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UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

‘As you were’: military-bureaucratic control and the employment relationship in the British armed forces

by

Margaret Prior

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth in partial fulfilment for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Plymouth Business School

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Author's declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

Papers and presentations:

- 'A life without limits? Control, consent and resistance in the British armed forces' employment relationship' International Labour Process Conference, Athens, April 2015 (Winner of best paper by a PhD student)
- 'A command under the guise of a command? Towards a labour history of the British armed forces' Invited speaker at British Universities Industrial Relations Association Labour History Group, November 2015
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Abstract

‘As you were’: military-bureaucratic control and the employment relationship in the British armed forces

Margaret Prior

Service in the British armed forces has not previously been considered a subject for employment and industrial relations research, but military personnel are in an employment relationship and thus worthy of such study. Drawing on an extensive literature review, documentary analysis and a qualitative survey and interviews with ex-service personnel, this study adopts a critical realist philosophy and retroduction to examine how the military employment relationship is regulated, experienced and contested, with particular reference to discipline and voice. It also compares military service with civilian employment, noting that the two, once similar, have diverged. The study uncovers a complex web of control mechanisms, termed military-bureaucratic control, along with widespread consent and compliance, but also finds that military personnel, like their civilian counterparts, will resist when the need arises. Furthermore, it identifies gaps in what is known about civilian employees today, and makes recommendations for further research.

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Introduction

One day in September 2012, I boarded a bus near my home in Plymouth. Taking a seat towards the middle of the bus, it was impossible not to overhear one side of a telephone conversation taking place somewhere behind me. A man was having a difficult conversation with, I assumed, a supervisor or human resource manager: it was clear he had a serious domestic crisis to deal with, but the person on the other end of the line was, apparently, neither sympathetic nor prepared to be flexible. 'Give it up, mate', I thought to myself. 'You need to be talking to a union representative, not a manager who won't listen'. As the bus neared the city centre, the caller – still on the phone – moved towards the front of the bus ready to get off. He was in Royal Navy uniform. As I, too, got off the bus and made my way to my appointment, I found myself wondering: 'how does that work, then?' Almost exactly one year later, I embarked on my PhD studies, still asking the same question: in the British armed forces, how exactly does the employment relationship work?

The British armed forces: visible and invisible

Plymouth is, and long has been, a military city. The home of the largest naval base in Western Europe, it is also the base for several Commando Regiments of the British Army, and a number of brigades of their naval equivalent, the Royal Marines, while there was also an active Royal Air Force presence in the city until 1992. As military geographers have pointed out, Plymouth's landscape features not only active military bases but also reminders of the military past (Sidaway 2009, Rech et al 2015) in the form of war and other memorials, plaques, commemorative events and even, as many construction workers can testify,

unexploded bombs, buried in the haste to rebuild after the Second World War. Reminders of the military present are everywhere, too: whether in the shape of helicopters hovering over the army base on the Hoe, known as the Citadel, of naval ships moored in the Sound, or of notices warning of activity on the military firing ranges on Dartmoor. On the river Tamar, warships and submarines lie at anchor, supply and related craft jostle for space with the vehicle ferry and boarding craft make regular training forays. Meanwhile, the banks of the Tamar are home not only to the naval shore base, the naval dockyard and associated armaments and supply depots, but also to the sole training centre for new Royal Navy ratings.

Growing up in Plymouth, this visibility extended to the people of the armed forces. It was far from uncommon to see uniformed sailors from all over the world wandering around the city centre. Some of my music teachers had been military bandsmen and at school it sometimes felt as if everybody was from a forces family: new children arrived part way through the school year, then, two or three years later, when their parent's posting came to an end, left again. The military also provided a high proportion of the civilian employment in the area, locals building and refitting ships in the dockyard or working in one of the other Ministry of Defence establishments. My father's career was not untypical: originally from the North East and of Irish extraction, he volunteered early in the Second World War, served in the navy for 22 years and then went to work in one of the armaments depots. My mother, too, was in the Women's Royal Naval Service (the Wrens): she came from East Anglia, met my father when they were both posted to the same shore base in Northern Ireland, was unceremoniously

‘discharged on marriage’ and, as my father’s last posting was to a Plymouth vessel, settled here with her growing family. By the time I started primary school, my father had left the service, but the house was full of souvenirs from his travels and he continued to approach life in something of a military way, emphasising timekeeping, routine, structure and rules.

As teenagers exploring the city’s nightlife, particularly in an era when many young men wore their hair long, it was easy to spot the naval sailors, the ‘matelots’, by their short hair, apparently bottomless wallets and, sometimes, a slightly bowlegged gait. Indeed, the continuous presence of the armed forces was so much the norm that it was something of a culture shock to arrive at university in London and find that the things we took for granted did not exist everywhere. I particularly remember my surprise, and mild embarrassment, on discovering that some of the words I thought of as Plymouth slang were actually naval slang. Returning to the city some twenty years later, the bomb sites of my youth had been built on and the changes wrought by the reduction in size of the armed forces were clear, but it remains the case that the navy in particular is ever-present. The old air-raid siren, which signalled shift changes in the dockyard when I was growing up, now serves in case of accident in the nuclear submarine base; it is tested, to the consternation of visitors, at 11.30am sharp every Monday. Services on the ferry to Cornwall can still be halted if a warship is due to sail; military vehicles, including those of the military police, are still a common sight on the roads; the timing and shape of the rush hour in the west of the city is still dictated by the naval base and dockyard, and, no doubt, military personnel still frequent the bars and nightclubs of the city centre. Above all, perhaps, Plymouth’s

landscape is still one of fences and barriers, Ministry of Defence ‘keep out’ signs, walls topped with barbed wire, crumbling forts, artillery towers and lookouts and, looming over the area where I grew up, an energy from waste plant dedicated to powering the dockyard and naval base.

Yet amidst all this visibility the armed forces remain largely invisible. We might count military personnel – now more likely to include women than in my youth – amongst our family, friends and acquaintances; we might witness some of their activities, read about acts of heroism and sympathise with those who have been disabled by their service; we might watch one of the occasional television series following new recruits through their training or featuring the activities of a specific vessel or unit. We might, in short, think we know quite a lot about what the armed forces do, but in reality most of what happens behind those fences, barriers and walls, in and on those vessels, aircraft and vehicles, is concealed from our view. The armed forces are a closed and hidden community, both in terms of the detail of military activity on the large scale and with regard to the small scale, the backroom activities that support armed conflict and other military activities (Woodward 2004). When I wondered ‘how does that work, then?’, I was thinking of the people, structures and processes we come to take for granted in civilian employment: the harrying supervisor, the kind manager, the disciplinary and other rules, the endless frustrations and complaints, the ability to speak up and the general culture and ‘feel’ of the workplace. It soon became clear that neither I nor we knew much about any of those things when it comes to the British armed forces:

> the potential similarities and differences between military worksites and those of the wider civilian world, and thus the

> lessons that can be drawn from one field to the other and the irrevocable differences between the two, remain under-explored (Jenkings et al 2011: 44)

This thesis, then, seeks to shed some light on the employment and industrial relations aspect of military service.

Research questions

Early in the process of this study, I came to the conclusion that military personnel might not be employees, but they are in a recognisable employment relationship. In short, they work for pay and they have to follow orders and instructions, the two key elements which, in the context of industrial relations theory, create such a relationship (Flanders 1974, Edwards 2003a). Drilling down into 'how does that work, then?', my research questions were:

1. How is the military employment relationship 'regulated, experienced and contested' (Williams and Adam-Smith 2010: 3)?
2. What comparisons can be drawn between the military employment relationship and civilian employment?
3. What might the military employment relationship tell us about the employment relationship more generally?

These questions remained deliberately very broad: military service has not been considered in this way before, so this is very much an exploratory study. It is also one which draws heavily upon the traditions of research on industrial relations, if a term like 'tradition' is appropriate for a subject which is not yet sixty years old (Lyddon 2003). Industrial relations is 'a field of study and not a distinct discipline' (Edwards 2003a: 2): it has its roots in industrial sociology (Lansbury 2009) but

also ‘involves contributions from a variety of cognate disciplines and fields’ (Strauss and Whitfield 2008: 174), including economics, law, history, political science and psychology (Bain and Clegg 1974, Edwards 1995, Edwards 2003a). These fields, and sometimes others too, ‘endow’ industrial relations with a wide-ranging research agenda and choice of methodologies (Heery 2005), enabling ‘an analytical purchase on the study of work and employment which is not available elsewhere’ (Edwards 2003b: 339). In particular, the central focus of much industrial relations research is the employment relationship. Where Clegg, for instance, defined industrial relations as ‘the study of job regulation’ (1979:1), others have expanded upon this to acknowledge the range of actors, forces and processes affecting what happens in that relationship (see for instance Sisson 2007). Crucially, the employment relationship is shaped and contested not only by employers, employees and their institutions, but also by the institutions of state and society, including the economy (Hyman 1975, Edwards 2003a, Sisson 2008). In short, the employment relationship operates on multiple levels and contains multiple actors with multiple and competing goals (Clarke et al 2011).

The work is also, therefore, based on an understanding of the ways in which the civilian employment relationship is indeterminate, unequal and one of ‘structured antagonism’ (Edwards 1986, 2003a, 2018); it seeks to explore whether the military equivalent is any different and, if so, in what ways. In particular, too, the study is based on a recognition that the employment relationship is always one of power and control: one of the main elements distinguishing one employment relationship from another is the source(s) of power, where and in whom power is vested and the means by which control is exerted. These points, then, informed

the need to attempt to uncover the ways in which the military employment relationship is regulated and experienced, and, moreover, whether it is indeed contested.

The study also draws inspiration from the emerging field of critical military studies. In contrast to the 'often atheoretical, apolitical and largely quantitative stances' adopted by 'traditional' social scientists of the military (Basham et al 2015: 2), it embraces 'sceptical curiosity' (Enloe 2015) and takes not only a multidisciplinary approach but also an interdisciplinary one. Critical military studies also acknowledges the ways in which distinctions between military / inside and civilian / outside can shift (Basham et al 2015); hence questions two and three address both military and civilian employment. Indeed, there was little point in developing an understanding of the military employment relationship in isolation, not least because the lived experience of work tends to differ in some respects from one organisation or workplace to another. In seeking tentative conclusions about the armed forces' version, then, it was necessary to consider, too, whether there were similarities with aspects of civilian employment and, indeed, to reflect on whether the military employment relationship has anything to tell us about the employment relationship more generally.

Hidden it may be, but the influence of the military on civilian affairs cannot be understated: there is, for instance, a body of military literature borrowing from and lending to that of leadership and human resource management (see for instance Alexandrou et al 2001, Gilroy and Williams 2006, Dunn 2015, Offord et al 2016). Similarly, military personnel, the majority of whom join or re-join the civilian

workforce on completion of their service (Ashcroft 2014), constitute a sizeable body of working people who are subject to some of the same trends and strategies as their civilian counterparts, including privatisation, outsourcing and redundancy, as well as general 'austerity' reductions in public spending. Moreover, former military personnel are viewed by many employers as 'ideal workers' (Acker 2012) and targeted in recruitment advertising: for instance, the coalition government introduced the concept of 'Troops to Teachers' in order to raise standards and address the supposed lack of discipline in the classroom (DFE 2010 and see Dermott 2012), a scheme which has now been extended to include tax-free bursaries of £40,000 for veterans intending to become teachers in science, mathematics and languages (DFE 2019). Similarly, household names like Tesco and Network Rail specifically highlight their willingness to recruit ex-forces people (Beckingham 2017, Network Rail 2019).

What, then, are the practices, experiences and assumptions such individuals bring to their civilian roles, and what might that tell us about wider developments in the employment relationship? Is it indeed the case in civilian employment, as Godard suggests, that 'the operative model seems increasingly to be the modern military one, in which workers are all part of a team (squadron) and are expected to have undying loyalty to their team leader and ultimately their team's "mission"' (2014: 12)? If it is, then the need to develop a greater understanding of the military employment relationship becomes even more pressing.

Methods and limitations

The research design for this study was qualitative, employing a critical realist philosophy and retroductive analysis to try to uncover the underlying structures and mechanisms of the military employment relationship. Ideally, this would have included carrying out interviews with serving personnel; however, and despite my best efforts, this proved impossible. Instead, then, the work draws on the views and experiences of former members of the armed forces, 245 of whom responded to a qualitative, exploratory survey, while 42 survey respondents also contributed interviews. This in itself posed limitations. First, participants were reached, in the main, through social media and were self-selecting, and second, most found out about the survey through ex-forces channels and communities. It is unlikely, therefore, that they reflect the full range of views and experiences within this group: individuals who did not enjoy their time in the military, or who left very early in their military career, were much less likely to hear of the study. Similarly, it proved difficult to attract many former members of the Royal Air Force, and comparatively few women took part in the study, but it was in the nature of the channels used to recruit respondents that individuals who had served in the navy or the army were more likely to see it, while the military is of course predominantly male even today. However, the study was in no way intended to be representative or generalisable, so, although these points did affect some of the data, the impact on the study as a whole was probably minimal.

One self-imposed limitation was the breadth of the research questions: throughout the study there was always a risk that it would lack focus, a risk that was exacerbated by the lack of a specific starting point in the form of previous

studies. It might have been possible, and would probably have been easier, to concentrate on one aspect of the military employment relationship, such as discipline, voice or resistance, or, as others have done, to explore the transition into, or back into, civilian employment. However, such a route would have prevented the possibility of developing a picture of the military employment relationship as a whole and fail to answer 'how does that work, then?'. A final limitation was, however, imposed from without and centred on the fact that official military statistics are published with different frequencies and sometimes irregularly. The bulk of this work was completed alongside a demanding full time job and it seemed that, within days of completing any section utilising published statistics, a new and more up to date set would become available. In order to avert the need for constant redrafting, therefore, all official data used in this thesis is up to date as of 31 December 2018.

Contribution and key findings

This study is, to the best of my knowledge, the first to examine the contemporary British military employment relationship. Sociologists, military sociologists and others have, of course, addressed aspects of the subject, focusing on, for instance, issues of equality, diversity and inclusion, military identities and the experience of leaving the armed forces. Similarly, social and military historians have examined some aspects of military employment in the past, while social geographers and scholars of law have also contributed to our understanding of the realities of life in the navy, army and air force. Very few of these have, however, explored the collective nature of military employment, and the use of industrial relations theory, analysis and methods is even more rare. In this regard,

too, the study offers a new typology of control in the employment relationship, a formulation which has been termed military-bureaucratic control.

The study is also relatively unusual, in the current academic climate, in that it is a case study of a single organisation, or, rather, three closely entwined organisations. At one time, work which explored the ways in which the employment relationship was regulated and contested in specific workplaces, organisations or industries was relatively commonplace: for instance, the automotive industry attracted a great deal of attention in the four decades from 1960 (see among many others Turner et al 1967, Beynon 1973, Beynon 1984, Hayter and Harvey 1993), and at least one leading industrial relations scholar argued that the case study was much to be preferred to, say, large-scale quantitative surveys (McCarthy 1994 and see Martin 1998). More recently, however, this kind of work has declined as others have risen (Frege 2005, Strauss and Whitfield 2008), and indeed quantitative studies, including those analysing secondary data, have become much more common. The apparent decline in case study research is, of course, partly the result of difficulties in gaining access to workplaces and research participants, difficulties which have arisen, to a great extent, from changes in the structure of the economy and the decline in trade union membership (Piore 2011). It also, however, reflects wider changes in research priorities on the part of individuals, institutions and funders. Those new priorities reflect different economic, social and political times, but it would be a great shame if the tradition of case study research, with its ability to uncover the realities of the employment relationship in a specific occupation, workplace, organisation or industry were to be lost altogether.

Furthermore, the methods adopted for this study enabled some comparisons over time. In particular, an analysis of available documents, together with the limited literature, allowed some tentative conclusions to be drawn with regard to the ways in which similarities and differences between the military and civilian employment relationships have developed over the years. Finally, the study makes a small methodological contribution, in that it confirms the value of social media as a tool for accessing 'hard to reach' groups (Baltar and Brunet 2012) and, similarly, demonstrates that carrying out interviews by email does not necessarily result in a paucity of data.

Amongst a welter of interesting and relevant findings, one key point arising from this study is the way in which the military and civilian employment relationships have diverged. Where once, for instance, both civilian and military codes had much in common, contemporary military discipline is much harsher, and less reflective of organisational justice, than that generally applied in the civilian workplace, while criminal offences are usually treated more severely when committed by military personnel. A second key finding relates to the complex and contradictory structures through which power and control is exercised in the military employment relationship, structures whereby authority is vested not only in the institution and its rules but also in the person of the commanding officer. Hence, for example, the written disciplinary rules and procedures allow for substantial discretion on the part of said commanding officer, to the extent that one individual could be imprisoned for an incident which might only result in a verbal reprimand for another. Third, and despite the range of controls imposed upon them, most participants in this study had little that was not positive to say

about their time in the armed forces, and had either actively consented to or simply complied with the restrictions placed upon them. However, and fourth, some had not consented or complied but, in response to specific issues and in various ways, resisted, demonstrating that, perhaps, the military employment relationship is not so dissimilar from that in the civilian workplace. Fifth, then, the study uncovers a number of points of similarity between civilian and military work and suggests that most military personnel experience their employment relationship in much the same way as their civilian counterparts. Sixth, and perhaps above all, however, aspects of this study highlight some gaps in our knowledge of civilian employees today.

Structure and content

Chapter one of this work explores the nature of the employment relationship, which is distinguished by the combination of market and managerial relationships; it is, therefore, a relationship of power and control and hence inherently one of conflict. The chapter then makes the case for treating military service as an employment relationship. Chapter two is concerned with the systems by which control is instilled and maintained in the employment relationship: opening with a discussion of control systems in general, it then focuses on discipline as the ultimate control mechanism before exploring the role played by voice in controlling, co-opting and occasionally relinquishing some power to employees. Chapter three then turns to what is known about the features of the military employment relationship, piecing together material from a range of historical and contemporary documentary and published sources. Here, as throughout, the focus is on rules and procedures, discipline and punishment,

voice and resistance: key elements of the employment relationship as identified by Clegg (1979) and others. The chapter also examines the nature of military institutions as Weberian 'ideal type' bureaucracies, but concludes that none of the common theoretical typologies of organisational control quite capture the nature of the armed forces. Instead, then, it proposes a new typology of military-bureaucratic control, comprising, as defined by Edwards (1979) elements of hierarchical and bureaucratic, rules-based control as well as normative controls and, after Barker (2005), concertive control. This typology provides the structure for the data chapters discussed below.

Chapter four is concerned with the research philosophy, methodology and theories underpinning this work. Having explained my position as a Marxist critical realist, it also discusses the methods by which data was collected: an intensive literature review, documentary analysis, a qualitative, exploratory survey, interviews and a group interview. In addition, the chapter explores the not inconsiderable difficulties encountered by civilian researchers of the armed forces, outlines my data analysis methods and provides details of participants in the study.

The next three chapters, as noted, utilise the proposed typology of military-bureaucratic control to present, analyse and discuss the data collected. Chapter five is concerned with hierarchical control and rules-based control, notably in the form of the military disciplinary rules and procedures, while chapter six examines the nature of normative and concertive controls in the military employment relationship. Chapter seven then addresses the question of consent to,

compliance with and resistance to said controls. In addition, these chapters use critical realist retroduction to seek explanations for the phenomena identified; hence, for instance, chapter six explores the ways in which basic training instils not only the formal rules and norms of military life, but also introduces recruits to the informal norms and, to some extent, inducts them into concertive control. Similarly, chapter seven takes the views and opinions of participants on the (lack of) opportunity for voice as an example of consent, as well as seeking explanations for this in the reasons individuals give for joining up in the first place. Each chapter, too, contains a short section comparing what has been uncovered about the military employment relationship with what is already known about the civilian equivalent. Finally, the conclusion pulls together the strands running through the work and explores the answers to the research questions.

1. The employment relationship and the military employment relationship

The cornerstone of this thesis is the view that members of the British armed forces are in an employment relationship, and that, like any other, the military employment relationship is one of power and control. This chapter therefore examines the nature of the capitalist employment relationship, with particular reference to the issues of conflict, power, authority and control, and highlights the contradictions inherent within it. Continuing with the case for treating service in the British armed forces as an employment relationship, it demonstrates that military personnel are in both a market and a managerial relationship with the state, in the form of their chosen arm of the services. The chapter concludes that, despite some notable differences between military and civilian employment, it is appropriate to examine and analyse the military employment relationship using the tools and concepts of industrial relations.

The employment relationship

There are several relationships in the employment relationship: it may take the form of a legal contract, and it is also an economic, political and social relationship (Sisson 2010). Arguably, it also incorporates a psychological contract, the perception of 'reciprocal obligations' whereby 'the individual believes that he or she owes the employer certain contributions (e.g. hard work, loyalty, sacrifices) in return for certain inducements (e.g. high pay, job security)' (Rousseau 1990: 390 and see for instance Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler 2000). This concept has, however, been described as 'a discursive artefact that serves managerialist interests to the neglect of other social actors' (Cullinane and Dundon 2006: 113)

and criticised as ‘a hypothetical construct, drawn, probably inappropriately, from a legal metaphor’ (Guest 1998: 650); indeed, many of the elements held to be part of such a ‘contract’ are to be found both in the legal contract of employment and the economic bargain upon which it is based. Regardless of the details, then, at its core the employment relationship is an agreement between two parties under which one, the employee, works for the other, the employer, for money (Anderman 2000). This arrangement, which might or might not be formalised in a contract of employment, has two primary characteristics. First, it involves a market relationship: it is ‘economic activity in which an employee works under the authority of an employer and receives a wage in return for his or her labour’ (Edwards 2003a: 2). Second, however, it is also a ‘managerial’ relationship (Flanders 1974), one which is concerned with the rules by which that labour is to be performed and rewarded: essentially, managerial relations ‘characterise how the consequences of market relations unfold and occur’ (Dundon et al 2017: 6-7).

The employment relationship therefore differs from any other economic exchange, not least because it is usually continuous and always indeterminate (Blyton and Turnbull 2004). An agreement to work for money is simply an agreement to work, without stipulation as to how much work is to be done, nor how it is to be done; hence the economic exchange is one of payment for labour power, or the capacity to work, rather than for labour itself (Sisson 2008, Colling and Terry 2010, Blyton et al 2011). The employer, then, is faced with the question of how to translate labour power into productive labour; that is, labour which is directed to meeting the employer’s goal of creating both value and surplus value.

The creation of value is concerned with covering the costs of labour power: wages and other overheads which the employer must pay in order to combine labour with materials to produce a commodity. Surplus value, on the other hand, refers to the additional value which that labour adds to those materials by producing the commodity: in other words, profit (Marx 1962). This holds true whether or not profit is the goal: in the public sector, for instance, surplus value is created by minimising costs (Legge 1995) and 'work is organised on cognate principles to those of capitalism' (Edwards 2014: 13).

Although the two parties to the employment contract are notionally equal, the employment relationship is fundamentally unequal: in a capitalist economy, the majority of people are obliged to sell their labour in order to live, and 'an employer is able to survive longer without labour than the employee can survive without work' (Blyton and Turnbull 2004: 34). Moreover, the employer has, or has access to, substantial resources and simply needs an employee, any employee, to expend his or her labour power on the employer's behalf, making the individual employee, at least in theory, dispensable (Sisson 2010). In short, the employment relationship is indeterminate and unequal: it is also, therefore, conflictual.

Conflict in the employment relationship

Employers are concerned, amongst other things, with translating labour power into labour and thence into value and surplus value. Employees are concerned, amongst other things, with earning a living. The interests of employer and employee are, therefore, 'divergent' (Fox 1966), ensuring that 'work relations (within capitalism) are an inevitable source of dispute' (Hyman 1975: 186). All

aspects of the employment relationship are essentially, and consistently, contested (Blyton et al 2011): conflict will arise over matters such as the amount of work required of the employee, the level of pay s/he will receive for it, the mechanisms by which said work is measured, allocated or supervised, or indeed the way in which a manager addresses an employee. Similarly, conflict is expressed in a range of ways, visible and invisible, overt and covert (Fox 1966, Hyman 1975, Saundry 2016), from absenteeism, going on strike or taking some other form of industrial action to pilfering, sabotage, making a complaint, ignoring or subverting organisational rules or simply leaving the job. Regardless of how it is expressed, conflict is inherent in the employment relationship and stems from its economic, social, legal and structural inequalities.

The wide-ranging and fundamental nature of conflict in the employment relationship is not, however, universally acknowledged. It has been suggested, for instance, that conflict can be explained largely, or even solely, in terms of personality clashes and conflicts of interest between different work groups (Gennard and Judge 2010). Such 'interpersonal conflict' is, of course, a feature of most workplaces (Saundry 2016), but claims that it is the only form of conflict in the employment relationship reflect a wilful neglect of the wider social, political and economic picture: essentially, 'conflict exists because the interests of workers and those of employers collide, and what is good for one is frequently costly for the other' (Edwards 1979: 12). Nevertheless, conflict is frequently ascribed to misunderstanding, poor communication, inadequate management or the actions of one or more so-called troublemakers, whether inside the organisation or external to it (Burchill 2008, Heery 2016). Unitary views such as

these have, despite their ‘grossly over-simplistic’ approach (Ackers 2014: 2620) and their neglect of the economic imperative, become increasingly influential in human resource management research and practice (Harley 2015). In a unitary frame of reference, the organisation is perceived as a single, united entity, where employer and employee share the same aims and goals and where there is, or should be, no scope for conflict (Fox 1966). This perspective conveniently ignores the expression of overt conflict, such as the fact that, for instance, around one third of workplaces are likely to receive at least one employee grievance in any single year (van Wanrooy et al 2013). Similarly, nearly 120,000 current or former employees lodged a claim against their employer with the Employment Tribunal in the year to December 2018 (MOJ 2019); indeed, even when confronted with the prospect of fees of up to £1,200, now abolished, over 17,000 did so in each year between 2014 and 2016 (MOJ 2017). In addition, unitary approaches focus on the individual employee and ignore or deny the collective nature and experience of work. Given this neglect of fundamental realities, therefore, human resource management has been criticised as lacking a ‘cogent theory’ of the employment relationship (Edwards 2014: 2), as being ‘at risk of intellectual and professional impoverishment’ (Dundon and Rafferty 2018: 377) and its scholarship ‘a manifestation of neo-liberal hegemony within the realm of ideas’ (Heery 2016: 13).

Conversely, pluralist and radical (or critical, or Marxist) perspectives on the employment relationship acknowledge the centrality of conflict, recognising that ‘the absence of overt conflicts does not mean that there is harmony of shared purpose’ (Edwards 2014: 43). In a pluralist frame of reference, conflict can be

reconciled or resolved, usually through negotiation (Dubin 1954, Clegg 1979). Radical perspectives, on the other hand, are based on the understanding that, since conflict is the creature not of the employment relationship *per se* but of 'the operation of contradictory tendencies in the capitalist economic system' (Hyman 1975: 31), it is not resolved but temporarily accommodated (Hyman 1975, Kahn-Freund 1983, Burchill 2008). In practice, however, the distinction between pluralist and radical frames of reference has become increasingly blurred, many industrial relations scholars placing themselves on the intersection of the two (see for instance Edwards 2003a, Heery 2016). Pluralism can, of course, be understood either as a commitment to values such as freedom, equality and democracy or as the belief that these values inform society today (Edwards 2014), while radical perspectives reflect a range of views not only on how society is, but also on how it should be. Those who find themselves on the cusp of the two frames, then, have perhaps taken the view that, while change is needed, we must work with what we have and 'analyse the situation as it is' (Edwards 2014: 16).

To further complicate the debate, however, critiques of pluralist and radical stances on the employment relationship come not so much from unitary writers, for whom the inequality of the employment relationship is a matter of little concern, but from within. 'Neo-pluralism' (Ackers 2014) is a critique of 'radical pluralism' which takes issue with the ways in which conflict has been addressed in industrial relations and suggests that such issues 'are better explained by political and socio-economic context than by any essential features of the capitalist employment relationship' (Ackers 2014: 2620). In particular, too, 'radical

pluralism' is held to 'load the employment relationship with an expectation that conflict is somehow normal and cooperation deviant' (Ackers 2014: 2616). However, the fundamental features of the employment relationship are ever present, whether or not they are visible at any given moment, and, moreover, at no point does the pluralist or radical literature suggest that cooperation is 'deviant': quite the opposite, in fact. The sources of conflict lie not only in the inequalities of the employment relationship but also in the mutual dependence of employer and employee: the employer relies on the employee to expend their labour power and create surplus value, while the employee relies on the employer to provide him or her with an income (Sisson 2010). Conflict and cooperation therefore coexist around a 'frontier of control' (Goodrich 1975): a frontier which is constantly shifting 'in a continuous process of pressure and counterpressure, conflict and accommodation, overt and tacit struggle' (Hyman 1975: 26). Similarly, cooperation means many things, including worker 'acquiescence', working together for mutual gain and the simple protection of self-interest (Bray et al 2019). Radical pluralism, then, supports a 'nuanced understanding' of the complexity of the employment relationship (Gold 2017) wherein employer and employee have both shared and converging goals and interests. The employment relationship, therefore, is one of 'conflicted collaboration' (Delbridge 2007) or, most commonly, 'structured antagonism' (Edwards 1986, 2003, 2018).

Power in the employment relationship

The central source of conflict in the employment relationship is the 'struggle between workers and employers for control over the terms on which labour power is translated into effort' (Edwards and Scullion 1982: 257). Capital has a 'need to

control labour' (Jaros 2010: 71): in order to create surplus value, employers and their managers must ensure that employees attend work and, once there, actually work (Pollard 1968). Control, then, is 'the essential managerial function' (Storey 1983: 100): it permeates all aspects of the employment relationship and will be explored further in chapter two. Control cannot, however, be exercised without power. In the unequal employment relationship, employers are able to dictate how employees spend their time during working hours, to give or withhold their incomes and to attempt to win their loyalty (Sisson 2008), but they cannot assume that employees will meekly concede to every demand. The workplace, therefore, is the site of 'an unceasing power struggle' (Hyman 1975: 26).

Power is an abstract and primitive concept for which there is no single, shared definition (Lukes 2005b); it is also, with some notable exceptions, remarkably under-theorised in the literature of industrial relations and the employment relationship (Kelly 1998). Wright Mills, for instance, suggested that 'power has to do with whatever decisions men make about the arrangements under which they live, and about the events which make up the history of their times' (1958: 29). This, however, tells us little about the realities of employment, where employees have little or no influence over such decisions. More usefully, then, Weber conceived power as 'the chance of a man or of a number of men to realise their own will … even against the resistance of others' (1948: 180); hence '*A* has power over *B* to the extent that he can get *B* to do something that *B* would not otherwise do' (Dahl 1957 cited in Lukes 1974: 12). Power is, therefore, both an ability and a resource (Edwards and Wajcman 2005), while the use of the word 'over' is

crucial: in the unequal employment relationship, employers have the ability to exercise ‘power over’ employees (Hyman 1975, Edwards 2006b, Sisson 2010).

Lukes (1974) proposed that ‘power over’, the asymmetric power of some over others, has three dimensions, or faces. The first, and most concrete, is concerned with how decisions are made and how one or more people get another(s) to do something: that is, with domination (Edwards 2006b, Sisson 2010). The second, which is not entirely separate from the first, deals with how the agenda is set and includes ‘nondecision-making’ (Lukes 1974: 20). In terms of the employment relationship, this second face might be seen in an employer’s decision about whether to consult with employees over a specific issue, and indeed whether to include all possible options in any such consultation. Crucially, too, both these dimensions incorporate an acknowledgement of conflict, the first dealing with situations where there is ‘an observable conflict of (subjective) interests’ (Lukes 1974: 15) and where power can be defined as ‘the ability to secure one’s own aims’ (Edwards 2006b: 572). In the second face, on the other hand, conflict is less likely to be overt, but still present, ‘embodied in express policy preferences and sub-political grievances’ (Lukes 1974: 20). In contrast to both the first and second dimensions, the third face of ‘power over’ is concerned with manipulation (Goldhamer and Shils 1939): ‘the ability to act against the interests of the powerless’ (Edwards 2006b: 572) by shaping their expectations, attitudes and preferences. Here, then, conflict might be overt but is more likely to be ‘latent’, in that there may be ‘a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those they exclude’ (Lukes 1974: 25), but those ‘real interests’ might not be known or articulated. In the employment relationship, then,

Lukes' formulation might be seen in a unilateral employer decision to impose a pay freeze (first face); in a political or managerial decision to delay the release of key financial information until after the conclusion of pay negotiations (second face), and in the use of human resource management techniques designed to 'seek to influence the "hearts and minds" of employees' (Sisson 2008: 38) and thereby secure acceptance of a pay freeze (third face). Moreover, since power is complex and dynamic (Edwards and Wajcman 2005), it can have more than one face simultaneously, as with the use of third face power to win employee support for a decision taken using first and/or second face power.

Influential though it has been, Lukes' analysis has also been heavily criticised, not least for the focus on 'power over' to the exclusion of other forms, something he sought to address in the second edition of his book (Lukes 2005a). Power, it is argued, does not only imply domination: it can also be conceptualised as 'power to', defined as 'a capacity to act and achieve goals that does not necessarily entail power over others' (Edwards 2006b: 579), and 'power for', 'when individuals band together in order to increase their collective power' (Hyman 1975: 27). In the employment relationship, the best example of 'power for' is to be found in the collective organisation of workers in trade unions to resist the employer's 'power over' (Hyman 1975): like 'power over', this is a 'zero-sum' approach, where 'the powerful actor is said to gain what the powerless lose' (Edwards and Wajcman 2005: 116). 'Power to', on the other hand, has the potential to be mutually beneficial: it can be 'productive, transformative, authoritative and compatible with dignity' (Lukes 2005a: 109). It has been suggested, indeed, that 'our primary understanding of power is as "power-to" …

[so] ‘power’ is best thought of as the ability to affect outcomes, not the ability to affect others’ (Morriss 2006: 126). Therefore, if ‘power over’ is ‘power down’ and ‘power for’ is ‘power up’ (Tilly 1999), ‘power to’ might be viewed as ‘power across’. For instance, the possession of specialist skills or knowledge might give a specific group ‘power to’ achieve things which others cannot, regardless of the power exercised over them and without necessarily damaging the interests of any other individual or group (Edwards and Wajcman 2005). In this respect, then, a broad definition of power reflects the contradictions at the heart of the employment relationship: ‘power over’ explains inequality and the potential for conflict, while ‘power to’, with its promise of mutual gains, reflects the interdependence of employer and employee. Furthermore, power is not static and does not exist independently: like the employment relationship itself, it is influenced and affected by the economic, legal, political and social framework, as well as by the actions and beliefs of individuals and groups. In a nutshell, then, the employment relationship in itself ensures that ‘power over’, ‘power to’ and ‘power for’ are in ‘more or less continuous tension’ (Sisson 2010: 178).

Legitimising power and control in the employment relationship: managerial ideology and authority

In a further contradiction in the employment relationship, employers cannot exercise power and control without the consent of employees: that is, they need to create an environment where ‘those in the subordinate role see the issuing of directives by those in the superordinate role as legitimate’ (Pugh et al 1971: 19). Authority, or ‘power that is justified by the beliefs of the voluntarily obedient’ (Wright Mills 1958: 29), is therefore both a form of ‘power over’ (Sisson 2010) and a prerequisite for the exercise of power. Indeed, the act of entering into an

employment relationship incorporates an implicit acceptance of the authority of the employer (Simon 1951, Blyton and Turnbull 2004).

Weber (1947) identified three 'pure types' of 'legitimate authority': the charismatic, the traditional and the rational. Charismatic authority is based on the belief that some individuals have personal qualities which set them apart: the charismatic individual has authority, and should be obeyed, because of their 'sacred or extraordinary characteristics' (Clegg and Dunkerley 1980: 78), as illustrated today by the extensive literature on 'charismatic leadership' (Houghton 2010). Traditional forms of authority also require obedience to the person of the leader, but on the grounds of custom and precedent rather than any personal qualities. In its modern form, traditional authority is evident in organisational structures and processes which are as they are because of 'the weight of reverence for tradition' (Clegg and Dunkerley 1980: 78). For Weber, however, the only form of authority which could bring order and stability was to be found in rational legal forms (Houghton 2010), where obedience is due, not to the person, but to 'the legally established impersonal order' (Weber 1947: 15). The 'purest' and most efficient variant of rational authority, he argued, was bureaucracy, a concept which will be examined in more detail in chapters two and three.

Regardless of the form of authority, power and control in the employment relationship depend on legitimacy: in short, why should one adult do what another tells him or her to do? One answer is, of course, to be found in the economic imperative: if the individual issuing the instruction is in a position to deprive the other of their living then naturally it might be assumed that the instruction will be

acted upon. Rarely, however, is this so openly acknowledged. Similarly, a veil is frequently drawn over the fact that 'the social function of hierarchical work organisation is not technical efficiency, but accumulation' (Marglin 1974: 62), a point dismissed by the rejoinder that 'we cannot turn the clock back … we are not going to abolish degrees of responsibility and authority in any operation of any size' (Landes 1986: 622). Employer and managerial authority and control is, then, posited as the natural way of things, historically derived from ownership but, as organisations became larger and more complex, argued as a 'right' and legitimised by notions of 'managerial prerogative' (Storey 1983). Managers, it is argued, possess superior abilities, derived from their personal qualities and extensive training. Hence management ideology:

> informs an orderly account of the nature of man and the functioning of society. [It constructs] notions about who is virtuous and deserves power in organisations, who should be punished or rewarded and according to what criteria, and under which principles should organisations and ultimately society be structured (Gantman 2005: 3)

Managerial ideology, then, acts as 'a method of self-reassurance, an instrument of persuasion, and a legitimation of authority' (Fox 1966: 373), all the while concealing the fact that control is central to 'a system … designed to secure domination' (Storey 1983: 122-123).

Contradictions in the employment relationship

It has been suggested that the concept of contradiction is overused in the literature of industrial relations and the sociology of work, that it lacks utility as a concept, is frequently used incorrectly or without context and that, in short, it is redundant (McGovern 2014). While it is indeed the case that 'contradiction' is sometimes used when a term such as 'tension' might offer a better explanation,

it is not the case that contradiction lacks clarity or utility. Essentially, ‘a contradiction means that there are two (or more) principles that characterise a relationship and that put competing demands on it’ (Edwards 2014: 10): these competing demands may be resolved, albeit on a temporary basis, but the contradiction remains. Hence it remains the case that there is a fundamental contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production: that is, between the processes by which materials, tools, technology, knowledge and labour power combine to produce commodities and the labour process, ‘the particular manner in which surplus labour is expropriated’ (Burawoy 1979: 15). As a result, the employment relationship under capitalism contains fundamental contradictions between the interests of the employer and those of the employee, and therefore between conflict and cooperation, between control and consent and between the exercise of power over, power to and power for.

To summarise thus far, the employment relationship is the agreement by which the employer agrees to pay the employee in return for work. Since the work-wage bargain involves the buying and selling of labour power, rather than labour, the relationship is inherently one of conflict. Furthermore, the employer’s pursuit of surplus value entails the exercise of power, authority and control, with which employees might cooperate or which they might resist. In short, then, the employment relationship is one of conflict, control and contradiction.

Military service as an employment relationship

Britain has three armed services: the Royal Navy (including the Royal Marines), the British Army and the Royal Air Force. As of October 2018, their combined strength was just over 192,000 men and women, of whom some 135, 360 were full time, trained military personnel. Some 60% (116,600) of serving individuals are in the army while the remainder serve in almost equal numbers in the navy (38,650) and air force (36,870) respectively (MOD 2018e). Military service is not, strictly speaking, employment, and military personnel are not employees: they do not work under a contract of employment but are 'servants of the Crown appointed under prerogative powers' (MOD 2004) whose 'civilian status is modified by the superimposition of a military status' (Oakes 2000: 10). Furthermore, military service is specifically exempt from the provisions of most employment statutes, with the notable exception of equality legislation, and personnel are instead protected by, and subject to, military law. However, the employment relationship exists independently of the contract of employment, and it does not rely on the existence of such a contract. Instead, as discussed above, it is the arrangement under which an individual works for another in return for money, and is characterised by market and managerial relations (Flanders 1974, Edwards 2003a). Members of the armed forces are paid for their work, so they are in a market relationship with the relevant service and, ultimately, with the state. Similarly, they are required to attend work and to follow rules and instructions, placing them in a managerial relationship. In short, then, military service can be viewed as a form of capitalist employment relationship (Edwards 2014): 'soldiering [is] an exchange of labour for pay, the army must be seen as an employer, its officers as managers, and its troops as workers' (Way 2000: 765).

Nevertheless, the military employment relationship rarely features in the literature of either industrial relations or the sociology of work and employment. This neglect is, no doubt, ‘partly because of ideological distaste’ (Way 2003: 457): understandably, many might view the study of the military as ‘politically unpalatable’ (Jenkings et al 2011: 38). Equally, the activities of the armed forces might not be viewed as work, since ‘not all effort qualifies as work’ (Tilly and Tilly 1998: 23) and indeed work is ‘a socially constructed phenomenon without fixed or universal meaning’ (Grint and Nixon 2015: 38). The effort expended by military personnel, then, might be construed as not constructive but destructive (Zürcher 2013b), not productive but unproductive and 'socially useless' (Braverman 1974). However, while it is of course the case that armed conflict, involving killing or being prepared to kill, might be viewed as the epitome of destructive, and hence unproductive, activity, military personnel also carry out productive work in the form of peacekeeping, deterrence, disaster relief and the like (Heinecken 1997). Equally, if work involves the expenditure of labour power in the production of commodities - goods or services - which generate surplus value for capital, then the armed forces do indeed make an economic contribution, not only in the provision of, for instance, fisheries protection, but even in the prosecution of wars which are of benefit to the capitalist state, as for example in the construction of the British empire. Essentially, too, military personnel constitute a sizeable body of working people, the majority of whom join, or re-join, the civilian workforce on leaving the services (Ashcroft 2014) and all of whom are subject to or affected by the same trends and influences which affect those in other forms of employment, not least the use of human resource management techniques and the impacts of redundancy, outsourcing and privatisation. Moreover, the armed forces are ‘a powerful shaper of social institutions and social practices’ (Matthewman 2012:

73) from which many of the practices taken for granted today, at work and elsewhere, derive. Neither military service nor civilian employment exists in a vacuum: each is affected not only by wider political, social, legal and cultural developments but also by the other. Ideological and philosophical objections aside, then, there is a strong case for researching the military employment relationship.

This is not to suggest, of course, that military service is the same as any other kind of employment relationship, since there are crucial differences. The most obvious of these is the fact that members of the armed forces may be required to put themselves in harm's way, making the 'unlimited commitment of injury and death' (Clayton 2006: 2). Since 1945, over 7,100 members of the British armed forces have been killed on operations, including 178 in Iraq and 456 in Afghanistan (MOD 2018d), although civilians are much more likely than military personnel to be killed, directly or indirectly, by armed conflict (Farrell and Schmitt 2012 and see Matthewman 2012, Chilcott 2016, UNHCR 2018), while 141 regular and reserve personnel have died while on training or exercises since the turn of the century (MOD 2018b). It has been argued that military service is the only work which involves the 'unlimited liability' of potential injury or death (Downes 1988: 162), but in fact 'the risk of a soldier losing his life in battle may … be considerably less than the risk to a police officer of being killed in the course of his or her duty' (Rowe 2008: 64). Over 4,000 police officers have been killed, or died from injuries sustained, on duty since the modern police force was established in 1829 (PRHT 2017), while at least 122 firefighters died on duty in the UK between 1978 and 2008, 82 of those deaths being classed as 'operational', and twelve more were

killed between 2005 and 2014 (LRD 2008, Watterson 2015). Indeed, there are grounds for arguing that all emergency service workers willingly put their physical and mental health and safety at risk in the normal course of their work (see for instance EU-OSHA 2011), as do volunteer mountain and moor rescue teams and lifeboat crews, while of course an average of 141 employees of all kinds are killed at work every year (HSE 2018). Moreover, the armed forces do not only demand 'selfless service' from their own (Downes 1988) but also from civilians working alongside them. The Royal Fleet Auxiliary, the supply and support vessels for the Royal Navy, are crewed by civilians who can be called to the front line: several were killed during the Falklands conflict and many more lost in World War II and other operations (Roberts and Marlow 2006, Puddefoot 2007, 2009, 2010). In short, military personnel might face the risk of death in the course of their work, but they are not the only occupational group for whom this is a real possibility; their uniqueness, then, lies in the fact that they may also be required to deprive others of life.

Further distinctions between military service and other employment relationships are less stark. Members of the armed forces are clothed and, at least during operations, given food, drink and accommodation by their employer, and they can be required to change location at relatively short notice. In these respects, however, they are again not entirely unique: indeed, killing aside, the only other thing which sets military personnel apart from all other workers is the fixed term of service to which they are bound. Recruits sign up for a legally binding period of service equating to a minimum of four years; however, new members of the British Army commit themselves until their 22nd birthday, meaning that those who

join at the minimum age of sixteen are required to complete at least six years' service (ForcesWatch 2011). Personnel can be discharged by the service at any point (Gee 2007), but with the exception of a short period following the first 28 days of training, known as Discharge As Of Right, they cannot leave during their minimum term of service; thereafter, a long period of notice is required. In this regard, then, while civilian employees might be described as free, military personnel are unfree.

In short, military personnel are in an employment relationship which differs from others in just two noteworthy respects. First, they may be called upon to kill others, as well as being put at risk of serious injury or death themselves. Second, the military employment relationship is not even notionally one of equals, since service is legally binding. These distinctions do not, however, preclude the study of the military employment relationship using the tools, theories and methods applied to any other.

Chapter summary

This chapter has explored the key features of the employment relationship, with particular reference to the conflict and contradictions inherent within it. It has then discussed the nature of power, authority and control within the employment relationship and again highlighted the contradictions within them, before examining the case for examining military service as an employment relationship. As organisations, the armed forces are intrinsically contradictory, and perhaps more so than any other:

> military organisations may be (and may be expected to be) civilised and barbaric, they can also be (and be expected to be) protective / destructive; filthy / clean; violent / peaceful … (Belkin 2016: 197)

Indeed, it is such extreme contradictions which enable the military to carry out its function, and in particular to train personnel to be able to put themselves at risk of death and, crucially, to kill others. Having established that this is achieved within an employment relationship, the next chapter will examine systems of control within the employment relationship.

2. Systems of control in the employment relationship

One of the central points made in chapter one concerned the role of control as 'the essential managerial function' (Storey 1983: 100). Control is exercised through 'a complex and dynamic configuration of mechanisms and practices' (Reed 2011: 41) which include, for instance, the allocation and direction of work tasks, supervision, the evaluation of performance and the 'apparatus of discipline and reward' (Thompson 1983: 122). This chapter will, first of all, explore some common approaches to control in organisations; it will then discuss discipline, the ultimate control mechanism, and explore the role played by employee voice in control systems.

Control systems

Systems of control are designed to fulfil three functions, the first of which is concerned with the direct management of work, specifying tasks and directing their completion. Second, since work is carried out in pursuit of specific goals, progress towards those goals is monitored using tools such as performance monitoring, evaluation and assessment. Finally, and in tacit recognition of the different interests of employer and employee, control systems seek to ensure cooperation and compliance, achieving this through the 'carrot' of pay and other reward systems and the 'stick' of disciplinary rules, procedures and punishments (Pollard 1968, Edwards 1979). Alternatively, however, control might be viewed as either 'detailed' or 'general', where detailed control is applied to such issues as the way in which tasks are performed, the speed of work, discipline and similar matters, while general control is concerned with 'the accommodation of workers to the overall aims of the enterprise' (Edwards 1986: 6).

Typologies of control measures tend to highlight three main approaches. Simple, personal or 'direct' control systems are those where the supervisor is free to issue arbitrary instructions (see for instance Edwards 1986, Gantman 2005). Technical controls incorporate the use of machines, such as the assembly line which dictates the pace of work or automated surveillance in computer systems, while a third set of measures make up the category commonly described as bureaucratic control. Bureaucratic control incorporates rules, as expressed in job descriptions, disciplinary rules and other documentation, along with norms of behaviour which may or may not be written down; under such a control system workers 'find themselves embedded within complex webs of rules and expectations that act as powerful constraints' (Vallas 2012: 43).

Richard Edwards (1979) further analysed the components of bureaucratic control, which he distinguished from hierarchical control. Hierarchical control, in his analysis, is concerned with the delegation of power down through the pyramid structure created by hierarchy. Control thus rests on the concept of a chain of command, whereby each layer in the hierarchy is responsible to the next higher authority, communication is vertical but not horizontal or lateral and power is vested in the person of the supervisor or manager. In bureaucratic control, on the other hand, the exercise of hierarchical power is institutionalised in the form of rules and policies. While elements of hierarchical control, as well as technical control, might still be evident, bureaucratic control 'makes power appear to emanate from the formal organisation itself' (Edwards 1979: 145), rather than from the individual(s) at the summit of the hierarchy. Moreover, bureaucratic control also incorporates normative controls, creating a 'totalitarian' system

whereby ‘workers owe not only a hard day’s work to the [employer] but also their demeanour and affections’ (Edwards 1979: 148). Within this system, furthermore, there are different levels, the crudest of which is simply concerned with the application of the rules. A more sophisticated approach is concerned with ‘habits of predictability and dependability’, that is not only with ensuring the rules are followed but also with ‘getting the job done even where the rules need to be bent or applied in new ways’ (Edwards 1979: 150). At its most sophisticated, bureaucratic control involves the ‘internalisation’ of the organisation’s goals and values through normative controls requiring loyalty and commitment; hence it is concerned not only with establishing a hierarchy of people and roles ‘but also an ideal hierarchy of traits characterising the good worker’ (Edwards 1979: 151). Building upon Edwards’ and others’ work on sophisticated bureaucratic control, furthermore, Barker (2005) explored and developed the concept of concertive control, whereby workers ‘collaborate to develop the means of their own control’ (Barker 2005: 213). In contrast to other forms of control, which reflect ‘power over’, concertive control is ‘power to’ or ‘power with’, but with a very specific purpose: to transfer control from the supervisor or other superior to the workers themselves, and to shift the focus of control from the rules to the ‘value consensus’ of the workforce. Concertive control, then, is ‘more powerful, less apparent, and more difficult to resist’ than other forms of bureaucratic control (Barker 2005: 210).

The concept of bureaucracy was, of course, first formulated by Weber (1948). In his analysis, the first fundamental characteristic of a bureaucratic system is a series of ‘fixed and official jurisdictional areas’ (1948: 196) ordered by formal,

written rules and overseen by appointed, salaried officials. Crucially, 'the authority to give the commands required for the discharge of [official] duties is distributed in a stable way and is delimited by rules' (1948: 196). Authority derives from the individual's position in the hierarchy, 'a firmly ordered system of super- and subordination in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones' (1948: 197), while entry into the hierarchy, and progression up it, is based on 'thorough and expert training' (1948: 198), perhaps the key factor in ensuring that bureaucracy is self-sustaining and self-replicating. Bureaucracy, for Weber, demonstrates 'a technical superiority over any other form of organisation' (1948: 214), and can be compared to a machine with its 'precision, speed, unambiguity, … continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material costs' (1948: 214).

By implication, therefore, bureaucracy both creates and rests upon hierarchy, 'one of the basic models for organising the work and lives of people' (Diefenbach 2013: 33-34). Formal hierarchical structures, processes and social relationships are standardised and, therefore, more likely to be characterised by stability and continuity. At the same time, though, they provide opportunities for personal and career development, thus offering those at the bottom of the ladder 'some kind of security and purpose as well as hope of personal advancement' (Diefenbach and Todnem 2012: 2); indeed, the prospect of advancement can in itself act as a control mechanism, encouraging those at the bottom of the hierarchy to maintain certain standards of performance and behaviour in order to win promotion up it. On the other hand, however, hierarchy creates and maintains social, economic and power inequalities, institutionalising 'advantages and enrichment for a few,

disadvantages and limitations for the many' (Diefenbach and Todnem 2012: 3). Hence, while an orderly structure of formal rules acts to protect those at the bottom of the ladder from arbitrary acts on the part of those higher up, and while bureaucracy can offer a degree of certainty, it also serves to create a relationship which is more that of master and servant than of equals in a democratic society. Furthermore, it is essentially contradictory, since bureaucracy contains not one hierarchy, but two: one deriving from the position of the individual within the formal structure, and one based on skills, training and expertise.

As with any organisational form concerned with the employment relationship, bureaucracy contains further internal contradictions. Formal rules can become a constraint, creating layers of authority without whose permission nothing can be achieved, and putting a brake on initiative and creativity. Similarly, as Merton (1940) pointed out, placing an emphasis on formal rules might create order and predictability, but it can also prioritise adherence to those rules to the exclusion of all else; at the extreme, this might become an 'obsession with narrow interest and ritual by the office holder' (Thompson and McHugh 1990: 22). Crucially, too, bureaucracy, already a form of 'power over', has the potential to evolve into 'a precision instrument which can put itself at the disposal of quite varied … interests in domination' (Weber 1948: 231); indeed, Marx viewed bureaucracy specifically as 'an instrument by which the dominant class exercises its domination over the other social classes' (Mouzelis 1975: 9). Bureaucracy, then, can become an irresistible force which creates an 'iron cage' (Weber 1958, cited in Barker 2005: 212): it is 'simultaneously an enabling tool for organising large-scale cooperation and a coercive weapon for exploitation' (Adler 2012). Nonetheless, the work of

Weber and others on bureaucracy and authority continues to influence managerial thought (Houghton 2010) and, despite widespread predictions of its demise, forms of bureaucracy continue to flourish (Courpasson and Clegg 2006, Clegg 2012).

Discipline and control

In a bureaucracy, control is achieved through a combination of rules and hierarchical authority, and by the relationship between the two. Gouldner, for instance, proposed that different kinds of bureaucracy were characterised by different kinds of rules: in a 'representative' bureaucracy rules, which have authority because they derive from knowledge and expertise, are mutually accepted, whereas authority in the 'punishment-centred' bureaucracy is based on rules which are developed unilaterally and reinforced by punishment (Gouldner 1954, Salaman 1980). Others, however, have argued that Gouldner's variants are patterns of rules, rather than forms of bureaucracy (Clegg and Dunkerley 1980). Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that Gouldner's analysis reflects some of the distinctions between different frames of reference on the employment relationship. In a punishment-centred bureaucracy, rules are made by one party, usually the superior, and perceived as being imposed upon the other, the subordinate, who might comply with or attempt to evade them. As a result, the punishment-centred bureaucracy is one of potential tension and conflict, as recognised in the pluralist and radical frames. On the other hand, Gouldner's representative bureaucracy features rules which, whether or not they are made jointly, are accepted and legitimated by both parties, 'buttressed by informal sentiments, mutual participation, initiation and education' (Clegg and Dunkerley 1980: 160). The representative form, then, where there may be tension but little

overt conflict, is more akin to the unitary perspective on the employment relationship.

This emphasis on rules, how they are made and how responded to, points to the centrality of discipline in any control system. In the earliest phases of industrialisation, employers grappled with the need to ensure workers arrived on time, did their jobs and created surplus value, using methods including 'the supervision of labour; fines; bells and clocks; … preachings and schoolings; the suppression of fairs and sports' (Thompson 1967: 90). Discipline, then, 'was designed to coerce workers into doing more than they would have freely chosen if they had maintained control over their hours of work and work intensity' (Clark 1994: 129). While it has, somewhat patronisingly, been argued that workers welcomed the introduction of industrial discipline because it enabled them to achieve higher earnings (Clark 1994), the capitalist employment relationship is of course founded upon 'the employer's right of command and the employee's duty of obedience' (Napier 1977: 1). Indeed, this is implicit in the implied terms of the contract of employment which require the employee, amongst other things, to cooperate with the employer, to attend and be available to work, and to obey reasonable and lawful orders (Wedderburn 1986, Middlemiss 2011). Discipline, then, is 'an apparatus that the employer uses … in order to elicit cooperation and enforce compliance' (Edwards 1979: 18) and dismissal, the ultimate disciplinary sanction, a continuation of 'the historic capitalist right to deprive workers of their livelihood' (Edwards 1979: 143). Furthermore, and although both the law on unfair dismissal and the statutory Code of Practice (ACAS 2015) introduce pluralist elements into the equation, it remains the case that disciplinary practice reflects

a unitary frame, not least because 'the right of the manager to get rid of an employee who he considers unsatisfactory is central to notions of managerial prerogative' (Clegg 1979: 90). In short, discipline is a form of 'power over', the mechanism by which 'control is practised at a day-to-day level' (Edwards and Whitston 1989: 3).

In his analysis of the development of control systems, Edwards (1979) argued that hierarchical control systems are characterised by the disciplinary power embodied in the foreman or supervisor, while technical control systems work on the basis of the fear of punishment and/or being replaced by another, equally dispensable, individual from the 'lever of capitalistic accumulation … [the] disposable industrial reserve army' of unemployed workers (Marx 1887: 646). In a bureaucracy, though, hierarchical power is institutionalised through the imposition of rules and uniformity:

> reprimand, suspension, dismissal and other punishments became fixed penalties for specific categories of offences. … Punishment, like other elements of control, became embedded in the organisational structure of the bureaucratic firm (Edwards 1979: 142).

Employers did not, however, only punish workers for limiting the creation of surplus value: they also embarked upon 'the institutionalising of positive incentives … Not only was "bad" behaviour punished, but "proper" behaviour was rewarded' (Edwards 1979: 142). Friedman (1977), too, explored developments in discipline over time: in the earliest stages of industrial capitalism, he argued, employers exercised harsh discipline, coercing workers by economic and other methods, including the law. When resistance to such methods had a negative impact on productivity, the focus shifted from 'blanket coercion' to the use of co-

option and / or conciliation, offering financial and other rewards to 'encourage worker effort and to ensure compliance with changing managerial directives' (Friedman 1977: 79). Critics of such analyses have pointed out, however, that it is somewhat simplistic to view discipline, or indeed any other control mechanism, as evolving in such a straight line: '[disciplinary] regimes are more complex than the idea of one dominant approach can recognise' (Edwards and Whitston 1989: 5). Moreover, they vary according to industrial and other contexts, since structural conditions, including social institutions and state policies, condition 'the balance between coercion … and consent' (Thompson and van den Broek 2010: 2).

Rather than seeking to identify changes over time, then, differences in disciplinary rules and processes are perhaps better explained by reference to a range of variables, including historical context, the way in which rules are developed, the procedures which are followed and the intent and meaning of sanctions. Using such criteria, Henry (1987) constructed four 'models of private justice' to distinguish between different disciplinary forms. One of these, 'celebrative-collective' discipline, reflects cooperative modes of production rather than the capitalist employment relationship, but the remaining three offer valuable insights into the nature of disciplinary processes. A 'punitive-authoritarian' approach, for instance, derives from the view that human nature is naturally 'acquisitive, selfish and competitive': hence power and control are directed towards coercing those from the 'lower orders' in the interests of private wealth and domination on the part of owners. Rules are therefore imposed from above, there are no formal procedures, decisions are taken arbitrarily and punishment is in the form of 'harsh, punitive sanctions for retribution and individual and general deterrence of

deviance' (Henry 1987: 287). In 'corrective-representative' discipline, however, formal written rules reflect the belief that organisations are built on consensus and a shared belief that individual interests are subordinate to those of the collective 'for the greater wealth and security of all' (1987: 294). In this somewhat unitary frame, then, procedures are formalised and sanctions, which progress from warnings to dismissal, are intended to 'deter and educate, to correct through voluntary self-discipline' (1987: 295). 'Accommodative-participative' discipline, on the other hand, reflects a pluralist understanding of 'order' being negotiated and therefore constantly changing. Rules, both formal and informal, written and unwritten, are jointly agreed and 'reflect the plurality of dominant group interests and behaviour standards' (1987: 302), while formal written procedures reflect the organisational hierarchy. Sanctions are, as in 'corrective-representative' discipline, progressive and punishment is designed to 'educate and rehabilitate' with an element of restitution (1987: 303).

As Henry's analysis demonstrates, disciplinary sanctions, or punishments, may be applied for a range of reasons and with differing intents: sometimes the aim is simply to punish, but in other forms of discipline, as in the criminal justice system, concepts of rehabilitation and/or deterrence also play a part. In criminological terms, deterrence, or 'permanent threat' (Bean 1981: 32), is used to prevent 'future crime' (Hampton 1984: 211) by 'modifying and controlling behaviour' (Arvey and Ivanovich 1980: 131). Deterrence might be specific, in that punishment is used to deter the offender from further misbehaviour, or general, where the threat of punishment is used to deter others from committing offences (Apel and Nagin 2011, Nagin 2012), and the severity of punishment is determined

not by the gravity of an offence but by ‘expected future effects’ (Brooks 2012: 40). There is, however, little evidence to support this approach: in particular, it has been found that ‘certainty of apprehension, not the severity of the ensuing … consequence, is the more effective deterrent’ (Nagin 2013: 199). Moreover, studies have found that, while some will weigh up the potential risks and rewards of any course of action, others are less likely to be deterred by the prospect of punishment and therefore more likely to take the risk of being apprehended (Jacobs 2010). Similarly, one study of self-reported theft from the workplace found that younger employees were ‘not as deterrable as their older peers, especially under conditions of both high certainty and high severity of punishment’ (Hollinger and Clark 1983: 398). In short, the effectiveness of punishment as a deterrent is extremely questionable.

One relatively simple, and widely adopted, approach to discipline in the employment relationship suggests that it might be either punitive or corrective in intent. The objective of punitive discipline is to instil fear of punishment and thereby ‘to act so as to deter employees from committing offences’ (Fenley 1998: 352). Rules are viewed as an end in themselves, and obedience is crucial: any failure to follow the rule is considered a deliberate act and, therefore, decisions are arbitrary (Fenley 1998). A corrective approach to workplace discipline, on the other hand, is designed to ‘foster self-discipline … [and] to correct the individual rather than punish or instil fear’ (Fenley 1998: 353). Sanctions are therefore predictable and the employee is given the opportunity to improve their conduct or performance. Moreover, the whole process is informed by the principles of natural justice, such that employees are granted the right to a fair hearing at which they

are represented, the right to put their side of the story and the right to appeal, all of which are features of the statutory Code of Practice (Fenley 1998, ACAS 2015). At risk of over-simplification, then, punitive discipline might be viewed as unitary in conception and coercive in practice, while corrective discipline reflects a pluralist understanding of the employment relationship and incorporates elements of co-option. In practice, however, it has been found that the two approaches are not mutually exclusive and that disciplinary processes which are apparently corrective may conceal punitive intent (Mellish and Collis-Squires 1976, Edwards and Whitston 1994, Fenley 1998). Indeed, Wheeler has argued that 'corrective discipline is nothing more, or less, than a sophisticated form of punishment' (1976: 241).

Rollinson et al (1997) identify two problems with the distinction between punitive and corrective discipline, however. First, and reflecting the view that there is a fine line between punitive and corrective approaches, they argue that the behaviour of managers carrying out disciplinary processes 'is unlikely to fall neatly into one or the other and may well reflect different degrees of being punitive or correctional' (1997: 285). Second, and perhaps more important, they identify three approaches which reflect different 'underlying philosophies and associated patterns of manager behaviour' (1997: 285), which they place on a continuum. At one end is rehabilitation, viewed as a 'genuinely correctional approach' (1997: 285) where discipline is used to persuade workers to change their ways, explaining what they have done wrong and how they can make amends. At the other end of the spectrum is a philosophy of retribution, characterised as 'an eye for an eye' (1997: 285); as in Henry's 'punitive-authoritarian' model (1987), guilt

is pre-judged and sanctions are imposed as a penalty for having done wrong (Rollinson et al 1997). Deterrence occupies the centre of the spectrum and is concerned with 'highlighting the adverse consequences of any future rule transgression' (1997: 285). The authors acknowledge, however, that it can be difficult to distinguish between deterrence and retribution in practice, not least because 'most discipline consists of a rather crude use of psychological conditioning' (1997: 286), seeking to change behaviour by whatever means are to hand.

Given the differing interests of employers and employees, and the 'structured antagonism' which exists in the employment relationship (Edwards 1986, 2003, 2018), any disciplinary process will incorporate punitive and coercive, rehabilitative, deterrent and retributive elements, whether or not these are visible. Discipline is not 'a minor component of work control … [but] a pervasive social technology underlying the continued existence of capital's hegemony' (Storey 1983: 131), but, at the same time, 'those subject to rule must be persuaded to legitimise, in some degree, the "rightness" of the prevailing order' (Storey 1983: 100-101). The incorporation of 'corrective' or 'rehabilitative' approaches therefore plays a central role, not only in minimising resistance (Friedman 1977, Edwards 1979), but also in co-opting employees, persuading them to justify their own submission and exploitation (Storey 1983) and encouraging self-discipline. One example of this is the extension of notions of 'professionalism' to roles, such as clerical or customer assistance work, which have not previously been considered to be 'professional' and which, indeed, do not meet established definitions of the term as incorporating autonomous expert knowledge. Here, it has been argued,

‘the mobilisation of the discursive resources of professionalism … allows for control at a distance through the construction of “appropriate” work identities and conduct’ (Fournier 1999: 281). In short, while coercive approaches continue to play a role in creating a disciplined workforce, co-option works alongside them in the form of ‘an elaborate system of bribes’ (Edwards 1979: 145) which include financial and other rewards, the prospect of advancement, pride in ones work and fulfilment through labour.

To summarise, disciplinary systems in the capitalist employment relationship function as control mechanisms which assist in the creation of surplus value. While they might differ in shape and form, in the formality or otherwise of disciplinary rules and procedures and in the intent attached to sanction or punishment, they remain the ultimate tool in the employer’s box of controls. Employee voice, too, can act as a control mechanism.

Voice and control

In the context of work and employment, voice is an ‘elastic term’ with ‘multiple meanings’ (Wilkinson et al 2014: 3, 4); in essence, however, it is concerned with the opportunity for employees ‘to have “a say”’ (Wilkinson and Fay 2011: 66). On the face of it, therefore, employee voice has the capacity to diminish employers’ ‘power over’ and increase employee’s ‘power to’, ‘power for’ and ‘power with’. Whether this is indeed the case, however, is dependent on the underlying rationale for voice, the means by which it is made available, or indeed denied, and the uses to which it is put. Crucially, too, the elasticity with which the term is used stems from substantial differences of opinion over these aspects,

differences which have resulted in the bulk of the burgeoning literature on the subject taking one of two positions dependent on theoretical frames of reference (Heery 2015) and disciplinary perspectives (Budd et al 2010, Mowbray et al 2015).

Scholars and practitioners in the fields of human resource management and organisational behaviour, then, tend to take a unitary, business case approach to voice, viewing it as essential to building an engaged workforce which behaves in 'positive and cooperative ways' (Rees et al 2013: 2780) and therefore of benefit primarily to the employer. For instance, a report commissioned by the then UK government on improving performance through engagement identified voice as one of four 'enablers of engagement', and emphasised the need for 'an effective and empowered employee voice' (MacLeod and Clarke 2009: 75). Human resource management research therefore tends to focus on matters such as the 'one best way' (Harley 2015) to improve performance through voice and engagement: that is, by co-opting the knowledge, experience and creativity of employees. Similarly, the literature of organisational behaviour tends to reflect the 'psychologisation' of management studies (Godard 2014), concentrating on the factors influencing whether employees will speak up or remain silent and thus providing guidance on how to ensure that employee knowledge is co-opted (see for instance Burris 2012, Klaas et al 2012, Brinsfield 2014). Even within this relatively narrow perspective of voice as co-option, however, it has been argued that it 'is too challenging for many managers because it is an alternative to managerial unilateralism' (Purcell 2014: 22).

In this unitary, managerialist approach, therefore, voice is something which is granted or denied from above. Employees 'speak out and challenge when appropriate' (MacLeod and Clarke 2009: 75), but the what, why, when and how of 'appropriate' is determined by the employer; voice is a control mechanism which reflects all three faces of ‘power over’ (Lukes 1974) and is primarily concerned with the co-option of employee knowledge and ideas. Critical and pluralist scholars working in an industrial relations tradition, on the other hand, argue that voice is essential in and of itself. It is a means of self-determination, 'an expression of employee's desire to co-determine work' (Barry and Wilkinson 2016: 270), an opportunity to seek to equalise power in the employment relationship and a fundamental human right. Budd, for instance, argues that in a democracy voice, defined as 'the opportunity to have meaningful input into decisions' (2004: 23), matters 'whether or not it improves economic performance' (2004: 13). Within this framework, then, voice refers to 'the ways and means through which employees attempt to have a say and potentially influence organisational affairs relating to issues that affect their work' (Wilkinson et al 2014: 5), whether those issues relate to the ways in which tasks are performed or the terms and conditions under which work is done, and whether they are individual or collective. Perhaps above all, this approach to voice acknowledges the inequality of the employment relationship and explores the ways in which it both 'gives workers cause to have a voice on their own terms, and ... creates a power imbalance that can limit the capacity of workers to engage in voice' (Barry and Wilkinson 2016: 263). In this frame of references, then, voice again features as a form of control, notably in the potential for ‘power over’, but it also has the potential for ‘power for’ and even ‘power to’. Indeed, those working within a labour process tradition may view voice, variously, as an instrument of managerial

control, an indicator of employee consent or compliance, or, both when it is used and when it is consciously withheld, a form of worker resistance (Marks and Chillas 2014).

In their analysis, Dundon et al (2004) acknowledged the range of 'meanings, purposes and practices' of voice in the workplace and identified 'four principal strands of thought' (2004: 1152) on the matter. Voice, they concluded, might first be the 'articulation of individual dissatisfaction', reflected in the use of procedures for making complaints or raising grievances. This type of voice might be construed as a form of 'power up' (Tilly 1999), whereby the individual worker has access to a means of addressing 'a specific problem or issue with management' (Dundon et al 2004: 1152) and, therefore, acting as a potential brake on employer control. Whether that potential is realised, though, remains in the hands of the employer, who might of course opt to brush aside or ignore grievances, even when there is a formal procedure for handling them. This is less likely to happen when the employee has a trade union representative (see for instance Saundry and Antcliff 2004, Saundry and Wibberley 2014), but workplace representatives, including those from trade unions, are only present in around one third of workplaces (van Wanrooy et al 2013). Similarly, the employee might of course be able to pursue the issue further by taking legal action; however, and leaving aside the emotional resources required to do this (see for instance Johnson and Johnstone 2010: 146), studies have found that, when asked specific questions about their rights at work, many either answer incorrectly or do not know the answer, even though most people believe that they know their rights (Meager et al 2001, Casebourne et al 2005, Fevre et al 2008). In short, the extent to which

the opportunity to ‘articulate individual dissatisfaction’ restricts the power of the employer varies, and is to a great extent dependent on trade union membership and organisation. In many cases, therefore, it will be extremely limited.

The second strand is that of voice as an ‘expression of collective organisation’ (Dundon et al 2004: 1152), usually through trade union membership, workplace organisation and collective bargaining. Here, collective bargaining is ‘joint regulation’, involving ‘a power relationship between organisations’ (Flanders 1968: 222): trade unions exert ‘power for’ and, at least in theory, place limits on the unilateral exercise of control by the employer (Hyman 1975). However, although around one in five working people are still members of UK trade unions, membership has fallen by over 50% since the peak of some 13 million members in 1979. Nevertheless, while only c.15% of private sector employees have their pay, or some part of it, determined by collective bargaining, the figure rises to over 57% in the public sector (ONS 2018). Hence, although collective organisation has declined rapidly over the last forty years, the scope for this form of voice to restrict the unilateral power and control of the employer remains, especially in the public sector.

In the third strand identified by Dundon et al (2004), voice is ‘a form of contribution to management decision-making … concerned with improvements in work organisation and efficiency’ (2004: 1152) as provided by upward communication processes such as attitude surveys and suggestion schemes. These mechanisms act in the interests of ‘power over’, whether in the form of domination or ‘nondecision-making’ (Lukes 1974): employers and managers can choose

whether or not to act on the information they receive, thus retaining control while co-opting employees' experience and ideas. Finally, voice in the fourth strand is 'a form of mutuality' concerned with 'delivering long-term viability for the organisation and its employees' (Dundon et al 2004: 1153). On the face of it, this form of voice limits the unilateral exercise of 'power over' and enables forms of 'power for' and 'power up'. However, perhaps the most common mechanism by which such voice operates is joint consultation, a concept which requires some further consideration.

Like voice itself, the term consultation can be construed in different ways and as having different purposes. In pseudo consultation, for instance, information is simply passed on to employees, with little comment and little attempt to seek or listen to employee views on its content; often, indeed, this form of consultation amounts to little more than the communication of a decision which has already been taken (Farnham and Pimlott 1995) and therefore reflects 'nondecision-making' (Lukes 1974). Classical consultation, on the other hand, involves taking the views of employees or their representatives into account before a decision is made; however, since there is no obligation to act on those views, decision-making, and therefore control, remains entirely in the hands of the employer. Integrative consultation, however, is a joint decision-making process not so very different from collective bargaining and, crucially, obliges both parties not only to listen to each other but also to reach a mutually acceptable decision (Farnham and Pimlott 1995). If consultation is integrative, therefore, power and control are shared, albeit only with regard to the matters upon which the employer deems it appropriate. Similarly, in a series of studies on the implementation of the

Information and Consultation of Employees Regulations 2004, Hall et al (2010) identified two distinct models of information and consultation: ‘active consulters’ provided information and consulted before reaching decisions, as in classical and integrative consultation, whereas ‘communicators’ used pseudo consultation to gauge employee reactions to decisions which had already been made. In both models, crucially, ‘managements … had almost complete freedom to design the arrangements’ (2010: 60).

Notwithstanding the different definitions of, and perspectives on, voice, and leaving aside the different mechanisms by which it might be made available, it remains the case that ‘employers are central to voice, set the agenda and develop and maintain the culture and values that surround voice’ (Holland 2014: 135). Hence, for instance, the most recent Workplace Employment Relations Study found, not only that just 7% of workplaces had a joint consultative committee but also that managers had, since the previous study in 2004, increased their control over the agenda for such committees (van Wanrooy et al 2013). While most forms of voice appear to have the potential to restrict employer control, this is rarely the case in fact, and indeed some forms of voice, notably those which ‘contribute to management decision-making’ and express ‘mutuality’ (Dundon et al 2004), are more concerned with co-opting employee knowledge than relinquishing control. In the unequal employment relationship, voice offers little in the way of equalisation, despite the continued relevance of the view that ‘the paradox, whose truth managements have found it so difficult to accept, is that they can only regain control by sharing it’ (Flanders 1967: 172).

Chapter summary

This chapter has explored the nature of control in the employment relationship, starting with a discussion of common control systems, particularly those termed hierarchical and bureaucratic (Edwards 1979). It has then focused on discipline as a central control mechanism, examining the different ways in which disciplinary processes might be formulated and used and the different meanings which might be attached to disciplinary sanctions and punishment. Finally, it has examined the use of employee voice as a hybrid of control, co-option and, in rare cases, the restriction of unfettered employer power, concluding that, although voice appears to offer the potential for ‘power to’, ‘power with’ and even ‘power up’, this is rarely the case in practice. The next chapter will turn specifically to the military employment relationship.

3. Features of the military employment relationship

This chapter will explore the nature of the military employment relationship, focusing on the ways in which it is regulated and contested (Clegg 1979, Williams and Adam-Smith 2010). Since the subject has not been considered before, it is not a traditional literature review; instead, it draws upon both literature and documentary sources, opening with an overview of the available material. The chapter then explores who joins the armed forces and the processes they go through in order to do so, before examining what is known about key features of the military employment relationship, notably the questions of rules, discipline, voice and resistance. In line with critical realist retroduction (see chapter four), this part of the chapter incorporates a substantial amount of historical material, looking to the past in order to understand the present (Cox and Hassard 2007, Mutch 2014). It also draws some tentative conclusions about the nature and modes of control in the military employment relationship and proposes a typology of military-bureaucratic control.

The chapter concludes, first, that there are clear lines of continuity in the military employment relationship from the earliest years of the standing armed forces until the recent past. Second, however, it suggests that there are also close parallels to be drawn between the civilian and military employment relationships, but that the two are also distinct in a number of regards. In particular, while the military employment relationship of the past had much in common with that in civilian employment, the two appear to have diverged in more recent times, many aspects of the military employment relationship changing little, if at all. Finally, the chapter proposes that standard typologies of control in the workplace appear not

to reflect military employment, and suggests instead a framework of military-bureaucratic control.

Searching for the military employment relationship

With few clues in the literature of industrial relations, the first and most obvious field of study in which to look for clues about the military employment relationship was the sociology of work and employment. However, the relationship between mainstream sociologists and military sociology is fraught; hence the armed forces have been neglected by most mainstream sociologists (Matthewman 2012, Heinecken 2014, 2015), while military sociology pays scant attention to military work and indeed has little to say about personnel who are not officers. Recent work by mainstream sociologists does, however, cast a little light on some aspects of the military employment relationship. This includes participant studies of infantry training and operations (Hockey 1986, 2016), insider ethnographies such as those produced by Kirke (2009, 2010), and material on embodied practices (Hockey 2009), military identities (see for instance Woodward et al 2007, Thornborrow and Brown 2009, Woodward and Jenkings 2011) and military masculinities (see for instance Woodward 1998, Woodward 2000, Higate 2003, Sasson-Levy 2003b, Woodward and Winter 2004, Silva 2008, Winslow 2010, Belkin 2012, Hale 2012). Elsewhere in the social sciences, military service has been examined in terms of its impact on the life course (see for example MacLean and Elder 2007, Wilmoth and London 2013), while social geographers have brought new insights into the ways in which the armed forces ‘create spaces, places, environments and landscapes with reference to a distinct moral order’ (Woodward 2004: 3), as well as exploring military recruitment (Woodward 2000, Tannock et al 2013) and the return to civilian life (Herman and Yarwood 2014).

In similar vein, contemporary social expectations of gender equality, accompanied by the somewhat belated acknowledgement of the need for change in the military, have spawned a wealth of literature on women in the armed forces (see for example Sasson-Levy 2003a, Nuciari 2007, Wadham 2013). The debates around extending opportunities for women into all military trades and occupations have received a wide academic airing (see for instance Cohn 2000, Nuciari 2003, Seifert 2003, Eulriet 2012), while Woodward and Winter (2006) have explored the limits to gender equality imposed by British military culture. Other aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion have also been addressed: Dandeker and Mason (2001, 2003) and Ishaq and Hussain (2002) have examined the participation of black and ethnic minority communities in the British armed forces, while Hussain and Ishaq (2003) and Mason and Dandeker (2009) have explored some of the obstacles to full equality on the basis of race and ethnicity. Attempts have been made, too, to analyse and contextualise the inclusion of gay men, lesbians and bisexual people in the armed forces in Britain and elsewhere (Belkin and Evans 2000, Dandeker 2003, Segal 2003).

There is, then, a growing body of literature exploring the individual in the armed forces; however, the experience of work and employment is not a solitary but a collective one. This is particularly the case in the armed forces, where cooperation is crucial not only to front line activities but also in the performance of day-to-day routines, and where there are constant reminders of the importance of teamwork and *esprit de corps*. It therefore proved necessary to go beyond the social sciences in search of material which might throw light on the collective

aspects of the military employment relationship, with the next obvious stopping points being social history and labour history. With some notable recent exceptions, however, scholars in these fields have tended, as with mainstream sociologists, to shun the armed forces. The exceptions include the work of Way (2000, 2003) on the armies of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), and his emphasis on 'the commonality of soldiers as paid military labour' (2003: 457); a collected volume exploring 'fighting for a living' across Europe and beyond over some five centuries (Zürcher 2013) and Mansfield's (2016) masterly exploration of 'class conflict' in the nineteenth century British army. Military history, and specifically the history of armies as opposed to the history of war (Tatum 2007), has, too, paid little attention to the people who do the fighting, focusing in the main on those who lead them. However, scholarly work bridging the divide between social history and military history has examined the mutinies in the army during World War I (Gill and Dallas 1975, Dallas and Gill 1985) and in the Royal Navy at Invergordon in 1931 (Carew 1979, 1981). Beyond these examples, however, the literature either does not exist or is largely descriptive and uncritically unitary.

Thanks to concepts of open government, and indeed to the existence of the internet, a number of key documents relating to the military employment relationship are now in the public domain in some shape or form, with information on procedural matters particularly accessible. Most of the rules and procedures of military discipline are contained in the Armed Forces Act 2006, earlier iterations of which provide context and the opportunity to track changes over time. In connection with this, the three-volume Manual of Service Law (MSL 2014, MSL

2017a, 2017b), which guides decision-makers, is available online, together with various related forms and leaflets for serving personnel, and statistics from the courts martial are published on the Ministry of Defence website (MOD 2019). However, further rules and procedures, some of them relating to disciplinary matters, are contained in Queen's Regulations, which are not normally published; extracts can be found online, but these are often not current and may not have been uploaded through official routes. On the other hand, the military grievance procedure, known as the Service Complaints procedure, is freely available (MOD 2016b), as is a volume of guidance for those considering complaints (MOD 2016c), forms and information for personnel and the reports and other material produced by the Service Complaints Ombudsman.

Turning to substantive matters, the available documentation is more limited but nevertheless of value in developing an understanding of the military employment relationship. Military personnel statistics are published at regular intervals, as are diversity statistics, and the results of the annual Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey are made available both in the form of a comprehensive summary and as full statistical tables (AFCAS 2018a, 2018b). In addition, each of the three arms of the service has its own website, all of which contain comprehensive information, although aimed primarily at stimulating recruitment: the emphasis, therefore, is on how to join and the training process, but there is also some information about levels of pay, the rank structure, promotion and service life in general. Finally, the annual reports of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body (AFPRB 2018) flesh out the details of military pay and how it is determined.

To summarise, material on the military employment relationship is rather limited and spread over a wide range of primary and secondary sources. What follows, then, is an attempt to synthesise this material and delineate key features of the military employment relationship.

Who are military personnel?

Britain has had a standing Royal Navy since 1660 and a standing army since 1707. In response to technological change, air arms were established in both services during World War I, followed by the formation of a distinct and separate Royal Air Force in 1918 (Cooper 1987). One distinguishing feature of military service is that it has not always been carried out voluntarily. Officially, Britain has only used conscription on two occasions: in World War I, when it was introduced in 1916 and abandoned after the armistice, and throughout World War II, when male conscription was reintroduced on 3 September 1939. From 1941, women between the ages of twenty and thirty also became liable to be called up, bringing 125,000 women, in addition to the 430,000 who volunteered, into military work (Campbell 1993, Crang 2008). At the end of World War II, male conscription was retained, with National Service continuing until 1960, and the last conscripts completing their service in 1962-63 (Shindler 2012). This is not to say, however, that all members of the armed forces before 1916 were volunteers; indeed, both services had relied on conscription to a greater or lesser extent for much of their existence, and especially in wartime. For the British Army, conscription was common until outlawed in 1789, although the practice of handing over men who had been pardoned following a death sentence continued until 1814 (Holmes 2011). In the navy, meanwhile, enforced enlistment, known as impressment

because of the ‘imprest’, or advance of pay, received by the conscript, came to an end in 1853, when continuous service replaced the practice of taking on sailors for a specific voyage on a particular ship (Carew 1981). While conscription lasted, it was viewed by the authorities as preferable to other methods of populating the armed forces: indeed, proposals for a voluntary register of seamen who could be called into the navy were considered an affront to British concepts of liberty (Brunsman 2013). In an exquisite contradiction, therefore, the irony of which was not lost on some contemporaries, ‘British freedom … was defended in times of war by a navy totally dependent on what many regarded as “legalised slavery”’ (Adkins and Adkins 2008).

The average Briton might not, however, have viewed impressment as 'legalised slavery', since the situation of the industrial working class was not much better, regulated as it was by a series of laws designed to punish ‘insubordinate or runaway workers’ (Hay 2004: 82). The Master and Servant Acts criminalised a range of work-related offences including leaving a job before the expiry of the contract, being absent without permission, negligence in the performance of work and other misbehaviours; punishments included imprisonment with hard labour (Frank 2010). By 1875, when these laws were repealed, some 10,000 people were being prosecuted every year (Hunt 1981, Hendy 1993). In 1845, Engels wrote that the gates of the new factories signified the end of ‘all freedom in law and in fact’ (1982: 205), but, hated though the press gangs were (Thompson 1980), it is by no means certain that work in the new industries was a better option than military service. Indeed, before continuous service was introduced, men moved between civilian employment and the military (Way 2000, Mansfield

2016), basing their decisions not only on the activities of the naval press gangs or army recruiters, but also on the state of the local economy. Essentially, neither civilian employees nor military personnel were free: both were bound not only by economic imperative but also by law, and all were simply trying to make a living.

Today, of course, all military personnel are volunteers. Potential recruits to the 'ordinary' (non-officer) ranks must hold British, Irish or Commonwealth citizenship (MOD 2013); the requirement to have lived in the UK for five years was progressively lifted and all three services now accept direct applications from Commonwealth citizens aged eighteen or over (MOD 2018a). Applicants must be below the relevant age limit, currently 36 years for the Royal Navy (RN 2019b) and 35 for the British Army (Army 2019). There is also a long list of disabilities, health and related conditions, including diabetes, severe acne, depression and HIV infection, which preclude entry to any of the armed services (see for instance RAF 2017). These requirements aside, there are no restrictions on who can apply: the ban on gay men, lesbians and bisexual people was lifted in January 2000 and transgender applicants are welcomed, while the last three decades have seen measures taken to improve racial equality (Ball 2011). Similarly, differential treatment for women has been eroded such that they now serve on both surface ships and submarines in the Royal Navy and, following a decision in 2016, are now eligible to serve in front line 'ground close combat' roles in the British Army and Royal Marines (MOD 2016a); indeed, the first woman to pass the necessary training to command infantry troops did so during the final stages of work on this study (Nicholls 2019). However, it remains the case that the majority of those who opt for military service are young white men, and indeed

there is evidence of specific attempts to target young people from working class backgrounds (Morris 2017). Just 10.5% of all regular personnel are women, while 7.6% are from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic (BAME) groups and only 2.6% of officers are BAME. The minimum age for joining any of the three armed services is sixteen; almost a quarter of all serving personnel are aged under 25 and the average age of all regular forces is 31 (MOD 2018c). Around 2,000 under-eighteens join up each year, despite pressure from a number of individuals and organisations, and an Ipsos Mori poll finding that the general public believe that the minimum age for enlistment should be eighteen (Gee and Taylor 2016). Indeed, Britain is the only member of NATO still recruiting under-eighteens (CSI 2016).

Potential recruits who meet all the eligibility requirements and pass security screening still have a number of steps to complete, including health, fitness and psychometric tests and formal interviews, before finally securing a place (RN 2019d). Throughout these processes, the same standards are required of all recruits, regardless of the role they wish to take up. On the face of it, the requirements for potential military personnel might be considered reasonable, and indeed they are not so different from those made by many civilian employers. Similarly, too, the armed forces' demands might be held to be justified in light of the tasks to be undertaken, and this is certainly the case in terms of requiring peak physical fitness for front line troops, or for those serving in hostile environments such as submarines. However, the requirements are applied across the board, regardless of the role sought by the applicant: the standard of fitness required of a cook or musician, for instance, is the same as that for the

more physical roles. This is partly because individuals in any role might be required to take on other tasks, including support for armed operations; musicians in the Royal Marines, for instance, also provide medical and logistics support to their commando colleagues (RM 2019). Equally, though, the blanket application of such rigorous standards might be viewed as a pointing to an insistence not only on uniformity but also on control.

Applicants hoping to join the armed forces as an officer are required to meet broadly the same nationality, residency, medical and fitness standards as the other ranks. The minimum age is, however, eighteen and the minimum educational requirements higher, being equivalent to A Level standard; in fact, up to 80% of officer cadets in the army are graduates (Army 2017) and some naval and Royal Air Force officer roles require a relevant vocational degree (see for instance RN 2019a). Similarly, the selection process is more demanding and incorporates a wider range of physical, intellectual and practical tests, as well as a selection board and individual interview (Army 2019b, RN 2019c).

Janowitz (1960) suggested that the basis for military leadership, at least in the United States, had moved from 'ascription', and particularly social position, to 'achievement', but the evidence for this in Britain is only partial. Before the abolition of the purchase system in 1870, many army officers held their positions on the basis of wealth, and even as late as the 1930s the overwhelming majority came from 'propertied and professional backgrounds' (Otley 1970: 231). Moreover, as recently as 1980 some 80% of British Army officers were privately educated (Salaman and Thompson 1978, Macdonald 1980), and the proportion

of officers who join the military from private schools continues to exceed the 10% of the population who are educated in this way (Hansard 2013, Massie 2013). Responses to Freedom of Information requests have confirmed that the army, in particular, still depends on private schools to populate the officer corps: one such request dated 2 June 2017 indicated that at least 40% of those who entered the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst between 2012 and 2016 had attended independent schools (MOD FOI 2017), while another has revealed that almost half (49%) of those entering Sandhurst in 2019 were also educated privately (Beale 2019). In the navy, however, the picture is very different: between 2007 and 2016 the proportion of naval officers who were recorded as having received their education privately was never much above one quarter (MOD FOI 2017). Similarly, a Freedom of Information request has shown that two thirds (64%) of those entering the Royal Navy College, Dartmouth, in 2019 were not privately educated (Beale 2019). At one time, owning a ship, or acting on behalf of the owner, conferred the status of captain, but with the establishment of a standing Royal Navy and the administrative skills of Samuel Pepys came rules and procedures for promotion. In particular, it was never possible to purchase a naval commission and promotion has always been based at least partly on merit, qualifications and length of service, reflecting an emphasis on the technical skills required to command a ship in addition to the leadership and other personal qualities considered necessary to command men in the army (Barnett 1967, Rodger 2004, Hechter et al 2016). This is not, however, to suggest that there were no class divisions in the navy: promotion depended on being able to read and write and therefore, in the era before universal free education, was only open to the few.

Today, direct entry is not the only route to becoming an officer: it is possible in any of the three services to be promoted from the ranks. In the army, for instance, soldiers may be selected for promotion to officer, and any sergeant with nine years' service after their twenty first birthday can apply for a 'late entry' commission. Few statistics are available, but between 1999 and 2009 the proportion of late entry officers in the army increased from 25% to 33% (Hansard 2009). The Royal Navy's own publications suggest that around 20% of naval officers come from the ranks (RN 2017c), while around one third of Royal Air Force officer cadets have already served in the ranks (Beale 2019). It remains the case, however, that the military hierarchy, at least in the British Army, tends to reflect the civilian class structure.

Rules

The rules governing the military employment relationship are to be found in the law, in Queen's Regulations and in voluminous procedural and other manuals, but with minor exceptions only the first of these is publicly available. British military law was divorced from the civilian codes in 1689 and has remained separate ever since (Oram 2003, Gale 2008), reflecting the view that 'the Armed Forces are distinct from other parts of society' (SCAFB 2006a: para. 14). This branch of the law is founded upon a 'certainty of process and basic suppositions' (Forster 2012: 283), chief amongst which is the view that the nature of military service, the readiness to kill or be killed, requires absolute self-discipline and obedience. It has been proposed, therefore, that its purpose is, basically, 'to ensure that the commander's will is obeyed' (Rubin 2005: 18), suggesting that

power in the military employment relationship rests with both the institution and the individual leader.

The primary focus of military law is front line effectiveness, and in particular the perceived need to place restrictions on personnel to ensure readiness (Oakes 2000); it therefore operates continuously, regardless of whether personnel are on operations, or even whether they are on duty, since, it is argued, ‘the military context is also important in non-operational environments’ (SCAFB 2006a: para.19). Indeed, it has been suggested that ‘the legal system remains deferential to the military's core function of combat, perhaps unduly so’ (Waters 2008: 31), such that it appears to be widely accepted, with minimal supporting evidence, that a failure to maintain discipline in a non-deployed unit will lead to a lack of discipline on the front line (Rowe 2006). This has been termed 'the military chaos fallacy':

> the Commander's right to absolute power over his troops in wartime must extend to the peacetime environment or he will lose his authority and unit effectiveness will later disintegrate in the face of the enemy (Joyce 1998: 23).

In turn, this suggests that there is potential for conflict in the military employment relationship between the rules and the ‘absolute power’ vested in the person of the commanding officer. Similarly, there is something of a contradiction in the continuous operation of a single legal system. On the one hand, it is a way of ensuring that everybody knows the rules and the consequences of breaking them, something which is considered equally important in civilian and military employment (SCAFB 2006a, ACAS 2015). On the other, however, members of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, civilians who are trained at naval establishments and who hold ranks parallel to those of the navy, are ‘governed by a mixture of

Merchant Navy, Civil Service and Naval discipline regulations' (RFA 2019). In particular, RFA personnel can be brought under military discipline during operations, suggesting not only that it is possible for an individual to work under two different systems without confusion or lack of clarity but also that this is acknowledged by the military authorities.

There are flaws, then, in the case for a separate and distinct system of military law, but apparently little appetite for change. Indeed, the armed forces are presented as being under siege, military law as under threat from 'civilianisation', 'juridification', 'democratisation' and 'encirclement' (Rubin 2002, Tugendhat and Croft 2013), and the military itself as 'culturally subverted' (Frost 2002). Changes imposed from outside have, it is suggested, threatened the ability of the armed forces to carry out their functions, partly because of a 'clear antipathy for British military justice' on the part of the European Court of Human Rights (Richards 2008: 194). In a jaw-dropping introduction to a pamphlet on the subject, an Appeal Court judge argues that

> 'Judicial creep' (the authors have too much courtesy to add an 's') threatens the ability of the armed forces to exercise that essence of professional military skill ... Judicial intervention … breaks the necessary chain of command between private and commander-in-chief and reduces the necessary space for a commander's judgement (Moses 2013: 7)

Again, then, the emphasis is on the chain of command, as reflected by the person of the commander, and the perception is of an erosion of the power vested in that individual. In reality, of course, 'civilianisation' is nothing new (Waters 2008), but the pace of it has increased since the 1960s, pointing to the conclusion that 'military law and civilian law are intersecting on a wider front … and at greater frequency than hitherto' (Rubin 2002: 36-37). With regard to the military

employment relationship, this intersection is visible in the belated extension of equality law to the armed forces (Arnull 1995, Ball 2011), in cases which have redefined crown and combat immunity (Lyon 1997a, Lyon 1997b, Lyon 1999, Tugendhat and Croft 2013) and in changes to court martial procedures (Lyon 1998, Oakes 2000, Lyon 2005, Taylor 2005a, Taylor 2005b). Given that many of these developments came about as a result of legal challenges by serving and former members of the armed forces, however, they are perhaps evidence not so much of outside interference as of the fact that 'service personnel are no longer willing to accept restrictions on their human rights to the extent that was hitherto the case' (Forster 2012: 296).

Military law also underpins the values of a 'unique moral community' (Rubin 2005), and the detailed statements of values and standards which exist for each of the three services are extremely demanding. Personnel in the army, for example, are required to demonstrate the values of selfless commitment, moral and physical courage, discipline, integrity, loyalty and respect for others, including being 'ready to uphold the rights of others before claiming their own' (Army 2008: para. 16). The armed forces therefore set the bar very high, while the military disciplinary processes seek to ensure that it is not lowered.

Discipline and punishment

The history of the British armed forces is one of tight discipline and harsh punishments. The literature is replete with lurid tales of flogging (Underwood et al 2018), branding and other forms of corporal punishment and 'casual violence' (Rodger 2004: 321), of miscreants being put in irons and of rations being stopped (Rodger 2004, Holmes 2011); moreover, it has been asserted that there was 'little or no rank and file resentment against severe punishment' (Clayton 2006: 86). Generous use was made, too, of capital punishment for offences ranging from disobedience to treason and, particularly in the navy, for 'sodomy', a conflation of consensual homosexual sex, male rape, child sexual abuse and bestiality (Gilbert 1976, Rodger 1986, Clayton 2006). As recently as World War I, nearly 350 British soldiers and officers were executed for offences including 'cowardice', quitting their posts, 'casting away arms' and desertion, although, recognising that their treatment had been 'highly irregular, even by the harsh standards prevailing at the time' (Howard 1998: 51), they were pardoned in 2006 (Babington 1993, Peifer 2007). The number of capital offences gradually reduced through the twentieth century, and there were no military executions after 1945, but capital punishment for armed forces personnel remained on the statute book until the passage of an amendment to the Human Rights Act in 2004.

Historically, military punishments were very similar to those available to the civilian criminal courts of the same era (Brereton 1986, Gilmour 1992). For instance, an in-depth study of a naval fleet between 1784 and 1812 concluded that the punishments 'were sanguinary indications of the draconian nature of the dominant penal theory of the eighteenth century' (Byrn 1989: 65). Hence it has

been argued with reference to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the law, both criminal and military, served as ‘a highly effective apparatus of social control’ (Gilmour 1992: 170). However, many sentences were reduced, death warrants commuted and criminals pardoned (Burroughs 1985, Rodger 2004): for instance, an analysis of 254 eighteenth century courts martial for desertion shows that, although 53 men were sentenced to death, only around a dozen of these were actually executed (Rodger 1986). This, then, suggests that disciplinary sanctions were designed as much to deter as to punish. Further evidence of the perceived need to discourage others from offending is to be found in both the military and civilian practices of public hangings and the ‘exemplary’ administration of corporal punishments in front of the miscreant’s peers (Manning 2007 and see Rodger 1986, 1997, 2004, Clayton 2006, Adkins and Adkins 2008, Holmes 2011). Similarly, a study of World War II court martial outcomes in one particular theatre found that sentences were more severe than elsewhere because, in the face of low morale and a perceived lack of discipline amongst the troops stationed there, the decision-makers wanted to ‘make examples and ensure the visibility of discipline rather than justice’ (Connelly and Miller 2004: 241). In short, military punishments were designed ‘to terrify the scoundrel’ (Byrn 1989: 65).

Today, too, military discipline is regarded as ‘the most stringent form of professional discipline’ (Rowe 2006: 63), and, as in the past, military law is based on punishment as deterrence, reflecting the view that some breaches of discipline ‘are aggravated by the corrosive effect on discipline and morale’ (Blackett 2009: 11). Military law, therefore, is designed to ‘mould … behaviour to the specific

requirements of military service' (Cathcart 2013: 237), regardless of the evidence that deterrence is not necessarily effective (Jacobs 2010, Nagin 2012, 2013). Indeed, historical evidence supports the view that members of the armed forces, knowing and understanding the rules, might opt for punishment as the lesser of two evils: for instance, some soldiers in World War II chose to desert, despite the near certainty of capture, because they preferred the certainty of detention and even penal servitude to the extreme risk of serving on the front line (Connelly and Miller 2004). Today, too, it is possible that some personnel commit offences with a view to being discharged: one study carried out for the MOD noted frequent comments about the use of absence without leave as 'an indirect exit strategy, ... a means of exiting Service earlier than if they employed the regular process of leaving' (Edgar et al 2005a: 8), even though this might mean not only dismissal but also, potentially, a period of detention beforehand. Similarly, there were reports of a breakdown in discipline on a naval submarine in the autumn of 2017, as a result of which some 10% of the vessel's crew were dismissed or otherwise disciplined for offences including illicit drug use (Independent 2017). This prompted the response on social media that 'those wishing to leave anyway presumably see it [a positive drugs test] as a fast-track exit route' (Rum Ration 2017). The insistence on deterrence, therefore, further indicates that the military employment relationship is regulated by control and enforced uniformity, supplemented by 'permanent threat' (Bean 1981: 32). However, some of the evidence suggests that the relationship is also contested, not least by those who, knowing the game, use the rules to their own advantage.

The first code of military discipline dates back to the twelfth century, but systematic attempts to standardise rules, standards and punishments date from the seventeenth century (Clayton 2006, MOD 2014). The three services maintained their own, albeit similar, disciplinary codes throughout the twentieth century, but harmonisation was mooted as early as the 1960s and finally came about in the shape of the Armed Forces Act 2006, which came into force in 2009 and is the single body of rules and procedures for all military personnel. The Act performs two functions. First, it incorporates all UK criminal law, applying it to British military personnel wherever they are serving, enabling issues to be dealt with regardless of where they arise and affording personnel the protections, and possibly milder punishments, of the home criminal code (Rubin 2005). Second, the Act defines specific 'service disciplinary offences' which have no parallels in the civilian criminal code but 'reflect the particular circumstances of Service life and operations' (Taylor 2005b: 12). Such offences include 'conduct prejudicial to good order', assisting the enemy, 'malingering', going absent without leave and desertion: the latter is defined as going absent with no intention of returning, and can result in a life sentence. The Act also details the formal processes by which offences are investigated and the procedures under which they are dealt with.

Disciplinary procedures

One of the founding principles of military law is the belief that, as the armed forces are separate from the rest of society, so military offences should be tried by military personnel (Blackett 2009). This is the case not only in summary hearings and courts martial, the two disciplinary procedures detailed in the Armed Forces Act 2006, but also in the third and fourth such procedures, known as major and

minor administrative action. Throughout these procedures, the commanding officer has wide powers designed to ensure, as a former chief of the defence staff put it, that 'the accused, and indeed his peer group and the whole company … perceives that the Commanding Officer has control' (SCAFB 2006b Q321 Ev 55). Hence, it is argued, these most senior officers must be able to deal with indiscipline 'quickly, proportionately and fairly' (Blackett 2009: 59):

Disciplinary procedures in each of the three armed forces are, since the Armed Forces Act came into force in 2009, identical. The sole exception is major administrative action: this remains the domain of each service (MOD 2008) and is therefore something of a closed book, although publicly available documents do provide some details. In the British Army, major administrative action is used to address 'major professional and personal failings that fall short of the stated standards of behaviour or performance' (Army nd: 67-D-1) and can result in a reduction in rank or discharge from the service. In the Royal Navy, such action may be taken alone or 'in conjunction with disciplinary investigation and action' (RN 2017a: para. 2029) and, again, may result in discharge, reassignment or other measures. Crucially, these decisions are within the powers of the commanding officer, again highlighting the power vested in that individual.

Minor administrative action, on the other hand, is an open, formal system 'quite separate from the military disciplinary system' (Taylor 2005a: 12) and designed to address 'personal or professional failings or minor indiscipline … where it is clear that criminal and/or disciplinary measures are not necessary, appropriate or desirable' (RN 2017a: para. 2012). Within this system, all serving personnel, with

the sole exception of those in the lowest rank, can order ‘minor sanctions’ against subordinates; detailed rules are laid down by each commanding officer, but these sanctions might be additional parades, musters and/or drills, extra duties, up to twelve hours’ extra work, or ‘interviews’ during which the offender is briefed on his or her shortcomings (RN 2017a: para. 2020). To control against arbitrary action, sanctions must be endorsed by a designated reviewing officer, and the recipient can request a formal review at which both the decision and the sanction can be contested (RN 2017a: para 2022); beyond this, individuals who feel they have been wronged can pursue the matter through the grievance procedure, the subject of further discussion below.

The minor administrative system is presented as a corrective process where sanctions are intended simply to ‘rectify minor professional and personal failings’ (RN 2017a: para 2014). Aspects of it, however, are more akin to the ‘punitive-authoritarian’ approach identified by Henry (1987), or the retributive model proposed by Rollinson et al (1997): although there is a relatively formal procedure to be followed, the process involves arbitrary decision-making on the part of any moderately senior individual, albeit the sanction must be endorsed and can be reviewed. Similarly, the range of potential sanctions include what might be termed counselling, but also forms which can only be described as punitive and, moreover, as transparently retributive and/or deterrent in intent. As discussed in chapter two, no disciplinary system can be purely punitive or corrective, but minor administrative action, it appears, is more punitive than not.

Formal military disciplinary proceedings, as constituted under the Armed Forces Act 2006, take place in summary hearings and the court martial. Summary hearings resemble the civilian magistrates' court (Blackett 2009) and are presided over by the relevant commanding officer, who hears charges against all ordinary ranks and many officers, handles most disciplinary and many criminal matters and can hand down sentences of up to 28 days' detention in the Military Corrective Training Centre, Colchester, or up to 90 days with prior approval (AFA 2006, MSL 2017a). In effect, therefore, the commanding officer is boss, judge and jury (Savage and Cumner 1999). Certain serious disciplinary and criminal matters are, however, outside the scope of the summary hearing system and must be heard by the court martial. In addition, any individual facing a summary hearing can, once charged, elect for trial by court martial (MSL 2017a).

The rules and procedures relating to courts martial have been substantially amended since the mid-1990s, not least following European Court of Human Rights judgements which found 'structural defects' in the system (Lyon 1998). As a result, and in connection with the harmonisation of service law, there is now a single, standing court martial, equating to a crown court, which hears all serious disciplinary and criminal cases as well as those where the accused has opted for trial. The sentencing powers of the court martial for criminal cases are the same as those of the crown court, while military offences carry the sentences stipulated in the Armed Forces Act 2006, up to and including life imprisonment. One key distinction between the court martial and the civilian court, however, is in the person of the decision-makers: in the crown court, cases are heard by a judge and a jury of the accused's peers, but in the court martial both roles are fulfilled

by a panel of officers (Rubin 2005, Blackett 2009, MSL 2017b). Although individuals in the highest non-commissioned rank now also sit on court martial panels, it remains the case that the majority of military personnel are tried by those who are above them in rank, whose orders they have to follow and to whom they are required to defer (Rubin 2005). Moreover, and in accordance with the doctrine of deterrence which, as noted above, permeates all military disciplinary matters (JAG 2018: para. 2.7), military sentences tend to be harsher than those handed down for similar offences in the civilian courts (Blackett 2009).

All the military disciplinary procedures are, therefore, punitive: although there are formal rules and written procedures, at least for summary hearings and the court martial, they closely reflect Henry's conception of 'punitive-authoritarian' discipline (1987), not least in their coercive intent towards those on the receiving end and the use of punishment for both retribution and deterrence. Similarly, using the formulation proposed by Rollinson et al (1997), there is little evidence of rehabilitation in the formal procedures, but plenty for the processes being both retributive and deterrent in intent. Discipline, then, is a key element in the control exerted by the military hierarchy.

The military disciplinary processes also fall short when viewed through the civilian lens of procedural justice, the perception that a decision-making process is fair (Baldwin 2006). In the interests of fairness, and in order to avert a potential claim for unfair dismissal, a civilian employer handling a disciplinary matter should, for instance, give an employee the opportunity to state his or her case, allow the employee to be accompanied at formal hearings and ensure the right to appeal

against any formal sanction (ACAS 2015). In contrast, there is no representation in the military minor administrative action process, and indeed no opportunity for the individual to state his or her case except by requesting a formal review which, it appears, may be carried out by the reviewing officer who endorsed the sanction in the first place (MOD 2008). Personnel facing the court martial are entitled to full legal representation, as are those appealing the result of a summary hearing to the Summary Appeal Court. However, the individual undergoing summary discipline, which could result in an order of detention, a fine or other sanctions (AFA 2006: part 6), does so largely alone: there is no representation at the hearing itself, although the individual is permitted to seek legal advice in advance and has the right both to give evidence and to call and question witnesses. There is also the option of an 'assisting officer', normally an officer or senior rank, who can advise and help with paperwork, but serious concerns have been expressed with regard to this role. In particular, assisting officers usually work in the same chain of command as the accused, and therefore have to defer to the same commanding officer as presides over the hearing; they might therefore struggle to be impartial. In addition, concerns have also been raised regarding the criteria by which assisting officers are selected, the training they receive and indeed whether they have any real interest in carrying out the role (SCC 2010, SCC 2011, SCC 2012, McLeod 2013). In many respects, then, the role of assisting officer is similar to that of the 'companion' in a civilian disciplinary hearing: that is, they are unlikely to serve as anything more than 'a source of moral support and a safeguard in the event of … malpractice' (Saundry et al 2011: 202-203).

There is, moreover, substantial scope for discretion throughout the disciplinary processes. Just as the individual facing a summary hearing has the right to elect for trial by court martial, so the commanding officer has some discretion over whether a case should be heard through the summary process or referred to the court martial. Such decisions take into account 'the seriousness and the complexity of the case and whether … [the commanding officer's] powers of punishment are likely to be adequate' (MSL 2017a: 1-6-26 para. 82), thus suggesting an element of retributive and even authoritarian prejudgement (Henry 1987, Rollinson et al 1997). In addition, the boundary between minor administrative action and formal disciplinary action is somewhat blurred, and it is left to the commanding officer to decide which is more appropriate in any circumstance (RN 2017a: para. 2017). Although some offences can only be dealt with by the court martial, and some must always be treated as formal disciplinary matters, others can therefore be dealt with as the commanding officer sees fit. For instance, a short period of absence without leave can be treated as a minor administrative matter, a summary offence or a court martial offence punishable by up to two years' imprisonment and/or discharge from the service. Similarly, misconduct towards a superior officer and disobeying lawful commands, both potentially serious charges, can be treated as minor administrative matters if there is no violence involved, if the incident is judged to be 'minor' and if there are mitigating factors (RN 2017a: para. 2028); again, this suggests some pre-judgement of the outcome of any hearing. There is also some discretion as to whether 'civilian' criminal offences committed by military personnel, particularly those which take place away from the military estate, are handled by the military or civilian courts (Blackett 2009, MSL 2017a) and, furthermore, the range of sanctions in all the procedures, along with the ability to impose more than one

punishment for an offence, permits yet more discretion, even within the scope of extensive rules and guidance.

Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the military disciplinary system has been criticised from within the armed forces. The most recent example of this is to be found in the written evidence given by a Major MacLeod of the Royal Signals to the House of Commons Defence Committee: calling for a ‘root and branch overhaul’ of the administrative action regime, he proposed that new procedures should be drawn up in consultation with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), the tripartite body which develops standards and promotes good practice in civilian employment. His evidence emphasised that:

> The Army’s internal sanctions regime stands alone in the UK in granting an employer vast powers of sanction, suspension and dismissal, without independent oversight, or checks and balances … [It] confers extensive powers to the chain of command: there are no safeguards ... to prevent dishonest commanders from pursuing vendettas against those over whom they exercise power (McLeod 2013: para 4B, 5)

Writing before either Britain or the United States had brought an end to conscription, Janowitz, himself a former 'draftee', argued that ‘coordination … cannot be guaranteed simply by authoritarian discipline’ (1960: 41), predicting that technological change in warfare would create more need for soldiers to take the initiative. Therefore, he proposed, military discipline would have to shift ‘from discipline based on *domination* to that involving *manipulation*’, from 'rigid discipline' to ‘more indirect forms of control’, and from ‘compliance or adherence to rules’ to ‘positive involvement and incentives’ (1959: 474, 475). More recently, similar arguments have been informed by a study of 'agents of social control'

based on questionnaires completed by 210 US Army soldiers on active duty in Iraq. Noting the predominance of ‘command-and-control approaches to the management of subordinates’, the authors proposed that this contradicted the levels of unsupervised discretion required, especially in combat, and proposed an alternative, ‘intrinsically oriented self-regulatory model’ which represented ‘a viable approach to fostering rule adherence’ (Tyler et al 2007: 459, 461, 479).

Schlueter (2013), meanwhile, proposes that the key question about military law is less about whether it should be different to, and separate from, the civilian code, and more the 'military justice conundrum', which centres upon the balance between justice and discipline. The changes in British military law since the 1990s have not, however, addressed this conundrum and indeed, procedural matters apart, there are few distinctions between the Armed Forces Act 2006 and the Service Discipline Acts of the 1950s which it replaced. British military discipline still hangs on ‘the unquestioned obedience by a junior to the orders of a senior’ (Murray 1932: 266) and would still be recognisable to the United States Army Colonel who, shortly after the Second World War, explained that:

> the underlying concept of an army is obedience. How else can this regimented obedience be attained unless such obedience is made attractive by comparison with the fate in store for those who prefer individualism? (cited in Spindler 1948: 86).

Amongst the many changes which have taken place in the military since the 1940s and 1950s, then, one appears to have been overlooked: members of the armed forces are no longer conscripts but volunteers, yet the nineteenth century conception of military law as ‘a mechanism for the disciplining of the soldier, rather than as a code which ... safeguarded the soldier's civil liberties’ (Rubin 1997: 51) is still relevant. Furthermore, contemporary disciplinary practice in the

armed forces appears to confirm the accuracy of Merton's view that ‘adherence to the rules, originally conceived as a means, becomes transformed into an end-in-itself; ... [resulting in] rigidities and an inability to adjust readily’ (1940: 563).

Voice

Given the overarching emphasis on obedience and discipline, it is perhaps not surprising that members of the British armed forces have little voice. Historically, though, military personnel who were unhappy with their treatment had some recourse. In the British Army, soldiers could complain to their officers, although most stayed silent for fear of being labelled as troublemakers (Mansfield 2016). Traditions in the Royal Navy were, however, rather different: complaints could be made direct to the Admiralty as early as the seventeenth century interregnum (Rodger 2004), and by the eighteenth century there were so many petitioners, individual and collective, that a scribe could make a living from standing at the Admiralty gate ready to assist those who could not write for themselves (Rodger 1986). Today, however, and in the context of ‘the centrality of … “operational effectiveness”’ (Baker et al 2016: 147), the scope for voice is more limited, but there are some formal mechanisms in the form of an individual grievance procedure, attitude surveys and some consultation on pay.

Following the typology of ‘meanings and purpose of voice’ proposed by Dundon et al (2004), the Service Complaints procedure is the route available to any current or former military personnel who believe ‘they have been wronged in any matter relating to their service’ (MOD 2016b: 9) and thus enables individuals to ‘articulate individual dissatisfaction’. The procedure, which has been revised and

amended in recent years, relies on a written ‘statement of complaint’ which must include details of the redress sought: there is no hearing at which the complainant can put his or her case, provide additional information or answer questions. This and other aspects of the process put it at odds with recognised good practice in civilian employee grievance handling (ACAS 2015): for instance, there is only a single appeal against decisions (MOD 2016b, 2016c), and, except in cases of discrimination or harassment, military personnel do not have recourse to the Employment Tribunal. Moreover, the Service Complaints Commissioner, who oversees the process and accepts some complaints directly, has consistently highlighted persistent and undue delays in resolving grievances, as did her predecessor, the Service Complaints Commissioner (SCC 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, SCO 2016, 2017). Indeed, in her latest report she states that ‘the Service Complaints process is neither efficient, effective or fair’ (SCO 2018: vii).

The Ministry of Defence carry out regular surveys of military personnel which can be construed as providing the opportunity to ‘contribute to management decision making’ (Dundon et al 2004). The annual Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS), covers a wide range of issues including morale, pay and allowances, training and development, work, management and leadership, while the responses are used to ‘inform the development of policy and measure the impact of decisions affecting personnel’ (AFCAS 2017a). However, such surveys are considered ‘a weak form of … voice’, designed purely ‘to assess the level of … engagement’ (Purcell and Hall 2012: 5), and there is little published evidence of any changes having taken place as a result. Similarly, consultation by the independent Armed Forces’ Pay Review Body points to some ‘mutuality and co-

operative relations' (Dundon et al 2004), but in line with previous practice only 'almost 2,400' serving members of the armed forces, or just 1.25% of all full time trained personnel, were consulted in 2017-2018 (AFPRB 2018). With these minor exceptions, then, British military personnel have no influence over the terms and conditions of their employment relationship (Heinecken 2010) and, in particular, there is no opportunity for personnel to 'express collective organisation' (Dundon et al 2004). Although military union organisation is permitted in other countries, this is not the case in Britain because armed forces personnel are not classed as 'workers' for the purposes of the trade union legislation (Bartle and Heinecken 2006, Heinecken 2009, 2010, Crawford 2019). Hence, where trade unions give evidence to most of the other independent pay review bodies, such as that for the National Health Service (NHSPRB 2018), there is no such representative structure to put forward the views of military personnel. Moreover, serving personnel are not consulted individually by the pay review body but in 'discussion groups' organised by the MOD and the three services (AFPRB 2018), suggesting that individuals may be selected to take part rather than putting themselves forward and that the exercise reflects pseudo-consultation more than any other form (Farnham and Pimlott 1995).

There is, however, an independent staff association for all ranks, the British Armed Forces Federation (BAFF). This was founded in 2006, a decade after the publication of an official review which found that some 66% of serving personnel agreed that there was a need for 'some form of representation outside the chain of command' (Bett 1995: 65) and some years after further research in the army confirmed the lack of trust in the chain of command to represent the collective views of soldiers (Bartle 1999, 2006). However, BAFF has yet to win formal

recognition or access to military workplaces; it is therefore restricted to campaigning work, and to offering some advice and guidance, including free legal representation at the court martial (BAFF 2019). In June 2019, however, a Private Member's Bill for an Armed Forces Representative Body was given its first reading in the House of Commons. The mover, a Scottish National Party MP, highlighted the contradictions in the treatment of military personnel when compared to some of the other uniformed services:

> Put a hero in a uniform and call them police or a firefighter, and they have a professional body or trade union to represent their interests; put them in an Army, Navy or RAF uniform and they do not. I cannot for the life of me see why. … Quite simply, if the armed forces can speak with one voice … then that voice would be one that the Government of the day would have to listen to. Improved economic and working conditions would follow (Hansard 2018)

At the time of writing (May 2019), the Bill has not progressed to a second reading, suggesting that this attempt, the latest of several, is likely to fall. The initial response from a government spokesperson was not positive: in particular, it was argued that the needs of serving personnel and their families were met by families' federations and charities and that, therefore, there was no need for a representative body. Similar points were made by the Families Federations which serve each of the three services: they too pointed to the work of, for instance, the Armed Forces Pay Review Body and the Royal British Legion as advocates for serving personnel and rejected the need for a representative organisation (Paterson 2019). Indeed, and in direct opposition to the military emphasis on teamworking, the limited opportunity for voice in the armed forces is very much an individual matter. If a group of personnel share a grievance, they are required to raise separate, individual grievances (MOD 2016c), and any attempt to raise a

collective grievance, perhaps through a series of identical individual complaints, may be construed as mutiny, an offence which can result in life imprisonment (AFA 2006). British military personnel are not only tightly controlled and disciplined, therefore: they also have few formal opportunities to 'have a say'.

Individual and collective resistance

The picture of the British military employment relationship painted thus far, then, is of one where uniformity and discipline are strictly enforced, and where there is little, if any, voice; however, there is also evidence of resistance on the part of military personnel. Historically, both soldiers and sailors have indulged in various forms of passive resistance (Mansfield 2016), drunkenness and misbehaviour (Burroughs 1985), absence, desertion, violence towards officers (Rodger 2004) and, of course, mutiny. Strictly speaking, mutiny is any act by two or more individuals 'with the intention of overthrowing or resisting authority' or of disobeying authority 'in such circumstances as to subvert discipline' (AFA 2006: s6 (2)); until 1955, it was punishable by death. Despite the risks, though, mutiny has been a constant throughout the history of the armed forces. There were a number of mutinies in the armies of the English Civil War (Morrill 1972, Morrill 1977, Kishlansky 1979, Brailsford 1983), and, since the creation of the standing British Army, during the Seven Years' War (Way 2000, 2003), amongst the soldiers at Etaples base and elsewhere in France in World War I (Gill and Dallas 1975, Dallas and Gill 1985), at the end of World War I (Rothstein 1980) and at Salerno during World War II (Clayton 2006, Strachan 2006), to highlight just a few. Members of the Royal Air Force mutinied at the end of World War II (Duncan 1998), while mutiny on individual naval ships was for several hundred years something of a habit (Divine 1970, Hore 2005): indeed, a study of mutinies in the

Royal Navy between 1740 and 1820 identified no less than 62 instances involving ‘seizure of a ship by its crewmen, or a halt to ship’s operations by collective action’ (Hechter et al 2016: 171). In addition, there have been three major mutinies encompassing most or all of the ships in a Royal Naval fleet: at Spithead in April-May 1797, the Nore in May 1797, and at Invergordon in September 1931 (Manwaring and Dobrée 1935, Divine 1970, Carew 1979, 1981, Bell 2003, 2005, Brown 2006, Whalley 2009). There is also some evidence of mutinies in the British armed forces in the period since the end of WWII (James 1987); for instance, Rubin (2005, 2006) identified five events between 1956 and 1965 which resulted in courts martial for mutiny, including an incident when

> a number of soldiers had ‘bunked off’ a map reading exercise at Barnard Castle to visit the pub and, on their return to barracks, had engaged in a scuffle worthy of the finest slapstick movies (Rubin 2006: 8)

During the course of this study, at least three examples of military resistance received some publicity in the news media. In the first, sixteen soldiers of the British Army staged a sit-down protest during a 1,000-strong parade in Kenya, saying they objected to being 'led by muppets'. The protest arose from an incident when, having completed a sixteen-mile march across difficult terrain and in full kit, the battalion found their officers sleeping off hangovers instead of ceremoniously welcoming their soldiers back to base in accordance with custom. Some sections of the media referred to this protest as a mutiny, and indeed these actions could be construed as such, but the soldiers were instead charged with disobeying a lawful command, which carries a punishment of up to ten years' imprisonment. The ringleader was sentenced to 60 days' detention, stripped of his rank and dismissed; another individual was demoted and dismissed, two more

were demoted and sentenced to 60 days' detention, and the remainder were all detained for 40 days (BBC 2013, Telegraph 2013). Indeed, this incident reflects the historical reluctance of the military authorities even to use the word 'mutiny' (Rose 1982), since

> many work stoppages or kindred acts of insubordination aboard ships or in onshore military units were, although legally fully fledged mutinies, either informally or summarily dealt with by [junior] officers, or presented merely as disciplinary offences and hushed up. … For functionaries … reporting such disturbances as a serious offence or crime is – to put it mildly – an undesirable option. (Lammers 2003: 479-480)

In the second example of recent resistance, an individual serving with the Royal Air Force at Akrotiri, Cyprus, wrote to the BBC listing a number of complaints about conditions at the base, which was being used to launch raids against Islamic State fighters. The writer stated that morale was low; there was no hospital despite the risk of serious injuries being sustained during missions; the food was poor and the chain of command on the base was 'so laced with budgetary fear … that no one knows what the plan is' (BBC 2014). His letter made the national radio news, as well as the BBC website, and both the RAF and the Ministry of Defence were quick to deny his claims. It is not clear what, if anything, happened to him. In the third and most recent incident, again an example of individual resistance, substantial publicity was given to the case of a young soldier who put himself forward to be photographed for an army recruitment campaign. When the posters were published, however, he objected to the use of said picture with the caption 'Snowflakes: Your Army Needs You'. Turning to social media, he posted that he felt humiliated and would submit his resignation at the earliest possible opportunity (Doughty 2019, Lyons 2019). Again, we are

unlikely ever to find out whether he was disciplined over this, or indeed whether he carried out his threat of resignation.

Rose identified ‘three broad categories of discontent’ (1982: 565) which lie behind mutiny and other such incidents: working conditions, demobilisation and concepts of legitimacy, the belief that ‘an aspect of their service is unacceptable for ethical, moral, intellectual, or political reasons’ (1982: 566). Hence, for instance, the three big naval mutinies were primarily about pay (Manwaring and Dobrée 1935, Carew 1981); the mutinies in the army in 1919 and the RAF in 1945 were related to demobilisation, or rather the delays in letting personnel return home (Rothstein 1980, Duncan 1998), and the Curragh 'incident' of 1914 was, unusually, a mutiny by British officers against the prospect of taking up arms against Protestants in Northern Ireland (O Domhnaill 2004, Connelly 2010). Similarly, Hechter et al (2016) ascribed mutiny to ‘structural grievances’ relating to issues such as pay or working conditions, or ‘incidental grievances’ arising from unexpected situations. In this formulation, the big naval mutinies again reflect ‘structural’ grievances over pay, while the demobilisation mutinies might be considered ‘incidental’ in that the personnel involved expected to be demobilised and sent home, only to find that this was not the case. Equally, however, more than one type of grievance might underlie such a rebellion and, it is argued, ‘the combination of shared incidental and structural grievances provides a superior explanation of mutiny’ (Hechter et al 2016: 185).

Causes aside, mutinies are generally conceptualised in two ways which closely reflect differing perspectives on the employment relationship. The first, and most

common, is the unitary stance adopted by the hierarchy: since many military historians are serving or retired officers (Howard 1962), this perspective is so common as to be taken for granted in much of the literature. Mutiny, then, is perceived as the result of ‘a failure by officers to lead their men and to manage events’ (Hore 2005: 139) or, as in one exploration of the January 1931 mutiny on the *HMS Lucia*, a simple failure of communications (Farquharson-Roberts 2009). In this perspective, where of course there is no scope for conflict between the leaders and the led, strenuous attempts are made to point the finger of blame for mutiny at perceived troublemakers, particularly those not in the armed forces, or individual, isolated 'agitators'. Hence it was variously suggested that the mutineers at the Nore were stirred up by Irish sailors with connections to the United Irishmen, or by individuals who were involved in organisations influenced by the French Revolution and Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man* (Brown 2006). Equally strenuous, and equally fruitless, attempts were made to pin the blame for the Invergordon mutiny on the Communist Party (Hutt 1937, Divine 1970, Branson 1985, Bell 2005).

Alternatively, mutinies can be regarded through a pluralist lens as the military version of a strike, as groups of military personnel stopping work ‘in order to express a grievance or enforce a demand’ (Hyman 1989: 17). Lammers (1969, 2003 and see Soeters 2018) carried out a comparative study of twenty strikes and twenty mutinies and identified a series of common components: both had their context in formal organisations; both involved 'the ruled' against 'the rulers'; both involved strategies such as stopping work and both were designed either to gain an advantage or to prevent a disadvantage. In addition, he found that a strike

or mutiny was not the only method available or used; indeed, having served himself, he was of the view that ‘there are few aspects of military life that do not, from time to time, evoke feelings of rebellion’ (Lammers 2003: 475). In other words, then, and just as in civilian industrial relations, the potential for conflict is ever present, but action such as a strike or mutiny is a last resort. Similar comparisons between civilian industrial action and military mutiny are drawn by Way (2000, 2003) and Mansfield (2016), both of whom also highlight the extent of collective organisation on the part of individuals with a shared grievance, one example being the role of soldiers from several militia and regular regiments in the food riots which took place across the south of England in the spring of 1795 (Mansfield 2016). The soldiers of the New Model Army in the English Civil War had 'Agitators' to present their demands over extensive arrears of pay and other grievances (Morrill 1977), and the mutineers at Spithead and the Nore had 'delegates' to press their claims (Divine 1970, Hore 2005). Moreover, the mutiny of the Atlantic Fleet at Invergordon in September 1931, might be viewed as a classic example of mobilisation (Kelly 1998, 2005). First, the sailors had a shared grievance, in that their pay had been cut by anything between 10% and 25% and they had only learned of this from the newspapers (Wilson 2013). Second, these grievances could clearly be attributed to the government and the Admiralty and third, the sailors had a strong collective identity and recognised leaders, both deriving from some twenty years' experience of informal ‘lower deck’ organisation and more than a decade’s agitation for better pay (Carew 1979, Carew 1981). Hence, as one naval captain wrote shortly afterwards, the authorities had to recognise that, if individuals are pushed too far, ‘the point may be reached when [they] realise that the justice of a case, and their united strength, will put them above the law’ (Murray 1932: 267).

The Netherlands has a long history of military trade unionism (Moelker 2006), and uniformed members of the armed forces have even taken part in public protests against austerity measures (FT 2011). In a recent study of the responses of 579 Dutch military personnel to severe cuts, the authors used Hirschman's model of exit, voice, loyalty or neglect (1970) to identify six 'clusters' of behaviour: faced with high levels of uncertainty, individuals opted to protest, 'escape', acquiesce, conform, obstruct or seek to combat (Petrovic et al 2018). These behaviours have not only been evident on the part of British military personnel throughout history, they also reflect the range of responses among civilian employees to conflict in the employment relationship (Fox 1966, Hyman 1975). In summary, then, the literature suggests that, although military personnel in Britain and elsewhere are tightly controlled and have little voice, they might experience their employment relationship in much the same ways as civilian employees. In particular, the relationship may be experienced as one of conflict which they can and will resist, whether as individuals or collectively.

Military-bureaucratic control

In their structure and organisation, the British armed forces are usually viewed as a bureaucracy or, rather, a series of interconnected bureaucracies: each ship, regiment or unit operates on bureaucratic lines, as do each of the three services, while the permanent joint headquarters functions as an overarching bureaucracy, leading on such matters as personnel, logistics, communication, policy and finance. Indeed, military organisations in general are often referred to as Weberian 'ideal type' bureaucracies (see for instance Heinecken 1997), and it is

the case that Weber proposed that professional armies require bureaucratic structures because 'military discipline and technical training can be normally and fully developed … only in the bureaucratic army' (1948: 222). Although there is no evidence that the Prussian army Weber studied, and indeed served in, fitted his conception of 'a machine-like bureaucracy' (Miewald 1970: 131), his development of 'ideal types' was not intended to reflect reality, nor indeed to instruct or create an ideal: the 'ideal type' is 'a diagnosis not a prognosis' (Cummings and Bridgman 2011: 83), a theoretical model for the purpose of explanation and interpretation (Clegg and Dunkerley 1980).

The British armed forces are indeed an 'ideal type' bureaucracy insofar as the authority and responsibility of each member is formally delineated and widely known and understood. There is also a clear, and steep, hierarchy in the form of the chain of command, and promotion within that chain of command is achieved by a combination of qualification, recommendations from superiors and experience, as measured by length of service (Clegg and Dunkerley 1980, RN2017b). However, the literature and documentary evidence examined in this chapter point to elements of contradiction in this regard, in that a distinction can be drawn between two forms of military control. On the one hand, command derives from the individual's position in the hierarchy, down which authority is delegated. On the other, however, leadership, which is not necessarily related to rank, is based on the notion of authority as being 'personally acquired' (Feld 1959: 15) through training and experience as well as such intangibles as skill and charisma. There is, then, the potential for conflict between the authority bestowed

by the rules and that vested in the person of the leader, a conflict which is neatly summed up in the army's own *Leadership Code*:

> … mission command … is based on mutual trust between leaders and those they lead. Leaders have a duty to provide the guidance, including resources and constraints, that allow subordinates to use their initiative and judgement. In return subordinates have a duty to act with loyalty and discipline (Army 2015: 2)

In other words, the ordinary soldier is expected, not only to obey but also to take the initiative. This, in turn, suggests that the military is not simply a bureaucracy.

Control systems in the real world are of course made up of 'a cluster of devices, structures and practices' (Storey 1985: 198) which 'coexist and interact in sometimes complex combinations with uncertain outcomes' (Sturdy et al 2010: 114), while typologies such as that developed by Richard Edwards (1979) and others might perhaps also be described as 'ideal types'. Kitaoka (1993) highlights two key differences between military bureaucracy and that in civilian organisations: first, rules and hierarchies are more important and more strictly enforced in a military bureaucracy, but second, those rules and hierarchies also have to be more flexible to allow for unpredictable situations and emergencies. Hence none of the existing typologies of control can easily be applied to the military employment relationship. On the one hand, the British armed forces are governed by detailed rules and procedures, such as those for promotion, discipline and grievances, suggesting 'ideal type' bureaucratic control. On the other, however, the power vested in the person of the commanding officer looms large, not least in the disciplinary processes, and, as has been seen, great emphasis is laid on the need for this individual to be seen as being in command, suggesting strong elements of hierarchical control (Edwards 1979). Equally, the

insistence on key values and standards, along with the scope for discretion in the disciplinary processes, suggests an element of normative control. Moreover, in the military context, control is inextricably linked to command, and indeed subordinate to it (Pigeau and McCann 2002): that is, the essential function of control in the military employment relationship is the maintenance and preservation of the hierarchy, the chain of command. There is, therefore, scope for the development of a new typology of military-bureaucratic control, which incorporates elements of hierarchical control and bureaucratic, rules-based control, together with normative controls and elements of concertive control. This typology will be used as a framework for analysing the data collected in this study.

Chapter summary

Having given an overview of the available literature and other source material, this chapter has explored some key features of the military employment relationship, with particular emphasis on the process of joining the armed forces, and on rules, discipline and punishment, voice and resistance within them. Throughout, it has highlighted the recurrent themes of uniformity and control, tempered only by the evidence of individual and collective resistance. It has also highlighted clear lines of continuity from the earliest times to today, while also acknowledging some change. In addition, the available evidence suggests that where, historically, there were few differences between the civilian and military employment relationships, there are today substantial differences. This is particularly the case with regard to discipline and punishment, where military practice falls short of the standards now demanded in the civilian workplace. In

the main, indeed, such differences are explained by the continuation of traditional practices in the armed forces.

Finally, this chapter has discussed the armed forces as an 'ideal type' bureaucracy and highlighted some apparent contradictions within the military employment relationship. In particular, the contradiction between the rules of the institution and the authority and discretion granted to the commanding officer leads to the conclusion that control is not exercised through bureaucratic structures alone. The chapter has, therefore, concluded by proposing a new typology of military-bureaucratic control, incorporating elements of hierarchical control, rules-based control, normative control and concertive control.

4. Researching the military employment relationship

There is a trend in employment relations and human resource management (HRM) research which prioritises the influence of psychology, uses ever more complex quantitative methods to prove or disprove hypotheses of little relevance to the larger questions of the employment relationship and frequently neglects any frame of reference that is not uncritically unitary (Godard 2014, Harley 2015). In this chapter, I will explain why I have rejected such an approach and opted instead for a simple, qualitative approach informed by my personal, political and academic stance as a Marxist. Having presented my research philosophy, I will then discuss the questions of access which arose during the course of this study, before outlining my methodology and methods. The chapter will also address the matter of 'outsider' research on the armed forces, highlighting some questions this poses with regard to my data, and conclude with preliminary details of those who took part in my study.

Research philosophy

My research philosophy derives from, and is to a great extent dictated by, a Marxist understanding of the employment relationship and, in particular, the ways in which the capitalist mode of production shapes every aspect of life, providing the base upon which the superstructure of our legal, political and social institutions is constructed (Hyman 2006, Grint and Nixon 2015):

> Assume a particular state of development in the productive forces of man and you will get a particular form of commerce and consumption. Assume particular stages of development in production, commerce and consumption and you will have a corresponding social constitution, a corresponding organisation of the family, or orders or of classes, in a word, a corresponding

> civil society. Assume a particular civil society and you will get particular political conditions … (Marx 1847: 180)

This is not to suggest that individuals lack agency, but to recognise that our ability to shape events is constrained by our economic context: men and women 'make their own history, but … they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves' (Marx 1869: 15). In a materialist analysis, then, the employment relationship is made between employer and employee, but determined by the capitalist mode of production, which in turn creates both the conflict inherent within it and the need to accommodate that conflict.

Given this context, positivist and post-positivist approaches to research on work and employment are inadequate and inappropriate. There is no objective reality which can be captured and there are no laws which can be discovered by verification or falsification: even within the confines of capitalism there are multiple variations in any given situation, and causality is not linear but complex and frequently multi-stranded and multi-layered (Cox and Hassard 2007, Benton and Craib 2011). However, interpretivist, relativist and phenomenological frames, which are subjectivist and empiricist, are equally inadequate for my purposes. Their emphasis on the individual and his or her experience neglects not only the wider economic, political and legal context of industrial relations (Brown and Wright 1994, Hyman 1994, Edwards 2005) but also the realities of employment as a collective activity. Indeed, some phenomenological positions are explicitly at odds with industrial relations research: post-structuralism, for instance, 'is largely uninterested in the nature of work and organisational forms' (Thompson 2007: 1360). Postmodernism, too, is detached from the realities of the workplace (Kelly 1998, Eldridge 2003, Reed 2005) and the 'postmodern turn' is more concerned

with consumption and leisure than economics, work or the employment relationship (Burrell 2006). The increasing emphasis on the individual body, identity and discourse has, therefore, created a position where political economy, class and social structure are neglected, if not ignored altogether (Reed 2005), a reductionist position I find untenable.

Having rejected both ends of the ontological spectrum, however, both also have something to offer to the study of work and employment. Positivism contributes the ontological position that the world is real, that it exists whether or not we know about it or understand it, while interpretivist positions explain that the social world is socially constructed and that our experience in and of it creates knowledge (Benton and Craib 2011, Howell 2013). As noted above, a Marxist approach to the employment relationship draws upon the understanding that the economic base and 'deeper social structures' are 'relatively enduring' (Delbridge 2007: 1354), but that human intervention also plays a role, albeit constrained, in shaping the superstructure. This understanding, then, requires a fusion of positivism and interpretivism in the form of critical realism, a position which is frequently, although not mutually exclusively, linked with Marxist scholarship (Joseph 1998, Sayer 2009, Cunliffe 2011). Moreover, Marx himself took a similar position (Freund and Abrams 1976, Ackroyd and Fleetwood 2000): in dialectical materialism,

> reality exists apart from our consciousness of it; … this reality is not in isolated fragments, but interdependent; … it is not static but in motion, developing and dying away; … this development is gradual up to a point, when there is a sharp break and something new appears; … the development takes place because of internal conflict, and the sharp break is the victory of the rising factor over the dying factor (Burns 1966: 74)

Critical realism takes as its starting point the understanding that 'the study of society cannot be reduced to the study of human activities' (Delbridge 2007: 1353-1354). Epistemologically, the world exists independently of our knowledge, but the social world is socially constructed, there is a clear 'ontological difference between physical and social reality' (Archer 1998: 190) and knowledge is dichotomous. Intransitive objects exist whether or not we know about or understand them, but facts, theories and models are transitive, 'fashioned into items of knowledge by the science of the day' (Bhaskar 1997: 16); hence theories (transitive knowledge) might change, but the objects they relate to (intransitive knowledge) might stay the same (Sayer 2000). Critical realism therefore acknowledges and maintains the distinction between social structures, which are intransitive, and the transitive knowledge, processes and actions which reproduce, maintain or transform them (Joseph 1998), recognising that 'institutions ... develop with logics independent of the choices of individual actors' (Sisson 2007: 53). Crucially, critical realism derives from the proposition that we cannot understand the social world unless 'we identify the structures at work that generate ... events and discourses" (Bhaskar 1989: 2). In the main, then, the role of social scientists is the 'modest' one of 'construing rather than "constructing" the social world' (Sayer 2000: 11).

To further underline the value of a critical realist position to Marxist industrial relations research, critical realist ontology is 'stratified, or layered' (Benton and Craib 2011: 126): that is, reality might be real (concrete), actual (potential) or empirical (Sayer 2000). The social world is stratified, most obviously as

intransitive base and transitive superstructure (Wacquant 1985, Collier 1998), and work, too, is stratified and complex (Tilly and Tilly 1998), the worker being 'object and subject, ... a commodity and a living person' (Thompson and Smith 2000: 55). Furthermore, the epistemological concern of critical realism is to 'produce theory that accurately identifies casual mechanisms in social change' (Brook and Darlington 2013: 239): that is, the underlying structures and mechanisms which shape events (Outhwaite 1998, Reed 2001, Delbridge 2007). In critical realism, then, 'causation is *not* understood on the model of regular successions of events ... There is more to the world ... than patterns of events' (Sayer 2000: 14, 15). Like industrial relations, then, critical realism rejects 'disciplinary parochialism, and its close relative disciplinary imperialism' (Sayer 2000: 7) and in so doing enables the development of 'a more robust conceptualisation of the relationships across levels (society, organisation and actor) and between logics, contexts and action' (Delbridge and Edwards 2013: 940).

Naturally, the value of critical realism to studies of work and employment has been questioned. In particular, and while acknowledging the 'seductive', 'common sense' nature of critical realism, Brown (2014) has argued that it is flawed and that, in particular, it is 'fundamentally at variance with the capitalist system as a whole' (2014: 113) since the different elements of capitalism, such as value, commodities and profit, 'can only be defined and comprehended together as a unified whole' (2014: 113). Critical realism, he argues, neglects this in favour of an ontology of structures which, while separate, interact with each other in an open system, an approach which, in his words, thereby 'hinders

comprehension of the capitalist system' (2014: 113). The solution, as Brown sees it, is to prefer systematic abstraction which, instead of working by retroduction, takes the totality as its starting point: critical realism, he believes, is 'inherently blind to the conceptual development from abstract to concrete' (2014: 121) but systematic abstraction eliminates this problem. In response, Fleetwood (2014) acknowledges the need to unpack some of the 'ambiguous terminology' of critical realism, and especially structures and mechanisms, which 'never exist in splendid isolation, but are always reproduced or transformed by human agents' (2014: 125). However, he stresses that the critical realist conception of the capitalist system is not an open system but '(minimally) a particular set of structures and mechanisms' (2014: 126). Responding to Brown's point about the impossibility of separating the different elements of the capitalist system, Fleetwood stresses that 'domains, and the phenomena located therein, are discrete and separate … if they were not, then observation would be synonymous with underlying causes' (2014: 126). Further, structures and mechanisms may or may not be manifest in actual or empirical events: the underlying conflict inherent in the employment relationship is not necessarily reflected in the actions or behaviour of employers and workers, although the potential is always there. Critical realism therefore

> directs our attention not only to the structures, mechanisms and agents that constitute a strike, or a capitalist firm, but also to the structures, mechanisms and agents that constitute the capitalist system as a whole and, therefore, to the integration of these two sets of phenomena. This keeps researchers asking: 'What structures and mechanisms are involved?', 'Which agents are involved?' and 'How do these agents reproduce or transform these structures and mechanisms?' (Fleetwood 2014: 128)

In short, critical realism seeks to understand how 'social mechanisms "structure", but do not determine, outcomes' (Manicas 2006: 3); as such, it is in fact

‘grounding for what industrial relations researchers have often tacitly done’ (Edwards 2006a: 5).

Methodology and theoretical underpinnings

Methodologically, my research is context-sensitive (Edwards 2005), 'partisan' but scholarly (Brook and Darlington 2013) and ‘infused with moral purpose’ (Burawoy 2014: 279). I am not ‘some autonomous being standing outside society’ (Wright Mills 1959: 204), but an actor within it, and notions of objectivity are ‘but the standpoint of the person as alienated’ (Manicas 1998: 314). Research cannot be anything but subjective, since it is filtered through the net of the researcher's beliefs, the place and time in which we operate (Brook and Darlington 2013), and the disciplinary frame in which we work (Cappelli 2006). This is particularly the case in industrial relations, which is a ‘normative, value-oriented field’ (Strauss and Whitfield 2008: 175) where research ‘should be receptive to the range of interests within the employment relationship’ (Heery 2005: 7) but where researchers have a ‘traditional sympathy with worker interests’ (Darlington and Dobson 2013). As the shift from the sociology of work to the study of human resource management demonstrates, research is frequently subordinated to ‘particular class interests’ (Kelly 1998: 131), and this is especially the case when it comes to the armed forces. For instance, an important survey on the desirability of independent representation for armed forces personnel in disciplinary and grievance matters was not circulated to those who stand to benefit most from such representation, but only to officers (Heinecken 2010). While acknowledging that this might have been the result of difficulties in gaining access, as discussed below, it serves to confirm that scholarly attention is rarely paid to ‘the soldier’,

the ordinary member of the armed forces (Haltiner and Kümmel 2009). Although there has been an increase in focus on the lower ranks (Jenkings et al 2011), such work is almost without exception based on large-scale quantitative surveys such as those carried out by the armed forces themselves. As such, it suffers from the problems identified with any positivist work, not least determinist conclusions that if, for example, a high percentage of respondents consider a process to be fair, then it must be fair, with little attempt to uncover how those respondents might define 'fair' or, for that matter, what they might know of the process in question or how they came by that knowledge. I make no apology, therefore, for being more concerned with the voices of the lower ranks in the armed forces than with those of the officers.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the ontological and epistemological complexity of critical realism implies a similarly complex methodology. Research design in this paradigm is essentially intensive and exploratory:

> Instead of specifying the entire research design and who and what we are going to study in advance we can, to a certain extent, establish this as we go along, as learning about one object or from one contact leads to others with whom they are linked, so that we build up a picture of the structures and causal groups of which they are a part (Sayer 1992: 244)

Similarly, a critical realist methodology is retroductive, constantly asking 'what underlying structure or mechanism would, if it existed, explain this pattern?' (Benton and Craib 2011: 123). Of necessity, then, it incorporates a strong historical approach, because 'structures which emerge from ongoing human interaction endure to shape future interactions' (Mutch 2014: 224): hence retroduction involves seeking historical antecedents. My research design therefore incorporated the analysis of a great deal of historical sources, primary

and secondary, with the aim of placing the present in context (Cox and Hassard 2007).

In terms of theory, critical realism seeks to apply existing theories to 'assist the retroductive step "backwards"' (Vincent and Wapshott 2014: 161): throughout this work, therefore, I seek to apply a number of theoretical approaches. My chief influence is, as outlined above, the Marxist understanding of the employment relationship: within this framework, I draw on some aspects of labour process analysis (Braverman 1974, Burawoy 1979, Thompson 1983, Delbridge 2006, Ackroyd 2009, Thompson and Smith 2010) and particularly Richard Edwards' (1979) work on control. On specific issues, similarly, I borrow theories and concepts from pluralist and radical industrial relations scholars, including Dundon et al (2004) on voice and Edwards and colleagues (Edwards and Scullion 1982, Edwards and Whitston 1989, 1994) on workplace discipline. However, and in line with the tradition of industrial relations as a multi-disciplinary field of study (Edwards 2003a), I also draw upon work in sociology, history, law, criminology and organisation studies; with regard to the latter, I owe a particular debt to Weber's (1948) work on bureaucracy, as well as to those who have followed him. More broadly, Lukes' (1974, 2005) exposition of power and Diefenbach's (2013) expansive interdisciplinary work on hierarchy have informed substantial parts of my analysis. Ultimately, then my aim has been to learn from those who went before and to create 'thoughtful in depth research with the objective of understanding why things are as they are' (Easton 2010: 119).

Barriers to researching the armed forces

Opening his contribution to one of two recent collections on military research methods, Belkin asks an important question: 'Why does the study of military organisation require a methodological toolbox that is any different … [from the] strategies that scholars have developed to understand other institutions, cultures and sites?' (2016: 196-197). The answer, on the one hand, is that it does not: the strategies and methods used elsewhere can, as this work aims to demonstrate, be applied to the armed forces. On the other hand, however, researching the military is different: the armed forces are a 'micro-society, a clearly defined yet comprehensive social system, equipped with almost the full range of social institutions and social relations' (Savage and Cumner 1999: 1) which exists alongside, but is separate to, and 'relatively isolated' from, civil society (Soeters et al 2003) and indeed claims its own 'inescapable difference' (Baker et al 2016: 140). In particular, there is 'a societal and political push to know and an organisational tendency … to hide' (Soeters et al 2016: 4), meaning that social researchers are met by the military with 'a more or less explicit and more or less widespread mood of suspicion and reticence' (Caforio and Nuciari 2003: 38). As a result, many have been compelled to compromise in some regard in order to achieve at least some of their aims, with problems arising around such questions as the person of the researcher and the selection of research questions, methodologies and methods. All of these problems have their roots in military culture.

Unsurprisingly, there is no single, shared definition of military culture. Put simply, however, it describes 'the military way of life and the value system associated

with it' (Wilson 1980: 528), notably the 'emphasis on obedience, loyalty, honour, tradition and self-sacrifice' (Frost 2002: 38), and is widely considered to have two faces: one for 'prevention, facilitation and preparation' and one for 'the real action' (Soeters et al 2003: 238). Military culture, therefore, contains strong elements of orderliness, physicality and the suppression of individuality (Winslow 2007), and incorporates subcultural differences between the different arms of the military and units within them (Soeters et al 2003). These elements combine to create an ethos based on 'the right to be different' (Mileham 1998 and see Boëne 1990). Moreover, this insistence on difference has the capacity to become resistance, often expressed in the most hostile of terms, to perceived incursions from civil society in the shape of equal treatment for women and homosexuals (see for instance Frost 2002), the introduction of civilian standards of duty of care (Tugendhat and Croft 2013) and the 'civilianisation' of military law (Rubin 2002). In short, military culture engenders a sense of difference and separation which has consequences for social researchers.

In military culture, serving and former military personnel are insiders, and civilians are outsiders; as one participant in this study put it, 'there's servicemen, ex-servicemen and civilians'. Although it is 'short-sighted' to assume that outsiders have nothing to offer (Miller 2010: 696), most social research on the armed forces is carried out by serving and former personnel, or by those working within or alongside military institutions (Caforio and Nuciari 2003, Sasson-Levy 2003b, Sion 2006). For instance, of sixteen contributors to a volume on military unionism (Bartle and Heinecken 2006) only four had no apparent military connection: the remainder were military or ex-military (two), worked for a military-related

government department or similar (four), or were associated with military academies (six). As a result, military sociology is somewhat 'embedded' (Matthewman 2012), focusing on 'apparently a-political issues' (Baker et al 2016: 141) and research questions which, if they are answered, better enable the control of the armed forces and their personnel (Ben-Ari and Levy 2016); in short, it is more concerned with 'engineering' than with seeking enlightenment (Higate and Cameron 2006). Research by military sociologists has tended, therefore, to focus on questions such as civil-military relations, the recruitment and retention of personnel, leadership, the inclusion of women and other diversity groups, privatisation and outsourcing, the impact of new technologies and the development of new roles for the armed forces (Caforio 2003, Segal 2007), suggesting that other questions relating to the military employment relationship are considered irrelevant or even taboo. There are, naturally, benefits to being an insider researcher, since insider status brings an understanding of, for instance, hierarchy and language, and it has been suggested, albeit in a context very different to that of Britain, that 'researchers … would enjoy having a military chapter in their background' (Gazit and Maoz-Shai 2010: 281). Equally, however, outsider researchers can bring fresh perspectives, questions and methods: whether these are welcomed, or indeed tolerated, is a different matter.

The armed forces are not only a closed society but also a masculine, and even a hypermasculine one (Rosen et al 2003). Even today, 89.5% of serving personnel are male (MOD 2018c); armed service is characterised by masculinity (Higate 2003) and the majority of military sociologists are male (Caforio and Nuciari 2003). For the outsider researcher approaching this patriarchy, gender is clearly

an issue. So, too, is the researcher's status in the academic community: while all academics might be viewed with hostility, a professor is less likely to encounter it than a PhD student (Gazit and Maoz-Shai 2010). Furthermore, even if the person of the researcher is acceptable, there remains the question of what s/he is proposing to explore, and how. First, the military is 'well camouflaged … [and] avoids critical enquiry' (Matthewman 2012: 72), particularly that which it perceives as posing a risk to individual careers, to military institutions or to national security (Ben-Ari and Levy 2014). In an international survey of military sociologists, most of whom of course had close ties to the armed forces, some two-thirds reported constraints or limits of some kind on their research: these included the discovery that certain subjects had been placed off-limits, that access to certain areas or units was prohibited or that there were restrictions on the kind of data which could be collected, as well as widespread controls on publication (Caforio and Nuciari 2003). Moreover, the military authorities work on the assumption that research is only relevant and appropriate if it reflects 'a supposedly rational, focused and highly reactive mode of thinking about the military' (Baker et al 2016: 144): hence the Ministry of Defence prefer 'reliable', as in quantitative, social research over qualitative and empirical work (Jenkings et al 2010), and tend to 'privilege' psychology over other subject fields (Higate and Cameron 2006). Again, the military emphasis is on the utility of research to their ends, rather than the quest for knowledge.

By way of example, two pieces of research on the armed forces disciplinary processes were carried out by a Ministry of Defence contractor and uploaded to the internet, possibly in error. The studies were carried out by psychologists using

predominantly quantitative methods and the literature review, although relatively wide-ranging, contains only unitary sources, neglecting key works in the fields of industrial relations and the sociology of work. Similarly, the questions were very much shaped by the concerns of the military hierarchies, such as the impact of disciplinary offences on operational effectiveness (Edgar et al 2005a, 2005b). In another example of military research priorities, a serving lieutenant commander in the Royal Navy was given sufficient access not only to complete his PhD but also to produce a series of papers on leadership and related topics with his academic supervisor, as well as developing a model which was adopted by the navy (Young and Dulewicz 2004, and see Dulewicz, Young and Dulewicz 2005, Young and Dulewicz 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009). To further underline the contrast between insider and outsider privileges, this time incorporating issues of gender, two former students at Plymouth University, both women, gained official access on the basis of having worked on earlier projects but then encountered obstacles in the way of local gatekeepers: although both did eventually get over the threshold, neither was able to achieve all her research aims (Bunyard 1995, Regan de Bere 1999).

Negotiating access to the military

Having come to understand the military as 'an island on its own … [where] getting access … is no easy game to play' (Soeters et al 2016: 3), I had to reflect on my position as a researcher seeking to explore the military employment relationship, concluding that the chances of gaining access were not very good. Crucially, I was an outsider, having never served in the armed forces and indeed being politically anti-military and pacifist. However, the military insider category is often

extended to military ‘brats’ (Higate and Cameron 2006), and, as discussed in the introduction, both my parents served in the Royal Navy. This family history might, I felt, be to my benefit, but there was little else on that side of the equation; on the other, of course, was the fact that I am a woman, somewhat older than the usual student and at the time had the low academic status of a doctoral teaching assistant. In addition, I wanted to carry out qualitative research, and particularly interviews, informed by the broad field of industrial relations and work sociology. In all, I had little hope of gaining access, but hoped that my parents’ service might count for something and that I could make a case for my work being of use to the service.

Initially, the intention was to limit the study to the Royal Navy. Collectively, the armed forces are a very large organisation and, having decided that the task would be easier if I focused on a single service, the logical choice was the one with which I was most familiar. While not an insider, I considered myself relatively knowledgeable about the service and its complexities and felt that I had a better understanding of the world within which naval personnel work than of those of the army or air force (Baker et al 2016). Moreover, the initial inspiration for this work, as explained in the introduction, came from overhearing a telephone conversation and then realising the caller was a man in naval uniform. The first step, then, was to explore how I might gain access to serving Royal Navy personnel.

From the information in the public domain, it was clear that gaining access could be a lengthy process (Baker et al 2016). However, since it was not clear whether

I should address my initial request to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) or the naval service, I sought advice from academics in the Centre for Military Health Research and Department of War Studies at Kings College London. They kindly advised that I needed a naval sponsor in order to get both MOD ethics approval and access to serving personnel, and suggested two names. Based on this, I sent a formal letter to the Vice Admiral with responsibility for personnel and training, outlining my plans and highlighting the potential for mutual benefit, suggesting that my detachment might bring a different perspective and perhaps uncover some of the stories behind the armed forces' own surveys. The letter also stressed that I had no interest in operational or security matters, offered to meet if necessary, and asked him to act as my sponsor. A copy of this letter is attached at Appendix 1. One week later, I received an email from a civilian occupational psychologist working as Head of Research in the office of the Commodore for Naval Personnel Strategy, asking for further details, which I supplied. Following this, she gave me the name of my potential sponsor, a Commodore, and asked me to seek clarification from the MOD as to whether my work would require approval from their ethics committee: this I did, and received a response to the effect that as I wanted to carry out interviews it would require such approval. In the course of this conversation, I sent draft copies of my initial survey to both the Head of Research and the MOD.

Having received confirmation that my work would have to go through the MOD ethical approval process, then, I updated the Head of Research and asked if a letter from her or the Commodore in support of the application might be useful. The reply was something of a bombshell:

> *I have just had a meeting with the potential RN sponsor for your work. Unfortunately they do not see a business need for what you are proposing, therefore are not willing to support your work. I know this is not the news you want to hear. However, my proposal would be to possibly consider whether there is something that has a current business need that you could address* (email from Head of Research, 25 February 2015)

The email went on to suggest that it would probably be possible to do some work on training, an offer which I politely rejected.

Nearly three months after my initial approach, then, and having had my hopes raised that I might be able to access serving personnel, I was no further forward. This response was, however, interesting in that my request to carry out research for my own purposes, albeit research which, I had argued, had demonstrable value for the service, was interpreted instead as an offer to carry out research for the navy, presumably free of charge. One inference, then, is that, despite the armed forces having their own substantial resources, civil institutions such as the university are viewed as part of the military support network. Furthermore, and as discussed, the perception is that this external support exists only to carry out research on the military's own terms, to produce more of the same rather than, figuratively and literally, rocking the boat. My suspicion, too, is that the Commodore involved, now a Vice-Admiral, knew little or nothing about my request before that fateful meeting, confirming the central gatekeeper role played by internal military researchers (Ben-Ari and Levy 2016). On a more personal level, this experience caused me to reflect on how I felt about dealing with senior military figures, uncovering an unwanted awareness of and even regard for military status and hierarchy which had never been the case in my dealings with civilian superiors.

In another situation, the temptation at this point might have been to seek to make contact with serving personnel by other routes, for instance by posting requests for interviews on social media. In the USA, the use of social media by military personnel has been the subject of heated debate and even a short ban (Matthews-Juarez et al 2013, Lawson 2014). British personnel, in contrast, are not only permitted to use social media and other internet platforms but positively encouraged to do so, largely because of the benefits of maintaining regular contact with friends and family. However, there are strict rules on acceptable online behaviour, and a range of prohibitions, breach of which can result in disciplinary action (MOD 2012, Jensen et al 2014, Adey et al 2016, PaCCS 2016), implying that the online activity of personnel is monitored. It was clear, then, that I would encounter serious ethical issues should I attempt to reach serving personnel through this or any other informal method

With hindsight, it was probably a blessing that I was not able to include serving personnel in my study. If I had been given access, it is unlikely that I would have been able to glean the views of a wide range of people: instead, the chances are that I would only have been given access to one vessel or unit. My outsider status would have been much more prominent, I would have had to assume that individuals would discuss the survey and any interviews with each other, and the chances of senior personnel briefing people beforehand would have been high. Equally, any work I did, whether in the form of a survey, interviews or anything else, would have had to be approved by the hierarchy, thus potentially preventing me from pursuing some of the more interesting strands. At worst, my research

would have been ‘co-opted by the institution and its priorities’ (Gray 2016: 70). The denial of access, then, left me free of such constraints, but also in need of research subjects. As others have done, whether by choice or not (Sasson-Levy 2003a, 2003b, Gazit and Maoz-Shai 2010, Baker et al 2016), I therefore turned my attention to those who were no longer serving.

Research methods

With regard to data collection methods, critical realism tends to presuppose a qualitative approach (Sayer 1992) and the use of a range of methods including interviews, case studies, documentary analysis and observation (Cunliffe 2011, Rees and Gatenby 2014). However, it does ‘not totally reject empiricist methods such as the use of statistics’ (Roberts 2014: 4) and, in general terms, research methods in this paradigm are any which suit the purposes of the study, because ‘the role of a research method is essentially to connect the inner world of ideas to the outer world of observable events as seamlessly as possible’ (Ackroyd and Karlsson 2014: 21), indicating a flexible and adaptable approach. Indeed, it has been noted that the literature of critical realism offers little in the way of guidance on methods of data collection or analysis (see for instance Fletcher 2017, McAvoy and Butler 2018). In similar vein, Belkin has argued that when researching the armed forces the choice of methods is less important than being ‘open to an appreciation of contradictions that structure military organisations and how and why those contradictions and their concealment operate’ (2016: 197).

Industrial relations has a long tradition of qualitative and inductive research (Brown and Wright 1994, Frege 2005, Frege 2008); equally, however, large-

scale, 'macro' surveys are used (McCarthy 1994, Marginson 1998), not least in the form of the Workplace Industrial Relations / Workplace Employment Relations series (for the 2011 iteration see van Wanrooy et al 2013), and complex quantitative methods have become widespread (Godard 2014, Harley 2015). In my work, I use statistics only for descriptive and illustrative purposes (Brook and Darlington 2013) and reject the notions of generalisation and representativeness in social research. Rather than constructing ‘the bloodless categories’ of statistics (Sayer 1992: 242), then, I sought to hear and understand the voices of ex-service personnel, using qualitative methods designed to elicit thick description, which is ‘better for seeing relationships, processes and contradictions (Cockburn 1991: 4) and hence for yielding valuable information about causation (Strauss and Whitfield 2008). This approach, too, was ‘more attuned to the “messiness” and “openness” of real social life ... which inevitability affect the outlook of respondents’ (Roberts 2014: 4). My research design, then, was a five stage one, starting with a systematic and wide-ranging literature review and continuing with documentary analysis, an exploratory qualitative survey, interviews and a group interview.

1. Literature review

As discussed in chapter one, military service has been neglected in the literature of industrial relations, albeit for good and understandable reasons. Rather than turning to an established body of work to develop some grasp on the military employment relationship, therefore, and, as outlined in chapter three, I was obliged to cast the net very wide, starting with contingent work in the social sciences and moving into the fields of, amongst others, history, particularly social

history and military history, criminology, law and organisation studies. Naturally, however, this work also draws upon a range of sources in industrial relations and the sociology of work. The results of my literature review are presented throughout this work, but particularly in chapters one, two and three.

2. Documentary analysis

Documents can be a valuable source of empirical data for establishing context and developing understanding of an organisation (Bowen 2009) and, in contrast to the paucity of literature on the military employment relationship, substantial documentary evidence is available, notably in the legal, procedural, statistical and other materials discussed in chapter three. Moreover, occasional contemporary news reports proved valuable in fleshing out some of the minor details.

A further documentary source which proved valuable in developing my understanding of the armed forces was social media, and particularly the biggest site used by serving and former personnel, the Army Rumour Service, known as ARRSE, and its two sister sites, NavyNet, usually called Rum Ration, and E-Goat, a 'rumour network' for the Royal Air Force. Strictly unofficial, but nonetheless tolerated by the military authorities, ARRSE was established in 2002 by two serving Army officers and has been used as a source for the news media and even the House of Commons Defence Select Committee. The site carries reviews of books and equipment, an unofficial encyclopaedia of military matters and, most usefully for my purposes, extensive and busy forums on a wide range of military and related subjects. ARRSE attracts some five million hits per month from

current, former and future members of all three services, along with some who are simply interested in the armed forces; the other two sites are much quieter. Regular visits to these sites, scanning the thread titles and sometimes spending many minutes reading multi-page threads, helped me to develop a sense not only of some of the practicalities of military life but also of the things that are taken for granted, or so widely held as to be considered ‘common sense’, including a solidly conservative approach to most political questions. At best ‘rude and naughty’ (Woods 2014), ARRSE, as one journalist put it, ‘is not somewhere for civilians of a delicate disposition’ (Beckett 2016), and particularly those who are opposed to racism and other forms of discrimination and hatred (Broomfield 2016). While not a pleasant experience, then, monitoring social media as a document was invaluable in helping to complete my initial picture of the military employment relationship.

3. Survey

Having concluded that I had little option but to focus my work on former members of the armed forces, I also had to accept that I was still an outsider: as noted above, those who have served still consider themselves different from civilians, and indeed still form an identifiable community (Baker et al 2016). In order to move beyond a small circle of friends and acquaintances who had been in the Royal Navy, therefore, I used an exploratory qualitative survey which doubled as a mechanism for recruiting interviewees.

Surveys are more usually considered the province of quantitative researchers, but ‘numbers in the sense of simple counts of things are a legitimate and important sort of data for qualitative researchers’ (Maxwell 2010: 478), while survey methods are widely used and therefore familiar to potential participants (Best and Krueger 2008, Lee et al 2008). Moreover, surveys and questionnaires can be ‘qualitatively oriented’ (Snelson 2016: 8) and, since all participants are given the same questions, elicit data similar to that provided by structured interviews. Equally, however, the inclusion of open questions, with the ability for respondents to give relatively lengthy answers if they so wish, moves the survey towards the realm of semi-structured interviews and can add important detail and open up new areas to be pursued (Brinkman 2013). At the same time, qualitative surveys eliminate some of the problems associated with interviews, not least the possibility of interviewer influence through ‘inflection or embellishment of the questions’ (Pitcher 2011: 975) and the impact of any interpersonal issues. Moreover, a survey of this nature, while not seeking or claiming to be representative of a population, does permit the development of ‘tentative generalisations’ (Mihelj et al 2011: 621).

My survey was designed to establish more detailed context than that permitted by the literature and documentary analysis, but also to gather some basic statistics, collect qualitative data and, as noted above, to recruit interviewees; a copy of the full text is attached at Appendix 2. The survey was in four sections, the first of which gathered some preliminary data about the respondent and his/her military service, including when they joined up and how old they were at the time, the highest rank achieved and the total number of years served. The

second section explored the experience of being in the armed forces and contained a mixture of open and closed questions covering the reason(s) for joining up, experiences of civilian work and how it compared to military service, experiences of the grievance and disciplinary processes and which word(s) respondents would use to describe their service. This section also included questions about the 'best' and 'worst' things about being in the Royal Navy or the Royal Marines, but an error on my part meant these questions were not asked of those who had been in the British Army or the Royal Air Force. As discussed above, the original intention was to focus solely on the navy, so the survey was drafted with that in mind; however, once it became clear that I would need to reach former personnel it was wiser to include all three services in order to maximise participation. I therefore amended the draft survey, but managed to miss that question: luckily, while it did generate useful data about the naval service, it was not crucial to the project as a whole.

The third section of the survey consisted of a series of statements about being in the armed forces with which respondents were asked to indicate strong agreement, agreement, disagreement or strong disagreement. This approach, with no neutral option in the Likert scale, was designed to encourage respondents to think about their response a little more than they might otherwise have done, but it was not a true 'forced choice' since they could, if they had no view, simply move on to the next statement (Allen and Seaman 2007). Following the statements, which were presented in random order, an open question asked respondents to identify the one thing about their service they would, if they could, go back and change. Finally, the fourth section consisted of an open question

offering the opportunity to say anything else about the issues covered in the survey, a request to pass on the details to anybody else who might be interested in taking part and, crucially, an invitation to discuss the responses in more detail. A positive response to this last generated further questions seeking contact details and offering a choice of methods by which that discussion could take place, empowering participants to select their own preference(s) and allowing for interviews to take place regardless of where the individuals might be and what responsibilities or routines they might have. The survey was constructed using Qualtrics software and tested by several people, following which some minor amendments were made. Unfortunately, I did not pick up the error noted above at this stage. Neither, indeed, did I spot that one of the statements was worded in a potentially ambiguous way; however, this turned out to be somewhat fortuitous, since that ambiguity generated some particularly valuable data, as will be seen in chapter seven.

Once the survey had been launched, the main method used to reach the ex-forces community was social media. Using the pseudonym Guz Researcher ('Guz' is the naval slang for Plymouth), I made a dedicated Facebook page with a short explanation of the work and a link to the survey: ex-forces friends and acquaintances then shared this page to various ex-forces pages, many of which are closed to public view. The administrators of the Forces Reunited page also kindly agreed to share my page with their sizeable membership. Meanwhile, and again recognising the importance of following internet etiquette (Hewson and Laurent 2008), I also approached the administrators of the Army Rumour Service and NavyNet and gained permission to post about my work on their forums, again

using the pseudonym Guz Researcher. Finally, since all three services have a presence in Plymouth or nearby, and since the university is one of the biggest employers in the city, I published a short piece in the staff newsletter to bring the study to the attention of ex-forces staff, partners, families and friends. Copies of all the relevant publicity material are attached at Appendix 3: for the ethical reasons discussed below, all included the message that the survey was only for people who were no longer serving.

The ex-forces community can be described as hard to reach, at least by outsiders. Link tracing, and particularly snowballing, or 'respondent-driven sampling' (Schensul 2011) is a useful technique for reaching such populations (Atkinson and Flint 2001, Noy 2008), while the internet provides a means, not only of accessing hard to reach communities but also eliminates the need for geographical proximity (Smith and Leigh 1997). In particular, Facebook, as a platform for individual and collective social networks, has been highlighted as a particularly good vehicle for this (Baltar and Brunet 2012). So, indeed, it proved: responses to the survey came in thick and fast and, while I did not ask respondents where they had learned of it, there were noticeable spikes in activity when it appeared on a new page and when I posted reminders. The use of ex-forces networks and sites to publicise the survey overcame any issues of trust associated with my being an outsider (Baltar and Brunet 2012, Baker et al 2016), and the use of a pseudonym in the public material, although not with the various site and page administrators, helped to avert any issues arising from my gender or status (Gazit and Maoz-Shai 2010). The survey received 270 responses, 245

of which were usable, giving me a wealth of data and a large number of potential interviewees.

4. Interviews

The interview stage of my data collection started while the survey was still live, partly because the number of people willing to be interviewed was so overwhelming: almost exactly one third of survey respondents (83 people) agreed to be interviewed, although some proved difficult or impossible to contact thereafter. It is unlikely that I would have been able to build such a large pool of potential participants by circulating a straightforward request for interviewees.

The interviews were on a spectrum between semi-structured and unstructured (Bryman and Bell 2011), very much 'conversations with a purpose' (Roberts 2014), and based on two elements: first, the individual's own answers to the survey questions and second, themes which were emerging from the survey responses overall and, in the later interviews, from the interview data. As such, then, they were a source not only of direct information about the participant and his or her experiences, but also of indirect evidence of opinions, beliefs, values and attitudes (Hammersley 2013). Moreover, the interviews reflected the critical realist conception of the interviewer as 'active, investigative and analytically informed' (Smith and Elger 2014: 130) and interviews as a process during which theories are developed and tested (Kempster and Parry 2011, 2014, Smith and Elger 2014).

As the survey responses came in, I read each one, starting to identify the areas where respondents seemed to agree with each other and, perhaps more important, where they had different views, particularly where there were apparent outliers. Downloading the data while the survey was still underway also enabled me to start to cross-reference responses to some of the questions against, for instance, the respondent's rank or arm of the service, and thereby develop some early assumptions. Once details of each interview had been agreed, I then returned to that individual's response and drew up a list of between three and five areas for discussion based on the response, the themes and anomalies that were emerging from the survey and earlier interviews, and my reading and reflection. Each interview was, therefore, very different from the last.

In all, I conducted 42 interviews: nineteen were face to face, two by telephone and 21 by email. I transcribed all the interviews myself, appreciating the opportunity this gave to develop my knowledge of the data, and made some initial notes as I did so; in total, the transcripts ran to over 250 pages and some 128,000 words. The transcription process also gave me the opportunity to reflect on whether I should try again to contact more of the people who had expressed an interest in being interviewed; however, it became clear that the later interviews were not shedding any new light on my areas of interest and that I had therefore reached 'saturation' (Mason 2010).

With regard to the data collected in the interviews, it has been suggested that data quality is not noticeably affected by the mode of interview (Meho 2006). However, it was generally the case that those carried out face to face produced

more information and thicker description (Ponterotto 2006). Having uncovered those uncomfortable facts about my response to military status during my attempt to negotiate access, I worked to put that to one side and sought, before and at the beginning of each interview, to find some points of shared experience, usually through my parents' service and / or local knowledge. In most instances, however, I found that simply asking about the experience of being in the armed forces opened the floodgates and that individuals were very happy to talk, often at great length: some of the face to face and telephone interviews were very long, running close to ninety minutes. At the same time, however, I soon learned not to ask anything about participation in active service, since such questions were usually met either with silence or with a very brief answer; however, as these matters were not at the forefront of my interest, any such reluctance did not pose a problem. I was also acutely aware that some, but not all, interviewees were telling me the official story: that is, whether or not they were aware of it, they viewed me as a civilian, an outsider, and did not want to disclose too much insider information. Although I treated participants as equals, and was generally treated as such in return, there was still a barrier: I was 'neither friend nor foe but stranger' (Baker et al 2016: 144). Where this was the case, there was no correlation with rank: it was just as likely to happen with somebody who had not progressed far, if at all, up the promotion ladder as it was with somebody who had been an officer. Sometimes it was quite marked: in more than one case the interviewee's style of speaking changed completely when the voice recorder was switched on; in others, it was more subtle or became apparent only when asked particular questions. Being in the armed forces, as will be seen, is an important part of the individual's identity, and, just as some of us have a 'telephone voice', so too did some of the interviewees revert to their military persona.

Interviews which are carried out by telephone or email share the potential disadvantage of lacking the visual clues provided by body language, facial expressions and similar (Meho 2006, Hewson and Laurent 2008, Brinkman 2013). To some extent, this was not an issue: being autistic, I often struggle to pick up these cues anyway. Email interviews also allow individuals to respond at their own pace, which can mean the replies lack spontaneity (Meho 2006, Lee et al 2008), although, of course, this might also mean that those replies are better thought through than those given verbally; similarly, they share with telephone interviews the benefit of being free of 'interviewer effect' (Brinkman 2013: 23). In general terms, however, the differences between the different modes of interview were not as marked as I had expected. Both telephone interviewees were as happy to talk as most of the face to face subjects, and some of the email interviews, once transcribed, ran to several pages. Not an experienced researcher, my steepest learning curve was, however, with the email interviews: I quickly discovered that it was vital to establish some ground rules at the beginning, and in particular to reach agreement on whether I would ask all my questions at once or whether we would engage in an ongoing conversation by email. Some of the early email interviews, unfortunately, came to an abrupt halt when I asked a follow up question and received no reply, presumably because the participant had assumed that the interview was finished. Having said that, however, some of the most personal and emotional data, touching on issues like bullying, discrimination or the impact of being separated from family, came from email interviews, suggesting that the absence of visual and aural contact created an environment where individuals felt more able to open up.

Two further issues arose from the interviews, regardless of format. First, a small proportion of interviewees expressed beliefs which were racist, sexist or otherwise objectionable. This placed me in a difficult position: had such things been said in the course of an ordinary conversation, I would have challenged them or at the very least made it known that I disagreed and did not want to appear complicit. As a researcher, however, I was of course aware from my reading, and particularly my monitoring of social media, that this might happen. In response, then, I expressed no opinion but simply moved on to the next point, while noting the institutionalised nature of these values and beliefs (Baker et al 2016). However, these incidents reflected an interesting dynamic in the interviews: the interviewees who were so open about their prejudices were perhaps, on the one hand, seeking my collusion or attempting to shock or even to educate me while, on the other, treating me almost as if I were an insider. Either way, the incidents, difficult as they were at the time, gave me some valuable and almost certainly unintended insights on military life. Second, while vehemently disagreeing with some of what was said, I also found myself, as others have noted, identifying with some of the values expressed by participants (Baker et al 2016). In particular, one thing which shone through both the survey and the interviews was the strong sense of military community and comradeship, something I have experienced in political and trade union circles but never to such an extent at work, and that in a long and varied career. Similarly, the certainties and security of military life have some appeal, and I left at least one interview feeling, somewhat wistfully, that I had missed out in some way.

5. Group interview

A number of interviewees expressed an interest in hearing more about my findings and / or keeping in touch about the progress of the study. Once the survey had closed, therefore, I put together a short document summarising the 'first findings' (attached at Appendix 4) to use in informal group interviews and to send to those who could not, or did not want to, attend. Originally, there were to be two group interviews, but only one, with five participants, actually took place: the second, which would only have involved two people, was cancelled when neither arrived. Ultimately, however, neither the group interview nor the comments from those who had received a copy of the first findings added anything of substance to the data I had already collected. This might be attributed partly to the way I structured the group interview, presenting the findings bit by bit and asking for comments and discussion: this was designed to glean further insights, but proved less valuable than it might have been due to the second issue which arose, namely the nature of the individuals who formed the group. Although the participants had all achieved a similar rank, three of the five had very strong, and very similar, opinions and they tended to dominate the discussions, reflecting the view that the background and experience of group members can have an impact on the ways in which individuals interact and respond to each other and to the interviewer (Frey and Fontana 1991). However, I suspect the main reason the group interview produced little data of note was simply because, as stated above, my data collection was completed when I finished the interviews. As a result of these failings, the group interview was not transcribed or taken into account when analysing the data.

Ethical considerations

Although I was not setting out to engage serving personnel in my research, it raised ethical issues over and above those which usually apply in research on work and the employment relationship. In particular, I had to consider what to do if any serving personnel wanted to take part, and how to deal with any breach of security by participants. Taking the latter point first, there were reminders at appropriate points in the survey about the importance of not giving any confidential information, whether personal or operational, and similar reminders were given in the interviews. In fact, as discussed above, participants were generally very reluctant to talk about operational matters, most even leaving out details such as where they were based, or which vessel they were on, at the time of the story they were telling.

The need to deter serving personnel was, however, slightly trickier. On the one hand, I was aware that personnel are barred from taking part in external studies, including surveys and questionnaires, unless they have permission, and that taking part without permission was a disciplinary offence. On the other, I did not want to collude with what can be viewed as draconian rules, nor to treat military personnel as incapable of making their own decisions. By way of compromise, then, the preamble to the survey, and all the material produced to publicise it, clearly stated that the research was not sponsored by the military, that the survey was only intended for ex-forces personnel, and that anybody who was still serving could be disciplined for taking part without permission, which was unlikely to be granted. Further detailed measures were also put in place in case any serving personnel wanted to be interviewed, but in the event these proved unnecessary:

one serving member of the armed forces contacted me about the research but pulled out following the reminder above.

Otherwise, the ethical concerns arising from this project were very much those encountered in any social research project: that is, informed consent, openness and honesty, the right to withdraw, debriefing and confidentiality (Shaw 2003, Eynon et al 2008) as well as the legal issues associated with using the internet to conduct research (Charlesworth 2008). The ethical protocol, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 5, was drawn up in accordance with those issued by the Social Research Association (SRA 2003) and the British Sociological Association (BSA 2002), and approval was sought, and granted, by the Plymouth University Faculty of Business Research Ethics Committee before work began (copy attached at Appendix 6). To summarise, involvement in all aspects of the project was entirely voluntary: ethics aside, this has implications for my data which will be explored elsewhere. The survey was completely anonymous, unless the respondent agreed to discuss the responses further, in which case a name and contact email was provided: this information was stored in accordance with the relevant legal and other guidelines and will be destroyed on completion of this work. Informed consent was sought at each stage of the process: survey respondents could not proceed without consenting, albeit passively, and active consent was sought at the beginning of every interview, including the group interview (Berg and Lune 2014). The interviews were not, of course, anonymous, but confidentiality was ensured by the removal of all distinguishing features before the data was analysed. Furthermore, all participants had the right to amend or withdraw their contributions at any time up to the end of December

2016. In this regard, one interview was indeed withdrawn on the basis that it would be possible to identify the interviewee, who had been in a rather unusual role, from the comments made: the individual's responses were therefore withdrawn from the survey and the transcript destroyed. Throughout the data collection process, finally, I took pains to explain the nature of my study and gave participants the opportunity to seek clarification.

Research participants

Survey respondents were not required to answer any question if they did not wish to; hence nine surveys contained no answers at all, and a further sixteen had no responses to any of the substantive questions. These were therefore removed, leaving 245 usable responses. As shown in figure 1, 72% of participants (175 individuals) had served in the Royal Navy, including five former Royal Marines, while 60 (24%) were former members of the British Army and ten (4%) had been in the Royal Air Force (RAF). Given the small number of former marines and RAF, and the resulting potential for breach of confidentiality, some of the statistics presented elsewhere have been combined: Royal Marines with the Royal Navy and RAF with the British Army.

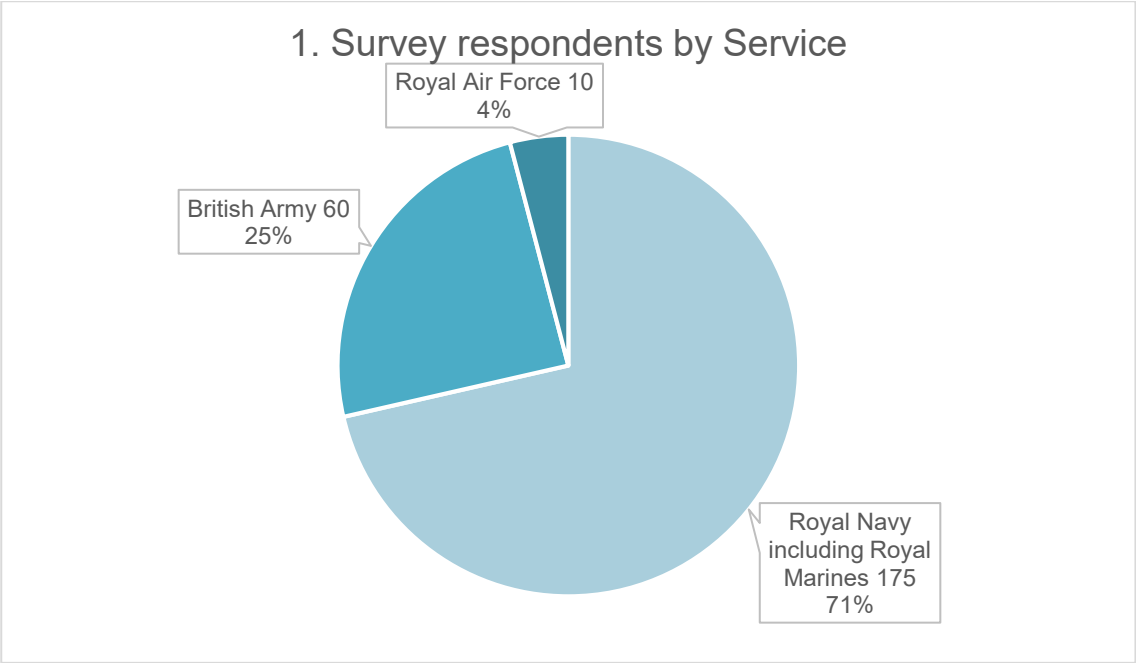

Figure 1: Survey respondents by Service

Figure 2 shows respondents by Service and gender: 210 (86%) respondents were male and 31 (13%) female, while four did not answer this question. Respondents therefore broadly reflected the current gender breakdown in the armed forces, where just over 10% of all serving personnel are women (MOD 2018c). Similarly, 161 respondents (66%) were aged seventeen or under when they joined up, 46 (19%) were eighteen or nineteen, and 38 (15%) were 20 or over (Figure 3). Again, this is broadly reflective of the relative youth of the armed forces, where almost one quarter of personnel currently serving are under the age of 25 (MOD 2018c).

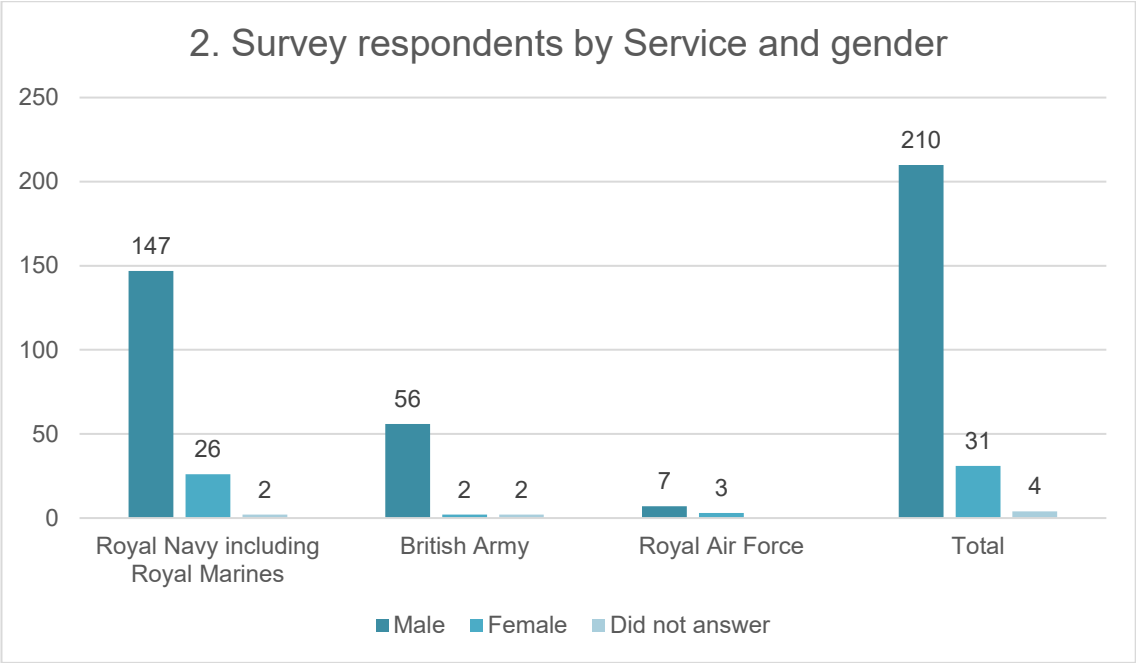

Figure 2: Survey respondents by Service and gender

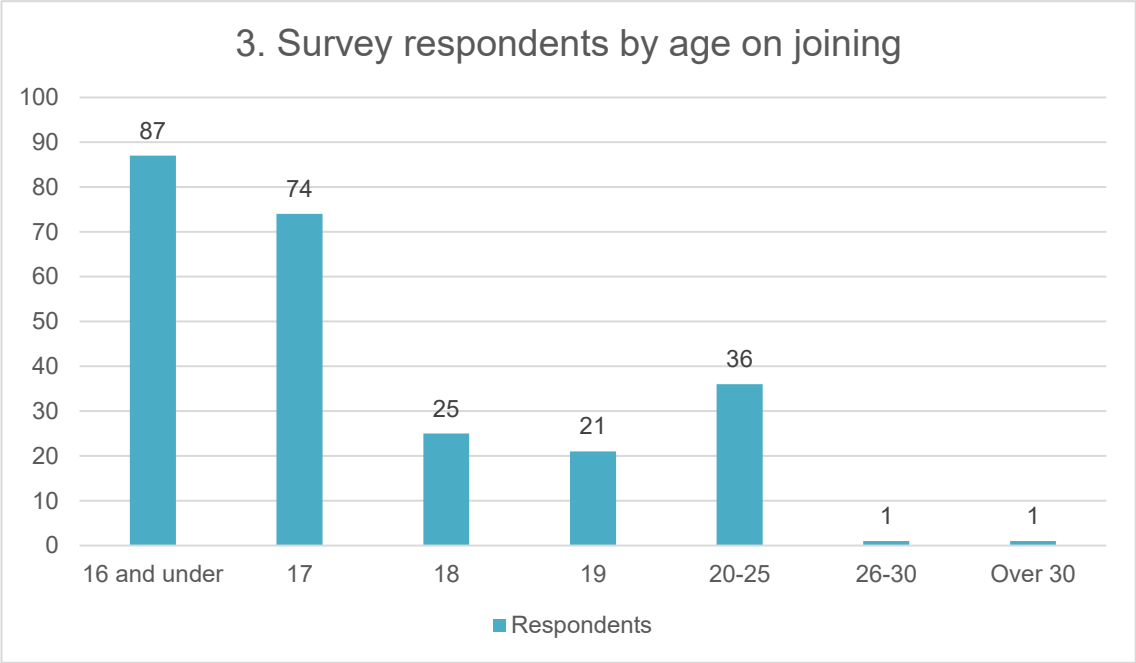

Figure 3: Survey respondents by age on joining

Figure 4 shows the ranks (post training) in all three services, along with those of the Royal Marines, how they equate to each other and how they have been grouped for the purposes of this study. 243 respondents indicated the highest rank they had achieved (Figure 5): of these, 131 (53%) had achieved a senior

rank (Royal Naval petty officer, British Army corporal or equivalent and above), 84 (35%) were junior ranks and 28 (11%) were officers. Within each service, the spread of ranks amongst survey respondents was broadly similar (Figure 6): for instance, 54% of naval respondents and 55% of those who had been in the army had achieved a senior rank.

Respondents reflected a wide range of experience in terms of the era in which they served (Figure 7). The majority (83%) of survey respondents joined the armed forces between 1966 and 1995: 66 (27%) signed up between 1966 and 1975, 85 (35%) between 1976 and 1985 and 51 (21%) between 1986 and 1995. Eight were veterans of the immediate post-war era, 1946-1955, a further 22 joined up between 1956 and 1965 and 13 (5%) volunteered after 1996, including four individuals who joined after 2005. This latter group included some who were very recent leavers, but the majority of respondents had left at least a decade before the study took place. Figure 8 shows respondents' length of service: the largest group of respondents, 95 individuals (39%) had completed between six and fifteen years' service; 88 (36%) had served for more than 22 years, 33 (14%) between sixteen and 22 years, and the remaining 28 (11%) for five years or less.

	Royal Navy	Royal Marines	British Army	Royal Air Force
Junior rates or ranks	Able rating	Marine	Private[1]	Leading Aircraftman / woman
	Leading rating / leading hand	Corporal	Lance Corporal	Senior Aircraftman / woman
Senior rates or ranks	Petty Officer	Sergeant	Corporal	Corporal
			Sergeant	Sergeant
	Chief Petty Officer	Colour Sergeant	Staff Sergeant / Colour Sergeant	
	Warrant Officer 2	Warrant Officer 2	Warrant Officer 2 / Company Sergeant Major / Squadron Sergeant Major	
	Warrant Officer 1	Warrant Officer 1	Warrant Officer 1 / Regimental Sergeant Major	
Junior officers	Sub Lieutenant	Second Lieutenant	Second Lieutenant	Flying Officer
			Lieutenant	
	Lieutenant	Captain	Captain	Flight Lieutenant
	Lieutenant Commander	Major	Major	Squadron Leader
Senior officers	Commander	Lieutenant Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel	Wing Commander
	Captain	Colonel	Colonel	Group Captain
	Commodore		Brigadier	Air Commodore
	Rear Admiral		Major General	Air Vice-Marshal
	Vice Admiral		Lieutenant General	Air Marshal
	Admiral	General	General	Air Chief Marshal

Figure 4: British armed forces ranks and groupings

(Sources: Armed forces recruitment websites)

[1] Depending on the corps or regiment, a Private may be known as Trooper, Gunner, Sapper, Guardsman, Rifleman or Kingsman

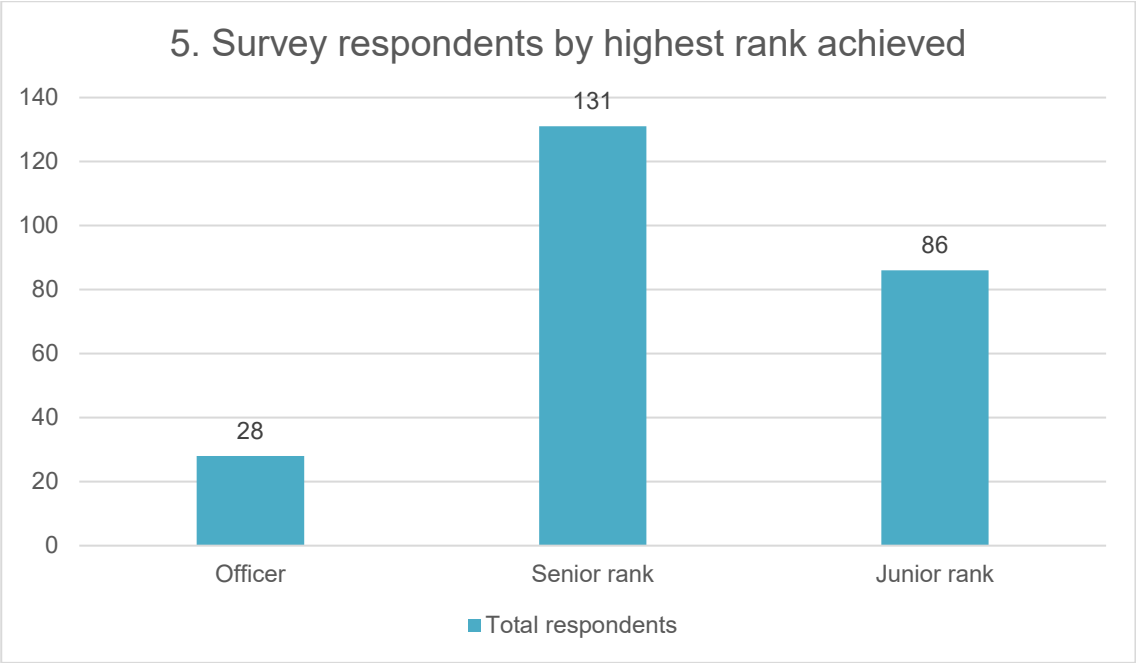

Figure 5: Survey respondents by highest rank achieved

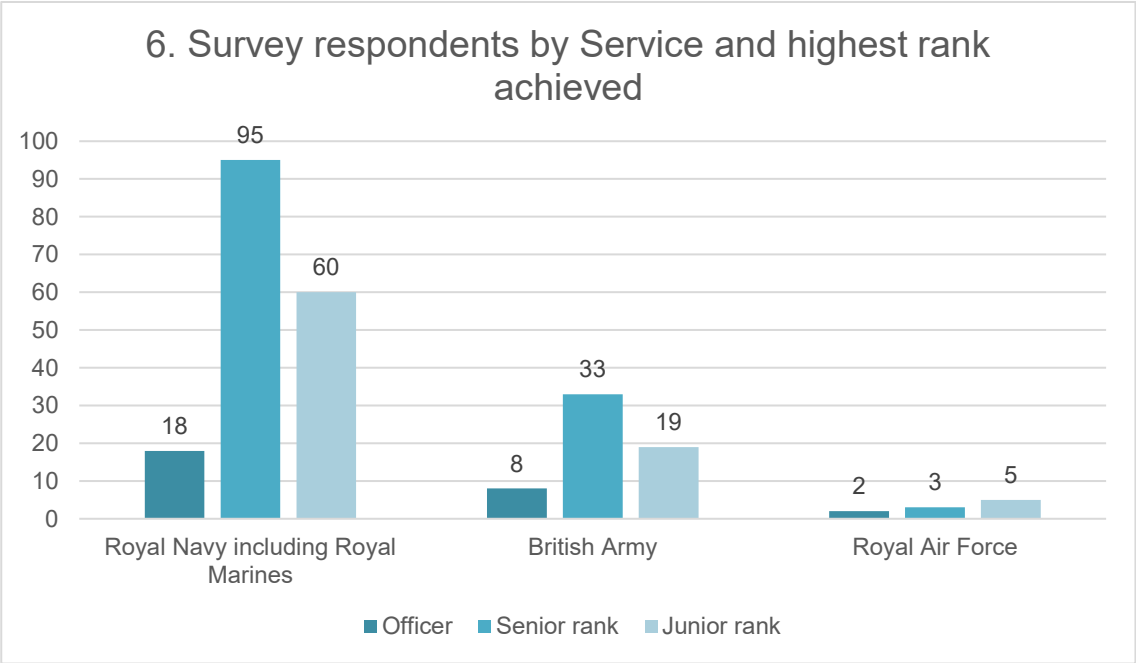

Figure 6: Survey respondents by Service and highest rank achieved

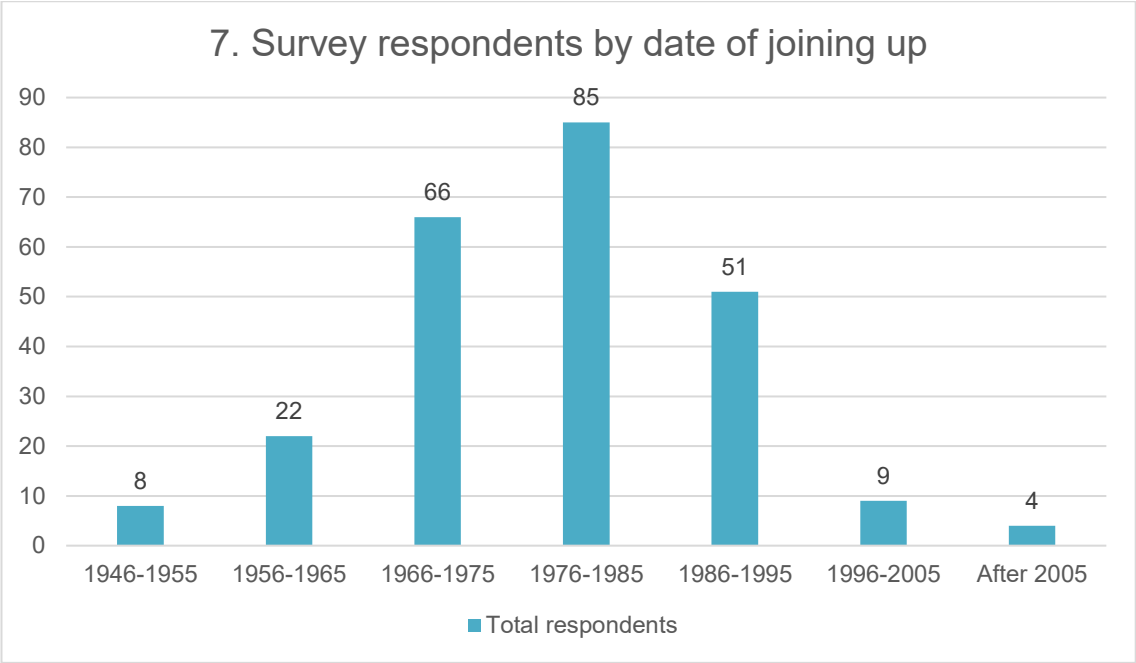

Figure 7: Survey respondents by date of joining up

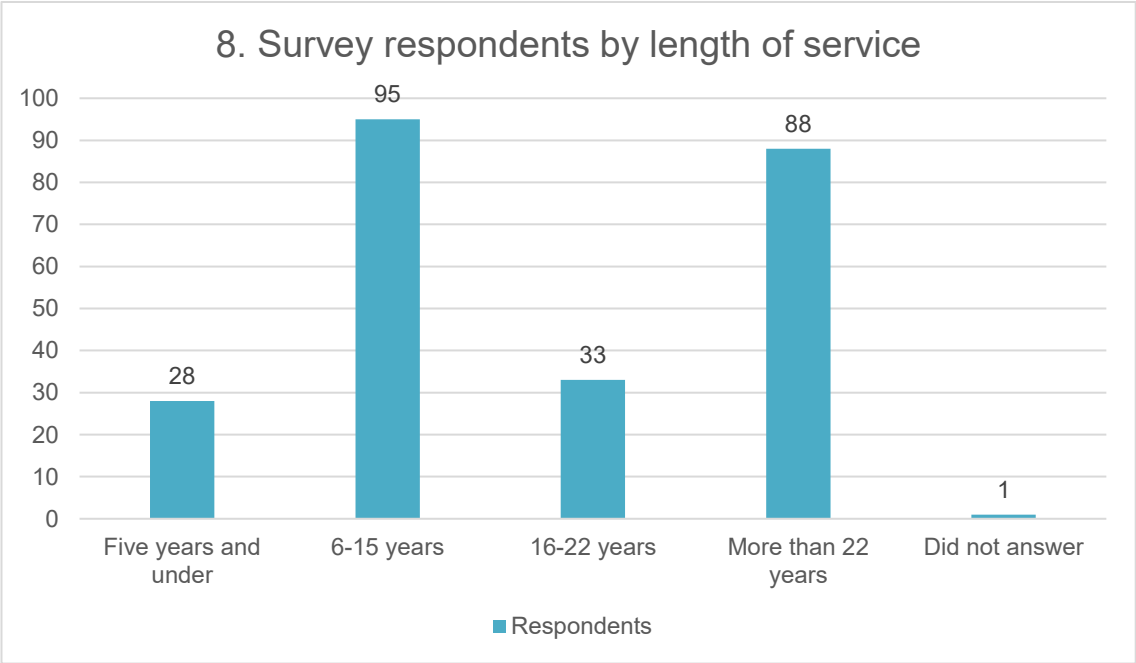

Figure 8: Survey respondents by length of service

Turning to those who were interviewed, Figure 9 gives full details of the Service, highest rank achieved, decade and age of joining up, length of service, gender and method of interview for each interviewee. 28 (67%) of the 42 people interviewed were in the Royal Navy or Royal Marines, eleven (26%) had served in the British Army and three (7%) were former members of the Royal Air Force (Figure 10). Coincidentally reflecting the demographic of the survey participants, (7%) were officers, 25 (60%) had achieved a senior rank and 14 (33%) served in the junior ranks (Figure 11). Figure 12 shows interviewees by Service and gender: 37 (88%) were male and 5 (12%) female, again reflecting the wider demographic of the armed forces; indeed, all five female interviewees had served in the Royal Navy.

Given the small numbers of officers who took part, especially in the interviews, all have been reported herein simply as officers, since further distinguishing them as, say, senior or junior officers, posed a potential confidentiality issue similar to that for the Royal Marines and RAF participants.

	Service	Highest rank	Joined up	Age on joining	Total service (years)	Gender	Interview method
1	Army	Officer	1966-1975	18	22+	M	Email
2	RN/RM	Senior	1976-1985	18	16-22	M	In person
3	RN/RM	Senior	1976-1985	19	22+	M	Email
4	RN/RM	Senior	1966-1975	18	22+	M	Email
5	RN/RM	Senior	1976-1985	17	22+	M	In person
6	RN/RM	Junior	1976-1985	17	6-15	M	Email
7	RN/RM	Senior	1966-1975	<16	22+	M	Email
8	RAF	Senior	1966-1975	18	6-15	M	Email
9	RAF	Junior	1986-1995	17	6-15	M	Email
10	Army	Senior	1966-1975	17	16-22	M	Email
11	Army	Senior	1986-1995	20-25	22+	M	Telephone
12	Army	Senior	1966-1975	19	6-15	M	Email
13	RN/RM	Junior	1986-1995	17	6-15	M	In person
14	Army	Officer	1986-1995	20-25	16-22	M	Email
15	RN/RM	Junior	1966-1975	20-25	16-22	M	In person
16	RN/RM	Senior	1986-1995	20-25	22+	M	In person
17	RN/RM	Junior	1986-1995	17	6-15	F	In person
18	RN/RM	Senior	1976-1985	19	22+	M	Email
19	Army	Senior	1966-1975	17	22+	M	In person
20	RN/RM	Junior	1996-2005	19	6-15	F	In person
21	RN/RM	Senior	1976-1985	20-25	6-15	M	In person
22	RN/RM	Junior	1956-1965	16	6-15	M	Email
23	RN/RM	Senior	1976-1985	17	6-15	M	In person
24	RN/RM	Junior	1966-1975	17	6-15	M	Email
25	RN/RM	Senior	1976-1985	19	22+	M	Email
26	RAF	Junior	1976-1985	16	6-15	M	In person
27	RN/RM	Junior	After 2005	18	<5	F	Email
28	RN/RM	Senior	1986-1995	20-25	22+	M	In person
29	RN/RM	Senior	1976-1985	16	22+	M	In person
30	RN/RM	Senior	1966-1975	16	22+	M	In person
31	RN/RM	Senior	1976-1985	16	22+	M	Email
32	RN/RM	Senior	1966-1975	16	22+	M	Email
33	Army	Senior	1986-1995	17	6-15	M	In person
34	RN/RM	Junior	1966-1975	18	<5	F	In person
35	RN/RM	Senior	1986-1995	19	22+	F	In person
36	RN/RM	Senior	1966-1975	17	16-22	M	In person
37	RN/RM	Junior	1956-1965	16	<5	M	Email
38	RN/RM	Officer	1966-1975	16	6-15	M	In person
39	Army	Junior	1976-1985	16	6-15	M	Email
40	Army	Senior	1996-2005	20-25	6-15	M	Telephone
41	Army	Senior	1966-1975	16	16-22	M	Email
42	Army	Junior	1966-1975	17	6-15	M	Email

Figure 9: Interviewees (RN/RM = Royal Navy / Royal Marines)

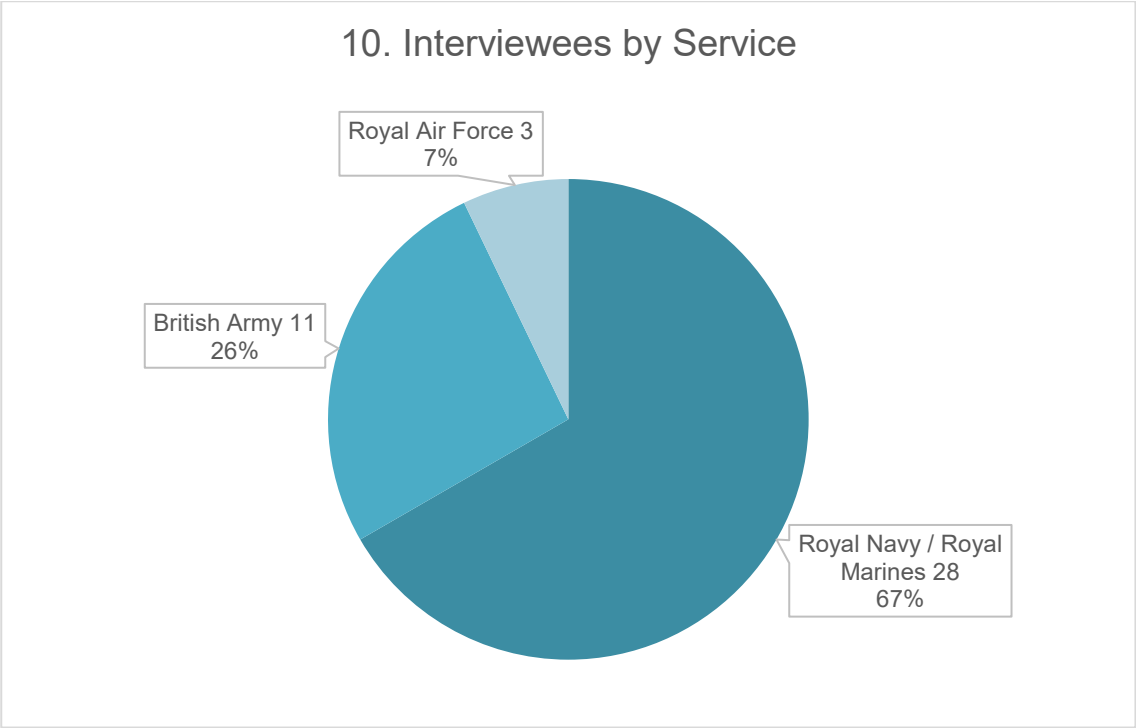

Figure 10: Interviewees by Service

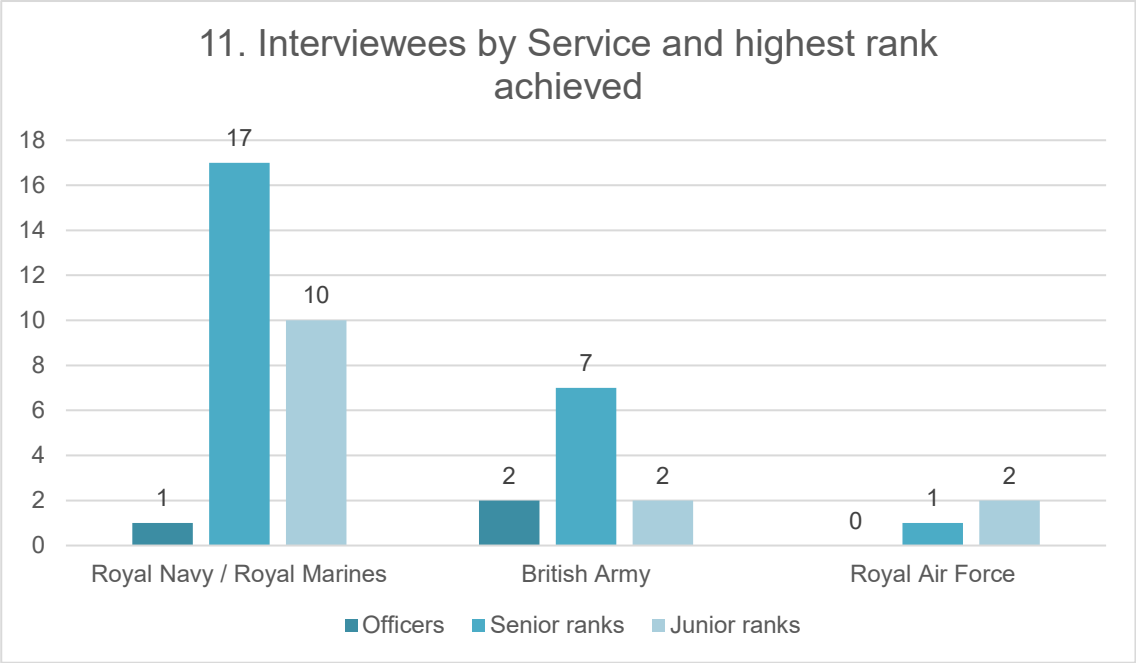

Figure 11: Interviewees by Service and highest rank achieved

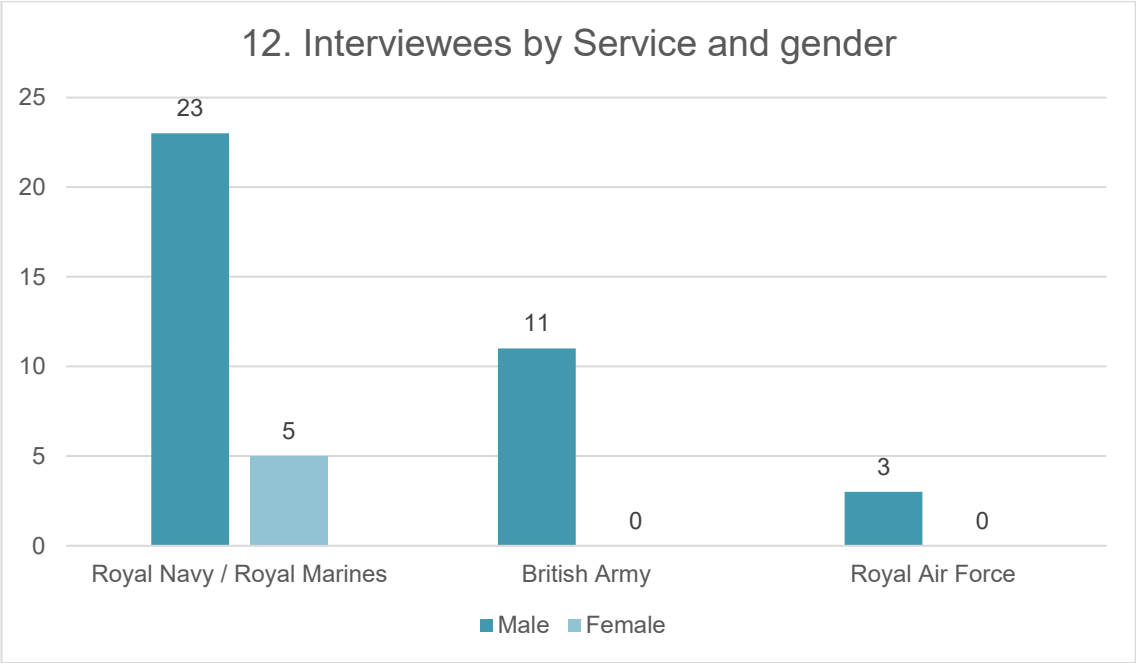

Figure 12: Interviewees by Service and gender

Data analysis

In critical realism, data analysis is not a distinct activity but part of an interconnected set of processes which are undertaken throughout a study. Typically, research designs 'start in a more expansive and exploratory phase before targeting what seems to matter most' (Vincent and Wapshott 2014: 159). Hence, then, my literature review and documentary analysis were 'expansive and exploratory'; the survey continued that exploration but utilised the preliminary conclusions I had drawn from the published material, and the interviews and group interview gradually homed in on what seemed to 'matter most'. Having identified themes and anomalies as I progressed, then, it was not necessary to develop a sophisticated coding system: instead, these themes and anomalies formed the basis of my analysis. All the interview transcripts, together with the text responses to open questions in the survey, were coded using broad terms such as control, discipline, promotion and voice, along with concepts including tradition, military separation and identity. At the end of this process, I had sizeable chunks of data which were broken down by themes: hence, for instance, material on voice was further coded to indicate whether the participant was content with the voice they had or not, and/or what type of voice was being discussed. Anomalies were highlighted in the same way, and then, together with the relevant literature and documents, the data was subjected to retroduction:

> highlighting key issues and asking why things occur as they do, what are the underlying mechanisms producing any regularities, what effects do they have and what are the conditions under which they happen (Sisson 2007: 57)

Retroduction involved, first, describing each phenomenon, paying attention to the ways in which the data illustrated the configuration of individuals and groups, the

norms of military behaviour and the wider contexts of the employment relationship and military life (Vincent and Wapshott 2014). Having described, the next step was to seek the causal powers which might explain each phenomenon and to explore whether they produced it or created the conditions for its production. Once the causal powers were identified, I attempted to conceptualise the ways in which they shaped events and actions, frequently using existing theories to do so. Finally, those conceptualisations were tested to see if they were adequate to explain the events and actions described in the data (Sayer 1992, Bhaskar 2014, Kempster and Parry 2014).

Chapter summary

This chapter has explored and explained my research philosophy as a critical realist working within the Marxist tradition of studies of work and employment, and outlined my methodological approach, which was subjective, intensive, exploratory and retroductive. It has also examined the barriers to researching the armed forces and highlighted the issues associated with access to military personnel, discussing how these were overcome. Following these sections, the chapter explored my research strategy, discussing the methods used at each of the five stages and the specific ethical issues arising from the study, before outlining some key points about the participants in the study. In particular, the chapter has sought to emphasise the similarities and contrasts between studies of civilian employees and workplaces and the armed forces, where questions of access and ethical considerations have more potential to disrupt the plans of the researcher. The next three chapters present and discuss the data collected during the study.

5. Regulating the military employment relationship: hierarchical control and rules-based control

Hierarchical control is based on the delegation of power down through the pyramid of hierarchy: authority is associated with the person of the individual and subordinates are subject to the orders of their superiors. In bureaucratic rules-based control, on the other hand, hierarchical power derives from formal rules and policies (Edwards 1979). Hierarchy is a central feature of military organisations, but, as discussed in chapter three, the literature suggests that power in the British armed forces derives both from the person of the leader and from the rules. The formal values and standards of all three services are rules-based, placing an emphasis on loyalty, obedience and duty (Army 2008, RAF 2008, RN 2016); on the other hand, however, the chain of command is all-pervasive, and detailed tables lay down the order of rank, precedence and 'entitlement to command' (see for instance RNQR 2016b), supporting the view that control is both hierarchical and rules-based. Similarly, the analysis of the disciplinary rules and procedures presented in chapter three suggests that power and control exist not only in the rules but also in the person of the commanding officer. Together, then, the chain of command, rules and disciplinary processes constitute a formidable control system, wherein all personnel are to 'conduct themselves with the utmost respect to their superior officers and with strict obedience to their orders' (RNQR 2016a).

This chapter will, first of all, explore participants' experiences of and attitudes towards the military hierarchy, emphasising in particular the value placed on promotion up that hierarchy. It will then consider some general points about the rules of military life before exploring respondents' experience of and views about

the disciplinary rules and procedures. Throughout, it will highlight apparent inconsistencies and contradictions which point to some confusion between rules-based control and hierarchical control.

Hierarchy and the chain of command

There were no specific questions in the survey about the military hierarchy, and the subject was rarely discussed in the interviews. However, it did arise tangentially: specifically with regard to individuals' attitudes towards the officers and the question of promotion, and more generally in the form of a set of unspoken assumptions. Three themes emerged: first, the data tended to support the view of the armed forces as informed by both hierarchical and rules-based control, and second, the study was used by some participants as an opportunity to express their frustrations with the hierarchy. Conversely, however, the third theme was the focus on promotion as a near universal goal.

The charts in Figure 13 illustrate the responses to the survey statement 'the officers always had our welfare and best interests at heart'. 218 respondents gave a view on this questions, with 48% agreeing or strongly agreeing. There were however, distinct differences according to rank: for instance, 100% of army and RAF officers and 75% of naval officers agreed or strongly agreed, but only 47% of army senior ranks and just 39% of naval junior ranks. Given the nature of the military hierarchy, this is unsurprising: indeed, the only surprise in these responses was the 25% of naval officers who, whether by accident or design, disagreed with the statement.

Figure 13: 'The officers always had our welfare and best interests at heart' (218 responses)

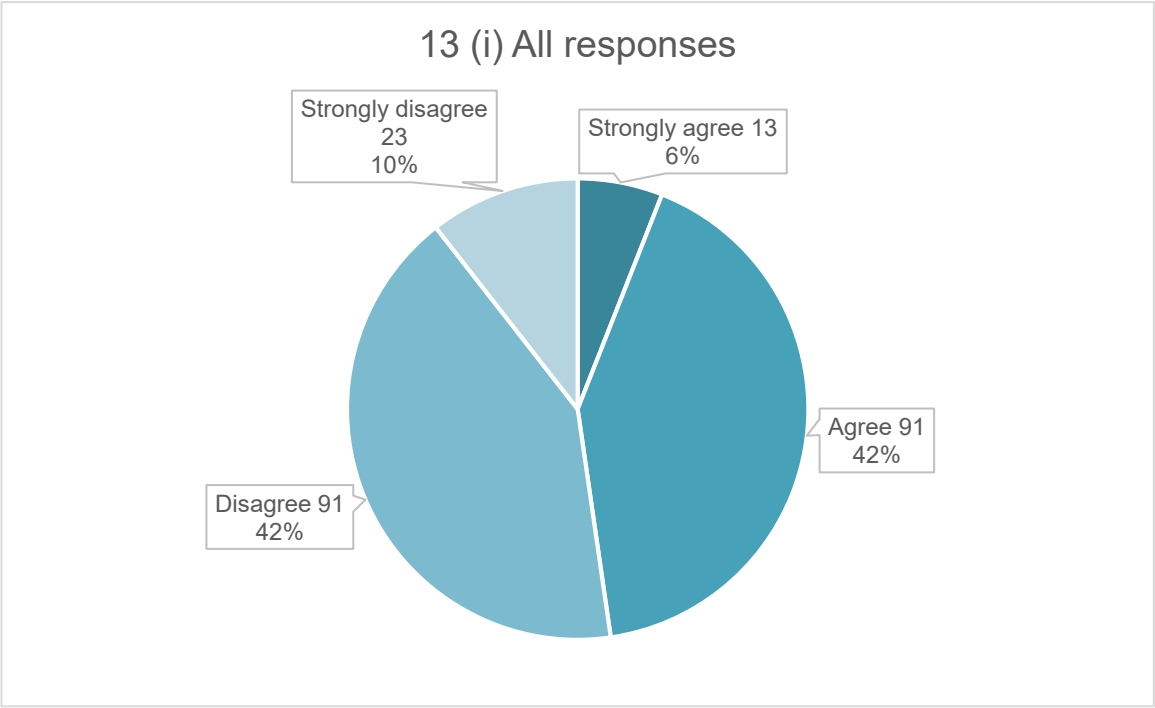

Figure 13 (i) 'The officers always had our welfare and best interests at heart': all responses

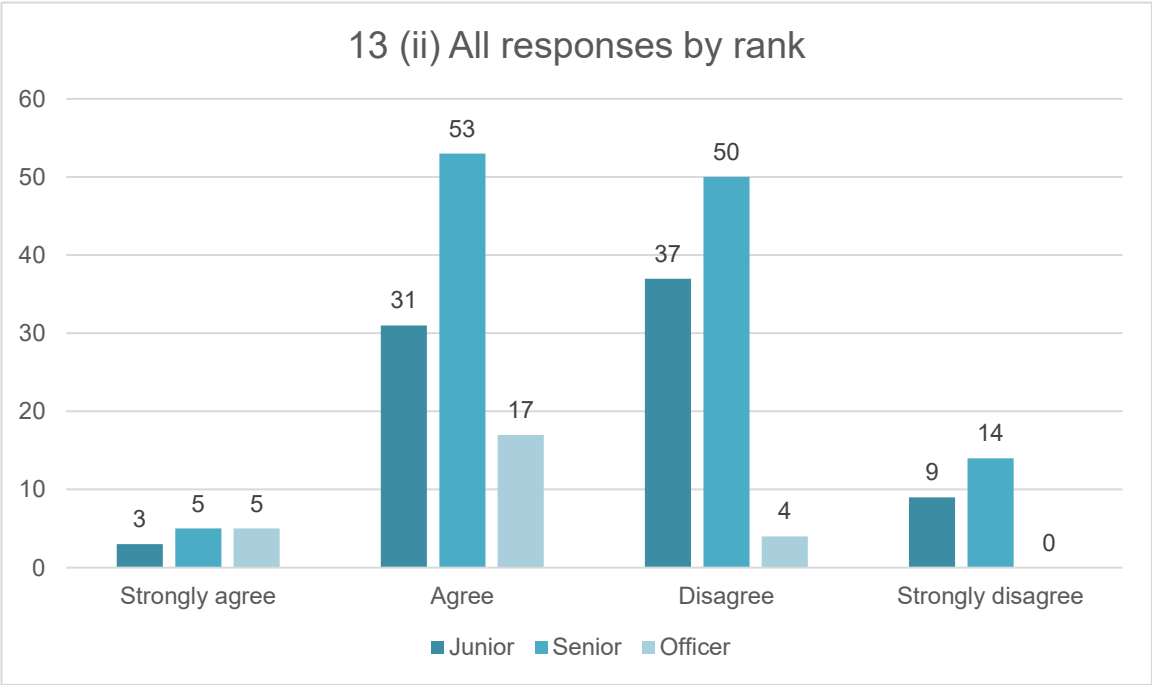

Figure 13 (ii) 'The officers always had our welfare and best interests at heart': all responses by rank

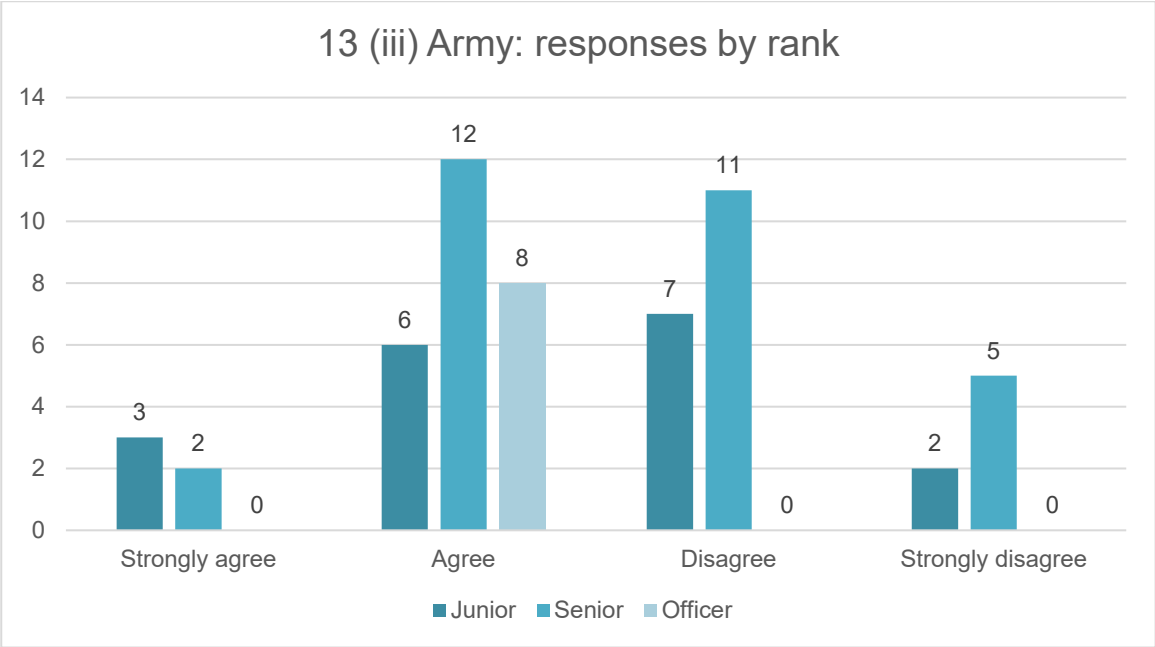

Figure 13 (iii) 'The officers always had our welfare and best interests at heart': Army responses by rank

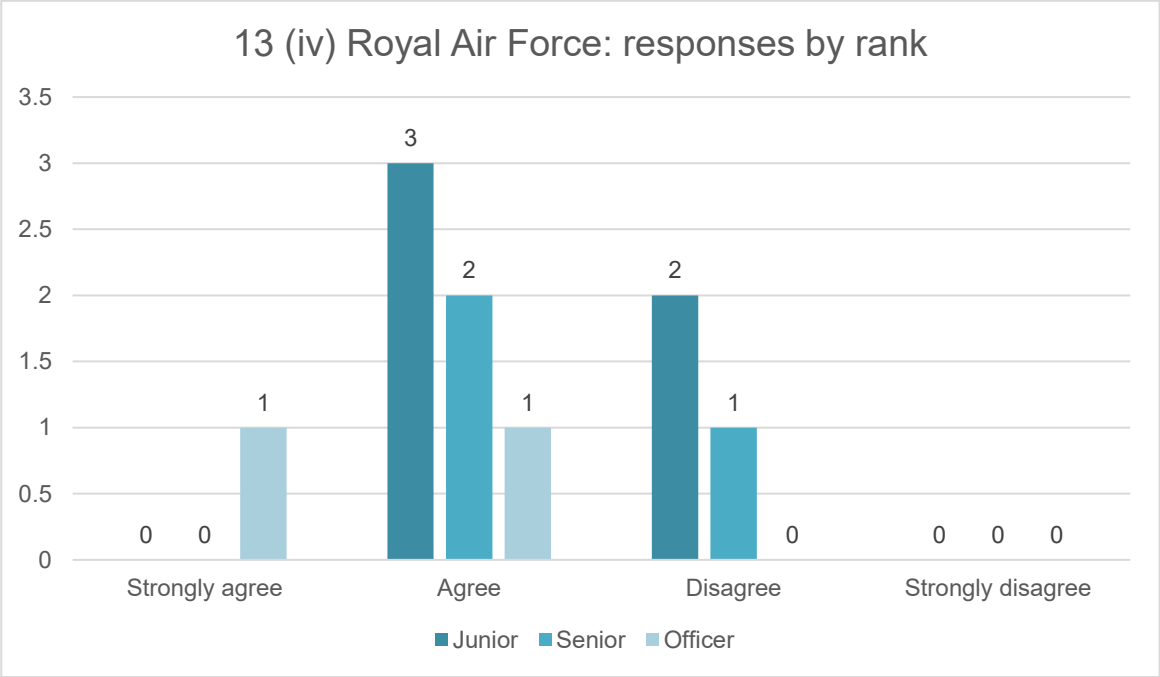

Figure 13 (iv) 'The officers always had our welfare and best interests at heart': Royal Air Force responses by rank

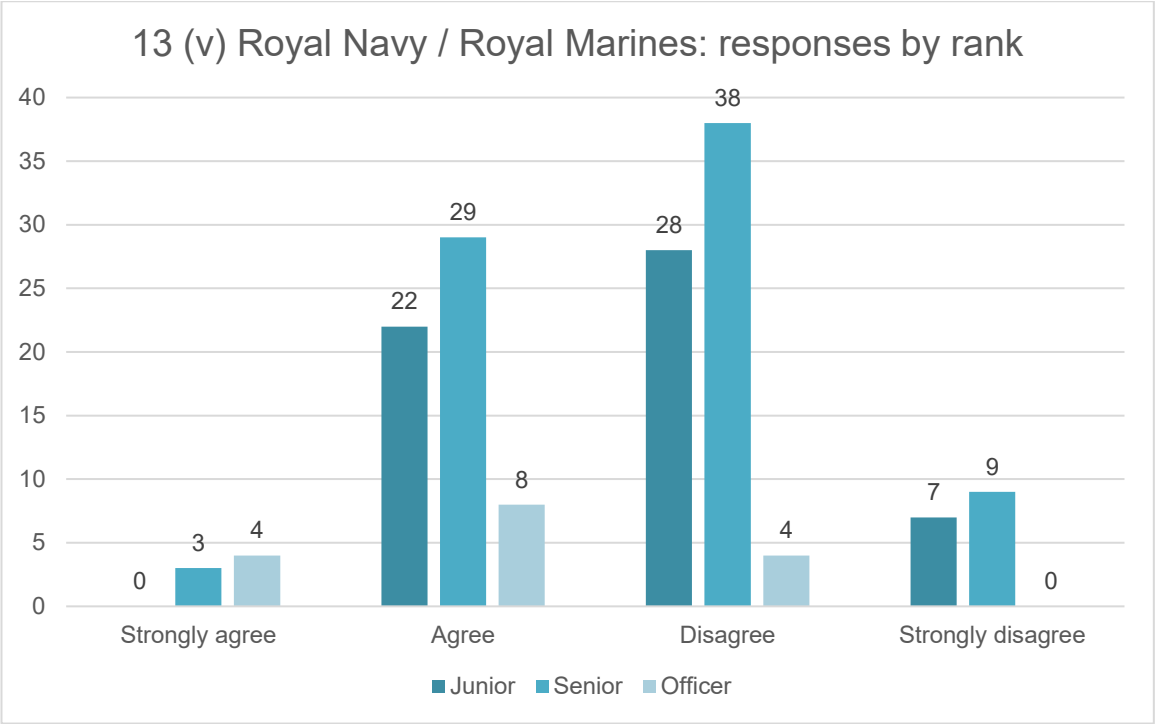

Figure 13 (v) 'The officers always had our welfare and best interests at heart': Royal Navy / Royal Marines responses by rank

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Survey participants were also asked to identify one thing which, if they could, they would go back and change: in response, two participants expressed a desire for what one termed a 'better relationship between officers and ratings' (Royal Navy, junior). In this regard, one interviewee in particular expanded on the ways in which, despite living together on board ship for lengthy periods, the different levels of the naval hierarchy spent very little time together when they were not working, since mess space, which comprises accommodation for both sleep and leisure, is segregated by rank. Furthermore, and in a navy which was then only just coming to terms with women going to sea, and which is still overwhelmingly male, she went on to explain that rank took priority over everything else, including the forging of social bonds with other women:

> *[On one voyage] I was the only female in the [chief petty officers' and warrant officers'] mess. … I don't think I ever went out [socially with any of the four women in] the petty officers' mess … even though one of them I knew from a previous ship … If I went out all the time with [women who were lower in rank] I wouldn't say it would be frowned upon, but I don't think they would consider it totally acceptable, totally appropriate … A lot of it's to do with discipline* (Royal Navy, senior)

Interestingly, however, another ex-naval interviewee recounted a story about an incident which occurred when he, a senior rank, and a friend, who was a junior rating, were drinking ashore together all day, pointing either to a distinct lack of consistency in this regard or, simply, to an evasion of the unwritten rules.

Hierarchy bestows certainty (Diefenbach 2013), as illustrated, for instance, by comments from more than one participant about being able to assume that orders and instructions would be followed, and by one interviewee's assertion that

> *whatever the top wants to happen, then that happens* (British Army, senior).

Certainty, too, appears to have lain behind the assertion that

> *senior officers will always support junior officers in disputes with ratings no matter the rights and wrongs of the case* (Royal Navy, senior)

Equally, however, others felt that such rigid hierarchy resulted in perceived wrongs, suggesting a lack of organisational justice:

> *Officers got away with a lot of things that were called high spirits whereas the ranks would be disciplined harshly (*Royal Air Force, junior)

Similarly, it did not go unnoticed that living standards and facilities varied according to the individual's place in the hierarchy. More than one interviewee gave their views on the differences in quality and range of food on offer, dependent on rank, and this extended to other key considerations:

> *Non-commissioned ranks would get old-fashioned spring beds with foam rubber mattresses, but officers would get proper mattresses* (Royal Air Force, junior)

Other participants took the opportunity to vent their feelings about the hierarchy, referring for example to 'power crazy senior officers' abusing their status (Royal Navy, junior) and a 'what I say goes syndrome' amongst superiors (Royal Navy, junior). Others still highlighted issues which have long been recognised as drawbacks in bureaucracy (Diefenbach 2013), not least the existence of parallel hierarchies, one based on skills, training and knowledge and the other determined by status, rank and seniority. Hence one survey respondent bemoaned having been 'managed … by senior officers who did not possess the level of technical expertise and then hid behind their deficiencies' (Royal Navy, officer), while a second spoke of individuals 'being promoted beyond their capability or too quickly … to the detriment of those subordinate to them' (Royal Navy, officer). A third highlighted the anomaly of military nurses, who, due to changes in professional requirements, are now the only graduate personnel who are not automatically given officer status, while a fourth exposed the way in which the rules took precedence over everything else, complaining that:

> *I qualified as an accountant during my time … yet was not allowed to undertake roles where I could use these skills because I was not commissioned* (Royal Navy, senior)

Several participants also had a view on how things might change for the better. For instance, it was suggested that, instead of separate entry routes for officers and other ranks, 'everyone should join on an equal footing with the best promoted on merit' (Royal Navy, senior) or, similarly, that access to more complex roles

should be based on 'aptitude and knowledge rather than rank' (Royal Navy, senior). Some also expressed a view on the difference between direct entry officers and those who had come up through the ranks:

> *If they'd come up through the ranks, they were more likely to know the score. Obviously you get some good officers that come straight in from university … but the ones that would really back you up wholeheartedly were the ones that had worked their way through … because he'd done it and he knew … he had a better understanding … Some of the officers, there was a lack of understanding of how the lower ranks worked* (Royal Navy, junior)

The more common distinction, however, was made between those officers who stood on ceremony and those who did not:

> *The captain … used to come out drinking with us in the evening … I've got happy memories of a first lieutenant and the rest of the crew [singing] down the main streets of Gibraltar* (Royal Navy, junior)

On the other hand, however:

> *Some officers would use [their] rank … If there was a queue for anything and you were blocking a route and an officer wanted to get through there was never an "excuse me" – it was "gangway for an officer"* (Royal Navy, junior)

Similarly, the personality and behaviour of the officer made a big difference to day-to-day operations; several examples were given, for instance, of officers who neglected to listen to subordinates with more knowledge and/or experience. As one interviewee explained:

> *You get the young officer who … thinks he knows the way of the world, he would be in charge of thirty people in the infantry … If he didn't listen to his sergeant who'd been in for fifteen years then he was silly, because the sergeant could make life very difficult for the officer* (British Army, senior)

Perhaps above all, evidence emerged to demonstrate that there was, for some, confusion over whether respect was due to the individual or to the rank:

> *There's a few [seniors] that go "you haven't saluted me" – "well you're not wearing a cap" – "you salute me" – "no, we salute the badge on the cap, not you. It ain't nothing to do with you"* (Royal Navy, junior).

Moving up the hierarchy

Despite these criticisms, and despite there being, again, no specific questions about it, the question of promotion up the hierarchy featured heavily throughout the data. One survey question asked participants to identify one thing which they would, if they could, go back and change, and responses to this question frequently indicated regrets in this regard. A former junior rank in the army stated that 'I would have strived harder for promotion', reflecting the views of a number of others who wished that they had tried for promotion, or that they had done so sooner or more often. One respondent regretted a single decision which had a substantial impact:

> *deciding to postpone taking my promotion examination for twelve months at the age of 21 cost me my career. Taking that exam immediately would have made a significant difference to my promotion prospects* (Royal Navy, junior)

Similarly, a former high-ranking army officer regretted not having been 'more career aware at an earlier stage: it might have helped me get even more promotion'. Here, too, differences within and between the services were apparent: for instance, one respondent regretted joining a particular branch of the navy because 'promotion was easier and quicker and less discriminatory' elsewhere. Promotion was, of course, seen as important because of the implications for pay and the all-important pension:

> *my military pension is almost worthless now as it is based on final salary. Final salary for a chief petty officer or an officer is a lot higher than it is for a … leading hand* (Royal Navy, junior)

However, the value of promotion goes beyond the financial, as is made clear to new recruits:

> *you're basically told from the beginning that your career is in your hands, so … the more things you do, the better you make yourself, the more courses you put yourself through, … the better your reports are at the end of the year … which means you're more likely to be promoted. It's all about promotion* (British Army, senior)

In light of the emphasis placed upon it, a number of participants highlighted their frustration with the obstacles which stood in the way of promotion. For some, the obstacles were perceived as being of their own making: a former naval officer took the blame for 'a foolish personal incident which effectively limited my promotion' and a former senior rank in the same service expressed some regret that, by volunteering for a posting which offered great opportunities for travel, he had 'frozen' his promotion prospects. One interviewee pointed out that it was important not to damage your own prospects:

> *If you start questioning too many things, people think that you've become awkward, that you're questioning the way of the military and the ethos of the military and the way that we do it … that could reflect on your promotion and reflect on your career* (British Army, senior)

However, as another explained, promotion was not necessarily in the individual's hands, particularly when it came to the higher ranks:

> *it's on recommendation and behaviour … somebody's perception or interpretation of you – if they've taken a dislike to you people were able to stop [you getting promoted] … It's usually the louder, the more confident, the more effervescent … the people people if you like, that get on. It's not necessarily attributable to intellect or ability, or not always.* (Royal Navy, junior)

Others, therefore, expressed criticisms of the promotion system as a whole, or of aspects of it: one former naval officer, for instance, spoke of a single appraisal report which had proved a bar to further progression. Similarly, a participant who had achieved a senior rank in the navy complained that he had been turned down for a course which would have improved his promotion prospects, while for one interviewee, the self-styled 'problem child' of the regiment, it was personal:

> *I came top of the course, which is automatic promotion, and I was the only one that never got promoted. … And then [I did another course and] I came within the top third of the course … being in the top third again is another reason for you to get promoted – and I never got promoted off that. [I wasn't promoted for] about two and half, three years … And … if I'd have been promoted on time I then would have got the next promotion on time* (British Army, senior)

Perhaps the biggest complaint about promotion, however, related to the process: in essence, personnel who meet the required standards cannot be promoted until there is a relevant vacancy, resulting in potential delays between being passed for the higher rank and actually achieving it. One interviewee, referring to the early 1990s, explained how:

> *there was quite limited promotion for the lads … they'd all be passed for promotion but there'd be no vacancies for them* (Royal Navy, senior)

According to a former naval officer, there was also a period in the 1980s when a 'demographic trough' held up promotions, and another interviewee indicated that the situation was not dissimilar in the 1960s and 1970s:

> *in those days it wasn't uncommon for people to have three stripes, which is twelve years' [service] plus and still be an able seaman [junior rate] … nothing uncommon about that at all* (Royal Navy, senior)

It was also suggested that there are similar issues today:

> *A lot of the people trying to get to [petty officer] level and chief [petty officer] level have to wait a long time to get promotion. That's why a lot of them don't stay in* (Royal Navy, senior)

Referring to this, amongst other issues, one participant suggested that making progress in a military career was 'more luck than judgement':

> *I was unlucky. Had I joined up five years earlier or later, I could have done exactly the same thing, received precisely the same reports, and I would have ended up as either a chief petty officer or an officer, which was my ambition. As it was, I didn't … [I left because of] the frustration at having to wait for promotion while duffers who had been on the roster for millennia clogged up the system* (Royal Navy, junior)

The emphasis placed on promotion by participants in this study, who were not specifically asked about it, indicates a strong sense and understanding of the nature of the military hierarchy. As such, the hierarchy itself constitutes a form of control: by holding out the prospect of advancement, with all this entails in terms of financial and other rewards, the promotion system serves to co-opt personnel and to keep them in line, thus helping to minimise overt conflict in the military employment relationship. The rules, and particularly those relating to discipline, play a similar role.

The rules

In accordance with the view of military organisations as 'ideal type' bureaucracies, the British armed forces are governed by a wealth of written rules and procedures affecting every aspect of life. Not surprisingly, then, the overwhelming majority (89%) of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the intentionally vague statement that 'everybody knew the rules', with

minimal differences between the different services or ranks. This was to be expected since, as one interviewee explained:

> *You do courses … you have to learn and do tests on what is acceptable and what isn't acceptable, the way you talk to people, the way you dress … and all sorts of things. … Nobody can say "I never knew it was wrong"* (British Army, senior)

In addition to the general rules which apply to all personnel, there are specific rules for each unit or establishment:

> *Every ship has its own standing orders [in thick volumes] … and you're expected to read them within 48 hours of joining and sign to say that you've read and understood them. … And people get enough induction when they join any establishment to know that there are standing orders and where to find them* (Royal Navy, senior)

By way of confirming how detailed some of the rules were, another explained that:

> *Every day … they tell you what the uniform of the day is. You know you've got to turn up fifteen minutes before you go on watch, you know [when] you don't drink* (Royal Navy, senior)

For a number of participants, indeed, the rules were welcomed and even comforting, since they reflected the certainties of military life:

> *You know what's expected of you and you know what to expect of other people. You know where you're supposed to be, what time you're supposed to be there, what you're going to do when you get there … [Compared with civilian employment] it was much easier in the Navy* (Royal Navy, junior)

It was also clear that most participants understood the rationale behind the rules:

> *Rules are in place, … ways of working and ways of living, … Breaches of those things, if they weren't dealt with, you'd just get total … anarchy* (Royal Navy, senior)

Indeed, some rules were not simply understood but positively welcomed. For instance, the armed forces place great emphasis on the need for scrupulous personal hygiene, to the extent that trainees are trained in how to wash

themselves. One interviewee spoke of how he still showers and puts on clean clothes twice a day, keeping himself ‘sterile’, a routine which had enabled him to avoid infection in the most hostile of environments, and which he continues to appreciate. A second took a similar view, but expressed it in rather more blunt terms:

> *let’s face it, no one wants to live in a bunk space with someone who can't clean themselves properly and doesn't realise that they stink to high heaven* (Royal Navy, senior)

Another interviewee, similarly, argued very persuasively not only for the rules, but also for those rules to apply continuously, as is the case with military law:

> *If I’m in the military then I have a professional identity, and that professional identity is dependent on how I behave … So … I must not behave in ways … which may erode trust … You can’t have people not doing drugs in the navy … then going home at the weekend and [taking drugs], or joyriding, or fighting in the street … [Besides, personnel] are subject to recall at a moment’s notice, and if you’re behaving in certain ways that would prevent you from being able to respond to such a recall* (Royal Navy, senior)

With regard to a more comprehensive understanding of the thinking behind the rules, however, it was suggested that this often only came with hindsight:

> *I don’t know if you know why the rules are there early on. You just think “well, it’s very strict, but it’s the armed forces and so the rules are very strict”. It’s only retrospectively, later on in life, you realise* (Royal Navy, junior)

Equally, some participants expressed frustration at what they perceived to be the unequal application of the rules, often, coincidentally, venting further frustration with the hierarchical nature of the armed forces:

> *[rules] were applied to the junior rates with rigour, yet the senior rates were allowed carte blanche to apply them to themselves, which they obviously did not, and the officers were seemingly free from any rules* (Royal Navy, junior)

Moreover, some rules were simply dismissed as being petty, as became clear in one interview:

> *They brought this thing out that you couldn't call people by nicknames … We're in the middle of the Pacific, there's nobody around, and I couldn't call my boss [nickname]. … they said familiarity was breaking down the respect of the service: it was nuts … and it was just a waste of time. … It didn't last very long* (Royal Navy, junior)

Taking a broader view, there was also some criticism of the way the rules had not kept up with changes over time; one interviewee was already qualified in his trade when he joined the service, but was told that he still had to be trained from scratch:

> *[They'll say] "we've got to teach you this way … this is how we've done it for a hundred years" … it's all about tradition, all about tradition* (British Army, senior)

As another participant put it:

> *It was always difficult to break the ingrained habit of "we've always done it like this"* (British Army, junior)

Most participants, however, had little, positive or negative, to say about the general rules of military life; taken together with the assertion expressed by most that 'everybody knew the rules', the data therefore suggests not only that there is a strong element of rules-based control in the armed forces but also that, in the main, personnel accept and comply with it.

Experiences of discipline and punishment

Probably the strongest theme in all the data generated by this study was the view, not only that everybody knew the rules, but also that, therefore, individuals who were punished for breaking those rules were getting their just desserts. 87% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 'if I did something wrong when I was in the [service] I deserved to be punished'. As one interviewee put it:

> *If I did something wrong, somebody would shout and scream at me and make me work over the weekend on guard or something like that, and I totally accepted that because I'd done wrong* (British Army, senior)

It was clear, too, that many participants had a strong sense, not only of what the disciplinary rules were, but also of the reasoning behind them:

> *it's for your own safety, it's for the reputation of the armed forces, it's for the good of the country which we all serve … So everybody's behaving in the same manner because if they don't it's not a force, you've just got random people doing whatever they want* (Royal Navy, junior)

Several participants, then, suggested that those who were disciplined brought it upon themselves. For instance:

> *The old system was "march the guilty bastard in" and invariably, in my opinion, it was true … I would argue that if you were ever to find the stats, 95% or more would go "guilty, you've got me" – because they were* (Royal Navy, senior)

Interestingly, this latter participant, one of those who tended to give the official line during the interview, also argued that he was treated very badly during a disciplinary investigation and hearing, suggesting not only that different standards might apply when matters come close to home but also, perhaps, that the official line did not always accord with reality.

Over two thirds (68%) of survey respondents said that they had been disciplined, formally or informally, during the course of their service, suggesting that, for many, discipline and punishment was something of a regular feature of military life. One interviewee appeared to confirm this:

> *The same people get done all the time because they just don't learn. I mean, mine was my timekeeping, for being late … I got done a few times for that …* (Royal Navy, junior)

Another, however, had committed a more serious offence:

> *I went absent without leave for three, no, four weeks. I got so fed up cleaning stuff … I just went off … Came back and they locked me up for four weeks* (Royal Navy, senior)

Others, of course, had been on the other side of the table, handing down disciplinary sanctions and punishments. One such participant, however, emphasised the comparative rarity of formal disciplinary proceedings:

> *I've had occasion over 35 years of service to pursue disciplinary proceedings against four people only. By proceeding, that's taking them all the way up through the discipline process. Others I could manage within house, and generally [they] were …. resolved quickly and simply* (Royal Navy, officer)

Participants had also experienced other aspects of the disciplinary processes, one acting as provost martial, accompanying personnel to the court martial:

> *They get put into my care and then I've got to be with them the whole time. You get dressed up in [full dress uniform], you have to carry a sword … I had to take them to dinner, if they went to the toilet I had to go to the toilet with them … I had to have them from the minute they came out of the cell until the minute they put them back into the cells … I didn't like that job* (Royal Navy, junior)

This reference to full dress uniform reflects the extent of formal ceremonial accompanying the courts martial, which is far in excess of that in the civilian courts. In particular, proceedings 'include a certain amount of … ceremony as

befits the traditions of the Armed Forces and the unique nature of Service life' (MCS 2015: 3). Not surprisingly, therefore, some historical accounts indicate that defendants find the whole experience intimidating, to say the least (Connelly and Miller 2004, Rubin 2005). However, another interviewee had been involved in the coordination of personnel required to sit on naval court martial panels and told of how, having been stood down for two weeks to perform this function, those individuals had nothing to do because there were no naval cases to be heard. The limited statistics available confirm that the overwhelming majority of courts martial defendants are from the army, not only the largest of the three services but also probably the one in which discipline is tightest (MOD 2019).

Turning to the question of punishment, two thirds (67%) of survey respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that 'service disciplinary punishments were harsh'. There were, however, notable differences on the basis of rank: those who had achieved a senior rank (73%) or were officers (77%) were much more likely to disagree than those who had served in the lower ranks (56%). As might be expected, then, those who were more likely to have been on the receiving end of discipline were also more likely to believe that the punishments were harsh. Interestingly, too, individuals who had served in the Royal Navy (71%) were substantially more likely to disagree that punishments were harsh than ex-army participants (57%), probably reflecting the different cultures of the services. Responses to this statement do not, of course, indicate whether the participant believed that 'harshness' was a good thing, but the interviews offered the opportunity to explore this in more detail. Here, again, the predominant view was that punishment was merited:

> *Every time that I did wrong – and believe me like every soldier I was wrong lots and lots of times – I got punished. And looking back … even when I did get punished I never got more … than I deserved* (British Army, senior).

Some, however, did feel that there was a degree of harshness to the punishments meted out during their time in the service:

> *It is harsh. If you turned up late, ten minutes late, you'd be in trouble, you'd be either fined or you'd lose a day's pay or lose a day's leave … if you turned up in the wrong uniform that'd be quite a big punishment. So little things you might think are nothing …* (Royal Navy, senior)

Respondents also highlighted the changes in punishments over time: one, who had joined up between 1956 and 1965, recalled the use of corporal punishment during his naval apprenticeship:

> *strokes of a cane, generally six, ceremonially carried out over a gym horse in the gymnasium with the captain and commander present, the medical officer examining the poor apprentice after each stroke* (Royal Navy, junior)

Those who served more recently made no mention of corporal punishment, but one participant spoke at length about the physical nature of many punishments, while also offering an explanation for them:

> *when I say physical I don't mean beatings, I mean things like running round parade grounds with a mattress over your head … press-ups, sit-ups … But everybody knew that in some respects they were there to serve a purpose, to make you fitter* (Royal Navy, senior)

Military punishments, as discussed in chapter three, are designed to deter, and in the past one way of ensuring this was to administer punishments in public. In contrast to the civilian workplace, where 'being disciplined is by definition a

private matter' (Edwards and Whitston 1989: 24), participants indicated that this practice had not entirely died out. One recollected how,

> *in my first four months [in the service], … these two boys were lined up in front of the whole camp … while they read out the punishment warrants. … And the way they did it … was to send a message, they wanted an impact … they wanted people to see how the service would react* (Royal Navy, officer)

Similarly, a former junior rank in the navy remembered how, less than twenty years ago, a young woman alleged to have stolen from others on the ship was verbally punished on the flight deck in front of the whole ship's company, presumably before being discharged.

As to whether punishments did indeed deter, whether specifically or generally, the experience of many who took part in this study confirmed that the deterrent effect was minimal. Several participants said that they had been punished several times, and one effectively rejected the notion of deterrence when he said that:

> *you'd get told off, you'd get your punishment and you'd forget about it* (Royal Navy, senior)

Similarly, another interviewee, coincidentally highlighting the relative security of a military career, suggested that it was unlikely that many would be discharged for disciplinary reasons:

> *You know that, obviously unless you do something really bad, they're going to keep you. They might lock you up for 28 days but they're gonna keep you* (Royal Navy, junior)

Perhaps the most comprehensive demolition of the portrayal of military punishment as deterrent, however, came from another participant who had at one point been demoted as a result of a disciplinary hearing:

> *twelve months later you get your rate back and [the demotion] is not held against your future development. I made [the rank above*

> *the one from which I was demoted] five years after getting busted … It was all about how good you were at your job, not about having a clean record* (Royal Navy, senior).

Moreover, this same interviewee had a good friend who:

> *hit a [superior], got busted and spent time at the military prison in Colchester. Towards the end of his career, as a [senior rate] he was drafted as staff to [the military prison in] Colchester* (Royal Navy, senior)

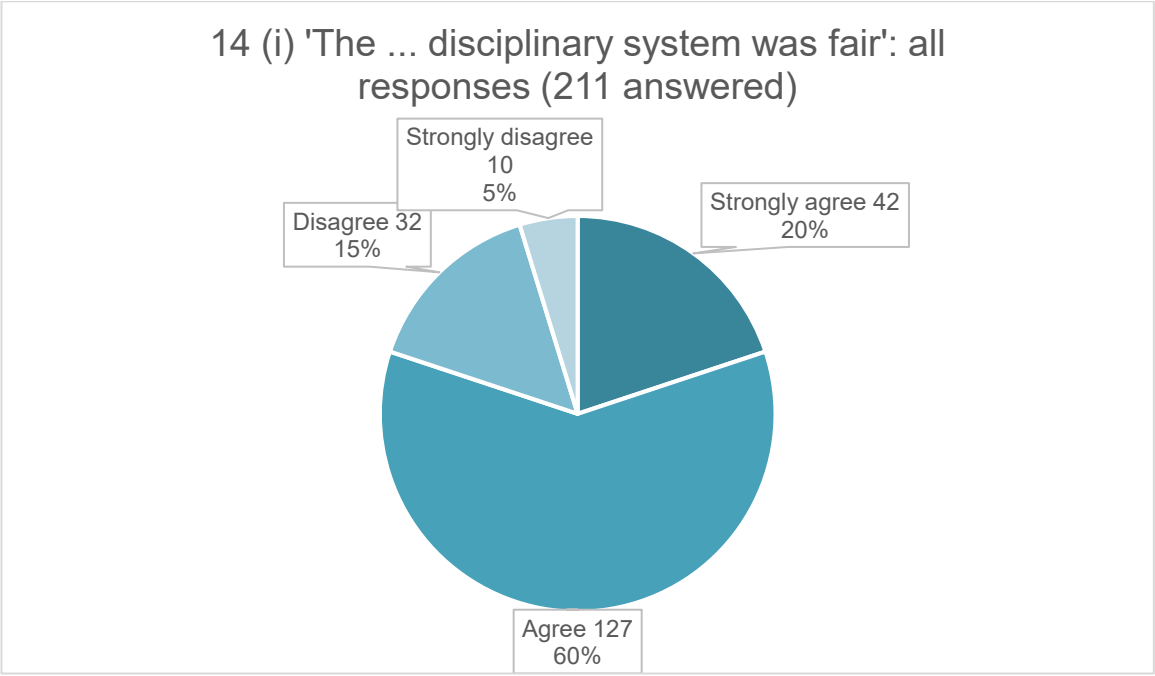
If an individual can be seen not to have suffered from his misdeeds, and indeed to have continued up the promotion ladder with apparently little difficulty, the use of military punishment as a deterrent is indeed questionable. Moreover, the armed forces remain a largely closed community, where news and gossip can spread a long way in a short time: personnel might be moved from one unit to another, but maintain personal contacts such that, as events unfold,

> *you just get on the blower, ring your mate up … "do you know so-and-so?" – "no, but I know so-and-so" – "right, give him a bell" … There's always somebody that knows somebody that knows somebody* (Royal Navy, junior)

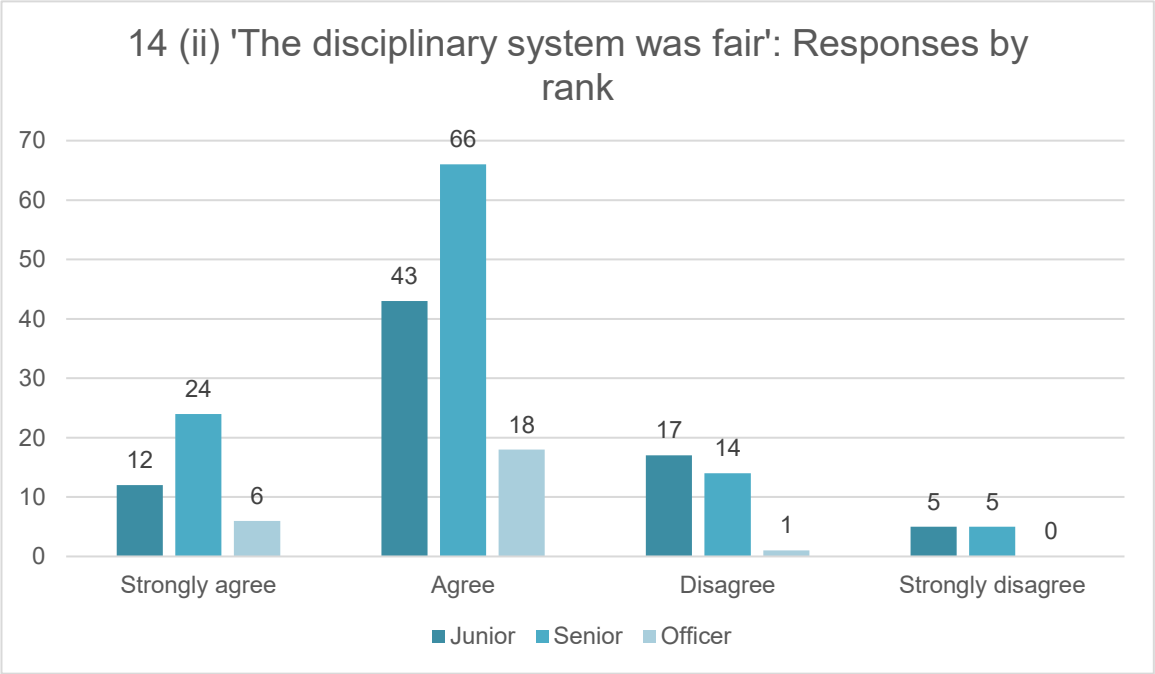
Thanks to this enhanced grapevine, therefore, not only is it unlikely that disciplinary matters remain confidential; there is also probably a high degree of certainty of being caught. As discussed in chapter two, a proportion of the population, and particularly younger people, are unlikely to be deterred by the prospect of punishment and, therefore, more likely to risk apprehension (Hollinger and Clark 1983, Jacobs 2010). Considering the relatively young age profile of the armed forces, then, it would appear not only that punishments do not deter, but also that a substantial proportion of military personnel are indeed not deterrable.

Perceptions of discipline and punishment

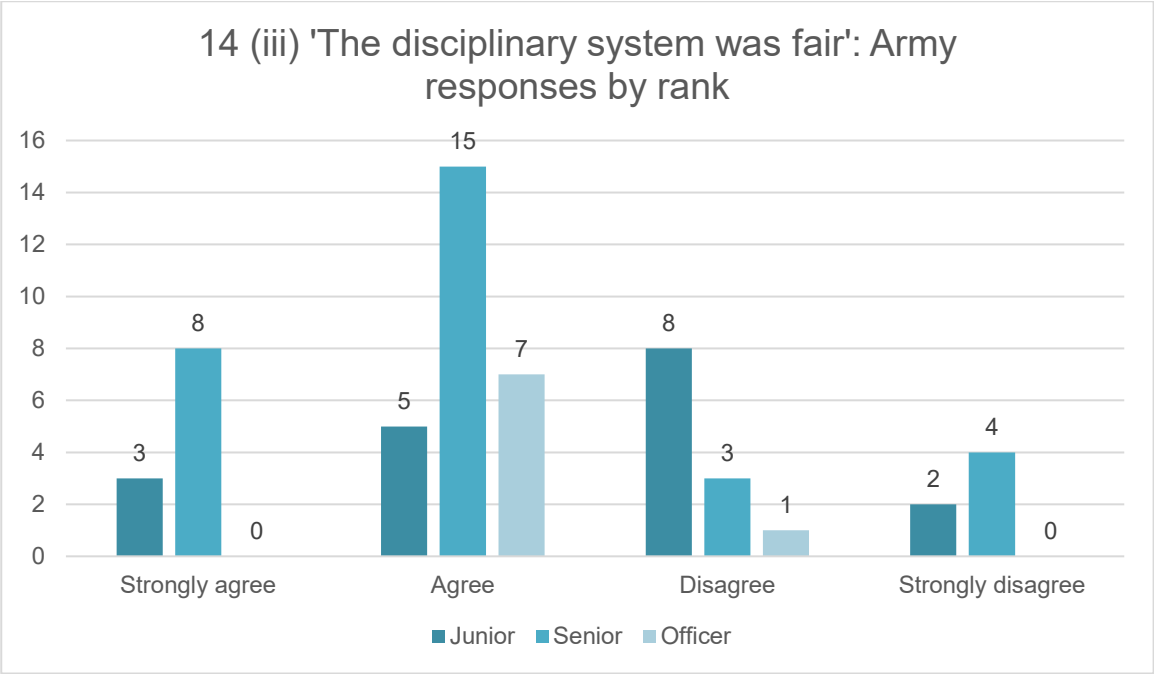
The charts in Figure 14 presents survey respondents' views on whether 'the Service disciplinary system was fair', while those in Figure 15 compare the data from this study with that from the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) (AFCAS 2018a, 2018b). Here, participants again displayed a remarkable unanimity: in all, 80% of survey respondents agreed (60%) or strongly agreed (20%) that the system was fair, a substantially higher proportion than the 63% of personnel who reported the same view to AFCAS, although that survey does include a 'neutral' option, whereas this study did not. There was, however, a clear divide on this matter between the different levels in the hierarchy: 96% of officers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, along with 78% of those who achieved a senior rank but only 72% of junior ranks. This, too, was apparent in the armed forces' own survey, where 85% of officers and just 57% of other ranks, who are not further subdivided in the published results, felt the system to be fair (AFCAS 2018b). Similarly, both my survey and AFCAS uncovered differences between the three services, with current and former other ranks in the army the least likely to consider the system fair (AFCAS 2018b).



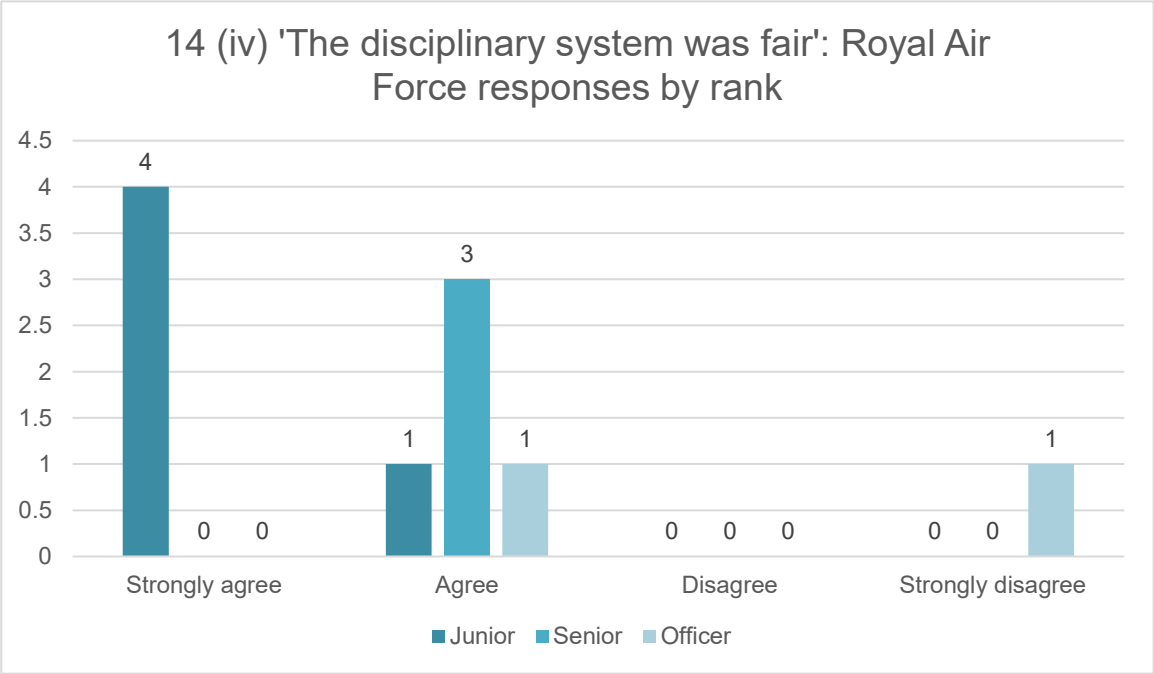
14 (i) ‘The Service disciplinary system was fair’: all responses



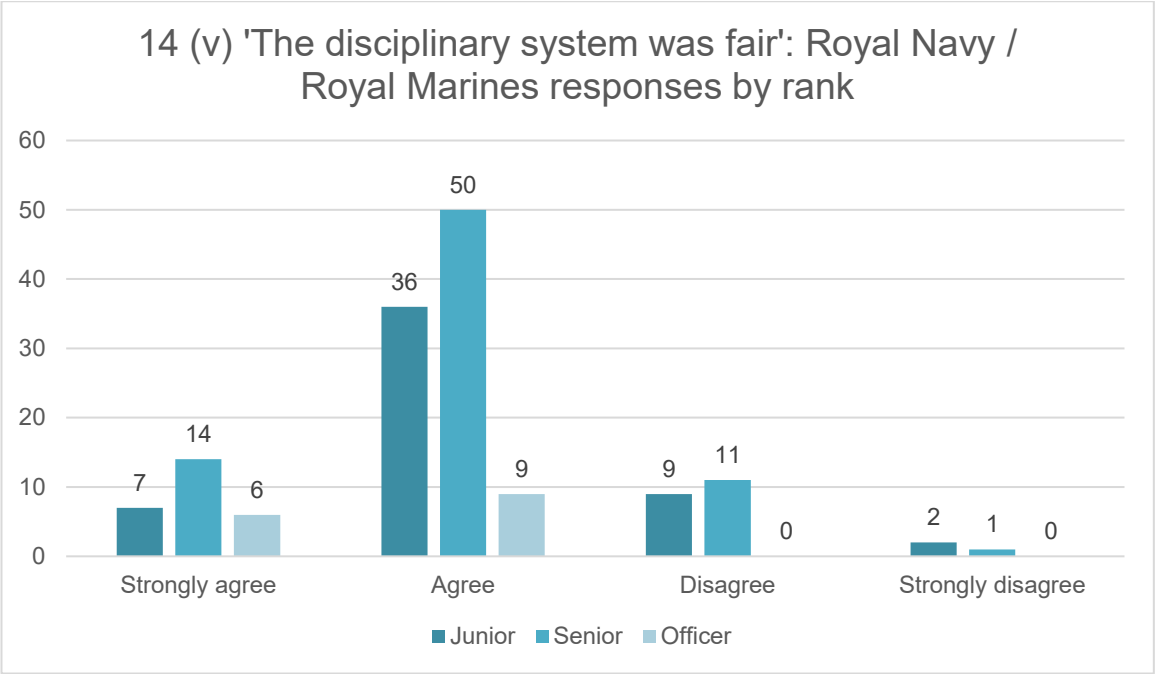
14 (ii) ‘The Service disciplinary system was fair: all responses by rank



14 (iii) ‘The Service disciplinary system was fair: Army responses by rank



14 (iv) ‘The Service disciplinary system was fair: Royal Air Force responses by rank



14 (v) 'The Service disciplinary system was fair: Royal Navy / Royal Marines by rank

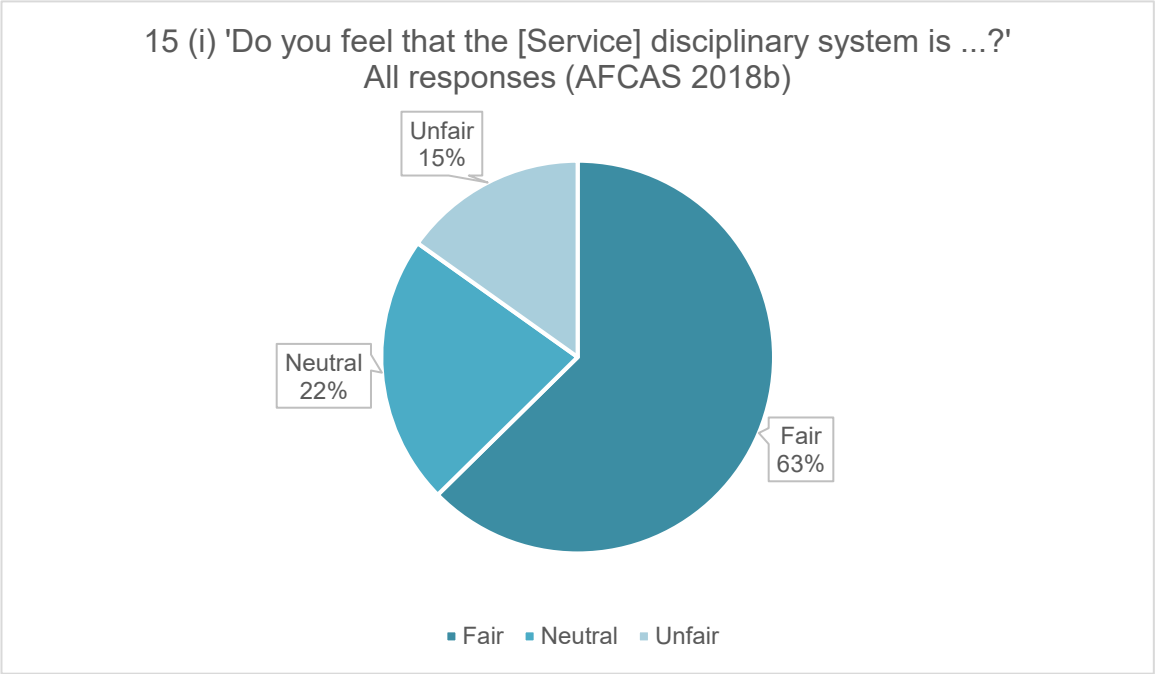


Figure 15 (i) 'Do you feel that the [Service] disciplinary system is [fair / neutral / unfair]? All responses, AFCAS 2018

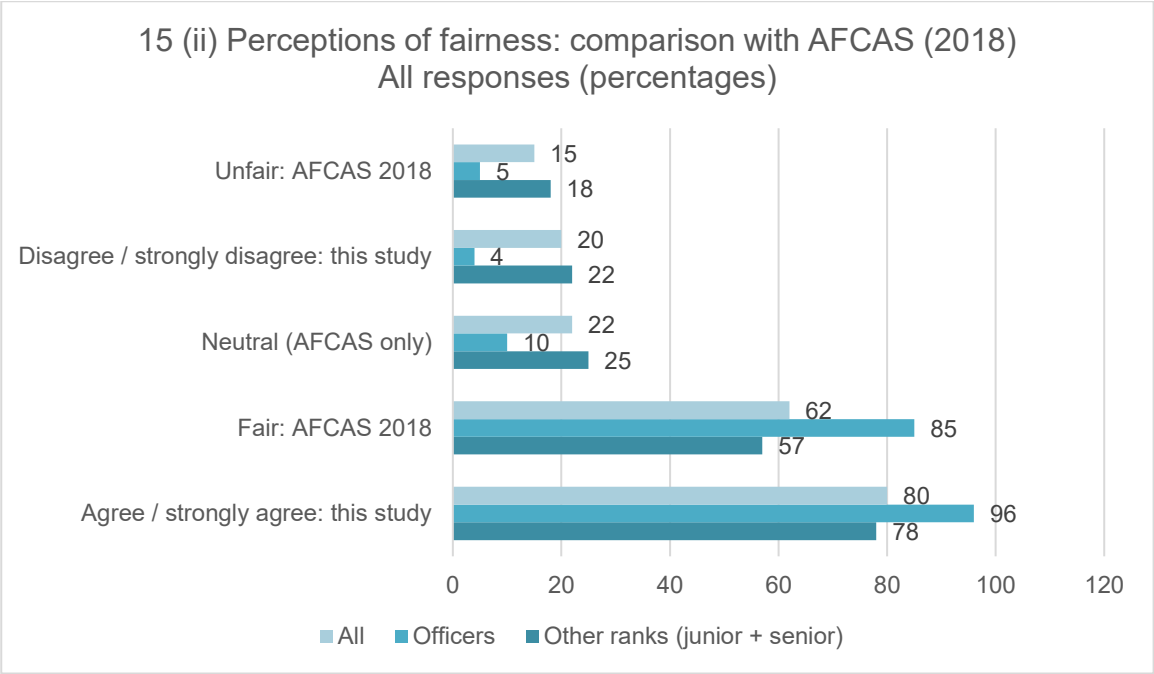


Figure 15 (ii) Perceptions of fairness in the disciplinary system: comparison between this study and AFCAS 2018, all responses

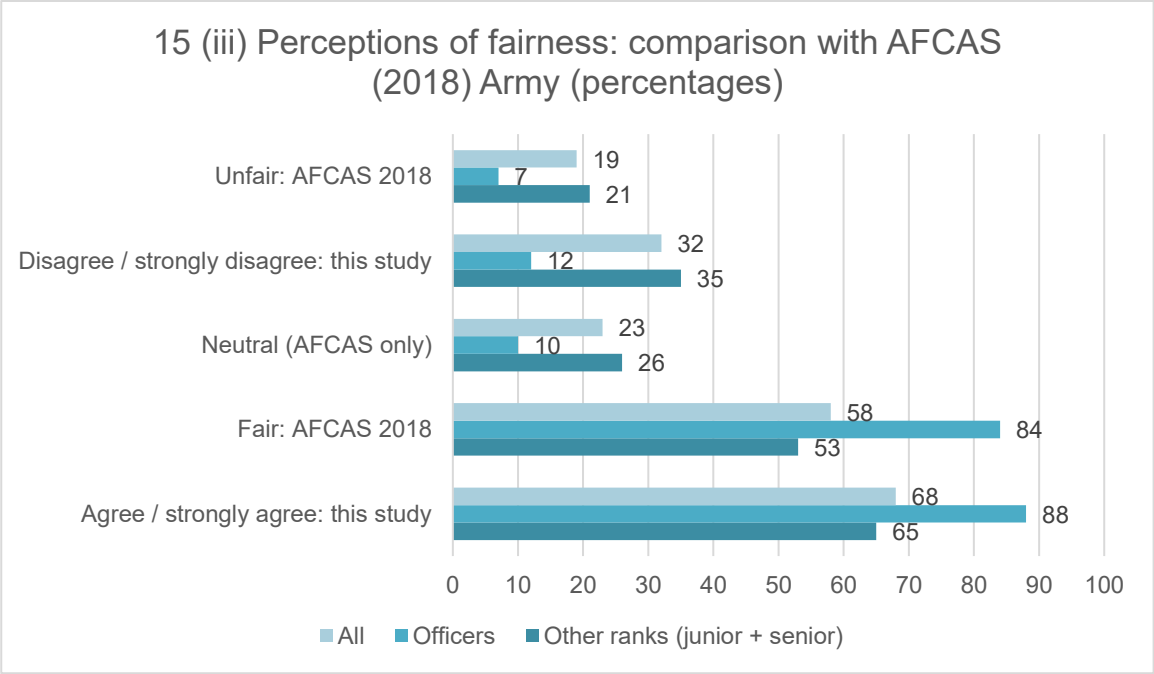


Figure 15 (iii) Perceptions of fairness in the disciplinary system: comparison between this study and AFCAS 2018, Army

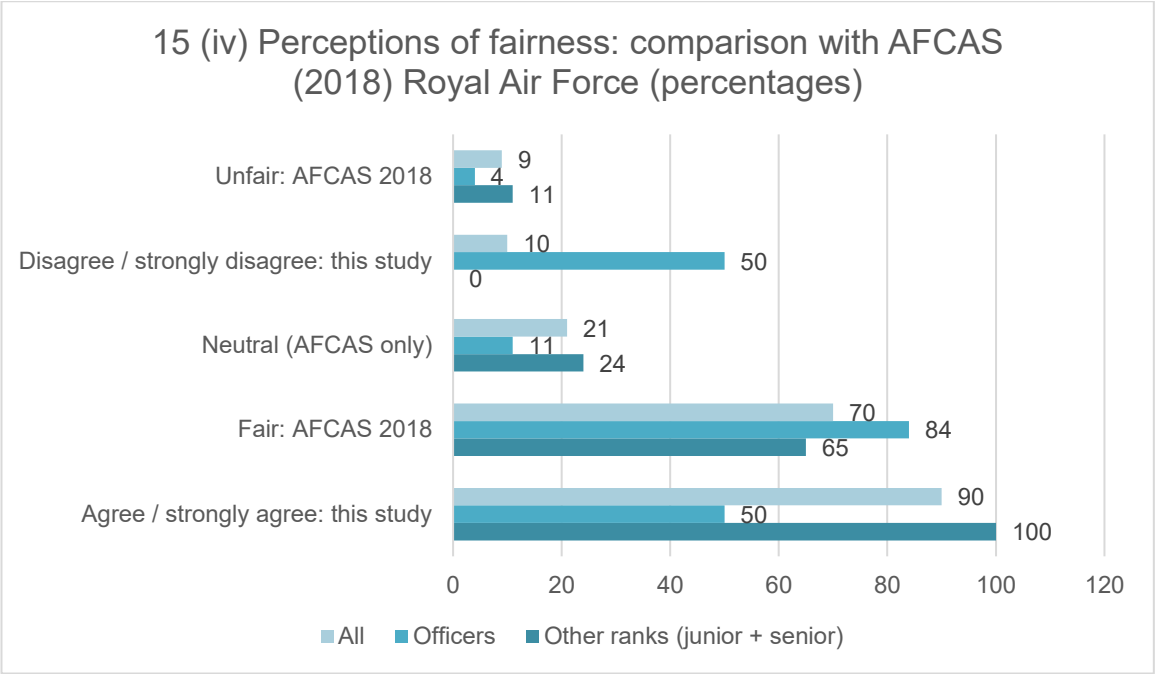


Figure 15 (iv) Perceptions of fairness in the disciplinary system: comparison between this study and AFCAS 2018, Royal Air Force

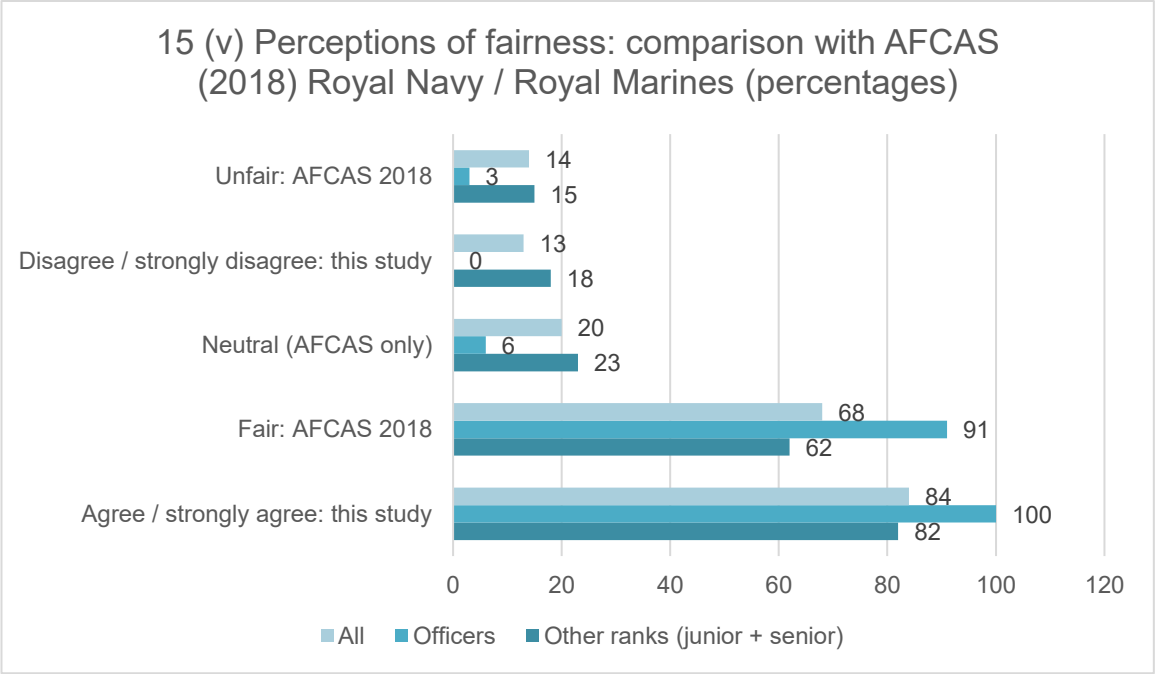


Figure 15 (v) Perceptions of fairness in the disciplinary system: comparison between this study and AFCAS 2018, Royal Navy / Royal Marines

The naked statistics about the fairness or otherwise of the disciplinary processes tell little, however, about how much individuals knew about the system, what experience they might have had of it or, in short, on what they based their assessment of fairness. In this regard, then, it is notable that, of those 68% of survey respondents in this study who said they had been disciplined, formally or informally, during their service, three quarters also said that they felt they had been treated fairly in the process. Equally, however, participants also highlighted instances where the process had not, in their opinion, been fair, while a number of participants, regardless of whether they felt they had generally been treated fairly, highlighted specific aspects which they deemed to be unfair or problematic.

In the main, instances of unfairness were explained in one of two ways. For some, the system itself was fair but one or more individuals acted in an unfair way, demonstrating the contradiction between rules-based control and hierarchical control. For instance, one survey respondent referred to a superior 'reaching his own conclusion' about a disciplinary matter (Royal Navy, officer), while another attributed an unfair decision to 'a vindictive commanding officer' (British Army, officer) and a third 'felt I was used as a scapegoat' (Royal Navy, junior). One interviewee, again confirming the effectiveness of the military grapevine, was subject to a form of discipline where the sentence was not given immediately since it had to be approved from above:

> *My line manager decided to increase the stress and anxiety I was feeling by colluding … to withhold the decision from me for three weeks by pretending that the result had not been received when in fact it had. I know this because I knew [another senior person] and he informed me of the sentence … on condition that I mentioned this to no-one* (Royal Navy, senior)

For others, though, both individuals and the system were at fault, not least in that some participants felt their case had been subject to the 'march the guilty bastard in' rule of pre-judgement. One survey respondent complained that 'they made their decision before I had given an explanation' (British Army, junior), another stated that that the 'verdict was pre-planned' (Royal Navy, junior), and one interviewee told of how:

> *my perception was that I was assumed guilty before [the] hearing. I was found guilty at hearing, but subsequently the case was [dismissed]. This actually reinforces my view [that I was assumed guilty]* (Royal Navy, senior).

A number of instances of a perceived lack of fairness also related to the disciplinary system as a whole: one respondent suggested, indeed, that it was 'intentionally intimidating and … weighted against the soldier' (British Army, senior). Others, too, complained of being 'stitched up' (British Army, junior), 'used as a scapegoat' (British Army, senior) and being hauled before a 'kangaroo court' (Royal Navy, junior). Here, too, the question of hierarchy arose:

> *I was disciplined for negligence due to failing to inform a man's [superior] about a forthcoming training course. I had done, but as I had no proof, my argument was absolutely ignored as I was the junior individual* (Royal Navy, senior)

Criticism was also levelled at the procedures, including the way they were applied. One survey respondent stated that 'lots of things were done behind my back' (British Army, senior), while another asserted that:

> *the cases are heard by someone who is not qualified or impartial* (Royal Navy, junior)

More generally, some participants felt that the system itself was inherently unfair: one survey respondent, asked to identify the one thing they would change if they

could, replied ‘the disciplinary system’ (Royal Navy, junior), while another stated that:

> *I wish I had been wiser about the disciplinary system rather than being scared of it* (British Army, junior)

Despite the prevailing view that the disciplinary system was fair and punishments both deserved and reasonable, two interviewees went into some detail about situations in which they and their comrades felt that an individual had been treated unnecessarily harshly. One concerned a colleague who had taken some food which was about to expire, intending to give it to a local voluntary organisation rather than see it go to waste:

> *He got caught going out the gate and he was given 28 days’ detention … And then you think … that seems a little harsh. But everybody knew … taking anything out of the gate without permission, Crown property, everybody knows it was an absolute no-no* (Royal Navy, senior)

Here then, it was a case of ‘rules is rules’, regardless of context, and the same was true of the second such incident. This took place in an overseas port and involved a senior officer who was found ashore, dead drunk in a gutter:

> *The lads got him back on board, he wouldn’t have got back on board the ship but they got him back on board. And the lad, the instigator, who said “come on – we’ve got to get him back, we’ve got to get him back” was adrift [late] the following day and he got trooped [disciplined] by the guy that he’d got back on board … He got fined* (Royal Navy, junior)

In both of these cases, the interviewee stated that they were not alone in believing the punishment to have been harsh. In the case of the colleague detained for taking food ashore, the reaction was mixed:

> *That sense of pragmatism … “well, what do you expect if you’re taking stuff out”’ but outrage at the same time … he wasn’t using it for himself* (Royal Navy, senior)

Similarly, the case of the 'lad' who helped the drunken officer aboard and was then fined by that same officer for being late the following morning had a number of consequences. A collection was taken up to pay the fine, and, as if to confirm the speed and effectiveness of the naval grapevine:

> *Everybody was really cross about it … and had not a nice word to say about the [officer]. They were really angry that he would do that, and he lost a great deal of respect … Everybody knew about it – people on other ships knew about it … [and] that's what people would have remembered him for – "oh I remember you, you're the guy who was dragged home and then [disciplined] the guy that picked you up"* (Royal Navy, junior)

Other aspects of organisational justice were also raised. A number of respondents highlighted the lack of independent, informed advice, particularly on legal matters, with one interviewee suggesting that personnel facing the court martial had struggled to get civilian barristers to represent them because they were 'up against it' and would be found guilty 'no matter what' (Royal Navy, junior). Similarly, others were frustrated by the absence of independent representation in disciplinary and other processes, one suggesting that a representative organisation such as a trade union was needed. A former officer acknowledged these issues when he explained what he said to an offender from his own team:

> *[I told him:] "you cannot be represented by me – I'm [part of] the prosecution. I will arrange for any other officer of your choice, from this ship or elsewhere, who can act as your friend … but this matter … I cannot discuss with you ever"* (Royal Navy, officer)

Two participants, moreover, had played a role in helping others who were subject to disciplinary proceedings. Following a week in detention for a minor offence, and a sense that the required procedure had not been followed, one interviewee

acquired a copy of Queen's Regulations, made it his business to learn them and become 'the archetypal barrack-room lawyer':

> *I could often talk myself, or my comrades, out of trouble by quoting, literally, chapter and verse* (British Army, junior)

Another participant had been a writer, the job title given to those who carry out a range of administrative and organisational tasks. As such, he had training in military law and access to the relevant documents, meaning he could help his colleagues; however:

> *advising someone who was facing disciplinary proceedings was frowned upon. … If I said anything to the accused that could work in their defence, I would be hauled to one side and spoken to by my superiors* (Royal Navy, junior)

A further source of perceived unfairness was to be found in the potential for inconsistencies in the disciplinary process. For some participants, this was not an issue:

> *What I particularly liked about the military … was consistency. It was … made quite clear: the lines are there … You know where the line is, and if you stepped over it that was a conscious decision on your behalf* (Royal Air Force, junior)

Others, however, highlighted inconsistencies they had encountered, not least in the differences between the services and units within them. For instance, a former submariner suggested that

> *in the surface fleet, in the bigger ships like the aircraft carriers and commando carriers and things like that, I think discipline was more by the book … In the submarine service it was more relaxed … "ok, you're ten minutes late – don't do it again"* (Royal Navy, junior)

Another, who had served in one of the elite army regiments, told of how:

> *Our discipline, our kind of laws … was if you messed up you got a kicking, and that was it. … You had to have done … pretty much*

> *murder to go to Colchester [Military Corrective Training Centre]. … We were very happy to keep the rest of the military out of it, we kept it in house* (British Army, senior)

One explanation for these particular inconsistencies might be that the individuals had served in particularly dangerous environments. Others, however, who had served on submarines, or as commandos in the Royal Marines or the army, did not support this view: indeed, at least one such spoke of the pride taken in the disciplined nature of his service. A better explanation, therefore, might be found in the extensive scope for discretion within the military disciplinary processes.

For some, the discretion afforded to the decision-makers worked in their benefit. One interviewee was on an 'intense' operational tour in an area where personnel were, patrols aside, confined to camp:

> *So there's an opportunity to go shopping. Basically, they put a load of us on a truck, a couple of armed escorts … and we drove to a safe area … But the shops are shut … so what did we all do? We went into the pub and all got drunk – even the escorts and the driver. So they had to send a rescue team out to take us back* (Royal Navy, junior)

However, and although this interviewee felt that 'it would have been fair' to hand down a stronger punishment, the commanding officer was 'wise enough to put it in context':

> *He said "I'm terribly sorry about this, but we'll have to fine you £10. Is that alright?" I said "yes, thank you, that'll do it"* (Royal Navy, junior)

Having the scope for discretion does not, of course, mean that discretion is applied. One interviewee told of how, just six or seven months into his army career,

> *I had a negligent discharge – I let loose with a … nine [millimetre] pistol … I was not trained in that weapon … they gave us two or*

> *three hours' training … and then gave us this pistol, and the only reason they gave it to us was because they'd put us on twenty four hour guard, hour on hour off, because it was an open day* (British Army, senior)

Negligent discharge of a weapon is not a specific offence under the Armed Forces Act 2006, but it is covered by Queen's Regulations, which state that all personnel in possession of a firearm are 'responsible for preventing unauthorised discharge' (Army 2013: para. 5.153). As a result, this individual was fined one month's wages:

> *Looking back on it now, they were totally wrong. They didn't train me enough, they shouldn't have done that. They should have been punished, not me* (British Army, senior)

Discretion means, then, that the rules are 'applied strictly in some cases, less strictly in others; and perhaps not even enforced at all in some circumstances' (Rubin 2005: 19), something which will be explored further in chapter six.

Comparisons with civilian employment: hierarchy and promotion

In general terms, hierarchy, and the desire to progress up it, are a constant in many civilian workplaces. Diefenbach explains the persistence of hierarchy as arising from complex, interweaving factors, notably the 'routine behaviours' of superiors and subordinates, which 'work towards the institutionalisation of people's mindsets and social actions', and the 'interactive combination of formal and informal hierarchy' (2016: 100). Much of the literature on promotion up the hierarchy, however, tends to focus on the kind of people who are, or are not, promoted, and in particular on the ways in which women and other disadvantaged groups are excluded from or face barriers to promotion, even if they are a sizeable proportion of the workforce (see amongst others Aksoy et al 2018, Brathwaite

2018, Vinnicombe et al 2018). Similarly, there are examples of cases taken to the Employment Tribunal which relate to discrimination in promotion processes. That aside, and notwithstanding the weight of anecdotal evidence, we know little about civilian employees' views on their superiors, the persistence of hierarchy or the processes by which promotion decisions are made.

Comparisons with civilian employment: disciplinary rules and procedures

As discussed in chapter three, the military disciplinary processes fall short of the standards expected in civilian workplaces, and in particular those laid down by the statutory *Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures* (the Code) (ACAS 2015). The Code, which represents 'a principles-based good practice approach' (Rahim et al 2011: 3) is not compulsory, but failure to follow it can result in an increase of up to 25% in the compensation awarded to claimants in unfair dismissal cases (ACAS 2015: 5). At its heart are three key principles, the requirements that issues be set out in writing, that a formal meeting be held to discuss the matter and that employees be granted the right to appeal against decisions (Wood et al 2015). In addition, the Code emphasises the employee's right to be accompanied to formal hearings by an accredited trade union representative or fellow employee (ACAS 2015). The absence of such elements in the military processes was, of course, the source of much of the disillusionment and perceived lack of justice and fairness expressed by a number of participants in this study and discussed above.

Analysis of data from the 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Study (van Wanrooy et al 2013) has shown that 89% of civilian workplaces have a written

disciplinary procedure, with 82% adhering to the three key principles in the Code (Wood et al 2014). However, one study found a 'relative lack of knowledge of the Code and … the accompanying guidance' amongst some groups who might be expected to handle disciplinary matters, although it 'remained the basis on which organisational … procedures were developed' (Saundry et al 2016: 42, 43 and see Wood et al 2017). Moreover, widespread publicity has been given to some examples of disciplinary procedures which do not conform to the ACAS Code. For instance, a reporter working undercover in one of Amazon's UK warehouses found that employees were urinating in bottles to avoid being disciplined for taking too long to go to the toilet, one of a number of potential offences (Bloodworth 2018). Most of the workers in these warehouses are employed by an agency, Adecco, whose 'Associate Handbook' (Adecco nd) makes several references to the disciplinary procedure but does not include it or give details of how to access it, putting the company in breach of the ACAS Code and other requirements. Similarly, media coverage of the conditions for agency workers at a Sports Direct warehouse, including a 'six strikes' policy with regard to minor disciplinary offences, stimulated an inquiry by the House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) Committee. Their report stressed that:

> The 'six strikes and you're out' policy is used as a punitive measure, which denigrates the workers at Sports Direct and gives the management unreasonable and excessive powers to discipline or dismiss at will, reinforced by their power to control the hours offered to each worker (HCBIS 2016:9)

The BIS report, and the unwanted publicity which had preceded it, also resulted in Sports Direct commissioning an independent report which found that the 'six strikes' approach was 'perceived as being unfair in design and deployment' (RPC 2016: 17). Notably, however, and despite the evidence from these, and other, organisations, the Taylor review of 'modern working practices' (2017) makes no

mention of disciplinary policy and procedures. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the armed forces are not entirely alone with regard to shortfalls in procedural justice, punitive discipline and the potential for managerial discretion.

Turning to the experience of discipline, and civilian employees' perceptions of discipline and punishment, it is of course the case that reports of malpractice in companies like Amazon and Sports Direct originated with workers and their trade unions (see for instance Onasanya 2018), as did, for instance, complaints about Ryanair employees facing penalties if they failed to meet excessive targets for sales during flights (Neate 2017). These voices aside, though, there are few pointers to the extent or experience of discipline and punishment at work. The 2011 Workplace Employment Relations study found, for example, that managers had taken disciplinary action against an employee in 41% of workplaces in the twelve months before the survey took place, and that, on average, 4.8 disciplinary sanctions were imposed for every 100 employees (van Wanrooy et al 2013). While most of these processes will, as discussed above, have been in accordance with the ACAS Code, the statistics tell us little about the people who were so disciplined, nor their perception of whether they were treated fairly. One inference might, however, be drawn from the fact that over 20,800 claims of unfair dismissal were lodged with the Employment Tribunal between January and December 2018 (MOJ 2019). While this is not a high proportion of the working population, it indicates that, like military personnel, many civilians may perceive a lack of fairness in the procedures followed and / or the reason(s) for dismissal. In this vein, one study found that an increased emphasis on performance management and absence reduction, particularly in the context of austerity in the

public sector, had resulted in employees and their representatives often feeling that they were being treated unfairly, sometimes to the extent of interpreting their managers' behaviour as bullying or harassment (Saundry et al 2016).

It remains the case, though, that there is very little literature discussing discipline in the civilian workplace, while that which does exist is more concerned with the ways in which such conflict is handled by managers (see for instance Currie et al 2017) than with the views, experiences and perceptions of employees. This is, in many ways, understandable: it is doubtful, for instance, that funding would be forthcoming for such a study, particularly in the unitary climate prevailing in the field of human resource management (see for instance Dundon and Rafferty 2018). One exception, however, is particularly pertinent to this study, focusing as it does on a uniformed service where, at least in the UK, trade union representation is not permitted and other rights are restricted (PFEW 2018): the police. Reynolds and Hicks (2015) examined current and former US police officers' perceptions of fairness and organisational justice in their departments and found, for instance, that interviewees complained of a lack of objectivity and consistency in disciplinary practice, which seemed 'to depend on who the supervisor [was] at the time' (2015: 477). Moreover, there was a sense from some that the focus was on the interests of the department, even when this entailed a breach of procedure, and that favouritism influenced some decisions; conversely, however, an element of supervisory discretion was apparently accepted and even welcomed. Such points appear to mirror not only the views and perceptions of participants in this study but also an interplay between rules-based and hierarchical control. In short, the experience of the employment relationship in the

British armed forces and a uniformed civilian service in the United States, appears to be remarkably similar.

Chapter summary

This chapter has examined participants' experience, views and perceptions of the military hierarchy, rules and disciplinary system. Throughout, it has highlighted a remarkable degree of unanimity on a number of issues, including the premium placed on promotion, the perceived fairness of the disciplinary processes and the view that, since 'everybody knew the rules', punishment was deserved even if it did not act as a deterrent. However, it has also uncovered a number of areas of potential discontent, the blame for which was laid at the door both of individual superiors, indicating hierarchical control, and of the rules and processes themselves, confirming rules-based control. As such, the chapter has provided evidence of potential contradictions and conflict between hierarchical control and rules-based control in the armed forces. It has also, despite the relative paucity of knowledge in this field, attempted to compare military experience with that of civilian employees, suggesting that members of the armed forces are not alone in being subject to disciplinary processes which fail to meet the requirements of procedural justice, not to mention the statutory Code of Practice. Throughout, too, the chapter has acknowledged a high degree of consent to, or at least compliance with, military controls, something which is explored further in the next two chapters.

6. Regulating the military employment relationship: normative control and concertive control

Normative control is concerned with control by consent (Burawoy 1979, Thompson 1983); that is, with 'manipulating the feelings and values of the workforce' (Gantman 2005: 6) such that workers 'internalise' the goals and values of the organisation and are, to some extent, self-directed and self-controlled (Edwards 1979). In a normative control structure, then, the norms of behaviour and action might go beyond or even outside that required by the formal rules, in some cases creating informal rules in their stead. Concertive control, similarly, may be in conflict with the formal rules, in that it involves workers collaborating in order to 'develop the means of their own control' (Barker 2005: 213). Crucially, normative control can be distinguished from concertive control in that normative controls are vertical, emanating from the upper reaches of hierarchy to the lower, whereas concertive controls are horizontal; that is, normative controls reflect the wielding of 'power over', but concertive controls are 'power to' or 'power with'. Both, however, result in increased control by those on the higher steps of the hierarchical pyramid over those lower down.

Despite the proliferation of both formal, rules-based control and hierarchical control, there is also evidence of both normative and concertive control in the British military employment relationship, and indeed it is not always clear where the boundary between normative and concertive control might lie. This chapter will, therefore, explore participants' experiences of and opinions on a range of formal rules and informal norms, from deliberate rule-breaking to taking short cuts to complete tasks more quickly. It will then examine evidence of normative control, expressed in participants' identification with the armed forces, and

concertive control, before retroductively seeking explanations for these norms in the process of basic training. The chapter will conclude that normative and concertive controls play an important role in the overall control systems of the military employment relationship.

Formal and informal rules

The survey included three statements about rules, deliberately using the term in a general way to cover disciplinary rules, operating procedures or a range of other workplace rules. The statements were presented in random order, part of the larger group of statements with which respondents were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed, so they might have appeared at any point during that part of the survey, in any order and in any relationship to each other. Responses to all three are shown in Figure 16. The first of the three, ‘everybody knew the rules’ was also discussed in chapter five: it elicited a high level of agreement, with little difference between the services or by rank: in all, 80% of ex-army respondents, 90% of those who had been in the air force and 92% of former naval personnel agreed or strongly agreed. In most respects, this was to be expected: as already noted, a key feature of the military bureaucracy is the existence of comprehensive written rules for all eventualities, and those rules are communicated to personnel in a range of ways, including frequent reminders where this is considered necessary.

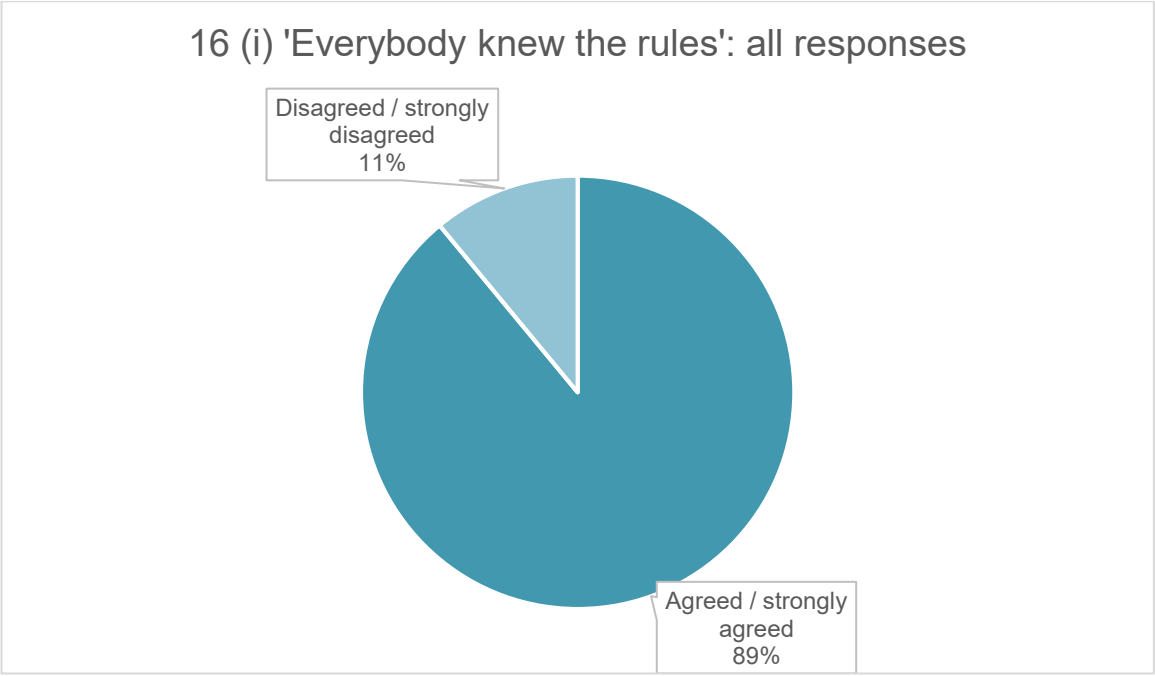


Figure 16 (i) Survey statement ‘everybody knew the rules’: all responses

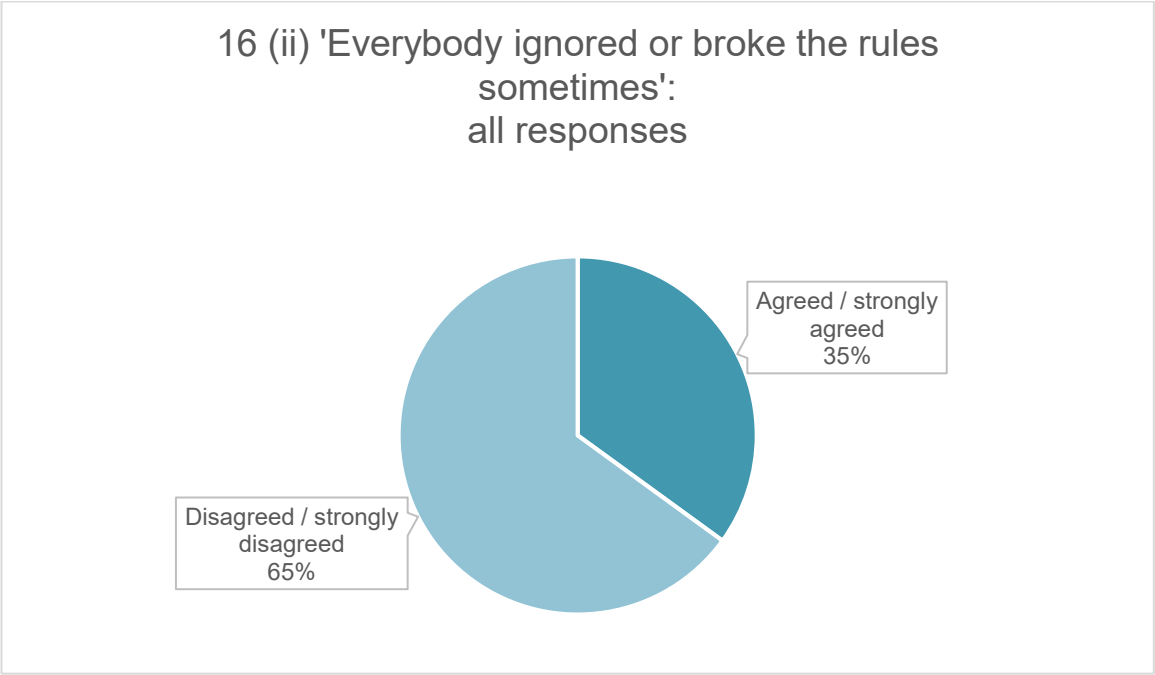


Figure 16 (ii) Survey statement ‘everybody ignored or even broke the rules sometimes – that’s just the way it was’: all responses

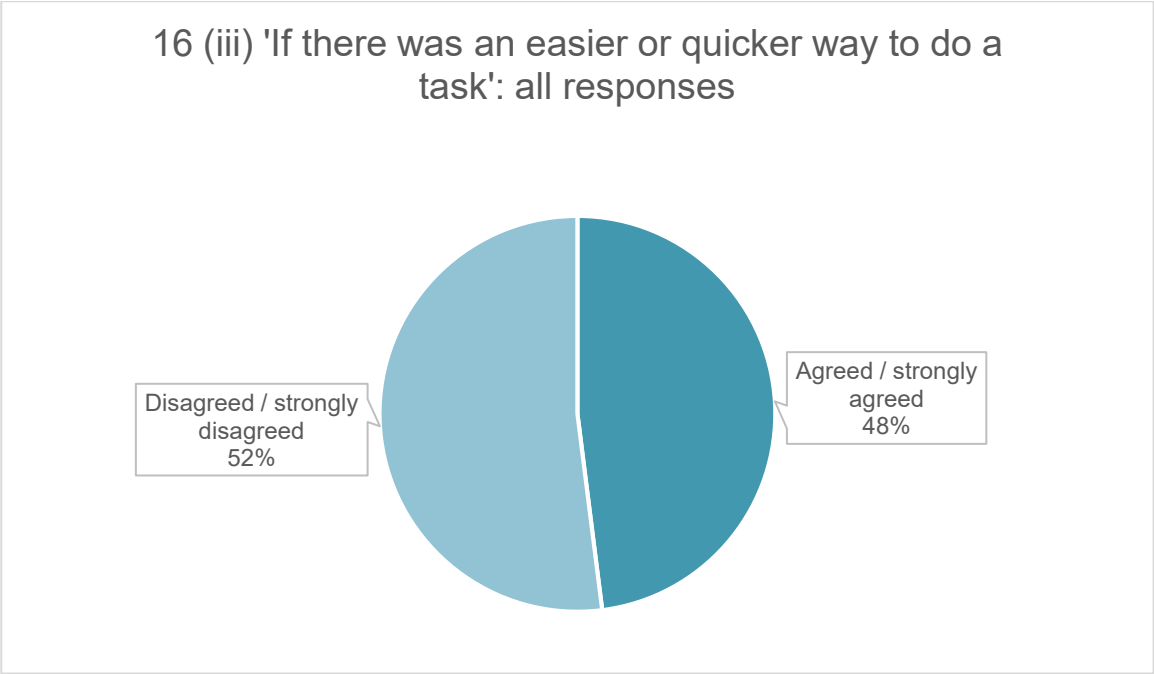


Figure 16 (iii) Survey statement ‘if there was an easier or quicker way to do a task, then that’s how it was done, rules or no rules’: all responses

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Responses to the second of the three statements, however, were more varied. While 48% of former army personnel agreed or strongly agreed that ‘everybody ignored or even broke the rules sometimes – that’s just the way it was’, just 30% who had served in the navy, and only 20% of ex-RAF respondents felt the same way. Naturally, differences in the response to this statement also varied in line with the highest rank achieved by the respondent: for instance, those who achieved senior ranks in the army or navy were least likely to agree with the statement although, interestingly, those who served as army officers were more likely to agree with it than those who remained in the lower ranks. The last of the three statements, ‘if there was an easier or quicker way to do a task then that’s how it was done, rules or no rules’, also produced a range of responses. Overall, just under half of all participants (48%) agreed or strongly agreed, but again there

were clear differences between the services: 63% of ex-army respondents agreed or strongly agreed, but only 45% of those who had been in the navy and just 40% of former RAF personnel. Again, too, there were noticeable differences in response by rank: across all three services officers were substantially less likely to agree, but there was no difference between those who had served in the other ranks, with two thirds of both junior and senior ranks in the army agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, and little difference between former naval senior ranks and junior ranks, 45% and 43% of whom respectively agreed.

The survey was not, of course, intended to be representative or quantifiable and, moreover, some apparent inconsistencies in the responses to the three statements suggest that a small number of participants might not have registered their views accurately and that these results are not, therefore, wholly reliable. Nevertheless, the data remains valuable, not least because it appears to uncover a sizeable contradiction in the military employment relationship. If everybody knows the rules, and if most people do not ignore or break those rules, it might, naturally, be expected that most tasks will be completed in the ways prescribed by the rules. However, 89% of all respondents felt that everybody knew the rules, and only 35% agreed that everybody ignored, or broke, the rules sometimes, yet almost half (48%) agreed that rules were indeed ignored or broken if doing so enabled tasks to be completed faster or more easily.

Data from the interviews confirmed the apparent contradictions in these responses to the survey statements. For some, of course, the rules were always followed to the letter:

> *In my experience I was part of a disciplined service and I never met anyone who would make a point of ignoring, breaking or swerving rules. If you did, … the end result was not getting disciplined, it was seriously injuring yourself, someone else or killing your crew mates. Everyone I knew took a very dim view of anyone skirting the rules* (Royal Navy, senior)

Others, however, illustrated the ways in which formal rules and procedures were applied somewhat more flexibly and selectively than might have been expected. Some of these examples, as discussed in chapter five, related to the disciplinary system and the scope for discretion within it, which could be to the benefit of the individual:

> *There was some indulgence. Once I turned up for work with a hangover and fell asleep, but I just got shouted at when it could have been more serious. I did the same with my own subordinates, later* (Royal Navy, senior)

Such leniency was not always the case, though, as another participant found:

> *Senior rates and officers, coming under the same rules as the junior rates, could turn up for duty when it suited them: when the duty [petty officer] or [chief petty officer] or officer had a hangover or was drunk then it was ok for one of his buddies to take the muster or duty for him. If this happened with one of the junior rates, then all hell was let loose* (Royal Navy, junior)

Indeed, several participants found more generally that any discretion or flexibility only applied to those in more senior roles, again highlighting the role played by rank and hierarchy:

> *It was stated that no one on board would be allowed to come back to the UK during a deployment. As it transpired, a number of officers were allowed back and it wasn't until a complaint was raised that a number of ratings were allowed back to the UK for [events like] the birth of a child* (Royal Navy, senior)

Formal rules were, therefore, supplemented by informal rules and norms. For instance, more than one interviewee talked about the routine pilfering they had witnessed or taken part in, even of such mundane items as toilet rolls:

> *On a ship if there was the ability to get away with something, regardless of the rules, then this would be attempted. Stewards would "borrow" bottles of wine from the wardroom [officers' mess], food would disappear from the galley at night … things were thrown off the back of ships at sea … naval stores ended up at home … Everyone knew this stuff happened* (Royal Navy, junior)

Similarly, if the rules were considered to be oppressive, ways were found of subverting them. One participant reminisced about a 'run ashore':

> *There was a girl, she had these over the knee, thigh length boots, and we were going out … [but] on the main gate [the guard] said "you're not wearing those, go back and get changed". So we went back to the mess, got a bigger handbag, I put one of the boots in my bag, she put a boot in her bag, and she came out in a pair of pumps. We got into [town] and she put her boots on* (Royal Navy, junior)

Thanks to such informal norms, more than one participant remembered that the Long Service and Good Conduct medal was colloquially referred to as a reward for 'fifteen years of undetected crime'. There was, however, also a form of collective self-discipline:

> *The military is largely self-policing … [through] localised unofficial discipline. The key factor was very much "what happens in the mess stays in the mess" … Everybody would have been subject to this, be that high jinks in the officers' mess or senior rates' mess, or covering for a mess mate in the lower decks* (Royal Navy, junior)

This point was also made by an interviewee who had served in one of the elite units:

> *We were very happy to keep the rest of the military out of it, we kept it in house, we never hung our dirty washing … Theft was frowned upon, that was fingers in the door frame, and I know it sounds quite terrible to say but we respected that – you don't thieve off your mates and that's that* (British Army, senior)

Nevertheless, there were boundaries, including those imposed by hierarchical control:

> *There was a line … which you couldn't cross, and those who didn't understand where the line was were disciplined and then the command would play things by the book for a few weeks and then the boundaries would be stretched again … Everybody knew this stuff happened and [those] who say it didn't have short memories* (Royal Navy, junior)

Naturally, though, the location of that line varied from one unit, ship or posting to another:

> *It … becomes a habit to ascertain just how strictly the regulations are adhered to in different units and how far they can be stretched before the proverbial ton of bricks begins to hover overhead. It becomes an instinct, with time* (British Army, junior)

Not surprisingly, therefore, some struggled to grasp where the line was:

> *You'd always get the odd person who'd get caught out, … who couldn't quite get their head round when something was appropriate and when it wasn't … That comes down even to forms of address: you could call senior NCOs by their first name, but if you did that in the wrong context at the wrong time then you'd probably get a flea in your ear and be reminded "it's Chief to you"* (Royal Navy, senior)

In his insider ethnographies of the British Army, Kirke explored the ways in which rules, both formal and informal, were interpreted, reinterpreted and even ignored in a 'continuous social process, part of the weft and warp of everyday life at regimental duty' (2010: 359 and see Kirke 2008, 2009). Similarly, a study of the United States Navy in the 1960s found that:

> aspects of the informal organisation, though not explicitly sanctioned by the formal organisation, are tacitly understood and accepted by it … They are … 'patterned evasions' – regularised ways of getting round the demands of the formal organisation (Zurcher 1965: 393)

This in turn implies the need to undergo a learning process at the beginning of a new posting, something which a new officer, known as a 'baby officer', who joined one participant's ship failed to grasp. This interviewee had a close friend on the crew:

> *He was Irish and we used to give each other hell … we was drinking buddies and he used to insult me and I used to rip into him. Well we got pulled up because one of these baby officers, he'd come in and … they accused me of bullying … They had to follow it through because somebody that was trying to make a name for [himself] had come up … They never even asked [my friend] [how he felt about it], and when he found out he was like "no – that's how we are"* (Royal Navy, junior)

As the interviewee made clear, new officers would not necessarily know where the line was and might indeed want to insist that everything was done by the book, at least at the beginning of a posting. As another participant pointed out, this could cause disruption on a naval vessel where the crew might change little in four or five years but where officers' postings were shorter:

> *the ship works on a routine … you get all the lads and the [petty officers] and the chiefs and the officer in charge, all working perfectly fine for eighteen months, two years, and then the young officers get promoted or they move on to something else … the lads know the job inside out – they could run the ship themselves, really – but then the leaders change and instead of just seeing how things are, a lot of them come in and try and put their own mark on it* (Royal Navy, senior)

The question of whether rules were broken in order to complete tasks more easily or quickly also elicited some detailed responses, confirming both the interplay of formal rules and informal norms and the use of normative controls which ensure that the job gets done (Edwards 1979). One interviewee, for instance, stated that:

> *When you're up against it, everybody's happy for short cuts to be taken if there are short cuts that are going to get the results that are needed to the quality they're needed, because other priorities*

> *then take precedence … Where necessary, pragmatism: rules can be ignored [and] short cuts taken* (Royal Navy, senior)

Another participant made very similar comments, suggesting that, in his experience, the unofficial rule said that it was acceptable to break the formal rules in order to save time:

> *A lot of the time, time was of the essence and if you kept on applying all these different rules … you wouldn't be able to get the task done. And because of the military ethos, if we could get the task done as fast as possible then we sort of turned a blind eye to what we were doing* (British Army, senior)

Others, however, were less willing to cut corners, particularly where safety was involved:

> *I'd be "we can't do that because we haven't got enough guys: we need six guys to do that and I've only got three", and [the superior would say] "I don't care – make it happen" … I'm like "ok, I can't do it for safety reasons … you need to go and tell them that you haven't got enough guys" … I've got a duty of care to people and [the superiors] have the same duty of care as well, but because they've been told by their boss "I want this to happen" they were more than prepared to let that duty of care go* (British Army, junior)

Where they existed, short cuts and other 'patterned evasions' were passed from one group of personnel to another. One participant explained that medics like him were often attached 'individually or in twos' to other units and 'very much left to our own devices', partly because they were able to overrule the commanding officer on hygiene and related issues. As a result,

> *We developed unconventional but effective methods of doing things out of sight of any real supervision. We passed our experience on to other comrades and they also used our methods, [just] as we used the methods they'd found to be quicker and better. The result was that just about every activity … was almost never done by the book – and no-one really minded* (British Army, junior)

In this regard, the question of taking the initiative arose a number of times. One participant reminisced at length about a situation which arose when he was in charge of a crucial aspect of a vessel which was due to sail the following day:

> *I'd gone back to bed – I was going to get up about 3.30 in the morning to bring the ship live ready to sail. I got a shake about … just after five o'clock, nearly had a coronary … got down there – and everything was ready. My little crew had gone and done it. They'd acted way outside their brief and responsibility, they'd taken actions they were not authorised to do … but they wanted to let me see that they could do everything. … I expected them to show initiative* (Royal Navy, officer)

Here again, however, there were noticeable differences between the three services, and between the units within them. One former Royal Marine, for instance, spoke about how he and his comrades were expected to take the initiative, whether or not they had been told to do to. However, when working on joint service postings he came to understand that, in the army, rank frequently took precedence over initiative, not to mention knowledge, skill and experience:

> *We've got a young [senior NCO from the army] who's in charge of our workshop, who fix the radios. He's walking past a vehicle mechanic who's a [long serving] Marine … fixing the generator and [the NCO] can't not say to him "make sure you change the oil". And the [mechanic] just stormed in to his boss: "fuckin' idiot, telling me to change the oil"* (Royal Navy, junior)

The widespread acceptance of informal rules and 'patterned evasions', along with the variations in standards applied by different senior personnel, in different services, units and contexts, implies, therefore, that much of the certainty implicit in bureaucracy and illustrated by, for instance, aspects of the military disciplinary processes, might after all be built on sand. As one interviewee put it:

> *They've got the unique system of messing everybody around from day one* (British Army, junior)

Normative control

Normative controls are concerned in particular with winning over hearts and minds, thereby harnessing the whole of the individual to their work. Participants demonstrated their loyalty and commitment to the armed forces, or at least to their own service, in a number of ways. Notable amongst these was the way, discussed in chapter four, that some identified so closely with the aims and values of the organisation that it was difficult to distinguish between their personal views and the official line. For instance, one survey respondent answered the question 'is there anything else you want to say?' in great detail, explaining that:

> *I owe the military a lot as they have given me just about everything I have got now. Without them I would not have realised any of my potential … The values, ethos and beliefs that the military instilled in me are at the core of [my current civilian role]* (Royal Air Force, junior)

Another respondent spoke of the sense of 'belonging to a culture which was seen as superior to a civilian identity' (Royal Navy, senior), while a third spoke at length about military identity:

> *I get paid for what I do [now] and I view this [job] as things that I do, whereas my naval identity is what I am. You become navy … That is my anchor to who I am. Not to what I did: it's an anchor to who I am as a person, as an individual, it's part of my identity* (Royal Navy, senior)

Similarly, one interviewee emphasised that:

> *You are a soldier 24 [hours a day], seven [days a week], 365 [days a year]* (British Army, senior)

Given these comments, it was to be expected that many participants still thought of themselves as military, a point which was also discussed in chapter four. Hence, for instance:

> *There's a part of me that's never left* (Royal Navy, junior)

Similarly, an interviewee expanded upon the way his military service defined him:

> *I still think of people as civilians, while I'm still forces – I still call people civvies although I'm a civilian myself. I still don't think I've left, I still class myself as military … I don't think you can ever leave* (Royal Navy, senior)

However, one interviewee had not enjoyed his time in the forces and, despite having come by the survey through ex-military social media, said that:

> *It was just a job to me. I left after ten years and moved on with my life, never even thinking of myself as an ex-serviceman* (Royal Navy, junior)

A number of respondents, too, gave examples of what military service had done for them. For instance:

> *For the first time the military gave me a sense of achievement. Actually doing things and then achieving them, and self-confidence … Things … which just didn't happen at school* (Royal Air Force, junior)

In particular, there was a great emphasis on the enduring sense of community and comradeship which developed out of the insistence on teamwork:

> *In a punch-up, people that you don't even associate with, if they know that you're services they'll help you out because they're services. … I got set upon in [overseas port] and I was rescued by a load of chefs from a different ship. … You look after your own – it's drummed into you to look after your own* (Royal Navy, junior)

One of the impacts of this sense of community was the way in which news and gossip circulated through the grapevine already discussed in chapter five. Another, related impact, was the way in which personnel came to know each other better than they might have known their own families:

> *My mate … he's met my dad and he [mate] knows more about me than my family do. I remember him talking to my dad and my dad was saying 'I didn't know that about him'* (Royal Navy, junior)

Equally, living and working in close quarters engenders a mixture of intimacy and formality that is unlikely to exist in any other relationship:

> *You know the insides out of everybody … You're so close, you're living in such proximity, [but] there's peculiarities that I always found amusing. You'd see somebody about forty or fifty times a day, but you always said "hello"* (Royal Navy, junior)

Concertive control

Concertive control is that in which power rests not with the superior but with the workers themselves; that is, 'power to', or 'power with'. It is, however, concerned primarily with getting the job done, rather than with, for instance, gaining some advantage (Barker 2005). Given the role played by both team working and shared values in the military employment relationship, it was to be expected that elements of concertive control would be evident, and indeed this has been demonstrated in the discussion of 'self-policing' above. Furthermore, one interviewee explained that 'peer group [discipline], informal discipline, unofficial discipline' sometimes involved physical punishments being meted out by colleagues (Royal Navy, senior), while another spoke of an issue being resolved by 'rough justice' (Royal Air Force, junior).

Other examples of concertive control included that of a team deciding on the winner of 'shit tradesman of the week' (Royal Air Force, junior) and details of how perceived laziness or a failure to fit in might be dealt with. In some instances, this was, and would still be, perceived as bullying, as illustrated by the experience of one interviewee:

> *The bullying from [fellow trainees] could be quite simple or very dramatic. In my case, it was getting tipped out of bed every night, things going missing and constantly being told [to leave]* (Royal Navy, junior).

He then went on to explain that, in his view, bullying was widespread, not only on the part of superiors but also between peers. There were, however, ways of responding to it:

> *Revenge [was wreaked] in many forms, not necessarily violence … Peeing in someone's brew, … even lobbing their kit overboard whilst at sea. … No one I knew during my time in the navy ever reported bullies: they either took it or found a way to avenge themselves* (Royal Navy, junior)

Another interviewee, thinking back to the 1970s, confirmed how bullying and related behaviour was perceived to be part of military life:

> *I remember … being hung up in a tree upside down and whipped with stinging nettles. That was accepted, it was part of [military life] and it toughened you up. … Later, you were the one, you were getting involved in doing it. … It was part of "this is what's going to make you a better fighter and keep you alive". You just accepted it, you didn't question it* (British Army, senior)

Similarly, another admitted, with hindsight, that some behaviour was probably unacceptable:

> *I suppose some of the things we used to get up might have been classed as bullying. Like if somebody was really dirty, his clothes were filthy, we'd put all his gear in the wash for him [so he had no clothes] … and if he was dirty we'd put him in the shower* (Royal Navy, senior)

Control in the military employment relationship, then, is achieved by the interplay of hierarchical, rules-based, normative and concertive controls. These controls are maintained by the carrot of promotion and the stick of military discipline, but they are imposed in the first instance through basic training.

Instilling control: basic training

All new recruits undertake basic training, but this varies slightly between the three services. New recruits to the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy complete a ten week course, but new Royal Marine commandos undertake 32 weeks' commando training. For new members of the British Army, basic training is a fourteen week programme unless they join one of the infantry regiments, in which case they undertake a six month course incorporating training for their chosen role. In all cases, this training takes place at dedicated residential establishments where trainees live communally, are kept occupied throughout their waking hours and are to all intents and purposes cut off from the outside world. Classroom education is interspersed with practical skills training, physical education and, perhaps above all, drill: marching and performing manoeuvres in close formation or, as one interviewee put it, 'marching, saluting and standing still by numbers' (Royal Navy, senior), something which ceased to be of use on the battlefield over a century ago and is now only of ceremonial importance (Dallas and Gill 1985). The emphasis on drills in basic training confirms their use as a core mechanism of control, a 'central means by which recruits are conditioned to respond obediently to commands' (Hockey 1986: 22).

During basic training, the screening of new recruits continues, and they can be discharged if they are 'found to lack the attitude, discipline, or [physical] fitness to continue' (RN 2013); indeed, some 35% of infantry recruits are discharged from the army during their extended training period (Gee 2017). By holding this threat over the heads of individuals, by limiting activities to those dictated by the trainers, and by isolating trainees from their friends and families for lengthy periods, the

armed forces set about their twin aims of ‘depersonalising’ and ‘converting’ the individual (Zurcher 1967), a process which is reflected in the recruitment campaign using the slogan ‘born in [town], made in the Royal Navy’. The purpose of military basic training is to remake recruits in the preferred image of the armed forces, stripping away their civilian identities and creating new, military, identities:

> submission is the first aim, the well-functioning, disciplined, inconspicuous statistical unit is the result. ... [Basic] training can be described as a prolonged degradation ceremony. The first aspect of this is de-individualisation (Steinert 2003: 267, 277).

In his in-depth study of the British Army, Hockey (1986) explored how the transformation from civilian to military takes place in two stages, starting with ‘civilian role dispossession’. During this phase, recruits are swiftly stripped of any sense of individuality: private space is severely limited, uniform is worn and they have to learn and conform to rules regarding how to address their superiors, how to look after themselves and how to look after their kit. Meanwhile, the ability to make choices is severely constrained; combined with restrictions on sleep and regular periods of intense physical exercise, this process puts trainees through a series of physical and mental shocks. As a result, they are likely to experience fatigue, anxiety and disorientation, often compounded by the fear that an individual mistake will be met with a collective punishment, thus putting the individual in hot water with the only other people s/he can turn to, the rest of the training group. The first phase of basic training, then, is primarily concerned with taking away, regressing the recruit to infancy (Hollingshead 1946), and one study has found that the process of ‘internalising’ military values begins as early as the first week (Carré 2018). During the second phase, though, ‘the military institution becomes a substitute parent’ (Hollingshead 1946: 442) and starts to give back in

the form of ‘organisational socialisation’ (Hockey 1986). Trainees still face daily challenges, but are becoming more accustomed to the life, some elements of which will have already become second nature, and will have some sense of achievement at having passed the early stages of training. Organisational socialisation in this context, however, is a one-way process, where trainees are passive subjects entering ‘an existing world where they quickly need to adjust and confirm to new … behavioural standards’ (Swain 2016: 119).

Basic training, and indeed military life in general, has been described in terms of Goffman’s concept of the ‘total institution’, where:

> all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority[;] … each phase of the member’s daily activity is carried on in the immediate company of … others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same things together[;] … all phases of the day’s activities are tightly scheduled, … the whole sequence of activities being imposed from above by a system of explicit formal rulings and a body of officials … [and] the various enforced activities are brought together into a single rational plan … designed to fulfil the official aims of the institution (Goffman 1961: 17)

On entry into the total institution, individuals are ‘programmed’ into cooperation, to contributing ‘required activity to an organisation and under required conditions’, through a process termed ‘primary adjustment’ (Goffman 1961: 172, 171). At the same time, however, there is a parallel process of ‘secondary adjustment’, the use of ‘unauthorised means’ and ‘unauthorised ends’ by which the individual subverts ‘the organisation’s assumptions as to what he should do … and hence who he should be’ (Goffman 1961: 172). According to an insider study of the United States Navy, primary adjustment equates to ‘the sailor’s enactment of the role expectations presented to him by the formal organisation’ (Zurcher 1965: 392), while secondary adjustments are to be found in the ‘informal organisation’

which ‘tends … to aid, to limit, and to redirect the performance of formally assigned functions … those phenomena of tradition, custom, ritual, initiation and myth’ (Zurcher 1965: 393). The process of secondary adjustment starts in the second phase of basic training, where, as well as adapting to the formal rules of military life and developing a sense of solidarity within the training group, albeit partly manufactured by the trainers, trainees also start to get to grips with the informal rules, notably regarding tips and shortcuts for the completion of tasks. For instance, the practice of keeping a clean set of kit to one side ready for inspection, some items of which might have been ‘liberated’ (stolen) from elsewhere, was, and probably still is, relatively common (Hockey 1986). By the end of basic training, then, new members of the armed forces have learned some military skills, been inculcated with ‘the canons of military discipline … collective obedience’ (Hockey 1986: 21-22), and discovered not only how to conform but also how, in some respects, to appear to conform.

Basic training, then, is the introduction to a new way of life for which young men and women must have their behaviour, attitudes and even their appearance ‘shaped and moulded according to a uniform template’ (Woodward 2000: 646); it is also where recruits form new friendship groups and learn the rules, formal and informal, of military life (Swain 2016). The experiences of participants in this study tended to reflect the literature in viewing basic training as a process of socialisation and control. Indeed, one interviewee unwittingly confirmed the points made by Hockey (1986) and others:

> *When I look back now it is essentially pulling a group of individuals apart and putting them back together as a team with a common goal* (Royal Navy, junior)

The overwhelming majority (95.8%) of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that 'basic training was hard work, but it was worth it'; indeed, one interviewee stated that:

> *Getting through basic training's a feat in itself* (British Army, senior)

With hindsight, too, most recognised the role of basic training as a control mechanism, 62% agreeing or strongly agreeing that it was 'more about discipline and obedience than anything else'; indeed, one respondent stated that:

> *The realisation that basic training was not the real navy was pretty much drummed into you from day one* (Royal Navy, senior)

In one important respect, however, respondents did not reflect the view that basic training was solely concerned with the imposition of control, the majority (65%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement that 'basic training bore no relation to what I actually ended up doing'. This, though, reflects the range of jobs within the armed forces and, in particular, the differences between the three services and their training regimes. In the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, new recruits who have completed basic training go on to a second phase of training which equips them for their chosen trade. In the British Army, on the other hand, the skills learned in basic training are more readily put to direct use, particularly by those who have undergone the extended infantry course; little surprise, then, that only 20% of former army personnel agreed that their basic training was unrelated to the work they went on to do. One interviewee, who was involved in a major evacuation operation within six months of his first posting, highlighted just how relevant he had found his basic training:

> *It was the attributes … that were taught to you in basic training that helped you cope with whatever situation you were faced with*

> *and even now I call on the training to see me right* (Royal Navy, senior)

Another highlighted in the starkest terms just how immediately some of the lessons of basic training might be put into practice:

> *I joined my regiment in January, and then in February I was off to [war] and one of my friends got killed* (British Army, senior)

The shocks of basic training are evident from the first moments:

> *So you were all chucked in this big room and you had to get on with people, and then there was people speaking almost foreign languages – people from Newcastle, Geordies, I didn't understand a word they were saying … It was just full on from day one … Basic training is designed to be difficult.* (Royal Navy, senior)

Similarly, one participant had some very clear memories of the whole experience:

> *I remember getting up very early, I remember lots of cleaning, I remember lots of marching, lots of uniform, lots of kind of outward bound activities … assault courses, being shouted at a lot. …It was terrifying really, for a seventeen year old* (Royal Navy, junior)

At the same time, however, and in support of the view that basic training is concerned with organisational socialisation, some participants spoke of this time as encouraging a sense of belonging, both to the service and to each other:

> *you live, literally, in everybody else's pockets – you have to do the same things together. It's quite tough, [but] you just get on with it. And those who don't get on with it leave* (Royal Navy, senior)

Furthermore, it has been suggested that military comradeship is not instilled from above but develops out of such shared experiences (King 2006). One participant unwittingly supported this view, demonstrating the ways in which comradeship can be a form of concertive control, not imposed by the trainers but by the peer group:

> *After a few days of being together there forms a hierarchy in the class. Supposedly the [training] staff don't know about this, but with hindsight I can see that they did. It helped them to do their job by weeding out the ones that were not going to make it* (Royal Navy, junior)

As discussed above, this concertive control has the potential to tip over into bullying, but one interviewee found a way of dealing with the peer pressure, coincidentally demonstrating the speed with which trainees learn not only the rules, formal and informal, but also how to turn them to their own advantage:

> *As a class we went on to further training, all together as a class, so really there was no escape from the peer pressure of the older lads … The way for me to get away from the bullies was to fail an exam: this got me back classed [put into a different training group to repeat the relevant part of the training], hence I got away from them* (Royal Navy, junior)

For some, the bullying and objectionable behaviour came not from their peers but from the trainers and other superiors:

> *We had a wash bin at the end of our beds, and in my wash bin was a little piece of paper - it was a bus ticket … The leading Wren … I was stood to attention, she was in front of my face about six inches away and she called me a dirty little slut. She was spitting at me – "you dirty little slut - what is this?" – "Um, it's a bus ticket" – "Don't you answer me back!" … There was a drill sergeant: … we would be marching … and he would shout abuse at us – "stop marching so fast you bunch of abortions"* (Royal Navy, junior)

Others, too, highlighted the ways in which hierarchical and rules-based controls were introduced and enforced:

> *Anything [the instructors] said was carried out without question … If you made a mistake on parade you could be made to wear a heavy oilskin coat and then have to carry your rifle above your head and run around the parade ground. Humiliating and punishing, but it was accepted. Some called it character building* (Royal Navy, senior)

Nevertheless, many participants enjoyed their basic training, or at least endured it: one interviewee said that the exposure to 'physical and mental deprivation' had served as good preparation for serving in a war zone, while another explained that:

> *I thoroughly enjoyed the experience (apart from breaking the ice on the assault course and getting wet in a sleet storm) … Basic training instilled in you a sense of belonging to the Royal Navy and to each other, helping each other to overcome the challenges that lay ahead. Obviously it also instilled in you to obey commands* (Royal Navy, senior)

Basic training, then, continues to be concerned primarily with taking civilians, removing their civilian characteristics and creating new, uniform (and uniformed) military individuals. The literature suggests that this has been the case for many years and in more than one context: in a paper about US conscripts in the 1940s, Hollingshead argued that

> the perfectly trained soldier is one who has had his civilian initiative reduced to zero. In the process the self becomes identified with the institution and dependent upon it for direction and stimulation (1946: 441).

Throughout the basic training process, moreover, hierarchical controls and rules are instilled: indeed, it has been argued that 'socialisation and training depend on the establishment of a master / slave dynamic' (Belkin 2016: 203). In addition, norms are established and, through processes which might amount to concertive control, and indeed to bullying, team work and comradeship are introduced and encouraged. Crucially, the processes involved in basic training amount to the overt use of 'power over': the trainers dominate and trainees have little or no power, particularly at the start. As training progresses, however, the scope for 'power to' emerges as recruits begin to learn the informal rules (Zurcher 1967,

Hockey 1986). By the end of their training period, then, they are full members of a total institution (Goffman 1961), subject to the full range of controls imposed by the military employment relationship.

Comparisons with civilian employment

The use of human resource management methods to capture the 'hearts and minds' of employees (Sisson 2008) and embed normative control is, as noted in chapter one, something of a commonplace in the civilian workplace. People management is increasingly concerned not merely with compliance but also with 'engagement', motivation and commitment since, it is argued, workers who are committed are also more productive (see for instance Legge 1995, 2004, MacLeod and Clarke 2009, Purcell 2012). As Gabriel has argued:

> corporate culture has emerged as an infinitely more subtle form of normative control, one that transforms each employee into a self-regulating, self-policing subject, one who is almost unable to achieve any political, critical or moral detachment from his/her employer's power practices. … It is … a subject that has developed the utmost psychological, social and material dependence on the corporation; it has become a nonsubject (1999: 180)

Similarly, the interplay, and apparent contradiction, between formal and informal rules and norms has long been recognised in the civilian workplace, where 'formal disciplinary rules interact with informal understandings to produce sets of norms and understandings about workplace conduct' (Edwards and Whitston 1989: 3). Hence, for instance, it has been found that trade union representatives will use 'informal channels to try to achieve a resolution' in disciplinary matters but also 'robustly defend' the union member in formal hearings, and see no contradiction between the two strategies (Saundry et al 2011: 203).

Concepts of normative and concertive control derive in the main from studies of the civilian workplace. During his participant observation in the machine shop of a steel processing plant, Roy (1952, 1954) noted the ways in which workers 'subverted' formal managerial controls. In one instance, a rule was introduced whereby all tools had to be returned to a central unit, or 'crib', at the end of each shift; however, workers took to concealing tools under their benches in order to save time. Since said workers were paid by the piece, this was a logical move, but 'intergroup cooperation' also amounted to concertive control: rules were being ignored or broken in order to keep production going and the 'subversion' was therefore to the benefit not only of the workers but also their employer. Interestingly, Burawoy (1979), who studied the same plant thirty years later and described the 'games' played by workers seeking maximum earnings, found that it was still the case that some tools might be at the benches even though the rule that they be held in a 'crib' was still in force.

In another example of 'subversion', Rosenthal explored the ways in which service workers used the extensive managerial controls imposed upon them to create 'interactive control' to advance their own interest and 'influence and control those parties with whom they directly interact' (2004: 617), again therefore acting concertively in both their own and the employer's interests. Meanwhile, a recent study of bank employees uncovered evidence of a 'cultural community' (McCabe 2011: 440) where concertive control played an important role: 'Employees "help each other" due to friendship ties and out of empathy for each other. The staff are disciplined through cultural norms and discipline themselves and each other' (McCabe 2014a: 440). However, Barker (2005) found that concertive control for

self-managing teams in a small manufacturing concern was not so much a 'cultural community' as a disciplinary one, where workers 'put themselves under their own eye of the norm, resulting in a powerful system of control' (2005: 238).

In terms of the operation of normative and concertive controls, then, there is little apparent difference between the military and the civilian employment relationship. Where the armed forces differ, however, is in the ability to remove personnel from all that is familiar, isolate and reshape them in the required, military, image. There is no civilian equivalent of basic training: the typical induction programme for a new employee may be concerned with ensuring that 'employees are integrating well into or across the organisation … [including] the company culture and values' (CIPD 2018), but it does not include limiting contact with friends and family nor the denial of privacy and individuality. In this respect, therefore, the armed forces might be said to have perfected the art of winning 'hearts and minds'.

Chapter summary

This chapter has explored the role of normative and concertive controls in the military employment relationship, highlighting the range of informal rules and norms which supplement and complement formal, hierarchical and rules-based controls and suggesting some sources of concertive control. It has also examined the ways in which all these forms of control are instilled during basic training, a powerful instrument for creating, inducting and socialising military personnel. Thus far, then, the emphasis has been on regulating the military employment relationship, and indeed on the uses of 'power over' to ensure command and

control. The next chapter will explore consent and compliance in the military employment relationship; it will also consider whether it is contested and, if so, by what means.

7. Contesting the military employment relationship: consent, compliance and resistance

Evidence presented thus far strongly suggests that there is a high level of consent to the range of controls in the military employment relationship, or that, if not actively consenting, personnel tend towards passive compliance. For instance, data presented in chapter five demonstrated that the majority of participants felt that the disciplinary system was fair and that those who broke the rules deserved to be punished. The historical evidence, however, points not only to compliance and consent but also to the absence of consent, passive and active non-compliance and indeed resistance.

This chapter will explore the questions of consent and compliance, discussing the issue of voice as a prime example of the apparent willingness of military personnel to comply with restrictions in return for certainty, security and, perhaps, adventure. It will then propose that, in the military employment relationship, consent and compliance derive from a number of factors including the individual's reasons for enlisting. Finally, and in contrast, it will explore the limits of consent and discuss some examples of individual and collective resistance. It will conclude, therefore, that although the military employment relationship is tightly regulated, there is perhaps more discontent and more scope for resistance than might be expected.

Perceptions of the military employment relationship

Survey respondents indicated their views on a number of general statements about the military employment relationship, as illustrated in the charts in Figure 17. 94% agreed or strongly agreed that 'the [service] is a good employer' and nobody strongly disagreed with the statement. Similarly, 91% agreed or strongly agreed that 'I never regretted joining up'; the overwhelming majority (92%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with 'I'd never advise anybody to join the [service]' and almost every participant (95%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that 'I got out of the [service] as soon as I could'. There was minimal difference between the three services on these four points, and indeed only small differences based on rank, although in the main those who had remained in the lower ranks were not quite as positive as those who had progressed to the senior ranks or served as officers. Hence, for instance, all former officers considered the army to have been a 'good employer', but 7% of senior ranks and 11% of junior ranks disagreed with the statement.

The range of responses to a fifth statement, 'pay and conditions in the [service] were very good' was broader, however, with 72% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing. Differences between the services on this issue were negligible, but there was less agreement between the ranks: with regard to former naval personnel, 94% of officers were happy with their pay and conditions but only 75% of senior ranks and 63% of junior ranks felt the same. Discontent about pay is not, of course, unusual, but some of this difference might be explained by the era when the individual was serving: for instance, one interviewee who joined up in

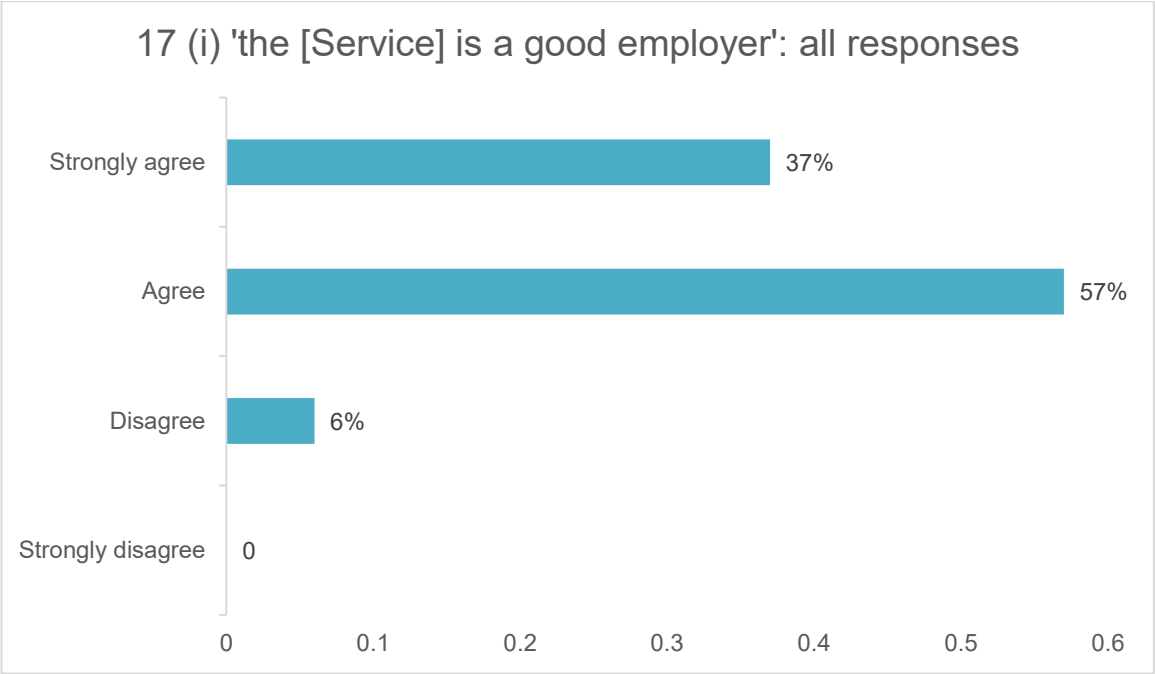

Figure 17 (i) Survey statement ‘the [Service] is a good employer’: all responses

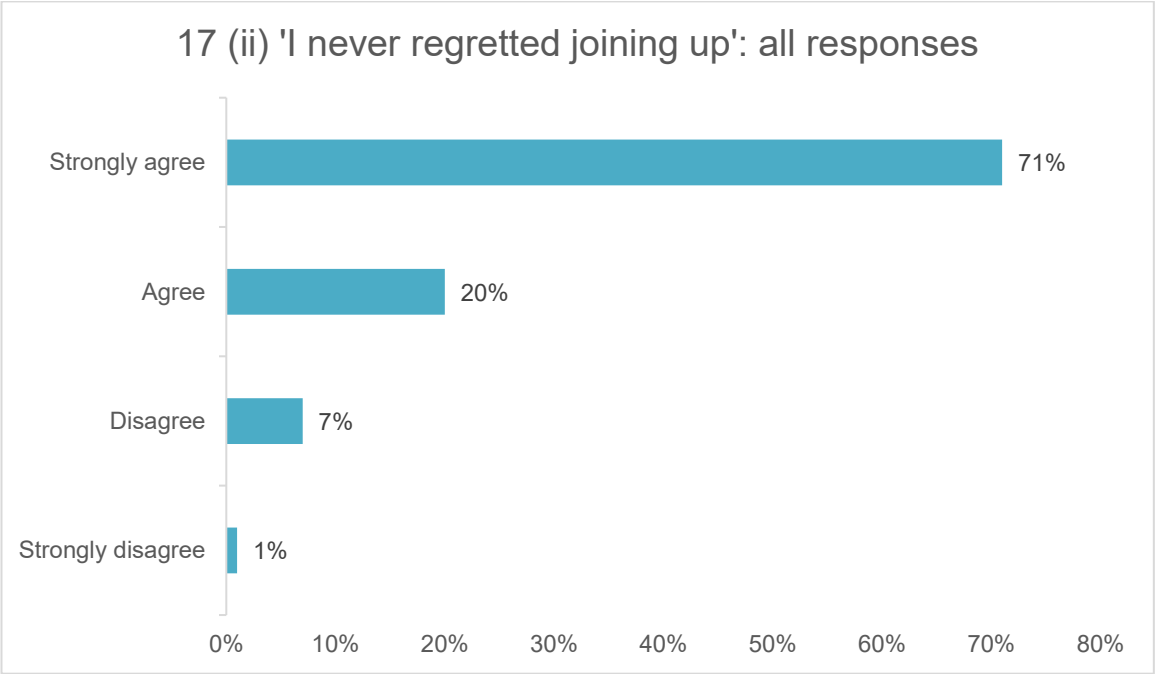

Figure 17 (ii) Survey statement ‘I never regretted joining up’: all responses

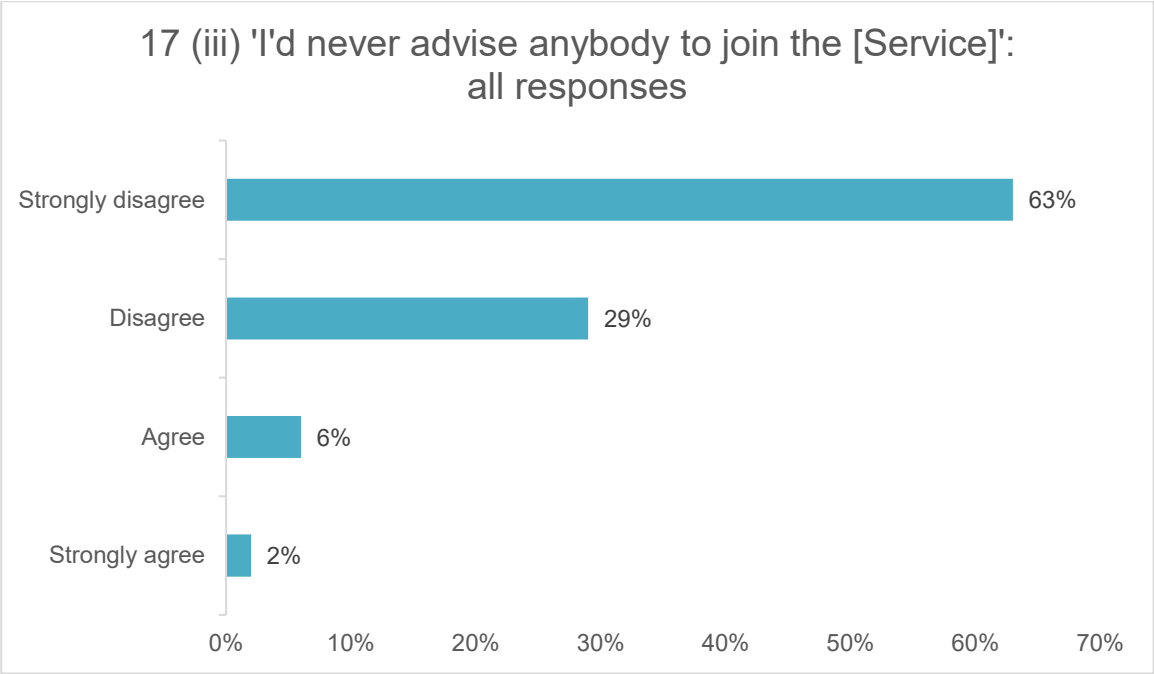

Figure 17 (iii) Survey statement ‘I’d never advise anybody to join the [Service]’: all responses

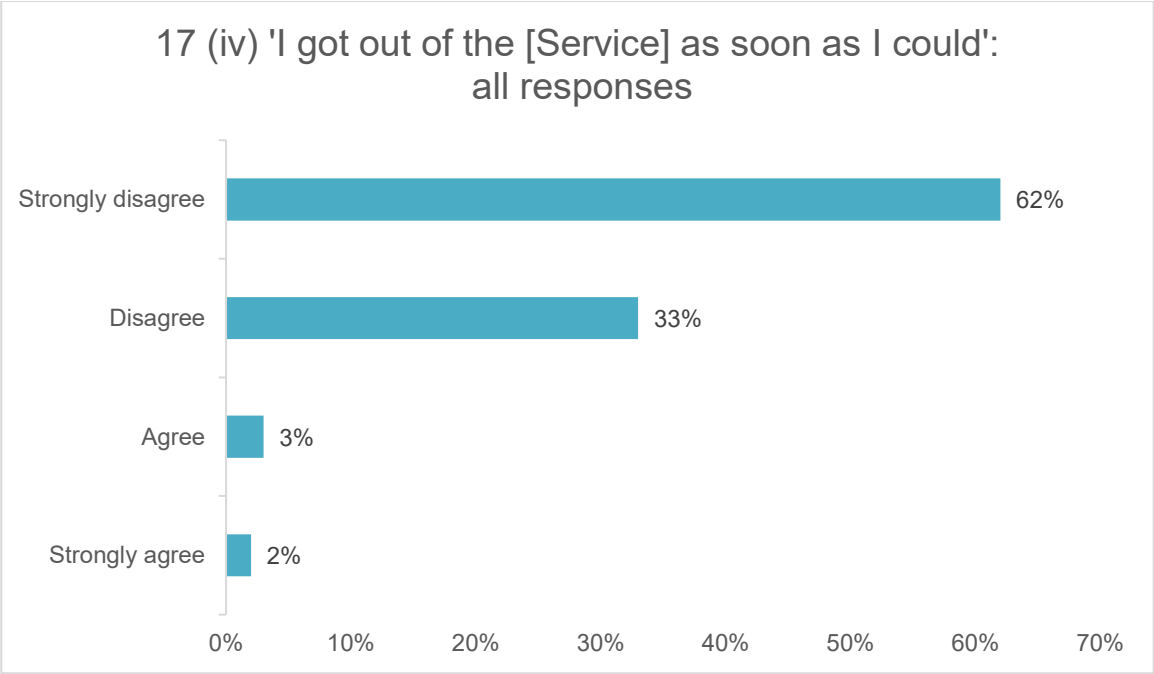

Figure 17 (iv) Survey statement ‘I got out of the [Service] as soon as I could’: all responses

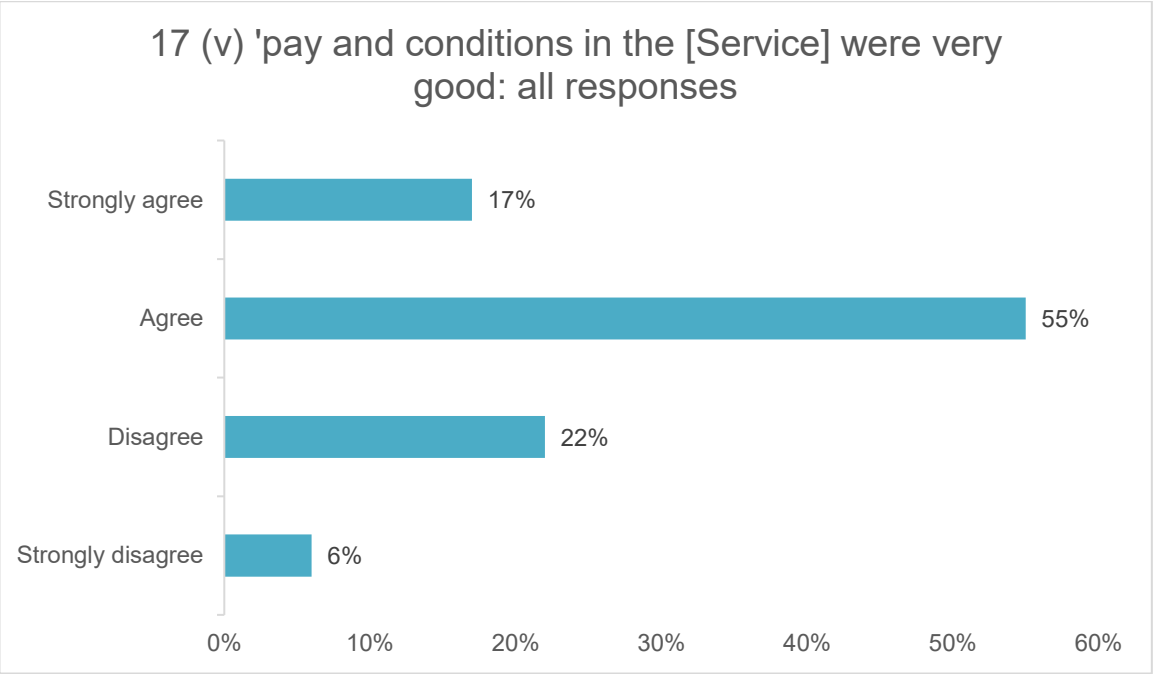

Figure 17 (v) Survey statement 'pay and conditions in the [Service] were very good': all responses

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the mid-1970s referred to earning about £15 per week in the civilian job he held beforehand but then finding himself earning approximately £13 per fortnight in the Royal Navy. Another, who served in the same era, recalled that the pay for an army corporal was so low that families were entitled to supplementary welfare benefits. However, an interviewee who served more recently made an important point which reflects a number of issues about military pay:

> *When you break down your pay … to an [hourly] rate, and the fact that … if there's stuff still going on you stay … you don't get time in lieu or overtime or additional anything – it's just "the job's got to be done: this is what you get paid"* (Royal Navy, junior)

This same point was, also made by another interviewee, who estimated that the hourly rate of pay for a new soldier earning about £18,000 p.a. was 'about £1.50 an hour' because the constant demands amounted to being permanently at work (British Army, senior).

The charts in Figure 18 tabulate the positive responses to the five statements relating to the armed forces as employer. Taken together, these responses indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the military employment relationship: 63% of all survey participants responded positively to all five, indicating that they were happy with their pay and other conditions and with the service as an employer, did not regret joining up, did not leave as soon as they could and would advise others to serve. Notably, too, there were few differences by rank or service. Indeed, data from this study appears to reflect a higher level of satisfaction than the most recent iteration of the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey, in which, for instance, only 31% of personnel, and just 29% of those who were not officers, agreed that 'the pay and benefits I receive are fair for the work I do', and just 41% expressed themselves satisfied with 'Service life in general' (AFCAS 2018b). This was, probably, to be expected, since participants in this study were self-selecting, gaining access to it through ex-forces social media and similar routes: it is therefore unlikely to have reached many individuals who, having disliked the experience of military service, have sought to distance themselves from this community. Nevertheless, 36% of respondents gave a negative response to at least one of the five relevant statements, although just 9% were negative about three or more. At the same time, however, in their responses to a further statement only 67% of respondents in this study agreed that when they were serving they were 'always treated fairly and with respect', and this dropped to just 44% of those who had remained in the junior ranks for the army and 46% of their counterparts in the navy. This suggests, then, that while participants were generally satisfied with the employment aspects of their service, there were also some aspects with which they were not so

satisfied, but which, perhaps, they tolerated in return for other, more positive aspects.

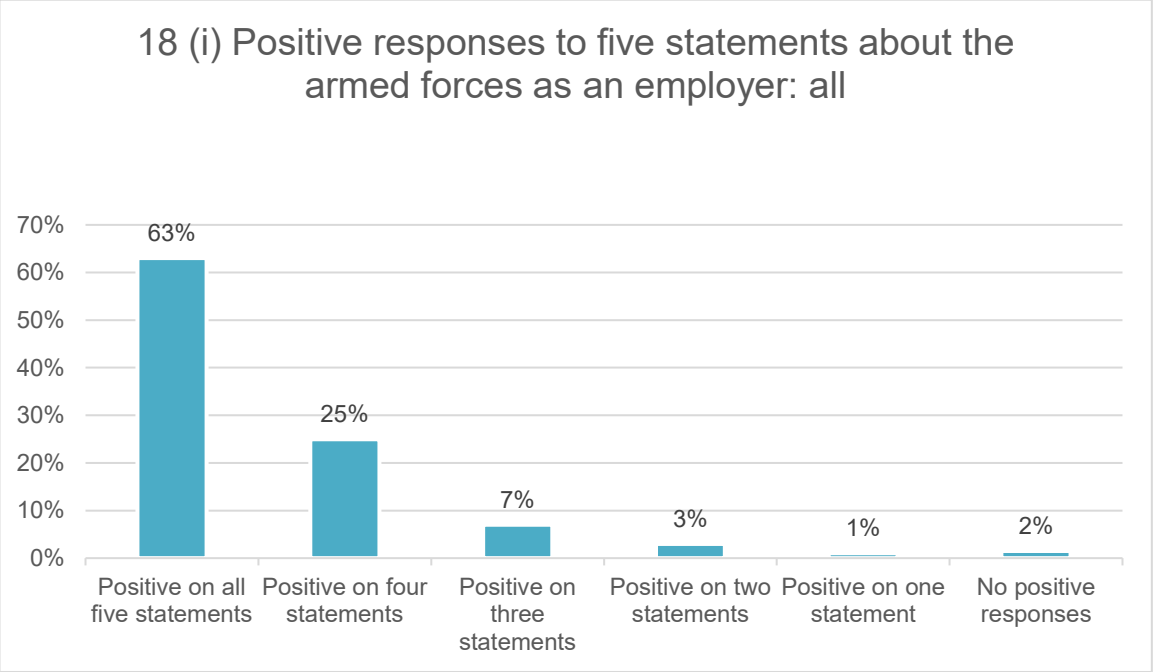


Figure 18 (i) Positive responses to the five statements about the armed forces as employer: all responses (220)

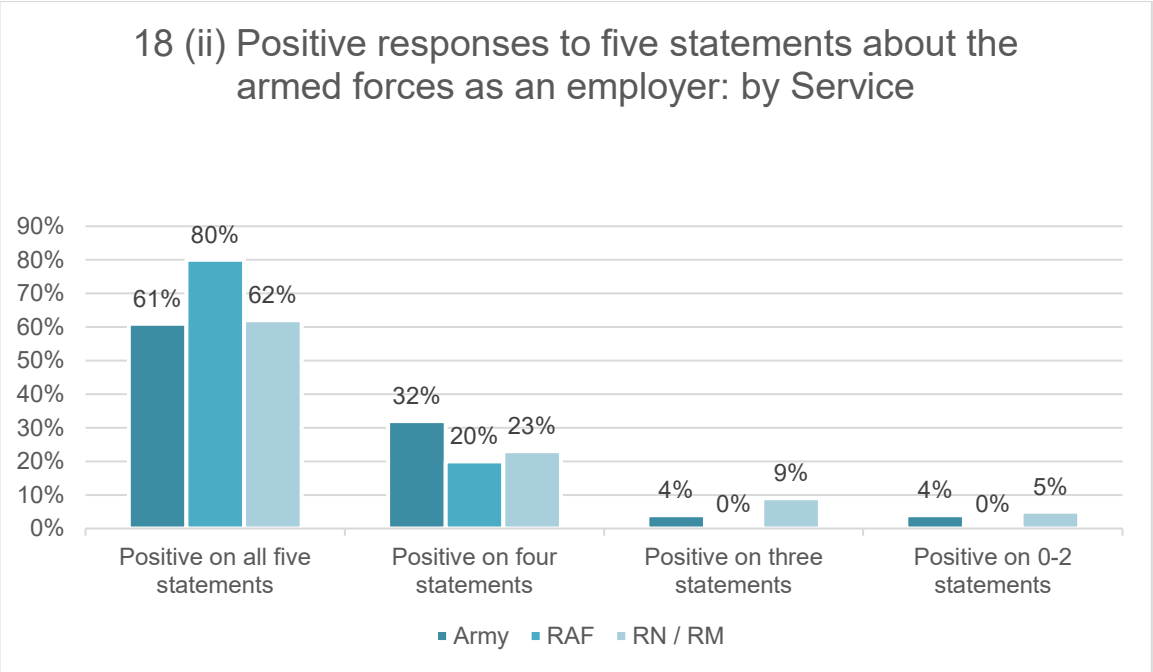


Figure 18 (ii) Positive responses to the five statements about the armed forces as employer: by Service (rounded to the next whole number)

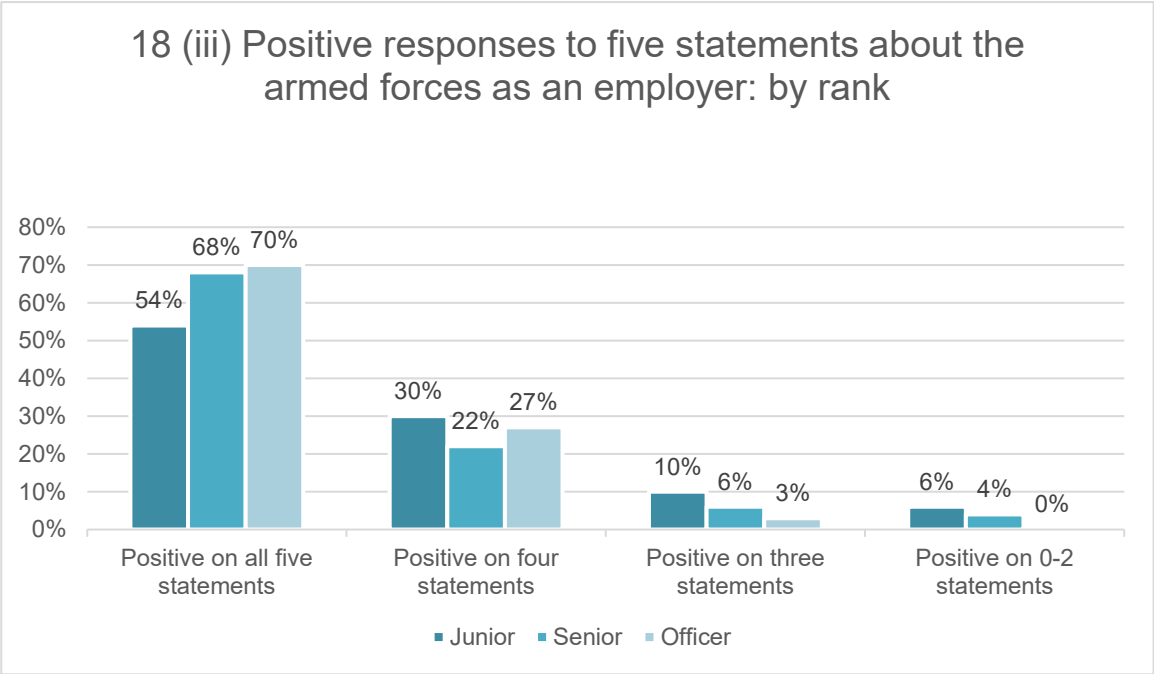


Figure 18 (iii) Positive responses to the five statements about the armed forces as employer: by rank (rounded to the next whole number)

Elsewhere in the survey and interviews, the majority of participants again indicated that they were very satisfied with their service; indeed, several regretted leaving, at least two had re-joined after leaving and others had taken up civilian roles alongside the military estate. Many also, as noted in chapter six, made reference to the value they placed on the comradeship, the forging of lifelong friendships and the sense of 'family', as well as other things they felt they had gained from their military service. Having lived and worked with their colleagues for long periods of time, frequently far from home and, of course, potentially in danger, participants highlighted the ways in which they depended upon each other, not only at work but also in the quiet times off duty. Although there were some references to solitary activities such as reading, many memories were of

going out and/or drinking together, and this in itself further strengthened the bonds: one interviewee stated that 'if you didn't drink you didn't fit in' (Royal Air Force, junior). Comradeship was also reinforced by a sense of separation, of being different and, perhaps, 'better'. Some participants were serving at a time when near universal respect for members of the armed forces was not the norm and there was, as one interviewee put it, a degree of resentment towards them:

> *I had a little group of lads set on me just because I was in the navy … You stood out, you know, short hair, quite fit looking, bit of money … [civilians] just didn't like it* (Royal Navy, junior)

In a question which, as discussed in chapter four, was only put to those who had served in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, respondents identified the 'best' thing about their service. Of 153 responses received, 90 again used terms relating to people, camaraderie, friendship and belonging, while a further 43 highlighted the ability to travel the globe and 27 used terms like 'adventure', 'variety', 'new experiences' and those relating to sport and/or social life. One interviewee, for instance, had visited no less than 48 different countries, while another recalled how:

> *So many times in my career I just had to stop and pinch myself and think "I don't believe I'm getting paid to do this"!* (Royal Navy, junior)

Alongside the comradeship and adventure, too, there was a shared sense of purpose, something which several participants had found lacking on their return to the civilian workplace. As one interviewee explained:

> *You're never on your own … there's always someone you can ask for help, someone you can talk to … And you all work together … everyone's got the same aim, to get through the work and get out the other side* (Royal Navy, senior)

Data from this study, then, suggests a remarkable degree of consent and compliance on the part of military personnel, some of which might be explained in terms of a trade-off: acceptance and compliance with hierarchical and rules-based controls in return for a sense of belonging, travel and / or adventure. Perhaps the prime example of both consent and trade-off is to be found in participants' experiences of, and views on, voice, or the opportunity to 'have a say' (Wilkinson and Fay 2011: 66).

Formal voice mechanisms

As discussed in chapter three, British military personnel have few opportunities for voice. The Service Complaints procedure is an individual grievance procedure, albeit one which falls short of the standards applicable in civilian employment (ACAS 2015), but apart from this there is only some very limited consultation on pay and other conditions and the chance to take part in regular attitude surveys.

One in ten survey respondents had raised a grievance using the version of the Service Complaints procedure in operation at the time they were serving. There are no published statistics to compare this figure to, but, coincidentally, the armed forces' own survey in 2017 found that 10% of those who had experienced discrimination, harassment or bullying in the previous twelve months made a formal complaint about it (AFCAS 2017), suggesting that the data from this study might not be untypical. However, the proportion of those who complained about discrimination, harassment or bullying the following year dropped to 6% (AFCAS

2018b), suggesting that participants in this study were perhaps slightly more willing than others to raise a grievance.

One reason for the apparent willingness of participants to pursue grievances through formal channels might be the relative seniority, and thus the confidence and wherewithal, of those who did so: almost a quarter of respondents who had complained were officers, and only one had never progressed beyond a junior rank. Awareness of the ability to make a complaint might also have been a factor: 82% of respondents agreed with the statement 'if I had a problem when I was in the [service] I knew where to turn to get it resolved'. This in turn reflects the military bureaucratic emphasis on detailed written procedures coupled with extensive training and the requirement that personnel be aware of the contents of key documents. Equally, the military working environment is somewhat familial, in that both managerial and welfare structures have a role in providing information and, where appropriate, support; hence, as one interviewee put it,

> *I always found that if I had a grievance I had somebody I could go to who would listen to me* (Royal Navy, senior)

Conversely, however, 42% of survey respondents agreed that it was sometimes difficult to find out what their rights were, and half of those who had pursued a grievance said that the matter was not resolved to their satisfaction. Asked why they were dissatisfied, most cited organisational or procedural issues, including 'jobsworthism' and, again reflecting the nature of hierarchical control, an institutional reluctance to find in favour of personnel against their seniors. As a result, perhaps, nearly half (45%) of all survey respondents agreed that 'I had a few complaints and grievances during my service years, but there was no point

trying to pursue them'. Responding to open questions in the survey, a number took the opportunity to expand upon this, saying that they now regretted not making a complaint about a specific issue, or not having appealed when a decision went against them.

One reason given for not complaining was the grievance procedure itself, which in the eyes of one respondent needed to be made 'easier, less confusing and less intimidating' (Royal Navy, officer). Indeed, it can be argued that the insistence on written complaints mitigates against procedural justice: one study found that 39% of new recruits to the British Army had only the literacy skills expected of an eleven year old (HCDC 2013), although standards are higher in the other two services. Similarly, studies have suggested that civilian employers may 'exercise retribution against grievance filers' (Lewin and Patterson 1999, Lewin 2014), and fear of the consequences of complaining was also cited as a reason for remaining silent. One survey respondent was told to discontinue a complaint or 'my promotion … could be jeopardised', while an interviewee stated that:

> *You're told if you have a grievance you can redress the officer in question, but if you did this it was the end of your career* (Royal Air Force, junior)

These findings also reflect those uncovered by the military's own internal surveys. In the most recent of these, 63% of personnel who had experienced discrimination, harassment or bullying stated that they had not made a formal complaint because 'I did not believe that anything would be done if I did complain'. 16% reported that 'I was discouraged from doing so', and no less than 50%

believed that making a complaint ‘might adversely affect my career’ (AFCAS 2018b).

Participants’ experiences and perceptions of the formal complaints procedure therefore varied a great deal. While a substantial proportion were willing to pursue grievances, many more were not, and some later came to regret this. Some of those who did complain emerged with the perception that the procedure only reinforced the authority of the chain of command, while others felt that obstacles, notably the fear of retribution, stood in the way of making a complaint. With the benefit of hindsight, one interviewee perhaps reflected wider opinion on the matter:

> *As the years roll on I realise we had very little redress against some of the things that happened* (Royal Air Force, senior)

With reference to the other military voice mechanisms, none of the participants made any reference to being consulted by the Armed Forces Pay Review Body, but the subject of attitude surveys arose in some of the interviews. Two interviewees in particular were sceptical about the confidentiality of exercises like the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS), indicating that, at least when they were serving, the identities of those selected to take part were known to the chain of command. One, who had served in the Royal Navy, recalled being present when an officer approached another individual to ask why the survey had not been returned, while a second explained that the commanding officer had a list matching individual’s names to the serial number on the survey. This latter participant, who was still serving three years before the study took place, also told of how an answer he had given in a survey had elicited requests for further

explanation, requests which were made in person by senior personnel. As a result, he developed a strategy:

> *Every time I filled in a survey … I just put in there what I thought was the answer they wanted … I knew that if I put something in that was detrimental then somebody would come back and keep asking me* (British Army, senior)

Here, perception is crucial. It is in the nature of military service that privacy is at a premium and, as already discussed, information, rumours and gossip can circulate very quickly. If individuals have heard that surveys are not entirely confidential, therefore, they might not complete them fully or honestly. Furthermore, the 2018 AFCAS forms were distributed to just under 28,000 personnel but returned by just over 11,000, or 40% of the sample (AFCAS, 2018a). Many social researchers would be delighted to secure a similar response rate, but in the military context of unquestioning obedience, 40% might be considered relatively low. It would appear, then, that a substantial proportion of military personnel offered this limited form of voice opt not to use it.

Perceptions of informal voice

In addition to the formal mechanisms, participants were asked about their perceptions of informal voice. Faced with the statement ‘I wish I’d had more of a voice on things that affected me when I was serving’, 47% of respondents disagreed, one in six of these strongly disagreeing. With hindsight, this statement was poorly phrased and could be interpreted in more than one way, but in fact this error produced some rich data. Disagreement with the statement, then, might be explained simply as a function of serving in the armed forces:

> *It's the military – you do as you're told … that's what you signed up for* (British Army, senior)

Indeed, several participants suggested that those who did not agree with the military way of doing things were in the wrong place:

> *if you wanted a voice then you shouldn't have joined* (Royal Navy, senior)

On the other hand, of course, 53% of respondents agreed that they had wanted more voice, including 10% who strongly agreed. There were, however, slight differences between the three services: 57% of those who had served in the army wished they had had more voice, while former naval personnel were almost equally divided on the issue and only 40% of those who had been in the air force agreed with the statement. As ever, these responses reflect the different tasks, cultures and traditions of the three arms of the military, as one interviewee with experience of joint operations explained:

> *In the Army it's not the same … they're always expecting to be told what to do* (Royal Navy, senior)

Hence those who had served in the biggest, most hierarchical and tightly disciplined of the three services were also most likely to indicate a desire for more voice. This appears to confirm that for some participants the denial of voice was a source of discontent, whether at the time or with the benefit of hindsight. Current personnel responding to AFCAS, too, appear to share some of this discontent: in 2018 , less than half (46%) of all officers and just 34% of those in the other ranks agreed that senior leaders 'are keen to listen to Service people's feedback', and, similarly, less than half of all serving personnel (44%) were satisfied with their 'involvement in decisions that affect my career' (AFCAS, 2018b).

During the interviews, it became clear that respondents who did not want more voice selected that option for two distinct and opposed reasons. First, and as highlighted above, a minority believed that voice was inappropriate in the context of military service. Second, however, the majority of those with whom the subject was discussed felt that they had been given a voice and, therefore, that they did not want or need more. In this regard, two further issues came into play: the link between voice and rank and the kind of voice respondents felt they had been able to use.

Once again reflecting the role of hierarchical control in the armed forces, perceptions of voice varied according to rank. In the survey, just four in ten former officers wished they had had more voice, compared with just over half of those who had reached a senior rank and almost 60% of those who had only served in the junior ranks. These responses suggest that voice is a function of rank, and further comments, both in response to open survey questions and during the interviews, tended to confirm this. For instance, one interviewee stated that

> *I had as much of a voice as I needed. More so in the last half of my career than the first half* (Royal Navy, senior)

For some, the denial of voice to the lower ranks was justified by operational demands:

> *at a certain stage you're going to have to turn around to these soldiers and say "we're being shot at – we're going to [respond in this way]" and you don't want them to question why you've made that decision* (British Army, senior)

For others, however, the link between status and voice rankled: asked to identify the 'worst thing' about being in the armed forces one survey respondent, a former junior rating in the Royal Navy, cited the denial of voice 'as it was considered

insubordinate and disrespectful'. Others said that their status in the hierarchy dictated that they would not be listened to, regardless of what they had to say, because being more junior meant that they were not considered important enough to have a view. Moreover, it was also suggested that the need to uphold discipline and maintain the authority of the chain of command might take precedence over all other considerations, including efficiency. One interviewee said that he would never have asked a group under his command how to tackle a specific task, explaining that even if good ideas had been put forward they would have been ignored because:

> *you didn't really want a private soldier telling the sergeant [what to do]* (British Army, senior)

In this regard, too, some participants also suggested that even when there was an opportunity to 'have a say' it was not always wise to take it, since it might reflect on their opportunity to progress. Compliance with the denial of voice, therefore, was perceived as improving promotion prospects, which would in turn bestow voice.

Conversely, though, some participants suggested that voice was not necessarily denied at any level:

> *I had a choice to have my voice heard within certain forums and contributed as and when I saw fit … the processes of having your views and perspectives listened to were there* (Royal Navy, senior)

Similarly, and again perhaps reflecting the different cultures of the three armed services, at least one participant felt that the lack of voice in the lower ranks was a matter of perception rather than reality. For some, too, it was less a matter of voice being denied and more one of choosing not to use it; asked whether

suggestions would be acted upon, for instance, one interviewee said that he would not have been credited for his contribution:

> *Probably not at my level, no. Somebody else may have taken all the glory for you, so you kept it quiet* (Royal Navy, senior)

Reflecting at some length, one interviewee suggested that voice, or rather the restriction of voice, was indeed concerned primarily with the maintenance of hierarchy:

> *When I left … maybe I was starting to question some of the elements. … [But] I don't think the questioning would have done any good … it wasn't a two-way process. … It's coming down from the top … "we appreciate your input but … we're not going to change"* (Royal Navy, senior)

Turning to the kind of voice participants felt they had during their service, many felt they had been given as much voice as they wanted. However, that voice was defined in a relatively narrow, task focused way, and, furthermore, may have been granted only at the discretion of their seniors. For instance:

> *I used to have lots of good ideas … I used to create stuff all the time – new equipment … No problem getting listened to* (Royal Navy, senior)

One participant spoke of voice being expressed through trade specialisms and technical ability, and another, who had been posted to work for a very senior officer, explained how that officer would

> *seek my thoughts … I was treated … with respect and my professional advice sought* (Royal Navy, senior)

Once again, these findings reflect recent military survey evidence. Asked whether they were 'encouraged to find better ways of doing things at work', less than one in five personnel disagreed, and only 7% disagreed with the view that 'the people in my team work together to find ways to improve the service we provide' (AFCAS

2018b). Even within the relatively narrow boundaries of this type of voice, however, there were still further limitations, since there was no guarantee that good ideas would be acted upon. One interviewee recalled that

> *If you had a … suggestion … it would be taken notice of, and people would give you a response and tell you why they couldn't do it* (Royal Navy, junior)

Furthermore, and as noted previously in different contexts, each of the three services has its own culture and traditions, but the units within them also have their own internal cultures, often dictated by the character and style of senior officers. Hence, in contrast to the experience of most other participants, an interviewee who had served in an elite unit again highlighted just how different those cultures can be:

> *we basically said what we want. I think sometimes if we didn't get our way we were like spoilt children …* (British Army, senior)

The British armed forces are, to all intents and purposes, a 'no voice' organisation (Willman et al 2006). Barriers exist to the use of the grievance procedure which, participants suggested, is not universally trusted; personnel therefore have little opportunity to challenge decisions, implying that they are not 'citizens' of their respective services but simply 'supplicants' (Colvin 2013). Moreover, the use of regular attitude surveys and the limited consultation over pay and conditions reflect, respectively, perhaps the weakest forms of voice for the purposes of 'contributing to management decision making' and 'demonstrating mutuality and cooperation' (Dundon et al 2004). In spite of these limitations, however, nearly half of all respondents perceived themselves to have had at least as much voice as they wanted. For some, of course, this was very little, since the very concept of voice was seen as being at odds with the nature of their voluntary military

service. However, participants, including some of those who held this view, often used this study to give voice, not only to complaints which might have festered for decades, but also to views on how to improve matters, as demonstrated in chapter five on the subject of hierarchy and promotion. Others, though, perceived themselves to have had, and to have used, a substantial degree of voice, albeit that this tended to be localised and task-oriented, a function of rank and/or at the discretion of those further up in the hierarchy. Moreover, these findings appear to reflect the military's own, suggesting that participants' experiences and perceptions are fairly representative. There is, then, substantial acceptance of, consent to and compliance with the lack of voice in the armed forces.

Explaining consent and compliance

Historically, when military recruitment relied on a combination of conscription and economic imperative, personnel had little option but to comply. Today, the economic imperative remains but military service has of course been entirely voluntary for nearly sixty years; perhaps not surprisingly, then, participants in this study demonstrated a high degree of both passive compliance and active consent, not only to the lack of voice but also to the disciplinary system and other controls. Even within the framework of a minimum binding term of service and long notice periods, individuals choose to serve, and 'it is participation in choosing that generates consent' (Burawoy 1979: 27). As noted in chapter one, authority is 'power that is justified by the beliefs of the voluntarily obedient' (Wright Mills 1958: 29); however, Diefenbach argues that, in a hierarchy, obedience is not entirely voluntary but instead achieved through a six-stage process of 'systematisation': 'sociopsychological processes or mechanisms that link the

individual and social institutions and make people able and willing to function' (2013: 73). In the British armed forces, the first three processes, namely socialisation, adaptation and synchronisation, are achieved primarily through basic training, resulting in the fourth, institutionalisation, and fifth, 'transformation' into the military individual. The sixth and last process, 'navigation', the ability to find one's way around and survive within the institution, is ensured by the stick of the disciplinary system, the carrot of promotion and the norms of military life. The extent of voluntary 'obedience' amongst military personnel is, therefore, questionable; as one interviewee put it:

> *We're indoctrinated … that's what the military's about* (British Army, senior)

This is not to suggest that military personnel have no agency, however, but that agency is restricted by the controls imposed upon them. Moreover, they do have agency in perhaps the most important decision they make: the decision to join the armed forces in the first place. Further explanation for the apparent levels of consent can, therefore, be found in why individuals join up.

Reasons for joining the armed forces

The decision to volunteer for military service may be motivated by a range of pull factors such as the prospect of challenge and adventure, the promise of good pay, training and other benefits, and personal concepts of loyalty and fidelity, dignity, risk and sacrifice (Eighmey 2006). However, it might also be a decision based on push factors, for instance the urge to escape deprivation, or by a combination of the two (Gee 2017). Potential recruits might also be influenced, rather than motivated, by factors such as a family history of military service,

having friends who are already in one of the armed forces or personal experience of one of the cadet forces (Swain 2016).

Survey respondents were asked to select their main reason for joining from a list of ten, the last of which was ‘another reason’. Three of the options offered were straightforward pull factors: ‘for good wages and a secure job’, ‘to learn a trade’ and ‘to see the world’, while a further two, ‘I followed in my father’s / other relative’s footsteps’ and ‘to serve my country’, were both pull factors and positive influences. In all, 72% of respondents selected one of the pull factors: the single biggest reason given was ‘to see the world’ (18%), while serving the country and following in the family tradition each garnered 14%. The single relatively neutral option, ‘I didn’t really know what else to do’, was selected by 6% of participants, and just 11% of all respondents indicated that their main reason for joining was one of the push factors: ‘there weren’t any other options’, ‘to get away’ or ‘to make a fresh start’.

The question of why participants joined up was also explored in a further open survey question, as well as in the interviews. Here, however, the picture was more mixed, reflecting the view that for any individual the decision is based on elements which ‘tend to be multiple, complex and frequently overlap’ (Swain 2016: 122). Given the nature of this study, it might have been expected that, when asked to select one reason, the overwhelming majority of participants would select positive, pull factors and influences: as discussed in chapter four, this was a group of respondents who probably would not have wanted to give negative impressions to a perceived outsider. Given the opportunity to say more, however,

many continued to cite pull factors: mention of military service as a childhood dream or lifelong ambition was very common, as were concepts of challenge, adventure and doing 'something different', and several respondents had served in the relevant cadet forces. Equally, however, push factors were also common and in some cases combined with positive reasons for joining, as one interviewee illustrated:

> *All there was to offer where I grew up was factory work. I wanted to do something completely different … It was a bit of job security … When I left school there was nothing, all the factories were closing … there was no jobs around there and I was destined for a life doing nothing. I wanted to make something of myself as well … I'd been in trouble a little bit, shall we say, and I just wanted to prove to everyone that I could do it* (Royal Navy, junior)

A number of other participants also cited a lack of job opportunities as a push factor, while difficulties at home or in the immediate environment also featured quite prominently. One stated a need to break away from the influence of a 'bad crowd' (Royal Navy, officer), another cited difficulties with a step-parent and another, more baldly, said that 'it was military service or prison' (British Army, senior). For others, however, there was perhaps little in the way of decision-making; one survey respondent said that:

> *a group of people at school were talking about joining and I thought it sounded like a good idea* (Royal Navy, junior).

There were also some differences between the three services, often reflecting the nature of military recruitment material and advertising (Woodward 2000, Gee 2007). For instance, 23% of former naval personnel said they had joined up 'to see the world', a slogan used in Royal Naval recruitment advertisements for some fifty years, but only 5% of ex-army respondents selected this option in the survey. Service-specific pull factors were also highlighted: the prospect of 'messing about

in boats' inspired more than one to join the navy, and similar reasons inspired one interviewee to join the RAF:

> *I thought – "do you know what? They're going to stick a roof over my head, they're going to feed me, they're going to pay me, and I'm going to do something I like doing – making things, taking things apart and fitting things to aeroplanes". What more could you want?* (Royal Air Force, junior)

Ex-army respondents, on the other hand, were more likely to focus on the desire to serve the country: indeed, one cited a specific desire to serve in Northern Ireland. One common factor amongst older participants was, however, the legacy of the Second World War: more than one mentioned growing up watching war films and playing with themed toys. One interviewee went into more detail about this influence on his decision to join up:

> *I think warfare and the military generally were more in the public consciousness … more people had an association with someone who was or had been in the military … and National Service had only just ended. … [Then] the military came back into prominence with the Falklands War … [and] I had always wanted to have a job that allowed me to see for myself and be part of significant events* (British Army, officer)

More than one participant, too, highlighted the role played by visible recruitment initiatives. One interviewee told of how

> *I remember walking past the careers office one morning and thinking "I could do that, I like that, that's something I think I could do". So I went in and joined up* (Royal Navy, junior)

Meanwhile, another had a change of mind as a direct result of a recruitment campaign:

> *I was heading towards joining [the army], and then I was in the city centre for some reason and I went past the naval recruiting office. I can still remember the posters in the window – there was a sailor in a rickshaw, and a Chinese girl in Chinese dress – you know, "join the navy, see the world". And I thought "oh – that sounds a better option than 'join the army, live in a trench'!"* (Royal Navy, senior)

Given the risks associated with military service, however, one participant gave an unusual and surprising response:

> *I was dithering between the police and the [military]: two policemen were shot dead in London, which made up my mind* (Royal Air Force, senior).

Theorising the decision to serve in the military

Participants in this study joined the British armed forces for a range of planned and unplanned reasons, from the fulfilment of a lifelong desire to the need to get away from a difficult, unappealing or unpleasant situation. Most commonly, though, they joined up in response to a mixture of push and pull factors, positive and negative influences. In the field of military sociology, service in the armed forces is often conceptualised in terms of Moskos' 'institution / occupation' dichotomy (1977a, 1977b, 1981, 1986, 1988). In this analysis, military service is, on the one hand, driven by an 'institutional' service ethic, while on the other it is an 'occupational' choice driven by the market and, in Moskos' view, at risk of becoming indistinguishable from civilian employment. This approach has been widely criticised: it lacks semantic precision (Caforio 1988), contains a range of 'inherent methodological problems' (Sørensen 1994), has minimal analytical or empirical foundation, and contains unrealistic 'overtones of an ideological appeal to return to the "good old days"' (Janowitz 1977: 54). Indeed, research published as early as 1960 had found that even conscript soldiers tended to view their service as 'just another job' (Segal 1986). In many ways, then, the institution / occupation thesis is reminiscent of the contemporary literature on 'orientations to work', which sought to analyse 'the expectations that the actor brings to work' (Daniel 1969: 366) with a view to exploiting them in the employer's interests, and

which sparked much controversy (see for example Whelan 1976, Russell 1980, Rose 1988). Hence, for instance, an ‘occupational’ approach to military service equates to an ‘instrumental’ orientation to work, where money is the prime motivator (see for instance Goldthorpe et al 1968). However, both the institution / occupation thesis and notions of ‘orientations to work’ are essentially unitary in nature and to a great extent neglect the economic imperative. Furthermore, the institution / occupation thesis is not only a 'top-down' interpretation of the military employment relationship (Jenkings et al 2011), but also one that is highly deterministic in its assumption that military personnel lack agency (Sørensen 2003). Nevertheless, it is 'commonplace' in military sociology (Callaghan and Kernic 2003) and continues to influence research in this field (see for instance Taylor et al 2015, Woodruff 2017). It also has some residual utility in exploring why individuals serve and their perceptions of the meaning of military service.

Joining the armed forces to learn a trade, or because of the prospect of good wages and a secure job, can be classed as an ‘occupational’ reason, while serving one’s country or following in the family tradition are more ‘institutional’. Hence, according to their responses to the questions about reasons for joining, 28% of survey respondents joined for ‘institutional’ reasons and 26% based their decision on ‘occupational’ considerations, while the biggest group (35%) fitted neither concept. However, survey respondents were also asked to describe their service in one word, selecting from a list which included terms such as vocation, job, profession, service, lifestyle and duty, as well as an open option. Here, just 22% selected an ‘institutional’ descriptor, while 55% opted for a term which suggested an ‘occupational’ motivation. Comparing the responses to the two

questions in more detail, these results suggest, as others have found, that institution and occupation are not diametrically opposed but represent dimensions on a scale, and that military personnel might tend towards one or the other or be oriented by a mixture of the two (Stahl et al 1978, 1980). For instance, of those respondents who indicated that they had joined up 'to serve my country', probably the most institutional of reasons, less than half chose an institutional descriptor such as vocation or duty to describe their service. Similarly, 13% of those who stated that they had joined for the most occupational reason, 'good wages and a secure job', chose an institutional descriptor like service and, moreover, nearly one fifth of those who joined up 'to see the world' still chose institutional descriptors. These results, then, further reinforce the view that individuals join the armed forces for a range of personal, economic, environmental and other reasons.

This complex of reasons for volunteering, then, goes some way to explaining the levels of consent and compliance uncovered in this study. However, there are limits to consent: 'although workers may adopt the ideologies of dominant groups their practices may reveal at least a partial rejection of these ideologies' (Edwards and Scullion 1982: 270). Consciously and unconsciously, then, participants supplied evidence of both individual and collective resistance to the controls placed upon them.

Resisting military-bureaucratic control

In any employment relationship, conflict and cooperation coexist around the 'frontier of control' (Goodrich 1975) and workers express their conflict in a range of ways, from misbehaviour, a 'kind of tacit disobedience that means that a managerial initiative fails to achieve its ends' (Thompson and Smith 2010), to making a formal complaint, taking some form of individual or collective action or removing themselves from the intolerable situation altogether. Historically, there are clear lines of continuity of resistance in the armed forces, lines which are particularly clear in the use by disgruntled personnel of methods of complete withdrawal: absence without leave, which continues to pose difficulties for the authorities today and to which at least one participant admitted, and desertion. Examples of resistance which made the news during this study were cited in chapter three, and participants demonstrated forms of resistance when, as in chapter five, they spoke about taking up a collection to pay a comrade's fine, which they perceived to be unfair, or, as in chapter six, they recalled matters such as widespread pilfering and a bully being dealt with by 'peeing in [his] brew' (Royal Navy, junior).

Others, too, gave examples of the ways in which control was resisted. One method, as in civilian employment, was leaving the armed forces altogether, or at least threatening to do so:

> *There were a lot of very fed up young lads … When they first joined you had to give eighteen months' notice to leave – eighteen months! So if you were fed up one week you'd put your notice in and then after twelve months you'd take it back. But they went through a stage where you could give one month's notice, if you had a job to go to … So a lot of the lads on the ship were leaving … cos they were just fed up with it* (Royal Navy, senior)

For others, the source of discontent was not the service *per se* but a specific issue, unit or person; like civilian employees, military personnel are:

> *Willing to put up with the rough and the smooth, but if it becomes unbalanced they will walk* (British Army, officer)

Hence one interviewee told of how, following a change in senior personnel, a 'happy ship' became 'an absolute nightmare':

> *Everybody hated it … Quite a few people put in for transfers, and there was a few people who left over it* (Royal Navy, junior)

For another participant, too, leaving became the only option. Having been posted to work on a 'green goddess' fire engine during a miners' strike, he had a run in with an officer from another service which resulted in a minor disciplinary warning. Moreover, this individual was a member of a trade union: although there is no union representation for military personnel, they are, with a view to the future, permitted to join a union relevant to their trade. The solidarity this interviewee felt with comrades outside the armed forces coupled with his response to the disciplinary warning to make the decision for him:

> *I had already been upset at being used to break a justified strike and the treatment I received from a senior army officer just confirmed for me that my time in the forces was over* (Royal Air Force, senior)

Leaving was not, of course, the only way in which participants resisted. One, indeed, discussed two separate incidents which involved two different forms of resistance. The first was an individual matter: while out and about in a major city with his parents, sober and out of uniform, he encountered a 'melee' and, in the confusion, was arrested for being drunk and disorderly. Advised to plead guilty at a civilian hearing which delayed his return to his post, he refused to do so, but was found guilty and fined. On return to his unit, an attempt was made to impose

a further, military, punishment for being arrested and found guilty. This, in turn, resulted in his being charged with refusing to accept 'consequential punishment':

> We *had a stand-off, so to speak. I knew I was innocent and nothing would have convinced me to think otherwise, but the regulations stipulated that I must be charged. [In the end, it] was quietly swept under the carpet because the Captain knew I would have went as far as was possible with that, both inside and outside the [navy]* (Royal Navy, junior).

The same interviewee also found himself at the heart of a second incident, which, at least potentially, had a collective nature:

> *I was about to be charged with behaviour likely to start a mutiny at one point … [but] I wasn't trying to start some sort of popular revolt. [It] was in response to the sailors being asked to work all sorts of hours to get the ship ready for a foreign visit; in return, [we] were to be offered time off when the ship reached our home port … What actually happened was that we worked all those extra hours and were not even offered a half day off in our home port, where most of us were living in married quarters. I stood up against this and refused to work until this wrong had been righted, which … it was* (Royal Navy, junior)

Although the issue was resolved to everybody's satisfaction, this individual found himself relatively isolated: his comrades

> *cared, but not enough to stand up and counted* (Royal Navy, junior)

Another interviewee, however, went into detail about a situation where the discontent and resulting resistance was collective. A 'lad' had been badly injured in a fall onboard, and was 'screaming out in agony', but, with the ship due to sail, the officers refused to send him to hospital, so:

> *We refused to sail … We all got together as a mess – there was 42 of us – and went "unless we get [name] off, we're not moving anywhere, are we?" … A couple of the lads went up and represented us to our boss … [who] backed us up totally … And then we got the senior rates involved … and they said "fair enough, we'll back you up"* (Royal Navy, junior)

Strictly speaking, this could have been treated as mutiny, and the personnel involved imprisoned for life, but they knew they were in a strong position. First, the tides meant that even a short delay would result in the vessel being several hours behind schedule; second, the roles carried out by the protesters were vital to the ship's being able to sail, and third, there was strength in experience and numbers:

> *There was nobody … that hadn't done at least ten years, so we all knew the score … I don't think they could have [charged] everybody really … you're talking around seventy blokes* (Royal Navy, junior)

Given the need to sail, the situation was resolved relatively quickly:

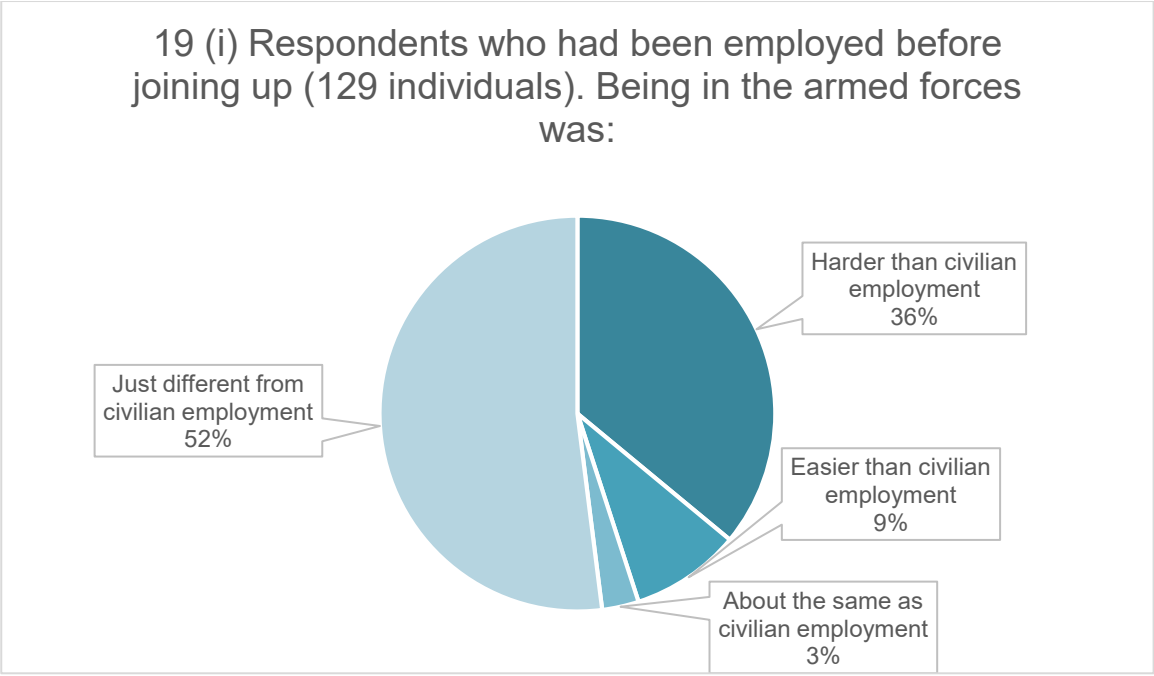
> *In the end, it went a bit higher and then it came back down and they said "before we go, we'll get [name] to the hospital" … [So] it was just "ok, we've got him off – can we sail now?" [and we said] "yes, of course we can"* (Royal Navy, junior)

Nobody involved in this incident was charged with any offence.

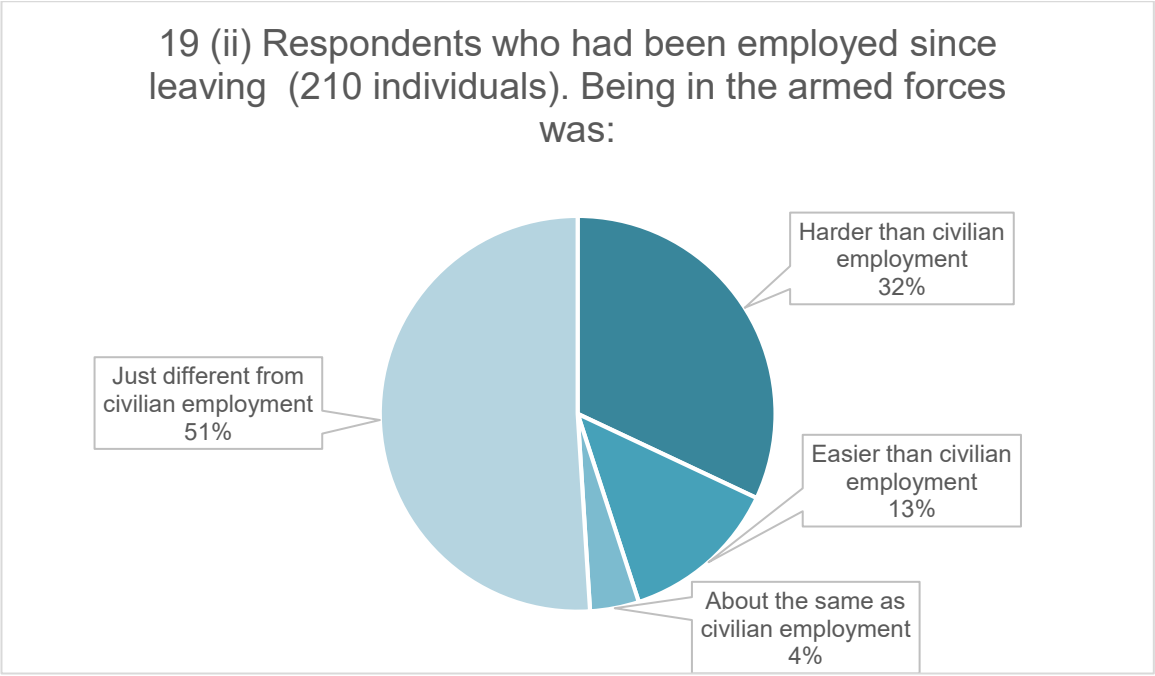
Despite the plethora of controls, then, and in spite of the apparent extent of both passive compliance and active consent, it appears that military personnel experience their employment relationship in much the same ways as civilian employees. That is, when a situation becomes intolerable they will resist.

Comparisons with civilian employment: consent and compliance

Survey respondents were asked whether they had been employed before joining the armed forces or since leaving; if they had, they were also asked to compare being in the military to their experience of civilian employment (figure 19). Just over half of all respondents (53%) had worked for a civilian employer before their service, albeit for some this was only for a short time. Of this group, over one third (36%) felt that being in the armed forces was 'harder' than civilian employment, while 9% felt it was 'easier' and 3% considered the two were 'about the same'. The majority (52%), however, simply felt that the two were 'just different'.



19 (i) Comparisons with civilian employment: respondents who were employed before joining the armed forces



19 (ii) Comparisons with civilian employment: respondents who had been employed since leaving the armed forces

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Similarly, of 210 respondents (86%) who had been employed by one or more civilian employer since the end of their military career, 32% experienced military work as 'harder' than civilian employment, 13% said it was 'easier' and 4% stated that the two were 'about the same'. Again, however, the majority (51%) said that the two were 'just different'. The perception of the two being different is not particularly surprising: clearly, there are many aspects of military service which are very different from working in the civilian sphere, not least the nature of the work. The fact that a proportion felt that military service was considered 'easier', however, and particularly by those who had completed their service, was followed up in some of the interviews: in the main, this centred on the certainties of military life compared with the civilian world. As one interviewee put it,

> *The people who've been in a very long time … suddenly they've got to … choose what to wear that day. It's hard.* (Royal Navy, Junior)

The table in figure 20 compares responses given in the latest Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) (AFCAS 2018a, 2018b) with those to similar questions in three other large-scale surveys. WERS 2011 (van Wanrooy et al 2013), a study of managers, employee representatives and employees in over 2,500 British workplaces across the economy, gives a general picture, while the National Health Service staff survey (NHS 2019) was distributed to over 1.1 million staff across more than 300 health service organisations, with a 46% response rate. Similarly, the Police Federation of England and Wales also carry out a wide-ranging survey on pay and morale in order to gather data to present to their pay review body: over 30,500 police officers responded to the 2017 iteration (Boag-Munroe 2017). The National Health Service (NHS) was selected as it is, like the armed forces, a sizeable public sector body, while the police, given their status as a uniformed service within which independent trade union representation is not permitted, were considered a particularly pertinent comparator.

Question in AFCAS	AFCAS 2018	Responses to similar question(s) in other surveys
B7.4 I am valued by the [Service]	41% officers agree 30% other ranks agree	Police 2017: 68% disagreed with 'I feel valued in the police' NHS 2018: 46.1% satisfied with extent to which organisation values their work
B7.5 I would recommend joining the [Service] to others	56% officers agree 38% other ranks agree	WERS 2011: 68% proud to tell others who they work for Police 2017: 65% proud to be in the police, but 70% would *not* recommend joining the police to others NHS 2018: 61.5% would recommend their organisation as a place to work
B1.2 The pay and benefits I receive are fair for the work I do	42% officers agree 29% other ranks agree	WERS 2011: 42% satisfied with pay Police 2017: 18% satisfied with overall remuneration NHS 2018: 36.3% satisfied with level of pay
B2.5 How satisfied are you with … my job in general?	69% officers satisfied 52% other ranks satisfied	WERS 2011: 75% satisfied or very satisfied with 'the work itself' Police 2017: 60% said own morale was low NHS 2018: 58.7% often or always look forward to going to work
B3.5 How would you rate your workload over the last 12 months?	54% officers too high (43% about right) 46% other ranks too high (47% about right)	WERS 2011: 28% of employees reported increase in workload since 2008 Police 2017: 72% said workload and responsibilities had increased in previous year

Figure 20 Comparing levels of satisfaction: Armed Forces and other surveys

Sources:

- Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) (2018a, 2018b)
- Boag-Munroe (2017)
- NHS (2019)
- van Wanrooy et al (2013)

As Figure 20 demonstrates, members of the armed forces are not alone in being relatively satisfied with their employment, albeit there are some notable differences between the groups being compared. Crucially, while some 47% of military personnel, and over 60% of NHS staff, would recommend others follow the same path, 70% of police officers would not: one key explanation for this is, of course, the impact of 'austerity' cuts, which have fallen particularly hard on the police service. This, too, is reflected in the fact that, while over one third of all employees, and a similar proportion of members of the armed forces and NHS staff, are content with their pay, the corresponding figure for the police was just 18%. Responses relating to levels of overall satisfaction show the same pattern: WERS 2011 found that some three quarters of the working population were satisfied or very satisfied with 'the work itself' (van Wanrooy 2013), while almost two thirds of NHS staff said they looked forward to going to work 'often or always' (NHS 2019) and 60.5% of current serving military personnel are satisfied with 'my job in general' (AFCAS 2018b), but 60% of police officers said their morale was low. Workloads are a concern for most groups, but, interestingly, the surveys again showed a degree of unanimity when it came to the perception of being valued: 36% of military personnel said they were 'valued by the Service' (AFCAS 2018b) and almost half of all NHS staff expressed a similar view, while 32% of police officers agreed. There are, of course, more detailed studies of job satisfaction and engagement, the questions asked in the different surveys do not always allow direct comparison and any number of variables, including the nature of the work and the economic climate, will affect the answers given by individuals. However, this exercise does suggest that, in general terms, military personnel are no more or less satisfied than other workers, particularly those in the public sector.

Comparisons with civilian employment: voice and resistance

It was noted in chapter three that there is a large and growing volume of literature on the subject of employee voice. Ironically, however, one voice that is rarely heard is that of employees themselves. Some studies have explored the extent to which employees feel they have an influence in specific contexts (see for instance Gollan 2003, Suff and Williams 2004, Markey et al 2012), while survey evidence suggests that many feel they have little or no influence (Purcell 2012). Similarly, the most recent UK Workplace Employment Relations Study found that only 35% of workplaces had any formal arrangements for consultation and that, while over half of workers felt that their managers sought their views, fewer felt that they were responded to or that their views had an impact on decisions (van Wanrooy et al 2013). On the whole, however, little work to date has explored employees' perceptions of how much voice they have or how they view the voice mechanisms available to them (Budd 2014, McDonnell et al 2014), and that which has been carried out tends to reflect the managerialist view of voice as a tool for increasing commitment and engagement (for instance Farndale et al 2011). We know little, therefore, about such questions as whether employees feel they are treated fairly in grievance processes, or indeed whether those processes are themselves perceived to be fair.

One major difference regarding voice in the civilian and military employment relationships is, of course, the question of trade union membership and representation. A series of anti-union laws have been passed since 1979 with the specific aim of restricting the ability to organise collectively, particularly with regard to industrial action; despite these, around one in four working people

(23.2%) or over six million employees, are still in a trade union. In the public sector, moreover, over half of the workforce (51.8%), or over three and a half million people, are trade union members (BEIS 2018). Leaving aside the role of trade unions themselves in recruiting and retaining these members, these figures suggest that access to independent representation is an important consideration for many, especially in the public sector. At the same time, however, trade union membership has fallen substantially over the last three decades, and concern about the 'representation gap' dates back over twenty years (Towers 1997). Moreover, and as noted above, only around a third of workplaces have any representative or direct voice mechanisms (van Wanrooy et al 2013), suggesting that the 'participation gap' is, or should be, of equal concern. Again, then, members of the armed forces are not alone in having very little voice at work.

Civilian employees continue, of course, to resist employer control in a range of ways. In addition to the 120,000 people who lodged claims with the Employment Tribunal in against their employer or former employer in 2018 (MOJ 2019), workers continued to organise collectively and, where necessary, took industrial action. In the twelve months to the end of December 2018 there were 144 'stoppages', or strikes, primarily over pay, involving some 68,000 workers and resulting in 272,000 days 'lost' (ONS 2019), although there are problems associated with the concept of work being 'lost' (Hyman 1989). Again, the number of collective disputes which escalate into industrial action is a fraction of that in the past, but, and acknowledging the risk of being over-optimistic, the statistics tend to confirm that workers with a grievance will, if all other circumstances are favourable and if the legal hoops are cleared, strike to protect their interests (and

see for instance Tuckman 2010). Similarly, workers can express the conflict inherent in the employment relationship by leaving. In the National Health Service, for instance, nearly 30% of staff 'often think about leaving', while over 21% say they are likely to look for a new job in the next twelve months and almost 16% say they will leave as soon as they find another job (NHS 2019). Similarly, 13% of police officers plan to leave the service as soon as possible or within the next two years (Boag-Munroe 2017), while some 4% of serving military personnel questioned in 2018 were already serving their notice and a further 8% intended to leave 'as soon as I can' (AFCAS 2018b). Once again, then, it appears that members of the armed forces experience their employment relationship in much the same way as civilian employees, and use the same means to resist when they cease to consent or comply.

Chapter summary

This chapter has examined some of the ways in which participants demonstrated both active consent to the range of controls imposed upon them and passive compliance with the resulting restrictions. In particular, it has highlighted the issue of voice as a prime example of consent and compliance, notably with regard to the way in which nearly half of those who took part in the study did not want more voice than they had. This was either because they believed it to be inappropriate or because they felt they had enough voice, albeit that voice was defined in narrow ways. The chapter has also considered some explanations for these levels of consent and compliance, focusing in particular on the voluntary nature of military service and the reasons for volunteering. Finally, it has discussed the limits to consent and highlighted some incidents which demonstrate that, even

though they are subject to such a plethora of controls, military personnel can and will resist when the need arises. Moreover, comparisons with civilian employment, where they can be drawn, indicate a great deal of common ground in these regards between military personnel and civilian workers.

Conclusions: As you were?

This study set out to explore the employment and industrial relations aspects of service in the British armed forces. It took as its starting point the understanding that British military personnel are in an employment relationship and that, therefore, it is appropriate to apply the range of theoretical and analytical tools and concepts of industrial relations to it.

Given the absence of previous research on the matter, the research questions were very broad. First, the study sought to uncover how the military employment relationship is 'regulated, experienced and contested' (Williams and Adam-Smith 2010: 3). Acknowledging that the fine detail of the employment relationship will vary from one organisation or workplace to another, the second question concerned similarities and differences between military and civilian employment, while the third and last was concerned with the lessons which might be drawn from the military employment relationship for our understanding of its parallel in the civilian world. The study was, therefore, an exploratory one, using critical realism to 'construe' rather than 'construct' (Sayer 2000), to understand 'why things are as they are' (Easton 2010) and thus to identify patterns and anomalies and the underlying structures or mechanisms which might explain them (Benton and Craib 2011).

The study was also, on the face of it, hampered by the lack of access to individuals currently serving in the armed forces. However, a qualitative survey of former military personnel, circulated primarily via social media, attracted 245 usable replies in a relatively short period of time. A substantial number of

respondents also agreed to be interviewed, 42 of whom went on to provide further insights, information, experiences and opinions. Alongside an extensive review of the available documentary and secondary sources, the survey and interviews generated a vast quantity of data, which was analysed to identify themes and anomalies and then subjected to retroduction. As a result, this work does not proceed in the usual way, with a literature review followed by the presentation and discussion of findings, but also incorporates discussion of the relevant literature as the underlying structures and mechanisms are uncovered.

This concluding chapter will, therefore, pull together the strands discussed throughout the study with a view to answering the research questions. First, it will reiterate some key theoretical and analytical issues relating to the study of the employment relationship. It will then examine the ways in which the military employment relationship is, respectively, regulated, experienced and contested. Following this, the chapter will draw some tentative comparisons between military and civilian employment, before highlighting the contribution to knowledge made by the study, drawing out its practical implications and acknowledging its limitations. Finally, it will make some comments about what this study might tell us about the employment relationship more generally and propose some areas for further research.

Fundamentals of the employment relationship

The employment relationship is, in essence, an agreement to exchange labour power for money. The nature of this exchange is such that, in a capitalist economy, it will also be one of control: since the agreement only relates to the purchase of labour power, the employer has to exercise control in order to ensure that labour power is converted into labour and that, therefore, both value and surplus value are created. Control is exercised through the use of 'power over', legitimised by managerial ideology which expresses such authority as the natural way of things, but resisted when workers exercise 'power for'. As a result, the employment relationship is intrinsically unequal, the interests of employer and employee fundamentally 'divergent' (Fox 1966) and the relationship inherently one of conflict. At the same time, however, there is a degree of mutual interdependence and therefore co-operation, resulting in a relationship of 'structured antagonism' (Edwards 1986, 2003, 2018) where conflict and co-operation operate around a fluid 'frontier of control' (Goodrich 1975).

These fundamentals, it is argued, apply equally to the military employment relationship. As an employer, the military establishment, and each of the three services within it, seeks to maximise surplus value in the form of military labour, whether that be making war, keeping the peace or carrying out the range of other tasks with which the armed forces are concerned. As a military worker, the individual member of any of those three services might seek to expend the minimum labour power for the greatest return, but at the same time the military authorities and the individual members of each service are each reliant on the other to achieve their aims. There are, of course, differences between military

labour and civilian employment, notably in that military personnel are not free to leave when they wish and, during their service, might be called upon to kill other human beings. Those differences do not, however, preclude the development of an understanding of military service as an employment relationship, and the identification of points of similarity between serving in the armed forces and working for a civilian employer.

Naturally, the concept of the employment relationship as one of inequality, control and conflict is not shared by all; indeed, much of the contemporary literature of human resource management and allied fields takes as its starting point the view that the employment relationship is, or should be, one of shared goals, harmony of purpose and an absence of conflict. This unitary perspective is reflected in some of the contingent literature on military work, and it is also evident in most of the structures and processes governing the military employment relationship. Control, as will be discussed further below, is instilled through rigorous selection procedures and the shocks of basic training. It is then maintained not only through coercion in the form of the strenuous application of discipline and punishment and the near denial of voice for those in the lower ranks, but also through co-option, notably with regard to the promise of promotion and, with it, rewards which include opportunities for voice. However, it became clear in the course of this study that existing typologies of control were not sufficient to describe the military employment relationship, which uses a complex and interwoven set of controls: hierarchical, rules-based, normative and concertive. Hence, it is proposed, this can be termed military-bureaucratic control. In turn, and at least partly as a result of the complex nature of military-bureaucratic control, the military employment

relationship is one of intense contradictions. In this, as in other facets, it is more like any other employment relationship than might at first be expected, or indeed than might be desired by the military establishment.

How is the military employment relationship regulated, experienced and contested?

The first research question was concerned with the governance of the military employment relationship: the way rules are made and the control mechanisms used to enforce them. It also addressed the lived experience of service in the armed forces, although of course confidential and operational matters were excluded, and how, given the conflict inherent in any employment relationship, matters were contested, if at all. Since this question was, in effect, three questions, each element will be considered separately.

1. Regulating the military employment relationship

As noted above, the military employment relationship remains unrelentingly, and unashamedly, unitary: rules are imposed unilaterally from above and, data from this study suggests, to a great extent accepted without question by those below. Disciplinary rules cover all possible eventualities, while the punishments for breaking them, which are designed to deter, are, by civilian standards, harsh. Other rules cover all aspects of military life and work, from what uniform to wear to how to address a superior; again, participants in this study accepted this largely without comment or complaint. Any such comments or complaints, however, would likely have remained unspoken, since military personnel are granted little that is recognisable as voice at work. Furthermore, the one real form of voice they

do have is in the form of a grievance procedure which poses difficulties not only in terms of accessibility for those who lack confidence in writing but also on a number of other fronts, not least the absence of a hearing to discuss matters. Control, then, is ever-present in the military employment relationship, where the overarching emphasis is on operational effectiveness and readiness, and it is exercised by way of four, intertwined, means, namely hierarchical control, bureaucratic, rules-based control, normative controls and, on occasion, concertive control.

In a hierarchy, power lies with those at the top of a steep pyramid and is delegated down through it (Edwards 1979), creating a structure where, in fact, control is subordinated to command (Pigeau and McCann 2002). The figures of the commanding officer and others with 'power over' loom large throughout the data, not only with regard to issuing orders and handing out disciplinary punishments but also, for instance, in shaping the culture of a vessel or establishment, as illustrated by the interviewee in chapter seven who told of how a 'happy ship' became 'an absolute nightmare' simply as a result of a change in senior personnel.

Participants in this study frequently raised the issue of the military hierarchy, even though they were not asked specifically about it. In particular, it was clear that, for some, the nature of the hierarchy rankled, particularly when, for instance, it was evident in the better living standards enjoyed by those higher up it. Similarly, there was a fairly widespread view that the more senior the individual, the more he or she seemed to be able to get away with. Conversely, however, promotion

was a common thread in the survey responses and interviews, although again there were no specific questions about it. The military hierarchy, then, serves to control not only by keeping the lower ranks in their place, but also by co-opting them, holding out the promise of promotion in return for compliance.

In one of several apparent contradictions, however, control is also exercised through bureaucratic means: the military employment relationship is regulated through a complex of written rules and procedures covering everything from the ways in which specific tasks are to be completed to how personnel behave when off duty. The clearest example of bureaucratic control in the military employment relationship is to be found in the disciplinary rules and procedures, which are overwhelmingly punitive and, despite all evidence that this is not effective, based on a doctrine of deterrence.

Participants demonstrated both knowledge and understanding of the rules, including the disciplinary rules. Furthermore, the data revealed a strong thread of consent to, or at least compliance with, them; this was perhaps best summed up by the interviewee who, as quoted in chapter seven, said that 'it's the military – you do as you're told'. The majority of survey respondents had been on the receiving end of some form of disciplinary action, but most disagreed that punishments were harsh and the general view was that if an individual did wrong the punishment was merited; few, however, appear to have been deterred. The disciplinary procedures also imply a degree of prejudgement against the offender, something which several participants commented on or complained about. In addition, when compared to the standards expected in civilian life, the military

disciplinary processes fall short on a number of other aspects of organisational justice, including the right to independent representation. Crucially, however, three quarters of those who had been disciplined also said that they had been treated fairly. Amongst those who were not satisfied with the way their case had been handled, moreover, the tendency was to blame an individual or to point the finger at the 'march the guilty bastard in' mentality, rather than at the system itself. Here, too, the blurring of distinctions between hierarchical and bureaucratic control became clear, particularly with regard to the degree of discretion vested in the commanding officer.

Data from this study confirms the view expressed in the literature that there are in fact two armed forces hierarchies: the purely hierarchical one based on rank, status and seniority, and the bureaucratic one based on skills, training and knowledge (see for instance Kitaoka 1993). The potential for tension between the two was, for example, illustrated by the interviewee in chapter five who spoke of being managed by 'senior officers who did not possess the level of technical expertise' and the participant, also quoted in chapter five, who qualified as an accountant but was not permitted to practice as such because he was not an officer. Similarly, one survey respondent pointed out that her profession, nursing, was the only graduate role which did not bestow the rank of officer. The tensions between the two hierarchies, and the contradictions arising from these two forms of control, are particularly clear in the disciplinary processes. Here, the commanding officer has vast discretion with regard to many types of offence, not only deciding under which procedure they should be handled but also choosing the sanction to be applied. Hence hierarchical control, at least in this instance,

takes precedence over bureaucratic, rules-based control, supporting the view that command, in the form of the individual issuing orders, is considered more important than control (Pigeau and McCann 2002).

Surrounding and even overlaying this web of hierarchical and bureaucratic controls, the armed forces employment relationship also features an array of normative controls designed to ensure that personnel 'internalise' military goals and values and hence discipline and control themselves (Edwards 1979). Evidence of such controls was apparent throughout the data generated by this study, not least in the contradiction, explored in chapter six, between the assertion that 'everybody knew the rules' and the level of agreement with the statements that 'everybody ignored or even broke the rules sometimes' and 'if there was an easier or quicker way to do a task then that's how it was done, rules or no rules'. Participants highlighted, for instance, the levels of discretion and flexibility in the application of the rules, something which again highlighted the contradiction between hierarchical and bureaucratic controls, as well as describing in some detail how rules were subverted and, indeed, how such knowledge was shared and made use of. In particular, and despite the ways in which norms became common knowledge, some emphasis was placed on the ways such 'patterned evasions' (Zurcher 1965: 393) differed from one unit or chain of command to another and the perils of not comprehending, as one interviewee in chapter six put it, 'where the line was'. Similarly, the data also generated some evidence of concertive control, whereby workers 'develop the means of their own control' (Barker 2005: 213); this was particularly clear in the

discussion of ‘peer group discipline’ and responses to perceived laziness and bullying, also in chapter six.

Military-bureaucratic control

In the British armed forces, then, hierarchical control, bureaucratic control, normative controls and concertive control combine to weave an intricate and contradictory web of controls which, for the purposes of this study, has been termed military-bureaucratic control. Contradictions are particularly evident in the tension between hierarchical command and bureaucratic, rules-based control, but also in the mixture of formal and informal rules, or ‘patterned evasions’ (Zurcher 1965), and the relationships between ‘power over’, ‘power for’ and ‘power to’. Crucially, however, such control is established through rigorous selection processes and the process of basic training, and maintained by the use of coercion and co-option. For instance, the disciplinary processes are used to coerce, as is the near blanket denial of voice to those at the bottom of the hierarchy, while co-option is practised in particular by the promise of promotion, which will bring the opportunity for voice along with other rewards.

With regard to basic training, an interviewee quoted in chapter six reflected the words of Hockey (1986) and others, saying that basic training is concerned primarily with ‘pulling a group of individuals apart and putting them back together as a team’. Through basic training, then, hierarchical and bureaucratic rules are instilled, normative controls introduced and, within a relatively short time, concertive controls developed. Indeed, participants in this study acknowledged this, nearly two thirds agreeing with the statement that basic training was ‘more

about discipline and obedience than anything else'. From the beginning, too, new recruits are reminded that they have no voice, even when, as recounted by a participant cited in chapter six, they are answering a question which has been put to them.

The vast resources expended on basic training, then, are directed towards ensuring absolute, unquestioning obedience. That level of control is then maintained through the generous application of disciplinary sanctions, as discussed above, but also by way of the limited mechanisms for voice. The Service Complaints procedure offers a route for the 'articulation of individual dissatisfaction' (Dundon et al 2004), thus suggesting an element of 'power for' military personnel, but as noted above, it is problematic and fails to meet the standards required in the civilian workplace (ACAS 2015). Nevertheless, one in ten survey respondents had raised a grievance under the procedure: most, however, were officers or senior ranks, suggesting that this avenue is not perceived to be open to more junior personnel. Furthermore, half of those who had taken the opportunity to complain felt that their grievance had not been handled well, whether because of the procedure itself, reflecting bureaucratic control, or because of the actions of one or more individuals charged with reviewing the case, an aspect of hierarchical control. The other voice mechanisms available to personnel, in the form of limited consultation by the Armed Forces Pay Review Body and participation in internal attitude surveys, are amongst the weakest forms of voice and, moreover, few participants had any experience of them. Among the small number who had completed attitude surveys, though, there was a degree of scepticism as to their confidentiality.

In the armed forces, then, voice is both made available and withheld from above, ensuring that it acts not to democratise but to control and co-opt the views and experiences of personnel. This was, to a great extent, confirmed by the views of survey respondents, nearly half of whom said they had not wanted more voice, either because they did not believe voice was compatible with military service or because they felt they had been given sufficient opportunity to speak up. It became clear in the interviews, though, that those who felt they were given a voice had defined it in a limited and discretionary way and, in particular, as a corollary of rank and / or the individual's trade or specialism. Again, then, limited voice was used to control and co-opt, while also being held out as a reward for those who ascended the hierarchy: a function of rank and status and something to be aspired to rather than granted as of right.

2. Experiencing the military employment relationship

Almost without exception, the individuals who participated in this study had fond memories of their military service. Moreover, and although the subject of active service was rarely raised, several indicated that they had indeed been in extremely dangerous situations: in the most extreme example, one interviewee, quoted in chapter six, was on the front line and lost a colleague within weeks of completing basic training. Despite the very real risks, however, the sense that being in the armed forces was an overwhelmingly positive experience was clear throughout the data, as demonstrated, for instance, by the fact that only 5% of survey respondents agreed with the statement 'I got out of the [service] as soon as I could'. Similarly, almost two thirds of those who took part in the survey gave

positive responses to all five statements about the armed forces as employer, and interviewees were, similarly, both positive and enthusiastic about their military experience. This was, to a great extent, to be expected: participants in this study were recruited primarily through the ex-forces community, implying that they would not in the main be negative about their service; all had, of course, joined up voluntarily and some, as noted in chapter four, were clearly giving an official view which might or might not have accorded with their own. Nevertheless, the fact that so many individuals had such a positive experience is notable, not least in an era when just one in twenty civilian employees are satisfied with all aspects of their job (van Wanrooy et al 2013).

One set of possible explanations for the level of satisfaction expressed by participants is to be found in the nature of military life, with its emphasis on working together and *esprit de corps*. Survey respondents and interviewees frequently used the term 'comradeship', a word which is rarely heard in the civilian workplace outside trade union circles, nor indeed in civilian life except when referring to shared political views and activism. For some, the armed forces took on the role of the family they had never had, or made up for perceived deficiencies in their home lives; for others, as demonstrated by the interviewee in chapter six whose naval 'mate' knew him better than his own father, their relationships with other military personnel were closer and more intense than those they had with families or others outside the armed forces.

A further set of explanations for participants' generally positive experience of the military employment relationship is to be found in the opportunities it offered them.

In addition to those, such as the participants quoted in chapter six, who credited the armed forces with helping them to realise their potential and/or achieve things that might not otherwise have been possible, participants also emphasised the wider opportunities their service had brought them: travel, adventure, challenge or simply 'doing something different'. Moreover, these opportunities and experiences were provided within a framework of secure employment: although there have been large-scale military redundancies since 2011, the overwhelming majority of participants had completed their service by then and thus enjoyed the degree of security and certainty expressed in chapter five by the interviewee who stated that 'you know … they're gonna keep you'.

The experience of military service was, then, an extremely positive one for this group of individuals, who, it is suggested, weighed the risk of injury or death, the legally binding nature of service and the enforced separation from home and family against comradeship, a sense of purpose, the prospect of challenge and adventure and, perhaps above all, the certainty and security of military life. Just as the employment relationship more generally is a compromise between the desire of the employer to extract maximum surplus value and the need of the employee to guarantee a decent living, so too the military employment relationship is one of exchange, where the risks are traded off against the promise of a secure income and other perceived benefits.

3. Contesting the military employment relationship

In line with the degree of enthusiasm expressed for military life, participants in this study also repeatedly demonstrated both active consent to and passive compliance with the range of controls imposed upon them. This was evident in, for instance, the extent of agreement with the view that those who broke the rules deserved to be punished, or in the near-complete acceptance of the hierarchy, coupled with the almost unanimous desire to move up it. However, it was also clear in the more nuanced approach to, say, any perception of unfairness. Hence, when discussing the disciplinary procedures and their experience of them, those who were not happy with the way they had been treated were more likely to explain this in terms of an individual who overrode the procedure, or even their own lack of understanding, than they were to highlight flaws and perceived injustices in the system.

The degree of compliance and consent was, however, particularly noticeable with regard to the question of voice: as discussed above, nearly half of all survey respondents either did not expect to be given the opportunity to 'have a say' (Wilkinson and Fay 2011: 66) or, conversely, believed they had been granted sufficient voice. Interestingly, however, and in yet another instance of contradiction, some participants took this study as an opportunity to say how they believed things should have been. This was demonstrated, for instance, in chapter five, with regard to the promotion system, and in some of the comments made about the disciplinary procedures, including the suggestion that personnel should be represented by a trade union. Whether during their service or with hindsight, then, some participants developed their own views regardless of the

degree of control and in spite of their apparent consent or compliance with said control.

While basic training serves to explain much of this compliance, a further causal power became evident in the reasons why participants had volunteered to join the armed forces. Most of those who took part had joined in response to a mixture of push and pull factors, 'institutional' and 'occupational' considerations (Moskos 1977a, 1977b, 1981, 1986, 1988) and both positive and negative influences: that is, for a range of personal, economic, environmental and other reasons. Crucially, however, they had chosen to serve, and choice is, in many respects, the parent of consent (Burawoy 1979). Taken together with the process of basic training, designed to recreate the individual as military, such personal decisions go some way to explaining why participants were, on the whole, so happy with their lot.

Nonetheless, the data also reflected the literature to the extent that it demonstrated a level of resistance on the part of participants. This was most evident in the near mutiny described by the participant in chapter seven, but also demonstrated by other acts of resistance on the part of both individuals and groups of personnel. One such example is the participant, cited in chapter five, who made it his aim to get to know the Queen's Regulations and use them to defend himself and others against disciplinary charges, while another, also discussed in chapter five, concerns the actions of those who, 'really cross' about the comrade who had been fined for lateness by an officer he had helped the night before, took up a collection to pay the fine. These and other examples

support the view that, despite the intensity of control in the military employment relationship, it is still a relationship not only of cooperation but also of conflict.

To summarise the answer to the first research question, then, the military employment relationship is regulated by a complex web of controls which are hierarchical, bureaucratic, normative and, on occasion, concertive. Despite this, however, it was experienced in a very positive way by the overwhelming majority of participants, and there was evidence of widespread consent to and compliance with those controls. Indeed, personnel, as evidenced by the participant who, in chapter seven, referred to being 'indoctrinated', understood the nature of the employment relationship and viewed the controls as appropriate in exchange for the excitement and possibility of military life. There was, however, a limit, and it was also clear that, when pushed too far, they would resist: one of a number of things they had in common with civilian employees.

What comparisons can be drawn between the military employment relationship and civilian employment?

There are, of course, stark differences between the civilian and military employment relationships. Civilian employees are, within the bounds of minimum notice periods, free to leave when they wish, while military personnel are legally bound to a minimum term of service and, thereafter, potentially very long notice periods. Many civilian employees face the risk of injury or death in the course of their working lives, but military personnel face not only danger but also the prospect of being required to deprive others of life. Civilian employees enjoy the protection of a range of legal rights, albeit these are merely a 'floor of rights'

(Wedderburn 1986) which not only reflect minimum standards but can also be difficult to enforce, particularly if the individual is unaware of them and/or not a member of a trade union (Meager et al 2002, Casebourne et al 2005, Dundon et al 2017). Military personnel, on the other hand, have few legal rights beyond those granted by the Equality Act 2010. Nevertheless, there are more similarities between the two forms of employment relationship than might at first be expected.

As discussed in chapter one, control is essential in the capitalist employment relationship (Edwards and Scullion 1982, Storey 1983). In this respect, the key difference between the military and civilian employment relationships is the visibility of control: in the armed forces, it is open and transparent, less so in the civilian employment relationship. Equally, and as discussed in chapter two, control is instilled and maintained, and power exerted, through systems and mechanisms which vary from one organisation to another and relate to each other in different ways depending on the context (Storey 1985, Sturdy et al 2010). Hence, for instance, hierarchical control, treated as a historical artefact by Edwards (1979), is less evident in civilian employment today, but it remains dominant in the military context, not least because of the weight of tradition and overarching emphasis on command. The other elements of military-bureaucratic control, namely bureaucratic, normative and concertive control, however, are influential throughout civilian employment, albeit to varying extents (Edwards 1979, Storey 1983, Barker 2005, Courpasson and Clegg 2006, Clegg 2012).

The chief difference, however, between the bureaucratic control exercised in the armed forces and that experienced in the civilian employment relationship is the

extent to which the power emanating from such control can be exercised. Where civilian employers are, at least in theory, constrained by the requirements of the law, and / or the demands of shareholders, customers or service users, there are no such restraints on the exercise of power in the military. Hence, for instance, disciplinary and grievance procedures which do not meet the basic standards required under the statutory Code of Practice (ACAS 2015) continue to provide, respectively, the means by which military personnel can be held to account, and indeed imprisoned, and their only relatively effective form of voice. In the armed forces, then, the power derived from and exercised through hierarchical and bureaucratic controls is unfettered. So, however, is that in many civilian employment relationships: 'unorganised employment is often unregulated employment' (Blyton and Turnbull 2004: 314-315), and, although around one in four employees still belong to a trade union (BEIS 2018), civilian employment is increasingly unregulated.

Just as control is essential to the capitalist employment relationship, so too is there always conflict and accommodation (Hyman 1975), and all employment relationships are contested to the degree possible in light of the economic, labour market and social context. As this study has demonstrated, individuals and groups in the armed forces who feel they have been pushed too far will resist, safe in the knowledge of their relative security. Equally, disgruntled and aggrieved civilian employees will strike or take other forms of protest action to redress a perceived imbalance of power (Hyman 1989, Dundon et al 2017), and a discontented employee will leave if s/he knows there are jobs available elsewhere.

More specific similarities and differences were also uncovered in the course of this study. Just as military personnel are both coerced and co-opted into compliance with the creation of surplus value, so too is a substantial proportion of human resource management research and practice dedicated to 'engaging' workers in the pursuit of their employers' aims. Similarly, the rules in the civilian workplace are not only formal but informal, and indeed the concepts of both normative control and concertive control derive from studies of civilian organisations and their employees. Furthermore, it appears that military personnel, including those still serving, are no more or less contented on the whole than those in other, civilian roles, notably the National Health Service. In addition, although military personnel have little effective voice, concerns about the civilian 'representation gap' (Towers 1997) and, increasingly, the 'participation gap', are nothing new. Crucially, too, the armed forces have basic training, for which there is no equivalent in civilian employment.

Taking a longer view, one notable finding from this study is the extent to which the military and civilian employment relationships, once quite similar, have diverged. Where once, for instance, both civilian and military codes had much in common, contemporary military discipline is much harsher, and less reflective of organisational justice, than that generally applied in the civilian workplace, while criminal offences are usually treated more severely when committed by military personnel. Similarly, civilian workers for much of the nineteenth century were tied into a legally binding contract, breaches of which were punishable by imprisonment, but this changed in the later nineteenth century and the second half of the twentieth century saw the gradual development of the 'floor of rights'

referred to above. All the while, however, the military employment relationship has remained, with few exceptions, in the place the civilian contract inhabited some two hundred years ago.

Perhaps the most important issue to emerge from the attempt to compare military and civilian employment, however, is the gap in knowledge it has exposed. Notwithstanding the 'psychologised', managerialist, quantified literature of organisational behaviour and human resource management (Godard 2014), there is a distinct gap in our knowledge and understanding of the civilian experience of some of the issues addressed in this study. We know little, it would appear, of workers' views on the disciplinary processes they are subject to, their willingness to complain, their perceptions of voice, hierarchy and promotion or a myriad of other details. This gap will be addressed further below.

Contribution

This study contributes to knowledge in several ways. First and foremost, it presents a picture of the military employment relationship and proposes a new typology of military-bureaucratic control, as discussed above. The study is based on a substantial amount of data derived from a qualitative survey, interviews, an extensive literature review and documentary analysis and, as noted in the introduction, there is no similar study in existence in the English language literature. Furthermore, it is a study informed by the field of industrial relations, which offers 'an analytical purchase on the study of work and employment which is not available elsewhere' (Edwards 2003b: 339). It is based on a Marxist understanding of the employment relationship and a research philosophy of

critical realism, ‘grounding for what industrial relations researchers have often tacitly done’ (Edwards 2006a: 5), as well as being influenced by a range of industrial relations concepts. The study also, however, takes inspiration from the developing field of critical military studies, particularly in terms of challenging the ‘atheoretical, apolitical and largely quantitative stances’ so common in military sociology (Basham et al 2015:2). As such, then, this study breaks new ground in our understanding, not only of the military employment relationship but also of the armed forces more generally.

Second, and in contrast, this study marks a return to the industrial relations tradition of single organisation case studies. Although this mode of research and scholarship has not disappeared, it is much less common than it once was, and its decline has resulted in an absence of some rich data and in-depth understanding. Third, this study enabled some comparisons over time: not only did the participants’ experience span several decades, but the available documentary evidence and secondary material was sufficient to, for instance, highlight the ways in which military and civilian employment have diverged in the last century or so, as discussed above.

Fourth, and final, this study also makes two, relatively small, methodological contributions. Above all, perhaps, it confirms the value of social media as a tool for accessing research participants, and particularly those who might be considered ‘hard to reach’ (Baltar and Brunet 2012). Having been denied access to serving personnel, the internet proved invaluable for recruiting survey respondents and, therefore, interviewees. Without social media, in particular,

there would only have been a handful of participants and, since most of them would have been personal acquaintances, it might have been more difficult to get to some of the details which individuals were happy to discuss with a stranger. Similarly, technology played an important role in the collection of data: the survey was electronic, which of course is not uncommon nowadays, and no less than half of the interviews were carried out by email. This had the benefit of overcoming any geographical distance: at least one participant did not live in the UK and others were several hundred miles away. It also helped those interviewees with full time jobs and other responsibilities to take part, and, similarly, allowed respondents to answer the questions at a time of their choosing. Hence, while it might be said that email interviews lack spontaneity, they were also more likely to garner reflective, considered responses than might have been the case in person or by telephone, and some elicited very detailed and personal data which might not have been divulged in any other circumstance. Although there are no visual clues, email interviews are also free of 'interviewer effect' and, overall, the experience of using them confirmed the suggestion that the quality of data is not greatly affected by the mode of interview (Meho 2016).

Practical implications

In theory, this study has relatively wide-ranging implications for the armed forces. However, given the distaste for 'outsider' researchers, and the distrust of 'unreliable' qualitative methods, it is unlikely to have any effect. Having said that, however, it is worth summarising the lessons the military hierarchy might learn from the work.

This study underlines the voluntary nature of military service. It is, therefore, questionable whether such intense levels of control are necessary to maintain operational effectiveness: indeed, studies of other voluntary armed forces confirm the growing importance of allowing personnel to take the initiative (Janowitz 1960, Tyler et al 2007). As noted above, there is now a gulf in standards between the military and civilian workplace, particularly with regard to the procedures for handling grievances and disciplinary issues, the severity of disciplinary sanctions and opportunities for voice. Indeed, as discussed in chapter three, the grievance and disciplinary procedures have been criticised from within on more than one occasion (Joyce 1998, McLeod 2013), while calls for some kind of representative body for military personnel date back some 25 years (Bett 1994, Joyce 1998, Hansard 2018, BAFF 2019). The degree of satisfaction with military life expressed by participants in this study, taken together with the evidence of self-discipline here and elsewhere, suggests that readiness and operational effectiveness would not be adversely affected by the introduction of procedures which meet the requirements laid down in the statutory Code of Practice (ACAS 2015), the granting of more voice, by which is meant effective voice which is listened to and acted upon, and recognition of a body with similar powers to the Police Federation. Similarly, some of the ideas put forward by participants in this research, particularly those regarding the promotion system, might also be adopted without any apparent harm. Indeed, with recruitment to the army, in particular, in ‘crisis’ (Watling 2018), such that the residency requirement for Commonwealth applicants has been withdrawn (BBC 2018), such measures might stimulate more young people to volunteer.

Similarly, the armed forces seem to have become frozen at a point when society in general was much more hierarchical: the proportion of army officers who are privately educated even today seems to confirm this. The emphasis on hierarchical control clearly rankled with a substantial proportion of participants in this study, as well as causing tension with bureaucratic controls which, in effect, create a second hierarchy. Again, given the voluntary nature of service and the obvious pride taken in it by those who took part in this research, there is no reason to suspect that operational effectiveness would be lost if there were less hierarchy and, perhaps, more bureaucracy; less emphasis on the individual leader and his or her personal qualities and more on clear, transparent rules. This, too, would eliminate some of the multiple contradictions in the military employment relationship and, if combined with the suggestions above, give ordinary soldiers, sailors and aircraftmen and -women less to resist. In short, the findings from this study lead to the inescapable conclusion that it is past time for the British armed forces to move into the 21st century.

Limitations

Naturally, this study has its limitations. First and foremost, it was not intended to be in any way generalisable, and it is representative only in so far as it presents the experiences and opinions of those who took part in it. Moreover, as noted at several points, participants were entirely self-selecting and, since they were, in the main, recruited through ex-forces channels, unlikely to want to present a negative image of the military, particularly to a perceived ‘outsider’. However, the degree of consensus on a number of key issues, including the fairness of the disciplinary system, and the overall satisfaction with the armed forces as

employer, points to the validity of the data and confirms that saturation had probably been reached. Having said that, the means by which survey respondents, and thus interviewees, were recruited might have excluded those with alternative views: in particular, it is highly unlikely that any young people who left the forces as soon as they could will have seen the publicity. It might, therefore, have been useful to let the survey run for longer, and perhaps to make further efforts to target those young people, along with women and former members of the air force; however, time and other resources were relatively limited and, again, it appeared that saturation had been reached.

A second limitation was imposed by the breadth of the research questions. While this was considered necessary because of the paucity of relevant literature and the lack of other work in this vein, it was always the case that the study could lack focus. As discussed in the introduction, it would have been easier, and might have been preferable, to focus on a specific aspect of military employment; however, this would have prevented the construction of a full picture of the military employment relationship and thus not achieved the overall aim of the study, namely to answer ‘how does that work, then?’.

Finally, and as with any qualitative work in the social sciences, my own position as a researcher is bound to have imposed some limitations on the study. Had I held a unitary perspective on the employment relationship, had I been more interested in how military workers are managed than in their experiences, had I not spent a considerable part of my adult life active in, and indeed working for, the trade union movement, the shape of the study would have been very different.

Rather than asking questions about whether individuals felt they had been treated fairly, for instance, I might have focused on measuring their 'engagement'. However, insofar as objectivity was required to collect the data, I strived for it, and insofar as some of the literature and data went against my beliefs, I worked to ensure that I did not exclude it on that basis.

What might the military employment relationship tell us about the employment relationship more generally?

Finally, then, to the third research question. The military employment relationship might be seen as the panacea for civilian employers: a structure which creates rows of dutiful, compliant employees who complete tasks in exactly the way they are told to do, consent to extensive controls and hardly ever speak up. However, while it is the case that, on the evidence of this study, the military employment relationship is the epitome of unitarism, it should be borne in mind that this is only achieved as a result of strict entry conditions, rigorous testing and selection and, perhaps above all, a system of basic training which removes the individual from all that is familiar for a period of weeks in order to eliminate individuality and create the dutiful, compliant, military person who will rarely, if ever, cause any trouble. Similarly, control is only maintained through a system of monitoring, surveillance and discipline which, one hopes, would at least raise eyebrows in a democratic society. Furthermore, none of this is achieved without vast expenditure of time, personnel and other resources, putting it beyond the desire, if not the pocket, of most civilian employers. Crucially, too, and despite the expense involved in instilling and maintaining military-bureaucratic control, military personnel continue to resist.

As noted in the introduction, it has been suggested that civilian employment is heading in a militarised direction, where ‘workers are all part of a team (squadron) and are expected to have undying loyalty’ (Godard 2014: 12). There is undoubtedly an ongoing move away from pluralist understandings of the employment relationship, such that unitary perspectives are ‘no longer marginal but occupy central ground’ (Heery 2016: 13), both in academia and in practice. However, it is far from clear that civilian employees welcome, or indeed share, this understanding. Perhaps, then, the most important lesson from this study is the need for research and practice to pay more attention to employees: their experiences and opinions, needs and desires.

As a result of the study, then, it is clear that there is scope for further research, and not only with regard to the military employment relationship. With reference to that, however, there is certainly room for more in-depth studies of military employment in the form of small-scale, qualitative work drawing out details and issues not captured herein: for instance, there was little in the survey or interviews about developments such as the expanding role of women in the armed forces, nor indeed about wider issues of equality, diversity and inclusion. Similarly, little attention was given to pay and other conditions, since participants served over a period of decades and it would have been difficult to draw any conclusions from their views and experiences. There is also scope for large-scale, quantitative work which is not bound by the restrictions imposed by the military hierarchy but which explores some of the issues covered by this study with a view to developing generalisable data. Given the reluctance of the armed forces to work with

‘outsider’ researchers, however, it is likely that any further research will have to continue to rely on ex-service personnel.

Issues of access, while they will undoubtedly exist, will not, however, be insurmountable in terms of the other research gaps identified in this study. Time and again, when attempting to compare military and civilian employment, it rapidly became clear either that the information did not exist or that work had only been carried out by scholars in a quantitative, managerialist and unitary tradition. Many of the questions asked in this study, then, have no comparators in research on the contemporary civilian employment relationship: for instance, we know little about how many people are disciplined or whether they perceive themselves to have been treated fairly, about the factors which might encourage, or indeed discourage, individuals from raising grievances or whether employees, individually or collectively, feel they have sufficient voice at work. No doubt there is some literature which I have not found, but it remains the case that these and other aspects of the employment relationship are under-researched, particularly over the last two to three decades; I hope, therefore, that I can play my part in addressing them.

Conclusion: ‘how does that work, then?’

This study grew from an overheard telephone conversation which resulted in my wondering ‘how does that work, then?’ and, specifically, wanting to know and understand more about the activities and processes which take place behind the walls and fences, and in and on the military vehicles vessels and aircraft, which distinguish life in Plymouth and other military cities. As told by those who chose

to participate in the study, and as supported by the literature and published documents, the answer is that one of those hidden features is an employment relationship, and that it is not as different from that experienced by civilian employees as might have been expected. For all that the armed forces rely on intense and extensive control, for all that they are distinguished as ‘other’ and for all the relative absence of change over the centuries, military personnel, it appears, experience their employment relationship in much the same way as any non-military individual. However, without greater knowledge and understanding of civilian employees, this conclusion can only be tentative.

Appendix 1

Vice Admiral David Steel CBE
Second Sea Lord, Chief of Naval Personnel and Training
Navy Command Headquarters
MP 2-1, Leach Building
Whale Island
Portsmouth
PO2 8BY

28 November 2014

Dear Vice Admiral Steel

Request for PhD research sponsor

I write to ask if you would be prepared to act as sponsor for my PhD research into what might be termed the 'employment' aspects of service in the Royal Navy. My areas of interest include the operation of the disciplinary and Service complaints procedures, as well as the day to day experience of work in the Navy.

I recognise that I am an 'outsider' researcher, although my late father, a veteran of the Arctic Convoys, served in the Royal Navy for 22 years and my late mother was in the WRNS before they married. However, I believe that my detachment could be of mutual benefit, in that I might be able to bring a different perspective to some everyday issues and perhaps uncover some of the stories behind the Continuous Attitude Survey.

In terms of methods, I propose to invite voluntary participation in a short online survey and then to follow this up through qualitative interviews and / or focus groups, either in person or electronically, again on a voluntary basis. Having completed the MOD Research Ethics Committee checklist (enclosed), I am satisfied that there is no need for an application to that committee. I can also assure you that I have no interest in discussing operational or security matters and that no individual will be identifiable in any of my work.

Naturally, I would be happy to provide any additional information you require and, should you wish to discuss this in person, to travel to Portsmouth.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Prior BA DipLib MA
Doctoral Teaching Assistant
margaret.prior@plymouth.ac.uk

Thank you for taking part in this survey, which should take no longer than fifteen minutes to complete. The survey is part of my doctoral research on the armed forces' employment relationship – that is, your experience of work and related issues in the services.

My research is not sponsored by any of the services, and this survey is only intended for individuals who have completed their service. If you are currently serving, you could face minor administrative action or disciplinary action if you complete this survey without prior permission, which is unlikely to be granted.

Before starting the survey, please note that:

- Your answers will only be used to inform my research, and any details which might identify you will be removed before the responses are analysed.
- You do not have to give your name unless you wish to be further involved in the research (you will be asked about this towards the end of the survey).
- If you do agree to be further involved in my research, your name and any other personal details you supply will remain confidential and you will not be identifiable in any work arising from this research. Data will be stored securely and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, and destroyed when the project is complete.
- You do not have to answer every question, and you can withdraw from the survey at any point. If you withdraw from the survey, your responses will be deleted. You also have the right to retract or amend any or all of your responses by emailing me at any time up to 31 December 2016.

Please do not disclose any operational information, or details which might be sensitive (for instance, any information which might enable identification of another individual, whether by name, rank or other feature) when responding to this survey.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me:
Margaret.Prior@plymouth.ac.uk

Statement of informed consent

I have read the points above and give my informed consent for the information I have provided in this survey to be used for the purposes stated

- ❍ Agree
- ❍ Disagree

Section A: About you and your service

Which were you in?

- ❍ Royal Navy
- ❍ Royal Marines
- ❍ British Army
- ❍ Royal Air Force

What was the highest rank you achieved? [Royal Navy]

- ❍ Able seaman / able rate
- ❍ Leading hand
- ❍ Petty Officer
- ❍ Chief Petty Officer
- ❍ Warrant Officer 2
- ❍ Warrant Officer 1
- ❍ Officer: please type in the highest rank you achieved

  _____

What was the highest rank you achieved? [Royal Marines]

- ❍ Marine
- ❍ Lance Corporal
- ❍ Corporal
- ❍ Sergeant
- ❍ Colour Sergeant
- ❍ Warrant Officer 2
- ❍ Warrant Officer 1
- ❍ Officer: please type in the highest rank you achieved

  _____

What was the highest rank you achieved? [British Army]

- ❍ Private (or equivalent)
- ❍ Lance Corporal
- ❍ Corporal
- ❍ Sergeant
- ❍ Staff Sergeant / Colour Sergeant
- ❍ Warrant Officer 2 / Company Sergeant Major / Squadron Sergeant Major
- ❍ Warrant Officer 1 / Regimental Sergeant Major
- ❍ Officer: please type in the highest rank you achieved

  _____

What was the highest rank you achieved? [Royal Air Force]

- ❍ Aircraftman / woman
- ❍ Leading Aircraftman / woman
- ❍ Senior aircraftman / woman
- ❍ Lance Corporal
- ❍ Corporal
- ❍ Sergeant
- ❍ Chief Technician
- ❍ Flight Sergeant
- ❍ Warrant Officer
- ❍ Master Aircrew
- ❍ Officer: please type in the highest rank you achieved

  _____

When did you first join up?

- ❍ Before 1945
- ❍ 1946-1955
- ❍ 1956-1965
- ❍ 1966-1975
- ❍ 1976-1985
- ❍ 1986-1995
- ❍ 1996-2005
- ❍ After 2005

How old were you when you first joined up?

- ❍ 16 or under
- ❍ 17
- ❍ 18
- ❍ 19
- ❍ 20-25
- ❍ 26-30
- ❍ Over 30

How many years in total did you serve as a Regular?

- ❍ Five years or less
- ❍ 6-15 years
- ❍ 16-22 years
- ❍ More than 22 years

Q7 Are you:

- ❍ Male
- ❍ Female

Section B: Being in the [Service]

What was your main reason for joining up?

- ❍ To serve my country
- ❍ To see the world
- ❍ To get away
- ❍ To learn a trade
- ❍ For good wages and a secure job
- ❍ There weren't any other options
- ❍ I didn't really know what else to do
- ❍ I followed in my father's / other relative's footsteps
- ❍ I was conscripted / called up for National Service
- ❍ To make a fresh start
- ❍ Another reason: please say what _____

What other reasons, if any, did you have for joining?

(Please type in your response)

Which one of these terms best describes how you view your service?

- ❍ Job
- ❍ Vocation
- ❍ Service
- ❍ Career
- ❍ Profession
- ❍ Lifestyle
- ❍ Opportunity
- ❍ Duty
- ❍ None of these

What term would you use to describe how you view your service?

(Please type in your response)

What was the best thing about being in the Royal Navy / Royal Marines?

(Please type in your response)

[Question was not asked of other services: see chapter 4]

And what was the worst thing about being in the Royal Navy / Royal Marines?

(Please type in your response)

[Question was not asked of other services: see chapter 4]

Did you work for a civilian employer before you joined up?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

[If yes]

Would you say being in the services was:

- ❍ Harder than working for a civilian employer?
- ❍ Easier than working for a civilian employer?
- ❍ About the same as working for a civilian employer?
- ❍ Just different from working for a civilian employer?

Have you been employed since leaving the services?

- ❍ Yes, I've been employed by one or more civilian employers since leaving
- ❍ No, I've been self-employed since I left
- ❍ No, I'm retired / haven't worked since I left

[If yes]

Would you say being in the services was:

- ❍ Harder than working for a civilian employer?
- ❍ Easier than working for a civilian employer?
- ❍ About the same as working for a civilian employer?
- ❍ Just different from working for a civilian employer?

During your service, were you ever disciplined - formally or informally?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

[If yes]

Did you feel you were treated fairly?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

[If no]

What was the main thing that made you feel you were treated unfairly? You don't have to answer this question, but if you do please don't disclose any confidential or operational information, or give anybody else's name

[Text box for response]

Did you ever make a formal complaint or grievance about any aspect of your service?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

[If yes]

Was the matter resolved to your satisfaction?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

[If no]

What was your main reason for being dissatisfied? You don't have to answer this question, but if you do please don't disclose any confidential or operational information, or give anybody else's name

[Text box for response]

Section C: Your views about being in the Services

This section contains a number of statements about being in the armed forces. For each statement, please indicate whether you **strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.** If you have no view on the statement, simply move on to the next one.

[Statements presented in random order]

- The armed forces are good employers
- Pay and conditions in the armed forces were very good
- If I had a problem when I was in the forces, I knew where to turn to get it resolved
- I got out of the forces as soon as I could
- The Service disciplinary system was fair
- I'd never advise anybody to join the forces
- Basic training was hard work, but it was worth it
- I never regretted joining up
- In the Service, I was always treated fairly and with respect
- If I did something wrong when I was in the forces, I deserved to be punished
- Basic training bore no relation to what I actually ended up doing
- I had a few complaints and grievances during my service years, but there was no point trying to pursue them
- The officers always had our welfare and best interests at heart
- I wish I'd had more of a voice on things that affected me when I was serving
- Basic training was more about discipline and obedience than anything else
- Service disciplinary punishments were harsh
- Everybody ignored the rules, or even broke them, sometimes - that's just the way it was
- Everybody knew what the rules were
- If a task could be completed in an easier way, or a quicker way, then that's how it was done - rules or no rules
- Sometimes it was difficult to find out what my rights were

This survey includes questions about a range of issues including joining up, basic training, pay and other conditions, complaints and discipline - that is, aspects of your employment relationship with the Service. Thinking about issues like these, if you could go back and change **one** thing about your service, what would it be?

(Please type in your response)

Section D: Concluding questions

Is there anything else you'd like to say about the issues covered by this survey?

❍ Yes
❍ No

[If yes]

Q20 What else did you want to say?

Please do not disclose any confidential or operational information, or give any names.

[Text box for response]

Would you be interested in discussing your answers in more detail?

❍ Yes
❍ No

[If yes]

How would you prefer this discussion to take place? Please indicate all the methods that would suit you:

❑ In person (depending on venue and timing)
❑ By telephone
❑ Electronically - by email
❑ Electronically - by instant messaging

[If yes]

Please give your name, and supply an email address where I can contact you to arrange the discussion. Your details will remain confidential, and will only be used by me for the purposes of this research; they will be stored securely and destroyed once the research is complete.

Name
Email address

Finally, do you know anybody else who might be interested in taking part in this research?

❍ Yes
❍ No

[If yes]

Please tell them where you found the survey, or forward this link: http://tinyurl.com/kpcz3lb

Thank you!

Thank you for your help!

Before you leave the survey, please make a note of my details so you can contact me with any questions or comments, or in case you want to withdraw your responses:

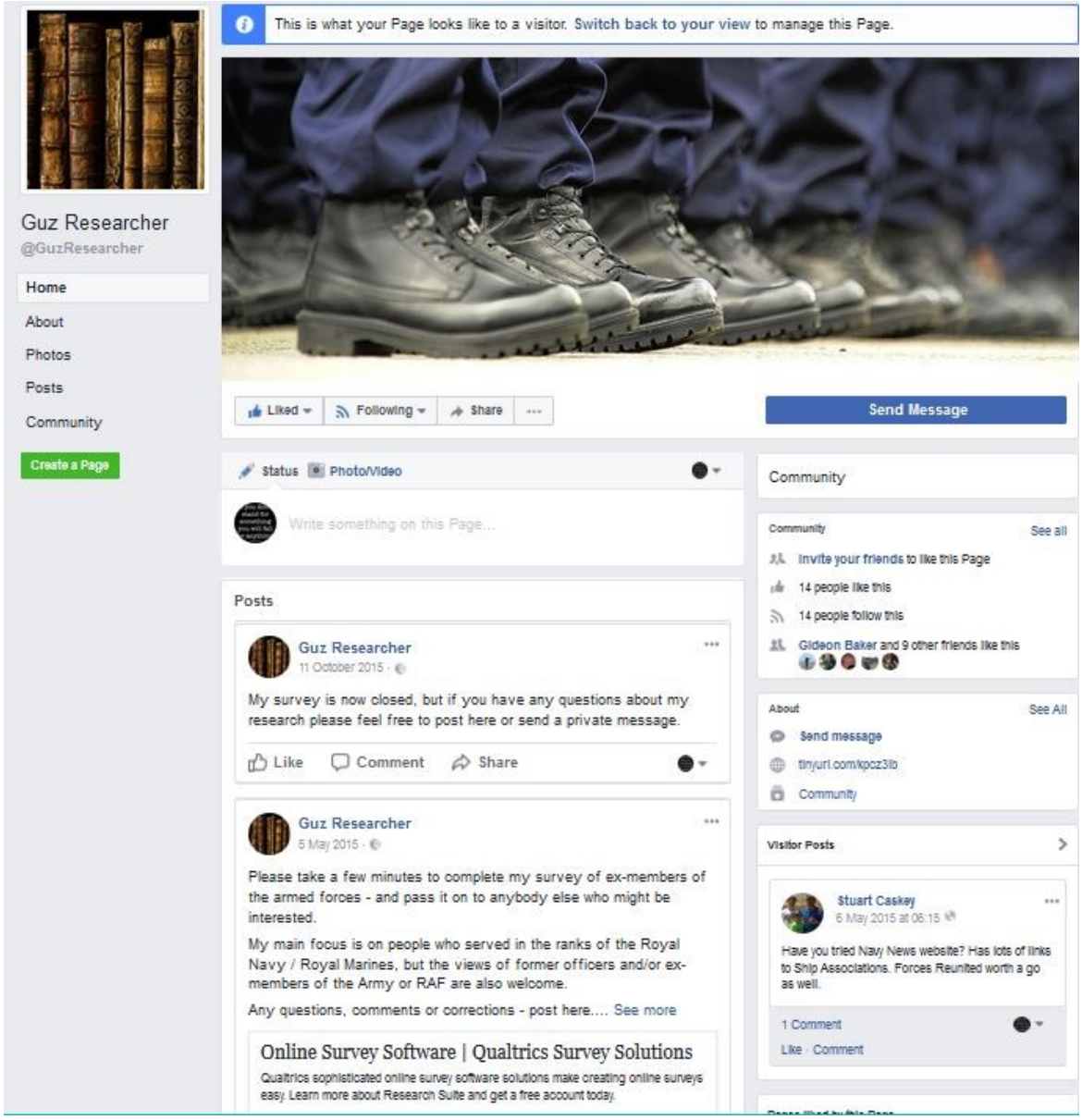
Margaret Prior
Doctoral Teaching Assistant
Plymouth University
Drake Circus
Plymouth PL4 8AA

Margaret.Prior@plymouth.ac.uk

Click the forward button for confirmation that your responses have been saved.

Appendix 3: Publicity for the survey

1. Dedicated Facebook page



2. Posts on unofficial military forums

Interesting research

Discussion in 'Royal Navy' started by Guz Researcher, May 5, 2015.

Welcome to the Army Rumour Service, ARRSE

The UK's largest and busiest UNofficial military website.

The heart of the site is the forum area, including:
- Current Affairs, News and Analysis
- The Int Cell (Gossip)
- The NAAFI Bar (not for the faint hearted)
- Clothing and Equipment

» we have our own encyclopaedia; the ARRSEPedia
» our reviews section - book and other reviews
» register a user (and see less advertising)

Join ARRSE (free) to join in and remove this advertising

Search this thread only

Guz Researcher

Hello, and thanks to the mods for letting me post here.

My doctoral research is all about the 'employment' aspects of serving in the armed forces - that is, things like pay, training, discipline and so on. I'm running an initial survey, which shouldn't take too long to complete, at:

http://tinyurl.com/kpcz3lb

Two things I should stress before you all rush off to complete it(!):

1. The survey's only for people who've left the service
2. My primary focus is on other ranks in the Royal Navy / Royal Marines, but former officers and/or ex-members of the Army or RAF are also welcome to respond.

Any questions, comments or corrections, do let me know - and thanks in advance for your help

The same post was made on NavyNet, but is no longer available.

3. Item in Plymouth University staff bulletin, 27 May 2015

Survey of former military personnel

Did you or somebody close to you serve in the armed forces? This doctoral research project concerns the 'employment' aspects of military service including pay, discipline and training. Former personnel from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, British Army and RAF are invited to complete a short, anonymous online survey. This research has been granted ethical approval by the University, but is not sponsored by the armed forces. Please note, therefore, that anybody who is currently serving in the military does not have permission to participate. Please direct any questions or comments to Margaret Prior.

Military employment research: first findings

This paper summarises the first findings from my survey and interviews and has been produced primarily for those who took part in my research. Please do not share it without my express, written consent.

The findings are presented, largely without any comment, under a series of headings relating to the main themes of the research. I should stress that the aim of my study is not to present a 'representative' picture of the armed forces' employment relationship, nor to prove (or disprove) any hypothesis about it. These findings are the views, opinions, knowledge and experiences of those who took part in the research, and as such they are valuable and important in themselves.

Sincere thanks to all those who took part, and particularly to those who gave their time for what were sometimes very long interviews.

Comments, including any specific examples, will be very welcome.

Margaret Prior

margaret.prior@plymouth.ac.uk

August 2015

1. The survey

The electronic survey ran for sixteen weeks between May and August 2015. It was publicised on a range of relevant social media platforms, through the Plymouth University internal news pages and by word of mouth. Question types included those requiring a simple yes/no answer, open questions requiring a written response and a series of statements where respondents were asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or give no answer.

245 former military personnel completed the survey: 170 had been in the Royal Navy, 60 in the British Army, ten in the Royal Air Force and five in the Royal Marines. 87% were male and 13% female.

38% of respondents served between six and fifteen years and 36% served more than 22 years. 14% completed between sixteen and 22 years, with the remaining 12% serving for five years or less.

Just over half of all respondents had achieved a senior rank (Naval Petty Officer or equivalent), 35% were junior ranks (Naval Able Rate or Leading Hand and equivalent) and 11% were officers, including some very senior officers.

2. The interviews

Over a third of survey respondents indicated that they were prepared to discuss their responses in more detail. At the time of writing, I've carried out 41 interviews: 20 in person, 20 by email and one by telephone. 28 interviewees were in the Royal Navy (including Royal Marines), and thirteen were ex-Army or ex-RAF.[2] 41 (56%) of interviewees had achieved a senior rank, fourteen were junior ranks and four were officers: coincidentally, this closely reflects the military demographic of the survey respondents.

3. Joining up

The majority (83%) of respondents joined up between 1966 and 1995, with the largest group (35%) starting their service between 1976 and 1985. 12% joined up before 1966, and the remaining 5% did so after 1995.

Two thirds of respondents were aged seventeen or under when they joined up, while 19% were aged eighteen or nineteen and 15% were aged 20 or over.

Reasons for joining up

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their main reason for joining up. The most common, selected by 18%, was 'to see the world', followed by 'to serve my country' and 'I followed in my father's / other relative's footsteps' with 14% each. Learning a trade and joining up 'for good wages and a secure job' were each selected by 13% of respondents. 11% said they'd joined for another reason: most of these related to childhood ambition and always having wanted to join their chosen service.

For most of the people who took part in the survey, then, joining up was a positive decision influenced by 'pull' factors such as travel, serving the country, achieving a childhood dream or learning a trade.

---

[2] Because of the relatively small number of interviewees from some of the services, some statistics have been merged to ensure no individual can be identified.

However, almost one in five selected 'I didn't really know what else to do', 'to get away', 'to make a fresh start' or 'there weren't any other options' as their main reason for joining up. For these respondents, then, the decision to join up was more of a negative one, influenced by factors 'pushing' the individual out of civilian life. Respondents spoke of the lack of employment opportunities where they lived, wanting – or needing – to leave home or to escape from the area where they'd grown up or getting away from 'a bad crowd'; in one case, *it was military service or prison*.[3]

There were, however, differences between the services on this question, some of which reflect the wider differences between the services. For instance:

- One in four ex-Army respondents said they'd joined up to serve the country, compared with just one in ten former Naval personnel
- Former members of the Army were more likely to cite 'good wages and a secure job' than ex-Naval respondents
- People who'd served in the Navy were much more likely to cite 'to see the world' or 'to learn a trade' than those who'd served in the Army

A number of respondents also pointed out that it was difficult to pin down a single reason for joining. Overall, these results indicate that people who took part in this study joined up for a mixture of positive and negative reasons, for the 'pull' factors of being in the armed forces and for 'push' factors in their civilian lives.

Describing service in the armed forces

In a related question, survey respondents were asked to select the term which best reflected how they viewed their service. The most popular, chosen by 32%, was 'career', followed by 'profession' (18%), 'lifestyle' (12%) and 'opportunity' and 'service' (both 11%). 6% viewed their service as 'duty', while 5% respectively said it was a 'job' or a 'vocation'. Again, there were differences between the services: for instance, former Naval personnel were more likely to select 'career' than those from the Army, while ex-Army personnel were more likely to select 'profession' than those who'd been in the Navy.

One longstanding debate in military sociology centres upon whether or not military service is becoming 'just another job'. The responses in this section indicate that the people who took part in this survey did not view their service in

[3] Verbatim comments, whether from the survey or the interviews, are in italics

black and white terms as either a job or something else, but that they saw it as a mixture of the two.

4. Basic training

Three of the statements in the survey related to basic training:

- 'Basic training was hard work, but it was worth it': 96% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed, with minimal variation between the different services

- 'Basic training bore no relation to what I actually ended up doing': 65% disagreed or strongly disagreed, but there were big differences between the services. In particular, 80% of ex-Army respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, compared with 59% of former Naval personnel. This probably reflects the different roles played by the different services, and the range of trades and occupations which exist within them

- 'Basic training was more about discipline and obedience than anything else': 61% agreed or strongly agreed, with little variation between the services.

One in four respondents agreed or strongly agreed with both 'basic training bore no relation to what I actually ended up doing' and 'basic training was more about discipline and obedience than anything else'. Here, there were again differences between the services: 13% of ex-Army respondents agreed with both statements, compared with 31% of former Naval personnel.

One survey respondent summed up the role of basic training:

> *The basic training wasn't anything like the day job ... but it gave you all the essentials of discipline, team work, core values etc. which set the standards for your service life and beyond*

5. Comparing service with civilian employment

Respondents were asked whether they had worked for a civilian employer before joining up and/or since leaving the Service. Those who had experience of civilian employment were then asked to say whether being in the forces was harder than working for a civilian employer, easier, about the same or ‘just different’.

129 individuals – just over half of all respondents – had worked for a civilian employer before joining up. Overall, 37% said being in the forces was harder, and 52% said it was ‘just different’. However, there were differences between the services:

- Just over half of all ex-Army respondents, but only one third of former Royal Navy personnel, felt that being in the forces was harder than civilian employment

- 58% of ex-Royal Navy personnel, but only 37% of former members of the Army, said the two were ‘just different’ from each other

Most respondents had had civilian jobs since leaving the forces, and half (51%) of these stated that being in the forces was ‘just different’ from civilian employment. Again, there were differences between the services:

- 44% of ex-Army respondents said being in the service was harder, compared with 28% of ex-Navy

- 55% of ex-Navy personnel said the two were ‘just different’, but only 40% of ex-Army personnel agreed

6. The armed forces' employment relationship

Military personnel are Crown servants, not employees, and they do not work under a contract of employment. However, an employment relationship exists wherever one individual carries out work under the instruction of another (whether that 'other' is an individual or an organisation), and wherever that individual receives pay for their work. In this regard, then, military personnel are in an employment relationship.

The remainder of the survey, and the bulk of questions asked in the interviews, related to that employment relationship, how it is regulated, and how it works on a day-to-day basis.

7. The armed forces as employers

Five of the statements in the survey explored how the armed forces fare as employers:

- ‘The [service] is a good employer’: 94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed

- ‘Pay and conditions in the [service] were very good’: 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed

- ‘I got out of the [service] as soon as I could’: 95% disagreed or strongly disagreed

- ‘I'd never advise anybody to join the [service]': 92% disagreed or strongly disagreed

- ‘I never regretted joining up’: 91% agreed or strongly agreed

Taken together, the responses to these statements indicate that the overwhelming majority of respondents were happy with their respective service as their employer. This is perhaps to be expected in a survey of this kind: most respondents found the survey through ex-forces social media, something which somebody who was unhappy about their service would be less likely to look at.

However, the headline figures also disguise a measure of unhappiness with some aspects of being in the armed forces: just over one third of respondents gave a negative response to at least one of these five measures, such as disagreeing with the statement 'I never regretted joining up'. Furthermore, just over one in every ten respondents gave a negative response to at least two of them, and two individuals gave negative responses to all five.

“If I could change one thing …”

In the survey, respondents were also given the opportunity to identify one thing about their service which they would change if they could. A number of responses to this question centred on aspects of the employment relationship: for instance, pay and pensions were mentioned a number of times. However, more than one in four said either that they wouldn't change anything or that they would have stayed in the service longer, both indicators of relative happiness with the employment relationship.

The best and worst things …

Respondents who'd served in the Royal Navy or Royal Marines were also asked to give their view on the best and worst things about being in the service[4]. Amongst a very wide range of responses, by far the biggest issue mentioned was that of camaraderie: nearly 60% of respondents said something about comrades, friendships, 'belonging' and a sense of 'family'. Comradeship, and the way it continues even after leaving the forces, was also a strong theme in the interviews.

Another common theme was that of travel, mentioned by over a quarter of respondents; one respondent said the best thing was:

[4] As noted in all the publicity for the survey, my primary research concern is the Royal Navy, including the Royal Marines; hence this group of respondents were asked an additional question and there were some differences in the wording of other questions for them

Seeing places in the world that aren't in the holiday magazines (and being paid to go!)

Other 'best things' included pay, job security, job satisfaction and professionalism, and the strong team ethic. One respondent perhaps summed it all up when s/he stated that it was:

A great way of life that civvy street is incapable of replicating.

On the downside, by far the biggest group of responses about the 'worst things' related to separation from family and the general effects of serving in the Navy or Royal Marines on the individual. For instance:

- *being away from loved ones*
- *never being able to plan anything personal in advance*
- *the irreplaceable time I spent serving away from home while my son was growing up*
- *instability of home life*
- *extended periods away from a growing family*

A second major theme in the answers to 'what was the worst thing?' related to aspects of the employment relationship. Two people said the worst thing was *the idiots in charge* and other responses were in similar vein, including:

- *career officers who would crush anyone who stood in their way*
- *a hierarchy who thought everything they did was right*
- *'do as I say, not as I do' attitude of some officers / senior rates*

Others, understandably, said the worst thing was serving on the front line:

- *seeing my mates getting killed*
- *going to war and not really knowing what was going on*
- *Afghanistan*

Several more responses were about the day-to-day rules:

- *rules, regulations, pettiness, bullshit*
- *petty administrative regulations*
- *stupid rules and regs: six weeks at sea [and being told to] "get your f***ing hair cut!"*

8. Discipline

68% of respondents said that they had been disciplined, formally or informally, during the course of their service. Three quarters of these said that they had been treated fairly in the process.

Respondents who perceived that they had not been treated fairly were given the opportunity to say why. Their comments fell into a range of broad categories:

- An individual acted in an unfair way: for instance *one man reached his own conclusion* or *due to a vindictive Commanding Officer*
- The issue was prejudged: for instance *they made their decision before I had given an explanation* and *I felt … that I was guilty before I walked into the room*
- The system overall was unfair: for example *the system was intentionally intimidating and immediately weighted against the [individual]*
- The procedures, or the way they were applied, were unfair: for instance *[I] had to prove my own innocence and the 'opposition' had training in the procedure* and *lots of things were done behind my back*
- Lack of independent representation: for example *[I was] not given legal advice* and *inability to obtain impartial counsel*

The survey also included three statements about the disciplinary system:.

- 'The Service disciplinary system was fair': 80% agreed or strongly agreed
- 'If I did something wrong when I was in the [service] I deserved to be punished': 87% agreed or strongly agreed
- 'Service disciplinary punishments were harsh' 67% disagreed or strongly disagreed

Notably, even those who felt they'd been treated unfairly in the disciplinary process were not entirely negative on these three points: one third still believed the system was fair, nearly three quarters still believed that if they did something wrong they deserved to be punished, and over a third disagreed that the punishments were harsh.

Taken as a whole, these responses seem to indicate that on the whole respondents felt that the disciplinary system was fair but that specific incidents were perceived to be unfair. This theme also arose in several of the interviews.

A number of other comments about the disciplinary system were made in the survey. Some of these were supportive of the system:

- *The traditional view of the military as some sort of oppressive, disciplinary organisation was not my experience*

- *The penalties for [individuals] who didn't behave were tough but disciplinary processes were rare because most people used self-discipline to prevent breaking regulations*

- *'Discipline' has become a dirty word but it is the foundation of everything in an armed forces environment*

- *There is a fine balance between discipline and personal freedom and it isn't always right – but I felt it generally was. It is really important to function as part of a team and trust and respect each other and sometimes I think that meant some people were treated harsher than they deserved*

- *Everybody knew the rules, so although punishment may seem harsh, if you abide by the rules then no problem*

- *You knew the rules, you accepted them or got out – it suits some people and not others*

Other comments, however, were less positive:

- *I wish I had been wiser about the disciplinary system rather than being scared of it*

- *[There should have been] more information in basic training about Queen's Regs*

- *[If I could change one thing it would be] that sometimes they listened to your side of the story before judgement was made*

- *[If I could change one thing it would be] having a representative organisation (trade union?) to advise personnel during disciplinary proceedings*

9. The rules

Closely related to the question of discipline is that of rules and regulations more generally. Respondents were asked their view on three statements about the rules:

- 'Everybody knew what the rules were': 89% agreed or strongly agreed
- 'Everybody ignored the rules, or even broke them, sometimes – that's just the way it was': 65% disagreed or strongly disagreed
- 'If a task could be completed in an easier way, or a quicker way, then that's how it was done – rules or no rules': 48% agreed or strongly agreed

On the face of it, these responses are contradictory: if everybody knows the rules and most people don't break them then it should follow that most tasks are carried out in the way prescribed by the rules! However, the responses to these statements reflect the work of one researcher, a former Army officer, who says there are two sets of rules, the official, or formal, ones and the unofficial, or informal, ones, and that everybody gets to know both sets. When a task is done in an easier or quicker way, then, it might be a breach of a formal rule, but not of an informal one.

10. When problems arise

Survey respondents were asked whether they had ever made a formal complaint about any aspect of their service: 10% of those who answered this question said that they had. They were then asked if the matter had been resolved to their satisfaction: half were, and half were not.

Asked why they were dissatisfied with the outcome, most respondents cited organisational issues or problems with the complaints process, for instance:

- *Organisational lethargy – and jobsworthism*
- *The complaint was against … senior officers whose word was given greater weight … evidence to support my case was ignored*
- *Senior individuals covering for each other*
- *I was told that my promotion … could be jeopardised if I continued with my complaint*

Elsewhere in the survey, further comments were also made about the complaints process, including:

- *I regret not making a formal complaint about a particular incident where I feel I was discriminated against*
- *[If I could change one thing] I would have taken my grievance higher*
- *I wish I had pursued a complaint about [an issue] which prevented me from being promoted*
- *[If I could change one thing it would be] making complaints easier, less confusing and less intimidating*

Respondents were also asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed with three statements relating to grievances and complaints:

- 'If I had a problem when I was in the [service], I knew where to turn to get it resolved': 82% agreed or strongly agreed
- 'I had a few complaints and grievances during my service years, but there was no point trying to pursue them': 55% disagreed or strongly disagreed
- 'Sometimes it was difficult to find out what my rights were': 58% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

There were minimal differences between the services on the first two statements, but responses to 'sometimes it was difficult to find out what my rights were' varied quite widely. In particular, 57% of ex-Army respondents agreed that it was difficult, compared with just 36% of former Naval personnel. However, there was little difference on any of these points between those who had made a formal complaint and those who had not.

This subject was discussed in more detail in some of the interviews, and a number of interviewees spoke of not wanting to 'rock the boat' by making complaints for fear of repercussions on their career and/or a negative reaction from others.

11. Fairness and voice

As well as arising in the survey questions about discipline and complaints, the issue of fairness was also the subject of three statements in the survey:

- 'In the [service] I was always treated fairly and with respect': 67% agreed or strongly agreed, with ex-Army respondents slightly more likely to agree than ex-Navy

- 'The officers always had our welfare and best interests at heart': 52% disagreed or strongly disagreed, with ex-Army respondents again slightly more likely to agree than ex-Navy

- 'I wish I'd had more of a voice on things that affected me when I was serving': 53% agreed or strongly agreed. There were minimal differences between the services on this point, although former Army personnel were again slightly more likely to agree than ex-Naval respondents

Questions of fairness also arose elsewhere in the survey responses. For example:

- *[The worst thing about being in the services was being] a service number, not a person / individual*

- *[The worst thing about being in the services was] unfair treatment*

- *I was very much treated as a commodity ... nobody cared about me as an individual*

- *[If I could change one thing it would be] to be treated like an adult*

On the question of having a voice, survey respondents also made further comments, many of which called for more voice for members of the armed forces:

- *[The worst thing about being in the services was] not being allowed to have a 'voice' as it was considered insubordinate and disrespectful*

- *The [service] was good but it has its problems, such as the officers just not listening to the lower ranks ... We were the ones with knowledge and experience ... [but] we were not classed as important enough to have any real serious input*

- *[If I could change one thing it would be] more of a voice for [the lower ranks]*

- *[If I could change one thing it would be] greater consultation across all ranks with respect to the terms and conditions of service*

Other respondents highlighted the way that voice increases with rank:

- *the more mature and senior I became the more empowered I felt to*

challenge, inform and influence meaningful change

A substantial number also disagreed with the statement about voice because they felt they had a voice and could use it, for instance with regard to suggesting improvements and / or taking the initiative. Hence they did not feel that they needed 'more of a voice'.

12. Equality and diversity issues

There were no specific survey questions about equalities issues, but a number of points were raised both in the survey and the interviews.

Bullying was mentioned a number of times:

- *[there was] too much bullying during basic training*
- *[if I could change one thing it would be] the bullying*
- *[the worst thing about being in the services was] a bit of bullying*
- *I sometimes came across individuals who were genuine bullies and delighted being in a position where they could exploit their seniority (not in a physical way – emotionally only)*

A number of respondents referred to sex discrimination:

- *[If I could change one thing it would be] more female equality*
- *[If I could change one thing it would be] getting the proper support for the severe sexism in my [trade] and the general attitude of males to this*
- *[the worst thing about being in the services was] the males' attitude to women ... [I] loved my job but hated how I was treated*

One survey respondent, who was amongst those who'd served more recently than most, expanded on the wider question of discrimination:

> *I feel that [the service] works hard to address discrimination on the basis of gender, race and sexual orientation. However attitudes amongst its employees on this subject are poor. There are many things done and said that would not be tolerated by a civilian employer and personally I think it will take a long time for standards to improve.*

Similarly, interviewees spoke of being on the receiving end of bullying, sex discrimination, sexual harassment and race discrimination.

Respondents also highlighted some issues around parenthood:

- *Stability was not taken into consideration with a view to a partner's profession or [if] you had children – you were drafted where the [service] needed you*

- *[If I could change one thing it would be] introduce formal part time work and simpler processes for women to return to the service without penalty after having children*

- *[If I could change one thing it would be] to serve in the same geographical area as my then [partner]*

13. Leaving the services

Again, there were no formal questions on the issue of leaving the services, but the subject arose frequently in both the survey and the interviews.

Two respondents cited lack of public support or respect as the 'worst thing' about being in the armed forces. One survey respondent went into some detail on this point:

> *I gave everything that I had to the Service, and I'm proud of that, but I didn't get any parades in my honour, or fanfares, or any form of welcome home after deploying anywhere despite being in genuinely life threatening danger on many occasions. While that wasn't something I expected, I do look at today's military and think how much more respected they are.*

Finally, the question of resettlement also arose frequently:

- *[If I could change one thing it would be] preparing you for civilian life*

- *The resettlement advice and training offered [in the service] is poor, and having engaged with several of the resettlement organisations I remain unimpressed by them*

- *That period of adjustment was a nightmare as nobody in the forces tells you about what to expect on leaving*

Appendix 5

Ethical protocol

A. Informed consent

All invitations to take part in the research will include a statement outlining the purpose of the research and the uses to which it will be put, and including assurances about confidentiality and anonymity.

The electronic survey will commence with a statement combining information with informed consent (Appendix 1) to which participants must agree in order to continue. Refusal of informed consent will prevent the individual from continuing with the survey.

At the beginning of each interview, these statements will be repeated and in the case of face-to-face interviews participants will be asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 2). Where interviews are carried out by telephone or electronically, the consent form will be sent by email in advance, signed or accepted electronically and then discussed and agreed verbally.

Should the research progress to a third phase of group interviews, and in advance of organising any such groups, discussions will be held with participants with a view to ensuring that, for instance, those who were of lower ranks are not put in the same group as individuals who were officers unless they give express consent to this. At the start of any group interviews, individual informed consent will be sought using the same form as that for individual interviews; in addition, written agreement will be sought with regard to respecting the confidentiality of fellow group members ('what happens in the room stays in the room').

Additional steps will be taken to ensure fully informed consent on the part of any serving members of the Royal Navy (including the Royal Marines) who wish to take part: please see section D below.

B. Openness and honesty

Participants will be informed in writing from the outset of the overall aims and purpose of the research. They will also be given the opportunity to ask questions about this.

C. Right to withdraw

Participants will be granted the right to withdraw from the research at any stage, in which case any personal data they have supplied will be destroyed. They will also have the right to retract or redact any statements made at any stage of the

research up to and including a specified date six months before the expected submission of my thesis.

D. Protection from harm

There is no perceived risk of harm to former members of the Royal Navy, nor to current or former members of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. However, all participants will be reminded of the need not to disclose any sensitive or operational information, no matter how old.

There is a perceived risk of harm, however, to individuals who are currently in the Navy. Like most 'outsider' researchers, I have not been granted permission to include serving members of the Royal Navy in my research. Anybody serving in the armed forces must seek permission before 'completing external questionnaires, taking part in external surveys … or contributing to external studies or research projects' and failure to do so can result in disciplinary action (Internal Defence Instruction, September 2014). In light of this, every effort will be made to exclude individuals who are still in the Navy, and in particular:

- all written material, including the electronic survey and all documents relating to consent, will include a clear message to the effect that:
    - the research is not supported by the Royal Navy
    - the request to complete the survey applies only to former members of the Service
    - individuals who are currently serving in the Royal Navy should be aware that they could face disciplinary action if they take part without prior permission, which is unlikely to be granted
- similarly, any method by which the survey is circulated – including emails, postings on internet forums and social media – will include the same warning

Despite such warnings, it is still possible that serving members of the Royal Navy might complete the survey, possibly because of a specific interest, and should not therefore be excluded. Should this situation arise:

- the quantitative data collected will only be used for general purposes, for instance to inform an overall view of the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with a proposition
- the qualitative data collected will not be quoted directly and again will only be used to inform the general findings of the study

Similarly, should any serving personnel complete the survey and volunteer to be interviewed, I will discuss this with them, repeating the warnings already given and ask them to reconsider their participation. Should they persist in volunteering, I will ask them to complete a further informed consent form (Appendix 3).

Should the research progress to group interviews, serving personnel will not be invited to take part, since doing so could compromise their anonymity. They will, however, be invited to answer any further questions which might be explored through group interviews, but only under the same conditions of enhanced informed consent.

E. Debriefing

At the end of each interview – whether individual or group – participants will receive further information about the project. Interviewees will also be sent a copy of their interview transcript with a reminder that they can withdraw, retract or redact at any stage. Further, interviewees will be offered the opportunity to receive a summary report of my findings and / or a copy of any published material arising from the project.

F. Confidentiality

The initial survey will be entirely anonymous unless the participant wishes to progress to an interview, in which case only a name and email address will be required. This data, along with any other personal details which might be disclosed, will be transferred to the University's secure servers at the earliest opportunity, and no personal data will be held on a mobile device for longer than ten days.

All interview transcripts will be anonymised and stored on the University's secure servers. They will only be accessible to my PhD supervisor and me, and no details which might identify any individual will be provided to any other person.

All data will be held until twelve months after the award of my PhD and then destroyed.

G. Professional bodies whose ethical policies apply to this research

In addition to the University's own guidelines, this protocol has been drawn up in accordance with those issued by the Social Research Association and the British Sociological Association.

Ethical protocol Appendix 1: Information sheet and statement of informed consent at commencement of survey

Introduction

Thank you for taking part in this survey, which should take no longer than fifteen minutes to complete. This survey is part of my research into the Royal Navy employment relationship – that is, your experience of work and related issues in the service.

Please note that this research is not supported by the Royal Navy, and that this survey is only intended for individuals who have completed their service. If you are currently serving, you could face minor administrative action or disciplinary action if you complete this survey without prior permission, which is unlikely to be granted.

Before starting the survey, please note that:

- Your answers will only be used to inform my research, and any details which might identify you will be removed before the responses are analysed.

- You do not have to give your name unless you wish to be further involved in the research (you will be asked about this towards the end of the survey).
  - If you do agree to be further involved in my research, your name and any other personal details you supply will remain confidential and you will not be identifiable in any work arising from this research. Data will be stored securely and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, and destroyed when the project is complete.

- You do not have to answer every question, and you can withdraw from the survey at any point. If you withdraw from the survey, your responses will be deleted. You also have the right to retract or amend any or all of your responses by emailing me at any time up to 31 December 2016.

- Please do not disclose any operational information, or details which might be sensitive (for instance, any information which might enable identification of another individual, whether by name, rank or other feature) when responding to this survey.

- Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me: margaret.prior@plymouth.ac.uk

Statement of informed consent

I have read the points above and give my informed consent for the information I have provided in this survey to be used for the purposes stated AGREE / DISAGREE

Participants must click 'agree' to continue with the survey. Clicking 'disagree' will take them to a message of thanks and a reminder that if they can try again if they change their mind. Trying to continue without clicking either agree or disagree will trigger a reminder to do so.

Ethical protocol Appendix 2: Consent form: interviews and group interviews

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview, which forms part of my research into the Royal Navy employment relationship – that is, your experience of work and related issues in the service.

Before we start, please note that:

- Your answers will only be used to inform my research
- Any details which might identify you will be removed before I analyse the information I've collected
- Your name and any other personal details you supply will remain confidential. Data will be stored securely and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, and destroyed when the project is complete.
- You do not have to answer every question, and you can withdraw from the interview at any point. If you withdraw, any responses you've already given will be discarded.
- You also have the right to retract or amend any or all of your responses by emailing me at any time up to 31 December 2016.
- Please do not disclose any operational information, or details which might be sensitive (for instance, any information which might enable identification of another individual, whether by name, rank or other feature) in this interview. If you do disclose such information, it will be removed before the data is analysed.

Statement of informed consent

I have read the points above and give my informed consent for the information I have provided in this interview to be used for the purposes stated

Signed and dated

Ethical protocol Appendix 3: Enhanced informed consent form to be used in conjunction with the standard informed consent form if a serving member of the armed forces wishes to be interviewed in connection with this research

I understand that this research is not supported by the Royal Navy, and that by taking part in this interview without prior permission I could be putting myself at risk of minor administrative action or formal disciplinary action. Further, I understand that I were to seek such permission it would probably not be granted.

I also understand that:

- All necessary steps will be taken to preserve my anonymity and confidentiality
- This form, and any other document I have signed or form I have completed in relation to this research, will be stored securely and access limited to Ms Prior and her PhD supervisor
- Nothing I say will be quoted directly in any publication arising from this research, including Ms Prior's PhD thesis

I wish to progress with this research interview and give my informed consent for the information I provide to be used for the purposes stated

Signed and dated

Appendix 6

Margaret Prior
PGR Student
Faculty of Business

Ref: FoB/UPC/FREC/FREC1415.34/clc
Date: 9 April, 2015

Dear Margaret

Ethical Approval Application No: FREC1415.34
Title: The manufacture and maintenance of consent in the British Armed Force's employment relationship

The members of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee are fully satisfied that the project complies with Plymouth University's ethical standards for research involving human participants. It also appreciates the very high quality of the application, which had clearly and concisely stated research aim and objectives. The approaches to achieving the objectives were also succinctly discussed and all potential ethical issues carefully identified and critically discussed to the extent to which they would be managed.

We have no hesitation in approving the application.

Approval is for the duration of the project. However, please resubmit your application to the committee if the information provided in the form alters or is likely to alter significantly.

We would like to wish you good luck with your research project.

Yours sincerely
(Sent as email attachment)
Dr James Benhin
Chair
Faculty Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Business

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