativity of
rigorous, disciplined over achievement and discourses of ‘Battle Rhythms’ and ‘Spec Chores’ (Dick and Cassell, 2004; McAdams and McLean, 2013). Another service wife, Sally, faced similar issues adjusting to the performative expectations of a wife, here she recounts a story about a dinner party hosted for her husband’s colleagues:

“all of a sudden, it seemed like that 25 years’ worth of service counted for nothing because we would be having a dinner party, and I would make a comment, and my opinion didn’t account for anything because all of a sudden, I wasn’t serving, therefore, I wasn’t important and what could I possibly know because I wasn’t current. ….. six weeks ago, we had colleagues of my husband over for supper, and a conversation started, which I’m involved in now in my consultant role. I raised a point about it, and the individual said, “well, I've just been in work doing X and Y with the Geneva Convention and Human rights”, and I said well “you had better speak to Mark… because this is the path they are going down on that project”. And you know there was a stony silence as if well you can't possibly know that this is a closed project. And I wasn't, you know, commenting on any restricted information that I shouldn't know and funny old thing two days later an e-mail was circulated saying this project is now on hold because of X, Y, Z .... I've seen the individual once since and [he said] “yes, yes, I've spoken … thank you for the heads up”. Well, I didn't give you a heads up. I had a conversation with you as a capable individual, not just as a wife who has cooked you super.” (Sally)

Sally had multiple purposes in choosing to tell this story. By recalling how she hosted a dinner party for her husband’s colleagues, she demonstrates her ‘wifely’ commitment, facilitating his career and networking opportunities. However, it also provides a means to demonstrate that despite her domestic gendered performativity, she has maintained a professional self as a contractor (McAdams and McLean, 2013). However, digging deeper through the lens of discipline and hierarchy, the narratives reveal the complex relationships which reproduce the gendered and privileged environment in which military personnel, MoD civil servants, and defence contractors operate. The security environment within the MoD reinforces the difference between military and civilian (Higate, 2001) and is embedded in the everyday practices demonstrated by how Sally automatically anonymised places and people as she spoke. Moreover, the stories both Sally and Annabelle chose to tell, despite their domestic nature, were designed to demonstrate they are more than ‘just a wife’ or ‘just a mother’; Annabelle, through her domestic diva status, and Sally through her professional competence and access to information (Lukes, 2005; Lewis, Ho, Harris, and Morrison, 2016). Both narratives position the women beyond traditional gendered normative representations of domesticity by reinforcing and reproducing military identity, maintaining self-continuity and masculine privilege (Ybema, 2010; Bulmer and Eichler, 2017).
The common theme running through these examples and others which emerged in the interviews is how the deference given to hierarchy within the military environment triggers behaviours from others which can over time give the illusion of occurring naturally; that people’s responses to the self are seen as a consequence of an essential self as opposed to being reproduced as a result of rank and social conditions (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Suzuki and Kawakami, 2016). It can then come as a revelation when the individual realises if they do, that the behaviours of ‘Others’ were implicitly linked to the visibility of their military identity, the rank on their shoulder:

“People talk to you differently. I guess that shouldn’t be a surprise, but it was. That is one of the reasons I struggled letting the 1250\textsuperscript{34} go because if I went into PSF\textsuperscript{35} ……. and said I was Flt Lt Jones and showed my card even though I was in civvies, I got a very different response from when I was Mrs Jones. And I just felt like, not, do you know who you are talking to? but you know, I know all this. I know all this crap sounding, this …. I've just finished almost 17 years of service, you know. I get this. I'm not stupid. And I think people almost assume a different level of, not intelligence, knowledge, I suppose. And they assume that you have never served, I think, is the thing that surprised me. Not that they should ever assume that you have, but…. the fact they assume you haven't. That got to me a bit, particularly as a dependent, you know, 'wife of', you are just Mrs, you are only here looking after your kids. No. You know I served Queen and Country as well. I am just as valid as you are. And yeh, I think that was quite an unhappy surprise that they speak to you differently and, but could you honestly expect it any other way?... So, is it unreasonable? Probably not. Was it annoying? Yes.” (Jessica)

6.2.3 Being a Veteran in the Civilian Environment

Outside the world of Defence, the participants chose a variety of personal and professional paths but not all settled immediately into a new career. Therefore, this section is divided into four sub-sections reflecting the professional and aspirational identities of the participants as they negotiate the challenges of the civilian world.

6.2.3.1 Entrepreneurs

Four women chose to work for themselves, expressing aspirational identities (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009) through which they could claim agency in contrast to their regulated military selves Lapointe, 2013; Gagnon and Collinson, 2014). These aspirations were

\textsuperscript{34} The military ID Card.

\textsuperscript{35} Personnel Services Flight –Human Resources.
laden with masculine rewards of materiality and status (Newton, 1998) whilst incorporating family responsibilities, suggesting they had been able to reframe their work and domestic responsibilities in such a way to facilitate the search for a new work/life balance (Buzzanell, Meisenbach, Remke, Liu, Bowers, and Conn, 2005):

“I hope the business will be ready for sale, having made a lot of money which is in my financial forecast because I would quite like to set up another business and I will be living here with my husband and my boys. I very much see myself in this area potentially thought about doing something with the reserves Army or RAF, but I am not going to lie, if I’m making the money, I think I am going to be making, and I am running my own company with lots of [unintelligible] I am not going back in as a Flight Lieutenant. So, if they are serious about, ‘we want people from business and industry to come in and work with us’, and there are entry levels that are wing commander and above, I would think about that in a few years. Depending on how successful I was. So, I would think about that, but I wouldn’t go back in as a Flight Lieutenant. I couldn’t do that now. Now that I have been running my own company, it would just feel awful.” (Amy)

Here, Amy asserts her ambition, and although by the time of the interview has become a successful entrepreneur, receiving awards and recognition, she continues to link her achievements and status to re-joining the RAF. This narrative strategy allows her to sustain a sense of self-hood during her transition (Gabriel et al., 2010) as she imagines a future with a “unity, purpose and meaning” (McAdams and McLean, 2013, p. 2013). However, it also shows Amy is still trying to make sense of her RAF identity, her motivations are deeply subjective, family remains a powerful driver, as does the sense of empowerment she has gained from running her own company, and the self-worth she gains from the charitable element of her business, one of her main inspiring forces (Heslev, 2005; Leung, 2011). But, despite her success, Amy finds it difficult to let go of her military self, drawing on aspects of her training to sustain a sense of differentiation and superiority over other entrepreneurs (Sherman, 2005; Pacholok, 2009) and maintaining a sense of belonging to the military (Brunger et al., 2013). In doing so, she insists that if she were to re-join, she would have to be accepted at least two ranks higher than Flight Lieutenant, creating a discourse of fantasy and aggrandizement (Knights and Wilmott, 1992; Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006). This is an instrumental, objective and verifiable measure founded in masculine logics and based on a need for status and economics (Heslev, 2005). This allows her to sustain a sense of security during this period of transition as she works to become an entrepreneur, which can represent a more ambiguous identity than her previous military self (Farmer et al., 2011; Duberley and Carrigan, 2013; Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016):
“so, I think my military career still sort of permeates through into my life. I’ve held onto a lot of the things I was taught, definitely being on time. I mean, you would be surprised. I went to for a … audition thing a couple of months ago, and I was early, dressed properly, and I had come with everything, and I was 38 weeks pregnant. And the woman that auditioned me was so shocked that I turned up with everything; she said, “oh you are one of the first entrepreneurs we have had today that has actually brought everything”. And I thought, “If you can't be prepared for [this], you have got no hope.” But entrepreneurs tend to be quite airy-fairy, head in the clouds, so you know.” (Amy)

For Amy, and the other entrepreneurs’, success was important, but it was discussed alongside agentic choices, balanced against family responsibilities and being recognised as capable of more than they were allowed to achieve in the RAF (Lapointe, 2013):

“If you live your life with regrets, you don’t move on from disappointments, which the company thing was. But I’ve been busy doing my research…. And I am getting excited, I am designing how I want it to be I am making ideas for the future I have got ideas about writing children’s book…. you know there are other things in life that I am finding …. there is a life outside of success in industry and a life outside of the norm if you like and the idea of working for myself …. will be worth every penny for me to do it under my ways of wanting to run things…. I guess the risk is I won’t make enough money to pay off because if I spend the money on the business, I am not spending the money paying off the mortgage, which I could do, it would finish it, but I like the idea of investing and trying to make a bit more money.” (Marie)

Amy and Marie draw on a feminized discourse of agency achieved through their entrepreneurial activities but combine it with masculine professionalism (Lewis, 2013); this suggests that they have not quite embraced the concept of a feminine boundaryless career as described by Lapointe (2013). Rather they continue to be driven by a disciplined work ethic, which for Amy especially was honed in the military environment and reflected many of the characteristics of hegemonic masculinities, including financial success and autonomy (Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio, 2004; Lewis, 2013).

6.2.3.2 Charity Workers

Membership of the military institution provides a certain social status (Goldstein, 2018), the replication of which can be linked to participants’ choices about their future careers
through which they aimed to sustain social value (Collinson, 2003; Costas and Kärreman, 2013). For Michelle and Nicola, this meant drawing on their military skills to work in the more femininized caring sector (Apesoa-Varano, 2007), where they shared similar frustrations of working alongside civilians viewed as more inclined to ‘talk’ than to ‘do’ (Woodward and Jenkins, 2011):

“but I know I am using the skills in the military to actually benefit a local charity and get them develop their policies and procedures, and that is what I wanted to do. … I am always the first one there at meetings. I am always the one that has read all of the material for the meetings. If I get something to review or feedback on, I am usually the one that has done it. My behaviour hasn't changed in how I approach my work and my job, and sometimes it is a bit annoying that people don't seem to have the same kind of urgency about it. I wouldn't say they don’t have professional standards because they certainly do, but it doesn't always translate to physically being in a place…. But I just walk outside we have a lovely garden to go into and have a little chat for five minutes then come back in, ‘cause you can't do what you would normally do and scream at people at work (laughter).” (Michelle)

“I am way more confident than everyone else, and it must be the military. I am like, why are these people they are good at their jobs and everything …they must have ideas, they can't just be sitting there and not have ideas! So, I will say, come on, let's do this … they will talk about things, but they are not actually doing it. So, I am always the one “ok let’s do it then, …. go do it, go and get everyone together … but there just seems to be a massive difference about the way that I work, and my confidence and I just think that I can do things and I suppose it’s probably the military.” (Nicola)

From these two extracts, we can see the importance military personnel put on certain skills and attributes that help them retain their professional selves in civilian life (Kulkarni, 2020; Higate and Cameron, 2006). As with Amy, we see preparedness and timekeeping acting as a disciplinary technique of power (Foucault, 1991; Lukes, 2005). Moreover, with Claire’s account, we see frustration at a lack of action, a lack of doing (D. I. Walker, 2012). Michelle and Nicola’s stories, however, appear to contain caveats as they recognise their colleagues’ professionalism. As a result, the purpose of their narratives is not necessarily to position themselves hierarchically above the civilian Other, but rather comes from a point of confusion and a desire to understand difference, suggesting a more embodied ethic is being embraced (Knights, 2015). But they also present themselves, if not as saviours, then as
able to see things differently from their colleagues due to their military experience. Moreover, for Nicola adjusting to the new world she has entered comes at an emotional cost which throws her military and civilian life into stark contrast and requires unaccustomed emotional labour (Gabriel, 2010):

“you are too sheltered in the military like from real life from real people and real people’s problems … and the sector where I work in in care as well the voluntary work that I do … it’s a bit much sometimes… A lot of this stuff …. you just don't get exposed to it in the military, do you? But this is real people and real life. These are the real people you know we just sort of live in some sort of dream world…. but then some days I really wish I could unknow everything, go back to being oblivious of real-life”. (Nicola)

Here Nicola’s depiction of military life as not being ‘real’ acts as a distancing technique suggesting she is letting go of her privileged military self in favour of the civilian ‘real’ (Conroy and O’Leary-Kelly, 2014). Nicola has not created a privileged military fantasy to sustain and help her negotiate a new organizational life (Moxnes and Moxnes, 2016). Rather, she has created one to diminish it and position herself differently from those still contained and limited within the military environment. This is in contrast to how other veterans depict their service (Godfrey and Brewis, 2018) and could be a response to Nicola’s need to de-legitimize the military’s disciplinary hold over her (Lukes, 2005).

6.2.3.3 The Training Instructor

While Nicola had a reasonably clear idea of her future career aspirations, Matt struggled to find the ‘right’ role when he left the RAF. Although he was happy domestically, he found finding a new job, which fitted with his aspirations of agency, status, and value challenging (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009; Haynie and Shepherd, 2011; Godfrey et al., 2012; Godfrey, 2016; Kulkarni, 2020). As a result, he took a temporary job as a training instructor, where repeated encounters with apprentices arriving late for class helped him to appreciate his shift in status and the disciplinary differences of power found in military and civilian life (Foucault, 1991; Lukes, 2005):

“…… a number of the people I have been training have been apprentices working for big companies, but apprentices and the attitudes I have had to deal with, with a lot of these kids have been astounding because they are just so not military it is not funny. When I first started teaching these kids who didn't turn up on time, in fact, often many of them turning up very late, not doing as I was asking them to do, was really putting my nose out of joint. Originally because I felt, thinking from a military
point of view, I felt these people are not respecting me, they are not respecting the way things should be, ‘should be’ being a keyword because they are working on a very different way of viewing the world to me. But that was a very military thing, and I have had to. It’s probably been quite useful. I have had to readjust my thinking on that massively because otherwise, I was going to give myself a heart attack before I’d even got anywhere.” (Matt)

Matt’s afront was based on his military background where instructors demanded respect, who drill into cadets the importance of timekeeping and punctuality, which was repeatedly noted by the participants as a skill lacking in many of their civilian colleagues (Higate and Cameron, 2006). This way of being, which Matt recognised as an outcome of military discipline (Foucault, 1991; Lukes, 2005), was nevertheless a tool he initially thought he could use to sustain a sense of professional continuity (Kulkarni, 2020):

“I did on the first couple of sessions take two people outside and have a real bark at them, which of course not only got me cross, but I had these bewildered looking people looking at me thinking, what in the heck are you on about? Because to them, it didn’t matter, I was just being an absolute nut, but of course, they had crossed over my line over what was right, as I saw it at that time. So, I have had to adjust in order to get the best out of other people but also just to manage myself.” (Matt)

Through these encounters, Matt discovered that behaviours which are appropriate within the military environment can be self-defeating in the civilian world. Matt’s narrative demonstrates how he was able to respond to changes in the subjective judgements and normalized behaviours but, the rationalisation of his change of approach was nevertheless embedded in a disciplined military framework (Higate, 2001; Herman and Yarwood, 2014). He did this by firstly recognizing that his judgements were out of step with the norm and stripped of his officer status; he had few disciplinary levers through which he could ‘correct’ behaviours (Ibarra, 1999). Secondly, as ‘kids’, ‘apprentices’ learning the ways of the professional world Matt was able to reduce their status in contrast to his more mature, experienced, disciplined, and military self. Thirdly, they were non-military and therefore could not be expected to behave as service personnel would have done, not having had the ‘benefit’ of disciplined military training. Although these strategies are embedded in functional and rational masculine logics (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004), Matt’s approach also demonstrates flexibility as he acknowledged what could have been an identity threat into a resource for change (Brown and Coupland, 2015). In this way, he was able to engage in identity work through his storytelling, helping him secure a new identity away from his military self (Brown, 2017).
6.2.3.4 Aspirational Identities

Many of the participants had clear life goals or well-defined aspirational career plans; however, released from the control of the disciplined military, they still found themselves constrained by traditional gendered family responsibilities (Acker, 1990; Foucault, 1991; Lukes, 2005; Ely, Stone, and Ammerman, 2014) but without access to their professional self (Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2009):

“Job wise, I have got no idea. I still do not know what I want to do. I think a lot of it depends on my husband” (Emma).

Sarah aspired to return to her medical roots, and although she recognised its partial instrumentality, her decision was made with a desire to help people (Apesoa-Varano, 2007):

“If you are doing nursing for the money, you are doing the wrong thing…. I don’t have to work, but I want to be a nurse and getting paid is going to a bit of a bonus it will make holidays a little bit nicer”

Sarah went on to elaborate:

“getting back to Something, getting back to education, it sounds silly. Finally, learning Something. I want to learn. You know I should have gone medical from when I left school. So, finally doing Something I am a little bit more passionate about. As much as I did like controlling, it was never a passion to begin with. It was just Something I was good at. And I did enjoy it, but medical wise I always should have done it. So, I just can’t wait to get going.” (Sarah)

By addressing the mistake she felt was made when she abandoned her medical profession to join the RAF, Sarah reasserts her agency and adopts a pluralistic approach to her career aspirations (Casey, 2000), balancing work and family responsibilities (Christopher, 2012). Through this, she can re-author her ambitions and turn her disappointment and anger at the RAF into something more positive (Gabriel, 2000). Sarah’s passion for embarking on a medical career is mirrored in Nicola’s ambition to become a geriatric doctor, with both participants hoping their career goals would help them gain/regain the status, social value and/or financial rewards (Dutton et al., 2010; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010) they had lost on leaving the RAF:
“when people ask you what you do … when you say you were in the RAF you always saw a reaction and my parents used to love telling people I was in the RAF, and now it’s “what do you do now”? and it’s “oh I work in a [charity]”. It’s not the same, is it? You don't get that reaction. I do miss that a little bit. But you get [it] with a doctor, which is probably why I am aiming to have a job where you have good money and also a wowness factor, a profession, but you do have to work so hard to get it. But I think something where I can still be creative and where I feel like I am making a difference and giving back. I think those are the things that I want in the future, so money and a good reason for doing something.” (Nicola)

Unencumbered by family responsibilities, Nicola was drawn to the NHS as it has a similar hierarchical structure to the military, with its normative value system and culture (Evetts, 2013; Andersson and Gadolin, 2020). She approaches her career goals in a self-disciplined manner, suggesting she is well placed, due to her military training and socialisation to make the sacrifices needed to achieve her aims (Shields et al., 2017). In this way, she uses her military background and aspirational goals as a resource for securing her identity in the present (Brown, 2017). However, she does so in a way that breaks down binary distinctions of instrumental masculine success and feminine nurturing demonstrating complex and intersecting motivations and behaviours (Britton and Logan, 2008). Given that both Nicola, Sarah and to an extent Amy, are pursuing what could be described as a ‘calling’, bodes well for integration into civilian life as research has shown employees who find their jobs fulfilling and feel like they make the world a better place have greater job and life satisfaction (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, and Schwartz, 1997; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). That they are driven to achieve aspirational goals, however, also suggest they may be vulnerable to unrealistic and even fantastical notions of work/life balance (Bloom, 2016).

### 6.2.4 Reflexivity and Blind Spots

Reflexivity has been noted as an essential part of recognizing how normativities contained within social elations can inhibit and produce productive behaviours (Foucault, 1991), and at different moments in their narratives and transitions, the participants reflected on their past life and were able to express a sense of moving on. Examples include occasions when they were able to acknowledge temporal influences on their identity concepts:

“Someone asked me the other day what I did for a living, and for the first time I said I was an entrepreneur, and I never mentioned the RAF” (Amy)
For others, separation was more intangible. Sally casually spoke about why she joined up and what drove her fight to stay in remarking, “I don’t know what I was thinking”. The Sally of the present wearing dresses and sparkly shoes suggests a feminine performativity that was far removed from her military self and signifies a new feminine civilian identity (Butler, 1993; Pullen et al., 2017). While time, distance and physical signification can work positively to aid transition, the complexities and contradictions of leaving the military are demonstrated in this next piece as Claire discursively positions herself through conflicting narratives (Linstead, Maréchal, and Griffin, 2014):

“Because I have gained my own self, sense of identity. I think historically, my sense of identity has come from being Flight Lieutenant Jones, Flying Officer Jones, all of that, but I have my own sense of identity now, so I don’t need that, and I have moved on. I don’t feel as though I need to belong to that, I’ve got my family, and I have got me so. ………. It’s how I view me. I don’t need to be in a career - job to define myself. I’m quite happy to be Claire. Although I quite liked being the Flight Lieutenant it gave me. Squadron Leader was even better because it gave me that feeling that perception of position. I couldn’t. I don’t feel that I need it now. Whether that has come from maturity, whether that has come from having my daughter and being a mum, but I don’t feel the need to hanker on to that. I had a great time, and I have some great stories, and I still tell the stories, but my sense of self comes from internally now. It doesn’t have to come from that external source.” (Claire)

Through a process of reflexivity, Claire suggests that she has moved past the external masculine ideals of success and status and the social relations that bound her behaviours (Foucault, 1991). Although aware of how she previously relied on her status to affirm her identity, she appears unaware of how elements of her military self remain part of her performativity (Butler, 1993) and how she uses these stories as a gendered tool (Connell, 2008) to maintain her sense of self (Butler, 1993; Driver, 2009; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010) as she negotiates a sense of coherency through her continuous identity construction (Swann et al., 2009; Wright, Nyberg and Grant, 2012; van de Ven, 2020). At each stage of her story, Claire is testing her identity narrative (Ibarra, 1999), and through this identity work, she can become the change she seeks (Holman Jones, 2015).

6.3 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated the multiple, shifting and socially constructed nature of identities (Berger and Luckman, 1966), showing the difficulties experienced in constructing a coherent self against the rejected disciplinary framework of a masculine institution (Clarke et al., 2009) while still drawing on its discipline to position oneself differently (Jackson and
Mazzei, 2012). Resulting in identities that are at different moments shown to be relatively stable, incoherent or inconsistent, and contextually driven (Clarke et al., 2009).

However, although the limitations of the military became a locus to extend potentialities, resisting relations of powers created new possibilities, the masculine gendered military self remained a site where the imaginings and aspirations of the participants, harnessed through resistance or realised through self-reflection, continued to constrain and guide gendered normativities and the need to seek approval from others (Roberts, 2005). The participants use narrative strategies based on a disciplinary framework to make sense of these contradictory forces, which caused identity disruptions to maintain self-hood (Gabriel et al., 2010; Hoyer and Steyaert, 2015). The participants used military discipline to conform to and resist military technologies of power in response to subjectively changing circumstances. Creative forces were fashioned, which extended, maintained and stymied possibilities that in some cases led to a reflective re-evaluation (Foucault, 1994, 1991; Grey, 2005). Yet throughout, many of the participants remained loyal to the organization as the influence of the disciplined military remained embedded in their collective narratives (Tosti-Kharas, 2012; Maringira et al., 2015). The self-discipline and normativities participants adhered to in-service life unconsciously spilled over or were consciously summoned into their post-military lives as they variously sought to sustain their identities through authoring moral, aspirational, consistent, or reflexive selves. Butler (1993, 1997) argues that subjugation creates a passionate attachment to the subjugating power upon which agency can become dependent. The participants’ narratives suggest that their agency continues to rely on the subjugating power of military discipline to varying extents even as they reject it. However, while the social relations found in military life can still restrict ways of being in the present and the future, they can also influence subjects in creative and positive ways motivating and inspiring change. Indeed, as participants draw on narratives of strength (Kokot, 2015), they can provide confidence and a drive to succeed for the benefit of the individual and wider society (Albertson, 2019).
7 Tensions in Transition Welcome to Limbo Land

7.1 Introduction

Constructed from notes made throughout my PhD, this chapter is a reflexive perspective on my transition; it accounts for the researcher within the investigative process (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2009). I intend to complement the analysis and discussion of the participants’ experience by reflecting on some of the military organizational structure versus the freedoms offered by civilian life, the unconscious attitudes of military/veteran selfhood in comparison to civilians and the associated stigmatised/privileged positions of veterans (Burdett et al., 2013; Lewis, 2010; Duffy, 2015). The military culture rests on an internalized world view primarily constructed through socialisation which creates behaviours and patterns of thought steeped in the military way of being (Woodward and Jenkings, 2011) reproducing culturally available scripts, which can also limit possibilities (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Holland, 1999; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Acknowledging this insider perspective (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008) which can limit understanding (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000) requires a critical approach (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2011; Neesham, 2018) to enable criticisms to be formulated and a fluidity of movement between paradigms to be explored. The challenge of autoethnographical writing is that in order to undertake critical analysis a “disrespectful” interpretation of motives is required, alongside an acknowledgement of embedded and embodied unconscious strategies (Holland, 1999, p. 12). Such critical analysis requires exposure and then acknowledgment of these blind spots through questioning the “tacit cultural rules” that partly make up the author’s subjectivity (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 452). Alvesson (2003) explains this may be difficult to achieve as a reluctance to expose backstage operations may be a condition of organizational loyalty.

Nevertheless, using excerpts from autoethnographic notes and an ongoing analysis of my relationship with the RAF and wider military culture, I will reflect on my own process of identity transition (Holman Jones, 2007). Extracts provided are presented roughly chronologically and range from those written early in the research process to others written up to the time of the first draft of this thesis. This text does not form a purely autoethnographic monologue but has been used as a means to liberate myself from socially shared frameworks (Alvesson, 2003a) and represents an opportunity to explore first-hand the identity disruption many veterans experience (Buyer, 2008; Brunger et al., 2013), as stories of disturbances can act as windows to subjectivity enabling the possibility of greater understanding (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007; Hoedemaeker, 2010; Hoyer and Steyaert, 2015).
Providing a detailed contextual picture of myself is fundamental to understanding my research approach and analysis (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). As I write I am forty-six years old, I have been married for ten years and have two children aged eight and ten. I served for sixteen years and six months in the RAF, joining when was I was twenty-three. I joined because I wanted a job which had a sense of purpose but would also fulfil my desire for adventure. However, I was not considered a model cadet during training; I had a strong northern accent and tended to ask questions, as opposed to obediently follow orders. I had no real knowledge of how the RAF operated and even less of how to behave socially; dress codes were a particular mystery. Completing Officer training should take six months, but it took me twelve. During my training, an element of the RAF college staff did everything in their power to make me voluntarily withdraw. Obstinance, stubbornness and in the end having a Flight Commander that supported me enabled my graduation. Nothing I have done since, bar parenthood, has tested me to my limits the way that RAF training systems did, including my time supporting and being deployed on military operations.

This part of my story is relevant, because I recognised from the outset that my decision to leave was fundamentally tied to how hard I fought to stay in. Leaving the RAF felt like giving up; indeed, in leaving, I was rejecting the imaginary ideal I had sometimes striven for and sometimes merely presented throughout my career (Hoedemaeker, 2010). My feelings associated with this decision are reflected in the concept of emotional labour, how feelings may be managed and governed in a specific organizational context (Hochschild, 1983). Within the military, the disciplinary discourse (and exercise of power) is that weakness and vulnerability are not displayed. As a result, emotions are often suppressed, and this can be related to academic concepts such as military masculinity, the warrior, and those dominant feeling rules within the organization which value toughness and resilience (Godfrey and Brewis, 2018).

I enjoyed being in the RAF, the jobs, the people I worked with and most of the places I lived. During my 16-year career, I served at 13 different locations in the UK and overseas. In the last five years of my service, I married an officer, my father-in-law passed away, I had one miscarriage, two children, three different jobs and moved to a new house three times. It was an intense period offering little professional or domestic stability. In many ways this left my vocational and professional means of identification at odds with how I identified myself as a wife and mother trying to provide a stable home environment for my children. Furthermore, as an outcome of the gendered policies and practices in the RAF (Acker, 1990) there were few aspirational ideals to follow in respect of being an officer, wife and mother. Such identity attachments were in many ways unknown and therefore unknowable;
the imaginary was fanciful. Historical organizational control and management discourses had worked in such a way as to produce a symbolic order in which discourses of motherhood combined with military service were lacking (Hoedemaeker, 2010; Sheritt, 2013).

While the pace of change has reduced somewhat since I left the RAF six years ago, in some ways, our lives have continued in a similar pattern, living in four different houses while our children have attended three different schools. While it is possible these disruptions may have occurred if my husband had not been in the RAF, they are nevertheless a direct result of his service and our family remains intimately interwoven and attached to the RAF (Hyde, 2015). There is little doubt in my mind this has ultimately affected my transition to civilian life, especially the effect of returning to military quarters for two years. Add my research to this and it demonstrates how I have not been able to move far from military influences. Indeed, it could be argued that I have been living “in the field” throughout the research process and this has fundamentally influenced the context of my research (Bell, 1999).

7.3 The Reluctant Subject

I have been uncomfortable with the autoethnographic element of this study from the outset for several reasons. Openly identifying oneself as military within public life is not something British Service people were/are encouraged to do. It is rare, even when bases are located near to towns, to see service personnel in uniform. Indeed, the wearing of uniform in public was for many years actively discouraged due to the security threat presented by the IRA and other republican groups. When I joined up, a group of service people on a night out routinely implemented ‘shark watch’ a policy which encouraged personnel to be wary of reputational and security threats, these ranged from trouble with locals to being targeted by terrorists or journalists looking for a story about foreign security services. As a policy of disciplinary control (Foucault, 1991) it fulfilled two purposes protecting the personnel from threats and ensuring their behaviours were moderated. Indeed, all military personnel are schooled and disciplined into applying discretion, and in our modern technological world, can be actively discouraged, and at times prohibited from using social media (Adey et al., 2016).

I suggest the results of these policies are manifold, affecting both service and civilian. Online military personnel are unwilling to discuss work and experiences in public forums, regulating their ability to share a significant part of their lives with friends or family outside the immediate military circle. In the wider world military personnel are largely absent appearing only at times of crisis or celebration. This reduces the opportunity for interaction contributing to the civil military gap (Hines et al., 2015). Furthermore, viewing everyone
outside the military circle as a potential threat to physical or emotional safety deepens the ‘othering’ of all civilians. It is actively honed and practiced through the intense military training regime, separating recruits from their civilian roots (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002). Such ingrained and entrenched behaviours, presented as a survival technique for both the individual and the organization can be difficult to overcome in civilian life (Alvesson et al., 2008; Weller, 2017).

From the perspective of the veteran lived experiences of the civil military gap can manifest readily in the ‘civilian’ workplace. For example, Lord Ashcroft’s report highlighted how potential employers demonstrate a lack of understanding of military employment and how military personnel are unable to ‘civilianise’ their skill set for potential employers to understand. This tension is further exacerbated by the notion that military personnel have in some way been damaged by their service (Duffy, 2015). Lord Ashcroft’s report on how veterans were viewed by the general public found 58% thought former Armed Forces personnel had either physical, emotional or mental health problems (Ashcroft, 2017). It is suggested such attitudes and perceptions influence how veterans approach integration into civil society and provide some insight into why I felt uncomfortable with the autoethnographic element of this research. While I felt and continue to feel uneasy making myself part of this study, I did not begin to become in Butler’s terms (2004) undone, through either the external judgements of others or my reflexive self-analysis. However, I have noticed that as I continue to suppress changes to how I present myself, the stronger I identify with elements of my military self, and the more I depend on the military ideal for consistency. I do this while also recognising that imaginary constructs are never sufficient and often falter or contain contradictions. Although I occasionally embrace/allow my behaviours to slip beyond the ideal, I hesitate, for what lies beyond could well be chaos (Giddens, 1991). Concerned that any potential vulnerabilities could be exposed through sharing my self-analysis, I wrote the next extract while returning from my first international academic conference in Samos, Greece.

“Lab rat, a specimen in a petri dish or a zoo, exposing myself, vulnerability, picked and pecked over, being on show, judged, analysed, an academic curiosity a performing seal. Bragging, boasting, big headed, from ‘look at me aren’t I great’ to ‘look at me I had to do these horrible (but sympathy inducing) things’.” (Samos, 2018)

On reflection, this is an issue of control which could be considered an outcome of the disciplinary practices required of military service including adhering to the feeling rules of the organization (Foucault, 1991; Flyverbom et al., 2015; Godfrey and Brewis, 2018). However, these thoughts came not only as a reaction to the feedback I received from my
presentation but in response to some of the engagements I had with more established academics whose excitement over my data made me feel ill at ease.

“There eyes light up at the prospect of rich data, greedy possibilities, it’s almost repulsive. This isn’t data this is my life, my friend’s lives, my colleagues’ lives.” (Samos, 2018)

I believe this is an example of one of the pitfalls of autoethnographic research. A desire to protect myself from the curious investigation and judgements of others leads to a reluctance to expose myself or make myself vulnerable to criticism from those very ‘others’ I want to inform. On reflection, this conflict and tension has been with me throughout the research process, and has throughout my research, led me, sometimes unconsciously and at other times consciously, to include or exclude research areas based on how comfortable I felt about the process of revealing, reliving and analysing them (Alvesson, 2003a). The emotional labour required to hold onto two contradictory thoughts, loyal and disloyal, accepting and critical, as I have relived my own, and others, service life experiences and transition has also been significant (Godfrey and Brewis, 2018). Throughout, I have also been aware of what has been described as the double and triple hermeneutic, were through autoethnographic analysis I interpret my interpretations and that despite my intent, readers of my work will add their own layer of subjectivity, which in turn has the potential to influence how I present my work in an effort to secure trustworthiness (Giddens, 1991; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2009). This “unending and recursive perceptions of others’ perceptions of the self, and the identities of others” (Knights and Clarke, 2017, p. 341) is how identities are constructed. Nevertheless, I have found it difficult to hide from my desire to influence change instigated by what I believe are the confines of ‘Other’s’ understandings and thought systems regarding the military. This is the case, despite acknowledging how my belief system is similarly regulated through exposure to the military institution. Indeed, I recognise my ‘truth claims’ are always tainted by my subjectivity and are by no means universal in the military sense. So, what follows is my story only.

7.3.1 The Training Environment

I completed my Officer training at RAF College Cranwell where cadets come to understand discipline, privilege, and status within the military. In the rotunda within College Hall at the RAF College lies a large blue carpet with the RAF Crest at its centre. The carpet is so thick it presents a trip hazard for people hurrying along the corridor, but cadets who must traverse this thoroughfare to reach the dining hall, cannot walk across it. Only commissioned officers can cross it and to stand on it without holding commissioned status can lead to a humiliating reprimand. The admonishments reinforce the lowly status of a cadet and excludes them
from the prerogatives of the higher ranks. For example, it would not be unusual to hear the following shouted,

‘.. get off that carpet, you have not earnt the right to walk on that carpet.’’

Institutional practices like these, reinforced with concepts of class and status (I was once reprimanded for carrying a plastic carrier bag – officers do not carry plastic bags they are common) are applied to exclude outsiders, to mark the difference between military and civilian and encourage cadets to adopt the ‘ideal’ military persona (Dandeker, 2001; Woodward and Winter, 2004; Egnell et al., 2019b). From the beginning of training technologies of power which encourage ideal military identities are underpinned by normalised behaviours which can diminish civilian life (Foucault, 1991), for example, I remember sitting in the lecture hall at Cranwell and being told we were the ‘best of the best’. Everyone seemed to accept this assessment unquestionably, while I sat thinking, we are only the ‘best of the best’ that bothered to apply for a commission in the RAF.

Many of my experiences in training were not happy, as I had every aspect of my identity, character and physicality criticised. My way of being was ‘northern’, little that I said, wore or did ‘fitted’ the behavioural expectations of an RAF Officer. When it came to civilian dress regulations, the RAF had strict rules, which meant skirts below the knee, shirts with collars and no cleavage. We went from being young women able to access fashionable clothes to looking like spinster maiden aunts as our femininity and sexuality were repressed. In short, we were desexualised (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993). This was not a look I, as a girl used to nights out in Newcastle, easily ‘fitted’ into and this was noted by the directing staff.

“Brennan36 is short, wears glasses and is from the North East of England.”

At the time, how this description reflected my abilities as a potential officer was a mystery, but I soon came to realise my northerness, my way of being, including my physical stature (I am just over 5ft), did not ‘fit’ the military ideal compared to more physically statuesque and differently “posher” accented colleagues (Henry and Treanor, 2010). By the time I approached the end of the course I and another cadet were called to a review board whose role it was to decide whether we should complete our training or be asked to leave. The review board procedure was formal and designed to be intimidating, exercising a similar disciplinary power as a court of law (Foucault, 1994). I sat alone facing three senior officers, while members of the directing staff looked on. I had to defend myself against my flight commanders’ recommendation to end my training and discharge me from the service. Despite advocating that we be discharged, our Flight Commander, against the rules, had

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36 My maiden name.
37 Flight Commanders are responsible for the welfare and training of their flight, approximately 10 cadets. They impart officer qualities and leadership skills during training.
allowed us to review our personal files prior to the board sitting. Again, although I have no official record of the content in the files, I can paraphrase the comments he had written.

“Brennan cannot command the respect of her peers, superiors or subordinates. She will never make an officer in the RAF.”

As I had been given access to my file (Lukes, 2005) I was able to contend the argument put forward that I was incapable of performing as an officer. While I recognised, I had my faults I failed to accept that I was not good enough. I challenged the board to find proof that supported this view of me as lacking officer and leadership qualities and I cited testimonies from other cadets who had offered me support. The board found in my favour as the claims about me could not be substantiated and I was permitted to continue.

However, I was singled out again for harsher treatment, the aim of which was to encourage me to voluntarily withdraw as within the homosocial circle of the 1990’s military I did not ‘fit’ the masculine norm (Bird, 1996) or social class expected of an officer (Howard, 2000). In response, I worked harder determined to prove myself capable. Playing the game became second nature and I voluntarily became a model cadet. I planned to graduate, to prove I met their criteria, then withdraw, allowing me a façade of autonomy which even at the time I recognised as a strategy of self-subordination (Fleming and Spicer, 2003; Tracy and Trethewey, 2005). When I did graduate, I asked one of the directing staff why I had received unequal treatment. He told me he had been ordered to make my life difficult but that he had not been as harsh as he could have been and went on to say that he was proud of me. This surprising affirmation helped provide some security as it came unsought, from a man whom I had grown to like and respect (Knights and Clarke, 2014). His behaviour and that of my flight commander also demonstrated how ethical acts of resistance to power can occur, even in the military institution (Pullen and Rhodes, 2014). Never again in my 16-year career did I come across sexism, bullying, mistreatment, and prejudice akin to what I witnessed at Cranwell. In many ways, despite been held up as a beacon of ethical and moral standards, a belief lived up to by the majority of the staff, it was also a site of immoral and wicked behaviours which personnel were able to hide behind, and reinforce, a mask of privilege that could allow exercise and abuse of power (Alvesson et al., 2008). However, demonstrating how military discipline can also be used as a corrective force a flight commander, accused inappropriate behaviour, was reprimanded and posted to another station within 24hrs, an act of punishment maintained on his permanent record (Bergstrom et al., 2009). Finally, after 12 long months I had learned through these contradictory and conflicting experiences that the organizational culture of the RAF was complex, I rationalised that resigning my commission would be self-defeating, so I stayed in.
7.4 Disrupted Identity

Once I had decided to leave the RAF, the MoD Career Transition Process automatically began (CTP, 2017). Unfortunately, due to a combination of family and work commitments, I was never able to fully take advantage of the process (Huffman et al., 2017). Although some of the elements were useful, many lacked relevance to me as a mother who still had to balance life with a serving husband and family. Furthermore, my lack of status brought on by the dis-guarding of my professional self was an aspect of my transition I was poorly equipped to deal with, as it presented a threat to my core sense of self that I had not realised I would have to face (Petriglieri, 2011). In my first few months after leaving, I noticed how little people acknowledged each other as they walked down the street, compared to walking around a military base, where such greetings were commonplace. It only slowly occurred to me that this expectation was a normative behaviour related to rank and junior personnel automatically giving compliments to seniors (Foucault, 1991; Lukes, 2005). While I had incorporated my children into my identity narrative as a working mother, crucially this acceptance had been alongside a professional self, which I no longer had access to (Laney et al., 2015). I found myself outside the military bubble without the crutch of my work to open conversations with. I felt the loss of these social props keenly and I would describe myself to my husband as having gone from “Squadron Leader to Toilet Cleaner”, reflecting on my new domestic drudgery in comparison to my previous professional status (de Beauvoir, 1949). Effectively, I no longer had direct access to the societal structure which had given me status (Giddens, 1991), and while leaving work to spend time with my children was a significant factor in my decision to leave, these next vignettes describe how forfeiting my professional identity affected my social relations.

“I hated doing the school run. I found it intimidating. What on earth do I have to talk to all these people about? I used to try to plan it so that I spent as little time as possible hanging about for the classroom door to open. Drop offs weren't so bad, mainly because we were rarely early so it was easy to drop off and run (or run away as easily as my screaming child would let me). Some days were easier than others. On reflection, it didn't take too long to start making some new friends but at the time it seemed like I spent hours standing in that queue while everyone else around me chatted easily. The problem I felt was that I had nothing to say, nothing in common with these other parents, I had only just stopped working and was adjusting to being a stay-at-home mam and already I didn't much like it. I knew I needed to start making an effort or it was going to be a lonely and awkward few years at the school gates.” (The School Gates - Thursday, 22 Sep 2016)
“After sitting on the floor for 10 minutes and having been ignored by the other two women who were speaking around me, I got up and got another glass of mulled wine. It was their complete lack of interest that was difficult, the assumption that I wasn't worth talking to because I no longer wore a uniform, but then again what did I have in common with them anymore? ….. I felt like a non-person, whose opinion wasn't valued or wanted. I looked round the room and felt very detached, disconnected. I hadn't realised it was going to be this hard and I didn't like it. It happened again and again, I would meet people who knew me as an Officer in the RAF, I would tell them I had left, they would go “Oh! What are you doing now?”, “I'm at home” I would say “looking after the kids”. They would smile blandly and look over my shoulder for someone else to talk to. Fuck this I thought. I refuse to be written off and defined as ‘Just a mam' …” (Children’s Birthday Party - Sep 2016)

Although making new friends as a civilian had been a challenge I had expected, I was not ready for the change in how I would be viewed by old friends, acquaintances, or service people whom I had never worked with. Having lost my value as a serving officer my new ‘veteran’ or ‘wife of’ identity often resulted in a cloak of invisibility being wrapped around me at military social events(Beech, 2011), where partners are often marginalized due to their inferior status (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004). In the first few months after I left, social encounters with women who were still serving or the wives of other officers were awkward. I tried to embrace my non-working life, I joined some wives for drinks and dinner, I went to the officer’s wives book club and coffee mornings, but I never felt comfortable, I never felt like I fitted, although it is difficult to say whether in retrospect this was a response to what Mavin et al., (2014) describe as intra-gender micro violence or the consequence of my own identity cage (Alvesson et al., 2008). Things improved when we moved out of quarters and into our own home. I started to see the same people on the school run, I started to make friends outside of the RAF. Social interactions became easier, and after a while, one of the other military wives at the school said: “You have become assimilated; you are one of them now”. This comment inferring, I had made the transition from ‘military wife’ to ‘civilian’. As life settled, I started to research different career paths; restricted, by the criteria of what I deemed acceptable, in terms of a work-life balance I was trying to create, however mythical or idealistic this may have been (Moxnes and Moxnes, 2016). This search led me to the option of academia, which I believed would be flexible enough to enable me to balance work and family while helping me to restore a sense of self, purpose, and direction in my life.

7.5 A New Way of Being

I was initially reluctant to go into my military background when I arrived at the university. I wanted to move on, and I didn’t want to be defined by my military identity, the assumptions and prepositions people make on learning you are ex-service with any kind of associated
stigmatized identity (Goffman, 1990a). I had no idea how people would react or what judgements they would make. I was traversing a new social world and I preferred to take my time and learn how to be in this new place before I let myself relax. It was all so different from my military life, the buildings were new and clean, there were so many women and so many people of different ages and nationalities, strikingly different from the military world, which made me feel guarded. This next extract helps explain my caution.

“As part of the induction at the Open University, all post-grad students were brought together for a briefing and to allow the students an opportunity to meet and get to know each other. Although I had by this time shared my military background with my fellow MRes students I was nervous in this larger group of revealing my connections, this nervousness was partly, but not exclusively, concerned with the international nature of the students. While I had felt reasonably comfortable sharing my past with the MRes students who were largely European or hailing from a country or a group we hadn’t been at war with recently, I was warier of the unknown larger group. When I was serving and I was asked what I did for a living, I would simply explain I was a logistician, this usually resulted in few follow up questions. However, at the induction and in an attempt of openness I explained my military background to the small group of about eight people around my table as we shared our stories. I felt slightly uncomfortable doing this but reasoned it was all part and parcel of transitioning to civilian life. A few minutes later, before I could quite understand the full implications, the facilitator of the session asked for volunteers to share a story of one of the people they had just met. One of the other students in my group practically jumped out of her seat and before I could stop her started sharing my story. The results were instantaneous. I froze while a hot flush rose through me, I was instantly alert. My heart started beating faster and my eyes dashed about the room looking for threats. This wasn’t embarrassment at being the centre of attention in the room, this feeling was fear. I felt like I had a target smack bang in the middle of my forehead.” (experienced Oct/Nov 2016, recounted Aug 2019)

This deep-seated response is difficult to explain or analyse, but in this unknown environment, filled with unknown people, I felt unsafe. This incident and others like it are part of the reason I was reluctant to include myself in this study. Within the small MRes group, I was comfortable, but outside of it, I continued to be wary. Indeed, I was enjoying my time at the university and living in my own home as a sense of my professional self returned and I was able to build a positive work identity (Shepherd and Williams, 2018). However, this optimistic state proved, as is common with military life, to be short-lived (Hyde, 2015), as my husband’s next posting drew near. Decisions about how we wanted to live as a family still needed to be made and when it came time to tell my civilian friends'
my husband was posted and we were moving with him, their reaction surprised me as I had not considered the effect on them. Indeed, one friend specifically said she was not going to get close to military wives anymore as we all just leave. I found this sad as I feared future military wives and their children may not be welcomed into the community as we had been, potentially exacerbating the potential stresses research in the US context has found reintegration into family and civilian life can be for veterans (Leslie and Koblinsky, 2017). My husband was then sent overseas for six months to be posted on his return leaving me to arrange the house move and when he did return a lack of school places and suitable housing meant we followed my husband two months after he started work at the new camp.

I was not looking forward to living in quarters again. Prior to our move, I received a reminder of what camp life would be like as I attended the Movers Reunion in London. The Reunion is an annual event for serving and ex-serving officers and offers the opportunity to reconnect with colleagues and friends, however, it did not take long for the distinctions of military life to surface. Whilst at the bar, an old colleague leaned over and after glancing furtively around to make sure no one could overhear, whispered in my ear “I’m thinking about leaving”. His nervousness about speaking the words out loud struck me as dispiriting and demonstrates the power of military discipline, its controlling discourses of loyalty and commitment (Coser, 1967) and the illusion of the ideal military identity where expressions of vulnerability are seen as a threat to competence (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993). This 6ft tall, experienced officer, a mature husband and father was worried someone might overhear him voice his wavering loyalty to the RAF. Should his loyalty and commitment to the organization be brought into doubt, his future employment and promotion prospects could be jeopardised; for example, not being considered for jobs which could increase promotability, a form of punishment designed to correct or even avert dissention (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009).

7.6 Back to Military Reality

Life on camp was much as I had expected it to be. I would have to navigate the military world not as an Officer in my own right, with the accompanying rank, rights, and status but as a ‘wife of’, a civilian, albeit a veteran. I found living amongst friends and colleagues who were still serving especially difficult, as it acted as a constant reminder that I was no longer ‘in’, and yet through the association of my husband, I remained part of military life.

“Walking back through the gate the other evening with a male friend and our children. The guard saluted and said Good Evening Sir. For just a split second my
I faced an ever-present reminder that the RAF was a world I had not escaped, as it continued to shape how I felt, who I was and who I was expected to be (Roberts, 2005). This military reality pervaded all aspects of my life, even my research offered no respite as fundamentally I was studying the military. I had left the RAF at the height of my career to escape the exhaustion of balancing two military careers, parenthood, the uncertainty of having to move every few years, the difficulties in arranging childcare, the third-rate accommodation, and the looming threat of being sent away from my children for six months. I was seeking freedom of choice about where and how my family lived. I had given up my status, rank, authority and wage packet and ended up back where I first met my husband; it was depressing. Turner (1987) discusses the possibilities that could be ignited by being in the liminal space; however, once I returned to the base, I felt like I had never had the opportunity to experiment with my identity or to be “suspended in [a different] social space” (Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016, p. 49). I had been ‘in’, and now I was ‘out’ and as I was definitely ‘out’ as far as the military was concerned; I was recognised only as a dependent Other, as one of the military’s many technologies of power (Woodward, 2004) and when I moved back on camp, they gave me an identity card to prove it.

Although it was two years since I had left the RAF, and I believe I had in many ways begun to leave the organization behind me, once back in the military environment there was no social ambiguity about my position, no recognised or appreciated liminal state (Shortt, 2015; Ibarra and Obodaru, 2020). Fortunately, there were benefits to this ‘patch life’, including the other non-military wives whose existence when I was a single officer I had barely registered. I arrived at a station which had several families with children of similar ages, and two of the wives were ex-serving. As a result, I and my children had an active and enjoyable social life away from the formality of the Officer Mess. Additionally, as only a few of the wives had known me as a serving officer I felt free to relax. However, living on base acted as a constant reminder of the status I had given up. This sense of becoming a second-class citizen was reinforced repeatedly and often unexpectedly. One such incident occurred as I explained to my friend (a female serving officer) that I was tired after hosting a Book Club the previous night.

“There was silence on the other end of the phone and then she said quietly, ‘You are a real officer’s wife now’ and even though I had been out of the RAF for three years and married to an officer for ten, her comments were like a knife to the chest because I knew what they implied. My breath caught in my throat, and I was glad she could not see my face as she would have plainly seen how hurt I felt. While I
I cannot deny what I am, I am an officer’s wife, but does that mean I am somehow less capable, less worthy of respect than a female officer.”

As an exercise in power this statement and my reaction to it recognised the reduced status wives have in the military hierarchy compared to serving personnel (Hyde, 2015). I was now one of the wives I had viewed in ignorance as never having a career or bestowed a form of recognition only in terms of how they had given up their profession to ‘happily’ follow their husbands around the country (Moen and Sweet, 2002). On base I tried to avoid formal occasions, however, sometimes sheer boredom, obligation or curiosity would encourage me to attend. These rarely went well. On two occasions during what are regarded as highlights of the social calendar; the Summer Ball and the Christmas Draw, I was spoken to by serving officers in a way which cemented in my consciousness, my unwelcome subordinate social status as ‘wife of’. At the summer ball pre-drinks, a young female Flight Lieutenant opened a conversation with the question, “whose wife are you?” as if I was a handbag someone had put down and needed claiming. At a Christmas Draw, as I tried to respect the mess staff’s wishes to restrict access to a room, a male officer took umbrage verbally, bullying me out of his path, “who are you? I know who you are. I don’t care, get out of my way”. Both incidents remain seared into my consciousness, for they demonstrate my social status within the eyes of serving personnel, not as an individual of any worth or value, but as an appendage, a hanger-on, a second-class citizen with a concomitant status and worth. In the eyes of serving personnel I had become the insignificant and almost invisible other (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993).

I also felt unable to redress them as I would have had I still been a serving officer and this I felt diminished me even further. I did not challenge the behaviour of these individuals, I was there with my husband and in the panoptic military bubble, any confrontation could reflect poorly on him. As a result, I was as much subjugated by the disciplinary relations and cultural controls of military life as a service person, despite my civilian status. I also found myself checking my behaviour, I would pause before responding to questions or hesitate before acting and I would reflect, almost obsessively, on interactions that occurred within the mess or at functions. On the patch, through a combination of lack of opportunity and disinclination, I deliberately withdrew from attending social functions with other wives and kept to the few close friends I had made. These friends were of course duly posted over time, reducing my social circle. This resulted in me, often, refusing invitations to functions, leading me to become further isolated and frustrated.

I inhabited a conflicted position as I often choose to hide my veteran status, even though I knew I could use it to gain a modicum of status, respect, and value within the military world. One example of this was the Battle of Britain Dining in Night which commemorates the
RAF’s defeat of the Luftwaffe during the summer of 1940. My quandary was whether I should go as a ‘wife of’ or a ‘veteran’; in Giddens (1991) terms, it could be argued I was considering my counterfactual options. Having been so readily dismissed at previous functions through, I believe, my ‘wife of’ status, I was not keen to encounter such dismissiveness again. However, I was also reluctant to signify my ‘veteran’ status for several reasons. I wrote the following extract before I attended the event.

“During evenings like this, which I now attend as a military wife, I become aware of the difference between my ‘once’ officer status and my ‘now’ civilian identity. At this event I felt the one-dimensional social identity I would be bestowed with; ‘wife of’, and its inherent diminished meaning bore little relation to the complexities I felt in myself. At occasions like this if you are not in uniform you are not military and therefore of lesser status. As such, when attending functions many retired military personnel wear medals or veterans’ badges38 to signify their previous military experience. Knowing this I felt little option but to choose between two identities, which have a unique place in military life: ‘wife of’ or ‘veteran’. Neither of which I particularly wanted to adopt. As a ‘wife of’ I felt I would be seen as an appendage, not qualified to be there in my own right, my presence negotiated and tolerated through my husband’s rank and status. If I wore my medals I would be seen as a ‘veteran’, a label I do not feel ready to wear.” (Battle of Britain Dining-In-Night – September 2018)

Conversely, my friend who was also attending the dinner was keen to wear her medals. While she wanted to signpost and signify her military background, I wanted nothing of it. Furthermore, I was increasingly becoming frustrated with the arrogance and superiority of military personnel, their explicit assumption that they are in some way better than civilians (D. I. Walker, 2012).

Nevertheless, despite my studies and the encouraging comments I received from friends, how I was perceived by service people was becoming increasingly problematic, leaving me angry and frustrated. Locked in this military bubble their view of me still somehow mattered. While I could and sometimes did change people’s perceptions of me, by speaking of either my postgrad or veteran status (delete as appropriate), I looked forward to the time when we could leave the camp and its people behind. My privileging of one identity of another was an attempt to be seen as more than ‘just a wife’ in a social situation where I felt much at a disadvantage (Atewologun, Sealy, and Vinnicombe, 2016). Moving into our own home

38 Issued to all military personnel on leaving the Armed Forces by HM Government.
again, would and did allow me to break away from these constraints, away from the panoptic military gaze and I could begin again to move beyond the liminal.

7.7 SAMOS 2018

This next section returns in more detail to SAMOS which I consider a pivotal event in my research journey and centres around a presentation which made me determined to use my experiences and knowledge to further academic understanding of the military world. This motivation stemmed from my frustration about how people in the military and similar ‘functional’ professions (Connor, 2010) such as medicine, are perceived by those who have never lived their reality. The research which triggered these thoughts concerned diary extracts from doctors working for medicine sans frontier in war zones, who had been involved in treating children, many of whom needed double amputations. I found the presentation, the audience’s reaction to the subject matter, and my embodied responses revealing and disconcerting. This extract was written on the plane returning to the UK.

“On the screen came a quote from a doctor about “Miss Piggy” a woman who was new on the team, the “newbie” she was too cheerful, too bouncy, too enthusiastic, she “fucked everyone off” (wrote the doctor in his diary) she lasted 5 days than sobbed her lungs out. The full quote was very powerful, 6-7 lines long of the doctor expressing how furious he was about enthusiastic and happy ‘Miss Piggy’. The whole presentation for me was distressing, raw, emotional, and evoked memories of my time in the military. The academic discussion afterwards was frustrating. I found the unpicking of the diary extracts almost disrespectful to their intent (as I perceived it) by academics who couldn’t, no matter how hard they tried or how well-meaning they were, understand the situation being described. Their attempts to analyse and frame the doctor’s diary extracts, effectively trying to sterilise them, upset me. One of the comments was that he was sexist and this most incensed me as I felt they were missing the point …” (SAMOS – 2018)

While the audience’s analysis of the situation was bounded by their own experiences, I was aware my position was similarly limited and guided by both the disciplinary mechanisms and techniques of the military environment and the associated feeling rules contained therein (Foucault, 1966; Lukes, 2005). I went on to write the following.

“… although he was being sexist her gender was irrelevant, he was just trying to survive/get through the day and if she had been a male, he would have felt the same. She was a distraction, a drain, and a disruption. He could barely hold himself together never mind be considerate of her. When you are in extreme situations like a war zone or dealing with the aftermath, you can’t always allow your unproductive
emotions to rule; patience and tolerance run thin. Allowing emotions to emerge can make things harder for everyone who is just trying to survive. You would become a burden to your team who in this case would then not be focusing on the people who really need your help, the patients/children. Once the job is done then you can deal with your emotions and this in part is what the diaries were meant to help with (the doctors were asked to keep them by medicine sans frontier as a type of therapy).” (Samos, 2018)

However, where the audience of academics saw sexism and misogyny, I respected and to an extent excused his functional imperative. It is not that I was blind to his unpleasantness, rather I appreciated his need to focus on the job at hand recognising through my own experiences how emotional empathy can run dry in extreme situations. While this can be perceived as indifference to her suffering it allowed him to function as a doctor and to make life and death decisions. Furthermore, by displaying enthusiasm and happiness Miss Piggy was revealing emotions in an organizational setting that were incongruent to the context of a war zone where the ability to function and protect is valued (Harel-Shalev and Daphna-Tekoah, 2016). They were not considered appropriate or socially acceptable by her colleagues and as a result, she was rejected (Reddy, 2001; Kramer and Hess, 2002).

In forgiving his sexism, in prioritising the functional imperative, I am compelled to question whether, because of my military background, I am perpetuating what could be considered a dysfunctional organizational culture of toxic masculinity, which is less acceptable in the wider social world. The functional imperative, the necessity to take, save or prevent the loss of life, has been discussed in relation to the creation of a physical space in which immoral behaviour is considered acceptable (Connor, 2010). While the military environment could be considered one such space, I knowingly extended this perimeter into the civilian hospital, albeit one operating within a conflict zone to understand and explain, but not excuse behaviours. This was not a perspective I believe was considered by the academics, their discussion centred on behavioural norms outside the battlefield as if they were discussing ‘normal life’ and as a result, I found their views devoid of contextual understanding. If we considered the hospital exists in an indeterminate state between military and civilian, normative behaviours belonging to one or the other could lose their appropriateness. I also strongly believe the doctor would have been equally as angry if a male nurse had acted in a similar way. In this sense, there is not a right or wrong way to view a situation but a need to appreciate the perspectives of others.

While the medicine sans frontier presentation challenged my conceptions and has helped me develop greater understanding of masculine behaviours in a military context, my embodied responses in the moment were almost overwhelming. The description of the war
zone and accompanying photographs triggered a heightened emotional response which lasted beyond the immediacy of the presentation.

“Afterwards I walked from pictures of children maimed and the words of the doctors trying to help them, into the bright sunshine and heat of the Greek summer which immediately transposed into the heat, the sand, and the desert of my time in Iraq, then back just as quickly to a holiday resort, families and children playing on the beach, queuing up for ice creams. It’s disconcerting, it’s discombobulating, and it’s fucked up. That is why we don’t want to talk about it.” (Samos – 2018)

A feeling of discontinuity can be considered normal for personnel returning from operations. They move from being immersed in a theatre of war where the totality of your existence is controlled by the military machine and all its technology of powers, hierarchy, discipline and duty, back into a civilian world which is different but familiar (Goffman, 1991; Foucault, 1991). Regardless of the time of year one returns to the UK from operations there is a commonality and consistency, striking in its simplicity, which can provide a shocking feeling of displacement. For example, in contrast to the arid deserts of the middle east, there is the sheer greenness of home, so lush, bright, and plentiful you must avert your gaze or squint through narrowed eyes. Night brings no relief to the discontinuity one can feel in those first few days after returning, as skylines and roads are lit up like Christmas trees, the entire world signalling and being signalled to, in sharp contrast to the stealth, darkness and concealment of operational life. No longer are you confined to base, but free to roam, relieved of body armour and rifles, feeling physically light yet simultaneously discomforted by vulnerability.

“In my mind’s eye, I return to the coffins being carried up the ramp and being carefully placed and secured on the aircraft floor. I can see the young Army Officer, highly agitated, making sure he kept track of who was who in each box. They are asleep, resting peacefully, unscathed. Their bodies are whole, not ripped apart by bombs or bullets. Their uniforms are intact, the bloody sticky mess of their last moments has been sanitised and now they are neatly lined up in rows.”

By sharing the raw experiences that constitute military life I hope to dissolve the rigid lines that can appear to exist between military and civilian, so that behaviours, enacted in spaces like those inhabited by the medicine sans frontier doctor and veterans, can be understood. Hundreds of people will have been involved in getting those soldier’s home. Logisticians like me, and the administrative staff, might not have the raw experiences of the soldiers who
have been under fire, the aircrew who risked their lives to medivac\textsuperscript{39} them, or the doctors and nurses who tried to save them, but we have been touched too. Our experiences are ours alone; this is not a place we play one-upmanship with ourselves or civilians; it is simply a time to be compassionate. For me it is beyond disrespectful to suggest, even here, that service people use these experiences as a tool of superiority, a way to hierarchically position the inferior civilian ‘Other’ (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993) as to do so would be morally shameful, counter to the military ethos and socially unacceptable. Yet such experiences do mark difference (Bhattacharya and Elsbach, 2001). At Brize Norton when a repatriation was scheduled a solemn silence would fall over the base, normal activity was suspended, the very air seemed heavy. Despite thousands of people being on camp, it would appear deserted. For months we lived with a well-used temporary morgue on the playing fields located between the officer mess and the rugby club, but it never became normal to have it there. While in Iraq, the sunset ceremonies\textsuperscript{40} were avoided by my team and I. We were excused by pleading emotional distress as we had to load the coffins onto the aircraft and it was easier to disassociate, to see the coffins as just more boxes. It allowed us to compartmentalise and protect ourselves emotionally (Harris, 2002) creating a separation between them and us (Bulmer and Eichler, 2017) helping us deny our vulnerability (Harel-Shalev and Daphna-Tekoah, 2016). But the same quietness I experienced at Brize would descend on Basrah Air Base when there was a repatriation, the same stillness in the air. As I was leaving, the policy changed, and the sunset ceremonies became mandatory parades for us too. Only in the military can you be ordered how to grieve.

### 7.8 Summary

This reflexive account demonstrates some of the tensions and difficulties found in autoethnographic research (Humphreys, 2005). It is in places truncated and dis-jointed, mirroring my mind’s eye as I remember, reposition, and reflect on my transition journey. The chapter provides some background information on why I joined up and continued serving despite the difficulties I faced in training.

This history was included to help illustrate the conflict surrounding my decision to leave and my drive to research veteran transition and share our experiences with civilians, providing such context aims to improve understanding (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). It also discusses my reluctance to share my story drawing on theory and practice to assist me in the autoethnographic process, which I could only understand critically by clinically evaluating my need for control and recognition.

\textsuperscript{39} medical evacuation.
\textsuperscript{40} parades held for repatriations: all personnel would gather on the airfield for a short church service followed by the Bugle playing of the Last Post.
In discussing my initial transition, I explore the importance of professional identity (Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly, 2014) against the foil of motherhood (Howard, 2000) and how lost in this world of domestication, I seek value through the pursuit of an academic career. The academic journey is uncomfortably but necessarily short and therefore limited due to space restrictions in this thesis, but it highlights the different worldview military personnel/veterans can have to civilians (Caddick, 2017). By returning to the military environment as a civilian, I focus on another side of military life (the veteran wife) that highlights the importance of intersectionality in research and starkly reveals the military’s gendered hierarchy (Sjoberg, 2014), the importance of signification (Priola, 2016) and narrative performances (Corlett and Mavin, 2015).

Finally, the functional imperative (based on the legitimacy of and outcomes of state-sanctioned violence) and the masculine behaviours this engenders are unpicked to explore wicked behaviours and organizational feeling rules (Zalewski, 2017). This leads to a deeply personal and reflective piece, the inclusion of which epitomizes the importance, challenges, and fraught nature of autoethnographic research. Even as I re-read to prepare for submission, I found myself questioning my analysis, recognizing how the loyalty I feel towards the organization and my feelings regarding the sacrifices service personnel make shape my thoughts and criticality (Holman Jones, 2015). Such a position is not unusual, like much research that enables life stories to be explored, as ethnographic work allows the storyteller to present the story they want to tell (Mottershead, 2019). Nevertheless, critical analysis of transition emerges throughout the chapter, recognizing the importance of contextual background (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012), the autoethnography prerogative in choosing which story to tell, and the embodied experiences of transition (Anderson, 2006).
8 Discussion

8.1 Introduction

Distinctive social relations found in the military environment are dominated by narratives of discipline, hierarchy, and masculine behaviours (Foucault, 1991; Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998; Dowding, 2006; Morgan, 2006; King, 2015). By interrogating how and why these narrative meanings, associated with power and control, are sustained (Lamont, 2000) an explanatory light has been shone on the consequences of gendered relations and identity practices in military institutions (Sasson-Levy, 2003).

This chapter will summarise the previous chapters, highlighting their main threads and tensions leading into the discussion of the findings that surfaced through the empirical evidence. The research questions will be answered by recoupling the findings to the theoretical discussions with a separate section focusing on the research questions in relation to the autoethnographic elements of the research. Finally, the theoretical, empirical, and practice-based contributions of this study into transition of military personnel into civilian life, will be discussed along with its limitations and suggestions for further research.

8.2 Summary of previous Chapters

The thesis began by providing some background to the RAF, women’s place within it and the RAF as related to Goffman's (1961) concept of a Total Institution. I argued that while, at times, the military environment can resemble a Total Institution in Goffman’s sense, the RAF differs in several significant ways; firstly, its members are volunteers who choose to join; and secondly, except for times of training and operations, its physical boundaries, while present and controlled, are breached daily by employees and other associated workers. However, as shown in the thesis, mechanisms and techniques of power have effects beyond the physical (Goffman, 1991; Foucault, 1991). To understand these effects Chapter 2 focused on Foucault’s (1967) theory of disciplinary power, discussing its applications and limitations, showing how it affects individual behaviours and decision making through social relations and environmental conditions. While a central theme of this discussion involved combining Foucault (1991) with Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan (1998) and Lukes (2005), power remains understood as acting through a combination of social relations and human agency, for it is seen as “capable of negotiation, renewal, and change” whilst also being “limited and conditioned” (Connell, 1987, p. 62). As such, power, and the multiple connections between individuals and ‘Others’, although mutually reinforcing, are not necessarily deterministic. While this was useful in developing an understanding of power, Foucault’s work does not explore how gendered relations of power support the underlying
processes of inequality regimes: the male model of organizing or the persistent gendering of interactions in the workplace (Glass, 2004). Seemingly paradoxical or contradictory gendered behaviours can emerge as a result of these interactions (Ashforth et al., 1996). Chapter 3 was dedicated to understanding identity and gender.

Chapter 3 explored power and gendered perspectives by examining identity as a fluid practice, reproduced and reconstituted through identity work which attempts to secure the sense of self in the eyes of significant others (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993). Within this chapter, the socially contingent nature of identity, masculine and feminine performativities, and policy decisions within the military environment were found to be deep-seated and enduring due to extreme socialisation processes experienced by all military personnel (Higate, 2000). These practices can put the military, designed to support and serve the social body, distant to or at odds with the people it is supposed to protect (Hines et al., 2015; Redmond et al., 2015). Through the literature, we explored how the military environment produces and reinforces a socially contingent paradoxical belief system of superiority, fragility, and vulnerability, with contrasting and competing narratives of gender equality/neutrality, while still rewarding and enforcing traditionally gendered behaviours and hierarchical hegemonic masculinities. Furthermore, although Foucault (1991) argued that power and resistance co-exist (Gabriel, 1999) and this has been explored by scholars such as Raffnsøe et al., (2019) few examples take a gendered perspective, an approach which is even rarer in the military context (Godfrey, 2016). Chapter 4 outlined the methodology, communicating the iterative and explorative approach of this research and continued to adopt a poststructural perspective exploring the tensions that emerged in the autoethnography (Cunliffe et al., 2004) and the interview study.

In Chapters 5 and 6 the participants’ transition journeys are presented cognisant of the autoethnographic findings, as their transition journey was at times my journey. Following their transitions, with an ever-increasing critical eye, allowed me to reflect on my own experiences seen through the hierarchical, gendered, power/knowledge dynamic of disciplinary and self-disciplinary power (Foucault, 1980, 1991; Butler, 1993). Conflicting behavioural normativities and social relations that emerged were analysed through a gendered lens which incorporated influences of power such as legitimacy and status (Suchman, 1995; Lukes, 2005; Brown and Toyoki, 2013). Chapter 7 analysed some of these conflicts in more detail, but the unpleasant and distressing lived reality of autoethnographic research, and the continuous nature of transition makes this Chapter, much like the findings in Chapter 6, an unfinished script (Humphreys, 2005). As a result, I feel on occasion I failed to convey the essence of the complexities and depth of emotions involved in ‘military service’ and ‘veteranhood’, the terms themselves suggestive of
subjugation or a ‘calling’, which paradoxically constrains as well as generates opportunity (Foucault, 1991).

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings in relation to the literature from the perspective of the participants, the autoethnographic element and the contributions to knowledge that arise from the study. In doing so theory will be advanced by addressing the contradictions and paradoxes that emerged. The aim is to present the findings not as hierarchical binary choices but as complex ways of being that can ebb and flow, be resisted and accepted, advancing current knowledge and theory about service life and veteranhood. The following discussion is divided into participant and autoethnographic analysis of the Research Questions. Participants interviews were designed to understand the following:

RQ 1 - Why do personnel feel conflicted about leaving the RAF

RQ 2 - How does military service affect gendered identity as individuals re-enter civilian life?

While the research questions for the autoethnographic account were adapted to take account of the first-person context and were as follows:

RQ 1 - Why was I conflicted about leaving the RAF?

RQ 2 - How has military service affected my gendered identity as I re-enter civilian life?

The first RQs found agency and resistance to be fluid concepts, which were linked to legitimacy and acquiescence to the power that governs (Lukes, 2005). While the second RQ sought to explore military behaviours finding them persistent (Maringira et al., 2015) as military discipline was harnessed and presented as a vehicle of power (Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998) by the participants through gendered performativities as part of their transition process even as aspects were rejected. Behaviours are described here as pluralities (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000) not dichotomies as they incorporate meanings across subjugation/agency and traditional understanding of the gender binary. Both discussion points explore gendered performativities enacted because of the military’s panoptic disciplinary gaze and consider the performative consequences of its durability (Foucault, 1991; Butler, 1993, 2004).
8.3 Research Questions - Participant Responses

8.3.1 RQ1 - “Why do personnel feel conflicted about leaving the RAF?”

Addressing the first research question, Chapter 5 draws on theories of disciplinary power to explore the decision to leave the RAF, specifically Foucault’s argument that power is always accompanied by resistance and that resistance is a fundamental feature of power (Foucault, 1980, 1991, 1994; Lynch, 2011). This approach was adopted firstly because of a lack of research into the resistance of military power within MOS, potentially a product of the military’s closed environment; secondly, it emerged as a result of how the participants formed their leaving narratives as a confused and at times contradictory rejection and acceptance of military normativities and power. As a result, while the leaving narrative can be presented as an act of resistance (Lukes, 2005), it can also be seen as conformance, as individuals recognise they can no longer meet the military ideal (Costas and Fleming, 2009; Green et al., 2010; Caddick, 2017), chose to remove their compliance, and in doing so, supported reductive institutional narratives, such as hegemonic masculinity, leaving the status quo unchallenged (Coser, 1974; Gatrell, 2013).

The RAF has always had a proportionally significantly larger number of women serving than the RN and Army which has arguably given the organization a different culture and feel to the other services (Higate, 2003b). Many of the female participants, including myself, noted in the interviews they never considered joining the Army or the RN for these reasons. Yet, the RAF’s gendered power relations have continued to support rigid processes and practices rewarding confirmatory gendered behaviours and loyalty to the organization above all else (Bakken, 2020). It is against this paradoxical and, at times confusing cultural backdrop and the organizational narratives that support this position that the participants found themselves struggling to make the decision to leave the RAF. A decision which incorporated their conflicting desires to remain loyal to the organization which had shaped them, and at times empowered them, yet also restricted their ways of being, and towards the end of their careers, acted as barriers to the achievement of their aspirational selves (however impossible they are to achieve) (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009; D. I. Walker, 2012).

8.3.1.1 Leaving as an act of conformance and resistance

Recognising their compliance to (Irvine, 2000) and resistance of (McIntosh and McKeeganey, 2000) the military disciplinary framework, the findings suggest that participants adopted two distinct but related narrative techniques (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010) to navigate...
transition, alternating and ambiguously drawing on both. My contribution here aims to
dissolve and disrupt the binary conditions between compliance and resistance, serving and
veteran, demonstrating how service leavers anticipatory ‘freedoms’ of civilian life are
interwoven with narratives of embodied military discipline. These narratives of
independence and loyalty create a duality that incorporates and reinforces gendered
behaviours that manifest through stories of altruism, duty, and compliance to an ideal
(Griffith, 2009; Jackson and Mazzei, 2012).

It is understood within the Armed Forces that status is conferred according to rank, which
allows individuals to be placed into positions of classification, which are both challenging to
dislodge and political (Acker, 1990). These practices produce a multitude of outcomes,
including paradoxically the subjugation of women due to their reduced access to positions
of power while also rewarding women who reach higher rank with authority and access to
power through the organization’s strict hierarchical structure. However, this promised
power associated with rank and status has several ambiguous gendered consequences,
simultaneously granting women access to power; while encouraging and enabling them to
cascade femininity where they are not seen as women but as serving personnel
(Goldstein, 2018). As a result servicewomen can find their femininity as they subscribe to
masculine ways of being (Höpfl, 2003; King, 2015) which are intimately and intertwined with
capability and masculine concepts of success. This was seen in the findings as women
rejected relationships and delayed having children to further both their careers and meet
the demands of the organization. However, even as the women made these ‘sacrifices’ their
presence undermined “men’s perceived ability to prove their masculinity” against a feminine
foil (Connell and Connell 2005 in Goldstein, p. 387) and they were rarely concomitantly
rewarded for their dedication.

Considering this position, it can be seen how narratives of equality found in the military
ignore or fail to recognise various effects of gendered organizations identified in the
literature: homosociality (Bird, 1996), identity threats, intra-gender micro-aggressions
(Mavin et al., 2014), ‘neutral’ policies which default to the masculine (Acker, 1990), and the
failure of the concept of tokenism as a means to leverage change (Zimmer, 2016). Lack of
awareness of the consequences of gendered relations were frequently apparent in the
participant’s narratives as they discussed their service life and subsequent transition.
However, occasionally narratives included a reflective awareness of how social relations
affected the behaviours and themselves and others; but this was set against a default status
quo, which encouraged masculine behaviours at the expense of the feminine through which
belonging, status, and power can be achieved (Höpfl, 2003) and which for many of the
participants (male and female) been extremely rewarding for a significant portion of their
career. As a result, many were heavily invested in perpetuating elements of the status quo
which they still found rewarding, and even in transition, they were reluctant to relinquish these ties from which they continued to receive significant benefit (Lukes, 2005). However, the moments the participants found themselves at odds with the organizational narratives or the frequency they found themselves categorised by their rank, specialisation, or gender continued to cause friction inducing anxiety (Clinton and Guest, 2014). Unable to explore alternative ways of ‘being’ as they were subsumed by their role (Lukes, 2005) within the organization, they turned from acceptance of the military ideal to the consideration of alternative possibilities as a means of resistance. Such behavioural defiance reflects Foucault’s understanding of how freedom is constituted as we as individuals navigate power relations that we are never able to step outside of (Foucault, 1980). This may also explain why for many the consideration of alternatives away from the military ideal was approached as almost heretical (Bakken, 2020).

It was this conflict of duty and freedom that made the decision to leave challenging for many of the participants; the confused and contradictory background of reward and equity, abandonment, and greedy demands, epitomised by a dominant discourse of ‘service first’ supported and prohibited the participants in the pursuit of impossible to achieve aspirational identities and from pursuing the impossible (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009; Bloom, 2016). This schism, between their perceived and aspirational selves, enabled the service leavers, while perhaps not entirely ‘freeing’ themselves from subjugation, to become less accepting or docile participants in their domination by the military ideal (Lukes, 2005; Dowding, 2006). This subjective agency allowed the participants to ‘see’ possibilities and ways of being beyond their own reinforced military experiences (Warren, Donaldson, Lee, and Donaldson, 2019). They were able achieve this because the conditions of possibility within the military environment were recognised as restrictive, based on concepts of the ‘ideal warrior’ and hierarchically organised social normativities concerning age, success and traditional gendered understandings, which reduce the feminine while thwarting aspirational ambitions (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993). Through these changing and different understandings, the participants were able to create new forms of subjectivity. Focusing on the masculine and feminine, three types of gender-specific stories emerged in the participant’s narratives to support these shifting positions, which became part of the participants’ transition narratives bolstering their military identities while also supporting their desire for change. The female participants used their stories firstly, to demonstrate equivalence to men in the military environment, often but not always drawing on concepts of homosociality to do so; secondly, they demonstrated how they had to deny the feminine in contrast to their male colleagues, in order to show commitment to the organization; and thirdly how they had to work harder than men to achieve equal recognition, which was rarely provided by significant others (Acker, 2006; Britton and Logan, 2008; Huffman et al., 2017). Male participants were also affected by these cultural narratives, and their stories also focused on professional
competence (Evetts, 2013), which was couched in masculine terms and used to measure their dedication and capability. However, unlike the female participants, this was not done in opposition to a specific gender but rather through a performance of masculinity. However, when they began to discuss lack of promotional success or opportunity, they drew on caring discourses to illustrate the aspiration to achieve a work-life balance, while fantastical (Bloom, 2016), also drew on feminine discourses (West and Zimmerman, 1987).

All the participant’s stories highlighted apparent discrepancies between the organization’s gender-neutral narrative and their lived reality, which illuminated hegemonic masculine privilege and homosociality at the expense of the feminine (Connell, 1987). The female participants’ everyday stories serve as powerful examples of how embedded masculine performativity and expectations reproduce hegemonic masculine privilege associated with rank and specialisation (Knights and Pullen, 2019). While obvious discriminatory behaviours are clear to identify and can be potentially addressed by the organization or the individual, subtle behaviours are indiscretions which, although produce similar outcomes, can be more challenging to overcome (Stout, Staiger, and Jennings, 2007). For example, despite the stories of equalling or surpassing masculine hegemony the female participants also described working harder than their peers by taking on more menial and mothering roles within the workplace, sometimes infantizing their male colleagues to achieve some measure of dominance. These behaviours were presented as individual choices, a result of their controlling natures, rather than a reflection of gendered normativities and a response to the hegemonic masculine military environment (West and Zimmerman, 1987). The female participant’s stories show how the false narrative of gender neutrality and equality at times failed to overcome traditional feminine gendered performativity and value judgements within the military environment which continued to privilege masculine behaviours and identities. The subsequent outcomes, which applied to both men and women, encouraged a complex combination of contradictory behaviours and expectations in personnel where homosocial practices that deny femininity operate alongside traditional gendered expectations and behaviours (Acker, 1990; Bird, 1996; Zimmer, 2016). The resulting discrepancies in individual lived realities versus official organizational narratives fuelled individual desires to leave the organization. In contrast, masculine discourses of strength, determination, resilience, and success supported by governmental discourses of legitimacy, organizational belonging, and loyalty infused through self-disciplinary normativities encouraged to remain (West and Zimmerman, 1987). The next section explores in detail how these forces operated not as opposing binary groupings but as a reflection of the difficulties in ridding ourselves of the “double-bind”, the “simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures” which Foucault suggests can be understood, not by discovering what we are but refusing what we are not (Foucault in Dreyfus and Rainbow, 1983, p. 216).
8.3.1.2 Exploring the ‘double-bind’ – the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures

Findings in Chapter 5 revealed how overt discriminations and social relations within the Armed Forces are explicitly gendered due to a combination of military training, discipline, and broader traditional understandings and expectations of gendered behaviours. This understanding draws on the literature of belonging (Ashforth and Mael, 1989) betrayal (Elangovan and Shapiro, 1998; McKenna and Thomas, 2007) and loyalty (Alvesson, 2003a) to explore how gendered compliance and resistance are conceived and enacted by the participants as binary concepts to constructively sustain a sense of self during transition (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2009; Horton, McClelland, and Griffin, 2014). For the female participants, there was often blindness to gendered behaviours in themselves and others, and this is a key contribution of this thesis. This illusion is viewed an outcome of homosociality and the false assumption that their deeply internalised military identity was not gendered due to the institutional narrative of neutrality reinforced through uniform, equal pay and to an extent job opportunity. These behaviours may result from years, if not decades of immersion in an environment that conferred knowledge, respect, and authority with rank, signifying masculine status and power. For the female participants, these conditions contrasted with traditional expectations and burden of domestic responsibilities that continue to place unrecognised extra pressure on women to ‘do it all’ (Radcliffe and Cassell, 2015). These contrasting realities appear to have been accepted based on a combination of homosociality and hierarchal separation from the unknown civilian other, through which they were denied alternative perspectives. This partition produces a naïve (restricted) understanding of civilian lived reality, including the feminine other, and an almost fantastical, and occasionally absurdly self-defeating, need to adhere to the standards of self-discipline imposed by the greedy organization under conditions of legitimate governmentality (Coser, 1974; Foucault, 1994).

These conditions of legitimate governmentality applied to the military environment make confronting the effects of embedded homosociality that incentivises hegemonic masculine behaviours, rewarding the privileged, and perpetuating the status quo challenging (Lukes, 2005). Successful contestation of the existing relations of power must overcome both male and female protagonists who would likely regard such moves as threats to their (in their eyes) legitimate and recognised identity (Fournier, 1999). Moreover, for those so long seen as ‘tokens’ (Kanter, 1977), which can incur favourable privileges as well as condemnation, female service personnel must be willing to relinquish what makes them ‘special/different’, reject intragender-micro aggressions while adapting and developing new technologies of the self and self-disciplinary practices with unknown consequences (Zimmer, 2016). Such
a leap into the unknown, especially during the uncertainty of transition, may help to separate transitioning personnel from the double-bind of modern power structures as the participants’ experiences of policy breaches concerning promotions, career breaks, and postings, are recognised as outcomes of organizational life’s dark side which rest on a competitive masculine culture threatened by a feminine presence (Vaughan, 1999).

That these treatments represent procedural breaches of the psychological contract, often as a direct result of gender (Robinson, 1996) or gendered behaviours, but were not recognised in ‘official’ narratives and consequently were not understood or acknowledged outside of the informal stories told between colleagues, meant for many years such stories lacked legitimacy and could be dismissed (Shortall, 2012). However, despite not being officially recognised the consequences to these stories are manifold as organizations are (re)created and maintained through meanings (McClellan, 2021). In this case the breaches had significant damaging impact on participants’ emotional connections, commitments, and loyalties to the RAF (Leventhal, 1980; Rothausen, Henderson, Arnold, and Malshe, 2017). Despite this, the power of the organizational narrative often left the participant’s taking partial responsibility for these policy contraventions leaving them feeling guilty for the breach, ashamed and emotionally exhausted from following the feeling rules of the organization (Kramer and Hess, 2002; Alvesson, 2003a; Godfrey and Brewis, 2018). Embarrassed to admit they no longer shared the warrior-like goals or commitment ideals needed to sustain the organization’s narrative of prioritising defence responsibilities above all else, the participants largely remained mute reinforcing the organization’s legitimacy and defending their own positionality (Milliken et al., 2003). More concerning still, many of the participants approached transition with guilt, shame and feelings of dis-loyalty as by turning their back on their ‘calling’ and resisting their ‘exploitation’ and strategized self-subordination they were potentially consigning themselves to be judged failures in their moral and professional commitments (Bunderson and Thompson, 2009). These narratives unveil tensions as a consequence of the unequal power relations between the participants and the organizational hierarchy, the endemic work practices of a greedy institution (Goffman, 1991; Scott, 2010) revealed through underappreciation, toxic work environments and consistently high workloads. This led to exhaustion, anxiety, disenfranchisement and burn out, symptoms that were weaved into the participants’ leaving narratives helping them to reflectively rationalise and justify their decision to leave (Hoedemaeker, 2010; Fraher and Gabriel, 2014).

In relation to the first research question asking why the participants found making the decision to leave the RAF difficult we can begin to understand the participants’ close association with the organization, their reliance and dependency on it for their sense of identity (Ashforth et al., 1996). From the initial socialisation achieved through military
training, or even earlier as children of service personnel or cadets, the participants were able to strategize their self-subordination because of the organization’s cultural narratives of self-discipline, self-sacrifice, ethical positioning, governmental legitimacy, and reward. In this they are encouraged, as Tracy and Trethewey (2005, p. 169) suggest “to align their seemingly ‘true’ or ‘real’ selves with the preferred organizational self”. This is not an argument to suggest that there is a ‘true’, ‘authentic’ or ‘essentialised self’ as this does not align with the poststructuralist approach of this thesis but rather that the participants’ ability to strategize their self-subordination to the ‘ideal’ became untenable as they realised their sense of justice and legitimacy was diverged from the organization’s cultural narrative (Hoedemaeker, 2010). Furthermore, there was often a recognition that their historic sense of identity, based on masculine conceptions of the ‘ideal service person’, lacked validity as they could no longer strive to meet this illusory perception and balance family commitments. This realisation was reinforced by significant Others, such as promotion boards and superiors (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004). Moreover, attempting to ‘do it all’ created a self-defeating cycle of stress and anxiety (Gill, 2015) leading to a breach of trust which once violated morphed into cynicism allowing criticism of the organization, where the difference between the official discourse and the lived reality could no longer be excused Bhattacharya and Elsbach (2001). Nevertheless, while this enabled some of the participants to compare and question the organization’s moral and ethical stance, in comparison to their position (Kornberger and Brown, 2007; Weiskopf and Willmott, 2013), they, like myself and those leaving on less aggrieved terms, remained loyal, continuing to recognise and privilege the institutional need for the ‘ideal warrior’ in light of the organization’s reason for being. However, this position of ‘loyalty’ must acknowledge and understand the detrimental effects of this ‘cultural narrative’ on the individual, society and how it continues to support the status quo (Lukes, 2005). As a result, participants could find themselves caught in the double-bind of surrounding power-structures (Dreyfus and Rainbow, 1983) unable to relinquish what has constituted and continues to reconstitute them as they approach the temporal marker of their re-entry into civilian life. Perhaps this was because to question the legitimacy of their/our behaviours could, at the extreme, trigger an existential crisis of the self and an ‘undoing’ of a gendered identity for which they had sacrificed and which they and Others continue to value (Butler, 2004). As a result, many participants found themselves approaching transition battling with the gendered consequences of a deliberately stimulated over-identification with the organization (Ashforth et al., 1996) and its reason for being, which in turn had ramifications for their transitions and how they adapted to civilian life (Binks and Cambridge, 2018).
8.3.2 RQ 2: ‘How does military service affect gendered identity as individuals re-enter civilian life?’

The second research question considers how service personnel adapt to civilian life and how their rejection/acceptance of the military ideal acts as a productive force which, to various extents, sustains or releases them from its controlling panoptic gaze. Continuing the approach outlined through Chapters 2 - 4, identity work is presented through the participants’ narratives as cyclical dualities which are at times ambiguous allowing the subject to position themselves relatively “in an ongoing process of ‘becoming’ and ‘undoing’, rather than ‘being’ in the world” (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p. 53).

8.3.2.1 Gendered Social Relations and Performative Expectations

The powerful social relations, dominant discourses and normativities of the military institution are notoriously persistent in their ability to influence the behaviours of veterans and how they are seen by others (Higate, 2000, 2001; Maringira et al., 2015; Cooper et al., 2018). Add to this the hegemonic masculine military identity based on a shifting hierarchical understanding of military and civilian polarities (Goldstein, 2018): between serving/non-serving, veterans/civilians, and life beyond the military can be full of new threats and opportunities which present multiple possibilities. If the decision to leave the RAF is viewed as a condition of a continual reassessment of social relations, through which the subject can attempt to secure the self (Knights and Clarke, 2014), leaving can be seen as a continuing act of agency, motivated by the need to “make a difference”, to exercise power “to a pre-existing state … or course of events” in terms of their own life path, regardless of whether disciplinary power is resisted and/or confirmed (Giddens, 1984, p. 14; Newton, 1998). However, in this light positioning agency versus subjugation can be problematic. It can overlook the consequential possibilities and opportunities for the individual, based on their capacity for reflexive awareness regarding what presents the greater threat/opportunity to securing identity: acceptance, resistance and/or confirmatory rejection.

Re producing or rejecting gendered behaviours was key to how participants attempted to disrupt, evade or accept the practices of knowledge and the anticipatory identification judgements (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) of ‘Others’; however, both the reproduction or rejection of behaviours constantly risked re-establishing the military/civilian boundaries of their identity, reinforcing associated gendered norms (Mavin et al., 2014). In this sense, it could be argued that veterans remained bonded with the military organization in a co-dependent relationship (Rice, 1992), through a combination of learnt self-disciplinary techniques and the anticipated observation of ‘Others’ who knowingly and unknowingly judged their performativities. These reflect the different practices of knowledge which were
imposed by known ‘Others’ (those who knew of the participants’ military past) and unknown ‘Others’ (who were unaware of the participants’ background). As a result, varying anticipatory behaviours which predicted masculine military behaviours were overlaid on the participants which from a known perspective reinforced military behaviours, these were often in conflict or contrast to unknowing Others who assumed the participants’ gendered identities were aligned to civilian societal norms. In terms of a practical contribution this thesis demonstrates how the perceptions of ‘Others’ therefore acted to coerce, constrict, or predict masculine military behaviours in the participants which then created the conditions for self-regulating anticipatory behaviour (Strauss, Griffin, and Parker, 2012) creating a cyclical reinforced behavioural loop. Consider the life long and even posthumous label ‘veteran’ (Goffman, 1990a) or the continuing use of military rank in private life which can be thought of as a political categorisation which acts to re(constitute) ongoing social process and performances that contribute to and shape cultural values and narratives. This was most recently seen during the pandemic and the huge outpouring of national warmth to veteran ‘Captain Tom’ (Rodrigues and Child, 2008; Captaintom.org, 2021) Judgements similar to this produced performative and occasionally reflective participant narratives which variously mimicked a combination of hegemonic masculinities and/or traditional femininities, which were used to support insecure selves (Acker, 1990; Simpson, 1998; Trethewey, 1999). These performativities were also linked to understandings of dominant traditional gendered behaviours in military/civilian worlds, which many of the participants were either blind to or only beginning to consider through their changing lived experiences (Burchell et al., 2007).

Notably when the reactions of Others supported a valued or aspirational version of the participant’s identity, it was almost seamlessly incorporated into their narratives. However, when responses disrupted, threatened or conflicted with the participant’s valued historic or aspirational identity, the participants sought narrative techniques to disrupt or evade its consequences (Petriglieri, 2011) by drawing on, accepting and rejecting, different elements of disciplinary power found in the military (Ainsworth and Hardy, 2004; Lukes, 2005). At times these narrative techniques overlapped, creating identity ambiguity as hegemonic masculine/feminine behaviours, and performativity was seen both positively and negatively, disrupted and or supported (Corley and Gioia, 2004; Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016; Van Gilder, 2019), demonstrating the temporal influences on identity construction (Cunliffe et al., 2004).

It is also important to note that as many of the participants were officers or SNCOs, they had access to power normally “reserved for the pinnacle of hegemonic masculinity” (Goldstein, 2018, p. 387; Treanor and Marlow, 2021) within the institution but this access, as demonstrated by the way they were treated, was often limited (King, 2016) and relied on their adherence to feeling and behavioural rules. Outside this environment many veterans
lost this power/knowledge relationship (Foucault, 1994) and were released from adherence to the feeling rules which were conferred through the visible signifier of rank, on which their status and identity could repeatedly be, albeit temporarily, secured. This demonstrates the unstable nature of identity and how it relies on both seeing and been seen (Butler, 1993; Roberts, 2005). The judgements of ‘Others’ therefore produced various emotional consequences including frustration, dissatisfaction and anger (Beech, 2011; Fraher and Gabriel, 2014), which are suggestive of an inability to “reconstruct foundational assumptions about the world, humanity, and self” (Haynie and Shepherd, 2011, p. 501). These frustrations led, for some participants, to intense continuing liminal experiences (Ybema et al., 2011) and what can be described as problematic transitions compared to those whose continuing adjustment appeared to be less problematic; possibly as a result of adopting a more flexible and open approach to alternative ways of being.

8.3.2.2 The illusion of neutrality and the consequences of binary positions

The complexity of the argument outlined above demonstrates the shortcomings of a theoretical position which reifies binary gendered behaviours. As a constrictive outcome military discipline and behavioural normativities can be considered to privilege masculine behaviours and discourses which “reflect and reproduce non-intimate, instrumental and self-regarding subjectivities” (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004, p. 434) including confidence and assertiveness. While some of the women were able to easily identify and enjoy the performative aspects of femininity they had been denied in the military (Godfrey et al., 2012) many were unaware of their instrumental masculine performativities or how they lay embedded within their military selves. These masculine behaviours appeared to be largely unrecognisable to the participants, as their ways of being, reinforced by the organization’s dominant discourses of equity and reward were considered neutral (Acker, 1990), albeit recognised as uniquely military. The participant’s views on behaviours followed a binary path with their narratives exposing what they considered to be the ‘essential’ aspects of their identities divided into either civilian or military rather than products of the deep socialisation and embedded performativity of military life (Doan and Portillo, 2017). As a result, especially in the first few months of their re-entry into civilian life, the participants resisted many of the gendered techniques of power found in the civilian world through which ‘Others’ used to judge and categorise them (Foucault, 1991; Lukes, 2005).

The empirical evidence suggests the participants resisted these hierarchical judgements using two strategies to author narratives which drew on their military selves. Firstly, they heroically disrupted (Lapointe, 2013) the hegemonic masculine behaviours of the troublesome ‘Other’ by providing examples of their military experiences to support their
professional or relational competence. Secondly, they became the principal character clothed in an injured innocence, defining themselves through moral superiority to which military personnel nearly always incorporated a continued loyalty to the RAF. In these stories the participants became ‘heroic’ objectors to the military ideal who could see through the military’s controlling narratives, while others could not. However, although tempered by the ability to consider alternative possibilities even the participants who produced these narratives continued to recognise the legitimacy of the RAF and their historic and current place within/alongside it. By maintaining connections to the RAF the participants used these narrative approaches to either fight off or neutralize the threat to their identities presented by the judgement of Other’s and through their identity work they produced narratives of strength based on their military selves (Kokot, 2015) which became a part of their ongoing storytelling (Dawson and Sykes, 2019). On those occasions when the unpredictable ‘Other’ encouraged the participant’s confident acts, the participants also drew on their military identities to support these reactions, explaining their assurance and confidence as an outcome of their military training justifying their frustration and derision for civilians who ‘lean back’ rather than take action (D. I. Walker, 2012; Binks and Cambridge, 2018). In this way, affirmation and rejection of their military identities were used to prop up and repair insecure selves (Clarke and Knights, 2015) during transition in a way that disrupted binary understandings, suggesting fluid ambiguity was a condition of successful transition.

8.3.2.3 Staying Still and Moving On

Deliberately seeking to prolong connections to the military by working as a reservist or Defence contractor/civil servant was often presented as part of a planned stepping stone to civilian life (Higate, 2000). This offers support for Higate’s (2001) findings that service leavers seek continuity by locating work within other masculinized institutions but also recognizes more prosaically the economic capital of service leavers in this sector (Swed and Butler, 2015; Weller, 2017; Weller, et al., 2021). Research has shown that individuals can reach for romantic identity anchors during tumultuous transitions, which can represent stability and consistency (Griffith, 2009) recreating a sense of belonging and community (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Tajfel, 2010; Daskalaki, Butler, and Petrovic, 2016). However, the idea of identity anchors has also been challenged by postmodern theorists who argue such grounded identity securities should be considered as simply only one image among countless others (Rosenau, 1992 in Tracy and Trethewey, 2005). Nevertheless, the need for stability achieved through professional connections, could act to mask an identity threat brought about by leaving the service and facilitate transitional adjustment, owing to familiarity of the environment (Broom and Smith, 1963). Alternatively, working in a familiar
environment may also prevent ex-service personnel from transitioning successfully into civilian life (Binks and Cambridge, 2018) inhibiting them from moving on (Gabriel, 2000; Fraher and Gabriel, 2014). The empirical evidence presented suggests ambiguous results where framing the professional choices of veterans in binary terms which reify occupations into defence or civilian sectors may be unhelpful. For while feeling the need to conform to military behavioural expectations was experienced most acutely by those who remained associated with the military (Binks and Cambridge, 2018), they and others often reported in their narratives and exhibited in their interviews less disciplined behaviour than found in military life, acknowledging an openness to possibilities beyond military expectations.

Furthermore, a sense of continuity attained through professional stability appeared to motivate and sustain service leavers “through periods of hardship, and inspire them to deal with adversities” (Fraher and Gabriel, 2014, p. 927). For these participants reconstituting, reclaiming or retaining their military identities offered a way to recover the confidence they had lost/experienced as serving personnel, as well as combat the anxieties caused by transition and a loss of status (Collinson, 2003; Alvesson et al., 2008; Fraher and Gabriel, 2014; Gill, 2015). From this perspective, re-joining the military can be assigned to several motivations from responding to a vocational calling (Bunderson and Thompson, 2009; DesJardins, 2012), to fulfilling a moral obligation the participants feel towards society (Connor, 2010; Campo, 2013; King, 2013) and their colleagues. Or, through a more critical lens although depictions of service life can enable discourses of heroism perpetuating military masculinities (Prividera and Howard III, 2006) and hegemonic identity over the other. However, this fails to account for how heroism can be refuted in service circles as risky, and discourses of heroism are seen as foolish or lacking in humility (Godfrey and Brewis, 2018). While such perspectives demonstrate the fluid complexity that can lie behind motivations and judgements re-joining as a reservist can, nevertheless, render veterans visible again. This visibility can help ex-service personnel regain some of their previous status and sense of purpose (Gowan, 2012) while in practical terms it provides more flexibility than regular service offering greater possibility of balancing home and work-life (Dutton et al., 2010) as well as being reasonably financially lucrative and offering job security in times of economic instability. However, re-joining also represents an acceptance of coercive control wielded by the organization including oppressive restrictions in an organization that continues to reward the unachievable ‘ideal’ alongside contradictory narratives of more flexible working practices and greater freedom (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002). Consequently joining as a reservist could be considered to reify the commitment levels needed to be a regular (Martin, 1990) continuing to hierarchically reduce re-joiners unless an alternative collective identity can be re-authored supporting a narrative of greater work/life balance, however illusionary (Bloom, 2016), while restoring and maintaining a positive sense of legitimacy and identity through agentic choice (Ybema, 2010).
8.3.2.4 Limits of Agency

One of the findings that emerged from the participant’s narratives was how they understood and framed their own agency (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). After years conforming to military discipline all the participants shared a desire for more freedom. These freedoms were presented as an antithesis to military discipline, with pre-leaving imaginations prioritizing a cultural fantasy of work-life balance and status (Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2009; Bloom, 2016), glossing over institutional contradictions (Creed et al., 2012) and the social normativities of civilian life (Scott, 2010; King, 2016). In their post leaving narratives many of the participants were able to recognize some of the controlling discourses of military and civilian life but often viewed these in a detached way, almost humorously, accepting them while dismissing their influence on themselves (Watson, 2013; Lewis, 2015). From an observer’s perspective, this was akin to watching subjects ‘unknowingly’ be party to their own subjugation in ‘real-time’ reducing their agency while they ambiguously and contradictorily argued their independence from controlling social forces. For transitioning military personnel this meant they often unknowingly replaced one type of subjugation with another, as they were unaware or unable to recognise how subjectification occurs through normalising organizational practices in accordance with particular social orders while giving the illusion of agentic choice (Foucault, 1994; Lukes, 2005). This resulted in the participants re-learning the limits to their own agency and freedom through numerous ambiguities and contradictions during transition. However, defining themselves in opposition to what they no longer wanted to be they were able to renegotiate the sociohistorical power structures that had surrounded them and in doing so re-construct and re-discover what they could be (Dreyfus and Rainbow, 1983; D. Taylor, 2011).

8.4 The Research Questions through the Autoethnographic Lens

My own transition offers further opportunity to understand the temporal, non-linear and social aspects of identity transition, the intense periods of liminality that may wax and wane, arrive unexpectedly or be anticipated with enthusiasm or trepidation. Although military service comes to an end on a specific date, transition periods have no exact timelines. Beginnings and ends are fluid, and in my case, transition was heavily influenced by environmental factors as it ebbed and flowed, froze, and thawed due to a combination of my research focus, my husband’s work, and my changing domestic circumstance. This section explores the autoethnographic element of the research process from a critical perspective (Astley, 1985; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000) including a discussion on conflicted loyalties, to the organization and its members, which manifested in several ways, including avoiding ‘taboo’ or darker subject matter and a hesitancy to interrogate alternative critical views (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000). It also includes an embodied (Trethewey,
and performative account of my identity transition incorporating the invisibility of veteran status (Beech, 2011; Hendricks-Thomas et al., 2020). This embodied and embedded position helped develop my awareness of the participant’s reflexivity as they constructed ‘identity’ and my role in ‘re-authoring’ their scripts as well as my own (Ybema et al., 2009).

8.4.1 RQ1 – Why was I conflicted about leaving the RAF?

In this emergent discussion, many subjective, contextual and social realities were explored and interpreted, with focus settling on the importance of masculine identity in the context of a gendered organization and hidden disciplinary regimes (Pullen et al., 2017) that influence behaviour. One of the richest research seams that emerged from the autoethnographic account was that of loyalty (Campo, 2013) to an organization which encourages conformity while discouraging criticism (Bakken, 2020). Indeed loyalty was recognized early as a deeply performative part of the signification of military life (Scott, 2010) which can make people feel disloyal as they consider leaving the organization. This can cause anxiety and stress as having been measured judged and evaluated in terms of loyalty throughout their military careers service personnel can find the idea of being dis-loyal an anathema, even as it proves useful in new organizational contexts (Kulkami, 2020). However, the challenge for many personnel, including myself, was trying to unpick the contradictory and anxiety inducing emotions surrounding my relationship with the organization as leaving was considered. As discussed previously loyalty is a fundamental requirement to an effective military organization that later produces a dilemma for service leavers, who, through the withdrawal of their labour are resisting and renegotiating one of the most significant military disciplinary techniques (Foucault, 1991) and bases of military identity (MacLean and Webber, 2015). My decision to leave therefore was fundamentally difficult because of a loyalty that bound me to the RAF even as I recognised I was unable to marshal the resources needed to sustain a positive work identity which may have enabled me to cope with the greedy demands of the institution (Dutton et al., 2010).

The conflicts and pressures we faced as a family where both parents worked full time in demanding jobs was not unique (Moen and Sweet, 2002) and although we did our best to manage and share our responsibilities, gendered stereotypical behaviours and expectations were nevertheless present. As a result, a combination of maternal guilt (Gatrell, 2011) and gendered expectations (Connell, 1987) shaped our decisions in a way that was at odds with my identity as a professional military officer. The expectations of the organization and of myself meant I was unable to reframe my working mother image to one of a ‘good working mother’ (Buzzanell et al., 2005, p. 261). This made me feel disloyal to the organization, to my children and to the ‘ideal’ I and others measured ourselves against.
Butler (1997) links desire to be seen with recognition, which enables viability as a social being, discussing the power dynamics involved in who gets recognised by whom (or not) and in what way. Governed by social norms, recognition becomes a condition of agency in the doing and undoing of subjectivity (Butler, 1993; Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) and this perspective meant that although I recognised leaving meant I was giving up on an unachievable ideal (Knights and Clarke, 2018) I still felt my decision reflected an inability to cope and this reduced self-efficacy became a threat to my identity which clouded my transition (Brunger et al., 2013).

8.4.2 RQ2: ‘How has military service affected my gendered identity as I re-enter civilian life?’

Seen through a gendered lens the ‘baggage’ I carried into my re-entry into the civilian world revealed many of the practices and behaviours of a masculine military life, including a reluctance to show vulnerability (Green et al., 2010). When I first left the RAF my identity as an officer began to become undone (Butler, 2004; Hancock and Tyler, 2007) and back in the military environment my identity as a ‘wife of’, a ‘dependent’, was automatically assigned through an association of status and culture that made the accomplishment of gender invisible (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Meanwhile, although my veteran status was often hidden (Ashcroft, 2014) my student identity was also separated from many aspects of my lived reality. The value that I and society put on these different identities has caused persistent disquiet as I have wrestled with balancing my studies, my parental responsibilities (Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2009; Laney et al., 2015) and my veteranhood, a term which itself is embedded in masculinity (Spall, 2000). To be identified as a veteran by others, whether civilian or military, requires constant knowing performativity, the foundations of which can be seen as a mixture of domination/equivalence (Lukes, 2005; Dowding, 2006) and due to its invisibility requires a visual or verbal signification (J. Butler, 1989) which made me feel uncomfortable as it anchored me back to the organization and all its restrictions. Outside of the university environment, my student status required an equal measure of performativity, which again I struggled with, finding the performative aspects of both identities draining (Ybema et al., 2011). This next section explores the performative aspects of my gendered behaviours in two distinct but overlapping environments

8.4.2.1 Transition Within the Institution

Inside the military bubble, veteran wives, like myself, often found social relations especially confusing. As with wives new to the military environment, I did not fully understand how we were socially positioned in this at once strange but familiar setting (Hyde, 2015) as I found
myself locked into military life and all its gendered and hierarchical expectations and social norms which preclude certain behaviours while encouraging others (MacMillan, 2018b). This had consequences as I ‘tested and adjusted’ my behaviours to find a position I could, not necessarily feel comfortable with, but which I could find a comfortable position. This recognised the transient nature of military life (it wouldn’t be forever) balanced against an acute awareness of my own continued subjugation (Lukes, 2005). Furthermore, within the closed world of the military institution, the available scripts of self-hood are limited, restricting the counterfactual options open to individuals (Goffman, 1991; Giddens, 1991) with everything and everybody seen through the prism of a gendered hierarchy, built and sustained on the civilian other, a civilian other which can absorb the veteran, making them invisible (Brunger et al., 2013).

The invisibility of veteranhood is why veterans wear their badges signifying their status to other veterans, service personnel and civilians alike, acting as a symbolic means to feign control over social interactions, projecting and legitimising their status in society (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002) in an endeavour to be ‘seen’, to be recognised. This creates a recurring citation of gendered behaviours which reify further the military civilian divide (Butler, 1993, 2011; Hey, 2006) and can prolong the demarcation process. Whilst the loss of my previously held seniority in rank was one aspect of my emotive response to new encounters, where I was automatically assigned ‘wife of’ status, I was also disturbed by many but not all, ‘Others’ inability to value any form of worth beyond the military institution. Yet, while perhaps not ‘valued’ in the same way as I was previously, through the social category ‘wife of’ I became a viable subject in Others’ eyes (RAF personnel, other wives, and MoD civilians), but it was contingent and conditional on my husband’s position rather than my own. In this my agency was removed, I was ‘seen’, categorised and labelled by the other, whether I wanted to be or not (Butler, 2011) as a useful appendage (Cree, 2020). This made their positioning of me, ‘dependent’ on my husband, especially uncomfortable and a product of their and my narcissism (Brown, 1997; Pullen and Rhodes, 2008).

The military’s definition of me as a ‘dependent’ positioned me in the military world into a particular category of being, through which my liminal status re-emerged and was prolonged as I was unable to resist the many technologies of power at play (Cree, 2020). Regarding discourse as a technology of power (Foucault, 1991, 1994) the term ‘dependent’ is conceptually laden with subjugation, helplessness and reliance. Furthermore, as a controlling mechanism of power, the official term ‘dependent’ supports a particular behavioural expectation from spouses in a similar way to how the word ‘serving’ and ‘veteran’ acts to shape the military self (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009). A paradoxical relationship that signals membership of an ‘elite’ organization that deliberately socialises its
members to regard themselves hierarchically superior to civilians (Binks and Cambridge, 2018) but which requires extensive subjugation.

Within the bounds of the military camp and the technologies of power surrounding us, the other wives and I were unable to reject the ‘wife of’ associations, despite our efforts. Although we experienced recognition of other aspects of our identities from family, friends and for myself to a lesser extent, due to a sporadic contact with my fellow students, we were “wives of”, however, we resisted. Hoedemaeker (2010) suggests resistance to identity ideals should be understood as forms of re-signification. This view argues failure of identity is important as it represents a collapse of the imaginary, creating an ontological shift enabling possibilities of resistance and alternative behaviours to be explored. As a fulcrum of identity, my ex-military status acted to facilitate and as a barrier to the identity construct of ‘wife of’ or ‘veteran’. While to be recognised beyond being ‘wife of’, a ‘veteran’, or anything else, I had to ‘perform’ an exhausting cyclical process repeatedly enacted and signalled producing uncertain and often unwelcome subjective and contextual responses from others (Jehn and Thatcher, 2014; Weller et al., 2021). For me in this military world the collapse of the imaginary revealed only further limited options, akin to when climbing a mountain and reaching the top the clouds disperse and reveal you were at a false summit of a never-ending mountain chain.

As I negotiated the social norms of the military and wider society doing ‘the wife of’ (Butler, 2004), I was constituted and reconstituted by discursive and symbolic signifiers, my agency often emerging from an uncomfortable absence or withdrawal of my military self (Costas and Fleming, 2009) as I went through a process of re-signification. Regardless of which subjective identity I privileged, wife, mother, student, or associate lecturer it could be argued I moved beyond RAF Officer, while continuing in many circumstances to reject my veteran status. However, this turbulent and fragile identity position is a constant site of conflict as I ‘use’ my veteran status in my research to gain credibility with participants and colleagues, as well as in my professional role as an associate lecturer. Indeed I use my military identity to prove my competence and to keep a narrative of the self ongoing (Watson, 2009). However, this leaves my narrative at risk of incoherence (Wright et al., 2012) and lacking in continuity as I negotiate a path between conceptions of my past self and the possibilities of my future becomings’ (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010). The source of this conflict is the result of the embedded and embodied nature of military being: the loyalty and commitment expected to be shown towards the organization whether you are ‘in’ or ‘out’ (Hoyer and Steyaert, 2015), generated in training and reinforced through institutional and societal norms and behaviours, which prioritise the military fantasy (Coser, 1967; Goffman, 1991).
8.4.2.2 Transition Outside the Institution

The military positioning of itself as superior to the public body is complicated by the public being both the person that is protected yet votes for the governing authority and is therefore considered and recognised as possessing a powerful judgemental voice. The military civil relationship relies on unspoken and unseen power/knowledge dynamics (Foucault, 1994; Gond, Cabantous, Harding, and Learmonth, 2016) and military personnel, because they assume a privileged position through their association with a masculine institution (Davies and Thomas, 2002), can often be un-reflexive, unaware, or uncaring of the nuances of these relationships. Furthermore, they do not necessarily recognise their own consent to subjugation within this dynamic or even that others might think differently to themselves (Lukes, 2005). If they do reflect on movements that decry rather than support military endeavours, they can be viewed as well-meaning but naïve and easily dismissed. This can breed a narcissistic arrogance (Brown, 1997; Pullen and Rhodes, 2008) which while not universal in its application, as military personnel can also perform humility (Godfrey and Brewis, 2018), can reveal the shifting dynamics of hierarchical positioning considered as a contributing aspect to military/civilian social relations which can affect service personnel’s re-entry into civilian life.

For my own part I approached my civilian status with a dread expecting that stripped of my military status while I was still living in military quarters, I would be seen as reduced (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004) and this was my experience. However, when living in the civilian world, I experienced things differently; in this world, although more alternative possibilities were appreciated (Lewis et al., 2016), I was often reluctant to demonstrate my military background for fear of being seen as overbearing or arrogant (Eichler, 2017). Moreover, within the institution I was still often seen as merely a ‘mother’ (Lewis, 2015). Occasionally as a student I found myself impatient with civilian ‘niceties’ my desire to ‘just get on with it’ overriding politeness with an instrumental rationality to produce an outcome, any outcome (Davey, 2008). This applied equally to my research as to my social interactions producing responses from ‘Others’ which were far from affirmative, further fuelling the identity threat of transition (Dutton et al., 2010). Occasions also arose during this time when I choose to enact my military self, for example when I got out of my car to direct traffic around a confused elderly driver, as what I thought of as the ‘civilian other’, sat passively and watched from the side-lines. The action and the story serves to combat discordance creating a coherent narrative and like the other stories of my transition are therefore part of a wider continuation of political identity work that serves multiple temporal purposes (Wright et al., 2012). As a result, I experienced a dual subjectivity of conflicting discourses and behaviours where I would sometimes temper my military self becoming softer, quieter, and occasionally more patient, more accepting of my ‘feminine gendered place’.
However, although this performance was difficult to maintain it created space for opportunity and reflection, to begin to understand different ways of being (Watson, 2008; Creed et al., 2012) and challenge, construct, and reproduce alternative behaviours (Wright et al., 2012). My stories tell of the continuing conflict found between parenthood and career (Duberley and Carrigan, 2013) and the gendered nature of all social relations which continue to reduce the feminine while punishing non-conformance (Foucault, 1991). They support a hierarchically elevated military self brought out of ‘retirement’ when needed which is also felt as best kept ‘hidden’ when not required. This flexible identity supports a self-consistency that offers cohesion while maintaining attempts to achieve the ideal (Hoyer, 2016). As a result, my stories of transition are at times paradoxical, confusing, and confused. Inconsistent and incoherent they reflect dynamic powerful social relations and a continued desire to seek an approval from significant ‘Others’ which is unachievable not least because the ‘Other’ are unpredictable (Knights and Clarke, 2017) but because ‘they’ should be considered as more than one person or group of people ‘they’ are a multitude of ‘Others’ with differing perspectives, knowledge, and judgements. My stories therefore should be considered examples of female veteranhood in action as identity is re-created through self-discipline and resistance (Foucault, 1991), socially constructed in opposition to military and civilian ‘Others’ (Treanor and Marlow, 2021), while seeking approval from a ‘them’ based on a representation which I can only ever partially understand (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000).

8.5 Contributions

As an exploratory piece of research, this thesis makes several contributions to an area of military life that has received little scrutiny. It presents military and veteran identity as a dynamic gendered consequence of governmentality and discipline particularly relevant to the study of organizational life and aspects of subjectification. From a theoretical perspective, it explored Foucault’s (1991) theory of disciplinary power along with Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan (1998) and Lukes (2005). By applying their theories to the military environment through a gendered lens the aim was to take account of the effects of a masculine gendered environment on women and men who had served in the RAF. Garland (1986) and Raffnsøe et al., (2019) have been helpful in identifying gaps in Foucault’s theorising which have been applied productively to the military enviornment. Focusing on narrative explorations of lived experience, aspects of disciplinary power such as loyalty, belonging, agency and resistance were explored to describe service personnel’s’ transition as they were reconstituted as veterans. This next section summarises this studies main theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions before discussing the limitations and suggestions for future research.
8.5.1 Theoretical Contributions

Foucault’s theories of power, discipline and resistance continue to be popular within MOS scholars (Raffnsøe et al., 2019), yet research into the military organization, despite its recognition as a site of exemplary disciplinary power (McSorley, 2014), is limited due to restriction put in place on serving personnel taking part in research studies41 (MoD, 2020f). As a result, most of the research is focused on male veterans because they are the most accessible and dominant group and understanding of military discipline is therefore based on a masculine perspective of a masculine environment. This has produced a focus on the duality of male/female, masculine/feminine relations and identities taking little account of pluralistic views of gender or their effects on women. This reductive view limits the understanding of challenges surrounding transition for all veterans. By combining a Foucauldian concept of power and an emerging critical approach to gender in the military, the messy, shifting and complex nature of gender and veteranhood was illuminated (Bulmer and Eichler, 2017; Eichler, 2017). This was achieved by applying an interpretive perspective to the fluidity of gender, veteran identities and transition which incorporated an autoethnographic element producing new knowledge about female and male veterans. By adopting this approach, I extended disciplinary theory in the following ways.

Firstly, I demonstrate how by applying Foucault’s arguments of governmentality through a pluralistic gendered lens the desire to serve in the military and do one’s duty can be seen as both a genuine aspiration and a response to subjugation (Garland, 1986) regardless of gender. Furthermore, building and maintaining discipline in the military has been central to this concept acting as a principal masculine narrative in military discourse, through which productive forces aim to safeguard the subject’s sense of self, irrespective of gender, but which has consequences for all. From a Foucauldian perspective this disciplinary approach embraces the lived reality of military life and categorisation of ‘veteran’ which follows as a political gendered tool of subjugation through which feminine identity and agency is denied, even as it empowers, creating paradoxes of understanding. Indeed, influence can be seen to extend beyond military service as Garland (1986) argues “dictates of conscience can become routines of convenience for other purposes” (p.870) and these can have real gendered effects and outcomes during transition, beyond the merely habitual. For example, gendered aspects of disciplinary power and the decision making they influence affects veterans’ transitions, subjectivities, future life choices, and aspirations. This can be especially problematic and challenging for female veterans at the beginning of their transitional journey as their sense of self is intimately bound to a hybrid masculine/feminine

41 Section 1 para 7 of JSP 556 (MoD, 2020f).
way of being which can be at odds with expectations of civilian social relations and the public's understandings of military life and because this way of being is internalised it can have an effect whether or not they invoke their veteranhood.

Secondly, moving away from transition to focus on discipline and power this research has demonstrated how in the military environment a multitude of behaviours are possible under the shadow of a disciplinary code which can be twisted to benefit the individual or obscure the unconscionable. For example, the hierarchical disciplined organizational structure enables women access to power ensuring rank, status and authority are recognised but the gendered social relations of power limit that access through conformance to conditional behaviours that limit femininity, encourage homosocial groupings (Bird, 1996; King, 2016) and ignore micro gendered aggressions (Mavin et al., 2014; Wigston, 2019; Davis, Brundtland-Steder, Harvey, and Chewing, 2020). Moreover, the interweaving of discipline and loyalty in this hyper masculine environment can excuse behaviours that would not be tolerated elsewhere, as women and men support binary distinctions between masculine and feminine, military, and civilian. These binary relationships can result in many female veterans being unable to recognise what they understand as ‘neutral’ or professional military behaviours are regarded by others as masculine (Rinaldo and Homberg, 2020).

That the military can be a site of empowerment and repression further confuses as it relies on a fluid combination of obedience and disobedience (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2009) with binary arguments between control and benevolence, masculine and feminine, being reproduced and reified to exclusively support instrumental goals (Butler, 2004; Hancock and Tyler, 2007). That such behaviours can be reputationally damaging to the organization and bring actual harm to organizational members demonstrates the ambiguities of power and discipline in the military environment. The participants’ experience of dark corners of military life, despite the panoptic nature of military discipline, came about because power, misplaced loyalty, and the hierarchical Othering of both civilians and lower-ranked, lesser valued service personnel is fundamental to maintaining the military discipline in the achievement of instrumental goals. Such ordered placements can produce expressions of practice out of line with rules, regulations, and normative social forces, precisely because the legitimacy of authority that comes with rank means senior individuals are considered above reproach, and disciplinary practices prohibit the questioning of authority. My contribution therefore adds to the theoretical literature about how gendered power relations and discipline can combine to obscure gendered behaviours from the subject and encourage wicked problems.
8.5.2 Empirical Contribution

From an empirical perspective, I have contributed to understanding the ambiguous relationship between military and civilian, which can present as superiority based on a disciplined military identity and capability, in contrast to a superiority based on a 'freedom' from military subjugation (May, 2014). Military discourses of superiority which are reproduced regardless of the speakers’ gender, rests on an embodied understanding of social relations within the military environment, which can potentially reverse/dissolve as service leavers re-enter civilian life. Moreover, the relationship between the military and civilian world is not static and military ways of being, which are supported by mechanisms and techniques of power may flourish or diminish in civilian life as dominant alternative disciplinary relations are encountered. Moreover, while Garland (1986, p. 876) argues the use of discipline and power should interpret “conflicting social forces, values and sentiments which find expression in practice”, this potentially becomes harder for veterans and civilians to understand as the civil-military gap widens (Moskos, 1977), the military becomes smaller, veteran numbers continue to decrease. Knowledge and understanding about the military environment become less accessible (Hines et al., 2015). This deficiency in understanding is problematic as a lack of knowledge encourages civilian reliance on stereotypes and tropes reinforcing illusionary ‘ideals’ that can never be achieved (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009; Bloom, 2016) and which can hinder veterans re-integration into civilian life. However, the creation of a service ombudsman in 2014 to independently investigate complaints (Service Complaint Ombudsman, 2020) and two subsequent research inquiries into the lived experiences of service women (MoD, 2020; Defence Committee, 2020), suggests a potential pathway to increased shared knowledge and understanding across the civil/military divide is developing.

Despite the prevalence of presenting and understanding military identity as masculine this research demonstrates its multiplicity and fluidity as a contested space. As such, academic literature, rather than continuing to reify military identity primarily and exclusively through traditional masculine concepts, should widen the research scope to reflect its multiplicity (Higate, 2003b) including feminine attributes such as empathy and vulnerability (Pecis and Priola, 2019), foregrounding a different gendered perspective. Presenting military identities in this way could help ease away from binary gendered discussions to support research aimed at reducing the civil/military gap but also help the military understand the effects of homosociality and the ‘traps’ of neutral practices (Acker, 1990) whether they be deliberate or produce unintentional consequences. However, it is recognised the functional imperative to build a military force capable of warfighting while embracing a more inclusive culture remains challenging. For example, the framing of military identity can be difficult to
construct beyond a brutal and explicit language, which supports deadly force especially one that is built in opposition to a reduced civilian identity.

Finally, in terms of empirical evidence I extended the prevailing masculine understanding of the gendered nature of service life, and the transition to veteranhood in the RAF, by taking account of women and femininity as well as men and masculinity (Eichler, 2017) using primary qualitative data rather than secondary sources (Burkhart and Hogan, 2015; Eichler and Smith-Evans, 2018). This thesis makes a contribution by showing how masculinities and femininities are transformed, resisted or sustained ‘in action’; how they are constituted, reproduced and performed through narrative identity work as a result of institutionalized (Goffman, 1991) voices in a male-dominated organization. By exploring narrative identity work, this study highlights how disciplinary techniques and technologies of the self are experienced within the lived realities of all veterans, recognising that the ‘rules’ are different in civilian life compared to the military (Cooper et al., 2018). I analysed the conflicts between the legitimacy of the organization and gendered performances that acted to sustain attempts at securing the self; with what can be described as transformative, positive, and negative outcomes for the individual and society. As a result, female veterans’ voices and feminine behaviours are foregrounded in a rare contemporary account of women’s service life and transition experiences.

8.5.3 Practice-based Contribution

Several practical implications have emerged out of this study, which could, if adopted, positively affect veteran transition.

- Current career transition practices are masculine focused, with the needs of parents and other ‘carers’ poorly served. Time limitations imposed on the services offered by the CTP (currently restricted to two years) do not reflect the needs of these parents or adopt a flexible approach to the post-military work environment. This lack of flexibility dis-proportionally effects female veterans from engaging with professional support during their children’s early years and it is recommended that CTP should extend its facilities beyond its current two-year timeline.

- Rather than suggest an ‘undoing’ of military identity, as to do so risks the benefits of ‘identity consistency’; raising awareness throughout military service and during CTP of the relational aspects of military identity could prove beneficial for service personnel and service leavers. For example, this research explores how gendered performativity, self-regulating behaviours, and hierarchical ‘othering’ sustains military superiority in the eyes of service leavers frustrating conditions of possibility.
within transition. However, care must ensure favourable aspects of military identities, such as leadership capabilities or a desire to help the vulnerable, which have proven positive for military veterans and wider society, are not lost.

- While the RAF has taken positive action to develop a more inclusive discourse around gender, it has less awareness or reflexivity around other inequality regimes which perpetuate the male model of organising, including the deceptions involved in adopting gender ‘neutral’ policies and the effects of homosociality. These culturally embedded behaviours risk creating a new ‘ghetto’ within the reserves where gendered bias can flourish and counter-intuitively be re-enforced, as rather than change practices and cultures ‘problem personnel’ can be encouraged to move sideways into the reserves (Glass, 2004), as reflected by the numbers of women in the RAF reserves (23.2%) as opposed to the regulars (14.9%) (MoD, 2020c).

- The idea of a ‘Plan B’, or what happens after the military, should be embedded deeper into service life. Already the RAF and other services are beginning to align their training with civilian standards for the benefit of the individual, however, beyond initial and specialist training more focus on ‘developing’ service personnel and linking this to a narrative of supporting a second career beyond the military should be encouraged. This should be embedded in annual appraisal reports and normalised through personal development plans to make such discussions a natural part of service left rather than an indicator of a lack of commitment to the military.

- Government Policies such as offering reduced rail fare and creating a Veteran ID Card have eased the practical and emotional challenges of post-military life. However, these have had to be fought for by the veteran community, demonstrating aspects of the government’s ambiguous support. Moreover, the decision to guarantee veteran job interviews with government departments while made with the best intentions, could have unintentional consequences if seen or experienced as a furtherance of controlling discourses, and an extension of the paternalistic state, which can breed dependence and disempowerment. By trying to ‘help’ veterans integrate academics/governments and charities can perpetuate gendered divisions and other binaries in social power relations. Rather, efforts could focus on the challenges of employing veterans from the perspective of the private sector.

8.6 Limitations of the Study

Several limitations to the study were identified: theoretical, empirical, and methodological. However, it should be noted that the limitations noted or experienced were not confined to
these silos; rather, their effects permeated all aspects of the research process. Rainbow and Rose (2003, p. 38) describe the human being as a “site of a multiplicity of practices or labours” and further elaborate by drawing on Deleuze to suggest the human soul is more of a “discontinuous surface, a multiplicity of spaces, cavities, relations, divisions established through a kind of in-folding of exteriority”. Perhaps understanding military/civilian life’s dualities through a more intersectional theoretical lens could have enabled a better explanation of veterans enduring loyalty towards the military as conceptually trapped in these spaces and cavities, still and quiet until awakened or disturbed by another unfolding of experience. Transition itself, rather than thought of as a fluid omni-directional process could also have been explored from the outset as a process of folding, concertinaed, or meandering with the potential to flow away from and return to its’ source. This allegory may also have worked with the concept of perpetual liminality and one of the participants more enduring images of transition, waves crashing down on her, folding, and subduing her beneath their crests. Moreover, a psychoanalytic approach based on a variety of defence mechanisms could also have illuminated the different aspects of transition. Indeed, there is little doubt the process of writing and studying identity has induced me to “engage in more identity-sensitive thinking and acting” than I would have otherwise, “possibly overstating the influence of identity and identity-related constructs on organizational processes” (Ravasi and Canato, 2013, p. 192). As a result the thesis itself has become/always been a labour of performativity and anti-performativity (Khan, 2018), saying and not saying. As such I am left to consider Derrida’s ideas around undecidability and in doing so I recall a seminar where the lecturer pointed out our research could likely produce more than one PhD and that by focusing on one story, we would be unable to tell the others. Derrida’s discussions on the impossibility of anticipating the outcomes of decision making is considered in this research (Reynolds, 2021) and it is recognised readers can engage with this thesis in multiple and unpredictable ways (Gabriel, 2010). As a result, this thesis can never be presented, considered or understood as a whole ‘truth’, instead it merely adds another partial perspective to an underexplored aspect of military life.

Nevertheless, as narratives naturally serve multiple purposes (Riessman, 2008), I continuously found myself censoring, dismissing, and including certain stories as relevant or irrelevant, depending on my thoughts and perspectives at the time of writing. My principal concern is that somehow in the review process, I have sanitised my text to the point of insipidity, forestalling avenues of analysis before they can be considered (Alvesson, 2003a). Although I feel I have overcome many aspects of loyalty to the organization that hindered my criticality, loyalty to my colleagues remains strong and has also influenced my analysis (Connor, 2010). For example, conflicted loyalty to the organization and its members, manifested in several ways, such as avoiding ‘taboo’ or darker subject matter or not interrogating alternative critical views (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000). Indeed, while
all organizations have dark corners (Vaughan, 1999; Linstead et al., 2014), multiple and
temporal discourses were used as levers through which social relations were explained
(Sillince and Brown, 2009), enabling the participants and myself to question aspects of our
loyalty and duty. This produced instances of ‘troubles’ (Morison and Macleod, 2013) and
contested narratives where participant’s continued, yet conflicted loyalty to the organization,
hindered and assisted with the deconstruction of dominant disciplinary narratives during my
analysis (Humphreys and Brown, 2002; Alvesson, 2003) and their transition.

As most of participant volunteers were officers, likely reflecting my officer status, further
efforts could have been made to include junior ranks in the study. However, in retrospect I
believe a separate study into female non-commissioned ranks should be undertaken to
explore their transition experiences. This recommendation is based on the different
hierarchical status, educational backgrounds, and lived experience of commissioned and
non-commissioned personnel. For example, the interview dynamic proved challenging
occasionally as many of the participants were officers and could be regarded as elite
members of an organization, promoting an exclusive set of behaviours (Coupland, 2015).
In such situations, interviews can be seen as forums where (hierarchical) power relations
are dynamic and fluid and where participants could attempt to control interviews
reproducing their political views (Alvesson, 2003a). However, fluctuations in the power
dynamic between interviewer and interviewee need not be viewed negatively. Riessman
(2008) suggests the researcher must be prepared to give up control of the interview to
enable the possibility for extended narration to take place. While this did produce anxiety
on behalf of the researcher, I hope it also produced meaningful digressions which are
demonstrated in this research.

8.7 Further Research

Building on concepts of discipline, power, resistance, and gender within this study, four
further research ideas were identified. Firstly, although this is already a longitudinal study
the research could be extended, revisiting participants in five to ten years to provide a
deeper and richer seam of data into gendered military identity, females veterans’ and the
transition process. This could be supplemented with research into veteran integration from
the perspective of the family and future employers. Further understanding is especially
important given the MoD’s drive to increase gender diversity which will increase female
veterans. Secondly, Ely and Meyerson’s (2010) research on gender on offshore oil
platforms demonstrated how masculinity can be undone in traditionally masculine
environments. The RAF has applied similar principles in its support of crew management
(Read and Charles, 2018) and by extending the disciplinary and gendered lens research
could explore if reimagining a more fluid and hierarchical gendered performativity could be
applied across the UK Armed Forces and what effects this could have on unit cohesion and war fighting capability (Walsh, Matthews, Tuller, Parks, and Mcdonald, 2010). Thirdly, it has been noted that the Armed Forces struggle to attract and retain female personnel. By adopting a more psychoanalytical approach (Fotaki, 2011), research into how female service personnel considered ‘successful’ and how they negotiate home and work life balance, could encourage a more candid conversation, enabling strategies to be shared and understood more widely (Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2009; Ely et al., 2014), while countering some of the negative aspects of intra-gendered relations (Mavin et al., 2014).

Finally, further studies could also contribute to Foucault’s theorisations on disciplinary power and resistance by researching how military discipline is shaped and limited by social forces, the limits of what is and what is not acceptable, and how this can impact group cohesion and loyalty (Garland, 1986). While some knowledge exists about how discipline is enforced in the military environment and can foster ‘obedience’ which produces dark forces (Kelman and Hamilton, 1989; Doris and Murphy, 2007; Bakken, 2020), less appears to be known about how these dark forces are resisted; and how, in this environment, a binary choice of good versus evil, is experienced. Considering the microaggressions and breaches of discipline that the participants’ experienced, how they were countered and/or accepted, more research into infringements of the military code should be undertaken to understand how they grow out of fissures. By increasing understanding of how ethical failures are resisted atrocities such as Mỹ Lai (Vietnam), Abu Ghraib (Iraq) and more recently Australian SAS war crimes in Afghanistan can be further understood (Doris and Murphy, 2007; Richter-Montpetit, 2016) and potentially countered through a more gender fluid approach to military research.

8.8 Summary

In summarizing the previous chapters, their main threads and tensions were highlighted to lead into the findings that surfaced through the empirical evidence. The research questions were then answered by recoupling the findings to the theoretical discussions around self-disciplinary power (Foucault, 1994, 1991) and how these manifest in gendered behaviours (Priola, 2016), thoughts and actions, which many of the participants were unable to see or acknowledge. RQ 1 asked why personnel feel conflicted about leaving the RAF and discussed how separation from civilian normativities as well as the hierarchical gendered othering of civilians contributed to this blindness along with a reluctance in some participants to relinquish the military identity which made them 'special/different' (Hoyer and Steyaert, 2015).

The second research question asked how military service affected gendered identity as individuals re-entered civilian life and discussed gendered social relations and performative
expectations (Butler, 1993), the illusion of neutrality (Acker, 1990), and binary positioning consequences. A separate section focused on the research questions concerning the autoethnographic element of the research, with the second question discussed from two distinct perspectives: transition seen from within and from outside of the military institution.

This study's theoretical, empirical, and practice-based contributions to the transition of military personnel into civilian life were discussed, along with its limitations and suggestions for further research. Theoretically, disciplinary theory was extended by applying an interpretative perspective (Hoyer, 2016) to the fluidity of gender, veteran identities and transition creating new knowledge about this understudied societal group (Burkhart and Hogan, 2015). Here, the word veteran was approached from a critical lens and seen as a political tool of continued subjugation, which can produce paradoxical effects (Clarke and Knights, 2015). Moreover, by focusing on power, discipline, and the organization's legitimacy, conformance to conditional gendered behaviours was recognized as a limiting factor in women's career success and a barrier behind which wicked behaviours could be justified (Grey, 2005). Empirically, the prevailing masculine understanding of the gendered nature of service life (Woodward, 2003) and transition was extended to account for women and femininity (Duncanson and Woodward, 2016). How masculine military behaviours are transformed, resisted, or sustained in-action through narrative identity work resulting from disciplinary technologies and techniques of the self were exposed through the lived realities of female service personnel, giving them a voice they have not previously had (Priola and Brannan, 2009). Practice-based contributions were also provided and ranged from recommendations for the career transition programme to government policy. Finally, the study's limitations were outlined, and further research was identified before the chapter was concluded.
9 Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

Identities of serving and ex-serving personnel have traditionally, and currently remain seen as masculine due to the assumptions associated with military life, violence and war (King, 2016). As a result, female service people and veterans’ identities are largely subsumed by these notions of homogenous and hegemonic military masculinity leaving alternative possibilities unexplored and unappreciated (Sasson-Levy, 2003). However, mirroring civilian life, female recruits are often attracted, directed and employed in roles that fulfill gendered stereotypes that encourage women to roles associated with ‘womens work’ and men towards more ‘masculine’ roles (Henry and Treanor, 2010; Fyall and Gazely, 2015). Yet a lack of understanding in the general public associates all military personnel, male and female, as part of an Army-centric force that engages in masculine activities such as ‘heroic helping’ (Weller, 2017) and other ‘risk-taking’ pursuits (Wymer, 2011), which can continue after service life (Joachim and Schneiker, 2020) perpetuating a docile masculine body (Coupland, 2015) which can be subsumed by ideas of self-sacrifice, service, and a need for legitimacy (Brewis and Godfrey, 2017). This gendered narrative is supported by the organization in part to maintain its legitimacy (Foucault, 1994), but continues to marginalise the female and feminine (Cockburn, 2008). A lack of empirical studies into female lived experiences across the Armed Services further exacerbates this position, including how female veterans re-integrate into civilian life and how the legacy of masculine performativity affects behaviours during their transition. This thesis sought to contribute to calls for more contextual and detailed analyses in this area (Brunger et al., 2013) as few studies focus on female service personnel or their veteranhood as sites of gendered performatory work. Instead they emphasise homogenous masculinity, femininity in hierarchical opposition to masculinity or are blind to women’s experience.

The belonging narrative repeatedly enacted by the participants demonstrates how complex, powerful forces can drive behaviours limiting and extending people’s possibilities and how making sense of these contradictions depends on contextual understanding (Creed et al., 2012). For some of the participants, the outside world offered difference, adventure and an escape from the RAF’s disciplinary framework, much as the RAF offered adventure and escape from the normalcy of civilian life when they first joined up (Lukes, 2005). While for others, the RAF and wider defence related jobs represented a continuation of the norm, where subjugation and gendered power relations contained accepted norms (Higate, 2001) if they were noted at all. However, there are dangers associated with maintaining identities as the continual reproduction and corresponding identity work required to sustain them may hinder or prevent individuals from accepting a change in their social relations and
developing a credible understanding of themselves (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Weller et al., 2021). This denial or deflection of new or changed social relations may further disrupt identity, contingent as it is on the unpredictable other (Knights and Clarke, 2017), which may in turn cause anxiety and negatively affect well-being (Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016; Tosti-Kharas, 2012). Such behaviours can shape actions and outcomes which can have consequences for the individual and society (Brown and Toyoki, 2013). Furthermore, the lack of shared experiences between military and civilian presents the veteran as unknown and unknowable further hampering the possibility of securing the self through the unpredictable and unknown civilian other (Knights and Clarke, 2017).

This analysis demonstrates the multiple conditions of possibility at play within the disciplinary power framework (Raffnsee et al., 2019). In terms of positive transitions those who demonstrated behaviours and discourse indicating they had ‘moved on’ and those who had ‘returned’ appeared to be most satisfied having demonstrated agentic decision-making compared to others who were stuck, waiting and experiencing aspects of a liminal state (Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016). However, this analysis, in applying Foucault’s (1991) theory of disciplinary power, has also demonstrated how gendered hegemonic power can constitute the agentic subject, and although such power has limiting factors, it can nevertheless be exercised productively regardless of gender (Raffnsee et al., 2019; Clegg, 1989). However, the relational fields that construct individual subjectivities are not homogenous or universal, and therefore the effects of power cannot be regarded as predetermined (Foucault, 1991; Lukes, 2005). As a result, the findings show the need to interrogate taken for granted and false indeterminates to understand how gendered performativities and social relations interweave to produce identity effects in ex-service personnel.

9.2 Discipline and Performativity

Foucault (1991) discussed disciplinary power as capable of both limiting and creating possibilities. From the military perspective, the purpose of discipline is unambiguous; to maintain self-discipline, through constricting some behaviours and encouraging others, to effectively carry out one’s duties (RAF, 2008). This creates a productive, if not completely docile subject, whose self-discipline is embodied, corporeal (Lande, 2007; Woodward and Jenkins, 2011) and is socialised into the military body and soul under the conditions of an organization which shares many of the features of a total institution (Goffman, 1991; Scott, 2010). Long term effects of military socialisation have been documented and researched but are predominantly focused on male veterans and masculinities, especially the effects self-discipline can have on the male self outside of the military environment (Haynie and Shepherd, 2011). This research focuses on female veterans’ responses to self-discipline,
but the findings show that disciplined military gendered performativity extends beyond service life for both male and female service personnel.

There is a lack of understanding in veterans as to how this gendered performativity is ‘seen’ by civilian ‘Others’, how it is valued and how expectations of civilian life, often naïve and unrealistic (D. I. Walker, 2012), can shape ways of being in contrast to veteran’s pre-leaving anticipatory illusions of ‘freedom’. In their invisible veteranhood, female veterans can find this civilian ‘gaze’ especially discombobulating as it rests on civilian notions of masculine military identity that are constructed through an opposing traditionally understood idea of the feminine and masculine that are found in civilian life. While many veterans recognise their institutionalisation, ‘knowingly discussing it’, female veterans are often unaware of the ‘covert assimilation’ of masculine practices, including intra-gender competition, due to the discourse of neutrality they have been subjected to throughout their service careers (Mavin et al., 2014; Mavin and Grandy, 2016). These normativities produce a ‘homosociality’ embodied and embraced, which continues to reduce the feminine other in civilian life, creating a turbulent transition as adjustments are made or resisted, potentially limiting acceptance of new social norms or battling to change them.

9.3 Dis-identification

Costas and Fleming (2009) write about the dangers of alienation that lie beyond dis-identification with organizations, and this research has touched on ideas of ‘chaos’ or ‘undoing’ that could be experienced by reconstituting or rejecting a military identity. However, this research has also shown that service personnel can reauthor their subjectivities and negotiate their identification with the military as they cast-off its legitimacy over their corporeal selves. Loyalty is key to the success of this reidentification, and while continuing loyalty could be interpreted as self-imposed entrapment, where the subject experiences little discomfort, it can nevertheless produce positive outcomes for the individual and the social body. Moreover, and perhaps at odds with their aspirational selves, the empirical evidence suggests the ‘freedoms’ military personnel envision regarding their post-military lives, once experienced, may produce a ‘truth of themselves’ which is less an alien concept but a familiar reaffirmation of their conservatism and conformity. As a result, traditional ways of being are reproduced precisely because the boundaries between civilian and military are not as rigid as they first might seem, and all organizations are gendered (Acker, 1990).

One such example, taken at the organizational level, discussed how in finally responding to social pressures to relax the rules enabling females into Close Ground Combat roles the military’s reluctance to change and its desire to reflect the society it serves was evidenced.
A theoretical perspective that views military organizations as narcissistic instead of greedy or totalitarian suggests pressures for change are difficult for the military to detect and even when they are noted they are considered optional and therefore resisted (Holmberg and Alvinius, 2019). Holmberg and Alvinius (2019) also note that military personnel view the organization as static, a position which was affirmed and contradicted by opposing empirical research in this thesis. However, these conflicting findings can help explain participants’ relationship with their military identity. For example, their reflexive ability to accept change and release aspects of their military selves as they transition, can be seen as a condition of their unconscious ability to accept/reject military discipline and may explain many of the behaviours and judgements that the participants carried with them into civilian life. These include instrumental activities such as time keeping, wardrobe organization, planning activities and how they expect to be seen and treated by others, their status, as well as how they continue to judge others against military standards of behaviours. When these encounters involved significant Others, the effects were amplified demonstrating, how identity is reliant on the ‘Other’ and how enacting a gendered identity that is not fully understood, recognised, or acknowledged can create challenges when negotiating the liminal space of transition.

Throughout the transition process the participants’ narratives of rejected and accepted normativities and hierarchical observations by and of others were fused to military discipline so they could sustain their sense of self in the uncertain present, the aim of which was to secure their aspirational selves in the future (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009; Fraher and Gabriel, 2014). In order to achieve this, participants variously replaced valued aspects of their military selves with alternative and aspirational narrative ideals; but also incorporated historic and idealised aspects of their pre-military/military identities into their future selves, through which they could become constituted (Chreim, 2005). These idealised identities simultaneously required a continued doing and undoing of gendered normativities which did not always ‘fit’ with their new circumstance. The resulting discordance potentially making them unrecognizable in the eyes of unreliable Others (Butler, 1993; Roberts, 2005; Jeanes, 2007) which coupled with uncertain power/knowledge relations produced multiple contextually driven subjectivities throughout participant’s transitions. These multiple and temporal subjective relations added to and took away from participant’s identities creating a precarious security (Bloom, 2016). The uncertainty felt in these initial stages of transition remained dominated by loyalty and hierarchical observation which on some level remained cognisant of a failure to achieve/sustain the military ideal (Irvine, 2000; Roberts, 2005) yet contained an excitement, a curiosity, and a drive to discover future possibilities.
9.4 Final Words

This exploratory thesis pushed the boundaries of my ontological and epistemological understandings and acceptances, helping me to frame this research through a poststructural lens which I could not have done and would not have been ‘acceptable’ had I still been serving. Exposure to other researchers, their ideas and arguments has undoubtedly made my research richer, but most importantly, while I recognise the limitations of my research and that there is still much ground to cover in this fascinating area, I feel I have given a voice to female veterans who have hitherto been muted. However, my immaturity as a researcher constantly raises doubts about the stories I have told and whether I chose the right ones. Although greater focus from the offset is unlikely to have prevented this uncertainty, I am left feeling confident of only one thing, that there are always many more stories to be told and I hope I have played my part in telling this one.
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11 Appendices


(Air Media Centre, 2017)
Appendix 2 - UK Service Ranks and diversity figures 2011. (Khadim, 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATO Code</th>
<th>Royal Navy</th>
<th>Royal Marines</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Royal Air Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OF-10</td>
<td>Admiral of the Fleet</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Field Marshal</td>
<td>Marshal of the RAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-9</td>
<td>Admiral</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Air Chief Marshal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-8</td>
<td>Vice Admiral</td>
<td>Lieutenant General</td>
<td>Lieutenant General</td>
<td>Air Marshal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-7</td>
<td>Rear Admiral</td>
<td>Major General</td>
<td>Major General</td>
<td>Air Vice-Marshal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-6</td>
<td>Commodore</td>
<td>Brigadier</td>
<td>Brigadier</td>
<td>Air Commodore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-5</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>Group Captain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-4</td>
<td>Commander</td>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel</td>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel</td>
<td>Wing Commander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-3</td>
<td>Lieutenant Commander</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Squadron Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-2</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Flight Lieutenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-1</td>
<td>Sub-Lieutenant</td>
<td>Lieutenant/2nd Lieutenant</td>
<td>Flying Officer/Pilot Officer</td>
<td>Officer Designate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF(D)</td>
<td>Midshipman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Officer Designate</td>
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**Other Ranks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OR-9</th>
<th>Warrant Officer Class 1</th>
<th>Warrant Officer Class 1</th>
<th>Warrant Officer Class 1</th>
<th>Warrant Officer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OR-8</td>
<td>Warrant Officer Class 2</td>
<td>Warrant Officer Class 2</td>
<td>Warrant Officer Class 2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR-7</td>
<td>Chief Petty Officer</td>
<td>Colour Sergeant</td>
<td>Staff Sergeant</td>
<td>Flight Sergeant/Chief Technician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR-6</td>
<td>Petty Officer</td>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>Sergeant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR-5</td>
<td>Leading Rate</td>
<td>Corporal</td>
<td>Corporal</td>
<td>Corporal</td>
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<tr>
<td>OR-4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Lance Corporal</td>
<td>Lance Corporal</td>
<td>Lance Corporal</td>
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<tr>
<td>OR-2</td>
<td>Able Rating</td>
<td>Marine</td>
<td>Private (Classes 1 to 3)</td>
<td>Junior Technician/Leading Aircraftman/Senior Aircraftman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR-1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Private (Class 4)/Junior</td>
<td>Aircraftman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Strengths for senior officers (OF-7 - OF-9) have been left unrounded so as not to obscure the data.
2. Percentages for individual officer ranks are based on the totals for officers. Percentages for individual other ranks are based on the totals for other ranks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Females as % of each rank</th>
<th>BME Personnel as % of each rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Services</td>
<td>Naval Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officers</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-7</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-6</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-5</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-4</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-3</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-2</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF-1 / OF (D)</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ranks</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR-9</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR-8</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR-7</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR-6</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR-4</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>OR-1/OR-2</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Defence Statistics (Tri-Service)

_Caution is advised when interpreting the officer percentages due to small numbers used in the percentage calculations._

(Khadim, 2011)
Appendix 3 - UK Regular Forces intake and outflow by age and gender, FY 2010/2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Intake</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Outflow</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>12800</td>
<td>11670</td>
<td>1130</td>
<td>18150</td>
<td>16560</td>
<td>1560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>2760</td>
<td>2570</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>5010</td>
<td>4580</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>4770</td>
<td>4360</td>
<td>420</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>1640</td>
<td>1490</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>3180</td>
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<td>400</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1620</td>
<td>1380</td>
<td>250</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>120</td>
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<td>40-44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3140</td>
<td>2990</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>850</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>55 and over</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>15</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Khadim, 2011).

Note: Female numbers leaving the RAF are disproportionately high compared to their male counterparts between the ages of 25-39.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>OSD Date</th>
<th>OSD Time</th>
<th>Interview 1 Time Lapse</th>
<th>Time Lapse</th>
<th>Interview 2 Time Lapse</th>
<th>Time Lapse</th>
<th>Interview 3 Time Lapse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>31/07/2016</td>
<td>Jun-16</td>
<td>16 months</td>
<td>Oct-17</td>
<td>7 Months</td>
<td>May-18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>01/07/2017</td>
<td>Jun-16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No further contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>05/06/2016</td>
<td>Jun-16</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>Jul-17</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>May-18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>01/04/2016</td>
<td>Jul-16</td>
<td>16 months</td>
<td>Nov-17</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>Jun-18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>29/07/2017</td>
<td>Jul-16</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>Jul-17</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>May-18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>02/10/2016</td>
<td>Jul-16</td>
<td>15 months</td>
<td>Oct-17</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>May-18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annabelle</td>
<td>31/10/2015</td>
<td>Jul-16</td>
<td>15 months</td>
<td>Oct-17</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>May-18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>13/08/2017</td>
<td>Jun-17</td>
<td>11 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>May-18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>01/06/2013</td>
<td>Oct-17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicola</td>
<td>31/07/2017</td>
<td>Oct-17</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td></td>
<td>May-18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>01/06/2017</td>
<td>Oct-17</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jun-18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>29/09/2018</td>
<td>Oct-17</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nov-18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>31/12/2017</td>
<td>Nov-17</td>
<td>8 Months</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jun-18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>11/09/2015</td>
<td>Jan-18</td>
<td>9 Months</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sep-18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>12/11/2017</td>
<td>Oct-17</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jun-18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>30/07/2017</td>
<td>Nov-17</td>
<td>8 Months</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jun-18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>04/08/2017</td>
<td>Jan-18</td>
<td>9 Months</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sep-18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>01/08/2017</td>
<td>Nov-17</td>
<td>10 Months</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aug-18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>10/05/2018</td>
<td>Nov-17</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nov-18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OSD: Out of Service Date
Appendix 5 - First Interview Questions

To be conducted no more than 12 months before an individual leaves the military and not more than 12 months after. Questions include a series of prompts/probes to be used if required.

The following biographical information will be collected: age, gender, family, last job role, brief career history with length of service. Additionally, it will be established if they are working now, if so, what they are doing.

1. Why did you join the military?
2. When did you start thinking about leaving the military?
   a. Was there any specific incident that prompted your decision?
3. What is the most vivid memory of your service?
   a. Can you give me an example and explain why that one stands out?
4. Is there anything that worried/concerned you while you were in the service? Particular behaviours/for example.
   a. How did that make you feel?
5. Is there anything that worries you now?
   a. How did that make you feel?
6. If you had a magic wand what would you change about your military experience?
   a. Why is it you have chosen that example?
7. What has been your biggest challenge to your air force career (added part way through this series of interviews – 3 participants asked this directly Alex, Jessica and Sarah)
8. How would you describe military life?
   a. How does it differ from life outside the military?
9. How would you describe your life now (that you have left)?
10. What has changed _____?
11. Can you describe how it felt when you decided to leave?
   a. Why did you feel that way?
12. What type of support did you receive once you officially communicated your decision?
13. What are you expecting to be the biggest change brought by life outside the military?
14. Do you have anything else you would like to add?
Appendix 6 - Second Interview Questions

To be conducted at least 6-12 months after the first. Previous biographical information will be confirmed/amended as necessary.

1. On reflection how do you feel about leaving the RAF? (Amended from – on reflection can you describe how you felt about making the decision to leave the military?)
2. What is the one thing you would change about your leaving experience?
3. Can you describe what the leaving process felt like (not the mechanics)?
4. What is it you miss most about your time in the military? (personal and professional)
5. Do you still see yourself as part of the military family? If so in what ways?
6. In what ways has the military continued to influence your professional life?
7. What have been your biggest professional challenges (only asked if relevant)
8. What has been the biggest personal challenge?
9. As you look to the future where do you see yourself in a years’ time (reduced from 5 years initially to enable a comparison to be made with the 3rd interview)
10. Is there anything you would like to add?

Deleted Questions –

1. Do you feel you received support once you officially communicated your decision? Replaced with question 3.
2. What were you expecting from civvy life that hasn’t worked out? Replaced with questions 7 and 8 to differentiate between personal and professional and to be less leading.
3. Is there anything you would change about your life now? Linked to questions 7 and 8 and removed because of negative connotations.
Appendix 7 - Third Interview Questions

To be conducted at least 6 - 12 months after the second interview.

Previous biographical information will be confirmed/amended as necessary.

1. There have been some big changes in your life over the last few years. Do you still feel attached to the RAF? A sense of loyalty and of duty? (e.g. negative/positive press - Why is that?

2. We have spoken previously about what you miss most about your time in the military and the camaraderie was a key point, can you describe how this is different in your current job?

3. I'm interested in discourses and behaviours, what people say and do. Do you feel you have adapted in any way since you left the RAF?

4. In your experience what are the ideal qualities of someone who is in the RAF?

5. Do you feel you need to live up to these qualities?

6. In respect of identity how do you introduce yourself to people?

7. What used to motivate you in the RAF?

8. What motivates you now?

9. Did you face any challenges in your transition?

10. Do you feel that you have transitioned or is it still a work in progress?

11. What happens next?

12. Is there anything you would like to add?
Appendix 8 - Example of Interview Transcript

Maria

.... There are people like Sarah who I have got regard for who actually worked for me as a Sergeant when I was a very junior officer and we worked together as SACs years and she did get to Wing Commander and I think well she didn't have children, she didn't have a marriage she could put everything into the job and so in balance I just tried to balance everything out into my head and well like I am a mummy, I've had a nice home a good family and I've got a good job. So, the challenge was not to be jealous, to cope and it never happened to me, but to cope if I had to work with somebody who had worked for me and hope that I got on with them well. And then the little bit about being embarrassed when people say things like that to you as if I had done something not wrong but gone off the boil and I think the other challenge was not to become a grumpy old Squadron Ldr because there was plenty of them around wasn't there? They become bitter and twisted, they are in their 50s and they have been bypassed and looking at a lot of them rightly so (laughter) and I had to try and think well maybe I am one of them so let's try not to be one of them let's try and keep positive and happy and making the best of it and don't become a bitter and twisted person and about 5 years ago I had the worry that I would become that person I was so upset after, John was an amazing desk officer and we were friends and that was the closest I came I was one of. It was when I was in the JHC I'd came 14th, I think I came 14th when they promoted 13, I think that was it. And I was so close I had already written myself off then that happened, and I'd done an OOA then I did an acting Wing Commander well a Lieutenant Colonel job for 6 months and I thought if there is any chance it is next year, having come that close, having done an acting job, having done an OOA if there's any chance and I think being 13/14th on the board I went to 22nd. And I though the deflation that year was the year I stopped caring, and I didn't stop caring about the job, but I stopped caring about my assessments. And since then, I have had a number of bosses who have said Maria we are going to write you up and we are going to make it really strong and we are going to try and get you promoted and I would literally snort at them, yeh alright then go on crack on help yourself because it is not going to make a blind bit of difference. Do you know it was liberating, so liberating! So, 5 years ago may be becoming sad and bitter, to becoming liberated, being able to say whatever you want, obviously I am a reasonably polite person. But having the guts to say what you want knowing I don't give a toss if you write me badly. Because I know I am right what difference is it going to make to me? It was quite a liberating time for me there. So, the challenge became quite fun. (Laughter). I know now, my last couple of bosses, I am actually quite good friends with them, we have become quite good friends, and they said we have never had anybody so bloody cheeky work for us and ...

Caroline

Can you give an example of that?

Maria

Well, I don't know I mean, John always remembers this. I didn't know him before I got into the job ...... and I didn't know him and at the end of the week of him explaining, I took over from Rob, but he had already moved on, so John had to bring me up to
speed on everything. John is a lovely bloke but sort of grey haired and I don’t know how but somehow or other our ages came into that week and I found out that he was a year younger than me. And I was truly shocked because I look a lot younger than him, I said seriously are you younger than me? But you are so grey! And this was when I first met him and he has never forgiven me and he tells people, you know first week of knowing her and she slagged me off for being grey and telling me I looked old. I think I have never been a creep I’ve never liked creeps; you know I don’t bumly crawly lick licks. But it’s nice to be relaxed enough not to have to think too much about what you are saying as I left CAM I was working for Mike laziest Wing Commander in the Air Force lovely man, lovely sense of humour but that man did not work for a living. He was doing his .... secondary duty stuff and if you want to talk about cheek, I just used to tell him, and I said to him "you know well you are useless, all you care about is your secondary duties, but I am happy because I can do what I want to do. You crack on and do that and let me run everything else". You wouldn’t normally do that if you were after promotion. And he knew it and at the end he said you know what I couldn’t have had the fun I’ve had without you there, because I did all the work. And he has let the job go down in the last year and he knows he has, and I said to him before I start in Oct you had bloody well better update all our contacts list and everything you have let drop since I left. So I guess it is that level of cheekiness but you can get away with it, having said that I think you get away with more when you are a female anyway, you know rightly or wrongly and I’ve never played on sexuality but when you are working for men and you can have a little grin after you say something naughty or rude, they sort of have that moment of oh they were rude to me then but then you grin at them and you get away with it. (Laughter)

It’s true it’s true

Caroline

Ok, ok that is really good. If you had a magic wand, and you could change anything about the air force or your career what would you change?

Maria

Well, I guess what I would have done is have more confidence in myself earlier and taken a commission earlier and given myself a better chance of getting promoted. So therefore, if I had the magic wand, I deny I wanted to be promoted, I wanted to see a reward for the work I had done. It wasn’t about being I powerful position it wasn’t about being in charge it was about being considered in the top bracket for the work and effort I made cause I’ve never been high powered I’ve never had a game plan I’ve never wanted to get to a certain rank .....
## Appendix 9 - Interview 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Second Order Concepts</th>
<th>First Order Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resistance and Recalcitrance</strong></td>
<td>Symbolic rejection of hegemonic military identity</td>
<td>Don't like having to wear a uniform, refusing to fit the identity mould, outgrowing the military identity and its constraints, rejection of masculine behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cycles of disruption</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stress, difficult, not enjoyable, pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Achieving co-location difficult and stressful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bought a house and don’t want to move, want to live at home with partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Want to keep the family together, didn’t want a nanny raising the children</td>
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<td><strong>Questioning legitimacy</strong></td>
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<td>Lack of interesting jobs, bleak future, stagnating</td>
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<td>identity fit, avoid the image of the ‘old crusty’</td>
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<td>Postings every 2 years, 6 – 12-month deployments, away from children and family, short notice detachments and exercises</td>
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<td>Fitness, physically challenging</td>
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<td>Fallen out of love, had enough of the RAF, recognised RAF wasn’t everything</td>
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<td>Lifestyle no longer appropriate, bar, expeditions, living in quarters</td>
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<td><strong>Aspirational identities</strong></td>
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<td>Promotion structure, restricts potentialities denied aspirational identity</td>
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<td>Don’t like what the Air Force stands for anymore (violence), what it is doing to its people, contractorisation, all ranks mess</td>
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<td>Too old to stay in and get anywhere but young enough to leave and do something else, age as an issue too young too old</td>
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<td>Procedural violations, being disadvantaged because of pregnancy, maternity leave, career breaks and lack of transparency in safety investigations, betrayal</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Consequences of hegemonic masculinity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Precarious promotion system, lack of appreciation/recognition/ transparency</td>
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<td>Lack of recognition for the personal and family sacrifices made for the RAF</td>
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<td>Working with the Army - bullying, unfair treatment, experiencing a lack of care from the organization, pressured to break regulations</td>
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<td>Chain of command not listening. Playing the game, politics</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Disrupted identities</strong></td>
<td>Coporeal and professional possibilities</td>
<td>Freedom of choice regarding clothing, hairstyles, where to live and what to do.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Liminal Transitional Experiences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>More things to do on the outside/there are alternatives/opportunities</td>
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<td>start own business, be successful in a different sector</td>
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<td><strong>Identity Consistency</strong></td>
<td>Relational sense of belonging</td>
<td>Banter, people demonstrating they care about others, wearing uniform is easy</td>
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<td>I’ll always be proud, I am what I am because of the RAF</td>
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<td>Exciting rewarding place to work</td>
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<td>Friendship groups in the military, a job with value, positive vivid memories</td>
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<td>Carrying on, using procedures in new job</td>
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<td><strong>Post-hoc reconstruction of identities</strong></td>
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<td>Round peg in a square hole - never fit, wrong choice of specialisation, identity fit always uncomfortable</td>
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<td>I joined by accident, I was always a bit of a hippy, what was I doing?</td>
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<td>Themes</td>
<td>Second Order Concepts</td>
<td>First Order Concepts</td>
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<td>Resistance</td>
<td>Rejection of hegemonic masculinity</td>
<td>I'm not putting a uniform on; 'I'm not putting a label on my shoulder' offered jobs but want to do something different - I don't want to be gassed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questioning Legitimacy</td>
<td>Ethical and Moral Concerns</td>
<td>I don't want to have to make the decision over life or death, there is no place for conscientious objectors when you take the Queen's commission</td>
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<td>Aspirational Identities</td>
<td>Reflexivity and status</td>
<td>Recognizing your own limitations in the RAF, but still wanting to succeed</td>
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<td>Post-event rationalisations</td>
<td>I don't need a career to define myself, what was I doing</td>
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<td>Work life balance</td>
<td>Participants speak of work life balance before, during and after transition. Normal job - same as RAF; time for something different. All the money, car etc but wanting blood.</td>
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<td>Agency</td>
<td>Being in control - drawing boundaries with work; I feel like I am driving, the empowerment came from giving them the Vs and saying I am off I am off. You didn't treat me right; I'm going because I could. Being able to step back from responsibility, no one is going to die if I don't turn up. Future aspirations. I will make this succeed; I want to be my own boss. Retraining to help people (doctor/nurse)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disrupted Identities</td>
<td>Liminal Transitional Experiences</td>
<td>Working out what the new organizations values and how its processes work. Getting used to commuting. Relying on yourself, not being able to tap into others for expertise. Getting used to procedures you believe are inferior. Not having close work colleagues. Lack of expected respect, it's all about the money.</td>
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<td>Participants respond to someone questioning her integrity. I was left to my own devices, I was trusted to have responsibility, then be questioned, judgement questioned</td>
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<td>Responding to others, language, standards, accepting a lack of authority</td>
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<td>Liberated to be judged without the rank, freedom of expression and life choices</td>
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<td>Finding, admitting spirituality</td>
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<td>Embedding into a community</td>
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<td>Participants discuss their life post RAF, general terms both positive and negative. Parenting is hard work. Wanting to be more than a small cog. It's all about the money.</td>
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<td>Changing home life. Well, I didn't even know about it. I really like being at home with my family.</td>
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<td>Making new friends. It's hard to make friends, not around likeminded people. it took months to get past the hello how are you stage. No one is going to knock on your door and say hello will you be my friend. The challenge of building up your life again.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
<td>Ambiguity - negative and positive feelings towards the Air Force. But I still love the air force but then when I got shot on ... I was struggling with the juggling and childcare and full-time employment I think I unfairly put a lot of my anxiety and negativity at the Air Forces door... they were very supportive of the fact that I was a full-time time mum but.</td>
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<td>Participants discuss their decision to leave and whether they regret it or not; a little bit of regret money etc, job security. still not sure but have a better idea, jury is still out...</td>
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<td>Legacy of gendered practices</td>
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<td>Changing Gendered thinking and behaviour. Family over career. Looking down on military wives until you become one, enjoying domesticity/hating domesticity, finding out how hard parenthood is. When I do mindfulness, people expect me to be there in a gypsy skirt and a boho isn't it ... I will do one of these days and just float in with unicorns and clouds and stuff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Second Order Concepts</td>
<td>First Order Concepts</td>
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| Consistency             | **Secure Selves**  
The reserves. It seemed easy, values my skills and is prepared to pay me                                                           | A valued self, you were an inspiration, you really helped me, people liked me. Serving people still call me up for advice. I was a policy guru.             |
|                         | **Meaningful selves**  
New sense of purpose. Being useful about making something better, make a difference have an impact                                                                 | Moving on but anchored to the military identity. I say well I left the RAF last year to set up my own business ... The conversation tends to go on what do you do I am a housewife, but I used to be in the military, now I don't say that |
|                         | **Behavioural Shadows**  
Military behaviours civil life. I have a little notebook that goes Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. How I parent, cleaning, haircuts, it's a bit like going into ops our corridor |                                                                                                                                                       |
|                         | **Valuable and valued selves**  
I am using the skills in the military to actually benefit a local charity. I am always the first on there at meeting. I am always the one that has read all of the material for the meetings if something needs to be done in the office, I will just start doing it. |                                                                                                                                                       |
|                         | **Continuance of military normativities**  
Various examples of how participants continue to feel duty bound or not to the RAF. Or how their concept of duty continues to affect their behaviours. | Confidence from rank and uniform. But even when I work, when I do my civic training I have a uniform as such. The military as part of your family. |
| Disrupted Identities    | **Hidden Hierarchy**  
Implicit hierarchical structure ... I don't know if you are aware, but I've never had to order anybody to do anything ... in my whole service career, I can probably count on one hand how many times I actually used my rank. Being ignored in civil when walking down the street on camp. |                                                                                                                                                       |
|                         | **Disrupted Expectations**  
Reaction to Students turning up late, no acknowledgement of experience (PSF and Dinner). I could not get through to this man I couldn't make him like me, I couldn't make him respect me. |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Reflexivity/agency      | **Reflection**  
It used to be 15, 16-hour day. Looking back on it I should have been stronger and stepped back ... it was a case it had to be done.  
My peers, who I didn't feel were as effective as I was were surpassing me because ... they had a wife at home to do all the bits  
And when we get back the phone would ring, where have you been? Lunch oh you have been for lunch it is alright for some isn't it? You know, excuse me? | Whils when I was in the RAF it was constantly worrying what people thought of you because you need to be thought of very well to get promoted |
|                         | **Rejection of organizational normativities**  
How do you feel when you don't want to fail  
Playing the game in the RAF. From Sgt Ldr onwards it kind of went from this is a game, this is fun this is all great fun, it went from being fun to serious I wasn't prepared to play that game anymore. And you are told to play the game and everything, just, just, head down, we are all doing this, that social pressure |                                                                                                                                                       |
Marching Towards Civvy Street

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH CONSENT FORM: Interviews/Focus Groups/Observations* (*delete as appropriate)

| participant serial number: |

| Consent to be interviewed by Researcher: Please initial boxes below |

I confirm that I have read / had read to me the leaflet, about this research project and I understand the content.  

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time before December 2018, without giving a reason.  

I understand that the data will be destroyed if requested any time before December 2018.  

I understand that the interview/session will be audio recorded and written out word-for-word later. The recording will be securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act for a period of 10 years after the research is completed.  

I understand that anything I say will be treated confidentially and only used for research purposes, in accordance with the Data Protection Act.  

I understand that my anonymity will be respected.  

I am content that anonymised data from the research study may be shared with 3rd parties (e.g. MoD or SSAFA).  

I agree to take part in the Marching Towards Civvy Street research study.  

| Name of participant | Signature | Date |

| Name of researcher | Signature | Date |
The Open University is a world leader in teaching and research. We design, carry out, and analyse, research studies in the fields of organisational studies and management change.

**The Research Team:**

Researcher
Caroline Mcklewright

Supervisors
Dr Caroline Clarke
Dr Cinzia Priola

The Open University Business School
PO Box 197
Milton Keynes
MK7 6BJ

If any issues discussed in this research cause concern please contact your GP or SSAFA.

www.ssafa.org.uk

If you want to withdraw from the research please contact:

claire.wylde@open.ac.uk

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**Our responsibilities to you:**

- **We ensure your safety:** all our researchers carry photographic identification.
- **We guard your privacy:** your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act. All data will be stored for a period of 10 years after completion of the study within The Open Universities research data repository. Your contribution will be used for research purposes only. Nobody will be individually identified in the final report. Pseudonyms may be used.
- **We respect your wishes:** participation in the study is voluntary and you are not obliged to answer any questions you do not wish to.
- **We answer your questions:** we will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the research.

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**Marching Towards Civvy Street**

**Exploring the Experiences of Transitioning Military Personnel**

**Research study:** participant experiences of transitioning from the military to Civvy Street.

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**The Open University Business School**

This leaflet provides you with further information about the study.
What is the aim of this research?

We are asking for your participation in a research project on the individual experiences of serving personnel as they transition out of the military.

This project aims to explore experiences of identity shift as personnel transition from the military into wider society. The aim is to further understand the transition process for the benefit of military personnel and society as a whole.

What is involved?

We are interested in finding out the experiences of individuals who are in the process of leaving the Armed Services. We will conduct a series of interviews, over a 2 year period about the experiences of transitioning military/ex-military personnel. These will be coupled with focus groups where participants will be encouraged to talk freely about their experiences and interviews with recruitment and resettlement specialists.

Interviews and focus groups will last approximately one hour and will be recorded with the permission of participants. We will work around you to arrange a convenient time and venue for the interviews.

We will be conducting this research between Feb 2017 – Dec 2018.

What will I be asked?

We will ask you to talk about the following broad topics:

Ex-Military Personnel:
- Your individual circumstances and experiences of the Armed Services.
- Your experiences of deciding to leave the Armed Services.
- Your transition from both a personal and professional perspective.
- Whether taking part in the research has helped you or not.

Recruitment/Resettlement Specialists:
- What are the key characteristics and concerns of transitioning military personnel?
- What are your experiences of working with military personnel as they take their first steps away from the military?

Do I have to take part?

No. We are relying on your voluntary cooperation. No one is taking part in this study who does not want to. Even if you say yes to begin with, you are free to withdraw at any time up to a specified date (currently Dec 2018).

Is it confidential?

Yes. Everything that you tell the interviewer will be in confidence. No personal information will be passed to anyone outside the research team. This includes the military. Data will be anonymised as it is transcribed. We will write a report of the study but no individual will be identifiable from the published results of the research.

What happens now?

We will contact you again soon to ask for your consent to take part in the research and to arrange an appointment to come and see you. You can withdraw at anytime up December 2018. In the meantime, if you have any queries at all about the study, please contact Caroline Micklewright.

What if I have other questions?

If you have any other questions, we would be happy to answer them. Please contact: Caroline Micklewright.

Email: caroline.micklewright@open.ac.uk

If taking part in this research has raised any concerns or issues you would like to discuss further please contact your GP or SSAFA:
www.ssafof.org.uk
Helpline: 0800 731 4880