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“Nobody's ever asked me what it's like”:

The role of family networks in the transitions of injured soldiers engaging with higher education.

By

Wendy Lambert-Heggs

A thesis submitted to Plymouth University in partial fulfilment

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Date: 17.03. 2016

Wendy Lambert-Heggs

“Nobody's ever asked me what it's like”: The role of family networks in the transitions of injured soldiers engaging with higher education.

Abstract

An increasing number of injured service personnel returning from active combat duty will not be redeployed and many of them face discharge from military service. A number of these men and women have sustained life-threatening injuries which may, if the individual survives, result in reduced physical and mental health functioning. This research is focused on the transitions and processes that injured personnel go through when contemplating a new career through engagement with a higher education programme of study.

An in-depth qualitative case study of networks of intimacy was used, an approach developed by Heath and Fuller (2007) to explore how, and in what ways, decisions are made within networks of family/significant others. In this case study it was with regard to transitions from a military to civilian culture, where traumatic life-changing events had impacted on the men and their families. As Johnson *et al* (2008:20) believe, in the case of educational decision-making, it is co-constructed within social networks and interviewing multiple networks facilitates our understanding 'beyond the individual'.

The research found that, by supporting their injured ex-combatants (IECs) in complex and difficult transitions, the family network also had to address their own social identities, established attachments and kinship routines and adjust to new ways of thinking and feeling. However whilst the family network is seen as a vital component in the 'operational effectiveness' for transitional readjustment, the Armed Forces *Covenant* , which states that supporting IECs is ‘an obligation for life’ (Ministry of Defence 2011:8), does not acknowledge that this obligation falls overwhelmingly on the IECs’ families, particularly the wives who receive little support.

In both the United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US) there is an absence of research that considers how family and social networks influence transitions into civilian life and especially decisions to undertake higher education programmes. The thesis explores how widening participation policies can be implemented more successfully to support IECs and their families, and how higher education institutions in the UK should improve staff training to raise awareness and understanding of the uniquely special needs that IECs have as a result of their injuries and military experiences.

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Finally, none of this would have been possible without the support of my husband, Bill, for his endless encouragement, love and ongoing belief in me.

Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctorate of Education has the author registered for any other university award without prior agreement of the Graduate Committee.

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

A programme of advanced study, which included four taught modules and this thesis, was undertaken. Relevant educational research seminars and conferences were attended at which work was presented. Two papers were prepared for publication.

Word Count 61,672

Narrative Reflection on my Emotional and Methodological Journey

My own academic biography is steeped in a background of positivist experimental psychology and throughout I was mindful of the potential for a possible lack of rigour as a result of these competing paradigms of qualitative and quantitative approaches. At the time of writing there was considerable media reportage concerning military personnel soldiers competing in the '*invictus'* games for injured armed forces but I refrained from any viewing fearing possible contamination of my interpretation of the data. Any subsequent reading or media coverage during the period of writing was avoided so that I remained focused on the content of the narratives from the case studies.

When using a sociocultural theoretical approach it is inappropriate to evaluate using terminology such as 'reliability' and 'validity', as Denzin and Lincoln (1998:287) highlight, 'it simply reflects a concern for acceptance within a positivist concept of research rigour'. Through copious reading around issues of reliability I became increasingly aware that whatever approach I used it was important to consider that all research has other influences and that the 'researcher's fingertips' are always evident. I began to see the relative positioning of myself as the researcher socially and emotionally but for a considerable time I was disconcerted by the fact that this research approach contradicts the predominant ethos of scientific, positivistic methods that I considered to have such objective rigour when I undertook my first degree. Denzin and Lincoln (1998:287) highlight that

‘traditional modernist research focussing on rigour neglects the dynamics in the lived world not to mention the pursuit of justice’ which this research embraced.

I gradually realized that I had to give myself permission to acknowledge that, although I had been open to the participants’ world views and what they said was scrupulously recorded, my interpretation was, nevertheless, affected by those being studied and, thus, inseparable from their and my own context and position. In other words, it was acceptable that my own personal contributions were of value and my voice an important part of the research as long it was clearly acknowledged.

I became increasingly convinced that I could never attempt to be purely detached and scientifically objective in reporting and analyzing the recorded data. Echoes from my experience of completing a BSc. Psychology degree meant that I had to battle regularly with issues to allow my own voice to be heard when recalling my experiences if I did not have the evidence of a transcript. For instance, from my recollections I noted that the references I made regarding the first focus group, discussed in the Introduction, were inserted much later in the writing as was one of the poems, as my confidence increased.

I am also self-conscious that the research reveals as much about myself as it does about the participants. By way of example, following the breakdown of my first marriage of 27 years I began to feel a stronger sense of self and also some

considerable anger at the lack of perceived acknowledgement of the positive contribution I believed I had made in a number of ways to enable that marital union, in very difficult circumstances, to succeed for such a long period. This absence of acknowledgement left me with questions about my own self-efficacy, particularly as a mother and a wife, resulting in a sense of disempowerment which has remained with me over many years. Perhaps as a consequence, in my analysis of the data and writing up the research, my biographical antecedents may well have had an unanticipated subjective influence on the choice of method used, namely, networks of intimacy, but also my subsequent interpretations of the data.

Finally, there are strengths and weaknesses in different research traditions and the appropriateness of the answers to the research question comes down to the fact that one method may be useful for some purposes and useless for others. With regards to this case study of networks, for me, it was a transformative experience as I believe no other method would have revealed the extent of stoicism, love, care and self-sacrifice that each member demonstrated as their circumstances changed. It was a privilege to be a witness to these events and my respect for the participants grew throughout the writing of the thesis in a quiet seduction of affection for them all.

1. Introduction

This research investigates injured soldiers' transitions following discharge from a military culture to a civilian world by contemplating and engaging with higher education programmes of study. I have included the three quotes below to contextualise the prior experiences of the three ex-combatants who are the case studies in this research.

> You go to do the job knowing what it is and the effect it has on people. So even though you know what you're going to do it's an even larger sacrifice because you know you're going to go and do things and see things and hear things and in some cases feel things that are sub-human things. They're not natural things and it's going to affect everybody I think it's an impossibility to go there if you have an active tour as a front-line soldier or a marine or a para or as a rifle man in the army, you are going to come back and you are going to lose sleep.

These comments were made by Alan, a Gunner in the Royal Marines, when I first interviewed him after his return from Afghanistan and reveals the dark side of military combat and associated experiences that occur in a culture brutalised by war that came to haunt him and the other injured ex-combatants (IECs) in a similar way.

Below is an extract from a letter by Lieutenant R Heggs (1968:2), sent to his sister. Although it describes events that took place in 1968, the battle experiences are vivid and it is a timeless commentary about what can happen to military personnel sent into combat. It encapsulates the experiences of many young men and women as a result of engagement in such conflict and gives an explanation as to why Alan said, "You are going to come back and you are going to lose sleep".

> You touched my heart, proving I have one. If I still had a soul, as a productive ambition, or if I could still own passionate love, I would have wept. But without a soul I can know no passion, my ambition is only to survive to fight another day, and my days are spent as part of an opera, sung and acted to an orchestra of destruction and incessant mayhem; the violins-machine guns, the flutes-rifles, the trumpets-great cannon, and horrifying bombs replace the beating drums. The fetid stage is garishly lighted by the streaking hell of a flame thrower, or the multi-coloured flares silently screaming warnings of disaster or imminent Armageddon. The great fighting aircraft dance an endless ballet above, the thrumming rotors of cobra gunships beat tattoo as they buzz busily sweet, of victory. The fighter bombers whoosh fleetingly by overhead, often stooping, screaming almost to earth, insane eagles whose talons are the synthetic hell of napalm the butterfly bomb and puking death electric cannon.

This final quote comes from Len, a Royal Marines Colour Sargent engaged as Employment Co-ordinator for the men and women under his command who were injured and would no longer be redeployed in the military. I interviewed him in May 2013. He had experience of military combat in Northern Ireland, the Falklands, Sierra Leone, Bosnia and Afghanistan. His description illustrates the injured soldier's first stage of his journey to recovery following combat engagements described above.

> You're out in Afghanistan, you watch your plane come in, it lands, and you watch the funeral procession as they're all taken out [including the wounded who are off to Headley Court in the UK for the first stage in their recovery]. That's what happens. The plane takes off; it dips its wing, flies home. That's quite an emotional thing if you've ever seen it. Ten minutes later you're back [in Afghanistan].

The three ex-combatants in this research have sustained injuries during war and as a result are all in recovery, not only had to come to terms with these and their

experiences of combat but also with the knowledge that they will almost certainly lose their military employment and have to seek a new career path.

As medical technology has advanced ‘an unprecedented number of individuals [have survived] major combat injuries’. As a consequence ‘experts suggest that close to 30% of those who served in the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan [would] live out their lives with enduring physical and/or psychological disabilities attributable to their military service’. This translates to ‘2.5 million individuals from the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) who have so far served in these combat zones in the past ten years’ (Haynie and Shepherd 2010:502). These statistics show that ‘a population of 650,000 individuals will be facing discontinuous transitions necessitated by trauma where many will need future new career opportunities’ (Haynie and Shepherd 2010:502). These figures do not take into account the subsequent additional three years of combat engagement.

1.1 Area of Study

The process of rehabilitation for injured ex-combatants (IECs) can be a long journey, not only do they have to confront their recent injuries but many are also unprepared for the loss of their career and that special military peer group; they are confronted with an uncertain future. The comment below from the first phase of the EdD research reveals the dilemma faced by these IECs (Appendix 1: Fighting Chance, Border Crossing):

> I'd intended to spend a long time in the forces like when I initially joined up, they did say that I would have a job for 22 years … so I hadn't actually planned, you know, a contingency plan [because] they always went on about how they were going to look after us but obviously they took too many casualties.

Strachan *et al* (2010:24) reported that:

> The common crisis point is the moment when personnel leave the service; service leavers and their families need strong support during this rite of passage. In addition to the in-service support […], the principal issues are to retain contact after leaving the service; to make sure that those who need support know how to access it; to reassure them that to do so is not to lose face; and to remove their sense of isolation after the close-knit community of service life.

According to one of the participants in this research, "Ten years ago a triple amputee blown up in Afghanistan would not have survived, [but now] there's more and more of them actually surviving". In 2014 the British military involvement ended its 13-year engagement in Afghanistan. At present the armed forces are left with imperatives relating to the sheer numbers of ex-combatants who may seek new careers and some may attempt to do this through higher education. Some may have a range of recent complex injuries; they may be coming to terms with physical and mental injury and discharge from the armed forces and they will also have to confront many challenges during transition from military to civilian culture.

This thesis will focus on a case study of networks of intimacy. For purposes of semantic clarification, when discussing the participants the military personnel in this case study the term 'injured ex-combatants' is used to distinguish these participants from several other categories describing ex-military. From the research already undertaken and discussed below, it was clear that the IECs did

not want to be categorised as ‘veterans’, ‘amputees’, ‘disabled’ or service personnel with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or, as Walkerdine (2006:13) writes, being ‘othered’ and/or ‘pathologized’. When interviewed the IECs showed resistance to the lexicon of disability insisting, rather, that they were injured soldiers and not disabled (see Appendix 1 for previous research).

Green *et al* (2010:1484), in her investigations into the ambiguities of masculinity among IECs, noted that their participants regarded themselves as ex-soldiers; one participant explained, ‘We kill and experience that and at the end of the day [we’re] not normal people, [he continued], I don’t consider myself to be a normal person, I look around and I think they are normal people. I am not, I am an ex-soldier’. This may explain why, at the time of interview, participants in this case study preferred to be categorised as injured ex- combatants (IECs).

1.1.1 Phase 1

My initial investigation began in 2010 when reports in various media raised awareness of a considerable number of wounded servicemen and women returning from combat around the world. As the campaign in Afghanistan continued, increasing numbers of injured IECs returning from active duty were not to be redeployed in the military and were facing discharge from the service. Unanticipated access to injured Royal Marines resulted in the onset of my research into IECs’ transitions revolving around a case study carried out on two of these men, one of whom had been awarded the George Cross. They agreed to

take part and were sufficiently qualified to undertake a University of Plymouth teacher training programme where I was one of the tutors. I thought that more IECs might seek careers as teachers especially when supported by government initiatives such as the ‘Troops for Teaching’ pathway for ex-military personnel that might sponsor service leavers to train as teachers (Department for Education [DfE] 2010:1).

I felt it would be useful to gain insight into the experiences of these IECs to understand how best to support such potential learners in the future. During the initial teacher training programme I gathered data about why they initially undertook the training programme and valuable information was gained of their transitional experiences whilst they studied and worked with civilian students. This first phase of the research culminated in the submission of a third assignment for the EdD programme called *A Fighting Chance: Border Crossing* (Appendix 1).

During the interviews for this first phase of the research, the IECs indicated that several of the other “lads” at their base might be interested in higher education. They suggested a meeting with myself and their Employment Co-ordinator, Colour Sargent Len, at the base to discuss educational possibilities for their comrades, as the Employment Co-ordinator was responsible for finding educational and career opportunities whilst the men were in recovery from their injuries. At this initial meeting with Len he revealed that each military service had its own medical facilities around the United Kingdom (UK), and the typical route for physically

injured military personnel, dependent upon type and nature of injury, was via Selly Oak hospital in Birmingham in the first instance, and then to Headley Court, Epsom, Surrey for initial rehabilitation. The principal facilities of the Royal Navy, including the Royal Marines, were located within Plymouth Naval Dockyard, known as Hasler Company (referred to as their base). However, during this first phase of research the Ministry of Defence (MOD) reorganisation incorporated all three military services into Hasler Company, which is now a tri-service provision for ex-service personnel that have served in the British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. Len was not only interested in finding employment for the injured men and women under his command, he was also keen to explore the prospect of offering higher education as a career pathway. The experiences of war described in the quote from the letter above, was also described by the IEC's and their networks in various ways especially the affects which are revealed throughout this thesis where their injuries were the catalyst that had brought about enforced career change. Len was aware that it would not be a smooth transition into the civilian world and wanted to give the men and women under his command as many choices and opportunities to facilitate a successful future, saying “I just want to give them a fighting chance”. This metaphor was a developing theme throughout all three phases of this research. The words ‘fighting chance*’* fitted the military genre of ‘doing battle’ or engaging in ‘combat,’ where ‘ … chance[s] of success [were] dependent on a struggle’ *Collins English Dictionary* (2007:605;283*).* This was especially appropriate in relation to the possibility of IECs entering higher education successfully. Len was aware that the transitional processes during their return to a civilian world would be a struggle but nevertheless wanted to maximise

the educational opportunities for the men and women under his supervision. Several meetings later, including one with the commander at the base, culminated in phase 2 of this research; *A Fighting Chance: Exploring Pathways to Higher Education for Injured Military Personnel.*

1.1.2 Phase 2

The second phase of this research was carried out through several focus group investigations at the base to establish whether there were other IECs who would like to undertake higher education programmes of study. The research raised questions as to what might be considered socially just for IECs within the widening participation agenda and the challenges that such personnel might face when contemplating higher education. I recall my first focus group with some emotion because, following my arrival at the base, I had to wait a considerable time before I could enter the designated room assigned for the focus group whilst all the participants were seated. In my naivety I did not realise why the room seating had taken such a long time to arrange but I later found out that it was because the IECs did not want to appear to be disabled, with the result that crutches and wheelchairs were kept out of sight. All of the participants appeared to me to be physically able bodied and after the focus group I asked Len how they were in fact injured. To my astonishment he recounted a catalogue of the most horrendous physical and mental injuries that each individual in that room had experienced which were not apparent to me.

A primary theme from the focus groups in this second phase of the research indicated that there was a great deal of interest in studying at higher education level but the nature and number of questions suggested that participants had little knowledge about what was involved and were unsure of which route to take. This liaison resulted in a collaborative project between the MOD Hasler Company and the University of Plymouth where a pilot four-week taster programme was initiated to enable interested IECs to experience the delivery, style and culture of a university. The taster programme was funded by the Royal Naval Rehabilitation Centre at Hasler Company. It was titled *'Reconnaissance of the terrain: Is HE for you'?* (Appendix 2).

Whilst teaching the IECs on the initial taster programme at the university I regularly witnessed examples of the additional struggles many of these men and women encountered as a result of their injuries. Whilst the university provided a range of facilities to support disablement such as ramps and lifts, these often involved a complicated indirect route to reach their destination and one amputee on crutches and two wheelchair users recounted how simply visiting the library or refectories left them completely exhausted.

Sometimes their attendance was unexpectedly erratic where one explained his absence with "I was not in a good place yesterday". On another occasion a missing member of the group was subsequently found in a Plymouth car park with no understanding or memory of how he came to be there. Sometimes aspects of

the lesson triggered post-traumatic stress symptoms which necessitated an exit from the class for perhaps half an hour until they had recovered. The situation became increasingly poignant since they exhibited such reluctance to acknowledge their disabilities and my colleagues and I felt more and more ill-equipped to manage these and other similar episodes. This experience convinced me that this constituency of potential students for any university would need to have a more comprehensive range of help and support to manage their idiosyncratic needs. In other words, I felt increasingly that something must be done!

During this period teaching the IECs on the taster programme I became cognisant of Afghanistan casualties who appeared to be increasing and I was aware that these injured soldiers might need to look for alternative careers through education. Each year 18,000 men and women leave the armed forces for a variety of reasons and re-enter civilian life (Iversen *et al* 2005). Figures provided by the Defence Analytical Services and Advice (DASA), the principal organisation that publishes official statistics on such matters, noted high casualties caused particularly through improvised exploding devices (IEDs). In addition to physical injuries many ex-combatants were suffering from other mental health issues, particularly PTSD. Many were young men who were married and had children and others might have families in the future.

As the campaign in Afghanistan continued there were increasing political concerns with the long-term consequences for children of parents who have never been able to find employment (Office of National Statistics [ONS] 2011). Iversen *et al* (2005:175) noted that 'those with mental health issues are more likely to leave service prematurely, experience lost work days and also more likely to end up socially excluded and homeless'. In addition, Begum (2004) highlighted that some 34% of unemployed people with disabilities were long-term unemployed compared with 20% for people with no disabilities. The same research also confirmed that people with higher qualifications were likely to experience shorter lengths of unemployment. One particular source that helped to form the trajectory of the third phase of the research was a report produced by Webb (2009) which detailed the lack of higher education academic studies in the UK provided specifically for ex-armed forces personnel with limited understanding of the social challenges that such personnel face when making transitions into civilian life. The literature, particularly in the UK, appeared to be very limited when discussing soldiers' transitions to civilian life and studying on higher education programmes. I was increasingly feeling from the experiences I had already encountered that if higher education institutions were going to support them successfully it was imperative that much more awareness and understanding was needed about the unique problems IECs faced to enable appropriate planning to anticipate their needs, and widening my research would substantially contribute to closing this gap.

1.1.3 The Covenant

Traditionally there has been an unofficial acceptance that British society has a special obligation towards its soldiers (MacIntyre 2009). This special agreement called the Military *Covenant* is between the armed forces and the nation and is based on the principle that, as service personnel make sacrifices and risk their lives in their duties defending the interests of their country, it is obligatory for the nation to ensure that they and their families are subsequently well cared for. The leader of the then Coalition Government, David Cameron, commissioned a report, *Restoring the Covenant* (Military Covenant Commission 2008:10), which stated that:

> Soldiers will be called upon to make personal sacrifices – including the ultimate sacrifice – in the service of the nation. In putting together the needs of the nation and the Army before their own, they forgo some of the rights enjoyed by those outside the Armed Forces. In return, British soldiers must always be able to expect fair treatment, to be valued and respected as individuals, and that they (and their families) will be sustained and rewarded by commensurate terms and conditions of service.

The report concluded with an action plan that veterans should be given due recognition for their service and are not disadvantaged because of it. One of the key questions reviewed was, 'What could be done to help ease the transition from service to civilian life'? (Military Covenant Commission 2008:5).

However, the *Covenant* states 'that they (and their families) (sic) will be sustained and rewarded by commensurate terms and conditions of service…' (Military Covenant Commission 2008:10). Whilst the wording in the *Covenant* at that time

acknowledged injured personnel, the wider kinship support was identified in parenthesis. The *Collins English Dictionary* (2007:202) describes use of parenthesis as implying that the words contained within are 'irrelevant, spurious, or bearing a separate relationship of some kind to the rest of the text'.

Since May 2011, the key principles of the *Covenant* were revised and this more recent version of the document does not consign 'their families' to parenthesis but acknowledges that, 'Families also play a vital role in supporting the 'operational effectiveness' of our armed forces' (MOD 2011:1). However, the prominence of the family, especially once the service personnel are discharged and who are therefore not supporting the 'operational' effectiveness' of the military, still appears to be separate and any support for families seems to be included among various other agencies which are not under the direct responsibility of the MOD. This restored *Covenant* aligns closely with the ethos of Young's (1990) social justice components discussed below where there is a 'procedural' and 'distributional' component consisting of instrumental support (monetary packages) and a 'relational component' where the whole nation has a moral obligation; 'support after service, is an obligation for life' (MOD 2011:8), relying on various agencies to provide a more comprehensive social support. This has been identified as a concern by Walters (2012:17, 23):

> … the Covenant is difficult to translate with vague formal and informal verbal formulae which both instruct the law and practice … a common area that constrained delivery in the past was that the provision of support and services for most areas are not under the direct responsibility of the MOD.

From two phases of research carried out so far it seemed to me that once the IECs were discharged the 'operational effectiveness' for recovery fell mainly on the family network where the 'obligation' for life' was a responsibility for them rather than the nation.

1.1.4 Social Justice

Teaching the IECs on the taster programme coincided with discussions surrounding social justice on the then current module of the EdD programme. Social justice appears to be a complex and contradictory subject. Literature suggests that social justice generally draws from an ideology of creating an egalitarian society or institution that is based on the principles of equality and solidarity and understands and values human rights. Rawls' (1972) theoretical position is that this vision of justice draws from a political philosophy associated with the notion of equity, whilst a broader version of justice, namely distributive justice, refers to the principles by which goods are distributed in society, also known as procedural justice. Young (1990) noted that contemporary theories of justice are dominated by Rawls' distributive paradigm, which tends to focus on the possession of material goods and social positions.

Young (1990) challenged these basic concepts in her work *Justice and the Politics of Difference* and, although she acknowledges that distributive issues are important, she argues that the scope of justice extends beyond Rawls' original philosophy. Young (1990:24, 171,173) distinguishes between distributional and

relational dimensions of social justice. The relational dimension is concerned with the 'ordering' of social relations, 'the formal and informal rules which govern how members of society treat each other both on a macro level and at a micro interpersonal level'. In Gewirtz's (1998:471) conceptualisation of social justice in education, she suggests that Young's (1990) relational dimension refers to the 'practices and procedures which govern the organisation of political systems, economic and social institutions, families and one-to-one social relationships'. Further, that by 'reviewing Young's (1990) relational justice as a separate dimension one is able to review the nature of the relationships which structure society' (Gewirtz 1998:471).

Young's (1990) model of social justice is not without its critique. Fraser (1997:15) reviews the relational dimension as 'cultural autonomy, recognition and respect' but argues that distributional and relational dimensions of social justice are 'intertwined [and do not occupy] two airtight spheres' (Fraser 1997:15). Although the distinction between them is somewhat nebulous, it is nevertheless useful to think about them as separated but also connected, both distributive and relational dimensions may have a component of the other. Therefore, for example, in terms of the IECs and their families, social justice exists not just as a distributional element, as Rawls' first noted, in how much individuals are given by instrumental monetary and education/training packages. The relational component would include the individual needs of IECs and their families at a micro level reflecting Young's (1990) ideas on how we are treating them, conferring autonomy, dignity, recognition and respect. The relational component is particularly appropriate to the

social support that these IECs and their families need. Various agencies such as 'Help for Heroes' the British Legion, education systems, employment agencies, the National Health Service (NHS) and so on should combine in a 'social cooperation' (Gewirtz 1998:471). Young's (1990) ideas on social justice and its relational component, if accomplished favourably, would allow a more successful transition to a civilian culture for IECs and their families.

1.2 Phase 3 (Thesis)

I believed that significantly more substantive acknowledgement was warranted of the support provided by family networks, especially during initial recovery when IECs are discharged. Following the taster course, widening the scope of research was a natural progression and I decided that this third phase would focus not only on IECs but also on their families. The complex embedded social and kinship network of IECs and their families was revealed in the focus groups which showed high levels of concern about broader family responsibilities, in particular loss of income: *"*a mortgage … puts a completely different slant on things" and "you have to be able to feed your family". One ex-combatant revealed:

> It's not everyone though, you don't see that [because] we can sit here but you can't go and cook for yourself because by the time you've cooked you're too tired to eat. So your wife has to look after you and cook for you – you know. And how it affects you – sitting here for an hour, and how it affects you later on and for the next two days after.

I felt that special consideration was needed to facilitate the transitions of IECs and their families into civilian life. It seemed clear from the participants who took part in

the first and second phases of my research that the need for further investigation was considerable, including acknowledgement of the social challenges that soldiers face when contemplating rehabilitation through higher education.

It has been known for some time that there are positive associations between social support and overall health and well-being, for example, the 'buffering hypothesis' (Cohen and Wills 1985) but less is known about the specific qualities of social support that may produce positive effects on health and protect against stress reactions (Cohen 2004). Wilcox (2010) suggests that veterans distinguish between specific support providers such as family members, significant others and military peers but he suggests there is a need to identify potential differences in social support efficacy. In relation to this, the focus groups held at Hasler showed that many, aided by appropriate support, would consider undertaking a higher education programme of study as part of their route into rehabilitation. One of the aims of this current research (phase 3) was therefore to explore whether IECs' families form integral and decisive elements of the support in their recovery, and continue to influence their decisions to either return or not to study.

When discussing ex-combatants' transitions from the military to the civilian world, Green *et al* (2008:27) suggests that on leaving the services, the idea of 'knowing who one is' may disappear and some personnel feel 'a non-person' and transition is best achieved with an aim to work towards 'nurturing and developing a strong wish to fulfil an alternative ambition'. From the two phases of research I had

already carried out, widening the scope of research seemed the logical way forward so that perhaps transitions towards civilian life may be achieved more effectively if IECs were able to enrol in higher education. They could not only enhance their knowledge and skills but also further goals for both personal and career enrichment.

The purpose of this research was therefore to build on a previous investigation but this time the focus would be IECs and their families' decisions to study in higher education by addressing the following research questions:

1. What are the transitions experienced by IECs through the processes of engaging with a higher education programme of study?
2. How, and in what ways, are decisions made within networks of family or significant others with regard to IECs' decisions to study in higher education?
3. What would enable IECs to enter higher education successfully through a more informed understanding of what is required with regard to re-settlement support?

(Appendix 3: Ethical Approval Phase 3, Appendix 4: Ethical Proforma Phase 3).

In this third phase of research I interviewed soldiers and their networks which consisted of three IECs as case studies who had attended the taster programme and were in recovery from their injuries but were soon to be discharged from the

armed forces. This group consisted of Alan, a Gunner in the Royal Marines who was in charge of getting supplies out to the soldiers in Helmand Province, and his nominated network included his wife (Carol), mother (Joan) and step-father (Patrick). Paul was enlisted in the Royal Navy but deployed with the Royal Marines as a paramedic and his nominated network included his wife (Rose), and two children (Christine and Jason). Chad was enlisted with the Royal Marines as a paramedic and his selected network included his wife (Lorraine), mother (Emma), friend (John) and colleague (Len) who was the Employment Coordinator and Colour Sargent at the base, who was also my contact. I drew from an interpretative paradigm using 'networks of intimacy' adopted by Heath *et al* (2007) as a guide in selecting the participants which were part of the IECs' family network. This approach is not so much concerned with what any wider research implications might be or how typical the situation being investigated is but rather by the finer details, depth and richness of its research narrative and analysis.

At the initial approach the men were about to be discharged from the armed forces and it was as a result of these circumstances that they were considering career change through application to study on a higher education programme.

In terms of understanding the issue there was a limited amount of research into post-military experiences of discharged soldiers and an absence of research on family influences and support systems generally. Specifically, there was an absence of literature in the UK on non-commissioned IECs studying in higher

education, which further hindered the process of enquiry, but it was precisely these difficulties that strengthened the justification for this research. I felt that discharged IECs bring with them unique issues and it was these that needed much more interrogation. As General Rose, a former Adjutant, reveals the armed forces requires a fundamentally different commitment from that required in any other sphere of activity. He states in the *Duty of Care Third Report 2004–05* (House of Commons Defence Committee 2005:28):

> Soldiers are not merely civilians in uniform: they form the distinctive group within our society that need a different set of moral values in order to succeed in circumstances which greatly differ from those prevailing in civilian life. For no other group in society is required to kill other human beings, or expressly sacrifice their lives for the nation

This different set of moral values echoes the extract from Lieutenant R Heggs (1968:2) quoted in the Introduction which describes the scene of battle and alludes to ‘imminent Armageddon’ and later in the letter states that ‘here [on the battle field] I have given up my soul’.

The number of participants was limited to13 and needs cautious interpretation but enlargement of the sample was complicated by the transient geographical location of the IECs, all of whom needed further unanticipated medical interventions, often in different areas of the country which made tracking them problematic. In addition it was not possible to regulate the numbers of significant others nominated by each IEC, which had been selected by each of them independently, but I feel strongly that this method is justified by its depth rather than its breadth. It

generates rich detailed data which illuminates how transitions from the military (and potentially into higher education) are made as a relational process. Whilst it reveals the IECs' dogged resilience it also elaborates our understanding of the unique issues they encounter following injury and the need for very substantial, additional support from their family who are also participants in this transitional process.

One wife commented that, "civilians think it is only about the bullets and the bombs that injure them … men and women are thrown in [to an alien culture] which bears no relationship to ours". We discussed the desensitisation and the brutalisation of people during war with little value of life. She felt that the after effects of such an encounter can be equally psychologically damaging as the battle field which is one of the surprising findings of this research.

Another surprise revealed from this research was the virtual absence of any subsequent follow-up procedures or support for either spouses or the men following discharge from the military. There were also very considerable differences between educational institutions' abilities to provide appropriate support for the idiosyncratic circumstances of each IEC. These ranged from exemplary, to another that clearly had little comprehension of what was required.

1.2.1 Antecedents

As a basis for contextualisation the antecedent biographical details of the individual case studies, their networks and information about their decisions to join the military as well as their experiences following injury have been included here to facilitate understanding of their transitional experiences. This has included approximate class positions of the subjects and their networks to provide context and against which the subsequent changes in conjugal roles and extended family relationships can be more clearly understood. As will be discussed in the thesis these support networks were pivotal in the rehabilitation process of the IECs to enable them to retrieve agency and experience a degree of control and sufficient initiative to choose a new career pathway through education.

1.2.2 Case Study 1

At the time of interview Royal Marine Alan was 25 years old and married. His occupation in the Royal Marines was Gunner in charge of distribution of arms and provisions to the front line. After seven years he was discharged from the military in August 2012 due to serious foot injuries sustained from an improvised explosive device (IED) during his second tour of Afghanistan; he also suffers from PTSD.

Alan's first nomination was his wife Carol who was 33 years of age and overall disliked her school experiences and on leaving school became a legal secretary. She is currently attending evening classes training in beauty therapy. They have a four-year-old daughter Elizabeth and they jointly own their residential property, as

well as a small apartment. Alan's second nomination was his mother Joan who has a Diploma in Forensic Management and is a full-time mental health nurse employed in a high security hospital. She jointly owns the marital home with her second husband, a substantial property in a fashionable suburb in Liverpool. Alan's third nomination was his step-father Patrick who has a BSc in Botany and Chemistry, is also a Certificate as Qualified Social Worker (CQSW)-trained, semi-retired but works as a part-time general manager in a large hospital specialising in mental health.

Application of the criteria identified in the Great British Class Survey (GBCS) discussed later regarding Alan's biographical circumstances and experiences would suggest that from his family of origin he broadly falls within the established middle class that scores high on all three sources of capital: economic, social and cultural.

Prior Educational Experience

Before Alan joined the Royal Marines the only information that was offered was that he felt "...a bit of a dweeb" at school (he felt out of place).

Decision to Join the Military

His decision to join the military revealed a typical 18-year-old teenage assertiveness with regard to decision-making about his life choices. There were established family biographical connections with the military, and whilst his mother

and step-father advocated that he pursue an educational pathway he resisted and decided to engage in what he saw as a “masculine” career and enlist in the Royal Marines. His determination ensured his parents’ reluctant acquiescence and they both came to support this decision. Following enlistment Alan’s mother revealed how her son physically and psychologically changed once the training had started, through bonding closely with the other recruits, “I don't know what they do but [it] happens really, really quickly”. Green et al. (2010:1483), in their research on military training of young servicemen, noted that ‘training breaks you down and then rebuilds you in a different way - that’s the way they make soldiers’. Len commented on the training, ‘They arrive and we take the civilian cassette away and throw it away and we put a new [one in]’.

Initial Experiences Following Injury

One month into his second tour of duty with his soon-to-be wife eight months pregnant, Alan sustained serious injuries to his left ankle which he explained, “was demolished”. He managed to retain a positive attitude by describing his circumstances following the incident as “unlucky but lucky”, primarily because prior to this combat episode he had personally ensured that the vehicle of their travel was provided with additional protective armaments, thus avoiding worse consequences. Alan’s philosophical attitude is typical of many IECs that sustain often appalling physical injuries and Barrett (1996:141) suggests that one of the key ingredients expected within the military is to be in control with an ability to carry on without complaint, where the culture of hegemonic masculinity in the military ‘must be continually confirmed and exhibited’.

Although Alan now realises that he did not fully comprehend the liabilities that went with active service in a war zone, or the longer term consequences post Afghanistan or the subsequent realities of injuries which were far worse than he anticipated revealing, "… and it's not in the military interests to get it into the front of your mind because nobody would join, and nobody would want to go". As a result of his injuries Alan was discharged after seven years of service.

1.2.3 Case Study 2

At the time of interview Paul was 30 years old and had been married for 10 years. He initially joined the Royal Navy and became a trained paramedic attached to the Royal Marines and subsequently achieved the rank of acting Troop Commander Medical Officer. Before Paul was medically discharged suffering from PTSD he had been deployed for 13 years. His first nomination was his wife Rose who was 35 years of age at the time of interview. She had a nursing diploma and was training to obtain a full degree in nursing at Plymouth University. When she met Paul she was a non-commissioned officer in the Royal Air Force with the rank of Sergeant; presently she works full time as a senior nurse. Paul and Rose have two children, Christine and Jason, who were aged 10 and 9 respectively and who Paul also nominated as part of his network.

Paul and Rose jointly own a local property. It was during Tri-Service military exercises in Oman that Paul met Rose and they formed a close emotional

relationship. Following marriage and children Rose discarded her career aspirations, leaving the RAF to become a military wife which she later revealed was often a very lonely experience "… adjusting to intermittent single parenthood with two young children has at times been horrific and lonely". Greene *et al* (2010) describe elements of military training that create powerful bonds which Paul still felt towards the other combatants of his unit who remained actively engaged in the conflict in Afghanistan. From interviews with his wife Rose, it was clear that this created some conjugal tensions that she found difficult to manage. Prior to Paul's injury the children experienced considerable anxieties whilst their father was away on tours of duty:

> Rose: They've put up with so much. My daughter, she is very, very close to her dad, and every time he went away she'd be in tears. Even my son, when Paul was in Afghanistan, he would have fear on his face watching the news so we would turn it off.

She explained that when her husband was away on tour her daughter frequently appeared tearful and withdrawn whilst her son, whom she described as having a sunny personality would become aggressive and fearful when watching television news items about the Afghanistan campaign. This is perhaps unsurprising as there is a growing body of research, for example Lincoln and Sweeten (2011) which suggests there are health differences between children of deployed and non-deployed military parents. Children of a deployed parent can suffer withdrawal, attention difficulties, aggression and depressive symptoms. In relation to this and Paul's PTSD, Rose revealed that Christine was beginning to ask more questions about her father's health. Although there are few studies on children of

PTSD veterans, one investigation by Dinshtein *et al* (2011) resonates with Rose's observations reporting that children of fathers with PTSD often imitate the father's symptoms and can suffer feelings of hostility, guilt, anxiety and depression and have difficulty regulating their emotions.

Paul's mother and father are separated and were not nominated as part of Paul's network; he seldom consulted his parents for advice. In terms of the current explanatory model of social stratification being used, Paul's family of origin is located somewhere between the categories of 'precarious proletariat and the traditional working class' (Savage and Devine, 2013)

> [Researcher]: So you have sort of said some reasons for joining the Military already, i.e. you hated school, and you didn't like being cooped up; any other reasons that perhaps influenced you?
> Paul: It was difficult at home. We didn't have two pennies to rub together so the thought of having to go out on a full-time job working in an office ...

Through his military career aspirations and consequences of an upwardly mobile marriage, his family of orientation had moved towards a higher, more secure, class position which corresponds more closely with the model of the traditional working class scoring low for social and cultural capital in the GBCS. At the time of the last interview Paul had dropped out of university and was unemployed.

Prior Educational Experiences

Paul's narrative reveals that he "felt claustrophobic in [school] classrooms" and did not enjoy the experience of education. There were also financial problems in his

single parent family which necessitated income and therefore employment to prevent them from falling into poverty.

Decision to Join the Military

Although unhappy with her 17-year-old son joining the Royal Marines Paul's mother signed the consent. Paul remains angry at the pressures of military "glossary of brochures" recruitment techniques where, "you are fed a line at the Careers Office that they will take care of you and give you all your training that you'll ever need, a job for life, going to be looked after for 22 years".

Initial Experiences Following Injury

Paul's unhappiness that the Royal Marines Careers Office failed to prepare him for what eventually transpired resonates with Ormerod (2009). Ormerod (2009:325) suggests that leaving the forces can frequently create a 'sense of abandonment.' Following further war zone duties and the experience of five traumatic combat incidents resulting in his return home on sick leave, Paul was subsequently diagnosed as suffering with PTSD. Although Paul has now recently revealed everything to his wife, he maintained at the time of my first interview that he had not revealed anything about these incidents to his wife because he said that "unless you have been there nobody understands. It sounds horrific but that's it". He increasingly found it difficult to relate to new acquaintances, perhaps because, as Haynie (2011) suggests in her discussions on career transition after traumatic

life events in the military, it was amongst his fellow combatants that the most closely held beliefs about who he was had been terminated.

1.2.4 Case Study 3

At the time of interview Chad was 31 years old and had been in the Royal Marines for seven years reaching the position of Lance Corporal Support Paramedic supervising other semi-skilled ranks. He relocated to England and, following an unsuccessful career as a theatrical stand-up comic, he enlisted. His current class position would seem to be in a state of flux as he has returned to the stage and achieved the lead actor role in a successful stage play in London.

Chad's first nomination was his wife Lorraine who was a graduate of the University of Newcastle where she achieved a degree in journalism and is currently employed as a government public relations officer. Chad and Lorraine had recently married and jointly own an apartment. His second nomination was his mother Emma who had a BA in Education and English. She had also established a successful business purchasing and selling residential properties and hotels. Following divorce from her first husband she has since remarried. Chad's third nominated network was a civilian friend, John, who had previously been a reservist in the armed forces who now ran his own business.

Chad's stepfather who lives in Canada was not nominated as part of his network, nor was Chad's biological father but both are part of his 'shadow network', people

who form ‘absent relationships, who were unable to be included for diverse reasons’ (Heath et al. 2009:70). Chad’s father was also highly educated attending the Royal Military College in Kingston Ontario where he gained a Master’s degree in Civil Engineering, later becoming an F18 fighter pilot and then retiring from the Canadian air force with the rank of Brigadier General. Chad’s biological father is currently away sailing his yacht around the world, which is why he was not nominated.

The fourth nomination was a military colleague, Len, from Hasler Company, who was coincidentally the regimental Colour Sargent. Len was also my contact at the naval base. Len’s formal position at that time was Employment Co-ordinator of the base and had strongly supported the development of the taster education programme held at the university. His responsibilities enabled him to facilitate education, training and employment opportunities including monetary support from the MOD and other charities, for all the men under his command including the present three case studies. He therefore also formed part of the unacknowledged ‘shadow network’ for both Alan and Paul.

Prior Educational Experiences

Chad was born and educated in Canada where he experienced an economically comfortable upbringing through the achievements of successful parents. The GBCS suggests that his position falls somewhere between the elite and the established middle class. According to the GBCS this group has the highest levels

of all three capitals. His family of origin enjoyed extensive economic, social and cultural capital and although monetary matters are sensitive and difficult to judge the family appear to have liquid assets in excess of £140,000. Chad initially followed the established educational trajectory of his social class, graduating from high school on the honour roll and attending two years at the University of Lindenwood in St Louis Missouri in the United States, an apparently good centre of education. However after two years his grades dropped significantly and he withdrew from the degree programme.

Decision to Join the Military

There was considerable parental pressure for Chad to achieve what they considered appropriate academic qualifications and he “initially conformed” even gaining entry to university. Unfortunately, he became disillusioned with educational experience and during the second year of his degree, at the age of 23 years, he left with no qualifications. He travelled to England where he unsuccessfully pursued a career as a professional comedian. During that period there were strong recruitment drives by the military with compelling advertising that described the range of exciting opportunities available and he decided to enlist in the Royal Marines. Chad’s future wife met him at that time but said that she had no influence on this decision. Their relationship was still in the early stages and there were few expectations on either side of its longevity.

Initial Experiences Following Injury

Chad's circumstances were altered when he sustained severe injuries as a result of combat encounter with an IED. As a consequence he received soft tissue injuries on his left side and on his upper right side, a double fracture to the pelvis, a semi-detached retina, and later had a below-the-knee amputation which left him with the knowledge of subsequent discharge from the Marines. In retrospect he acknowledged that there was a "positive side" to the experience, even making light of the situation because he felt he "always bounces back" from adversity. This resilience echos Ecclestone's (2007:455) thoughts that, 'as writers we need to celebrate human potential and resilience'. However, Chad's attitude also resonates with a military identity exhibiting 'toughness and courage' appearing to be in control without complaint (Barrett 1996:132). Chad's injuries created a "drastic switch of priorities … [but he] felt good about it". At the time of the last interview he had been employed with the Royal Marines for seven years.

1.2.5 Brief Summary of Biographical Antecedents

When injured the philosophical attitudes in the narratives of Alan and Chad "unlucky but lucky" and "[he] felt good about it" reveal a hierarchy of preferences made by these IECs in relation to injuries sustained during combat, where resulting physical disabilities were preferred to those that created mental health problems such as PTSD. With regard to influences on their decisions to enlist, both Alan and Chad claimed that whilst they were affected to some extent by positive experiences of military family life during childhood, their resolution to enlist

was made independently which was apparent in the later career decisions of all three subjects.

Alan had a serious foot injury and both Alan and Paul were suffering from PTSD. Alan and Paul have since been discharged from the military and Chad who suffered an amputation below the knee as well as other injuries, at the time of the last interview in June 2013 was waiting for the MOD Medical Board to review his case in January 2014 and fully expected to be discharged; to date he exhibits no symptoms of PTSD. With reference to social class, discussed further in the Literature Review, the current class positions of the IECs in this research are included because they are important to our understanding of the transitions they make into education. They are however only approximations as clarity is difficult to establish because their social and economic lives have evolved since their early experiences in the class position of their families of origin. Further, they have achieved military categories of status and position making it more difficult to understand class position in relation to their newly acquired disablement.

What follows is a snapshot of time revealing the many complexities involved in the IECs' ongoing recovery, coping with their unanticipated disability and career change. These revelations were accompanied with disclosures about the transitional processes they had experienced as they moved from a military to a civilian culture and attempted to re-establish agency through a reconstituted self.

I have constructed a theoretical framework to make sense of the IECs and their networks' transitional experiences used as '…physical eyeglasses to sharpen and focus' (Ely *et al* 1997:228) The subsequent chapters show the decision processes involved and what enabled and hindered the fighting chances of the IECs whilst they were contemplating, engaging and sustaining higher education programmes of study.

This thesis is structured in five chapters: first this Introduction, second the Literature Review, third the Methodology and Ethics, fourth the Analysis of the data and the final chapter is Discussion and Recommendations.

2. Literature Review

In his historical review, Beach (2008:679) notes that 'military education is notable only for its very limited presence in the academic literature'. This literature appears to be even more sparse when discussing ex-combatants' transitions to civilian life, particularly when studying on higher education programmes. As mentioned in the Introduction, one of the few recent reports which recognised the significance of supporting ex-combatants into a higher education pathway was carried out by Webb (2009). She revealed that 'despite an exhaustive search there appears to be a woeful lack of peer reviewed academic studies relating to United Kingdom (UK) ex-armed forces personnel and higher education' (Webb 2009:4). She states that 'transition to civilian life is a time of emotional upheaval and uncertainty, withdrawing from military support networks and having to create new social support structures within the civilian community [and]… reconnecting to the civilian social world was ranked the most difficult' (Webb 2009:6). The scope and word limitations of this doctoral thesis do not permit extensive exploration of the history of relations between education initiatives and the military, although it is an important subject that needs further investigation.

Whilst there is therefore a dearth of academic knowledge about the armed forces and higher education, the justification for the role of individual education and transitional advantages for ex-combatants has been very consistent over decades, couched in terms of immediate benefit to the army and eventual assistance to the soldier in resettlement. As early as 1919 Lord Gorell (1919:107) argued that

education would make soldiers ‘far easier to train’ and that recruiting would be ‘easier if the return to civilian life was smoothed’. Lord Gorell traced the genealogy of army education back to Cromwell’s religious education of his troops during the English Civil War, where he explained how and why army education had developed up to 1914. The process of easing transition from soldier to student and developing career pathways through education for ex combatants however is possibly more associated with the American GI Bill of Rights introduced in 1944. This gave access rights to college (university) or vocational training which, although now amended and updated with planned resettlement packages, continues today to allow ex-combatants to pursue a higher education experience.

In the UK there have been historical precedents for collaboration with the military, such as the Emergency Teacher Training Scheme of the MOD flagship resettlement programme following World War II (Allport 2010). Arguments in favour of army education and resettlement were expanded further when it was suggested in a report on the Working Party on the Royal Army Educational Corps that the attainment of educational qualifications higher than those provided by compulsory soldier education would increase a ‘man’s value to the Army’ and would brighten his resettlement prospects’ (1958, cited in Beach 2008:688). Aligning with this thinking, other studies reveal that ex-combatants who used ‘educational benefits after serving in every period beginning with World War II have attained more education and had higher earnings than those who did not’ (MaClean and Elder 2007:187).

According to Beach (2008:688), voluntary individual education is now perceived as ‘personal development’ and the role of armed forces education organisations is now primarily to direct learners to the most appropriate courses through a network of civilian Individual Education and Resettlement Officers. These might include vocational courses offered at colleges or academic courses such as those offered by distance learning through the Open University and other universities.

Increasingly over the years the armed forces began to recognise the importance of educating their non-commissioned troops and initially education was carried out by uniformed educationalists rather than civilians. Much discussion surrounded whether educators in uniform are a necessity or a luxury (Beach 2008). Since 1920 changes have culminated in a process where civilians rather than uniformed army educators now carry out what is termed preliminary education in basic literacy and numeracy known initially as basic skills and, more recently, functional skills. For instance, in the UK, an Armed Forces Longitudinal Basic Skills Study commissioned jointly by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the MOD was carried out between 2008 and 2011. According to Vorhaus *et al* (2012), it was a response to the broader socio-economic imperatives demanded by employers today that put English and Maths at the heart of recruitment and progression, acknowledging that learning supports individual work roles to achieve qualifications needed for progression. The study focused on non-commissioned recruits assessed with low levels of literacy or numeracy skills on joining the armed forces, and the support they received during their subsequent two years in uniform.

In Vorhaus *et al* 's (2012) *Armed Forces Basic Skills* study survey their findings acknowledged that, 'unless provision is sensitive to the operational setting, line managers are reluctant to release their personnel during work time to access literacy and numeracy support' (Vorhaus *et al* 2012:9). In addition, learners are less likely to respond enthusiastically to provision that they perceive is not directly relevant to their work and careers' (Vorhaus *et al* 2012:9). The results from the survey noted that Accredited Apprenticeship programmes were delivered as part of specialist trade training – 'especially in the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, and 'increasingly in the Army' (Vorhaus *et al* 2012:21). The training was either 'mandatory, to support military requirements of a specialist trade, role or rank (Vorhaus *et al* 2012:22), [or] 'elective training for personal development'. The survey also revealed that recruits in all services were offered a range of trades or jobs based on aptitude test results, qualifications and personal interviews during recruitment. These trades included infantry and warfare roles, chefs, drivers and communications specialists 'eligible to those with low initial qualifications or assessment' (Vorhaus *et al* 2012:30).

The report showed the strong impact that continual training had on the success of the recruits' military employment, but as importantly, the report revealed the limited support actually provided by the MOD, which tended to implement a rather narrow focus on providing minimal Government requirements in literacy and numeracy. The report stopped short of encouraging ex-combatants to have higher aspirational career goals by, for instance, undertaking academic degrees or implementing stronger support imperatives.

In the UK, the Coalition Government published a wide-ranging education White Paper entitled *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE 2010:1) which, amongst other things, promoted the idea of discharged British armed forces entering the teaching profession. The subsequent policy enacted 'Troops to Teaching', used postgraduate routes into the profession as a way this policy might be achieved. It needs to be acknowledged however that the policy emphasis was aimed more at resolving perceived poor discipline standards in some schools rather than supporting ex-military. It formed part of a broader context of Secretary of State Gove's then Conservative educational reforms and public and media concerns over these issues. Subsequently it was requested that universities and the then Training Development Agency for Schools (TDA) explore the possibility where funding was put in place to train the person and give them teacher status that could help the Armed Service leavers who have relevant skills but may lack the required degree level entry requirements. The UK is therefore finally following the lead of the US to establish Troops for Teachers programmes where thousands of ex-combatants in the US have been successfully retrained as school teachers.

With regard to education and the transitional processes of IECs in the UK, I will now explore relatively recent literature primarily drawn from the US and from the UK. As the literature, particularly in the UK, appears to be limited when discussing ex-combatants' transitions to civilian life and studying on higher education programmes, much of the most pertinent literature to this research revolves around investigation into the subject in the US. The special relationship and, more recently, the shared historical narrative of the UK the US in relation to war

engagements, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, has created levels of injuries in personnel returning from various zones of combat that are considerably greater than that experienced by most other European countries. At the time of writing, between October 2001 and January 2014, it appears that the US military suffered 2,299 deaths and 19,572 wounded (Fischer 2014:1). The UK government casualty and fatality tables from the MOD for the conflict in Afghanistan reveal that between October 2001 and February 2014 there were 447 deaths and 2,173 wounded (MOD 2014).

A review of fatality figures of the coalition partners (drawn from the US, UK and some European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries) in Afghanistan shows that they are considerably lower. For instance, between October 2001 and December 2012 the French military suffered 88 deaths, although official figures are difficult to locate for the number of wounded (Chesser 2012:2). As the US has such high casualty figures, it is perhaps to be expected that relatively recent investigative data to support political initiatives that deal with transitional issues and ex-combatants studying in higher education are correspondingly more rigorous and sophisticated in the US and there is a limited amount of data in Europe.

Recent literature of British military engagements has explored the transitional experiences of ex-combatants and acknowledged that integration into the civilian community as an independent person may present a real challenge after years of

institutional living where membership of groups such as the military confers a powerful aspect of identity (Jolly 1996). Jolly's (1996) research revealed unique insights into the world of the military as she was a former Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) officer and a military wife with children and, as a result, had experienced many other aspects of military life. Her body of work, some of which was written 25 years ago, conducted research on the complexities experienced by military families with children. Jolly's (1996) research resonates with this present dissertation as it similarly draws from interviews with, as she terms them, 'ex-servicemen', members of the military who had been deployed to Bosnia and Northern Ireland and who were no longer employed within the armed forces. Although not primarily focused on education or family influences, her research mainly lay with the experiences and transitional adjustments from military to civilian life, so there are parallels with this present research.

With regard to transition Jolly (1996) suggests that, regardless of what practical resettlement advice is given during transition, some ex-combatants leave this closely regulated life without a clear view of the way ahead or what it means to abandon the military in their return to civilian life. More recently, the government published The Veterans' Transition Review (Ashcroft 2014) of veterans in transition where several aspects of their proposals resonate with this research. However, although the family role is acknowledged the family was not given prominence because the report mainly focuses on the efficacy of provision for ex-combatants rather than personal experiences of family members it affects. Similar to the Ashcroft Review, Jolly's (1996) research was essentially post hoc, after they

had settled into a new life for some time, whereas the research undertaken for this thesis is about the immediate process of transition and expectations.

A UK study by Ormerod (2009) investigated mental health problems experienced by veterans, noting that many ex-combatants will have joined the armed forces on leaving school. Having limited experience of independent living prior to joining the military, their day-to-day lives will have been powerfully influenced by the imperatives of such routines. As Ormerod (2009:325) points out, leaving the forces for civilian employment can be a shock as these ex-combatants have been used to the clarity of a culture defined by hierarchies and structures and many ex-combatants regard the military as their 'family'; leaving the forces can frequently create a sense of abandonment. Some of the insights gained by both these authors are similar to unpublished research carried out by the present researcher and briefly referred to in the Introduction. The two case studies in the first phase of my research revealed that they were in "panic" whilst coming to terms with leaving.

Continuing with this theme, a study in the US by Glasser *et al* (2009:33) investigated the experiences of 'veterans returning to college'. Similar to Jolly (1996) and Ormerod (2009), it notes the 'culture shock' experienced by many of them, for which they were unprepared. Glasser *et al's* (2009) paper also acknowledged that the ex-combatants in her study were not only adjusting to becoming university students but also to their continuing recovery needs from physical and mental wounds following military service. Glasser *et al* (2009) noted

that one ex-combatant had been doing well until he received word of the death of one of his fellow servicemen in Iraq, which significantly impeded his college work.

The present researcher's previous study in 2011 (Appendix 1: Fighting Chance, Border Crossing) and recent feedback from tutors who taught on the University of Plymouth educational taster course (2011/2012) have highlighted similar unexpected deterrents. For example, it transpired that ex-combatants' study needs to cease for a short period before and after November 11 due to distressing emotions that are released during the annual Remembrance ceremonies associated with previous military histories of armed combat and lost comrades. One of the students still "in recovery", attending the taster programme during this November 11 memorial period revealed that, whilst in Afghanistan when he was seriously injured losing part of his leg, two of "his men" had also been killed. As a result he had been unable to deal with the experience of bereavement and had not seen any of the other members of his platoon since the incident; understandably he was extremely sombre during that week, revealing that he felt that they might blame him for what happened and he was dreading the reunion.

Any contribution of higher education to the transitional experience of ex-combatants into civilian life needs to acknowledge that they and their network of significant others will already be experiencing important forces of transition having faced recent physical and psychological hurdles, including loss of employment, but also grief.

Another area that this research relates to is how the ex-combatants cope with the university admission process, the curriculum and assessment procedures, and whether any adjustments need to be made at present or in the future to enable them to apply and successfully complete a higher education programme of study. It has been noted that adjusting admission and curricular and assessment procedures of students with disabilities gauges the willingness and commitment of the institution (Shevlin *et al* 2004:28). Another aim of this present research was to identify any adjustments to provision that might be needed for supporting their family networks whilst they are studying. Quinn *et al* (2006) discusses the drop-out in higher education of young working class men, where she highlights that changing courses, withdrawing and returning to them should not be penalised and suggests that the system should be more flexible. She claims that universities are far from being lifelong learning institutions and policy makers are not facilitating learning despite the rhetoric of equality, diversity and inclusion in the widening participation agenda.

In a survey, *From Soldier to Student*, carried out by the American Council on Education (ACE), where over 700 colleges and universities across the country responded, (Cook *et al* 2009:iii) states that:

> Institutions have not faced such a significant influx of veteran students on campus since World War II. Military personnel and veterans will be a tremendous asset to higher education, as they have been in the past, but they have needs that are distinct from other students.

The survey was carried out because of the difficulties experienced by so many ex-combatants returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. As ex-combatants, they would be entitled to the benefits of a new GI Bill that removed most of the financial barriers to attending college. Under this legislation many would be able to attend college and enrol in higher education, to enhance their job prospects, achieve career goals, expand their knowledge and skill sets for both personal and career enrichment, enabling their transition to civilian life.

It also investigated how well-prepared higher education institutions were in order to serve these different types of students. The report noted, as others have, that despite the long history of ex-combatants' education benefits and presence of veteran students on campuses, little research had been conducted about campus programmes and services that aid veterans in their college transition. According to the report, based on survey results from 723 institutions this was a first attempt to assess the current state of these services for ex-combatants on campuses across the nation. The survey hoped to gain useful information to help campus leaders understand the needs of the veterans. 'More than half of all responding colleges and universities reported engaging in recruiting efforts specifically designed to attract ex-combatants, where 66 percent of these institutions specifically designed programmes for these ex-combatants' (Cook *et al* 2009:vii). These campuses were considering 'veteran-friendly changes to their institutions in the next five years, the top two of which were providing professional development for faculty and staff on dealing with the issues facing many ex-combatants with unique issues' (Cook *et al* 2009:23). The survey recommended that universities needed to

work with these students in such a way to accommodate those needs, as many found the transition to college difficult following wartime service. The survey also found that more training for staff was needed in some institutions to understand the distinct issues that veterans brought with them. A revised survey in 2012 examined if there were any changes noting that, although there were some improvements, there was further work left to do, particularly in 'raising faculty and staff sensitivity to the unique issues faced by veteran students and their family members' (Cook *et al*:48).

Another US study which resonates with this thesis was carried out by DiRamio *et al* (2008:74), who investigated the individual needs when 'soldiers become students'. Twenty-five students who had served in the current Iraq and Afghan conflicts were interviewed whilst dispersed over three campuses. Similar to the present research and others, DiRamio *et al* (2008:75) noted that 'previous research studying student veterans was slim and mainly concentrated on academic achievements and mental health issues rather than the notion of transition'. Aspects of this research included goals to discover both the challenges ex-combatants face when attending college and the types of support services they needed to be offered to ensure success. Ackerman *et al* (2009:10) mirrored the ACE survey (Cook *et al* 2008) and stated that veterans are a 'special needs population'. Several veterans talked about 'anger and stress as a carry-over from their time in combat' (Ackerman et al. 2009:12). Although the genesis of military aggression in war is not the topic of this paper, there are nevertheless features in military socialisation and training that contain substantial levels of physical

aggression, which are completely inappropriate in a civilian context. These military identities juxtaposed with broader hegemonic notions of masculinities are discussed later.

Ackerman *et al* (2009:12) also revealed that several students mentioned the need for 'reorientation to college programmes just for veterans'. This finding also resonates with some of the comments from the focus groups held with IECs at the base at HMS Hasler in 2011 which resulted in the University of Plymouth's taster programme discussed in the Introduction. Ackerman *et al's* (2009) research showed that relearning study skills, connecting with peers and financial concerns were major aspects of the adjustment process and these findings resonate with the three phases of research carried out here.

With regard to higher levels of study, apart from the recent Troops for Teachers initiatives, within the United Kingdom today there appears to be very little collaboration with the military on this as a Task Force report reveals on the *Covenant* (Strachan *et al* 2010). The report suggests that stronger relationships with universities need to be built as greater engagement could benefit both the military and promote understanding of the military.

Thomas (2011) also identified this issue. He recommends that a closer liaison is needed between the current provision provided by the MOD and wider educational resources in the United Kingdom. He explains that, whilst there is a re-settlement

programme offered through the Career Transition Partnership (CTP), nationally there are no formal links between rehabilitation programmes and educational institutions. Thomas (2011:7) notes that this 'provides information regarding Further Education and Higher Education via institutions registered as "preferred providers", but there is no systematic integration of educational services for personnel leaving the Services via medical discharge'.

The Government, in its response to the report of the Task Force on the *Covenant* for the armed forces, noted:

> The Defence Academy recognises the need to build stronger relationships with universities and the academic community in general, and with a view to achieving this is pursuing new opportunities to improve and extend existing linkages as well as to foster new ones in order to encourage greater engagement in the future (Brooke-Holland *et al* 2013:33).

With regard to IECs, my previous study began to bridge this gap in the literature through collaboration with the military and higher education institutions' anticipation of IECs' needs for a successful pathway to higher education programmes through the taster programme.

A recent project initiative by the University of East London Universities in Support of Wounded Injured and Sick Service Personnel (UNSWIS 2014), encouraged a network of universities to provide work placement for IECs in a university setting. It recommended to the MOD that a network should be established, with universities, in support of rehabilitation and resettlement of wounded, injured and sick military

personnel through extending these work placement opportunities. So far, six testimonials provided by UNSWIS work placements have been published and all confirm they have benefited from a placement that has provided them with opportunities to gain some insight into a range of different areas in the workplace; two of these testimonials were placed at Plymouth University. To understand more, the prime focus of the initiative was on gaining work experience for a few weeks in a higher education setting to facilitate future employment, rather than sustained career enhancement through education.

It appears that research on educational transitions into higher education has been derived mainly from the US experience which must be interpreted with caution in relation to the UK. As (Iversen *et al* 2005:175) discloses 'little is known about their counterparts in the UK' revealing that there is 'no systematised follow-up of ex-service personnel in the UK studying in higher education'.

2.1 Social Class

The links between social class and educational engagement and achievement are important in relation to my study. Social class has long been a key disciplinary concept to enable a broad intellectual exploration of issues of social inequality, social exclusion and social mobility.

Social strata have been differentiated and represented by a wide variety of factors related to wealth, income, occupation, market situation and work situation, status of occupation, residence area, social origins, education, consumption patterns and even modes of language (Noble, 1972).

Although there are disagreements about where the boundary between the upper, middle and working classes should be placed, it is often the case that manual workers are broadly regarded as being working class and non-manual workers as middle class. However there are few succinct definitions of class and even ONS (2010) acknowledges that it is difficult to pin down socio-economic classification.

One of the most recent attempts to shed light on the complexities of social stratification can be found in the Great British Class Survey. The survey measured the cultural dimension of class, for the first time investigating the social structure of the UK. The theoretical underpinning drew from a perspective developed in France by sociologist Bourdieu (1977). The survey aimed to provide the first large-scale test of Bourdieu's ideas. Savage (2013) claims that:

> … people tend to think they belong to a particular class on the basis of their job and income [but] these are aspects of economic capital … Sociologists think that your class is indicated by your cultural capital and social capital. Our analysis looked at the relationship between economic, cultural and social capital

The survey characterised class as a multi-dimensional construct which was measured according to the amount and type of economic, cultural and social

capital reported. Economic capital was defined as income and assets; cultural capital as the amount and type of cultural interests and activities; and social capital as the quantity and social status of their friends, family and personal and business contacts. After questioning more than 161,000 people online via a 20-minute survey, it was concluded that upper, middle and working class categories are now largely redundant and are of limited use in explaining social structure. The results identified seven new layers of stratification characterising European societies: elite; established middle class; technical middle class; new affluent workers; emergent service workers; traditional working class; and precariat (Savage *et al* 2014).

The results showed that the elite was the most privileged class in the UK and has substantial levels of all three capitals where their high amount of economic capital sets them apart from everyone else. The second level, established middle class, consists of members who possess high levels of all three capitals although not as high as the elite. This class was more likely to be gregarious and culturally engaged. The new affluent workers have medium levels of economic capital and higher levels of cultural and social capital. They are a young and active group. The technical middle class is new, with few members who have high economic capital but are less culturally engaged. They have relatively few social contacts and so are less socially involved. The emergent service workers is also a new class and this group has low economic capital but high levels of emerging cultural capital and high social capital. Its members are young and often found in urban areas. The traditional working class scores low on all forms of the three capitals, although

they are not the poorest group. The average age is 66 years making this group older than the others. The precariat is the most deprived class with low levels of economic, cultural and social capital. The everyday lives of members of this class are deemed to be precarious, hence ‘precariat’.

Savage *et al* (2014) found that parents remain a powerful predictor of what class you are in and what class you are capable of moving to because of concomitant cultural values and attitudes to education. This links well to Bourdieu’s (1977) ideas on capital which has significant bearing on the educational outcomes of two of the participants in this research. It should be noted that, as Mills (2014) argues, surveys are always self-selected and, in this instance, it was an online survey so drew disproportionately from younger age groups.

In spite of certain limitations, the Savage *et al* (2014) classifications represents 161,000 respondents and is relatively recent so it has arguably sufficient authenticity as a classificatory process to suggest useful connections between the IECs’ social and class origins.

2.2 Educational Context

Whatever their class positions it should be noted that all three IECs in this research were born in the 1980s, therefore much of their schooling would have taken place in the 1990s, where during this period post-industrial governments,

notably in the US and UK, had become aware that the needs of global capitalist economies were a major influence on local and national economies and assigned education a major role in improving those national economies. Governments of 'varying political persuasions around the world rediscovered human capital theory which suggested that improving peoples' skills and capabilities makes them act in new productive ways' (Tomlinson 2005:7). It was assumed that investment in education would improve the quality of the workforce and 'young people became human capital who were persuaded that continuous education, reskilling and lifelong learning were in their own best interest' (Tomlinson 2005:7). Disadvantaged groups took steps to acquire qualifications because 'the global economy has largely made a job for life extinct' (Tomlinson 2005:7) so the imperative became employability for life. The stress on individual achievement was underscored by the state whose 'enabling role masked a certain coercive dimension' (Tomlinson 2005:8).

In the UK the New Labour government elected in 1997 made education, training and work central to its politics. The increasing competitive nature of education, where students became 'customers', meant that the climate of inspection of the quality of these skills increased. Use of the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) at age 7, 11 and 14 introduced by the Conservative government and maintained by New Labour encouraged the perception of education as the delivery of a banal range of products. It is not surprising that during this period there was strong evidence of pupil disengagement as they progressed through secondary school (Barber, 1996). These experiences suggest varying levels of antecedent

disaffection with education, which may have continued to influence the IECs' attitudes regarding readmission to higher education.

2.3 Resilience

Resilience refers to 'a dynamic process of encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity' (Luther *et al* 2000:543). However, the construct of resilience is a contested subject with numerous definitions and interpretations. The term originated in engineering but in recent literature has been adopted by a variety of other disciplines, in particular, developmental psychology and the social sciences.

As far as this study is concerned I use the term in relation to the IECs and their families' abilities to positively adapt following stressful or adverse situations. The American Psychological Association (2016) describes resilience as 'the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress—such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors….bouncing back'. The training of military personnel encourages the development of resilience and also promotes a stoical attitude, here defined as impassivity or resignation (Collins, 2007:1588) in the practice of their professional duties and responsibilities. It is this type of stoical resilience within a broader culture of hegemonic masculinity which develops the desired characteristics of the 'ability to soldier on without complaint however dangerous or unpredictable the circumstances appear to be' (Barrett 1996:132). The MOD believes this is essential for its armed forces to cope successfully during combat in a war zone. However, following unanticipated discharge of soldiers from the military, invariably with significant mental and physical injuries, stoical resilience can also function to discourage them from seeking appropriate support especially for mental health issues.

Within this research the IECs delayed disclosure of PTSD and dyslexia. One IEC explained why he was reluctant to disclose health issues in the military, revealing that ‘you need to ... pull yourself up, man up, get on with it'. Further, demonstrating successful ‘bouncing back’ from adversity can result in denial of symptoms that may well require professional help and support. Reid (2014), however, argues that the government promotes the ideas that ‘vulnerability to threat, injury and loss has to be accepted as a reality of human existence and mental health is [a] taboo subject’. They also argue that promoting resilience ‘draws attention away from governmental responsibility and towards localised, laissez-faire responses’.

Canavan (2008:3), in his research into childcare practice, is cautious about the use of the construct of resilience and suggests that, although individuals may be ‘outwardly successful…and resilient they may [nevertheless] suffer deep ongoing personal trauma associated with past experiences’. Later he claims that ‘… the focus on resilience as a generalised notion can blind practitioners to the concrete awfulness that some children and parents face’.

When IECs are discharged, the familiar military normative structures they have experienced are discontinued and they are confronted with a confusing civilian narrative that has a number of mixed messages. This includes policies promoting ‘emotional wellbeing’ (Ecclestone 2004:11) in a supportive culture juxtaposed with a neo-liberal emphasis on personal responsibility and autonomy with the ability to demonstrate appropriate resilience to life’s difficulties and problems. Access to the support IECs need can also be confusing with some provided by the state but others are managed by a plethora of voluntary and charitable organisations which often does not sit easily with the values and attitudes of the ex-combatant.

This confusion can result in adverse circumstances, for example, homelessness of ex-military personnel. It is known that there are many homeless veterans. The British legion reveal that, while ‘in attempting to quantify the prevalence of

veterans amongst the homeless population there is no clear picture to reliably draw conclusions upon' (British Legion Household Survey (2016). However, the British Legion also found that 'there is significant evidence of members of Service community are unwilling to seek support'. I would maintain that this emphasis on the term 'resilience' both in civilian and military cultures may render many of the IECs resigned to their newfound circumstances, particularly with regard to their health and other related issues already described. This stoicism is often expressed with a sardonic humour that attempts to mask the dark realities of their circumstances, as Chad's mother illustrated when her son referred to his amputated leg, saying to her "I'm home [from Afghanistan] but my leg is still on tour".

I suggest that the emphasis on resilience and positive adaptation so important in military performance not only obscures the difficulties ex-service personnel undergo in what appears to be a successful transition but may mask, often profound, longer term problems especially when they have little or no support from a family.

2.4 Military Identities and Masculinities

Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony drew from Marx's ideas of how a powerful economic class controls key features of society and in turn ensures compliance with its definition of social and economic situations. This is not only sanctioned by the force of the state but involves active consent of dominated groups such as political, the state, the law, capitalists and intellectuals (Donaldson, 1993).

> …hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organization of social institutions in ways that appear 'natural', 'ordinary', 'normal'… (Donaldson, 1993:645)

Hearn (2004:61), in his paper on hegemonic masculinity, describes hegemony ‘as one way of seeing things which convinces people that this way of seeing things is natural, that it is just the way things are’.

Connell (1995) made a significant contribution to our understanding of the broad development of gender but in particular masculinity. She claimed that masculinity can take more than one form and constantly changes, but in any particular era a broad distinction can be made between hegemonic and other types of masculinity. She claims that each society at a particular stage in its development possesses a set of gender practices, or different ways of being male and female. Military culture differs markedly to so many other sub-cultures in society for a number of reasons because of the control that is legitimately exerted within the chain of command. Connell (1995:79) discusses ‘complicit masculinity’ where despite the risks involved, troops will position themselves on the frontline aligning themselves with these conventions of masculine hegemony.

Hegemonic masculinity stresses a highly patriarchal traditional stereotype of maleness and of masculinity associated with hardness, both physically and mentally. Alignment with these conventional ideals has implications for transitional issues faced by IECs which are exacerbated because of the social construction of a hegemonic masculinity imbued in a military identity. It is in explicit opposition to ’femininity’ and, according to Connell (1995:68) is a ‘culturally defined masculine

behaviour that confers authority and the subordination of women' and less powerful men.

When one enters the military, the civilian world that is familiar to a person is replaced with that of the military culture which is unfamiliar and uncertain which can be described as a unique way of life and notably distinct from civilian institutions and organisations. According to Hale (2008:306), to identify what is distinctive about military masculinities 'one needs to consider what the aims of militarisation are'. She maintains that in order to achieve militarisation, it is necessary to build or reframe masculinities which cultivate and sustain conceptions of self-identity that comply with those aims of military organisation. Entering the military is 'a rite of passage to male adulthood, teaching toughness and trying to eliminate what is regarded to be effeminate' (Klein 1999:47).

There are numerous critical studies of men from feminists, gay and queer scholarship and of men's responses to feminist debates on gender relations, and so on (Hearn, 2004). Investigating the differing perspectives involved in these studies is not the main focus of this research, neither are women soldiers, although in the UK nine percent of armed forces personnel are female (MOD 2008). Whilst acknowledging that processes of constructing an appropriate soldier identity are also likely to raise complex issues for gender identity in female soldiers who are in the minority, this research focuses on the male majority because the case studies in this research are all men.

The process of military socialisation has been described as the acquisition of a highly masculinised soldier identity (Hockey, 1986). New recruits are first deprived of statuses associated with their civilian roles whilst simultaneously participating in rites of passage to acquire the role of effective soldier and internalise an appropriate new self-image. According to Hockey (1986:34), central to this identity is 'toughness, aggression, endurance and loyalty' often presented to recruits 'as being the epitome of masculinity' and in contrast any inadequacy in performing tasks effectively is associated 'with being feminine' (Hockey 1986:35). Within some parts of the armed forces, hegemonic masculinity appears to be grounded in 'physical toughness the endurance of hardships, aggressiveness and rugged heterosexuality and refusal to complain are paramount' (Barrett 1996:132). He further maintains that the key ingredients expected are to be 'capable, reliable, loyal to peers, in control with an ability to soldier on without complaint however dangerous or unpredictable the circumstances appear to be' (Barrett 1996:132).

Whilst it is apparent that there is a 'multiplicity of masculinities' (Paechter 2003:69) in the armed forces, officers versus other ranks, combat troops versus support personnel for example, it is important to note that all of these masculinities achieve meaning in 'contrast to femininity' (Barrett 1996:140). Military training is often described as transforming boys into men and 'failure or weakness is punished with insults which question manhood' (Green, *et al* 2010). 'Masculinity is publically tested and must be constantly proven' (Green *et al* 2010:1481).

There are, however, persistent questions surrounding what actually counts as hegemonic masculinity when subjective definitions of the soldier are constituted through a military discourse that essentially imbues a discipline of compliance and obedience (Foucault 1977:135-165). Smith (2012:528) suggests that those who commend the benefits of key aspects of hegemonic forms of masculinity say that it is 'not an identity type that many successful modern soldiers seek or possess… [and is] dated'. He affirms that 'high level emotional literacy skills -- such as sensitive capacity to listen, adapt and learn' alongside respect for other people -- are central characteristics of modern soldiers', which are not the salient characteristics of those adhering to hegemonic masculinity'. In relation to Smith's commentary the case studies under discussion also challenge notions of hegemonic masculinity, the participant Alan does not wear contact lenses but usually wears thick-rimmed, black-framed glasses (even when he was in combat). Two of his leisure activities are reading classical literature and writing poetry. Paul claimed he was happiest and most relaxed when shopping in a supermarket with his children. Chad had been a stand-up comic and a competent ballet dancer before enlisting in the military and is now a lead member of a theatrical group touring in a highly acclaimed production.

However, as referred above Connell (1995:79) argues masculinity can take more than one form and constantly changes. Connell's 'complicit masculinity' gives one explanation as to why despite all the IECs' individual non-military characteristics the IECs went into combat over a sustained period of time. They engaged in more than one tour of seven months, each aligning themselves to military imperatives

which put their lives in danger every day. Connell (2000:11) suggests that, once discharged ex-service personal ‘live in a state of some tension with, or distance from, the hegemonic masculinity of their culture or community’. A recent paper by Herman and Yarwood (2014:41) discusses ‘spatiality of (post) military identities’. Although the authors do not refer to engagement with higher education or the effect that transition from military to civilian culture has on their families, their research nevertheless resonates with this thesis. It reveals the continuing impact of having been part of the military community and the challenges faced even with ex-service personnel that have ‘been deemed as successful [in their transitions] they still felt loss and separation from the military’. Some ex-service personnel ‘achieved closure on their military past while others appeared stuck in a liminal space between civilian and military lives feeling isolated’.

2.5 Philosophical Issues and Disability

There is some evidence to support an association between hegemonic masculinity and responses to a range of long-term conditions, where identifying illness and disability are seen as threats to masculinity (Charmaz, 1995; Robertson, 2007). Stress of conflict experienced by a highly masculinised occupational group and lack of emotional control does not conform to an idealised notion of hegemonic masculinity (Green *et al* 2010). Yet according to Rosebush (1998:559-563), ‘along with involvement in active combat, soldiers are often exposed to events such as witnessing atrocities including torture of civilians, the handling of civilian adult and child casualties and the retrieval and disposal of human remains’. It is

acknowledged that extremely traumatic events can produce chronic clinical disorders in normal individuals such as PTSD. Fossey's (2010:8) report noted that from a group of 3,000 veterans investigated, 13 percent were diagnosed with mental health problems. He also noted that mental health is 'often hidden partly due to stigma, discrimination and ignorance'.

Analysis of the data from the IECs and their networks shows the costs have been high. Alan has a serious foot injury and PTSD, Paul has PTSD and Chad has had serious physical injures with one leg amputated below the knee. As all three cases have seen combat they may have a 'substantial risk of other forms of serious psychiatric disorders, health and social problems' Westwood *et al* (2010:45). This research evaluated military veterans in transitions in British Columbia and Canada suggesting that 'former military personnel with war-related trauma are more likely to use medical services and have hypertension, asthma and chronic pain symptoms than veterans without exposure to traumatic stress.' Westwood *et al* (2010:45). This research further suggested that veterans are also at higher risk than their peers for 'premature mortality from accidents, chronic substance abuse and suicide'. According to Hopkin (2014:1) 'the number of Afghanistan veterans seeking help for mental health issues has increased by 57 percent and is likely to increase'. Furthermore Commodore Andrew Cameron, chief executive of the charity Combat Stress added that 'one fifth of ex-service personnel were likely to need help for some form of mental illness which could take [several years] before any symptoms emerge' (Hopkin 2014:1). As all three IECs in this research had been engaged in combat in more than one tour in Afghanistan it is not surprising

that two of them were subsequently diagnosed with PTSD. Fossey (2010:8) suggests that PTSD increases with multiple deployments and suggests that after only two deployments soldiers might require mental health intervention or reconditioning to restore mental equilibrium.

There are many psychosocial theories explaining mental health and the disorder of PTSD. Lickey and Gorden (1991:258) use the following definition:

> [It] occurs following an intense experience that is outside the normal; range of stress encountered in everyday life. An example of such stress would be seeing your friends killed on a battlefield or seeing your child die in a fire. Following such stress, the afflicted person may re - experience traumatic event in such a way that it interferes with his or her life. The person may seek to avoid any situation that might set off memories of the event, and undesired recollection of the event may induce chronic anxiety, sleep disturbance, difficulty concentrating outbursts of anger, and other evidence of emotional distress.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM 2013) is the standard classification of mental disorders used by mental health professionals in the US and lists symptoms such as:

> Re-experiencing memories of the traumatic event, recurrent dreams related to it, flashbacks or other intense or prolonged psychological distress. Negative cognitions and mood represents myriad feelings, from a persistent and distorted sense of blame of self or others. Arousal which can be marked by aggressive, reckless or self-destructive behaviour, sleep disturbances, hyper-vigilance.

The scope and word limitation of this thesis does not permit extensive exploration of the aetiology of PSTD but two of the case studies, Paul and Alan, who were

diagnosed with this condition describe how they and their families were affected by it in their transitions and their studies.

For the foreseeable future all the case studies in this research will be in recovery and, therefore, whatever the initial intentions, health issues naturally remain a recurring theme throughout the data. Nevertheless, when discussing health issues attempts have been made to move beyond essentially reductionist definitions of disability drawn from a medical lexicon. The IECs fall somewhere in between two philosophical viewpoints: first, rehabilitation from their injuries, and second, focusing on the disabling environment.

Whilst acknowledging the merits of both the above philosophical stances Shakespeare's (2006:55) assertion that 'disability is an interaction between individual and structural factors suggests that the experience of the disabled person results in a relationship between both intrinsic and extrinsic factors'. Contextual factors will be considered when reviewing personal attitudes including the IECs' networks and reactions of others, the extent to which the environment is enabling or disabling, and wider cultural, social and economic issues relevant to disability in our society. Smith *et al* (2013) reveals that there are few studies investigating social support in the context of military stressors. Thus, the disability of the IECs is not described solely in terms of their impairment through damaged bodies and minds (medical model) or from a strict social model where people are disabled by society. Shakespeare's (2006) interactionist view sits well with these

IECs and will frame discussions on disability as an interplay between both the medical and social model views which may affect the IECs' sense of self (subjectivity) in the transition to the civilian world whilst undertaking a higher education programme of study.

2.6 Summary

The literature reviewed above highlighted the difficulties that IECs face in their transitions while transferring from military to civilian culture. Re-engagement with education revealed how their previous physical and emotional experiences had resulted in what can best be described as a population with significant special needs for which institutions were largely unprepared. As Read *et al* (2003, in Hey and Leathwood 2009:17) highlight 'policy/practice initiatives such as those aiming to support students' transition into higher education and improve retention seek to fix the student rather than reform traditional academic cultures'. My experiences of teaching IECs on the taster programme (discussed in the Introduction) and interviews carried out during this research confirmed much of the content of the material I have reviewed so far (discussed fully in the Analysis and the Discussion sections, 4 and 5).

Since there are so many variables to consider which may impact on the process of IECs' and their families' transitions including engaging with higher education, the literature review also endeavours to contextualise the participants' circumstances. It therefore attempts to review participant's class positions, the educational context

during their schooling, the socialisation of military identities juxtaposed with theories of hegemonic masculinities including a discussion on the construct of resilience. Finally, since all had been injured and discharge from the armed forces was imminent, some related philosophical ideas about disability were also discussed.

2.6.1 Theoretical Stance

I used a theoretical framework, as outlined briefly below, as a 'set of eyeglasses', in an attempt to add coherence and to enable the reader to 'sharpen and focus' on the various facets and insights that illuminate the central aims of this thesis (Ely *et al* 2001:228).

In my professional role as a teacher I am interested in student learning. Over many years I have observed that the learning experiences of students are not just about pedagogy but also encapsulate the social and the emotional where learning can be transformative on various levels. Since this thesis investigates the experiences of IECs through their participation in higher education programmes of study the concept of 'liminality', first mooted by van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969) to explain certain rites of passage resonated with me. The concept 'liminality' was adopted by Meyer and Land (2005:374-376) as a metaphor to provide an explanation of what students encounter at the threshold of new learning.

They suggest that adolescence often involves oscillation between states of childhood and adulthood, a ‘between-ness’ in the relationship of old and new learning, a transitional stage they identify as ‘liminal’ or ‘threshold’ involving ‘status inconsistency’. They claim that although learning can be transforming, this process of new learning can be ‘troublesome’. I felt that liminality was a powerful image to describe the position the IECs and their families who were effectively forced in-between two contrasting cultures: the hierarchical strict military culture on the one hand and facing a neoliberal civilian world on the other with its emphasis on self-direction and autonomy which is necessary for engagement with higher education programmes of study.

As a consequence of considerable delays in their discharge and their final remuneration and pension awards, adjustments to medication among other issues, the IECs and their families are often ‘condemned to operate in a liminal zone straddling the border’ (Walkerdine 2006:26). The concept of liminality juxtaposed with Walkerdine ***et al’s*** (2000) metaphorical usage of psychological borderlines offered a further framework to illustrate how the personal tells the story of the structural. Once discharged from the military the IECs and their family network are confronted with border crossings that, as Walkerdine (2006:10) identifies in her paper on *Workers in the New Economy: Transformation as Border Crossing,* that ‘the border is one that fundamentally instantiates a separation between interior and exterior with respect to subjectivity, itself, a fundamental transformation and a painful and difficult border’.

Although focussed on issues relating to migrants, redundant coal miners, factory and steel workers, Walkerdine's (2006:12, 21) work resonates very much with the military families in this present research where, once IECs are discharged they enter what she describes as a 'no man's land'. Crossing borders is not only a geographical exercise but an emotional, psychological transition where crossing encompasses one's internal borders 'experienced as part of the self'. Faced with a civilian culture and through the changes thrust upon them, the comments from the participants in this research show how their psychosocial subjectivities are in flux with their own internal borders to cross, in complex relations to each other in the family network, 'in a world of constant choice and self-invention' (Walkerdine 2006:12). She notes that crossing borders '…is only one part of the story…[it] is precisely the other side of the border…the complexities of beingness in social relations' that her metaphor is so pertinent in relation to the IECs' and their families' stories revealing how the personal tells the story of the structural where their commentary illustrates the, often darker, 'repositioning' confronting this new unfamiliar civilian landscape (Walkedine 2006:14).

2.6.2 Perspectives of Social Capital

My interest in perspectives of social capital theory with its links to class emerged because of the strength of its ability to analyse and relate to the influences on the processes of educational attainment. As will be seen in the following pages, there were many variables that contributed to the outcomes of each of the participant's transitions through engagement with higher education. Each of the perspectives of

social capital theory added yet another strand to explain their transitions and outcomes of their re-engagement with education.

Bourdieu (1986) first proposed the term of social capital to distinguish between economic, cultural and social capital, what he termed as forms of capital where social inequity was caused by people's ownership of cultural capital. He argued that privileged groups have more access to economic capital and access to social resources and information than others from less privileged backgrounds. Bourdieu (1977:81) uses the term 'cultural linguistics competence' and it is these competences that can give advantages to certain children in education.

Coleman (1988, 1990) defined social capital as a resource because it involves the expectation of reciprocity, and goes beyond any given individual to involve wider networks whose relationships are governed by a high degree of trust and shared values. Coleman's (1977, 1990) definition of social capital had considerable influence on the study of education. Through the process of developing a network, individuals can build social relationships which, in turn, enable them to access resources and contacts with programme staff and peers. These connections and relationships enable students to closely engage with the institutional resources of the programmes. In other words, the process of network development encourages the participating students to be involved with programme activities and services which enables these students to move forward with their studies and more successful outcomes.

Putman (2003) added another dimension in his highly acclaimed book, *Bowling Alone,* which highlighted the decline of the traditional community. An important contribution to this discussion on social capital centred on distinguishing between 'bridging and bonding social capital' (Putman 2000:23). The bonding refers to values of solidarity, mutual reinforcement, support and specific forms of reciprocation with a homogeneous group, such as the military and their family of networks (Putman 2000). Bridging refers to more defuse and indirect forms of linkage and reciprocation between and within groups. (These perspectives are discussed in more detail in the Methodology and Ethics section.)

2.7 Conclusion

From the small amount of literature linking wounded soldiers with civilian higher education institutions, there are many complexities to consider, which include the transitional process from the military to civilian culture. There are also many variables impacting on decisions to undertake and maintain attendance in higher education programmes of study. There is an absence of research in both the UK and US that considers how family and social networks influence transitions and decisions to undertake such programmes. This present research intends to build upon personal previous research and what is a limited body of knowledge on ex-combatants' transitions to civilian life through higher education. Further, it attempts to bridge the gap in the literature by investigating the contribution to this process of the IECs' family support networks.

3. Methodology and Ethics

3.1 Summary and Review

As discussed in the Introduction the need for this research emerged from phase one of two earlier pieces of work concerning the transition experiences of two ex-combatants whilst undertaking a teacher training programme. This culminated in an EdD assignment titled '*A Fighting Chance Border Crossing*' (Appendix 1). Further research of phase two was carried out through several focus groups entitled '*A Fighting Chance: Exploring Pathways to Higher Education for Injured Military Personnel*'. This investigation at the military base was carried out to establish whether there were other IECs who might be interested in undertaking a higher education programme of study which resulted in the design and offering of the taster programme (Appendix 2).

This third phase (thesis) as discussed in the Introduction was more broadly concerned with IECs and their networks of intimacy and focused on three research questions:

1. What are the transitions experienced by IECs through the processes of engaging with a higher education programme of study?
2. How, and in what ways, are decisions made within networks of family or significant others with regard to IECs' decisions to study in higher education?

3. What would enable IECs to enter higher education successfully through a more informed understanding of what is required with regard to re-settlement support?

3.2 Participants

In the early stages of this research three participants were recruited from IECs who were considering studying in higher education following the University Enterprise Project four-week taster programme. Initially this programme consisted of nine students, seven men and two women: two of the students relocated geographically; two took local A' level programmes of study in a further education college with a view to eventually entering higher education; one was redeployed in the Navy; and another was unable to study their subject specialism locally. Three available participants agreed to take part in the research project and were recruited not only because of their availability but also, critically, because they had first-hand knowledge of the complexities encountered during their transitional processes whilst contemplating higher education, therefore, this was a 'purposive' sample [as] they were relevant to the research topic' (Sarantakos 1998 :152).

Gaining access to the participants was problematic due to unanticipated developments of the IECs' injuries. Consequently only one taster course had been implemented and a second was not possible due to the changing nature of the IECs' injuries and their geographical proximity. These difficulties however strengthened the justification and the importance of this research, since these

issues of fluctuating proximity and progressive physical deterioration, as discussed in the Introduction, seem to be constants that contextualise all attempts to establish representatives for this kind of research. To some extent it explains the dearth of substantive research into the subsequent higher education experiences of injured soldiers in both Europe and the United States.

The initial three participants were male and consisted of one naval ex-combatant, Paul, and two Royal Marines, Alan and Chad. As this was an in-depth qualitative case study of ‘networks of intimacy', an approach adopted by Heath *et al* (2007) guided the selection of further participants. This approach suggests that each individual will have a circle of significant others who influence educational and employment decision-making, which is embedded and co-constructed within their social networks. Interviewing multiple networks extends understanding beyond the individual. Heath *et al* (2007) explored processes of decision-making highlighting that it is deeply embedded within the behaviours and dispositions of networks and that there is considerable complexity in decision-making. By examining the IECs’ significant others it was hoped understanding would be gained of the complex influences surrounding taking a higher education programme of study, where such choices, as Heath *et al* (2007) suggest, are embedded in history, biography and structure. Promoting the IECs’ continued rehabilitation through a pathway into higher education is not perceived as a discrete decision and by using this holistic methodology, it was hoped the research would reveal these other influences on IECs’ and their decisions to return to study.

In line with Heath *et al's* (2007) approach, the sample of three IECs nominated individual members of their broader network of family and friends who were prepared to be interviewed. Following the initial approach to the proposed participants, there were several lengthy protocols to complete for the Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD), which included a research proposal and ethical approval (including permission to gain access to the IECs from the MOD negotiated through a Royal Marine Colour Sargent who acted as the 'gatekeeper' (Cohen *et al* 2009:109), and without whom the research could not be undertaken. All of these procedures took time, with the result that all the participants were not formally asked to participate until several months later in 2012 after the University taster programme had ended in November 2011 (See Appendix 3: Ethical Approval Phase 3; Appendix 4: Ethical Proforma Protocol Phase 3; Appendix 5: Example Letter to Participants; Appendix 6: Example Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form).

Finally, the case study of networks included three IECs who had all been injured in Afghanistan and were in recovery from their injuries at the time the research began but were soon to be discharged from the armed forces. This group consisted of a Gunner in the Royal Marines, Alan, who was in charge of getting supplies out to the men in Helmand province, and his nominated network included his wife Carol, mother Joan and step-father Patrick. Paul was enlisted in the Royal Navy but deployed with the Royal Marines as a paramedic and his nominated network included his wife Rose, and two children Christine and Jason. Chad was enlisted with the Royal Marines as a paramedic and his selected network included

his wife Lorraine, mother Emma, friend John and colleague Len, the Colour Sargent, whose prime function was Employment Coordinator at the base and who also was my contact.

3.3 Interpretative approach

Previous investigations (Phase 1 and 2) had different aims and it was not my intention to focus on the IECs' difficulties managing physical and mental disabilities. For the thesis, however, I did not feel I could ignore the injuries that were sustained during combat, which rendered all three of the IECs unemployable within the military. Consequently, they were forced to think of other options which, in this case, was higher education. I was interested in the IECs' and their networks' reality to these changed circumstances and felt justified using an interpretative approach because, as Hughes (1990:89-114) puts it, 'Reality is not objective but subjective, reality is what people see it to be'.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) highlight that interpretivism is an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of traditions but, as they point out, all interpretative traditions are involved in a commitment to theoretically and conceptually formulate an engagement with the world that produces descriptive accounts of human experiences. Therefore, I felt adopting an interpretative approach would allow the participants and their nominated networks to discuss their experiences by '… understanding things from the point of view of those involved…' (Denscombe 2012:80). In addition, I would not simply be reproducing their words but

interpreting meanings from their accounts. My epistemological position was drawn from a constructionist view, where 'meaning is not discovered but constructed … by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting…' (Crotty 2010:42-43). This study explores in-depth IECs' transitions from the military to civilian culture caused by the impact of traumatic life events.

The interpretative perspective believes that reality is not 'out there' but in the minds of people; reality is internally experienced and is 'primarily concerned with human understanding, interpretation, inter-subjectivity, lived truth (i.e.in human terms)' (Ernest 1994:25). The quote below encapsulates this approach:

> 'Research in an interpretative paradigm builds up rich ('thick') descriptions of the cases under study. Since these typically concern human beings and their inter-relationships and contexts, these rich descriptions allow the reader to understand the case through identification, empathy, or a sense of entry into the lived reality of the case. Thus a kind of truth involved can be regarded as akin to the novelist: the truth derived from identification with and living through a story with the richness and complex inter-relationships of social, human life', Ernest (1994: 25)

There are many unique features of military culture that justified the use of this perspective as the approach 'has the task of searching for systems of meaning that actors use to make sense of their world (Sarantakos 1998:37). I believed that each IEC would give unique insights into their individual transitions from military to civilian culture as they contemplated and engaged with education. The three participants and their family networks made a discrete group which had been involved with the military for several years and were in a position to reveal insights

into military culture from an insider's view. These views, shared also by other family members, are socially significant because they are shaped by the contextualising culture formed from comprehensive experiences in the military. This extends from initial training to subsequent combat. I expected to discover the myriad of influences that impacted on their transitional experiences now that they were entering a civilian world through engagement with higher education.

An interpretative approach is judged by the depth of its portrayal and the intricacy of its description without worrying about how representative the situation is. Although it is not possible to generalise from each participant's reality of events as they contemplated education, nevertheless, conclusions and implications can be drawn beyond the bounds of the particular events described. Hammersley (1990:598) states the 'descriptions must remain close to concrete reality of particular events but at the same time reveal general features of human life'. I hoped the research would provide a more informed understanding of what was required for resettlement for these men and their families for a pathway to higher education.

I endeavoured to create an egalitarian, trusting relationship to enable the participants to feel comfortable and to talk freely. The interpretations of situations and actions from the IECs and their networks are paramount to understand what is unique for them when they engage with education in this transition process.

By way of example, much of the culture of the military appears to successfully address physical and complex medical issues such as amputation or damaged limbs where such physical injuries are treated with the highest quality prosthetics. Chad's mother, Emma, revealed that her son received, "The best [physical help] I believe in the world. I think from our experience, really the absolute best, and I mean that, and I'm qualified to speak because I was the mum and I was there".

With regard to mental health there appears to be a different attitude, as Rose, Paul's wife, revealed:

> But they don't because it's ... mental health is that taboo subject. You need to ... 'pull yourself up, man up, get on with it' and they don't see that. For years, and years, and years you were described as being a coward or you see on the battlefield people would run away, and that was battle shock but they would class it as being a coward. The Forces aren't going to turn around ... I mean they are getting better now, or I hope, I would like to say I hope but I don't know. They won't pick up on it they will just see someone being insubordinate or ... they end up getting in trouble don't they, or charged or something for causing problems. No, it was never picked up, never really looked at until Paul got introduced to Hasler Company.

This appears to be an unfair attitude, perhaps steeped in ideas of masculinity or what the expectations are in a military culture. Using an in-depth qualitative case study of networks of intimacy I expected to reveal the ways in which power is entailed in culture, leading to practices of exploitation that have become naturalised. For instance, Foucault (1977) claims that the subjective definitions of the soldier are constituted through a military discourse that essentially imbues a discipline of compliance and obedience.

Further justification for using an interpretative approach involving IECs is that reducing them and their network (for example, their wives, mothers, colleagues and friends) to measurable discrete entities can be avoided, unlike the scientific or even some interpretative paradigms, which are essentially 'technicist' (Cohen *et al* 2009:27), seeking to understand rather than question and transform.

As the researcher I am speaking on behalf of subjects and, in using this approach, I cannot attempt to be purely detached and scientifically objective in reporting and analysis. Although I am open to the participants' world view and what they say is scrupulously recorded, my interpretation is, nevertheless, irrevocably affected by those being studied and, thus, inseparable from their context and my own context and position.

From my previous research for the taster programme, I was aware that the service personnel had many concerns about their responsibilities to their families. When asked "What sort of things would encourage you to go into higher education?" comments such as, "…being injured … affects you, your wife as she has to look after you and cook for you … there would be conflict between completing assessments (sic) to do versus playing with the kids". One IEC said, "I am not 18 falling out of college with absolutely no responsibilities other than myself and I have got to put food on the table". The research, therefore, hopes to reveal how these concerns and others are resolved.

Using Giele and Elder's (1998, in Heath *et al* 2007:4) approach of networks of intimacy, the research explores the initial and continual maintenance of the decision-making within the IECs' nominated network which covered the elements indicated below:

> Firstly, the location in time and place which highlights the importance of exploring generational positioning. Secondly linked lives, the element that highlights the impact on the life course of the social and cultural expectations-dispositions, attitudes and behaviours specific to an individual's social contacts. Thirdly human agency which focuses on the goal orientation, motivation and active decision making of individuals. Fourthly the timing of lives that focuses on how and when a person undertakes actions or engages in events and includes a concern with both passive and active adaptation to events.

From this approach I was blending the voices of the participants with my own in the analysis of the data. From this standpoint I expected to interweave political and social issues to scrutinise assumptions that might not only inhibit, repress and constrain the transitional processes into higher education, but also facilitate this process. The insights gained would have to be described in relative terms as, from this view, no one version of their truths could explain everything. As Sikes and Gale (2006) reveal, 'there are multiple realities and multiple selves' and by interpreting their accounts I should recognise that they are socially located and shaped through various influences where the same person may tell different stories about the same thing.

The data is invariably subjective, and conflicts with what is considered to be scientific procedures and methods. This view argues that, not only do scientific positivistic methods fail to discover the many beliefs, attitudes and underlying

impulses that lead to a person's decision, but such methods can actually obscure what needs to be examined because of positivistic insistence on objectivity. It is this insistence on objectivity that is at the very heart of my resistance to engage in positivistic methods for this thesis, since positivists reject all subjective explanations of an individual's behaviour, even when it is the individuals themselves who are offering these explanations. It is exactly this subjective perspective that I wished to explore. In the positivistic view, the significant components that make up an individual's experience of reality are excluded or remain unexplored.

3.4 Semi-structured Interviews

I carried out in depth semi structured interviews where data collected from the participants' narratives reveals their reality, it clearly captures their emotions which is an important dimension in the decision-making to undertake a higher education programme of study. It was anticipated that these accounts would provide a more informed understanding of what is required with regard to re-settlement support, particularly for establishing a pathway and continuing participation in higher education.

This study was carried out over a period of 11 months and the adult participants were interviewed twice and the children once. The children were only interviewed on one occasion to protect them from any negative consequences of revisiting potentially unpleasant memories. Most participants preferred to be interviewed at

the university in a privately booked room. One participant requested telephone interviews and another preferred to use Skype. One family was interviewed face-to-face over a period of three days followed by telephone contact. As one participant lived in Canada it was necessary to complete discussions via telephone which were also recorded. It was hoped that data drawn from this style of semi-structured interviews would capture the differences and possible similarities between all the participants involved, all of which would need to be explored before a more complete picture of the IECs changing worlds could be understood.

(See Appendix 7: Example Questions to IECs and Appendix 8: Example Questions to Chad).

3.4.1 How the Method Links to the Questions

Closed questions were used initially to gain background information about schooling, age, occupation, etc. Thereafter, open questions were used around themes to gain an understanding of the contextual factors that had brought the participants to this point, which covered experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. These explored, for example, the number and length of tours completed, the nature of their operational involvement, and they all volunteered details of the incident that caused their injuries and how their recovery was progressing. The wording of the questions was altered slightly for participants who were part of the IECs' network, for example, simple rephrasing or re-wording and use of third person vocabulary was changed with references to 'your husband; son', etc. (See Appendix 9: Example Family Network Questions.) This was to allow all the

participants time to speak freely and to run through contextual factors surrounding what had brought them to this point as quickly as possible, so that if they wished to talk about injuries or medication, time was allowed for this to take place (as it transpired, this time was insufficient). I felt I could not move on to the questions surrounding my research aims and felt uncomfortable about discussing aspects of their intended educational engagement before the participants had been able to discuss what, for them, may be far more compelling issues. It appeared insensitive, considering how severely injured these men were, not to allow them space to talk about their experiences if they wanted to.

Further, I was conscious of 'a limit to which the pace can be forced particularly with individuals perhaps out of touch with their feelings' (Nelson-Jones 1991:122). It also gave me time to build a valuable rapport to gain their trust by maintaining sensitivity about the issues being discussed. To minimise any anxieties and defensiveness of the respondents, I drew from skills learned during my professional counselling background and I attempted to use effective listening skills with appropriate empathetic responses as affirmation. In addition, I felt that time was needed to create a secure psychological base for them, sentiments derived from the Humanistic school of thought (Rogers 1951). Some of the most powerful data came from the IECs' wives who appeared to gain some comfort from self-disclosure. Later, semi-structured questions surrounding their decisions to undertake a higher education programme of study were augmented with prompts such as, 'what subject and why', 'who or what influenced your decision'

and ‘biggest challenge’, etc. Open questions included policy changes they would like to see implemented.

I felt less comfortable when interviewing two of the children of one family, who were aged nine and ten, but they were part of the IEC’s nominated network (see (Appendix 10: Participant Information Sheet for Children and Appendix 11: Example Questions for Children). The children’s mother monitored the proceedings and eventually joined in the discussion, which eased my feelings about the process. She raised the subject of the children’s holiday with their father in “Lap Land”:

> …it was the first time daddy started smiling again wasn’t it? … “He didn’t smile before [because] he kept having flashbacks about Afghanistan”.

They said this made them sad.

Although I did not initiate the question that drew unpleasant memories from the children, I did not feel comfortable that this had happened so I chose not to interview them a second time.

To maintain appropriate protocols the questions I directed at the children were very simple (Appendix 11). Apart from asking about their school experiences the questions were confined to feelings and thoughts about their father attending university.

The second interviews with the adult participants were informal and conversational and were built on what I already knew. They explored some factors that indicated the relationship between their networks and what enabled them to maintain the decision to continue or suspend their studies.

Although face-to-face interviewing was preferable, continuity of location in Plymouth was uncertain for the group and the IECs' networks were not always locally situated. For instance, one IEC undertaking a degree programme transferred to another university at a considerable distance. In addition, one of the networks was located in Canada, requiring telephone interviews. During these interviews I found I could judge reactions and moods by the pitch of the voice, but also by how they breathed, including the pace of their speaking voice and I felt able to build a rapport with each participant even during a telephone interview. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed.

Two Skype interviews were carried out but, in hindsight, some practise interviews would have been advisable. I had not anticipated seeing myself so prominently simultaneously with the participant, and I found this distracting. It was often difficult to see the participant's face clearly because of technology hitches. Unlike face-to-face interviews, which are carried out together in one room, the participant and I were in different spaces with different background noise but in the same timeframe; this is known as 'double mind; we are in different spaces in the same time' (Bertrand and Boudeau 2010:3.23), which I found unsettling. In addition to

these difficulties, there was a fragmentation of the synchronisation which was another distraction, resulting in difficulty judging reactions, their mood or their feelings as clearly as with other mediums due to the tiny delays between the visual and the sound (Bertrand and Boudeau, 2010). That said, the two interviews carried out via Skype were useful and added further to the body of knowledge I had already gathered.

Whatever the difficulties I was experiencing in adopting this holistic approach by incorporating the views of the IECs' significant others, the investigation encapsulated some aspects of the IECs' life cycle, which included their transitions into civilian life and the impact of higher education on their subjective sense of self and their networks. By mapping the development of IECs' experiences over 11 months while they were contemplating and undertaking higher education, I was able to gain insight into their experiences and, as a result, offer future recommendations for consideration to enable universities and study programmes to anticipate the appropriate support required for IECs while they undertake similar education programmes. Justification for using a holistic approach resonates with Greenbank (2006), who suggests that many aspects of student life have been largely ignored. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE 2001a; 2002) policy on strategies and funding for Widening Participation emphasises that policies need to adopt a more 'holistic approach to the issue of student access, progress and success by focussing on the student life cycle' (HEFCE 2001b:151).

As can be seen in the following chapters, the research revealed important influences, attitudes and emotions towards learning, employment and educational achievement from the IECs and also from the nominated significant others. Using the IECs' social networks consisting of family members, friends and colleagues, a relationship between the decisions made by the IECs and their families to enrol on a higher education programme were revealed.

However, it should be noted that due to the time constraints of the doctorate programme, I was unable to track the IECs for a longer period to explore more comprehensively the long-term outcomes regarding the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life. These could include the broader effects on employment and the influences on their subjective experience and their families and could be significant issues to be explored by future research.

Hodkinson and Macleod (2010:185) claim that 'no methodology can act as a neutral lens as different research approaches have different affinity to particular conceptualisations'. However, the advantages of using an interpretative theoretical approach is that it uses the subjective perceptions of the participant to 'place the individual at the centre of the investigation' over an extended period of time (Hodkinson and Macleod: 178-9), which enables the researcher to make sense of their experiences and the way they construct their understanding. According to Johnson et al. (2008), in the case of educational and employment decision-making, this is co-constructed within social networks and interviewing multiple

networks can extend understanding beyond the individual, as a person's narrative is not experienced in isolation, but is interwoven with engagement of significant others.

3.5 A Word about Coding

Overall, my approach in this analysis of the data follows Sikes (2004) where: '[themes] are not meant to be seen as definitive or totally inclusive, nor are they neat and tidy, but are rather offered as a framework to inform thinking (Sikes 2004:24-25).

There were four main themes emerging from the data, although these themes covered several dimensions: biographical antecedents; health; role of education; general recommendations including educational policy proposals. The themes were colour-coded so they could be found more easily in the raw data. These themes also overlapped with each other and all four themes had a number of sub-categories attached which were labelled: A 1, 2, 3; B 1, 2, 3; C 1, 2, 3; and so on. Education had the most sub-categories. (See Appendix 12: Example Coding.)

The first theme, Biographical Antecedents, includes prior educational experience, decision to join the military and initial experiences following injuries sustained during combat. These biographical antecedents are included in the Introduction. The second theme, Health, explores issues such as the transitional process following injury and family support. The third theme, Role of Education,

incorporates leaving the military and future aspirations, family support and financial concerns. Also included is the experience of studying in higher education and the provision of institutional and family support. These themes have been included in the analysis section. The final theme, Participants' Recommendations and Policy Change Proposals is explored in the Discussion

There were considerable data that, although very powerful, could not be used because there is a limited word count and not all data were relevant to the research. By allowing the IECs the opportunity to talk about sensitive issues a lot of additional data were accumulated. These data could be used for further research with different foci.

To ensure that a reliable coding was accurate 'for reliable interpretations [to] be produced' (Silverman 1993:145) a university colleague who was already familiar with the sensitive content and fully understood issues relating to confidentiality transcribed all the tapes. The transcripts were reviewed by this colleague for accuracy of recurring narratives verified similarities of my interpretation of themes encountered and overall agreement with the coding. I could therefore be confident that reliable coding had been applied, which would be used for analysis.

3.6 Ethics

Three participants who were in recovery from very serious combat injuries and there were also young children involved, important ethical considerations therefore needed to be applied throughout the research process. First-hand accounts of IECs' experiences in transition were necessary to discover the social challenges that such persons and their families faced, otherwise it would have been difficult to anticipate their support needs for a smoother pathway to higher education.

I have used the codes of ethics determined by the Plymouth Institute of Education (Appendix 3 and Appendix 4) which are the established protocols for the university as a whole. An ethical approach is '… to do with the application of moral principles to prevent harming or wrong doing others…' (Sikes 2004: 25). Although the institutional guidelines are clear and the principles that were attached to this research were carefully adhered to, there were moral dilemmas that needed resolving. For example, the IECs in particular were a captive constituency and some may have felt obliged to agree to take part. As the researcher, I am in a position of authority and personally feel uneasy with this unequal distribution of power when considering the ethical dimensions of this research. Specifically, the IECs may be vulnerable because of their disabilities and because of their previous status as military personnel, used to obeying orders.

I attempted to follow Sikes' (2004:29) recommendations that, 'You have a basic human moral responsibility towards the people you are working with. Are you sure

you are doing as you would be done by?' I needed to be sensitive to the issue of disability; it is important to address the needs raised by their disabilities without defining them simply as 'disabled'. In addition, while taking note of support needs, this research aimed to focus on the participants' strengths and resilience, and looking forward rather than backwards so as not to diminish their sense of self or position them by focusing on their injury. It is hoped that this research provided an opportunity for the IECs to share career aspirations and to voice the influences that affected their decision-making.

How, then, can engaging with what could be termed as vulnerable participants be justified? Denzin (1997:283) encapsulates why I felt the research should be carried out. He uses the term 'interpretative sufficiency', aspects of which are expressed as:

> Taking seriously lives that are loaded with multiple interpretations which are grounded in cultural complexity possessing depth, detail emotionality, nuance and coherence that will permit a critical

Sparkes *et al* (2011) reviewed narrative accounts of patients suffering from cancer and revealed that participants appeared to choose three different plot lines. For instance the 'restitution narrative' has a storyline that follows, 'yesterday I was healthy, today I'm sick, but tomorrow I'll be healthy again'; whereas another, the 'chaos narrative', imagines never getting better; and finally 'the quest' where the narratives met their suffering head-on, they accepted illness and sought to use it. The 'quest' was defined by the person's belief that something was to be gained from the experience.

The IECs who participated were keen for their views to be heard and many, especially the networks, felt it had been a cathartic experience. Although it was very often difficult to set-up interviews, they were each interviewed twice and expressed willingness to speak again in the future. Each wanted their stories to be heard as they felt it might help to raise awareness of their issues in the civilian world. One IEC's mother, Joan said, "no-one has ever asked me my point of view before".

All consented to take part and their rationale for doing so resonated with the 'quest narrative' (Sparkes *et al* 2011:16), for instance, Paul: "if it helps other people in the future…"

One of the most powerful interviews came from Paul who was particularly graphic in his descriptions. This section of the transcript is presented in its entirety because it has an important bearing on the outcome of Paul's engagement with education, my ethical concerns, my lack of neutrality and why, after hearing this, I understood the *Covenant* much better, which became so pertinent to this research.

When Paul recounted his story we were sitting in a small, silent, windowless room, which, for me, heightened the power of his narrative. This was not a broadcast

news item but a human being recounting horrific events. To maintain ethical congruity I issue a warning about the very distressing content.

> Paul: My main injury is PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]. It all stems from these five occasions where I was subjected to not very nice things, the first one being a mass murder of a load of school children by the Taliban. They were standing at the bus stop and then somebody on a motorbike, I was on sentry in [place name]. I was in my base {unknown}, these kids were all getting ready to go to school at the bus stop and the Taliban drove past on a motorbike and just sprayed them with bullets.
>
> Paul: Horrific.
>
> Paul: The next one was my patrol was walking down an alley and there was a little boy wheeling a wheelbarrow just in front, and kids {unknown} say hello to them, didn't think anything of it and then, three people in front of me, he walked up to them and his uncle detonated him, detonated the boy and killed two I had in front and injured three lads back and I was just ... I was where the injuries stopped.
>
> Paul: And then I had to deal with it.
>
> Researcher: And then you had to be the medic.
>
> Paul: Yes.
>
> Researcher: I don't know how you managed that one.
>
> Paul: It was horrific. Another time I was out on patrol and we got called into a mud house by a woman who was wailing. Those sounds never go away you know. A little boy had put his sister, a baby, no bigger than that, in a boiling pot because he was jealous.
>
> Researcher: Sibling rivalry to the point of...
>
> Paul: Yes. And I tried to save the baby but I didn't have any kit, any kiddie kit, so that was it.
>
> Researcher: It shows the ... what they are seeing is making them numb to right and wrong.
>
> Paul: Yes, absolutely. Yes that was another one. Also being the troop commander I would have to do the burials, the burial parties for all our lads, and all the Afghan soldiers. For ours we get coffins sent into

us from the UK so they are all top-notch coffins, but for the Afghans we have to make them, but we contracted them out to a local man who had started, well sent us a coffin for one of the Afghan soldiers. We put him in the coffin, and then we put him in the ambulance and drove him round to our front gate where we would hand the coffin over to the Afghans. They had a big burial party there, there must have been about 30 to 35, and as soon as, I think it's Muslim culture, that whenever the body is, or the coffin is, shown, they all have to touch it. As we got the coffin out of the ambulance there was such a commotion that because the coffin wasn't built brilliantly the body fell out of the bottom of the coffin. Which then turned into a bit of a riot, they all started having a go and jeering and kicking us, so I ended up having to pull my pistol out to get them away then we took the body back to the hospital. That shook me up for a while actually. Somebody else had to go out and re-deliver the body because I would have shot them if they had done it again; I would have shot them.

Researcher: You're only human.

Paul: Yes.
Researcher: You can only witness so much. That must make you very angry and wanting to do something. It's the helplessness of it all isn't it?

Paul: Yes.

Researcher: Are you alright? Do you need a cup of tea or anything?

Paul: No. There's another one.

Researcher: You're okay?

Paul: Yes, I'm good. We were in quite a heavy fire-fight in Sangin. We were {unknown} Op and I'd already had two casualties brought to my location, and the helicopter couldn't land because there was such a fire-fight going on. So we called in mortars from our FOB [Foreign Operating Base], we called in mortars to cover our extracts. We called in smoke, mortar {unknown} so we could extract, but the guy who called them in called them into our position so as the mortars came in they weren't smoke they were high-explosive rounds and they were landing just in front of us. That's damaged my ears. That one tour has been horrendous. And then I got sent home after that though {unknown}.

Paul: They sent me home because I was just a wreck.

The *House of Commons Defence Committee Duty of Care Third Report 2004–05 Volume I* (House of Commons Defence Committee 2005), stated that the armed forces require a fundamentally different commitment from that required in any other sphere of activity. It quotes from General Rose, a former Adjutant:

> Soldiers are not merely civilians in uniform: they form the distinctive group within our society that need a different set of moral values in order to succeed in circumstances which greatly differ from those prevailing in civilian life. For no other group in society is required to kill other human beings, or expressly sacrifice their lives for the nation (1998 cited in House of Commons Defence Committee 2005:28).

I had a number of concerns about the extent that recollection of these events would distress Paul, but I did not terminate the interview. I was aware of the potential for transgression of professional boundaries since the research was primarily focussed on educational choices following injury, rather than the injuries themselves. I have asked myself why, on several occasions, I did not consider the potential for a negative effect on the participant; he may have felt rejected or felt he had done something wrong in recounting such details during the interview. At the time, to have terminated the interview would have interrupted what he clearly felt was pertinent and important to the discussion. Following the interview I reviewed Legerski and Bunnell (2010) *The Risks, Benefits and Ethics of Trauma-Focussed Research Participation*. They concluded that, 'of the participants who do experience some form of distress, most individuals do not regret their participation, and many acknowledge the importance of the research in addition to feelings of personal and/or societal gains from their experience' (Legerski and Bunnell, 2010:440).

I telephoned Paul the following day to assess the extent that he had been affected. He maintained that he was not affected, that he had been happy to talk about it and, overall, he had had a fairly good night's sleep. However, whilst he was keen for the narrative to be disclosed he asked that the transcript of our conversation remain anonymous as he had not disclosed these details to other members of his family. At that time I therefore ensured that this account was not used in any document his family could access or was in any presentation that included his family. However, he has since changed his position, which is discussed below.

After hearing Paul's story I understood more clearly that, while there may be an uneven power ratio between the participants and the researcher, in many respects: 'The research-subject relationship is reciprocal; invasion of privacy, informed consent, and deception are non-issues' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:149). Power from this perspective is reciprocity between two subjects, a relationship not involving domination of one over the other, but intimacy and vulnerability on both sides. The dialogue enabled some empowerment to be achieved by the participant who wanted his story heard but, in turn, it invaded my own private space and unmasked my own vulnerability. Although graphic pictures on television may de-sensitise a little, hearing an account first-hand is more powerful and offers greater meaning to the listener.

Behar's (1996) testimony in *The Vulnerable Observer* suggests that it is only worthwhile doing research 'that breaks your heart'. I suggest that emotion is essential in this context because entering the reality of another requires empathy and 'it is inconceivable how the qualitative researcher would accomplish her/ [his] goal by distancing herself [sic] from emotions' (Sciarra 1999: 37, 48).

A question of interest here is that such powerful stories using qualitative research methodologies are central to epistemological debate. This type of qualitative research is anti-positivist in its rejection of a single knowable reality and may be criticised as lacking in sufficient scientific rigour. I will, therefore, need to be continually aware that my personal narrative may impact on rigour. Cornett (1995) resonates with some of my concerns surrounding the emotional struggles that the researcher is faced with when exploring any truths, values and ethical behaviour. As already stated, when Paul recounted this part of his narrative, I was transfixed, and with no escape it became clear to me that the research-subject relationship manifests a reciprocal invasion that works both ways and part of me will be forever trapped in Paul's story.

When this thesis was nearing completion, it was ethically imperative that I contact Paul again about the contents of the above accounts to ask first whether his wife was now aware of the contents of the transcripts above and second if they could be included in their entirety or would he prefer these accounts to be omitted. I also checked whether he would feel comfortable about their publication in the thesis.

He assured me both verbally and in an e-mail he was “more than happy” for these accounts to be included in their entirety. He told me that he had disclosed “more bits of the stories” to his wife, and reassured me she would be fully aware of the contents.

3.6.1 Gatekeeping

I established interpersonal trust through informal discussions with the Colour Sergeant (Len) who initially was acting as gatekeeper with whom I had liaised before in the first and second phases of the research. During this period the two case studies I was tracking whilst they undertook the teacher training programme, instigated a meeting because they felt, “there are plenty of lads who would be interested in studying in higher education”. As a result of this meeting Len later allowed me to conduct several focus groups at the MOD recovery unit at Hasler Company. This became the second phase of the research culminating in the taster programme run at the University, discussed briefly in the Introduction.

Although Len was formally nominated as part of one of Chad’s networks, it seemed to me that he was also part of Alan and Paul’s ‘shadow network’, people who form ‘absent relationships, who were unable to be included for diverse reasons’ (Fuller *et al* (2011:70). Len therefore increasingly came within the purview of the research. As he was nominated as part of Chads network I formally interviewed Len twice and because of our prior relationship he was much more relaxed and talked uninterrupted for a considerable time, revealing even more

detailed background knowledge about Chad, other participants, their families and personnel at the base. He appeared to want the best outcomes for the ex-combatants and was very concerned for their future welfare, particularly in securing education opportunities. His occupational position on the base contributed to the men's rehabilitation decisions to pursue either further training to improve access to employment opportunities or an educational route before they were discharged. He therefore saw the men frequently and had formal and informal meetings with them. He was informed about their medication and treatment of their injuries through access to all their individual military files and, although these remained confidential, he was nevertheless very candid and disclosed many important issues surrounding the men and their families, much of which I had already observed from interviews. As far as the participants in this study were concerned, any discussion of them was always recounted in a balanced, even affectionate manner and he knew them very well in terms of both their strengths and weaknesses. (See Appendix 13: Example Questions for Len.)

I had already accumulated a considerable amount of confidential data about the IECs and their families but had to remain silent when confronted with Len's revelations, many of which confirmed what I already knew. Delaine (2000:124) .uses the term 'guilty knowledge' with regard to members in schools harbouring counter-culture attitudes, which is an apt description of my feelings. Although much of what this participant revealed aligned with some of the families' revelations I had unwittingly become a gatekeeper too.

This trust between researcher and participant can be difficult because of the responsibility of the researcher to remain ethically grounded when disclosures move towards the boundaries of confidentiality. In my interviews with Len he was proud of some of the achievements that had been facilitated by the MOD for the injured men and women at the base. However, he was often very frustrated and made some scathing remarks about disputes he had undergone to facilitate equitable treatment with regard to education, employment, accommodation and financial and family support. He frequently felt hampered by what he described as government inertia and inconsistencies from the MOD including, 'Massive fallout between the Help for Heroes and the Army'. This made it difficult for him to be positive about IECs' long-term futures.

Many of his comments were congruent with my own understanding through the network interviews about the distress and continual practicalities many of these IECs and their families endured. This made it difficult to sustain my own neutrality, for instance, when interviewing him he made this comment on politicians:

> …They go out when they want, when they need to, they kiss babies and do the old campaigning but when they don't need to pay lip service to it… Every now and again, Christmas! A pound to a pinch a week before Christmas he will [Prime Minister Cameron] be in Afghanistan seeing the troops, yeah great. It will be a publicity stunt … There are no decent politicians. They're all criminals.

My refusal to engage in any confirmative disclosure to his commentary resonated with Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:287) where they state, 'Most of the time, in our view, the temptation to abandon the researcher role should be resisted'. I

nodded and displayed affirmative body language to show that I understood what he was saying, since sensitive matters had been revealed to me by all the participants, but I had to restrain any further disclosure about the extent of that knowledge even if such disclosure might facilitate a more positive outcome for one of the participant's. Despite these ethical dilemmas the data were rich and by interviewing the networks I gained an in-depth understanding of the IECs from other aspects.

3.7 Reflection

With regard to reflection and in the interest of transparency, I have attempted to include my own reflections as researcher throughout this thesis. I decided that following each interview it would be useful to record my feelings in a journal because of the very powerful effects they produced in me. That said, earlier in my life I have kept various detailed diaries for a number of years and once written I have never read them again. It seemed to suffice as a closed chapter, in other words, I had expunged my thoughts and feelings. In this instance, although I experienced many conflicting responses these were for the most part kept locked inside myself. However, on occasion I wrote some blank verse to expiate my emotions and thoughts following some of the IECs' and families' disclosures of their harrowing experiences.

The wives, mothers and fathers also told me how they came to hear the alarming news about their husband/son's injuries and in one case there was prolonged

uncertainty as to whether they had been wounded or even killed. These were very moving, lengthy narratives and Len added to these by telling me of his own experiences. After considerable thought I decided not to use them in this investigation, partly because of the limited word count for the thesis, but also because their often dreadful stories might distract from the focus of this research which was on IECs' transitions through education. However, their revelations were so moving that I felt the need to expunge my feelings through poetry, which I have included below. I focussed on wives and mothers because I had recently heard their accounts, although I acknowledge that such powerful feelings are not the exclusive domain of mothers and wives.

Hearing the News

A hot searing poker was thrust deep into my heart
At odds with the sweetness of the garden perfumes
At odds with memories of tranquillity and bliss still lingering
The wound bleeds and sadness envelops my soul.

After I wrote these words I began to feel less distracted by what I had heard and was able to continue reading the transcripts. My enthusiasm was fuelled once more for writing with what I believe to be with more clarity, freshness and passion.

3.8 Reliability, Validity, Epistemology

With regard to reliability and validity, whatever approach is used it is important to consider that all research has its influences; mine are steeped in issues of social justice and are not value free, a position declared in the Introduction. It therefore

contradicts the ethos of scientific, positivistic methods which are considered to have such objective rigour. However, Mauthner and Doucet (2003) suggest that the methodology employed is less important than the epistemological accountability involved which needs to be as transparent as possible, and this raises issues relating to validity.

In relation to this, my epistemological accountability, and methodology in terms of social justice has been strongly influenced by two principal experiences, firstly my previous research teaching the IECs on the taster programme (discussed in the Introduction) and secondly as a wife and mother (also referred to in the introduction). Firstly, from research I had carried out together with my experiences teaching IECs on the taster programme I realised how unprepared we were as a team and as an institution to understand the support needs of IECs, particularly in relation to their difficulties with mobility and mental health issues such as PTSD as they attempted to re-engage with education. Their powerful stories are well documented in this thesis, other research and in regular media reportage.

During this period, I become increasingly cognizant of issues relating to social justice, particularly with its links to the widening participation agenda, for example, the Equality Act (2010) that protects students who have disabilities which are known as ‘protected characteristics’. The Human Rights Act is enshrined in the Equality Act which states:

> You should not wait until an individual disabled student approaches you before you consider how to meet the duty. Instead, you should

> plan ahead and anticipate the requirements of disabled students…and the adjustments that might need to be made for them, (Equality and Human Rights Commission: 1.1.6 pp18-19)

Since there was such limited literature on IECs studying in higher education the aims of the research were therefore focused on the individual IEC's transitions and their experiences. I expected this focus to highlight that not only were they an under represented group at this academic level but also constituted a unique special needs population that warranted more careful scrutiny of the institutional structures needed to support them.

Secondly, Grenfell and James (2004:508) discuss Bourdieu's concept of the 'field' of educational research which, in a Bourdieusian sense, is temporal with ever changing dynamics from both internal and external forces. Bourdieu suggests that 'the way the *field* is constituted is; *fields* within *fields*; [where] the relationship between [the] *field* position and knowledge formation; [continue to have] influences on the *field*' Grenfell and James (2004:520). In relation to this, my point of departure in this research was to give a voice to the family network, especially the wives highlighting their selfless support of the IECs where their narratives appeared to leap equally powerfully from the pages of the transcripts.

The success of the transitional process from the military to civilian world through engagement with education appeared to be much more the responsibility and 'obligation for life' (*Covenant* 2011:8) of the wives and families rather than the nation and the individual IEC. Young's ideas (1990) and Gewirtz's (1998:471) 'relational dimension' on social justice, discussed in the Introduction, describe how

‘members of society treat each other at a micro level… [in] families and one to one relationships…’. This particularly resonated with my thinking, I felt passionately that in this study the voices of wives, mothers and families were entitled to equitable acknowledgement of their profound roles in facilitating the IECs’ recovery and transitions which were a departure from the initial focus (within my *field*) of the research from the individual IEC’s journeys to a case study of networks of intimacy where the emotional, the social and relational dynamics of each narrative are equally pertinent to the IECs’ transitions.

Guba and Lincoln (1994:110) point out, that researchers are ‘intertwined’ with who we are investigating, and as I represent the participants’ accounts this will be always some form of self-presentation so their presence is directly connected to my self-presence in the text. Morse et al.’s (2002:13) view is that, ‘qualitative researchers should reclaim responsibility for reliability and validity by implementing verification strategies integral and self-correcting during the conduct of inquiry itself’. I agree with the sentiments of Pratt (2003:371), ‘from the perspective of a practitioner—as opposed to the researcher—external validity is a question of usefulness’, how do we ensure its usefulness.

> As research relies on interpretation of subject’s accounts [these] can only make sense with a high degree of reflexivity and awareness about the epistemological , theoretical and ontological conceptions of subjects and subjectivities that bear on our research practices and analytic processes (Mauthner and Doucet 2003:424).

I have adopted a reflexive stance throughout each stage of the research to ensure some rigour in capturing the various perspectives of the participants knowing that

it may be at times ‘impossible to grasp the unconscious fillers through which [I and they] experience events’ (Mauthner and Doucet 2003:425).

In relation to this, authors such as Sarantakos (1998), Denzin (2000) and Robson (2002) among others, agree that a key element of naturalism is the demand that the social researcher should have an attitude of respect or appreciation towards the social world. An alternative to the protocols of reliability and validity is put forward by Lincoln and Guba (1985) where the concept of ‘trustworthiness’ in naturalistic inquiry is explored and they pose eight questions which I have considered throughout to add rigour to this thesis. However, as researcher and writer, it is as if I am one of the principal social actors in a play who has drawn from, and will draw from, previous research when investigating the IEC’s and their families’ stories. I need to be continually aware that I may be trapped by my own script and interpretations, potentially reconstructing (the past) with reference to how I understand the present. The quote below identifies the crux of many criticisms of interpretative epistemology and illustrates my feelings:

> As researchers we too seek to make sense of what we are researching through interpretative schemes or frameworks. This double sense making as discussed briefly above is referred to as double hermeneutic… The subject and the object of research, commonly located in pre-understood worlds cannot therefore be separated…’ (Scott and Usher 1996:19).

Lather (2004) argues that, within interpretative qualitative research tradition there is a heterogeneity of theoretical discourses/models, some of which critique the textual narrative as ‘navel gazing’ and ‘naïve humanism’, thus rejecting its

authenticity. However, Lather (2004) acknowledges that researchers using positivistic methods may be no worse than any other approach; they simply tell different kinds of stories. This suggests that it is important to be aware that qualitative and quantitative research traditions are all coded in their own special language. Therefore, the absence of a rigorous positivistic paradigm in my approach does not mean that clarity of description, critical analysis and, ultimately, theorisation cannot be achieved with a valuable contribution to the educational discourses of the present times.

Although I have adopted an interpretive stance, whichever epistemological stance I embrace, it is important to be sensitive to limitations, flaws and biases with this chosen approach, as there is little consensus as to what an unbiased or universally accepted method of analysing qualitative or quantitative material could be. Moreover, I feel that one has to find a way of working which is appropriate to the material under investigation and to one's own personal epistemological and theoretical propensities.

3.9 Theoretical Stance

As discussed in the literature review my theoretical stance drew upon authors referenced here and below. The notion of 'liminality', a concept first described by van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969) and, more recently, Meyer and Land (2005; 2006) who suggest that learning involves the occupation of the liminal space, including notions of threshold in student learning. I use these concepts as a

framework to understand human interaction in transition but juxtapose them with Walkerdine *et al's* (2000:11) metaphorical notion of 'psychological borderlands' which, as the authors state, could be viewed as an 'anxious border' existing at 'zones of intersection'.

In relation to this process, van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969) conducted ethnographical studies investigating central social rituals, such as rites of passage. Meyer and Land (2005:375) explain this 'threshold' in relation to transitional space/time within which the rites were conducted. They suggest that adolescence, for instance, often involves oscillation between states of childhood and adulthood, a 'between-ness', a transitional stage they identify as 'liminal' or 'threshold' involving status inconsistency. They use these concepts as a framework to understand learning in undergraduate programmes of study where, according to their research, learning involves the occupation of a liminal space, a transitional process of 'mastery of threshold concepts' which transforms one's identity and thinking by adopting an 'extended discourse', involving a 'conceptual shift' from our previous selves (Meyer and Land 2005:375). Transition can be difficult and troubling where the old identity of the learner is stripped away during the experience of acquiring new knowledge which results in new status and identity within the community. Meyer and Land (2005) suggest that students who reverse their intuitive understandings acknowledge that this can be troublesome because the reversal may involve an uncomfortable, often emotional repositioning.

In relation to the present study, Walkerdine *et al's* (2000:11-13) metaphorical concept of 'psychological borderlands' best describes this darker emotional repositioning, particularly the anxiety which ex-combatants go through because of the unexpected decisions thrust upon them. It can be described as a 'violent border crossing', and aligns well with this research, where the ex-combatants move from a condition acknowledged as fighting fit to disabled and through a military to civilian culture.

Repositioning is being at the threshold of a liminal space which can be as 'troubling' (Meyer and Land (2005:376). Feminist writers such as Walkerdine *et al* (2000), Lucey and Reay (2002) who discuss issues of transition and anxiety, give further depth to the theoretical framework proposed for this thesis, as they include a more powerful focus on social aspects 'where individuals become objects of a new gaze' (Walkerdine 2006:13). With regard to the IECs entering higher education 'they will still retain ways of being from the past, but will be simultaneously in two places at once, in a social world [with new] cultural and social practices' (Walkerdine 2006:14). Retaining the old ways from the military, perhaps as Meyer and Land (2005:376) identify, 'oscillating between old and emergent understanding'.

The IECs' old identity has been stripped away; not only have they had to come to terms psychologically with their recent injuries, but they have also been

unexpectedly thrust into civilian social and economic contexts far earlier than they had originally planned, which may cause considerable anxiety.

3.10 Human Capital, Social Capital, Bonding, Bridging and Linking

Discussion about theories of ‘social capital’ invariably start with the contributions of Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), Coleman (1990) and Putman (2000). While their focus may be heterogeneous, there does appear to be a broad agreement that the core elements of social capital consist of personal connections and interpersonal interaction, together with a shared set of values that are associated with these contacts.

For me this aligns with the IECs who, within the armed forces, share a set of values consisting of symbols, artefacts and ceremony designed to cultivate and sustain conceptions of self-identity united with the military organisation, intertwined with a shared set of values.

Ormerod (2009) reveals that within the military close bonds are formed with the people around them, and have powerful normative structures contextualised by a strict hierarchy that ensures containment and compliance. However, it is important to note that these connections consolidated by expectations of a long career were abruptly terminated once the participants in this research became injured, with

powerful consequences for their self-perceptions and ‘human capital’ because of their depleted stock of social capital.

Bourdieu (1977) developed a multi-dimensional view of capital described as social capital, cultural capital, economic capital and symbolic capital. Bourdieu (1977:89) is most known for his metaphor ‘cultural capital’, indicating that some group’s middle and upper class people traded their cultural tastes and enjoyed more status than others. This was through cultural symbols, taste for perhaps classical music, marks of social distinction through schools they attend, higher education, chosen careers and through signalling and constituting their position in the class structure. These acquired tastes and ways of thinking were passed on to their children.

Bourdieu’s (1977) ideas were not without flaws and were widely debated, particularly because he appeared to only acknowledge that economic capital was the route to other types of capital and, similar to his concept of cultural capital, he only acknowledged the social capital of the privileged. His ideas relied on resources people used to secure their own positional advantage to advance their interests and those of their children. From his view social capital was defined as a ‘capital of social relationships which provide[d] useful support served as currency in support [for instance] of a political career (Bourdieu 1977:503). Bourdieu (1977:81) uses the term ‘cultural linguistics competence,’ and it is these competences that can give advantages to certain children in education.

Abercrombie et al. (2006:91) translates this as ‘children from middle class parents acquire from them cultural capital, endowments… that ensure success in schools’. Nevertheless, as far as this present research is concerned, Bourdieu’s ideas on inherited cultural norms, might well have their influence on IEC’s attitudes in relation to a natural progression of re-engagement with higher education following discharge.

Similar to Bourdieu, from Coleman’s (1990:300) perspective, high levels of human capital arises when individuals can draw on social capital:

> …the set of resources that adhere in the family relations and in community social organisation and that … can constitute an important advantage for children and adolescents in the development of their human capital … its premise being that everyday relationships and the patterns they assume affect our capacity to learn over a life time.

Coleman (1990) suggested that some people have wider relationships than others and we all appear to use them and, although it may appear self-evident, isolation means that there is no one to turn to when things become difficult. Coleman’s (1990) ideas on social capital were influenced by his interest in educational achievement, where he argues that sufficiently high social capital tends to favour high levels of attainment in the young and, conversely, low levels of social capital usually leads to low levels of educational attainment. His central argument was that social capital made a positive contribution to the development of human capital for successful learning and a secure self-identity. Social capital has become important in helping to explain educational attainment which, as far as this

research is concerned, resonates with the IECs' experiences because once injured, social capital is considerably depleted. Once they leave the armed forces, IECs need to draw much more heavily on their family networks if they are to sustain convictions of self-worth and motivation that are needed for re-engagement with education.

Coleman (1990) also defined social capital as a useful resource by referring to features of social organisations, where trust, shared values, norms and networks facilitate support for the individual's actions. He drew attention to the social communicative skills involved in the process of mutual cognition and recognition of the vital importance of social relationships which exists within the family. He noted also that social capital could be drawn from outside the family, from the wider community (Coleman 1990:334). This part of Coleman's position is an important contributor to understanding what lay ahead for the IECs who were no longer redeployed and were in recovery and were thinking of engaging with a new community provided by education and training at a high level in the civilian world.

Putman (2000), like Coleman (1990), stressed the importance of membership of social organisations which includes shared norms and values of trust, where such networks can improve the efficiency of society with coordinated actions. However, unlike Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), he recognised that social capital was not exclusive to the privileged elite but that social capital lay with one's networks and relationships which are important resources. His book, *Bowling Alone,* was highly

acclaimed as it highlighted the decline of the traditional community, proposing that membership of charities, religion and work-based socialising had shrunk. An important contribution to this discussion on social capital centred on distinguishing between ‘bridging and bonding social capital’ Putman (2000:23). The bonding refers to values of solidarity, mutual reinforcement, support and specific forms of reciprocation with a homogeneous group such as, for example, the military and their family of networks (Putman, 2000). The latter (bridging) refers to more defuse and indirect forms of linkage and reciprocation between and within groups; ‘bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue’ (Putman 2000:23). ‘Bonding’ social capital facilitates ‘getting by’, while ‘getting ahead’ requires ‘bridging social capital’ (Putman, 2000: 23).

What Putman is suggesting is that those networks that have strong group norms and sanctions on members’ behaviour are more likely to have high levels of social capital and subsequent bonding of those individuals. This links to IECs because of their close ties with their military comrades whilst still deployed. By contrast, those networks whose social relations contain abundant bridging social capital are more likely to be accessible to newcomers; members who are more likely to have diverse social relations, give them access to other networks and social capital that may be mobilised through extended and multiple sets of social relations. De Souza and Briggs (1998) suggest that bridging social capital can enable a stronger ability to identify and take advantage of new opportunities. For instance, soldiers in recovery are encouraged to make decisions about future plans for training while still in the MOD and to simultaneously take advantage of new

opportunities in the civilian world by making an action plan which includes, for example, applying for training and education programmes of study.

However, as Chad's wife, Lorraine, explained:

> There is no life coach going 'what would you be happy to do? Where do you see yourself?' and trying to figure out a plan of what they'd be happy to do when they leave the marines. They're expected to do it all themselves. And for civilians we're always expected to do it all ourselves and that's okay but for people that have been in the military and have for years, and years, and years been told where to be, what to turn up with, and what time to be there, actually figuring stuff out yourself is quite a tall order.

Once injured the soldiers tended to have a small but exclusive network initially, the 'sociological superglue' identified by (Putman 2000:23). This had ramifications for their later engagements with transitions to a civilian world and engaging with higher education.

Bridging also aligns with 'linking capital' Woolcock (1998:168) a third variety of social capital that enables vertical connections to be made between social groups and with significant social structures, such as universities. In their discussion of linking social capital, Thomas and Quinn (2007:60) refer to this as 'the ability to access institutional resources'. Woolcock (1998) makes a distinction between the sources of social capital available through different sorts of social relations and the benefits that might accrue. He called this the 'consequences of social capital' (Woolcock 1998:185). The nature of the benefits depends on the combinations of, and the extent to which, social relations can be mobilised to engage in relevant

social practice (for example, IECs' decision-making about whether or not to participate and sustain engagement in higher education).

3.11 Self and Agency

Sociological theorists have for some time interrogated the explanations of agency where, for example, Calhoun's (2002:5) definition sees agency as 'the capacity for autonomous social action'. Terms of self in this thesis are only explored in relation to what enables the IECs to maintain their sense of agency, here defined as 'having the ability to exert control over the course of their lives' (Beista and Tender 2006:27). Other definitions of agency cover a broad spectrum and there are tensions between agency and structure; put simply 'Do individuals determine society or does society determine individuals?' (Burr 2010:182).

A humanistic view would suggest the 'essential nature of [individuals] argues for a coherent, unified self, and the capacity to make self-originated choices and decisions' (Burr 2010:183). However, if society is seen to determine individuals then agency becomes an 'illusion' (Burr 2010:183). In the *Dictionary of Sociology* (2006:9), individual agency and social structure are seen as one rather than separate. Giddens (1984 *in* Burr 2010:185) offers a metaphor, that 'individual and society as like two sides of the same coin'. This can be applied to these IECs because within the military they were subjected to a strict hierarchy of rank, rules and regulations enforced within a formal bureaucratic structure, underpinned by compliance and acceptance of what was perceived legitimate authority. The other

side of the coin would be that, even within the limitations of such a structure, individuals can adapt by creating their own world, ‘shaping their own responsiveness to problematic situations’ (Emirbayer and Mische 1998:971). Indeed, in relation to these IECs, their training encourages them to use their initiative, although this is acknowledged and encouraged only under specific operational circumstances.

In terms of agency, I feel there is an emphasis on the critical dependence on others and the ways others respond, which is particularly appropriate in relation to the IECs. Biesta and Tedder (2006:27) suggest varying degrees of influence, that there are ‘controlling circumstances such as physical and mental disability…situations and circumstances’, all of which impact on a person’s agency.

3.12 Subjectivity

According to Cavlletto (2006) ‘many mainstream sociologists portray the individual as almost exclusively moving from the social to the psyche, their excessively sociologistic theories assuming that the values, norms and definitions of society imprint themselves in some uncomplicated way upon the individual psyche’.

Henriques *et al* (1998:2) in their discussion on subject and subjectivity refer to ‘subject [as] the generic term in philosophy for what in lay terms would be the

'person', 'individual' or 'human being' and what in psychology is referred to as the 'individual'. However, when discussing transformations, they highlight the complexities of individual-society dualism providing a critique of these theories. Henriques *et al* (1998:14) suggest that the individual as a concept could not exist without its opposite number, society, and reveal that 'In the social sciences their relation is almost universally theorized as some sort of interaction'. Rather than using the psychological term 'individual', Henriques *et.al* (1998:3) prefer the term 'subjectivity to refer to individuality and self-awareness – the condition of being a subject – but understand in this usage that subjects are dynamic and multiple, always positioned in relation to particular discourses and practices'.

In relation to this, the IECs and their networks were, when interviewed, in a state of flux as they were engaging with transitions (a border crossing) from a military to civilian culture, and these life-changing events impacted not only on the IECs but also their families too. Walkerdine's (2006:15) metaphor of 'border crossing' suggests that this border contains 'not so much a simple mixture [of] two sides, a new side [but also the previous side] a side that is a site of painful lost dreams of another way of being, in half-remembered rituals, obstinately preserved even in the face of their extinction…'.

With regard to issues of subjectivity the IECs often described themselves as injured soldiers, but in relation to their injuries in a civilian culture were confronted with discourses grounded in the lexicon of disability. Emirbayer (1997:19)

maintains that ‘individuals, persons, or organizations are inseparable from their relational context [and he attempts to explain that] all social life is embedded in interdependent and interweaving social relations’. Their recovery and reconfiguration of their subjectivity, from fighting fit to disabled was therefore ‘interdependent and interweaved’ in relation to their social network shifting between the psyche (their subjectivities) and the social world.

Walkerdine (2006:10), when discussing issues of transformation as border crossings, suggests ‘that neoliberalism brings with it a speeding up of transformations of liberalism in which subjects are constantly invoked as self-contained, with a transportable self …’ where she argues for ‘a relational approach to subjectivity and sociality’. She suggests that ‘the psychic-social, individual-social dualism is not solved by attempting to reposition everything as though it were only on the outside’ (Walkerdine 2006:14).

Walkerdine (2006:15) also maintains that ‘subjectivities are constantly formed and reformed in complex relational networks’. In her discussion surrounding redundant mine workers, for example, she suggests that these ‘workers [subjectivities] are constantly formed and moving from one work identity to another where [it] ‘is not then a simple matter of retraining or learning new skills but involves complex semiotics, discourses and embodied practices lived through complex emotional relations’ (Walkerdine 2006:29). Within this present research each of the IECs’ network had several borders to cross and this reformation of new beginnings was

a process that also had to simultaneously incorporate each other's concurrent responses rather than an unconnected series of discrete crossings. IECs' subjectivities are therefore shifting between the psyche and the social where, in order to have a new beginning, there needs to be transformation through a conceptual shift from the IECs' previous ambitions in the military. As Wakerdine (2006:13) asserts, 'the other side of the border, the *beingness* [on the other side] is entirely produced through the *relations* that make it possible to sustain it'.

With regard to these issues I was especially concerned with understanding the influences they had on IECs when they were considering, engaging and sustaining a future career in higher education programmes of study, and these issues are discussed in the Analysis section.

3.13 Conclusion

This concludes the Methodology and Ethics section in 'What is the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life amongst injured military personnel'. It has posed a number of unusual issues that demanded unanticipated levels of sensitivity and confidentiality following sometimes harrowing narratives. This research has been accompanied by an imperative that requires rigorous reflexive interrogation of the methodology and ethics involved in the process at each stage of my investigations.

4. Analysis

As already discussed in chapter 3 Methodology and Ethics, several themes emerge from the data which I have limited to key issues that comprise many dimensions. Overall, my approach in this analysis follows Sikes (2004) where: '…[themes] …are not meant to be seen as definitive or totally inclusive, nor are they neat and tidy, but are rather offered as a framework to inform thinking…' (Sikes 2004:24-25). The first theme, Biographical Antecedents, includes prior educational histories, decision to join the military and initial experiences following injuries sustained during combat. These biographical antecedents have already been discussed in the Introduction. The second theme, Health, explores issues such as the transitional process following injury and family support. The third theme, Role of Education, incorporates leaving the military and future aspirations, family support and financial concerns. Also included is the experience of studying in higher education and the provision of institutional and family support. The final theme is Participants' Recommendations and Policy Change Proposals are discussed in the discussion.

4.1 The Participants

As a reminder to the reader, the full details of each participant's biography is included in the Introduction but I feel it is important to briefly summarise their backgrounds here. The participants consisted of three IECs as case studies who had attended the taster programme and were in recovery from their injuries but were soon to be discharged from the armed forces. This group consisted of Alan,

a Gunner in the Royal Marines who was in charge of getting supplies to the soldiers in Helmand Province in Afghanistan. He received a serious foot injury from an IED and suffers from PTSD and his nominated network included his wife (Carol), mother (Joan) and step-father (Patrick). Paul was enlisted in the Royal Navy but deployed with the Royal Marines as a paramedic in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. He was not redeployed due contracting a mental injury PTSD and his nominated network included his wife (Rose), and two children (Christine and Jason). Chad was enlisted with the Royal Marines as a paramedic. Following an encounter with an IED he suffered several injuries including a below knee amputation. His selected network included his wife (Lorraine), mother (Emma), friend (John), and colleague (Len) who was the Employment Coordinator and Colour Sargent at the base who was also my contact.

4.2 Health

> Patrick: That's when [Alan's] PTSD kicked off, when he was training it almost did, he was very anxious, very jumpy, even when he was training you just knew he was constantly on edge, but when he came back from that first encounter... one of his colleagues who lives [near him] was one of the lads who was strapped to an Apache helicopter to go and retrieve the dead body of one of their colleagues from that fort and you know it was a bad time but he came home and we went to ... to see his uncle Peter. We thought that would be good for him just to go, because he was in the forces as well. We got there and Alan had a god almighty panic attack, he had a serious panic attack, he couldn't breathe. I took him outside and he was distraught, he just panicked. And he said to his uncle Peter later on before he went back he said 'I don't want to go back. I'm not a coward but what I've just seen it's...'. Then back he went.

4.2.1 Transitional Process Following Injury

Four years later Alan was injured and sustained serious foot injuries from an improvised explosive device (IED) during his second tour of Afghanistan and he was still suffering considerable pain in his injured foot when I first interviewed him. This had been aggravated by an inexplicable two-month delay by the NHS to provide effective pain relief "…there was a lot of waiting around …".

Alan's experience of waiting resonates with Paul, whose wife Rose revealed that, in spite of confirmation from three independent consultants that his PTSD would likely be permanent, the settlements relating to compensation remained incomplete, leaving them with significant financial uncertainty and anxiety. In both instances of delay, there was no explanation. The report on *Improving Armed Forces Service Care* (British Orthopaedic Association 2014:23) confirms there is a significant disconnection between the MOD and the NHS and a separation of responsibilities resulting in a fragmented service. As a consequence:

> … military healthcare lacks a clear, fast track referral pathway. [There is a] failure to acknowledge the special requirements of this highly motivated group and their need to be returned to their prior level of occupational function.

Referring to his psychological health and the onset of PTSD, Alan's mother and stepfather, Joan and Patrick, revealed in full above, that Alan's PTSD may actually have begun during his initial training when he became "very anxious, very jumpy…and constantly on edge".

In their research on the military training of young servicemen, Green *et al* (2010:1483) noted that, 'Recruits had to prove that they were tough and able to endure physical hardship and all participants commented that training was physically very challenging'.

Patrick revealed that, soon after Alan's training:

> Alan literally went from that straight into a war zone and when he came back on leave Alan said they were firing over each other's heads and recounted to Patrick [that] he 'saw people blown apart, he saw bits, limbs here and there and everywhere and they were fighting through it, and then he got on the plane and the train and I picked him up from [the] station.

Alan's mother recalled that he initially tried to hide the symptoms of his PTSD. Using the metaphor of Walkerdine's (2006) 'anxious border crossing' in relation to his health, this normative structure prescribes that a Royal Marine is fighting fit, capable, reliable, loyal to his peers, in control where 'no one is going to admit they're weak' (Green *et al* 2010:1484) so there is 'a refusal to complain' (Barrett 1996:132). Len, who was the Royal Marine's Employment Coordinator and, arguably, part of his shadow network, confirmed that "We're very much a case of that alpha male person".

Acknowledgement and expression of such emotional distress could therefore provoke a stigmatising response that predisposes combatants to hide their condition as it might be perceived as a weakness (Green *et al* 2010), or 'pathologised' (Walkerdine 2006:18).

With regard to Paul, his mental health issues remained undiagnosed by the MOD for some time because, as his wife Rose pointed out, "... they don't [diagnose] because it's....mental health is that taboo subject. You need to be...'pull yourself up, man up, get on with it' ". She also claimed that Paul had always found discussing emotional issues very difficult and these inhibitions compounded the effects of his illness. In his review of mental health in veterans, Fossey (2010:8) argues that 'PTSD increases with multiple deployments and suggests that soldiers might require mental health intervention or reconditioning after only two deployments'. Paul had probably been involved in three tours of duty, although only two of them could be acknowledged because the first tour was shrouded in secrecy which he claimed was a secret mission. In relation to his mental disability, Paul vocalised that he would "… rather have lost his legs than have a mental illness because people can see you have lost your legs but cannot see what is going on in your head". Len's response to concerns surrounding mental injuries was:

> It is still an unknown injury. We have politicians saying 'you don't look very hurt, what's wrong with you?' The scars that the mental health side leave behind are [unknown]. A missing leg ... everyone can see it. Everybody can dish out the sympathy. That guy gets more. You know somebody's going to see him and move out of the way for him. The guy with the mental health issues… the wife can't cope and the kids are no longer happy... [is unseen].

Unlike Alan and Paul, Chad does not appear to have experienced symptoms of PTSD but acknowledged that:

> I was at a point, I was very, very... I'm under six months from being injured. So I was in a shit state… You have no idea. I was on a lot of drugs, but I'm off them all now. The drugs are a necessary evil because they do exactly what they're supposed to do, they kill the

> pain, and not just physical pain, psychological pain, and some would say spiritual pain. It's a necessity really but there comes a point in everybody's recovery path where it's time to take command of your own feelings, your own emotions, [and] your own life. It's around that time people start saying it's time to come off this shit.

According to Chad's wife, as a result of his severe injuries and high levels of prescribed medication he initially "lost his spark", however, "… ex-combatants will not complain about what happened to them; they are totally positive outwardly". As with Alan who initially hid his condition and Paul who did not refer himself until he was ordered to, she confirmed that soldiers seeking professional psychiatric support "becomes a bit of a taboo". As Green *et al* (2010:1484) suggest, 'service environment engendered a … strong affiliation to a normative masculine identity [and] was an obstacle to the expression of emotional distress'. Len felt that the MOD provided excellent support for physical impairment using, for example, intensive physiotherapy and sophisticated prosthetics but were generally poor in their responses to psychological issues where Chad's wife felt counselling should be mandatory.

However, there is considerable evidence to support an association between the imperatives found within the value systems of hegemonic masculinity, which may identify disability as a threat to the military behavioural prescriptions (Charmaz 1995) and, as Chad had not yet been discharged, this may still have an important influence on him impeding any disclosure of psychological pain.

At the time of interview, Chad appeared to be adjusting well to his changed circumstances and his engagement with the theatre project had provided a new important therapeutic context. His friend, John, also confirmed that Chad was increasingly willing to share these experiences maintaining that this was “half the battle”. Whilst there were no evident symptoms of continuing trauma, Len, who was part of Chad’s nominated network, still had some concerns that “the macho stuff [could be] hiding [possible] *PTSD*”.

The impact of life-changing events on the IECs’ sense of self following recently acquired injuries clearly interfered with their ability to maintain autonomy in their day-to-day social interactions:

> Alan: It was quite frustrating, yes it was, and I went out for a meal with my mum and my brother, it was frustrating because I wanted to go out with my brother for a drink and I couldn't because I was on crutches and I was in pain. There were a few instances where I found it difficult. But most of the time ... at the time my wife was my girlfriend, she was pregnant.
>
> Carol: Nightmare because I was pregnant, it was my relaxing maternity leave, and I was helping him in and out of the shower. It was hard but we got through it.

Paul talked about his difficulties and personality change:

> Paul: Yes and that's a bit of a struggle for me because I've not been in work for about a year and a half because I couldn't do full days …I was a happy-go-lucky kind of guy before and now I'm ... I don't enjoy things anymore. I don't drink anymore because it makes me violent. I'm just a totally different person now.
>
> Researcher: I can see that, but you would like to feel that person again that you were of course. Do they say that you will?

Paul then again explained that losing his legs would have been preferable to a mental illness that cannot be seen.

> Rose: [Paul] takes his tablets and he goes to sleep, and he's snoring from the minute he goes to sleep to the minute he wakes up ... It's a difficult thing as well because prior to [Paul] being on medication there's a lot more feeling there… We are still very emotionally connected. It's kind of like looking at an old married couple, when you look at [name] and they've been married 80 odd years... and that doesn't work anymore... but even the social side of things, me and [Paul] don't ... he doesn't go out, and I don't go out because I don't want to go out without [Paul] if you know what I mean.
>
> Lorraine: No … when he was less mobile he relied on me to do some things for him, and I fit that role of nurse, and mothering type role, he didn't feel good about it and it put a strain on our relationship because I was probably a bit overbearing and he didn't like being helped to do things. So now that I don't have to help him do anything that has removed a big pressure. Both of us want me to be his wife not his nanny or his nurse.

These quotes reveal some of the profound adjustments that have occurred with such physical and mental damage; there seemed to be an erosion of their previous confidence and sense of self, especially management of agency as a consequence of their recently acquired injuries. This resonates with Biesta and Tedder's (2006:27) discussion about 'controlling circumstances such as physical and mental disability' they had therefore temporarily lost the capacity for autonomous social action (Calhoun 2002).

The quotes above illustrate how difficult it was for the men to establish and maintain with conviction any autonomy that had been previously integrated with their presentation of self in daily engagements.

4.2.2 Family Support

> Patrick: he'd probably end up drunk and a drug addict by now if he hadn't had that solid thing [family] I think it is important that we live where we live, we've lived here for a long time and he just knows that it's here. That's all we can offer.

The above comments reveal how important family stability was for Alan as he had several sources of support from family members, a network of support that also included his wife's mother who, although not nominated as important in his kinship connections, nevertheless contributed important functions such as childcare and was part of his 'shadow network' (Heath *et al* 2009:70). As discussed in the Literature review and Methodology and Ethics, Putman (2000:23) distinguishes between 'bonding and bridging' social capital where bonding refers to values of solidarity, mutual reinforcement, support and specific forms of reciprocation associated with homogeneous groups, for example, the military and family members, where all three case studies had strong family networks.

With regard to Alan, his family of origin broadly fell within the established middle class that scores high on all three sources of capital: economic; social; and cultural, therefore he was able to draw upon this strongly bonded, loving family network which mediated many of his anxieties. This social capital drawn from close kinship ties is also described as 'the Buffering Hypothesis' (Cohen *et al* 1985) where members are able to draw on such resources to mediate such experiences that provoke stress and anxiety. Once in recovery followed by discharge from the Marines, Alan initially chose to concentrate only on close

kinship ties, this ‘bonding social capital’ as described by Putman (2000:23) is ‘a kind of sociological superglue’. Alan claimed that he preferred to have:

> a small amount of people in his life who he really cared about rather than [a large network] … I am not the sort of person who goes out with big groups of friends. It’s just not for me particularly now.

Alan’s mother and stepfather were mental health specialists who were familiar with the professional resources available and this may have influenced his decision to access outside help. Clearly evident was the quality of support provided by Alan’s wife and members within his family that enabled him to re-establish some control over his emotional state and to eventually reach out to other mental health professionals for further support.

He eventually decided to disclose his feelings and of special importance was the treatment he received from one particular psychiatric nurse:

> Alan: I had a CPN (basically a mental health nurse) and she when I was really bad with it and I couldn't sleep at all and I was on a quick downward spiral and my family was falling apart, because I went to the doctor and said 'I don't know what's happening to me but my life is falling apart and I don't want to end up some drunk in 10 years with nothing I want to sort this out', and this woman (it took a year pretty much) but she dragged me out of the worst of it.

This began to widen his network and free him from the constraints imposed by the masculine hegemony of the military. Putman describes this as ‘bridging social capital’ which refers to more defuse and indirect forms of linkage and reciprocation between and within groups and is required for ‘getting ahead’, whereas ‘bonding social capital’ facilitates ‘getting by’ (Putman 2000:23). Reaching beyond the

family and attracting a more heterogeneous support of resources was a critical factor that began to free Alan from the constraints of military training, broadening his social networks within the civilian world. He clearly could draw on the substantial cultural capital of his family which facilitated the personal skills and resources needed to contemplate and access higher education. That said, his wife also confided her concerns that continually supporting her husband during his recovery period had had a deleterious effect on her and the family and she had recently been diagnosed with mild depression:

> Carol: I think it even affects my mum because I get really down so then she worries about me and Elizabeth, [their four-year-old daughter] and obviously Alan but more me and Elizabeth. So yes I do get really down about it and some days I don't really want to get out of bed.

At the time of the second interview it appeared that Alan's recovery was continuing but his mother revealed that:

> Joan: He's still not well. He's incredibly poorly sometimes. Just for an example on New Year's Day he came and because I hadn't warned him I'd invited somebody else, just two other people, he couldn't cope, so by two o'clock he was in the toilet having a panic attack and he'd gone home by half past two. It's still there and I believe that it'll always be there.

With regard to Paul, Len revealed that, when Paul attended the taster programme (discussed in the Introduction) his PTSD had not been identified and this may have been because he had other medical complications which masked the PTSD to the extent that his family remained initially unaware of this mental injury:

> Rose: When he first came back he... as a lot of lads do when they come back... very fine until he'd had a drink and then very, very tearful talking about something... he couldn't get this thing out of his

> mind, and he'd only been back not very long a couple of weeks I think and we'd had a family party, and Paul never cries in front of us. I think I've seen him cry once before all of this. And he was crying in front of his family, in front of his dad, was massive. Paul's always been larger than life, the life and soul of the party, but we just put that down to... his chest infections…

This was compounded by an inherent reluctance to express his feelings which, as his wife recounted, had long been part of his character. This was strongly reinforced by the highly masculinised soldier identity prescribed by military culture discussed by (Green *et al* 2010) that for some time may have inhibited his acknowledgement of the condition or the need to seek treatment for his distress. For example, Paul's wife Rose said, "it is really difficult for Paul to open up [but] Paul is still the man of the house, he's still... that's who he is, but I'm always worried that something's going to tip him over".

However, an examination of the finer details of IECs' lives reveals the complexities involved in transitions from a military to civilian identity where there are tensions in reframing thinking from the hegemonic masculinity facilitated by intense military training which is very powerful. It appeared that both Paul and Alan initially found it difficult to acknowledge aspects of their condition that might be deemed as weak especially reaching out for help, or acknowledging mental health issues. Referring to Len's comment on training, 'They arrive and we take the civilian cassette away and throw it away and we put a new [one in]'. It is clear from this investigation that the original "cassette" is difficult to retrieve because the MOD do not de-commission their ex-combatants from the hegemonic masculine ideals which continue to have a powerful influence on their thinking.

In addition, as Fear *et al* (2009:29) posit in their report on *Health and Social Outcomes for Military Veterans*, there is a clear perception in the armed forces that it is detrimental to their career prospects for members to disclose psychiatric problems. This was further intensified perhaps by the cultural imperatives and expectations attached to the roles of husband and father, his career aspirations and consequences of an upwardly mobile marriage. As discussed previously in the biographical antecedents in the Introduction his class origins were located somewhere between the categories of precarious proletariat and the traditional working class but through his military career aspirations and consequences of an upwardly mobile marriage, his class now corresponds more closely with the model of the traditional working class that scores low for social and cultural capital.

His family of orientation therefore had clearly moved towards a higher, more secure class position and he had much to lose. A diagnosis of a mental disability would have had detrimental career implications profoundly shifting his identity in a painful border crossing. Palmer's discussion surrounding liminality highlights the difficulties at the threshold of new learning where '…the quicksilver flash of insight may make one rich or poor in an instant', (2001:4).

It is therefore unsurprising that he preferred to remain in a 'liminal state' of denial (Meyer and Land 2006:22) where, for example, 'denial of depression is one of the means that men demonstrate masculinities, avoiding lower status positions' (Courtney 2000:1396).

A further major impediment to diagnosis was the self-referral process, whereby members of the armed forces, through their own volition, needed to seek psychiatric help. Len explained that, "… there are several guys that have actually been through the system who have not indicated that they have mental health issues but really deep down they are screaming out for help".

Following injury, Paul, like Alan, chose to be reliant on his family network, but in Paul's case this support rested entirely on members of his nuclear family which included his two young children, since his extended family lived a considerable distance away and his wife's father was suffering from a prolonged depressive illness that made contact difficult.

Paul also suffered from chronic tiredness and Rose described how this affected the children. In her attempts to explain it she would say that "daddy is tired" or "daddy doesn't want to play anymore". However, she explained that his tiredness was not a new experience for the children; it was an established pattern that when their father returned from duty it was accepted as normal for him to be fatigued and once his energy returned it would, unfortunately, be time for him to return. "…so, the tired thing [was] not new to them". Rose discussed how both children were unsettled by Paul's frequent ill-tempered moods and that he often remained in bed in the mornings. They also found it difficult to understand why sometimes during social visits outside the home their father inexplicably had to leave. Her son commented on his father's "sadness", as he put it, from "flashbacks to

Afghanistan". This resonates with Dinshtein's (2011:119) research where, in his investigations of adults who recalled their childhood with fathers who were suffering from PTSD, he noted they had to cope with behaviour that was often 'unpredictable, incomprehensible and aggressive' so that, as young children they had to develop flexible coping mechanisms.

Outside of the intense relationship within their marriage, Rose's only support was provided by a sympathetic naval wife who acted as a paid child minder when needed. Granovetter (1973:1370-1373) highlights 'the strength of weak ties' and, conversely, 'the weakness of strong ties' which describes Paul's over-reliance on his wife through what Biesta and Tedder (2006:27) acknowledge as a lack of agency caused by the 'controlling circumstances' of his mental illness. This made it difficult for Paul to feel secure enough to broaden by 'bridging' (Putman 2000:23) to the non-familial. In addition he had derived little cultural capital from his under-achievement in education; the descriptors in The Great British Class Survey (GBCS) Savage *et al* (2014:1) suggest that he is of the traditional working class scoring low for social and cultural capital. Unlike Alan who possessed high levels of the three sources of capital, Paul not only lacked an extended network of support, he was also disadvantaged through a concomitant lack of understanding of cultural and educational norms and expectations. This may have impeded his ability to identify and express coherently the resources he needed to support his physical and psychological needs, particularly in a higher education institution, leaving his wife to assume full responsibility for mediating these needs.

As with Alan and Paul, Chad also had considerable support from his wife and members of his family that enabled him to re-establish some control over his new career path as an actor very early in his recovery. Lorraine, Chad's wife, initially felt that she was an "emotional punching bag … every frustration was taken out on me". However, she understood why this was happening but wanted Chad to move forward saying that he "has got Emma his mother and he's got me and we're never going to stop nagging him" but added "some guys don't have that". In view of class positions, it is perhaps unsurprising that Chad's nominated network was the largest of all three case studies although, as with all the recently injured IECs, his class position remains in a state of flux. According to criteria revealed in the GBCS, his family position falls somewhere between the 'elite' and the 'established middle class' (Savage *et al* 2014:1) and, accordingly, this group has the highest levels of all three sources of capital.

During his recovery period prior to discharge, Chad was beginning to add, what Putman (2000:23) terms 'bridging social capital', through his theatrical participation with a 'shadow network' of fellow actors who all shared their military combat experiences, which forms the central theme of the play (Heath *et al* 2009:70). As for Chad's educational aspirations, he may have been influenced by the cultural capital of the education achievements of his family, as he had an initial ambition to become a practitioner in psychiatry. Further, since he had not yet been discharged at the time of the final interview, 'bonding capital' from the 'homogeneous group' provided by the military was also still available to him (Putman 2000:23).

What can be seen in the narratives of all the IECs is enormous resilience and bravery in difficult circumstances involving acute emotional and physical distress. It also emphasises the critical dependence in the process of others within their network and the ways others respond, which is particularly appropriate in relation to the injured ex-combatants. To achieve one border crossing they and their network need to engage with the lexicon of disability to enable sufficient adaptation to begin something new. With the support of their network and increasingly taking control of issues that contextualise their health needs, IECs can begin to retrieve earlier statuses of wholeness and normality facilitating more successful engagement with their options for the future. Their networks, which provide much of their vital support, remain largely unacknowledged in the *Covenant*, perhaps obscured because of the severe injuries of the men; they are the unsung heroes yet these family networks continue to show surprising fortitude in their support for their loved ones. With regard to Chad however, Len is not yet convinced that he is not suffering some form of PTSD explaining that, to acknowledge this most IECs feel it is an “embarrassment, [where there are feelings of] shame, of being the broken man and not being able to cope”.

Alan and Chad appear to be intrinsically more emotionally adjusted, but they also have far more extrinsic sources of social capital upon which to draw for support, which has enabled them to progress further forward. Unfortunately, Paul’s PTSD appears to be not only far more acute but also he has reduced access to social capital. Of the three case studies, Paul, was the youngest when he enlisted aged seventeen years and served six years longer in the military than both Alan and

Chad. The increased longevity of a service career, where identity is powerfully prescribed by a masculine hegemony, is likely to have resulted in an even more profound socialisation experience. This would have been difficult to discard and would have resisted early disclosure of his mental health issues associated with PTSD and the presumed consequential detriment to his career aspirations. Ormerod, (2009:325), in her work with military veterans, suggests that '[what] make[s] good soldiers often make[s] bad patients'.

Ecclestone (2007:455) writes that we should 'resist images of the diminished self' and, rather, celebrate human agency 'that interventions and discourses should not offer diminished images of people but should celebrate human potential and resilience'. The reclamation of a sense of agency in the management of disability, however, requires an initial acknowledgement of the pathology of the condition, a transitional process that moves beyond the 'liminal state' of denial (Meyer and Land 2006:22). In order to move forward and be aware of the 'spectrum of possibilities', the IECs need to adopt a realistic appraisal of the varying degrees of 'controlling circumstances' such as 'physical and mental' (Biesta and Tedder 2006:27) and, additionally for the IECs and their networks, there are also financial considerations.

Using Walkerdine's (2006:11) metaphor the confrontation of their disability and discharge has been the catalyst for transition, a 'border crossing' and, as can be seen by all three case studies, this has been achieved in varying degrees hand-in-

hand with an unstinting supportive family network. It is especially concerning for discharged IECs who are alone and do not possess such a vital kinship support apparatus.

4.3 Role of Education

4.3.1 Leaving the Military and Future Aspirations

> Alan: For me if I can be a civilian that's got a degree and I could get a graduate job it's basically saying to myself and others beyond what happened to me before, it's regardless of it, I'm still a success. That's what it means to me. … You hear all the time people who've been to the Falkland's or wherever and their life has just unravelled and I was kind of determined that wasn't going to happen to me. That's what it's all about really.

Alan's narrative reveals that it was obvious to him that his injuries meant he, ultimately, would have to leave the military. He also acknowledged that essential medical treatment procedures required for his recuperation, and even basic educational courses offered by the MOD, could take at least 18 months to two years to complete.

As already suggested in the Introduction, the *Covenant* aligns closely with the ethos of Young's (1990:24, 171) social justice components, where there are 'procedural' and 'distributional' elements and 'relational components'. These consist of instrumental support (monetary packages) and a relational component that relies on a variety of agencies to augment a more comprehensive social support. Alan had received some procedural and distributional components of

justice through compensatory monetary support from the MOD towards re-training and education, as well as experiencing a ‘relational’ component of justice in the form of considerable succour from his family network and professional psychiatric support. Alan took advantage of all the support offered, enabling him to achieve a direction towards a new beginning, a transformation through a conceptual shift from his previous ambitions in the military.

Despite the significance of Alan’s changed circumstances, he began increasingly to accumulate ‘bridging capital’, ‘getting ahead’ and taking responsibility and control for his future. This was augmented by forming other relationships within the education community, which would therefore continue to increase his stock of capital (Putman 2000:23).

By way of example, he enrolled on an A’ level programme and subsequently achieved an A’ level pass in English Literature. He disclosed that “some lads don’t do the stuff that others do and they leave without the minimum”. Other Marines did not take advantage of the time they had before discharge and, since it is not mandatory, did not undertake educational programmes of study. Although Alan understood some of the advantages of an educational process underpinned with values of deferred gratification, he was also concerned about fulfilling his perceived financial responsibilities to his wife and daughter:

> For me it's pretty basic. I had a wife and daughter. I had a family. I've got to leave here and provide for them. That's what it's all about. We had a discussion around the dinner table last Sunday here, and my

> wife [Carol] she goes out to work and she says 'you just sit around all day' and I said 'but I'm studying' the whole point of this is that when I get to the end of it I can get a better job.

He maintained that, within the military individual responsibility is encouraged but that they also needed to look beyond that military environment:

> … some guys are incapable of thinking like that, not because they're not bright but because of what's happened to them. It's hard to see beyond today. It's hard for people in positions of command to say to them 'you've got to think of the future' because they're just thinking 'I don't actually really care about that'. It's a difficult thing to approach from both sides I think.

Alan's family were influential in his decision to study in higher education, drawing on their reserves of cultural capital. He understood that he needed to take the A' level route to secure a place in higher education. This corresponds with Bourdieu's (1977:81) views which claim that children from middle class parents acquire from them 'cultural capital', including endowments such as "cultural linguistics competence", and it is these competences that 'ensure success in schools'. Alan admitted that, although he had resisted parental educational advice when he was younger he, nevertheless, had been inspired in many ways by his highly educated mother and step-father:

> My mum's done the equivalent of a degree in her own line of work. Patrick's got a degree. And they are the two people that I look to really for inspiration. They're always there saying 'you need to be the best that you can and in whatever you do' so I have that, lots of people don't have that. And I've had that all my life. And I've fought against it {unknown} {0:44:52.8} but I'm not interested but now I can say 'you're right'.

Paul's version of his discharge from the Navy differed in several ways from other respondents in this study. He maintained that, since he had no physical injuries he had been invited to remain in the service but was subsequently discharged through mutual consent. However, his wife Rose claimed that, ultimately, the decision for Paul to leave was made by the Navy on the basis of the Medical Board's finding that Paul was not fit for military duty. Rose stated "They [the Navy] decide your life; in a way your life is in their hands".

> Rose: It's been hell to be honest. It was 'oh my god; we've got our own house'. I work but I'm not earning as much as Paul and I put together, we're now going to be losing over... well nearly £2500 a month just like that. We didn't know ... as it's turned out Paul's got a guaranteed income payment and his pension. However because this will not be finalised for two years trying to sort out the financial side is stressful because we are coping with PTSD which is a nightmare.

Paul described his experience of discharge as "the world as you know it is turned upside down ... you are informed that you can do anything, and they make massive promises and then they get rid of you". Having been on recent active combat service in the field for a number of months, his subsequent confinement to an administrative post or "desk job" was extremely difficult to manage and, for Paul, constituted a 'violent border crossing'. This best describes Paul's 'darker emotional repositioning' Walkerdine (2006:11), particularly because of the anxieties and loss of status he appeared to be experiencing. When interviewing Paul, he appeared to have felt very let down by the military. Leaving the services and the idea of 'knowing who one is' can lead to status ambiguity, thereby becoming a non-person (Green *et al* 2008:27).

Ormerod, (2009:325) investigated mental health problems experienced by military veterans, and noted that ‘many ex-service personnel will have joined the armed forces immediately or very soon after leaving school. By having limited experience of independent living prior to joining the military, their day-to-day lives will have been powerfully influenced and shaped by the imperatives of such routines’. Ormerod (2009:325) suggests that, ‘leaving the forces for civilian employment can be a shock as ex-service personnel have been used to the clarity of a culture rigorously defined by hierarchies and structures’ and points out that many veterans regard the military as their family. This loss of family would have exacerbated Paul’s symptoms of PTSD, such as ‘negative cognitions and mood where feelings, exhibited for example ranged from persistent and distorted sense of blame of self or others, to estrangement from others…’ (American Psychiatric Association 2013). Nevertheless, during this period of recovery he did avail himself of the instrumental support on offer (essentially monetary packages towards education) and undertook to train as an ambulance driver and qualified technician for para-medicine which he felt was a sufficiently specialised qualification.

Unlike Alan and Paul who had very recently been discharged from the armed forces, Chad was still awaiting discharge when interviewed. He was therefore still employed by the Royal Marines as he was, in the lexicon of the armed forces, ‘still in recovery’ where the usual procedure was to facilitate the individual’s achievement of optimum fitness. Once this had been reached, for many, this was typically followed with discharge from the unit. He had at the time of writing a

further seven months until the next medical board survey, when a decision would be made about the remainder of his employment in the military.

With such serious injuries Chad appeared to be realistic about his situation and understood that it was almost a certainty that he would not be deemed fit to continue his previous duties. However, he maintained hope that he might still be able to remain in the service and even achieve the rank of a commissioned officer which would be less physically arduous.

> Chad: If they do not wish to keep [me] on [then] no hard feelings … everything is in a state of constant flux … [and] in reality it is not easy for them [the armed forces] and it ain't easy for me.

Chad's wife felt that that he was unhappy that he would be unable to return to Afghanistan "to be with and help his mate s… he's a [trained] medic … he feels guilty that he is not out there…". This is unsurprising; masculine norms imbued within the military forge bonds between members of a fighting unit that are often perceived to be closer than their civilian friendships as this 'band of brothers' are key to their survival (Green *et al* 2010:1483). In addition, this loss of comradeship may have been linked to 'grief about not only his dead military brothers but loss of his military career' (Westwood *et al* 2010:45). Despite his hope that his present military career would not be terminated, Chad was formulating plans for a future in a civilian world. His situation was similar to that experienced by Alan and Paul prior to discharge: obliged to operate at a threshold in a context of transition or a liminal state. Visiting Walkerdine's (2006:26) metaphor once more he was 'straddling a border crossing' between the military and civilian worlds.

During his recovery period, Chad was given to understand by a visiting senior officer that he could pursue his ambition to become a Royal Marine doctor. “That's the impression I got from a Colonel in the Armed Forces”. Later, when he found out what would be required from him to achieve such a position, it left him feeling that he had been “strung along … that he had … walked in [the] office and [had] been left with false hope.” This was confirmed by Chad’s wife Lorraine who said that, “we were promised so many things when Chad was in hospital, none of which have come to fruition apart from the physical stuff”. Len, in his role as Employment Coordinator, also confided:

> When people started promising him a career in medicine alarm bells started to ring for me, because I know when a guy actually ends up in Headley Court … after being blown up a lot of high, influential, senior officers in the Navy and Army go and visit them and empty promises are made. And in this case an empty promise was made to Chad, that he could stay a Royal Marine, and become a doctor… which was impossible as Royal Marines do not have their own doctors.

Following discharge Chad’s ambition to become a medical psychiatrist was strongly supported by his middle class network consisting of his mother, Emma, wife Lorraine and friend John, all of whom had university degrees as well as a younger sister who was still studying at university. Initially this may have seemed the safest option to enable his social class of origin to be maintained.

The family’s GBCS classification would suggest that Chad’s ascribed position falls somewhere between the elite and the established middle class, a grouping that has the highest levels of all three capitals and his family of origin enjoyed

extensive economic, social and cultural capital. In addition, since at the time of the final interview he had not yet been discharged, it could be argued that this valuable stock of ‘bonding capital’ from the ‘homogeneous group’ (Putman 2000:23) provided by the military was also still available to him.

Using the notion of ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990:11), he initially followed the established educational trajectory of his social class. Following injury he re-established high educational aspirations, endowed with acquired cultural capital, previously referred to as ‘cultural linguistics competence’ (Bourdieu 1977:81), which he used skilfully in conversation. For example, during the university taster programme, despite his initial use of inappropriate language he could be very articulate during discussions, particularly if the topic strayed into philosophy which revealed an analytical mind. Chad followed Canadian cultural practices and was always very deferential answering female teachers with “Yes mam” and the male teachers were always addressed as “Sir”. It was interesting to note that none of the other IEC’s in the class used this mode of expression.

Chad turned to Len for help with his educational ambitions. As Marine Employment Coordinator, apart from seeking employment opportunities, Len’s professional responsibilities with regard to all IECs in situations similar to Alan, Paul and Chad involved facilitating his knowledge and understanding of vocational courses offered at colleges or more academic programmes such as those offered through distance learning with the Open University. Information was also provided

about other types of university courses and about various agencies able to provide help and augment a more comprehensive social support. Chad was therefore asked to devise a written career plan but, suspecting that he may well have significant literacy problems relating to dyslexia, Len expressed concern that the written transcripts produced had actually been completed by his wife. This was disappointing as he felt that, had Chad disclosed this disability, there would have been more comprehensive practical help and support available.

Chad was born into a military family; initially both parents were employed in the armed forces. The hegemonic masculinity imbued within this context may have played a part in the lack of diagnoses, especially as Chad had excellent linguistic skills which possibly obscured any problems during his early education. The absence of literacy support as well as undiagnosed dyslexia might explain why his grades dropped dramatically along with his motivation and commitment, culminating in his dropping out of university in Canada and later enlisting in the Royal Marines. He maintained he was not dyslexic to his wife until recently. Chad's wife confided, "to be honest I think he [her husband] [has] serious confidence issues about his academic abilities … because he is quite seriously dyslexic so he thinks that he's thick". Chad's desire to preserve a successful soldier's masculine identity is unsurprising. Chad was already coming to terms with his sudden change of circumstances and his initial denial of dyslexia was perhaps to avoid being perceived as having a weakness which might have jeopardised his educational aspirations.

As Chad began to reformulate his career path he increasingly understood the ramifications of the choices that lay before him. His initial ambitions to become a medical practitioner through training within the Royal Marines were thwarted having learned that no such route into medicine was available. Using initiative acquired through his military training he still looked for other ways of achieving his ambition confiding to Len that, “if I become a doctor I can do this, I can fill that hole in the mental health side of things that isn't particularly good at the moment then I can actually give something back”. He subsequently made applications to a number of university medical schools but became increasingly frustrated at the rigidity of entry criteria and his inability to establish sufficient credentials for acceptance.

> Chad: I'm 31 years old and I do not consider myself to be a stupid human being. I don't mind being a little bit arrogant on that side, I don't think I'm an idiot, I don't think I'm uneducated and I don’t think I lack in life experience. Thirty-one years old, a grown man, the entry requirements for me to go into this university, to a university in this country are almost exactly the same as the entry requirements for somebody who is 17, even as a mature student. I need A’ levels or equivalents, GCSEs or equivalent. I don't have A’ levels, I don't really have any qualifications of any sort. I've got a shit load of life experience, but no qualifications whatsoever… there's a reason why there's so many ex-Military in jail or on the streets. The reason is because there's no clear path, clear path for non-commissioned members of the Armed Forces...

John, his nominated civilian friend, confirmed Chad’s dismay at the resistance of virtually all higher education institutions to acknowledge any of his prior leaning, achievements and experience.

> John: He had experienced considerable medical training including the medical training he received and the A & E training he did at an

> [NHS] hospital, and I think he did something else as well to qualify as a battlefield medic … but it took about 18 months in total … I think he felt there was a lot of resistance to his initial ambitions ... out of all the institutions only one would even consider taking him on as a pre-med, and that still required a great deal of hoop-jumping even though he's got so much ... he felt that the skills he'd learnt weren't transferable. So his existing medical training and his A & E training to qualify as a battlefield medic almost counted for nothing ... I don't know what the process is but they felt 'no you haven't got the A' Levels, no' or 'you haven't got this, you haven't got that, no'. But he felt that what he did have wasn't considered valuable even though to most people it would be considered essential, because he will probably be taught the same things again. Yes I think he felt there was a certain amount of resistance. He got quite frustrated I believe … they basically showed him the door … I think it just deflated him somewhat.

Despite his disability it was clear that acknowledgement was not given to Chad's considerable training in the Royal Marines. where despite the rhetoric of equality, diversity and inclusion in the widening participation agenda, university admissions procedures to date do not seem to be responding to the unusual idiosyncratic demands of the increasing numbers of discharged IECs, and there appears to be little integration or linkage between the variety of facilities on offer following their discharge.

The combination of resistance from university admissions and pressures to plan for Chad's future so early on in his recovery, juxtaposed with his family's encouragement to undertake higher education, led him to experience increasing ambivalence towards education, described by Heath *et al* (2008:223) as 'when social structures constrain their ability to exercise individual agency'. Chad's ambitions were limited by a form of 'structured ambivalence', a term coined by

Connidis and McMullin (2002:559) where ‘broader conflicts over resources within wider society can be linked to various forms of social stratification’.

4.3.2 Family Support and Forward Planning

I asked Len why when IECs are in recovery, apart from making a formal action plan, they were not re-commissioned more rigorously into the norms of civilian life to facilitate the transitional process. I suggested that this might include daily and weekly budgeting skills, to which he replied, “We don't”.

> Len: We were hoping that Hasler Company would do that. We would all be civilian orientated, we would all be 'you're not in the military anymore, this is it,[although] we're going to pay you for the next 12 months, however everything we do will be civvie [planning towards civilianization]; but it did not come to fruition.

Much of the forward planning, especially with regard to financial management, was executed by their families, especially the spouses. For example, Alan’s wife, Carol, had recently enrolled on a beauty therapy training programme with the aim of ultimately becoming self-employed. She was required to attend training two evenings a week, but once qualified she believed she would be to able manage the demands of transporting the children to school and supervision during the holiday periods more easily. However, until she qualified, they needed a guaranteed income to support essential family expenditure such as mortgage payments and other routine costs of daily living. As Alan had enrolled in a higher education programme, Carol had to continue with full-time employment whilst training; the consequence being, “there is a lot of pressure on me”.

According to Joan, Alan's mother, when leaving the Marines Alan was not prepared for the organisation skills required to manage financial responsibilities such as household budgeting and civilian expenditure.

> Joan: I think their responsibility is ... where they lack is that they don't prepare them for what comes after. They are much cradled, cosseted. They have bills stopped out of their salary before they get it, that kind of thing, so they [the military] almost take the place of the parent. They live in that sort of cradle, all those men in the services and then when they come out this is real life and they're not prepared for it.

This mirrors Patrick's admiration for his stepson's wife, maintaining that "she is the boss", as Alan has little understanding of the routine payment of bills and "likes people who can lay life out to some extent". With his determination, resilience and support from his family network, Alan was ready to leave the military and move on with his life via the route of education. He described the experience of leaving the military as, "it is like the last few months of high school where there is nothing really going on and you just want to leave as there is nothing keeping you there. I was just ready to move on".

Similar to Alan, there were also unresolved financial issues in Paul's case where a settlement award for his ongoing PTSD was still to be achieved. According to his wife, Rose, there was a considerable delay before he was referred to a civilian psychiatrist and he had experienced "at least three wobbles", which were not reported. Although he had visited his GP he had not been provided with even an initial consultation with a Clinical Psychiatric Nurse (CPN), nor seen anyone with the professional psychiatric experience qualified to make an informed judgement

about his PTSD. Rose had further concerns about his medication which was unchanged; the MOD Medical Board might assume that there were no additional problems because nothing further had been documented or recorded in his medical files. Paul did receive support to help him re-establish a focus on his career prospects but Rose was obliged to take on additional shifts at work to increase their family income.

The *Covenant* relies on various agencies to augment a more comprehensive social support for IECs, for example, the NHS liaises with the MOD in the form of 'social cooperation' but , in Paul's case, appears to have taken some time to resolve. This is one of the dilemmas with the current revised *Covenant*:

> '… the Covenant is difficult to translate with vague formal and informal verbal formulae which both instruct the law and practice … a common area that constrained delivery in the past was that the provision of support and services for most areas are not under the direct responsibility of the MOD but although the covenant has now tried to rectify this there may be a possibility for variable and divisive levels of provision (Walters 2012:17, 23)
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> .

As Len says:

> For example, two guys both blown up in Afghanistan, one of them is particularly well-liked, the other one isn't. This guy comes to us and wants to do this course on this day; this guy comes to us, exactly the same course on exactly the same day, funding not a problem, no, because he isn't liked. [The rationale] 'You haven't done enough to prove to us that you are worthy of spending £800 on'.

According to Len "there are [also] variations in financial support depending on where you live ... if you live in Wales you don't get it anyway. So if you're Welsh

you're not going to get it [financial support that Royal Marines in the UK are entitled to]". Support packages that English service persons receive are not identical because Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have published their own documents covering support packages consisting of written pledges in support of the *Covenant*.

For Paul, his financial uncertainties were aggravated by the additional costs involved in studying para-medicine. Paul had already undertaken a driving and technician qualification but the finance awarded for education and training by the MOD fell short of the funds required to complete the programme of study. Paul had to rely partly on charitable funding.

In addition Paul lacked skills such as essay writing and he had a very limited attention span. Despite these challenges, he appeared highly motivated and before enrolment had already registered with Disability Assist to make them aware of his condition, where he was told he would be provided with a note-taker and a personal tutor. His tutor was not from a paramedical- or health-related area but he felt he needed a structure to his educational engagement and his tutor's specific task was to set him goals for his studies. At the time of the second interview Paul was unclear about the additional support he might need. He was also credited with prior knowledge of three of the course modules but, nevertheless, had to undertake all the practical examinations. He was looking forward to beginning his studies following discharge.

Paul’s wife, Rose, maintained that his successful engagement with the course would be facilitated with her support and by association with students who shared his subject specialist interests, beginning ‘bridging social capital’ through his university peers. These new circumstances created strain on Rose’s ability to maintain the integrity of family life. While both of the children had visited the university, their son, Jason, appeared to be non-committal about any impression he had gained and when asked about the visit, his sister, Christine, appeared to have forgotten completely about the episode. When asked how they felt about their father going to university they were initially positive as both agreed that it was “good because he wanted to do it” and Jason said, “he can do whatever he wants to do”. However, Rose confided, “it's difficult from my point of view, it's just another part of getting Paul better, and yet it's pushing more on to me again. You've just thought, okay, I'm in the corner again, just for a little bit longer”. She was unable to discuss the challenges that lay ahead because, as she put it, “[she] would end up talking all day”.

Paul’s selection of a subject to study was essentially made by himself with little influence from his spouse but said that his wife was “up for it”, especially as it would enable him to “get out of the house”. However, Rose noted that his choice of a university education may well have been influenced by regular conversations during their marriage concerning the additional professional qualifications that she was trying to achieve through her studies for a civilian nursing degree. In addition, his successful military career and the consequences of an upwardly mobile marriage with a wife studying at university had moved him towards a higher, more

secure class position even before his discharge. This may have increased his aspirations about what he could achieve and encouraged him to take the opportunity to study for a future that would retrieve something important to him through a subsequent career with a higher income and status.

When Chad's wife, Lorraine, was asked about what she perceived as her biggest challenges in supporting Chad in a new career, she revealed that, although she enjoys her work, the option for a career change for herself was no longer an option, particularly as she earns "a good salary". She was firm that Chad was not expecting her to support him financially but she did feel there should not, at present, be any further changes in her career because "one of them needs to be constant because Chad is in a state of flux". While she did not resent this, she "could not for instance [enjoy] a year's sabbatical engaging in … 'bead work' [an unpaid creative interest or hobby] ... that option is no longer there".

There were two developments that had substantial consequences for Chad. He received an opportunity to take part in a one-off, London West End theatrical production as the lead actor, the scenario of which was soldiers discussing their combat experiences whilst in recovery. This held an immediate attraction for him. Westward *et al* (2010:46) argue that the benefits of group approaches to treatment of traumatised combat veterans are considerable. A group can protect patients from being overwhelmed by 'the power of therapy-released emotions' and such an approach can mediate guilt and loss through group-sharing. The second

development was that Chad's medical pension had been awarded by the MOD, so they were relatively financially secure. Lorraine said "this was a huge weight lifted because when he is eventually booted out he will not have to take the first job that is available to pay the bills". She concluded that not all the families were as fortunate.

As Chad was no longer compelled to seek employment or an educational route like Alan and Paul he decided to try an acting career. The production was highly acclaimed which provided a vital therapeutic component of his rehabilitation. It also enabled him to access bridging social capital. Similar to Alan and Paul, Chad reached beyond the family and, although all the other actors were IECs he was nevertheless attracting a more heterogeneous support from a more diverse set of resources. He did not rule out studying in higher education but for the time being, "it was on the back burner" whilst he took the opportunity to be lead actor in the play. With regard to his initial ambition:

> I need to be able to walk into an office full of people and say 'look you would be taking a chance on me from your perspective, (and that's true) but from my perspective you're not taking a chance. I've never failed at anything in my life. I've never not completed the race. So from my perspective you're not taking a gamble, you're just letting in one more guy … what I need is for you to throw me a bone'.

On acting:

> Lorraine: the acting thing has just lit him up, he just loves it, he absolutely loves it, and that is what he wants to do … he still has some confidence issues about ... oh God will I get hired, will people hire a one legged guy, I haven't been to drama school…

4.3.3 Experience of Studying in Higher Education

At the time of completion of this thesis in 2015, Alan has been awarded a university First Class Honours degree in English Language with Creative Writing. I was very pleased to hear this although not surprised as he was receiving good grades early on in his programme of study and as revealed in our second interview he continued to receive excellent grades:

> I've had a couple that are in the 80s, and then the rest have been in the 70s. I've had all firsts apart from one mark. It feels pretty good, but I've tried really hard as well. For some of the assignments I've put 35-40 hours in of research just for 1500 words, I've tried as hard as I can.

When asked if studying had helped him transition from the military he was certain it had:

> Yes it's good because it gives me something to concentrate on. It's given me goals to have on civvy street, which I think are some of the problems people have had [leaving the military]. They don't have anything to strive for, and it's not like that for me. I've got a great community of people who are all just trying to … learn.

Alan seemed to relish the learning within a community of like-minded people, enabling him to strive with a clear purpose. This resonates with Webb's (2009:5) view which suggests that, 'the transition to civilian life is a specific process, and an aim to be worked towards [where] a successful transition to civilian life is by nurturing and developing a strong wish to fulfil an alternative ambition'. On this point Carol, Alan's wife said, "he's always wanted to go and do a degree … and I was glad he's doing what he wants to do..." concluding that Alan now had "meaning and purpose".

> Alan: The marks are great, it's always great to get good news. The amount that I read, my whole life has been transformed in a good way. The book shelves are full of stuff that I've bought that I'm going to read. I just feel like I'm developing in new and better ways which is nice.

Meyer *et al* (2006:4) discuss conceptual transformation in the educational experiences of learners 'where new understandings are assimilated into our biography'. They suggest that 'we are what we know becoming part of who we are'. In Meyer and Land (2005:375) it is suggested that 'threshold concepts lead not only to transformed thought but to a transfiguration of identity and adoption of an extended discourse'. Perhaps in this case it could describe another beginning of the transition for Alan and an exit from the liminal state of unknowing gaining confidence as he moves across the border.

During the year that I interviewed Alan he appeared confident and was enjoying the rewards from attaining high grades. In addition, as Mason and Slater (2005:3) describe in their paper on Military e-learning, Alan had 'discoverer[ed] education' and was 'develop[ing] a habit of learning'.

> Alan: I think I'm doing better now than I would have done if I was 18 because I've already learnt a lot before I joined the university and I've applied myself in a way that I don't think I ever would have been able to when I was younger. I suppose I'm reaping the benefits of past experience but the thing about it is it's not like it's a burden for me. I've wanted to do it so if I spend 35-40 hours doing something it's time well-spent as far as I'm concerned. That's the best indicator that I'm doing the best sort of thing for me at the moment.

As Meyer and Land (2005:374-375) suggest, initial acquisition of new knowledge that includes 'threshold concepts' can be 'troublesome'. However, once students

have grasped new concepts ‘a new way of understanding, interpreting, or viewing something may thus emerge’. As can be seen in the above comments there has been a significant shift in the perception of Alan’s thinking compared to that of his previous educational experiences (see Methodology and Ethics section for further discussion). The engagement through reading, maintaining attendance and preparation of coursework with his programme of study has considerably developed insights into his own motivation.

At the time of the second interview Paul had withdrawn from his para-medicine studies after one term and was unemployed. In reviewing his experiences in higher education he explained that, during the first term he had had four different note-takers, but needed additional support with his writing skills, about which he had become increasingly anxious. The university was unable to provide this level of support and attempts to discuss the issue with his tutors were not successful. They appeared to be extremely busy, “in a hurry, rushing off somewhere”.

Paul said his depression was exacerbated when both the tutor and mentor assigned to him were “sacked for gross misconduct”. He describes what happened:

> My tutor got sacked for gross misconduct. So I was left without a tutor. My mentor on placements got sacked for gross misconduct, two different episodes, but all in the same week. We had no uniform to go out on placement, and we were told that if you've got no uniform you can't go on placement, but you have to make up your hours in your own leave, and that to me was a brain spin because I've got kids to look after in my leave, because they're the same time as school holidays.

His wife, Rose, recalled there appeared to be other professional difficulties that his mentor was experiencing that subsequently resulted in his dismissal, but these were not understood by Paul at the time.

Many symptoms of PTSD caused by Paul's past traumatic experiences were his 'chronic anxiety, difficulty concentrating, outbursts of anger' and other evidence of emotional distress, some of which Paul appeared to suffer (Lickey and Gorden (1991:258). It is therefore unsurprising that his anxiety was heightened by the delayed arrival of his uniform, a mandatory requirement of his placement. Perhaps his concerns were 'hyper-vigilance', another characteristic often seen with individuals suffering from PTSD (American Psychiatric Association 2013), but it was nevertheless this absence of uniform which prevented him from attending the placement. The course leaders were made aware of the situation and reassured him that he could still achieve the required taught hours by additional teaching during the holiday periods.

Paul maintains that he repeatedly asked where the placement was located but this information was not forthcoming, perhaps because a replacement mentor had not been found. He was therefore without a mentor, tutor, uniform, with a delayed placement and an absence of any information about where this placement might be located. He said all these issues "made [his] brain spin". One important symptom of his physical and mental condition was that, in order to cope successfully it was vital for him to know arrangements in advance. Unfortunately,

unlike Alan, the essential anticipatory adjustments to support Paul's progress following disablement and transitions to education laid down by the Equality Act 2010 fell far short of his needs. He appeared to be 'battling the system' to access what he needed to successfully complete his programme of study (Goode 2007:44).

Unsurprisingly, research on veterans such as Webb (2009) suggests that, whilst support structures are in place, universities are significantly unprepared for the magnitude of the challenges that such students face. The Ace Survey (2008:23) recommended that universities work with students (veterans) in such a way as to accommodate their needs, as many find the transition to a civilian college difficult following active war service. The survey also found that 'more training of staff was needed in some institutions to understand the distinct issues that veterans brought with them'. Ackerman *et al* (2009:12) states that veterans are a 'special needs population' and that several veterans talk about 'anger and stress as a carry-over from their time in combat'. With increasing frustration over the lack of appropriate support and following advice from the university *Student Handbook*, Paul initiated a 'Stage One' complaint, reporting his concerns in an e-mail.

> Paul: So all this was going around in my head and then I got called in because I made a complaint about the uniforms. I made a stage one complaint because it had taken ... we first got measured for our uniforms in the June of last year, so they could order the uniforms, but when we got there in September they measured us again because they hadn't ordered them; by September every other university was applying for the same ones to the supplier and they were told 'nobody can have them until January'. So it just kept going on and on, and on. We weren't told where we were going on placement so I couldn't sort out childcare if I needed it. And I'm one of these people I need to know these things prior so I can plan.

He also claimed that Disability Assist had reneged on the initial recommendations that had been agreed to support him during his studies.

His wife, Rose, maintained that, as far as she was aware the programme leader initially did not receive Paul's disability report which would revealed his vital need to be able to plan ahead. She said that Paul attempted to expedite the process by offering his own copy of the Disability Assist report to the tutors but this was rejected. She felt that "given [Paul's] history the university could have been more helpful and supportive".

As a result Paul was reprimanded for initiating this Stage One complaint and, according to Paul, was given a warning by the course leader who maintained that "he was insensitive to all the help they had given him". According to Goodman *et al* (1997:67) there are considerable adjustments to make when an individual is in transition and they need to 'learn the ropes'. According to Glasser *et al* (2009:33) they are confronted 'with a culture shock'. For many it is 'not an easy bureaucracy to understand … with many challenges of fitting in, of just being a student' (Ackerman *et al* 2009:6). Paul was used to military protocols regarding complaints. From Paul's point of view, he was avoiding unnecessary amplification of the issues by attempting what he believed was the least antagonistic pathway, rather than "going further up the hierarchical chain of command".

One explanation for this was that unlike Alan who had educated parental influence that understood the norms and procedures within educational institutions Paul had none of this cultural capital to draw upon for advice. As already discussed, his class position corresponded closely with the model of the Traditional Working Class in the Great British Class Survey, scoring low for social and cultural capital. He unsurprisingly drew on the cultural norms with which he was most familiar when he entered the higher education programme retaining the established ways of the military rather than the approach of more subtle diplomacy typically used in higher education institutions. As Meyer and Land (2005:376) identify, he was 'oscillating between old and emergent understanding' of a new culture. This is also similar to Goode's findings (2007:46) in her study of the initial experiences of students with disabilities when they enter university. She notes that 'institutions overestimate the accessibility of terminology and the information students get sent in advance and make unrealistic assumptions that what 'insiders are familiar with will be obvious to newcomers'. This she said especially applied to some 'first generation students, and mature students' which describes Paul's circumstances exactly.

Chad was still in recovery at Hasler Company, facing imminent discharge from the Marines, and during the second interview he was beginning to reconsider education. Following two years in rehabilitation, Chad had now come full circle since he was initially injured and explained why it had taken him so long to reach this conclusion about continuing:

> It is unfair to ask somebody who has just woken up from a coma and has had his career, his body parts ripped away from him, his prospects ripped away from him, his sanity ripped away from him, it is unfair to ask him when he wakes up ‘well what do you want to do now?' because the reality is if you wake up in a hospital after getting blown up it will take you months to realise what has happened, or understand the magnitude of what has happened to you and it's unfair to ask somebody what are you going to do.

Chad’s wife, Lorraine, was of the opinion that, whilst still based with Hasler the quality of advice and support provided such as, “what are you going to do with the rest of your life?” was not sufficiently specific to enable Chad to formulate a pathway for his future actions. “The MOD [is] terrible at this”. She explained that the support needed was a trained career advisor who could use a more engaging, collaborative approach such as, “let's work together [and] think about what you are interested in, what are you prepared to study?” She felt that during the initial recovery period, which could last as long as three years, there was considerable time wasted; the ex-combatants could be learning a range of elementary skills needed to cope with civilian life such as budgeting household expenses or appropriate behaviour in civilian employment contexts.

Chad continued to appear free of any signs of PTSD, although Len was still concerned that, “it was the macho stuff that [was] hiding the PTSD”. He shared his experiences with other IECs about to be discharged:

> When they shut the door ... they're not prepared to let us see. When everybody goes home and they're just sat here and it's all caught up and it's raining and it's miserable … on a Sunday afternoon. And they're 'well is this me for the rest of my life, this is it, this is all I'm going to get'.

Chad echoes this when talking about his aspirations to enrol on a university programme:

> I was sitting there thinking 'I'm bored now and I'm still in the military, imagine how bored I'm going to be in 2 years' time when I'm no longer in the military and I have nothing to fucking do'. So I thought what I am going to do to alleviate this boredom?

Chad now recalled prior educational experiences in a positive light alleviating his sense of earlier failures. He had only recently acknowledged his significant literacy problems associated with dyslexia and thought that this might partly explain why he had excelled at physics and chemistry because much of the curricula were mainly formulaic. "I have really opened my mind up to higher education … I have a hunger to consume the information that is out there, and I cannot do it on my own, and that really is the key." Chad's reframing of his future and contemplating education again as a route forward was perhaps unsurprising as he had wealthy, well-educated parents and a sister at university. Similar to Alan, the cultural norms of his class origins continued to influence his thinking.

Although Chad was uncertain about the trajectory of his career, he remained hopeful that sufficient funding would be raised to continue financing the theatrical production so that the play could tour worldwide. Knowing that her son would be discharged very soon Chad's mother, Emma, had anxieties and fears about his future prospects:

> Chad has the rest of his life to grow old with a limb that will ... God knows what'll happen ... I'm really optimistic for Chad but there are so many who are injured and we say to Chad 'You know what, you're ... with the best will in the world … when you're out, by God honey

> you're out, and you're one of the numbers and they can't wait to get rid of you because there are so many of you. And you are so expensive‘. That’s when I'll be afraid.

Emma had further concerns about his acting career and preferred that her son was employed with a secure income and greater certainty of continued employment, something that could be facilitated through an educational pathway.

> I think right now he's still on an adrenaline high [but] he will be a 50-year-old amputee. I don't think living with the stump is going to be easy … I say to him 'Oh honey I don't want you to choose acting I want you to do something that will give you some income and some holiday rights’.

4.3.4 Institutional Support

> Alan: If I start to feel anxious, because whenever I feel anxious or nervous about anything these days I always think about Afghanistan no matter what it is … I still feel it every day [thinking about Afghanistan] and every time I go into a lecture theatre or a seminar room I feel it, it's there all the time ... I've had learning facilitators so I've had people who've come in with me to sit with me and they don't do anything they're just a person who's on my shoulder who knows why I might struggle and I can just ask them to take notes or talk to them and we go outside to the fresh air sometimes … If I'm nervous about an exam, Afghanistan will always be at the forefront of my mind. It's a strange thing and I can't stop it from happening … If I'm in a seminar and I start to feel anxious I'll miss notes and the pen [a technological support device] just allows me to record what the tutor is saying and then later on I can attach it to my computer and it is there … I have exam modifications so I don't do my exams in massive rooms because I would just flunk it and it's not fair so I have a separate room with just two or three people in and I get a break halfway through it. So they've done loads of things to help me.

The transition from combat veteran to college student is shown in Ackerman (2009:10), where several of the veterans interviewed talked about anger and stress as a ‘carryover’ from their time in combat. Memories of war experiences, of

being on constant alert and constant presence of fear remained close to the surface and these memories were difficult to manage for some. One of the typical symptoms of PTSD that plagued Alan was that he continued to ‘re-experience spontaneous memories of the traumatic event’ whilst in lectures (American Psychiatric Association 2013: online). He described how the university had supported his studies:

> They offered me counselling service, and for the first eight weeks of my degree I went weekly to this lady, and the first week she said ‘what do you want me to do for you’ and I said 'I just need to talk to somebody it's as simple as that I don't need anything else. I'm not going to hit the ground running here, so I need somebody to just help me get up to speed', and every week we just talked about things, obviously related to what happened to me in Afghanistan and how it relates to who I am now and it just helped me.

As discussed in Methodology and Ethics, a third variety of social capital enables vertical connections to be made between social groups and with significant social structures, such as universities. Alan continued to widen his network accessing additional resources such as counselling support that was offered. The experience freed him further from constraints imposed by the masculine hegemony of the military as he described the importance of being open to sharing his feelings:

> The thing that I've found that is helpful for me is just to be open with people. When I've had difficulties in the past is where I've held things back and people don't know what's going on. For me, I just said 'this is what most of the problem is, and these are the things that can happen, and this is how I usually deal with it' and she [the counsellor] just said 'okay that's fine, whatever you need me to do I'll do it'. And she was willing to go above and beyond. She would just sit and chat with me and I'd just look at her give her a little nod and say to her 'I’m having a bit of a hard time at the moment ' and she would either start taking notes or say 'do you want to step out for some air?' and we'd go and get a cup of coffee or something. For me it’s just about being honest with people. How can they possibly know how difficult it is if you don't tell them? They've been great. I'm on tablets as well so that

> helps, being on Prozac that helps a lot because it means that it takes the edge off … They [the university] have been absolutely brilliant, I can't say enough how good they've been … I probably wouldn't still be there if I hadn't had the support from that small team.

Alan's mother, Joan, was pleased with her son's success at university when she talked about how two of her son's assignments are "already publishable" and she praised the support from the university, "he hasn't felt pre-judged or belittled, or even disabled at all and has been really quite happy".

This institution appears to demonstrate a strong model of enabling Alan to succeed on his programme of study. Mason and Slater (2005) suggest that supportive staff and strong leadership in the learning environment are qualities that foster a desire for learning and increase self-esteem in veterans. Discrimination against disabled students by higher education institutions was made unlawful (Equality Act 2010). The Act encapsulates much of the underpinning spirit of Alan's institution which has implemented essential anticipatory adjustments to support Alan's progress. As discussed in the Literature Review these adjustments prevented Alan from engaging his energy to 'do battle' (Goode,2007:44), unlike the disabled students in Goode's study who had come close to giving up their studies because of the 'amount of emotional expenditure' necessary to access HE.

While Paul's placement was temporarily suspended, as a qualified technician he was able to find shift work as an ambulance driver paid at an hourly rate, which contributed much needed family income. Rose: "he is still the man of the house".

> Paul: … decided that if I wasn't going to be mentored I'd go and do some shifts so I could pay some bills; where I would have one-to-one with the paramedics so I could get my stuff signed-off, and the university pulled me up on that and said 'you can't do that, you're doing too many shifts, it's impacting on your work, so you've got to stop doing shifts'. I've got a family to take care of, I'm a mature student, I've done all this before, I'm not learning anything.

Traditional male conjugal role responsibilities and obligations were clearly imbued with imperatives Paul found difficult to resist, even within a new context. Len noted the lack of any living support:

> Paul was Royal Navy, no support from us at all because we are funding to support Royal Marines, but he has had no support, he's just out there … the MOD funded his course, [but] there has been no [other] assistance at all.

Paul's daughter, Christine talked about her father's experiences at university, "the stuff he had in the lesson he knew already … he just wanted to stay in bed because he kept being taught the same thing". When the children were asked whether they thought their father enjoyed university, Christine replied, "sometimes" but his son, Jason said "not really, he had to do homework on stuff he had already done". From their perspective Paul seemed to have a lot of written homework which he did using his laptop and they tried not to interrupt him. Jason felt they were prevented from enjoying sufficient contact with their father. Rose, Paul's wife, commented that the children had both begun to notice their father's exhaustion after attending university.

Nevertheless, carrying out shift work as a driver seemed to ease Paul's anxieties but the tutors claimed that it was impacting negatively on his coursework. Paul felt he was doing well, recalling that his grades awarded so far were 100% for two modules and 79% for the third, and he concluded that the "impact on my university work is rubbish" . He displayed a lot of anger about this situation. Ackerman *et al* (2009:11) noted that combat veterans transitioning to college students had a lot of anger issues and that it did not take much for them to get 'sparked off'.

Paul's issues were compounded by Christmas approaching. He always became very depressed at this time of year because the distressing events that occurred in Afghanistan took place during this period. Paul's wife, Rose recalled that, "in order to remain alert and attentive, he had to reduce his medication". This also avoided the medically induced deep sleep from which it was impossible to revive should the PTSD nightmares occur, leaving him exhausted the following day.

> Rose: [The issues described above] happened before Christmas and he was ... having a crisis over Christmas with his PTSD because it's the anniversary of when he was out there, and everything came flooding back and it was all he could muster to get to university and do that, but to have spanners chucked in here there and everywhere...

Paul acknowledged that he walked out of one lecture because video footage was being shown of a battle with many casualties.

> Rose: He knows it's his bread and butter so he passed his exams, went back to work on a student paramedic shift and got an email from his lecturer about him missing or walking out of this lecture before Christmas saying 'you shouldn't have done this, you shouldn't be working etc.', and at the end of it 'this has been forwarded on to head of department'.

It was during this period, after some unpleasant e-mails from the course leaders he finally decided:

> …this isn't for me then, I'm going to go … and not one person said let's talk about it … they just went okay bring your stuff in ... and that was that … they just wanted to get rid of me because I was creating problems … [But] I wasn't creating them I was just trying to find why there were problems in the first place ... [which] was probably not the way it was but that is how it felt.

Rose added that Paul was also frustrated by the mandatory attendance at lectures where the content covered knowledge and learning with which he was made thoroughly familiar during his military training.

> Rose: It just seemed as though it was one problem after another, after another, after another and someone who hasn't got PTSD it would have totally put me back as well and made me lose confidence and not know, and it's an intensive course and that alone is very stressful, so that all happened just before Christmas.
>
> Paul: Everything just seemed to conspire against me. I'm sure if everything had gone to plan I'd still be on the course. If the uniforms were there when we first turned up I'd still be there. If my mentor hadn't done what he did and got sacked I'd still have a mentor. My tutor if he hadn't groped a student then I'd still be...

Paul could not remember whether they had offered him an interruption of studies; lapses in memory form part of the illness when he is anxious. When asked whether he would like to resume his studies:

> I'd love to go back, I would because now I'm better again. I just want to move on with my life. I don't want to be picking rubbish up off the street. I'll do it if I have to but I was a professional in the forces and I want to be a professional again.

In the meantime he had been considering alternative career paths but confided that his wife, whilst generally encouraging, nevertheless “presented these stupid ideas such as go and volunteer at an old people's home” which he rejected maintaining that he did not wish to be “reduced to dish[ing] out biscuits; that's not me that. I can do a lot better than that … I've got 35 more years left in me … [during deployment in Afghanistan] I commanded 27 other medics”.

As the date of Chad’s discharge approached he was ‘opera[ting] in a liminal zone still straddling the border’ Walkerdine’s (2006:26) he needed to finally cross. Through Walkerdine’s (2006:14) lens, he continued to be situated ‘simultaneously in two places at once’ retaining the old ways from the military whilst confronting his new status as a civilian, ‘a social world [with new] cultural and social practices’.

To pursue an educational pathway, Chad needed to access easier funding opportunities, so he applied for British citizenship. Unfortunately, because he encountered major problems in retrieving the necessary evidence of certification from the institutions he attended, which were the Canadian and American high schools and university, progress was slow. That said, he insisted that when the transcripts arrived, should the qualifications fail to achieve sufficient equivalency to study in the UK for a higher education programme, he would engage with whatever was necessary to supplement any shortcomings of certification. However, according to his wife Lorraine, even to establish such confirmation through transcripts of his high school achievements in Canada entailed a “huge

battle … that we've tried before and have given up half-way through because it was just one more hassle than it was worth". She felt there ought to be some institutional support with an alternative route: "had there been a straight forward test … particularly if he achieved a high percentage would clearly confirm that he had university potential. However the hoops we have to jump through at this moment are just so hard".

Fuller *et al* (2011:149) maintain that qualifications have strong currency in terms of their 'exchange value' for career advancement or access to a ladder of progression in certain professions. The strength of the 'pull' from higher education is an important factor particularly for IECs and those in Chad's situation with a family of origin that have a record of high educational aspirations and achievements. Universities need to 'diversify' the student population and 'knowing potential learners is a critical factor for widening participation and lifelong learning [institution support] from interventions need to be carefully crafted to build capacity within their specific target groups' (Fuller *et al* 2011:149).

4.3.5 Family Support and Financial Concerns

Alan's family network was extremely supportive in his engagement with higher education but his wife, Carol, felt under pressure:

> I know once he's done his degree he'll be able to get a really good job and that pressure will go off me … I even wish sometimes that his pension was a little bit more because he does deserve more, not just for the money, he does deserve more, I think he gets about £650 a month.

She felt this was insufficient income but after 12 months his disability in relation to PTSD would be re-assessed. Unfortunately Alan's medication had some very unpleasant side effects, such as affecting his ability to concentrate during classes, so he stopped taking it. They were therefore concerned about the lack of medical prescriptive evidence needed to support any claim for increased financial help. When asked about the source of payment for the fees needed for his education, Carol said, "I do think the MOD's paid for Alan actually. It was supposed to be Help for Heroes but I do think it has come from the MOD … I don't care as long as someone pays it".

Alan's Mother, Joan, thought their income came mainly from the MOD but there were regular delays with these payments and her son was compelled to make numerous telephone calls to establish the varying reasons why these delays were happening, which aggravated his anxiety.

Len was aware of some financial issues which Alan needed to resolve. He explained to the MOD that, although Alan had been awarded travel expenses for university, he also needed to find some funding towards his living expenses.

> Len: [Alan] has been cut free and he's gone [discharged]. He's at university now, he's struggling [with finances], and my boss turns around and says 'yes he's got 4 limbs' ... so they [the commanding officers in charge] refused to agree to any additional financial support … [they said] 'Yes he's got a problem with his feet [we] are only prepared to fund transport for him … He's got his own house why should we assist him, why should we help him?' … living is not supported, so it's just course fees are paid for, and then they wash their hands of everything else. There's no after care to make sure you've got food on the table, somebody's paying for your exercise

> books. How much does it cost to go to university? How much do you then pay for books … if they go to university they cannot physically do that and go out and get a job and hold a job down to support a family. Why should the wife actually have to go out and get a full-time job to support all the family? They should be ... not special, but it would not be that difficult to turn around and say 'we will keep you on as a Royal Marine, (or any service come to that it doesn't have to be a Royal Marine), we will keep you on in the services until you have actually finished your training'.

In their 2006 report, *Strategy for Veterans,* the MOD suggested the level of support received when veterans are discharged from the armed forces can have a big impact on how they cope in the transition back to civilian life which is also acknowledged in the restored *Covenant*.

However, once discharged, the family's support continues to be 'operational' and is critical to maintaining the operational effectiveness of the IECs' recovery and transition to the civilian world. It is the family which enables them to maintain thoughtful valid career choices and although the *Covenant* acknowledges the sacrifices made by veterans in the past stating that this 'obligation involves the whole of society' but the 'obligation for life' falls to the family (MOD 2011:1, 8). However, these responsibilities have been shifted to other kinship, especially the spouses, for whom little help and guidance was provided, Len: "there is no support for the wives, rather the assumption that they will look after their husbands once discharged".

Alan acknowledged that he had received good support from his wife and family and when asked “So the support network has been critical?” he replied, “definitely”.

> Alan: lots of people might have a partner who’s saying 'go out and get us some money now', because it must be hard for my wife to go out and work when 4 mornings of the week I get off. I'm at home studying. So she [his wife] goes out to work and I'm at home still but she never says to me she never makes it difficult she just knows it's the right thing and lots of people might not be able to feel that way about it. I just think I'm quite lucky … [family is of] paramount importance. If I hadn't had any of this support I don't think any of this would have happened … family is everything.

Alan’s family’s disposition to education and learning contributed to his decision to undertake such a programme of study. In addition, his family have continued to support him, shielding him as much as possible from further exposure to stress.

> Patrick: he’s still jumpy. When he’s at uni he’s fantastic, he’s loving it. He’s sending me poetry he’s written. He’s flying. At university he just loves it, he’s up in the 80s, so this year he got the equivalent of a first, and he’s so excited about it but then he’s got this reality of bringing up a small kid. To the extent the funding runs out for nursery payments in June but before Elizabeth [Alan’s daughter] goes to school in September. It would have meant really, in effect, Alan having to look after her 5 days a week on his own, and I just said this isn’t going to work. I’ve agreed to pay the nursery fees for that gap, he’d go insane, he really would. Sometimes you do wonder whether he’s on a short fuse with Elizabeth when he’s on his own. That worries me … I think we’re just going to have to stick in there with him. I think all we can do is provide the steady centre, and just respond if there’s a crisis of which there are many, and several, I am sure to come.

Alan’s social circumstances suggest that he broadly falls within the Established Middle Class. It is unsurprising that Alan’s highly educated family influenced his decisions to enter a higher education programme of study where he has also been

able to continue to draw upon the strength of this family network. This resonates with Coleman's (1990) ideas on social capital. He argues that sufficiently high social capital tends to favour high levels of attainment. Despite Alan's mental and physical injuries he has continued to achieve excellent academic results and it appears that he has crossed yet another border through education with a further spectrum of possibilities. These include his stated intention to consolidate his degree by continuing with post-graduate studies, albeit part time, at Master's degree level. It appears that Alan is not just 'getting by [he is] getting ahead' (Putman 2000:23).

Paul explained that his wife was rather stressed as it had become increasingly necessary for her to work more often with the consequence that she had to interrupt her studies. Nevertheless, his view was that his wife was coping reasonably well. His son, Jason and daughter, Christine had been unhappy when their father was away even for one night. With more free time Christine said that her father was a lot happier now that he was not at the university, adding "I am happy because he is happy". Jason also confirmed that he was much more contented as his father had more time to engage with them now. Christine recalled that when her father had to go away recently, they were "not too down in the dumps" as their mother was still present, although they still resented her going to university.

As Paul now wishes to spend more time at home supporting Rose with domestic activities and child care responsibilities such as school transport, a child minder is no longer needed, an important saving in their household expenditure. Rose: “Fingers crossed that [it] will work”.

With regard IECs and support, Chad’s mother commented, “the question that you'd ask is should that holding of the hand ever go away?”

With support from their networks, Alan, Paul and Chad appear to have reclaimed some sense of agency in their decision-making about moving to new beginnings. Following the influence of his parental norms and values, Alan appears to have been very focussed on an educational pathway by undertaking an A’ level programme and subsequently gaining entry to a university degree programme in English Language with Creative Writing. Paul has also reclaimed some sense of agency with support from his wife and children by initially engaging to train as a technician and paramedic ambulance driver. He also attempted a degree programme in para-medicine from which he eventually withdrew. However, Paul appears angry at his predicament, perhaps because he completed more tours of combat duty, had been employed by the MOD for the longest period and had higher expectations about the support they would provide. Paul is much more fixed in what Meyer and Land (2005:375) call caught in a between-ness, a transitional stage identified as ‘liminal’ or ‘threshold’ involving status inconsistency. His PTSD appears far more acute and his support network is rather narrow,

relying disproportionately on his wife. Unable to share the negative experiences that haunt him, he is unable to free himself from the stigma associated with such disclosure, even to his wife. Such are the constraints imposed by the masculine hegemony of the military which he had been immersed in for a longer period of time than Alan and Chad.

With regard to Chad, although he is presently 'straddling' both the civilian and military world there is clearly some transitional movement forward towards a new beginning through acting in a West End play (Walkerdine 2006:26). He does not have the financial constraints experienced by Alan and Paul and his injuries are more visible. As Len said, "A missing leg ... everyone can see it. Everybody can dish out the sympathy". Whilst Chad is aware that he will receive a financially generous pension he is still what the military term 'in recovery' and therefore still employed by the MOD.

With regard to Alan and Paul the above accounts clearly have different outcomes in so far as the IECs transitional experience in education is concerned and this will be referred to in the Discussion chapter. However, what cannot be ignored is their continuing battle with their health and ongoing financial worries which impacted badly on both Alan and Paul. It is quite clear from each account that Alan's university adopted an exemplary model of support for this, which has contributed to such a positive experience for him. Conversely, it appears that Paul has been clearly disadvantaged by his particular health issues and unfortunate institutional

responses which impeded his development in higher education with negative consequences.

Financial concerns continue to feature in the narratives of both Alan and Paul. Alan's extended family have provided support for the payment of nursery fees and to sustain other living expenses and his wife maintained full-time employment as well as studying for two evenings a week, albeit with some difficulty. Paul's wife also continued to work extra shifts to cover all the household expenses whilst Paul was studying but, unfortunately, was forced to interrupt her studies. Paul received little support from the MOD. As Len pointed out above, "paying for their course … is different to being supported [where the] MoD will pay for their training but will not contribute to living expenses whilst they study". Len felt that the MOD should say, "'we will keep you on as a Royal Marine, (or any service come to that it doesn't have to be a Royal Marine), we will keep you on in the services until you have actually finished your training'".

Chad is now seriously contemplating studying in higher education. However, in order to seek the funding to which he is entitled, he has to continue to pursue his citizenship and try to retrieve his previous educational transcripts.

4.4 Conclusion

Despite the difficulties that the IECs have faced, these three case studies have been largely successful in many ways, especially because of the consistent family support. The prognoses are much less favourable for IECs who are without family. There is a need to recognise potential unintended consequences of such familial support over the longer term. In so far as Chad and Paul there were some unrealistic expectations initially that institutions would change, for instance, in Chad's case, changing admissions criteria, and in the case of Paul, protocols and procedures. Goode (2007) suggests it is important to encourage disabled students to have realistic expectations rather than expecting transitions to be problem free.

Nevertheless, it appears from these case studies that there are variations in support strategies to ensure successful transition of student IECs, and these numbers may possibly increase as hostilities in the Middle East escalate. As discussed previously, Fuller *et al* (2011) have reiterated that one imperative of widening participation is the need to understand much more clearly the broader biographical characteristics of such a wider constituency of applicants.

The *Covenant* of 2011 is an important document for establishing the values by which the nation should treat the military. In this *Covenant* the prominence of the family however still appears to be an afterthought and it is subsumed in terms of significance under differing levels of support from various other agencies. When asked about the support IECs receive:

> Len: Very little. There was a welfare system there, well actually we might sit down and have a cup of tea with them if they want to talk, and that's it. Other than that we would suggest they go and see their own GP at home and ask for assistance.

As can be seen from the narratives of all three IECs they have clearly relied profoundly on the unstinting support of their families for their ongoing recovery. The “hand holding” (a comment from Chad’s mother used here as a metaphor to describe continuing support) is ‘an obligation for life’ (MOD 2011:8) but this obligation tends to fall overwhelmingly on the IECs’ families, particularly the wives. This ‘obligation for life’ needs to be extended to acknowledge and support the families which, at the present time, as Len remarked “[they] get very little help” (Len).

5. Discussion

This chapter describes my methodological findings and theoretical underpinnings with a review of both the strengths and weaknesses of each. It also includes several pertinent findings from the key themes which covered several dimensions juxtaposed with recommendations and a final conclusion.

In section 5.1 I contextualise the aims of the research and identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of my methodological approach. In section 5.2 I critically evaluate the rationale of my theoretical underpinning, highlighting some of its strengths and weaknesses. In section 5.3 I discuss some of the principal findings and in section 5.4 I make specific recommendations to facilitate a smoother pathway into higher education for IECs. Lastly, I provide a summary and conclusions drawn from the three case studies of this research.

5.1 Discussion on Methodological Findings

Prior to injury the men in all three case studies were healthy, militarily defined as fighting fit and serving effectively in their career choice in the armed forces, whilst they and their families anticipated financial security for the foreseeable future. However, their situation was irrevocably transformed as each soldier was injured in combat. They entered a process of transition through re-engagement with education and it seemed right to explore this from the perspective of not only the IECs but also their wider kinship.

In order to understand more clearly these stories from the experiences of everyone connected to the IECs' progression into education the following questions were identified:

1. What are the transitions experienced by IECs through the processes of engaging with a higher education programme of study?
2. How, and in what ways, are decisions made within networks of family or significant others with regard to IECs' decisions to study in higher education?
3. What would enable IECs to enter higher education successfully through a more informed understanding of what is required with regard to re-settlement support?

The aims of this research were achieved to the extent that accounts from the interviews clearly showed the processes in decision-making and the social challenges that soldiers face when contemplating rehabilitation through higher education, and as discussed and summarised later, a number of significant factors and key themes were identified covering many dimensions. These issues influenced the choices made by the IECs to apply and maintain engagement in higher education study or other avenues on offer.

One of the key revelations was the pivotal importance of family network support in relation to the IECs' decisions. It was very influential initially in supporting IECs'

applications and in subsequently helping IECs to sustain their engagement in higher education.

The research also highlighted a number of significant key issues relating to resettlement support for a smoother pathway into education for the IECs and their family networks before and after discharge from the military. In terms of my understanding of the issues involved I found that there was a very limited amount of research into post-military experiences of discharged soldiers and in particular an absence of research into family influences and support systems generally.

A second key strength of this research therefore is that it significantly augments the limited body of knowledge in this area in the UK. As already noted Iversen (2005:175), amongst others, has indicated a lack of systematised follow-up of ex-service personnel in the UK studying in higher education with limited cognisance of the social challenges that such personnel face even when making transitions into broader civilian life'.

A third key strength from this investigation is how new, life-changing decisions following injury are not made in isolation because this transitional process acutely affected all their family members who were active participants in this process.

A fourth key strength was that the research moved beyond my initial aims as it progressed revealing many unexpected insights concerning the culture of the military and the extent to which the health issues of combatants cast a profound shadow over all the participants, especially the family network and how single-minded the IECs and their network members needed to be throughout the transitional processes.

A fifth key strength is that this research makes an original contribution through providing an in-depth understanding of the experiences ex-military personnel in transition have by using a socio-cultural approach of networks of intimacy. This provided much more detail of the context in which the subsequent changes in the performance of conjugal roles and extended family relationships occur in this process of achieving a re-constituted self of the IEC. As Johnson *et al* (2008:20) write, in the case of educational decision-making it is co-constructed within social networks and interviewing multiple networks facilitates our understanding 'beyond the individual'. I felt that other methods were unlikely to produce these kind of revelations with the depth of insights achieved by this holistic approach. Behar (2003:18) writes, 'We listen to other peoples' stories especially to the stories of those who go unheard'.

The sixth key strength of this approach is its originality; it has given voice to not only the IECs but to all their nominated family network members. Through this I was able to gain a unique insider's view of the transition experiences of the IECs

but especially those of their family network whilst the IECs contemplated, applied for and engaged with a higher education programme of study.

However, interpretations of subjects' accounts can only make sense with a high degree of reflexivity. I have tried to adopt throughout each stage of the research reflexive evaluation in my writing of this thesis to ensure integrity and consistency in capturing the various perspectives of the participants. However, although I felt I was conscientiously interpreting multiple networks' accounts so that all their voices were heard, I am aware that one of the weaknesses of interpretive research is, as Mauthner and Doucet (2003:423) suggest, 'some voices may be enhanced while others are silenced'.

In recent years social scientists have become wary of 'othering' people about whom they write, although this derives from the anthropological tradition I feel 'othering' as a conception is particularly pertinent to this research which, according to Atkinson (2015:31), 'it implies the creation of unwarranted distance between the self and the other of the researched'. As a civilian with little knowledge of military norms and procedures, when I began this research it took some considerable time to understand the nuances, subtleties and complexities of this organisation. My research on military participants and their families automatically created distance between myself and them. I certainly did not wish to objectify the participants and their networks and felt strongly that we should, as far as possible, have an equitable relationship.

This natural ‘othering’ process created a bridge that I had to cross in order to gain their trust concerning the nature of the research project and what it was trying to achieve so that they felt comfortable with discussion about often very personal issues. However, as a civilian observing this military culture the distance between us meant that I was often shocked by what I heard, where an ‘insider’ might not react quite as strongly. For example, a key finding from this research relates to a particular version of hegemonic masculinity, which is instilled through intense training and has long-lasting effects even when soldiers are discharged from the military.

According to Atkinson, ‘othering’ is a methodological prerequisite to productive analysis. He argues that ‘if we do not or cannot recognise some degree of difference between ourselves there is no learning, no social science’. He notes that one of the greatest problems confronting [researchers] is ‘how do I make a given social world or social process familiar so as to render it accessible, [but] while rendering it sufficiently strange we gain analytic purchase to reconstruct their lives’ (Atkinson 2015:32). ‘In the absence of any sense of strangeness researchers are doomed to recapitulate their existing ideas, or fail to generate any ideas at all’ (Atkinson 2015:33).

Much of the literature and reports on military issues are often either government funded and staffed with serving military advisors or have been written by ex–military personnel which can provide advantages because they understand the

culture, protocols, procedures and language of such organisations. Indeed, many of the reports cited in this thesis such as Jolly (1996) Walters, Wg Cdr J (2012), Ashcroft (2014) and other research literature from the US such as DiRamio and Spires (2009), Ackerman *et al* (2009) and more have been written by ex-military experts who would understand the culture and norms and procedures of the military as participant observers. They are therefore writing from an insider's perspective and it could be argued that there is less 'othering' as a result; being an insider is a strength.

However, Atkinson (2015:33) maintains that 'we should not seek out only people who resemble us in order to understand them' therefore paradoxically I believe that another key strength of this present research is derived from my non-military, civilian biographical experiences. Although I became absorbed and emotionally moved by their narratives, being a civilian enabled me to maintain enough distance to be able to achieve, as Atkinson (2015:32) writes, sufficient 'othering' [which] is a methodological perquisite to productive … analysis'.

Through carrying out this research in many ways I have had my own border crossing and I have gained a better understanding of what true compassion means, and from my perspective it is not about pity. However, investigating the etymology of pity and compassion is complex and feeling either appears to be dependent on contextual factors where, according to Carr (1999:411), both of these terms involve 'altruistic emotions in a sympathetic reaction to distress.' He

draws from Aristotle's writings suggesting that pity is a self-centered emotion which is directed to another's suffering but is reserved for people who resemble us (Carr 1999:415-419); in other words 'there but for the grace of God go I'. For Carr (1999:424) however, compassion is about imagination and here his views resemble humanistic ideals suggesting that compassion involves:

> … viewing the other person and their suffering in a certain way [it] involves a sense of shared humanity, of regarding the other as a fellow human being, in other words 'equally human … imagining what the other person is undergoing' [where] compassion depends upon the capacity to enter another's heart and mind, to understand what the other person takes to be important and how that person judges his situation. It is in terms of these values and expectations that the suffering has its existence, and an appreciation of them is therefore a prerequisite of grasping the suffering.

A further strength of using networks of intimacy as an approach enabled me to appreciate the cultural context of the IECs and their family networks but, as noted above, my status as a civilian allowed me to maintain sufficient distance that empowered me to feel compassion rather than 'othering' them with pity, which they would not want.

5.2: Theoretical Underpinning

There were clear advantages in using networks of intimacy as an approach because it allowed participants to discuss fully the transitional processes from their own unique perspectives. Alan's mother commented that she had never been asked her opinion about her son's transitional experiences before. However, one of the weaknesses of this approach is that I found it produced a vast amount of

data with a number of distinct but co-existing narratives which were not relevant to the essential trajectory of this present research and had to be put aside for future research. I am also mindful that ‘facts and theories are quite interdependent and that facts are determined by theory’ (Guba and Lincoln 1994:107). Facts are only facts within some theoretical framework and a quite different theoretical framework might equally well support the same facts, so ‘objectivity is undermined’. Nevertheless, I think that the use of my theoretical framework, as outlined below, gave structure and revealed a number of substantial insights into the case studies decision making and helped to explain why and why they were not able to successfully complete a programme of study.

From this perspective, I have used sub-headings to provide a clearer structure and a theoretical framework, as mentioned previously a ‘set of eyeglasses’, through which to view the second section of this discussion in an attempt to add contour and coherence and to enable the reader to ‘sharpen and focus’ on the various facets and insights that illuminate the central aims (Ely *et al* (2001:228).

5.2.1 Liminal Space and Border Crossings

Since the participants and their families were coming to terms with sudden change and at a threshold of new beginnings I felt that the notion of ‘liminality’ would be useful to provide a framework to understand such human interaction in transition, a ‘between-ness’ involving status inconsistency and change. For me this aptly described the circumstances of the IECs and their families moving from a military

to civilian culture (Meyer and Land 2005:375) However, although it gave invaluable partial explanation of the experiences of people in transition, particularly at the threshold of new learning, I did not feel that it was sufficient on its own to describe the transitional experiences of the participants in this study. Therefore using the ideas of liminality juxtaposed with Walkerdine's (2000) metaphorical notion of border crossings gave more coherence, strengthened the framework and also added more depth to our understanding of these transitional experiences. These were particularly poignant because they were forced upon the IECs under circumstances beyond their control and Walkerdine's (2000) work encapsulates the darker, more painful, issues that were involved in such transitions. The injuries the IECs received in combat were the catalyst for not only a career change for themselves, but generally for all the families.

These changed circumstances affected all of their networks which occupied that same 'liminal space' that reviews the temporary transition through which identity is reconstructed when a person passes from one identity state to another. As Cousin (2006:4) writes, 'liminality is an unstable space in which the [individual] may oscillate between old and emergent understandings where social identities and previous status with established social orders are left behind'. These ideas resonated with the metaphor of a border crossing, described by Walkerdine (2006:12) as 'not exclusively geographical but one experienced as a part of the self, which has to change to accommodate new forms of work ways of being'.

This present investigation complements this cluster of concepts, particularly Walkerdine's (2006:13) metaphor, as it adds a perspective of concurrent border crossings of the IECs' kinship networks that also appeared to experience, in varying degrees, a somewhat 'violent border crossing'. By supporting their IECs in complex and difficult transitions the family network also had to address their own social identities and their attachments to associated practices and adjust to new ways of thinking and feeling, a concept identified as 'hybridity' (Lucey *et al* 2003:287). Walkerdine (2006:15) suggests subjects are expected to make transitions smoothly, but they can be 'painful as they may be constrained by the burden of emotions and practices of the past' so border crossings therefore require memories to be left behind. IECs' families are profoundly affected by these transitions and have to gradually adapt to new realities.

The closest kinship of wife, partner, mother, father and children in parallel ways had to confront these changing developments with their own internal borders to cross and were also compelled to draw upon their own psychological resources when confronting the emotional difficulties and anxieties unexpectedly thrust upon them. Others such as close friend or professional colleague ostensibly appeared to have a role of spectator but were, nevertheless, crucial in this complex social reconfiguration of selves in transition. Although each person had several borders to cross, this reformation of new beginnings was a process that also had to simultaneously incorporate each other's concurrent responses rather than an unconnected series of discrete crossings.

This present study builds on Jolly's (1996) findings and also complements aspects of Ashcroft's (2014) *Review* but, uniquely, another key strength of this investigation is that it covers the critical seminal period when the IECs were actually in a transitional experience rather than post-hoc analysis and evaluation. The influences described here explore how support from their networks mediated the men's anxieties from a 'between-ness' of status inconsistency, following injury both before and after discharge (Meyer and Land 2005:375). Ashcroft's (2014:134) Review acknowledges the families' role as an essential element of successful transition, quoting that service personnel 'often said that the security and prospects for their family was more important than their own'. However, this acknowledgement of the family role in his review was limited as the focus was on service personnel transitions as an individual, discrete enterprise rather than seeing the transition process affecting the family as a whole. Further, although Jolly's (1996) research included families, it was carried out before the Afghanistan conflict so a further strength of this research is that much of this present material has more relevant temporal currency.

5.2.2. Social Capital

There were limitations in using the concept of social capital with its links to class because class is 'not a fixed entity and is always in continual flux and change' (Wynne 1998). Further, it does not explain all the outcomes as there were also institutional, medical and financial constraints which further impacted on the IECs' educational endeavours. Nevertheless the concept of social capital with its links to

class status frames the explanations about how each combatant used their own and family's stock of capital to achieve a number of border crossings with variable success. It also helps us to understand the variations and unevenness of each IEC's success or failure in higher education, where embodied social class norms and values derived from their family of origin appeared to have a significant influence.

5.2.3 Educational Pathway in Relation to Social Capitals

Findings from this research suggest first that decisions relating to the choice of an education pathway were especially significant because all three subjects had been disillusioned with education prior to enlisting in the military. Second there were important differences between the individuals within the group of participants and their ability to successfully re-engage with the education system as a pathway to a civilian career. Third, these variations seem largely related to social class origins, which influence the amount and type of human cultural and social capital they had acquired during their earlier education (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Coleman 1990). For instance, Alan was able to re-establish a successful affiliation with the educational process, because through antecedent experiences with parents and at school he had already acquired sufficient social capitals which could be used to support his further educational progression as an adult; he had the confidence to use elements of capitals such as bridging, bonding and linking (Putman 2000; Woolcock1998).

Differential success when negotiating with a higher education institutional apparatus was another important finding of this research. For example, Paul failed to re-connect over the longer term and had little in his biographical cultural experiences and few resources in the form of capital to draw upon (Coleman 1990). Unlike Alan, he appeared to be 'battling the system' to access what he needed to successfully complete his programme of study, a finding similar to Goode (2007:44) who, when discussing disability, reveals that disabled civilian students had come close to dropping out of their studies because of the amount of emotional expenditure necessary to access their rights. Even Chad who had an abundance of human, cultural, social capital and life experiences, without A' level qualifications encountered numerous difficulties in accessing the Accreditation for Learning verification route because of his Canadian citizenship. In other words, he too was 'battling the system' but with greater reserves of capital to support articulation of his ambitions.

5.2.4 Emotional Capital

The potential difference in social support efficacy is that, once injured and with discharge imminent, there is a powerful need to find substitution for these high levels of social capital they previously enjoyed and that derived from allegiances within their military 'family'. As discussed previously, Wilcox (2010) suggests that veterans distinguish between specific support providers such as family members, significant others and military peers, but claimed there is a need to identify potential differences in social support efficacy. Here it is argued that hegemonic

masculinity imbued through military culture inhibits any display of what might be perceived as a weakness through self-disclosure of mental health issues to their fighting fit comrades who are still employed. As Haynie and Shepherd (2011) suggest in their discussions on career transition after traumatic life events in the military, it was amongst their fellow combatants that the most closely held beliefs about who they were had been terminated and this became an impediment to seeking further help.

This research reveals that it is fundamentally emotional capital, derived from the humanistic ideals of unconditional positive regard and empathy (Rogers, 1975) that is sought by IECs. This can only be supplied by the closest intimate family members they trust. Although it can be argued that emotional capital forms an element of social capital, it is specifically the need for this emotive dimension, particularly early on in recovery, that is the distinguishing active constituent of social capital that is most needed and at high levels if they are to be able to move forward and begin this reconstruction of self. The research also reveals that this imposes considerable additional demands on the resources of each member of the network and the need for such high emotional capital could be draining network members that are closest to them who, in turn, need to draw additional sustenance from their own sources of social capital to conserve their own emotional equilibrium.

Finally, the research also shows that the larger the family network the more comprehensive the distribution of practical, financial and emotional support which is available. Surprisingly, it also reveals that once injured there was little support for spouses and no follow-up procedures in place once the men were discharged.

5.3: Key findings

5.3.1 Successfully Supporting IECs in Higher Education

There was considerable variation in the ability of institutions to adapt to the idiosyncratic mental and physical circumstances of the IECs, especially to their injuries and medication. In one case the institutional support provided was an exemplary model of appropriate encouragement for Alan that appeared to anticipate his needs comprehensively and sensitively. Another organisation appeared to have little comprehension of what was required to apprehend Paul's access to support, other than his family, and this disadvantaged him significantly. He did not have a family history of university education, so a longer time period to make appropriate adjustments to the new environment and experiences was imperative. He was not only trying to cope with the distressing symptoms of his PTSD but also lacked understanding of the normative structures and protocols of higher education.

This present study corroborates other investigations of veterans entering colleges and higher education institutions in the US, where it was found that they were not

only adjusting as novitiate university students but also to their continuing recovery needs from physical and mental wounds following military service (Glasser *et al* 2009). This is also confirmed by the ACE survey (2008:23) and Ackerman *et al* (2009:12) amongst others, who agree that veterans are a 'special needs' population with 'unique issues'. The *Covenant* (MOD 2011:8) also acknowledges in its commitment to IECs that it is an 'obligation for life' which confirms the longevity of the support that is necessary.

Green *et al* (2010:1484) claims that 'service environment engendered a … strong affiliation to a normative masculine identity [and] was an obstacle to the expression of emotional distress'. IECs find that disclosure of personal mental health issues, such as PTSD with its associated stigma, difficult to communicate to both military colleagues and civilians, which can result in denial of the severity of the condition and impede access to appropriate support tailored to individual needs. This was another contributing factor to Paul's difficulties in effectively accessing tailored support for his needs when attending university. Both he and his wife have withdrawn from their programmes of study and, at the time of the final interview, Paul was unemployed.

Iversen *et al* (2005:175) noted that 'those with mental health issues are more likely to leave service prematurely, experience lost work days and also more likely to end up socially excluded and homeless'. This is also supported by other research both in the UK and the US, some of which was discussed in the Literature Review

chapter. It underlines the dearth of appropriate integrated civilian support available to ex-combatants following military discharge.

Another revelation from this research is that current admissions procedures of many universities appear to remain inflexible in the way that accreditation for learning and skills achieved by applicants is acknowledged. According to Shevlin *et al* (2004:28) 'adjusting admission and curricular and assessment procedures of students with disabilities, gauges the willingness and commitment to widening participation of the institution'. It appears that acknowledgement was not provided for Chad's considerable skills, training and experience as a paramedic in the Royal Marines, a factor that seriously impeded his enrolment onto a higher education programme. His frustrations were compounded by the recent diagnosis of his significant problems relating to dyslexia.

At the time of our first interviews Chad was to be employed for at least another year by the MOD and therefore would have a degree of predictable financial security and continued stock of capitals from both his civilian and his military family network. As a consequence, he was able to postpone long-term decisions with regard to education, 'straddling a border crossing' between the military and civilian worlds (Walkerdine 2006:26). However in a later, second interview following influential family support and his own further reflection he appeared to have revived his longer term educational ambitions. Unfortunately, in practice this was not supported effectively. The research thus reveals some perceived

deficiencies of civilian organisations and institutions where I feel the core values described in the Equality Act (2010) need more rigorous implementation within universities' protocols that address the special circumstances of IECs attempting to study in higher education.

5.3.2 Finances, Pensions and Funding for Education

At the start of the interviews, the revised *Covenant* had been in operation for only 18 months and therefore one of the weaknesses of this research is that some of the issues with regard to funding and liaison with agencies may since have been resolved. Nevertheless, whilst there may be additional funding possibilities available for ex-combatants, this research reveals that such payments appear to be awarded arbitrarily. This investigation also found a lack of clarity regarding funding of fees for education and what is available from various charitable organisations by the MOD. Even when awarded there were inconsistencies and payments were often delayed which aggravated the anxieties of the IECs and their networks. This was compounded by the absence of any supplementary financial support with day-to-day living expenses whilst studying, which affected both Alan and Paul and their families.

Alan received a modest pension because, although constantly in considerable pain and still waiting for prescribed medical intervention, he had elected not to have his foot amputated. The tuition fees for his degree programme of study were paid directly to the university in instalments but were often delayed. He failed to

achieve sufficient financial maintenance for his family and his wife consequently became the principal source of family income.

Once discharged Paul was also awarded a pension but at a level that resulted in a considerably reduced net income with wide-ranging effects on all aspects of family expenditure. Again there was no additional funding other than payment of fees whilst he was at university. The additional pension increments awarded for his PTSD, which he had previously been informed would be permanent, had still not been resolved by the time of the final interview in 2012, which considerably aggravated his stress.

Chad had had a complete limb amputation which qualified him for the full disability award and therefore had no financial uncertainties. However, he was trying to achieve Prior Learning accreditation with some difficulty so he could fund his university degree.

5.3.3 Disclosure of Mental Health

Although much has been done in recent years by the MOD and other organisations, during the period before discharge when injured soldiers are still employed by the military, there should be rigorous preparation to raise awareness of, and actively reduce, the stigma attached to mental health conditions and to encourage individuals to seek assistance. There is still widespread reluctance of

military personnel to initiate the required self-referral process needed for engagement with psychiatric assessment services in relation to any suspected mental health issues they may experience. This investigation confirms research already discussed by Greenberg *et al* (2008), Ormerod (2009), Iverson *et al* (2011) and many others, which has shown the influence of hegemonic norms of masculinity resulting in the stigma that prevails in relation to mental health issues. In short, there is a cultural imperative for military personnel to 'man up' and independently deal with their own problems. As Len revealed:

> … we will not volunteer ourselves to go [to seek psychiatric help], somebody's got to say 'you've got to go' [otherwise] he's then sort of on his own, six months to a year down the line he's under a railway bridge in a cardboard box, and he's known as the local nutter and can't cope, can't hold a job down, can't do anything … At this moment we are just glazing over the mental health side.

In relation to this I suggest that all IECs should be compelled to engage with a more purposeful programme of 'de-militarisation' in the months before discharge to support their preparation for civilian life. Integral to this should be contributions by psychiatric professionals who can provide a safe context within which such issues as PTSD and mental health can be discussed openly and the stigmas associated with the condition can be put into a clearer perspective. Such regular group discussions should normalise the process and reduce stigma.

The Ashcroft (2014) *Review* highlights that, once discharged, service leavers' medical records are given to their general practitioners. However, this does not mean that all IECs will be able to articulate their needs to a medical professional

who typically may have limited knowledge and understanding of combat experience or PTSD. IECs find disclosure of personal mental health issues, such as PTSD with its associated stigma, difficult to communicate to anyone especially civilian support professionals, and universities need to acknowledge this in their provision for IECs (Greenberg *et al* 2008; Ormerod 2009; Iverson *et al* 2011).

Iverson (2011:8) revealed that veterans have 'negative pessimistic evaluations' of what might be available, noting that less than half of those who return from combat seek help for mental health problems and veterans appear to take their 'barriers to care' with them when they return to civilian life. Perhaps this explains Paul's reticence in recounting the difficulties he was experiencing when he walked out of a lecture showing visual material depicting wounded soldiers in battle. His wife explained that he, "liked to keep things to himself" which was part of his depression. She confirmed that he had experienced an emotional crisis over the Christmas period when "everything came flooding back and it was all he could muster to get to university and do that".

These issues disadvantaged Paul because, although he was provided with the support of a note-taker he was still unable to articulate what he needed, appearing to lack even basic understanding of the normative structures and protocols of higher education. Several incidents resulted in him withdrawing from his programme of study. Conversely, Alan was able to discuss his feelings more easily revealing how, in a variety of situations, he unexpectedly felt anxious or

nervous, stating that “I always think about Afghanistan no matter what it is … I still feel it every day [thinking about Afghanistan] and every time I go into a lecture theatre or a seminar room I feel it, it's there all the time”. Alan, however, was provided with a learning facilitator who was aware of his struggles and would take notes or talk to him, sometimes suggesting that they moved outside “to take some fresh air”. Alan’s account of his experience in higher education and the various support interventions on his behalf enabled him to sustain his attendance on the programme with positive outcomes.

As present, international relations appear to be in a state of considerable uncertainty and with the aggression manifested by the proclaimed ISIS and other extremist groups, the UK is being drawn into combat situations resulting in yet more casualties of war. Much more research and improved understanding of the mental health issues faced by ex-combatants and their families should be a priority to provide appropriate support because, as Paul claimed:

> …They’re very geared up for people losing their legs and arms, and not geared up for mental health, they’re just not. There’s just not enough practitioners to sort you out, especially in the recovery centres like Hasler… There’s no funding going towards it. There was no doctor there, you had to go up in the main military system to get yourself a psychiatrist, and for me that took 7 months from joining Hasler Company to getting one.

Universities need to be much more informed about the unique issues that IECs bring with them, which should extend towards understanding mental health and the effects of trauma in general. It seems sensible to suggest that higher education institutions in the UK should implement appropriate training to raise

awareness and understanding of the uniquely special needs that IECs have as a result of their injuries and military experiences. Qualifications have strong currency in terms of their 'exchange value' (Fuller *et al* 2011:149) for career advancement. Interventions within institutions need to be carefully crafted; it is not about pity but compassion, and I suggest that unless further research is carried out these students' needs cannot be anticipated or adequately supported.

5.3.4 Masculine Hegemony and Mental Health in the Military

This research reaffirms previous findings on transition following discharge from the military, which note the difficulties experienced by so many ex-combatants returning from Iraq and Afghanistan; military culture expects service personnel to 'soldier on without complaint' (Barrett 1996:132) and contravention of such norms could provoke a 'stigmatising response' (Green *et al* 2010:1487). This may explain why, in the present research, there was a reluctance to initiate the required self-referral process for any psychiatric assessment in relation to mental health issues. This reluctance to disclose personal mental health issues, such as PTSD, for fear of it being perceived as a 'weakness' or 'pathologised' (Walkerdine 2006:18) could have impeded any career aspirations. For both Alan and Paul this prolonged denial resulted in additional problems through lack of appropriate early treatment. These delays also had implications for the final level of compensation and pension awarded and their ability to plan for the future. Even Chad initially denied having dyslexia, which might have been to preserve a successful soldier's masculine identity and to avoid being perceived as having such a weakness.

Support by the military of injured soldiers' recovery encourages them to retrieve both mental and physical optimum fitness. However, as their configurations of disabilities tend to be idiosyncratic, this results in individualised support programmes tailored to each of their specific combination of conditions. For instance, Paul was treated with a discrete and very individualised therapy such as eye movement disassociation (similar to cognitive behavioural therapy) and drug therapy which, so far, has had limited success and the drug therapy has had several serious side effects, particularly on his educational studies.

Research by Westwood *et al* (2010) and van der Kolk (1987) amongst others, suggest the importance of simultaneous proactive involvement with peer groups should also be augmented because individual therapeutic approaches do not necessarily improve soldiers' abilities to engage successfully with the interpersonal difficulties that arise from exposure to traumatic stress. Paul's discrete individualised therapy was at odds with the powerful ethos of comradeship, collegiality and interdependence that underpinned his antecedent military experiences, where strong group allegiances operate to achieve common goals. Westward (2010:46) suggests that more group-focussed approaches can facilitate 're-empowerment by encouraging mutual support'. In addition, van der Kolk (1987:163) suggests that group work is 'regarded as a treatment of choice for many patients with PTSD'.

In relation to this, Caddick *et al* (2015) explored how displacement activities underpinned with powerful notions of hegemonic masculinity provide similar experiences to previous military contexts. These can replicate the norms of such comradeship, which in his study involved a group of IECs learning the difficult skills of wind surfing, and provided opportunities for regular discussions centred on the new learning experiences and how they were coping with PTSD in relation to these new challenges. These displacement activities are similar on a larger scale to those promoted by the 'Walking with the Wounded' enterprise founded in 2010, which arranges difficult physical challenges for participants such as extreme running expeditions in different parts of the world, incorporating teams of wounded servicemen and women, both those with physical and mental injuries. There are also parallels with the therapeutic theatrical experiences of Chad whose opportunities to dramatise his combat experiences through professional theatrical acting on stage with other IECs over a period of months helped to facilitate his successful adjustment. Out of the three case studies to date, he shows no signs of the typical problems associated with PTSD. The experience of such cognitive challenges has parallels with Caddick *et al's* (2015) research discussed above. In addition, intra and inter-university support groups for other service personnel who are undertaking degrees may be beneficial.

Another finding was that the extent of mental health issues experienced by ex-combatants has profound implications for the final level of compensation and pension subsequently awarded. This present research shows how reluctance to acknowledge the severity, and even denial, of a mental health condition such as

PTSD can impede access to appropriate essential support tailored to their individual needs and especially an IEC's ability to anticipate what support they may need should they wish to enter higher education.

5.3.5 Action Plans for Future Education to Augment Second Careers

Strachan *et al* (2010:24) in his report on the *Covenant* noted that, 'if [service personnel] were going to be able to move into the civilian world, successfully understanding of the broader context of their circumstances needed further detailed exploration'.

In relation to this, and of special significance, were the difficulties IECs found in formulating long-term comprehensive plans for their future that required a completely new language relating to self with which they were unfamiliar.

Once injured, the recovery period to optimum fitness can be lengthy, typically from one to three years, and during this time the IECs are encouraged to make action plans for re-settlement support of their civilian future. However, it is clear from these case studies that there are often unrealistic expectations by the MOD of an ex-combatant's ability to purposefully engage with imaginative and productive strategic planning of their lives for a second career. For a number of years their lives have been rigorously controlled by highly prescriptive military regulations

governing daily behaviour and actions. In addition they are adjusting to their recent injuries and, as Chad revealed:

> My wife made a beautiful comment about a month ago, 'it is unfair to ask somebody who has just woken up from a coma and has had his career, his body parts ripped away from him, his prospects ripped away from him, his sanity ripped away from him, it is unfair to ask him when he wakes up - well what do you want to do now?" because the reality is if you wake up in a hospital after getting blown up it will take you months to realise what has happened, or understand the magnitude of what has happened to you and it's unfair to ask somebody what are you going to do'.

Savin-Baden (2008:14) describes this as an 'interplay of striated and smooth learning spaces where problematic situations causes disjuncture… where this new learning is …counterintuitive, alien, emanating from another culture or discourse' manifesting in 'an overwhelming stuckness'. Meyer and Land (2005:376) suggest that 'being stuck [is] a protracted liminal state' where a shift in perspectives needed for personal development can be 'troubling'. This failing to choose could also constitute a 'violent border crossing' Walkerdine (2006:13).

Chad stated that, "there's a reason why there's so many ex-military in jail or on the streets [and] the reason is because there's no clear path for non-commissioned members of the armed forces." This view finds support from Ashcroft (2014) whose *Review* recommends that personnel on entry to the services should be required to create a personal development plan, a pathway which should also prepare them for a second career, rather than waiting until they are about to be discharged. However as Lorraine, Chad's wife commented, such activity requires the support, professional understanding and skills of a trained career advisor; a

much more engaging, collaborative approach is needed, “let's work together [and] think about what you are interested in, what are you prepared to study?”.

Expert civilian personnel should be closely involved with providing guidance and advice to IECs to support the construction of flexible, realistic action plans or professional development plans for their transition to civilian life. Further, since such decisions are clearly not made in isolation and have effects on the whole family network, this engagement should include at least one chosen significant other such as wife, partner, mother or father. Goode (2007) suggests that, when disabled it is especially important to have realistic expectations for transitions into education.

5.3.6 Support Services

Another finding of this research relates to issues of social justice. A variety of different support packages, both procedural and distributional, were available but were determined by geographical location with significant variations between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is clear from this investigation that Young’s (1990:24, 171) ‘relational component’ is provided by support services such as educational institutions, charitable organisations and the NHS but which are clearly very variable. Other analyses of the *Covenant* by Walters (2012:17, 23) identified a lack of clarity and divisive levels of provision and significant absence of coordination between the MOD and other support agencies.

Although successive reports have noted the limited collaboration and coordination between agencies which has resulted in only some small initiatives, the large numbers of military personnel that have been discharged through injuries from the 13-year conflict in Afghanistan, many presenting with psychological issues, needs significantly greater prioritisation. Some of the findings surrounding transitional issues of IECs and their families in this study may offer some explanation of a recent prison report by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ 2014). It identifies that at least 3.5% of the prison population were once employed by the armed forces and suggests that, whilst as a society we owe veterans a huge debt of gratitude, a much more tailored response to their individual needs should be implemented. In other words, the MOJ (2014) acknowledges that ex-combatants are a special case with unique issues, which resonates with IECs applying to undertake higher education in the present research.

5.3.7 Demilitarising

This study has also revealed some of the broader imperatives and typical responsibilities IECs need to understand to achieve successful discharge into a civilian environment. Ormerod (2009:325) claims that ‘leaving the forces for civilian employment can be a shock as they have been used to the clarity of a clear culture defined by hierarchies and structures’. This present investigation also reveals the limited demilitarising of combatants prior to discharge to prepare them adequately for the typical responsibilities they will encounter in civilian life. These include such things as inexperience in budgeting and financial management of

income and resources and domestic and dietary responsibilities which were long since discharged to the apparatus of military supervision. Ormerod (2009:325) identifies that in a military context on a basic level, housing needs are satisfied, bills are paid, meals are provided, routines are established, which many have described as corresponding to ‘family’. When asked to describe the existing military protocols and preparation for life as a civilian prior to discharge, Len commented:

> We don't … we were hoping that Hasler Company would … all be civilian orientated, and declare to the IECs 'you're not in the military anymore, this is it, we're going to pay you for the next 12 months, however everything we do will be civvie' [but this did not happen].

The Ashcroft (2014) *Review* suggests that protecting operational service personnel enables them to focus on their military duties, and it also acknowledges that service leavers are unprepared for the imperatives associated with the routines and management of personal finances. It recognises that a more rigorous financial preparation is needed and recommends that it should be included as part of a professional development plan. Many of these were long since delegated to the apparatus of military supervision. Joan, the mother of Alan, declared that during the initial recovery period there was, “considerable time wasted, which could last as long as three years”, she felt the time could be used more purposefully in preparation for a civilian life. Chad’s wife Lorraine expressed similar feelings saying that:

> … the problem is they’ve got no plan for each of these guys [they are expected] to be on the base for three weeks at a time but [all they] do is three hours of physio each morning … They don’t equip them really to think for themselves or to take action for themselves. They just don’t know how to do it. They’re not stupid but they’ve just

> always been told where to be and what to turn up with and when to come and that's what they're used to. They don't understand a life without those parameters.

Although this does not directly relate to a pathway to higher education, understanding final financial awards, the pensions, the fees for education and maintenance whilst the IECs are on their programme of studies, impacts on the whole family, especially the spouses who face additional challenging demands by this transition, not least supporting their partners in their recovery and achieving their educational aspirations. As Carol, Alan's wife, revealed with regard to these changed family finances, "[It puts] a lot of pressure on me". Unsurprisingly it seems sensible to suggest that at least six months before leaving the military the IECs should learn the essential skills necessary to achieve greater autonomy such as budgeting and management of income, resources and domestic and dietary responsibilities, as well as civilian dress codes and appropriate behaviour in civilian employment contexts.

5.3.8 Follow-up Procedures and Support for Families

> The common crisis point is the moment when personnel leave the service; Service leavers and their families need strong support during this rite of passage. In addition to the in-service support […], the principal issues are to retain contact after leaving the service; to make sure that those who need support know how to access it; to reassure them that to do so is not to lose face; and to remove their sense of isolation after the close-knit community of service life (Strachan *et al* 2010:24).

In discussing follow-up procedures with Len, he commented that when he began his job as Employment Co-coordinator it was agreed with the MOD that there would be "…support [for] them throughout [for] at least for another two years". The MOD would **"**keep in touch via, for example, regular newsletters but this did not materialise**"** and fairly quickly, Len had to reduce the level of support he provided to intermittent telephone communication and with little organisational support, he found this too time-consuming to sustain any effectiveness. Fairly quickly the newsletters and telephone calls "had gone by the wayside because it's just ... there's not enough of us to actually manage it all".

In addition, it is clear from all three case studies that there is little support for spouses and no follow-up procedures in place once the men have been discharged. Len suggested that these responsibilities had been:

> …covertly shifted to other kinship, especially the spouses, for whom little help and guidance was provided … there is no support for the wives, rather the assumption that they will look after their husbands once discharged …there's no support for them [once the IECs are assigned to the base] we might sit down and have a cup of tea with them if they want to talk, and that's it. Other than that we would suggest they go and see their own GP at home and ask for assistance … There is no direction, there is no support for families.

This is again confirmed in Ashcroft's (2014:133) *Review* on transition of veterans:

> … consideration of the family during resettlement is an essential element of successful transition. Indeed, unsurprisingly, service personnel themselves often said that the security and prospects for their family was more important than their own.

Alan's mother suggested that IECs should be provided with a direct contact telephone number where they can be identified by their own military serial number to provide support and advice at any time. This has also been recommended by Ashcroft (2014) in the form of a 'Veteran Card' that provides a direct telephone number and website address that would enable them to contact an appropriate person for advice and help. That said, so much support depends on family members that the 'obligation for life' and 'operational effectiveness' described in the *Covenant (*2011:1, 8) depends very much on this wider kinship. Since support for such major decisions as career changes are made jointly, acknowledgment of this could be recognised by extending this contact support to spouses or partners.

In relation to the support needs of both the family network and the IECs, Chad's mother commented, "… the question that you'd ask is should that holding of the hand ever go away?" Whilst she did not say this to diminish her son's resilience, it is perhaps better to suggest that the holding can stop but the hand should always be there.

5.4 Specific Recommendations to Facilitate a Smoother Pathway into Education

In the following section I discuss with reference to this research how specific recommendations emerge to facilitate a smoother pathway into education. The following five recommendations are made as a result of this investigation and cover admissions criteria for higher education programmes, equality of education

provision, funding and maintenance support for education and better preparation for entry into higher education for ex-service personnel.

5.4.1 Accredited for Learning

The Ashcroft *Review* (2014:39) acknowledges:

> …a lack of transferability of qualifications and licences to the civilian employment market, [which] was a barrier to service leavers seeking jobs, with some former personnel having to retake qualifications at considerable personal expense to make them valid in the civilian world.

Current admissions procedures for some universities are inflexible, resisting accreditation of much of the prior learning and skills achieved by applicants during their military careers. For example, when Chad was considering his application to pursue a career in medicine, his professional accident and emergency training and experience as a battlefield medic did not appear to be considered relevant.

> Chad: [the] hoops [I had] to jump through [were]... just too hard [I was] 31 years old, a grown man [and] the entry requirements [for me] to go into a university in this country [were] almost exactly the same as the entry requirements for somebody who is 17.

His wife Lorraine also felt there ought to be greater institutional support which recognised alternative criteria: “had there been a straightforward test … particularly if he achieved a high percentage it would clearly confirm that he had university potential”.

Since the *Covenant* acknowledges the debt of gratitude owed to veterans who can be described as a population with special and unique needs, prior to the discharge of IECs and whilst still employed by the military, there should be much closer liaison between the MOD and university admissions faculties, so accreditation for learning can be linked more closely to the programmes of study. Goode's (2007:46) findings of the initial experiences of students with disabilities when they enter university were that 'institutions overestimate the accessibility of terminology and the information students get sent in advance and make unrealistic assumptions that what insiders are familiar with will be obvious to newcomers'.

An additional, comprehensive informative process should be established to familiarise this cohort of ex-military applicants with the lexicon of academic procedures and protocols so that they are cognisant of the administrative knowledge and skills needed for successful entry to higher education institutions.

5.4.2. Equality in Education Provision

Chad noted important inequalities in educational provision for different ranks offered by the military, claiming that there were differences between:

> the men [non-commissioned personnel] and the officers [commissioned]; [they] are educated and the men are not … it's a class structure; it's tough; but people should have the opportunity... because I know officers can go to university, they can pick and choose

When he had shown interest in applying to do A' level mathematics and chemistry he was told " 'No, no, no you're in the wrong place … we can't do that … the military doesn't offer A' levels ... they offer you courses so that you can get skill sets' ".

> Len: Once injured they [the MOD] did try to encourage a strong educational route but unfortunately as time went by this was no longer the MOD's priority … we pushed it, don't get me wrong. I turned around and said when I first started my job was employment and education. It's now just employment, we don't even bother with the education.

This is borne out by the Ashcroft *Review* (2014) where education seems to focus on gaining skills linked to moving up the ranks for career management development, raising literacy and numeracy levels and apprenticeships with technical trades rather than enhanced accreditation through additional non-operational civilian qualifications, such as A' levels and degree programmes that would require considerable motivation and financial contribution from individuals.

Walters (2012:17, 23) identified a lack of clarity and divisive levels of provision and significant absence of coordination between the MOD and other agencies in the *Covenant*.

> … the Covenant is difficult to translate with vague formal and informal verbal formulae which both instruct the law and practice … a common area that constrained delivery in the past was that the provision of support and services for most areas are not under the direct responsibility of the MOD'

There appear to be inconsistencies in advice depending on the person asked, which depends on the knowledge the person has: ‘The chain of command may not be aware of the schemes on offer and be reluctant to promote them if they are’ (Ashcroft 2014:43). This arbitrary process of labelling the future potential of non-commissioned personnel in such a restrictive way is likely to establish a self-fulfilling prophecy of underachievement following their discharge.

Universities and colleges need to liaise much more with the MOD to allow for a more heterogeneous range of educational and training opportunities incorporated into this process. This could include, for example, trained personnel encouraging online A’ level programmes of study that will enhance rather than limit the future aspirations of IECs. A good example of this is Alan, who was able to draw on the cultural capital of his parents and successfully completed an online programme in English Language and Creative Writing and subsequently gained access to university.

Since Chad’s dyslexia was not diagnosed whilst employed, automatic testing to reveal learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyscalculia is recommended to anticipate any support needs necessary and to identify more clearly aspirations for higher education or career choices, especially if discharge is imminent.

5.4.3 Fees for Education

There is a lack of clarity regarding funding of fees available by the MOD and various charitable organisations, which even when awarded are variable and payments often delayed which aggravated anxieties. Alan, for example, regularly experienced late payment of fees.

There was also some confusion regarding the provider of Alan's funding for his degree. Alan's wife commented, "I do think the MOD's paid for Alan actually. It was supposed to be Help for Heroes but I do think it has come from the MOD… I don't care as long as someone pays it".

It is clear from this investigation that, at present, there is limited collaboration between those agencies able to provide support services such as educational institutions, charitable organisations and the NHS. For instance, at his first interview, Alan was in considerable discomfort because he had been kept waiting for two months for prescribed pain relief for his injured foot. Lack of collaboration makes it difficult for families who need advice to find appropriate support and, as Len comments, "we are Service, they are veterans, you will not cross-pollinate with them at all … there's no cross training, there's no [collaboration]."

The Ashcoft *Review* (2014:132) highlights similar concerns:

> … as well as overlap between organisations, there were also gaps in provision … came across cases of veterans who had contacted several charities but ultimately fallen between the cracks or given up in frustration … it appears that some charities do not track cases to a

> successful conclusion; if the client goes off the radar there is no pursuit.

This needs major organisational improvement and perhaps the service leaver's card may help to track individual's needs more effectively. Further investigations also need much more focus on the family network for they are an integral part of this transition, especially if the family continue to support IECs into higher education rather than immediate employment.

5.4.4. Maintenance Support for Education

Len was increasingly concerned that IECs were not receiving any maintenance support whilst in education:

> [there is] a complete absence of financial maintenance whilst studying which left this responsibility to the families … [I] would recommend that a maintenance allowance should also be awarded on top of the fees ... [this should be an] automatic right for people who are medically discharged if they're going into [higher education] … you retire on medical pension on completion of your course … If they go to university they cannot physically … go out and get a job and hold a job down to support a family… it would not be that difficult [for the MOD] to turn around and say we will keep you on … in the services until you have actually finished your training

Some form of maintenance grant should form an essential part of educational support to prevent excessive stress on family resources and the increased possibility of withdrawal from their study programmes. Both Paul and Alan's wives recounted the serious financial difficulties experienced by the family that had to accommodate the shortfall in weekly income, which added more pressure whilst

the IECs were studying. As Len explained, “paying for their course and their tuition is different to being supported”.

5.4.5. Taster Programmes for Higher Education

Research in the US by Glasser *et al* (2009) on ex-combatants attending college found that, not only are veterans still recovering from physical and mental wounds, but they are also confronted by a culture shock in the classroom. Len was very positive about the taster programme run by Plymouth University and he felt that it showed the IECs that higher education was quite different from their previous primary, secondary and college educational experiences, noting that the IECs who attended the taster programme were all better prepared and keen to enter higher education. Others who had not attended such a preparation “would have been better assisted and have benefited [had they completed the university taster programme]”.

Similar taster programmes of study for ex-combatants are recommended to raise aspirations and provide orientation, insight and greater understanding of the normative structures, culture and protocols that operate in higher education to improve their successful integration into this new environment.

5.4.6 Future Research

Due to the time constraints of the doctorate programme, it was not possible to track the IECs for a longer period to explore the long-term outcomes regarding the

role of higher education in the transition to civilian life among them and their families. There are significant issues to be explored by such future research, which could also include the first two case studies that began this present investigation in 2009/2010. A total of five cases studies could be investigated further and the broader effects of the education they undertook could be reviewed, their employment and the influences on their subjective experience of their health and those of their families, making it a much more comprehensive longitudinal study.

Further, I feel there is sufficient research data to provide a wealth of further interpretation and understanding of a wide range of issues that are integral to military family narratives, both during and post-combat situations. What is already clear is that termination of military service has profound effects on other family members as well as the discharged soldier. The transcripts of the IECs, their wives, parents, children and others in their network contain other important stories that also need to be heard and understood. Many of these were beyond the scope of this present research. Themes that were not included, for example, are evidenced in the painful narratives of the wives' coping strategies when their husbands and partners were on tour in Afghanistan

A lot of data discussed these anxieties from the wives' perspectives whilst their husbands or partners were away. At times it seemed a lonely existence in ways

that civilians would find difficult to comprehend. This was vividly recounted when Lorraine, Chad's wife, revealed:

> Well that's the thing, obviously I have my family around me and lots of nice friends but none of them know what it's like. I don't come from a military family; none of my friends are with military guys, so it's really difficult. And while they're really sympathetic they can't empathise because they don't know.

She continued with a reference to the sources of comfort that wives explored to alleviate their emotional anxieties:

> At least then you feel if you get up at one in the morning because you're so worried and you can't get it out of your head that you've got something to do and maybe there's something up there [online] like a glean of information, or as you say someone is actually feeling exactly as you are is a real comfort.

Certain episodes that would usually engender relatively mild irritations in a typical civilian marital relationship can often assume a much graver and painful significance when military families experience them, as Carol, Alan's wife, disclosed:

> Well I'd missed some [phone calls], like sometimes he'd say he'd ring at a certain time … miss it. I just cried for the rest of the day.

Chad's wife, Lorraine, underlined the elaborated coping strategies that she developed to contain the daily underlying rhythm of stress that is typical of such military family situations when she said:

> It's never out of your mind. It's always the thing that's with you all the time. You are taking any opportunity to go onto the internet forum for wives and mums and dads and girlfriends etc. of the lads that are out on tour so they can talk to each other on this forum. You are constantly on that wanting a bit of news thinking other people probably know a bit more than you do. You are prepared to drop

> anything important meetings, anything that's going on you're prepared to drop it to step outside and take that phone call when they call. Nothing matters more than that phone call. I would take my phone with me to the gym, into yoga (which wasn't well-received), I'd take my phone and I didn't care what anyone else thought.
>
> I was apprehensive especially because I was pregnant as well when he went, seven months pregnant with Elizabeth. And then when he got injured I was three months pregnant. It was probably the worst month of my life if I'm being honest with you. It was just awful, especially when I missed his phone call.
>
> When they're away it's like you said crying, waiting for the phone call, and because I was here and no one really understood, my friends.

Rose, Paul's wife, confirmed the sense of imminent danger that for her and other wives pervades each day as it unfolds:

> You don't watch [the TV] half the time. It's awful. You are petrified when the phone goes; you're petrified when it doesn't go. It's very strange. It's one of those things you just kind of deal with each day. You know as well, if you don't get a telephone call is that because he's had an accident or is that because somebody else has had an accident, because you know that there's a communication blackout. And although you see it on the news I suppose there is that....you know that once it's come on the news it's not you!

Other coping techniques to facilitate family adaptation and coping with regard to children's experiences was described by Rose, Paul's wife:

> We would have a chuff chart. You tick off the sleeps until daddy comes home. So they have something to work towards, they can cross or tick off and that's a day closer to daddy getting home. Before he went away he bought them a teddy bear with a voice in it. She would have that, whereas Jack was very happy-go-lucky but you could still see, he would get very bad tempered, aggressive. They did feel it.

Lorriane, Chad's wife, elaborated on how the routine of anxieties that contextualise each day's activities become part of the fabric of their lives as a military wife:

> Well it was and I really wasn't expecting it. It was his second tour. The first tour I spent six months absolutely terrified, seven as it turned out. The first tour was awful and this tour I thought 'okay relax, we've done this before, it was fine last time, and it'll be fine this time', and I tried to be more, a bit more sanguine about it than I was the time before, so I really wasn't expecting it, it was a huge shock.

As the serving military personnel are to some extent brutalised by their combat experiences this can be mirrored in the revisions of many of their wives' attitudes and values too that civilians might find difficult to comprehend, as Lorraine explained:

> Chad has been injured I don't know anything else. And that was it, so it was terrifying. We didn't know anything for three hours. …Brigadier turns up at [Chad's mother's] house and they talk and then she puts him on the phone to me immediately and he says 'He's alive' which is all you wanted to know, and then he says 'he's lost his right leg below the knee, he's got eye injuries, etc. etc.'. He went through this absolute litany of injuries all of which I completely ignored because you just want to know that that person is alive, and that's all I cared about and the whole 'oh well he's lost his right leg', I thought 'so fucking what!' Big deal!
>
> It was absolute terror. I just don't know how we got through that three hours to be honest, it was just a nightmare.

Again the alienation that military wives frequently feel in relation to their civilian friends and peers shows in the following comments:

> I was just so relieved to have him home, that he was alive. I just felt like we could really cope with anything because I was really grateful. It sounds mad, and people say to me 'oh god you must feel so angry about this, you must feel it is all so unfair', I bloody don't. I feel really lucky. That explosion...three guys died. Chad wasn't well enough so I had to go to those funerals on his behalf. I'm sat in those funerals at the back of the church and god help me thinking 'thank god that's not me'. Awful, awful thing to think when you're at a funeral and you can see the agony of the families, absolute agony but you just sit there and think...and you literally thank the lord, and you go 'thank you, it's not me, it's not us'. So I was just so grateful. And people say you must be so angry about everything, you must feel so unlucky it's so

> unfair and I think 'no we're the lucky ones here I feel damn grateful thank you very much'.

These are just snapshots of poignant comments that run through the transcripts from the interviews that were focussed on network experiences of the wives and partners. The wording of the 2008 *Covenant* referred to earlier in this research stated ‘that they (and their families) (sic) will be sustained and rewarded by commensurate terms and conditions of service…’ (Military Covenant Commission 2008:10). This thesis noted that the wording in the *Covenant* acknowledged injured personnel but the wider kinship support was identified in parenthesis. Revisions to the key principles made in May 2011, which removed the parenthesis emphasised more clearly that, ‘Families also play a vital role in supporting the ‘operational effectiveness of our armed forces’ (MOD 2011:1). However, it remains questionable whether the burden of responsibility and critical roles carried out by wives especially, is as yet politically recognised and acknowledged sufficiently in the support apparatus that still operates. This suggests that the parenthesis remain to some degree and still subordinate the functions of these family members in the recovery process of IECs. Further research is needed to prioritise our understanding of the fundamental critical importance of these family networks and the vital contributions they make to support this ‘operational effectiveness’ during service and following discharge.

One approach for further research would be to realign the trajectory and focus with greater emphasis on the experiences of the wives and partners of IECs. These network members who have surrounded the families have provided, especially for

the wives, a different form of support and as a consequence these nominations may reveal a change in the positions of significance for the wives when compared to their spouses. Such an interpretative research project derived from their stories could throw further light on perhaps more subtle nuances about the support needed.

5.5 Summary and Conclusion

This research shows that for transitions to be successful for the IECs, their rejuvenation needs the augmentation of very substantial generosity in kinship support, especially from wives. In this investigation wives were strong, organised and capable women yet they appeared to continually acquiesce to the IECs' needs and even subordinate their own career interests and ambitions to support their husband's aspirations. At the same time, the biographical narratives of all three IECs also record a resistance to intervention from kinship concerning their career choices and entry into the military, which is to some extent evidenced in their independent decisions regarding their subsequent redeployment following injury and discharge.

Whilst the IECs needed to maintain an exceptional single-minded focus to achieve a successful outcome in their transitions requiring some realignment of personal priorities, conversations with the wives revealed the extent of their own opportunity costs so that their husbands may reach satisfactory readjustment. For example two of the spouses were aware that following discharge there would be a

significant reduction of family income with consequential financial constraints. This resulted in a reconfiguration of conjugal roles where responsibility for earning and managing the family finances needed to support their husband's educational and career choices fell much more on wives than other kin. However, this present study found that IECs make very independent, even selfish, decisions when they relate to their career paths. Within the new conjugal realignments they increasingly need to acknowledge and accommodate the sources of support they draw on as they are more reliant on these close networks to support their decision-making than they were prior to injury.

The recently restored *Covenant* acknowledges the debt of gratitude the nation owes to the military forces and recognises that the 'operational effectiveness' of the armed forces depends vitally on the support of the family (MOD 2011:1). However, what this present research *shows* is that, whilst the family network is a vital component in the 'operational effectiveness' for transitional readjustment especially following injury, surprisingly, the *Covenant* fails to continue acknowledgement of this effectiveness by the spouse once discharge has occurred.

The poet Ernest Henley has captured many of the essentials of this process of change and repair that this research has revealed. In the final lines of his poem, 'Invictus' (Henley 2015*)* he describes the courage needed to retrieve dignity and

agency in the face of adversity, so that IECs are able to once again declare that, ‘I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul’.

The stoicism and courage of IECs in general to adjust and manage adversities has been well-documented. The moving accounts in this investigation are testimony to this stoicism and, as Ecclestone (2007:455) writes, rather than diminishing IECs through their disablement their accounts ‘celebrate[s] human agency’. One of the many strengths of this research is that it captures the essence of this stoicism, and the attempts to retrieve that agency, which was facilitated by all members of each IECs’ network, including children, who share in this transitional process of achieving a re-constituted self. Therefore uniquely this thesis has given voice to not only the IECs but to all their nominated family networks. By using a network approach, much greater detail is revealed of the little acknowledged but extraordinary levels of support needed for the IECs from family and significant others in order to achieve a restoration of self and for the IECs to become ‘captain of their soul[s]’ again (Henley 2015).

This research has provided me with an emotional journey through the opportunity to share the experiences they have all endured as I joined them in their transitions. In relation to this, a key element of naturalism is the demand that the social researcher should have an attitude of respect or appreciation towards the social world. However, as can be seen in my reflections, particularly in the ethics section, one of the weaknesses of this approach is that it is difficult to detach oneself from

such emotional immersion and in one instance I felt trapped in the IEC's story. In addition, when reflecting on the other interviews, sometimes their anger became my anger and their distress my distress and I felt pride in their achievements too; a transference of emotion which is extensively discussed in Freud's (1973) writing. There is however a 'growing acceptance of emotion in qualitative research', as discussed by Rager (2005:24) who suggests that understanding emotion is essential in some theoretical contexts. Sciarra (1999:44) elaborates further '...because entering the meaning making world of another requires empathy, [and] it is inconceivable how the qualitative researcher would accomplish her (sic) goal by distancing herself from emotions'.

As far as education pathways are concerned this thesis has clearly shown that IECs bring with them unique issues and are a special needs population. For the men and women to have an equitable fighting chance in relation to higher education programmes of study, educational institutions need to make much more thoughtful and comprehensive provision and support so as not to prejudice their chances of success.

5.5.1 Present Circumstances of the Three Case Studies

A brief biographical reference to the present circumstances of these three case studies and their spouses seems appropriate. Alan, case study 1, following discharge has been very successful at university in his studies in English Language with Creative Writing. He has completed the three-year degree

programme and was awarded a first class degree with honours in 2015. His wife Carol also successfully completed her studies in Beauty Therapy and has now established her own business which enables her to manage child care with Elizabeth more easily.

Paul has not returned to his university studies and at present is employed as a Paramedic ambulance driver. After a number of years his PTSD was finally acknowledged as a permanent disability and as a result he was awarded a substantial financial payment and commensurate pension. His wife Rose has now successfully completed her degree in Nursing Studies and they continue to live with their two children Christine and Jason and have become much more integrated with their civilian community.

Chad, case study 3, following his successful theatrical debut as lead actor in a London West End stage production has continued in his acting career and more recently has had some success in television. He has also continued his links with the military through a variety of media productions.

As this research has given voice to the IECs and their families, and it seems to me their commentary shouts louder from these pages far more powerfully than anything I write, it is befitting to conclude this thesis with a poem written in blank verse by Alan during the early part of his career as a Royal Marine in Afghanistan and prior to his injuries.

From my perspective his poem explores the incongruity of life and death that defines human experience, but however the poem is interpreted, its existence represents a celebration of the stoicism, resilience and renewed aspirations for the IECs and their families.

A Marine finds a Scorpion in his Sleeping Bag

how angry he is

a scorpion invades his resting place
its foreign feet have found another's home

trapped in a matchbox
in his pocket
the patrol stops
for water by a village
it's released
beside the river

and the local children crush it
with rocks.

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Appendix 1: EdD 621 Fighting Chance: Border Crossing

Abstract

Many injured military combatants who have seen service in Iraq and Afghanistan are seeking to retrain in a civilian context. Two such candidates are undertaking a University of Plymouth teacher training programme. This case study has two aims: to gather preliminary data about why they undertook the programme, their hopes, aspirations and experiences; and to consider any future recommendations that could support injured military personnel's pathways into higher education. Insights have revealed the complexity of transition between semiotic shifts caused by discursive practices in a civilian world and a need for a bespoke adaptation of disability protocols adopted by the University. There is a need to provide support during transition using ex-military significant others as mentors. Walkerdine's (2006) conceptions of transformation, parallel the marines' experiences in this study, who are at an 'intersection' between phases in the development of their lives leaving the military and re-engaging within a civilian culture. This resonates with Daloz's (1986) developmental perspective of transformative learning. (*160 words should be 150*)

Keywords: Transformative learning, psychological borderlands, zones of intersection, semiotic discursive practices, Disability Assist , Royal Marines, Postgraduate /Certificate in Education (PGCE/Cert Ed)

Introduction: First Meetings

I was first introduced to the two Royal Marines (Case A and Case B) who became the subject of this research at the University of Plymouth (UoP). They were accompanied by their colour sergeant when a colleague and I had an informal interview with them to discuss the Postgraduate /Certificate in Education (PGCE/Cert. Ed.) teacher training programmes for adult learners. Each would need a teaching placement and a mentor. In response to questions concerning their motivation to engage in a teaching career rather than a degree, for which both Case A and Case B seemed eminently suitable, they replied that, like many of "the lads" (a generic military descriptor) who had educational aspirations, they had very limited time and resources. They felt the PGCE/Cert.Ed. programme had considerable status in the civilian world and would enable them to apply their professional knowledge and experience to train others and find employment. In addition, it would help them to enhance and improve their academic skills.

The marines were both 24 years of age and had initially contracted to a military career of 22 years, with expectations of sustained employment. One of the ex-marines wanted to attend the full-time programme and the other part time. In the context of their injuries I was immediately surprised by their skilled articulation and positive and forward-thinking approach to their futures.

Case A revealed that further surgery would be necessary on his injured leg with the possibility of complete amputation. I suggested that he may need to register with Disability Assist (DAS) at the University to establish the type of support he might need in order to complete the programme, such as parking space and access on campus. Surprisingly, he denied that this would be a problem because current standards of prosthesis are extremely good and any transportation difficulties would be resolved by reference and support of his military peers. The resilience shown to such medical prognosis and his refusal to accept incapacity I felt was quite striking.

Case B confirmed that he had been on two tours in Afghanistan and later disclosed that he had been awarded the Military Cross during his first tour, but he was very discreet, even embarrassed, about such disclosure. He was subsequently diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Case B shows similar resilience to his disability and casually admits to having "night sweats" which he just "accepts and gets on with things".

At the time of this first meeting I had become aware through media reports of the increasing numbers of casualties caused particularly through improvised exploding devices (IEDs) in Afghanistan. Information about this was freely available through Defence Analytical Services and Advice (DASA), the principal organisation that publishes official statistics on such matters. There had also been publicity through media news sources such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to 'retrain ex-troops' (2008a; 2008b) as teachers, which was linked to the US-style programmes for returning former soldiers. In Britain there was an historical precedent for this with the Emergency Teacher Training Scheme of the Ministry of Defence flagship resettlement programme after World War Two (Allport, 2010). These ideas have more recently been reformulated in a White Paper (TDA, 2010) and announced by Secretary of State Michael Gove from the Department for Education, which states that some 200 armed forces leavers could receive sponsorship through bursaries of £9,000 to train as teachers. In addition, he has pledged to pay university tuition fees for first degrees for anyone who had completed an active tour of duty.

Increasingly, media reports have suggested that there will be a significant number of injured military personnel who, like the two marines in this case study, face an uncertain future. The trends discussed above led me to believe there would be further ex-service marines with disabilities who might seek redeployment as teachers, which was confirmed in conversation with the marine's colour sergeant following these first meetings. After initial rehabilitation, marines may increasingly be relocated to Plymouth Royal Naval Dockyard, which was to become a national centre for rehabilitation of military personnel. I felt that, by mapping the trajectory of these marines while they undertook the teacher training programme, it would enable me to gain insight into their experiences and allow me to consider future recommendations to support any further injured military personnel's pathways into teacher training or, even, other higher education (HE) programmes.

Theoretical Position

The concept of transformative learning, introduced in 1978 by Mezirow, forms a conceptual framework on how adults learn. The contributions of several theorists within this area are reflected in many authors, such as Freire (1970), Daloz (1986), Boyd (1991) and Dirkx (1997), and it is from these authors' works, but in particular Daloz, from which this paper draws. Transformative theorists have similarities in that the need to find and construct meaning within our lives is a key factor which motivates adults to participate in formal learning experiences Dirkx, (1998). From the literature Dirkx (1998) suggests that the strands of transformative learning all agree on the need for both personal and social change as a means of enhancing freedom within our lives. All these threads stress the significance that, through educative experiences learners engage and confront novel situations and 'through critical reflection and revaluating' question existing assumptions, values and beliefs (Freire, 2001, p.43).

The connection with this research is that Daloz's (1986) developmental ideas on transformation appear to resonate with the biographical experiences of the ex-combatants in this study who have been denied redeployment in the military and, therefore, find themselves 'between phases of development', (cited in Dirkx, 1998, p.5). Daloz continues that meaning structures of the 'old phases seem worn, outdated and no longer relevant to their life experiences'. As Daloz emphasises, the psychosocial developmental context and movement to a new phase 'requires the adult learner to construct new meaning that helps them to perceive and make sense of the changing world', which as the marines' comments later show, reflect the discursive practices situated within the civilian sites and seem the most pertinent in the transition process of these two marines.

Daloz (2000, p. 112–117) sees four conditions of transformation: engagement with diversity and 'otherness'; critical reflection that 'can recognise others' voices as valid'; a mentoring community, through a relationship with significant others, which enables by 'shaping values and strengthen[ing] resolve'; and 'opportunities for committed action' where individuals will 'act on their evolving commitments'. Daloz's model of developmental transformative learning and Walkerdine's (2006) ideas, include not only a psychological developmental stance but also an anthropological theme, which were used as a framework to track the marines through the first stages of the teacher training programme (1986). Walkerdine (2006) uses the analogy of transformation as 'border crossing', which also resonates with Daloz's 'between phases of development'. Consequently the marines will need to:

> … change to accommodate new forms of work and ways of being, with resources understood as being one's own psychological resources, rather than those given by the community (Walkerdine, 2006, p.12).

Her stance includes social aspects 'where individuals become objects of a new gaze' (Walkerdine, 2006, p.13) where the marines 'retain ways of being from the past, but are simultaneously in two places at once, in a social world [with new] cultural and social practices'. The quote above highlights that, in addition to the social aspects, her work is also focussed on resources within ourselves that we draw upon in the development of the self through changed circumstances. This case study clearly reveals the ongoing resilience of these marines who have not only had to come to terms psychologically with their recent injuries, but also have been unexpectedly thrust into civilian social and economic contexts far earlier than they had originally planned. To elaborate further, Walkerdine (2000, p.11) uses this metaphorical concept of 'psychological borderlands' where she says that they exist at 'zones of intersection'. With this in mind, this present paper uses the same analogy as a framework to explain psychological cultural, and social borders in the context of the marines who have been encapsulated within military culture for several years. It could also be suggested, therefore, that while undergoing the teacher training programmes, a hybrid of both Daloz and Wakerdine's conceptions of transformation, illustrate that they are at an intersection between phases in the development of their lives, leaving the military and re-engaging within a civilian culture.

Arguably, it would be difficult to deny that these marines are already engaged in a transformational process caused by their recent physical and mental experiences in the theatre of war. However, they are now catapulted into unexpected imminent discharge with little redeployment on offer to date. Not only are they at Daloz's 'between phases of development' (Cited in Dirkz, 1998, p.5) but using Walkerdine's (2006, p. 11) metaphorical concept, they have arrived at the 'psychological borderlands of zones of intersection'.

Research Methods

This research involved a small-scale, qualitative case study drawn from an autobiographical genre. This is a biographical narrative in the spirit of reflexive ethnography through which the researcher's lens identified her professional life and the culture of the world she inhabited at the time. The advantages of adopting this approach is that this is where, as Denzin and Lincoln (2000: p 740) write, 'personal experience becomes important primarily in how it illuminates the culture under study' and where the researcher's experiences are actually 'studied along with other participants'. It was not intended that the research would necessarily focus on the marines' difficulties managing physical and mental disabilities but, rather, on the way the language of disability may affect the process of transition from a military to civilian culture. It would focus on social/psychological, semiotic, and discursive practices that surround disability. Semi-structured questions were used to set the agenda, but with an open-ended format where the interviewer took a 'secondary position in the process' (Sarantakos, 1997, p.249). The marines talked freely with minimum formal syntactical structure in the narrative to constrain their views. The raw clarity of their descriptions in the data gathered was critically analysed within the theoretical framework described, so that a valuable

contribution to present educational discourses, in the form of recommendations, could be achieved. Field notes were written up and interviews were recorded and transcribed. A meeting with one of the marine's mentors took place using the same format to discuss their experience of mentoring one of the marines. Emerging themes were drawn from their comments and are referred to throughout the analysis and discussion in this paper. However, it is important to note that the themes are not meant to be seen as definitive or totally inclusive, but are essentially offered as a framework for further discussion. As Sarantakos (1997, p.36) states, 'Reality is not objective but subjective; reality is what people see it to be'. The notion of truth, therefore, could be considered as a problematic term, but it is offered in this version drawn from the interviews and conversations and no more than that. Themes that emerged were related to the shortened and abrupt time span of their careers, issues of language in the civilian world such as humour, discursive practices surrounding disability, "education snobbery", and especially the pivotal role of the mentor. The approach in using this methodology represents the term 'interpretative sufficiency', aspects and qualities expressed in Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 145) as:

> taking seriously lives that are loaded with multiple interpretations which are grounded in cultural complexity possessing depth, detail emotionality, nuance and coherence that will permit a critical consciousness to be formed

The process of this research has not only given the marines a platform for their voices to be heard but, through this critical engagement, the researcher has experienced transformation in her understanding of injured military personnel, and subsequent experiences.

(1)

Analysis and Discussion of Interviews: What Led them to Apply for the Programme

> "… I'd intended to spend a long time in the forces like when I initially joined up, they did say that I would have a job for 22 years…" (Case A)

> "… So I hadn't actually planned, you know, a contingency plan {cos} they always went on about how they were going to look after us but obviously they took too many casualties -now they just don't want to be any part of that." (Case A)

> "I've already done 12 or 14 months in Afghan, I don't want to go back for another seven-month deployment and potentially not come home." (Case B)

Walkerdine adds a further dimension to Daloz and his ideas of transformative learning as she suggests that it carries with it shifts in demands of new practices in a changed labour market 'small embodied enactments, opposed to previous dispositions [which] could be viewed as an anxious border' (Walkerdine 2006, p.33).

> "… it just came out pretty clear that um they were going to get rid of everyone who couldn't return to commando fitness despite the fact I could … I'm at Army and Navy fitness because I couldn't return to that fitness even though I didn't want to be in that branch anymore they decided that I still had to go. So then I had to start in a way doing a bit of a panic…" (sic) (Case A)

> "… umm, a panic, well a panic situation because … I've been injured almost two years now. And the first year they just lied to me telling me they were going to keep me in so I'd concentrated on my rehab … and that turned out to be a complete waste of time now so I'm already behind by a year, umm. So this year, er, I had to like pick something up … well I don't have enough time to go for a full degree um and I didn't want to do sort of like the 'stocking filler' courses. [What do you mean by stocking filler? (Researcher)] Like small, like, six-week courses, week courses … they don't really give you anything but they're just more like you turn up and attend one which seem to be everywhere? I didn't want to pick up a trade because I've worked in a trade environment before during the marines and it just wasn't for me…"
> (Case A)

> "… it literally has been like, you know, 'right you're done. Think of something to do' and a lot of people spend years thinking about what they want to do and I've got like a really small window." (Case A)
> "… two tours of Afghanistan. Um. I was injured … with a mental injury. I came home and I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. The Royal Marines, have seen it fit to sort of medically discharge me to like become a civvy." (Case B)

> "Took me a couple of months to sort of get, to come to terms with it. But after I, well you know I can either sit around for the rest of my life sort of moaning about the fact that I've lost my career or I can just get up and, and move on with something else. Erm and the original plan was, the bigger picture was, to go into outdoor education when I left the marines anyway, but not, you know, for years down the line."
> (Case B)

As can be seen an emerging theme from the interviews was the shortened time span in which these combatants had to decide an educational career path and a concomitant urgency in their decisions and choices that amplified their anxiety. These marines were between phases, for example, by 'crossing a border' as

Walkerdine highlights, the marines retained past ways of relating to the world but simultaneously were having to come to terms with the lexicon of a civilian future.

(2)

Analysis and Discussion of Interviews: The Skills the Marines Brought to the Programme

Both Case A and B indentified commonalities of skills, such as being able to take fitness classes, good time management, communication, empathy, inspiring others and being able to work if necessary "on the hoof", as well as teamwork and behaviour management skills. Regarding behaviour management:

> …it's amazing how much easier they are to handle … one of the teachers … she said "oh but they'll do what you say because you're in the marines". (Case A)

> "When they're being difficult [you] put them in line, sometimes they don't react to it so the only way to get them to react … is to make them feel that they're letting everyone else down. So if you show them … come on I'm doing this and you make everyone else [its] peer pressure, then they play the game straight … [clicks fingers]. I've … noticed, um, it's supposed to be a mature environment but it's really 'Alpha Male-y' um… [Explain what you mean by 'Alpha Male-y' (Researcher)] Alpha Male … making faces at you, [if] they all think they can get away with it … it's definitely a male thing where men like to get together and they egg each other on and they feed off each others egos." (Case A)

Case A also mentioned teamwork and public speaking:

> "… it's pretty interesting actually because when I look at the people in my class [on the programme] here who've all got degrees and they've spent what you might call career students then they seem to be terrified of talking in public or standing up and stuff but it's just something you develop without knowing. Um, so that's already helped me straight away so it's put me ahead on the teaching side of it … I mean I'm used to working in team environments and…"

One issue that Case A found confusing had cropped up early on in his teaching practice:

> "… what is interesting is that when you ask them to do something and they say 'no' and I don't understand 'no'. What do you mean,

> 'no'?! You know? … so then you've got to try and work your way around it … I'm still trying to get over [the students saying] 'no'. [Laughs] … But they don't say 'no' and then back it up with a reason, they just say 'no'. Really confusing!"

Some theoretical interpretation for this confusion can be found in the writings of Foucault who claims that 'worker subjectivities have a particular relationship to learning, for instance the subjective definitions of the soldier, which are constituted through a military discourse that essentially imbues a discipline of compliance and obedience…' Foucault (cited in Billet, 2004, p.311).
Another issue was Case A's humour with his peer group on the programme:

> "… she had to hand in one of her assignments but her granddad had just died and um she couldn't go to the funeral because she had to hand it in and even when she asked for special dispensation and I said—er what was it—I said 'what did they say to you, he'll still be dead tomorrow?!'… no, that wasn't funny at all, apparently."

Both of these trainees have ex-military mentors and the mentor that was formally interviewed had also previously been employed in the military police. He was pleased overall with Case A's development, although there had been some challenging issues. For instance, the mentor highlighted that Case A expresses impatience with certain student traits such as late attendance, lack of respect for authority and the students' widespread procrastination in relation to completion of academic tasks. Sometimes Case A's language was rather abrasive and, although it may have had the desired affect, the mentor had to remind him that he is not dealing with "squaddies" where the regimes of compliance are much higher. "… he thinks he's dealing with disciplined people and of course he isn't". The mentor revealed that with all military personnel there is an understanding that if you make mistakes you learn quickly from them and Case A is no different. Foucault (Cited in Billet 2004, p.311) suggests that individuals become subjected to the social world through the discourses and discursive practices of the social context primarily through language, and Case A's humour was derived from his military background. The mentor did not view this as a big issue and considered it an acceptable "rite of passage" but felt Case A needed to show greater discretion in relation to the audience with which he engages, who do not share these experiential antecedents.

With regard to transformative learning, Daloz (1986) identifies formal educational experiences which can play a critical part in helping adults recognise the process of disrupting old patterns of interpretations and can encourage the formation of new ways of seeing the self and the world. This mirrors Walkerdine who suggests that individuals at border crossings involve 'embodied semiotic shifts from complex rationalities in one practice to another in which becoming a subject in each required different regimes of power/knowledge, emotion, position, meaning and self management' (2006, p.23). In other words, transformation requires these marines to construct new meanings that help them in their cases to perceive and make sense of the changing world and engagement with a new discourse,

language and culture of the civilian young learner. Although this marine had adjusted with resilience and flexibility and had some initial success with his transferable skills, he had to learn new ways of dealing with reluctant learners who occasionally refused to participate in class activities, the kind of episode rarely encountered in military functioning.

(3)

Analysis and Discussion of Interviews: Class Episode, a Critical Incident

Educational achievement features prominently in civilian discourse and forms an important element in the 'legitimisation' of social status where assumptions that underpin the validity of university education help to maintain these 'regimes of truth' Foucault (Cited in Smart, 1985, p.72). Absence of this level of academic achievement could imply a lower rank order within the civilian discourse system as one of the marines in this transition process experienced. He revealed that there was some "academic snobbery" at the beginning of the programme and many students seemed to exaggerate the status of their academic achievements, with one peer in particular who was especially "aggravating". During one class short presentation exercise known as a 'micro-teach', the peer presenter distributed newspapers of varying levels of sophistication to the group, from higher level newspapers known as 'broadsheets' (e.g. *The Times*) to low level 'red tops' (e.g. *The Daily Star*):

> "… he gave everyone in the class a broadsheet and then when he was walking towards me I said 'that better be *The Times* in your hand' and he gave me *The Daily Star* so obviously I was really annoyed at it so I said 'look I've had enough of your academic snobbery around here' like I know I should have challenged it, and then I was like 'look I've had enough of this academic snobbery, this ain't on' but because I put like a humorous edge on it, it kinda dissipated err. But I thought I should go and discuss this because my intention was to just get up and chin the guy to be honest! … I didn't do anything. But I should have erm … I am a big boy I can take care of myself. … he won't do it again as I know he's actually quite scared of me now, he can see, he knew straight away that he'd made a mistake." (Case A)

The genesis of military aggression and war is not the topic of this paper, but there are features in military socialization and training that contain substantial levels of physical aggression, which are completely inappropriate in a civilian context. This episode demonstrates the importance of a mentor who has already crossed the border from the military to the civilian world, and is another emerging theme.

From the interview with Case A this incident had a powerful effect on him and was clearly critical. He wanted to be seen to belong and, as Walkerdine writes, when

one is at the intersection and attempting a border crossing, individuals do not want to appear 'found wanting' (2006, p.21). As Betts and Kelly, 2011, p. 277) argue, ' Transformative learning is not only or even a rational-ordered set of processes but also, significantly, engages non rational meaning making, involving emotions, intuition, disordering, and mess.'

(**4)**

Analysis and discussion of interviews: The pivotal role of the mentor

The mentor's reaction when interviewed about the incident described was important:

> "Yeah it would have been catastrophic for everything and [Case A] realised that and thankfully too. I had to have a long talk with [Case A] about this and the fact that I myself had experienced academic snobbery when I started the Cert. Ed. because I got a Royal Marine and police background therefore you're not considered to be able to read academic books or have any discussion because you're a robot. And actually that is sometimes how you're viewed … I did say to [Case A] is that you… have got to prove that you can take them on, on the same level playing field. You can do it. It was a turning point. It was critical moment. He … now realises if you're going to be within this arena you've got to have some credibility ... this is another battlefield."

In this illustration it is clear that a mentor who has already experienced a border crossing has important skills and understanding with a valuable utility sourced through retrospection. The ex-military mentor has already encountered, as Daloz (1986) shows, the between phases of development and has also encountered being at an intersection. They have a sophisticated cognizance of both discursive practices from one terrain, to another, which Walkerdine (2006, p. 11) aptly describes as 'where emotional geographical borders collide'. Ex-military personnel are acquainted with the transition process involved in a border crossing, and as Claxton et al. (1996) highlight, a key element in the success of the relationship between the mentor and mentee is the mentor's ability to see the mentee holistically and understand their world view.

Daloz's (1986) views transformation as development and this episode reveals how new constructions of the self can take place; a psychosocial development enabling the formation of new ways of seeing the world. However, Walkerdine (2006) explores this further by identifying the political arena at the borderlands where she suggests that a neo liberal culture normalises these borders in a simplistic way by acknowledging psychological characteristics of flexibility, and transferable skills, among others. Within a globalised economy this adaptability is

a prerequisite and it is clear that these marines have these qualities in abundance. A perceptive Walkerdine (2006) suggests that this rhetoric of transferable skills overlooks the different subject positions in varying discursive practices with different semiotic relationships. It is these subtleties of transformation at the border which can cause anxiety where even a violent experience can ensue at the crossing. In reference to power, knowledge relations and practices, Foucault states that the 'individual is constituted and becomes conscious of himself as the subject' (Cited in Smart (1985, p.72). It is clear that the class episode described illustrates a number of themes explored by Walkerdine's (2006) analysis, but also how important it is to understand one another through this collective notion of meaning. This is a very significant component which, according to Claxton et al. (1996, p. 232) 'enables the mentor to develop a working relationship of mutual trust…' with their mentee.

(5)

Discursive practices surrounding disability: Transformative learning for the researcher

Issues arose early with Case A as, from a pastoral perspective, it would be disadvantageous if his physical injury was aggravated in any way that would impede his progress. He was eventually persuaded to complete a registration with the Disability Assist (DAS) provision of the university. However, whatever the altruistic professional intentions involved the researcher has increasingly questioned the wisdom of the recommendations which may yet have consequences for Case A to manage his definitions and images of self, both immediately and in the longer term. To return to Walkerdine's (2006) metaphorical concept, the researcher may have unwittingly become the instigator of another institutional gaze existing at the border of a civilian world, through the objectification of his injuries. Walkerdine highlights that 'the newly mapped subject becomes an object through that process … distributed by the community, in relation between people and others' (Walkerdine, 2006, p.13).

The marine may have begun to experience being 'othered and pathologized' (Walkerdine, 2006, p.18) within a civilian discourse. Edwards et al. (1999) suggests that language can be deliberately used to produce certain meanings and effects and that discourses influence the way a person values and feels about him or herself.

The researcher's concerns over Case A's physical injury evokes Ecclestone's body of work illuminating the concept of the 'diminished self' (2007, p.464). It is the 'emergence and political preoccupation with risk, danger, vulnerability in the face of life events, and the erosion of the belief in agency, resilience and collective support to overcome problems' (2007, p.464). While Ecclestone was mainly focussed on humanistic ideas on the growth in education of supporting emotional

well being, and vulnerability, her research draws attention to issues of a discourse of otherness represented through DAS at the University. The link comes from a discourse that causes 'otherness', and through this, prejudges the status of the marines under discussion but who, nevertheless, need support for their disabilities. A small, semantic rearrangement with a greater emphasis on the assistance to ability—Ability Assist or ABAS— might challenge some of the assumptions that help to construct these existing paradigms of care. As Ecclestone (2007, p. 455) writes, we should 'resist images of the diminished self' and celebrate human agency 'that interventions and discourses should not offer diminished images of people but should celebrate human potential and resilience'. As Jones writes (2009 p. 11) 'The transformation of meaning perspectives becomes possible in those situations where experience is not congruent with our existing meaning structure'.

As can be seen from the research discussed, the researcher's experience with marines has found that they have resilience in abundance and that the interventions with Case A may have been unnecessary, or even damaging. Thus, one of the main emerging themes from this research was the issue of the lexicon surrounding disability in a civilian educational context and the importance of finding celebration in their stoical resilience.

In addition, through critical reflection of the researcher's previous assumptions, a new frame of reference echoing Dirkx's (1997) 'disorientating dilemma' which is a prerequisite to transformative learning. Viewed through Daloz's (1986) lens on transformative learning, it was not only the marines who were between stages of development, but it follows that at the beginning of this research, the researcher was also at Walkerdine's (2006) intersection moving through a transitional process as a result of mapping the marines' transition into the civilian world.
Finally, on the subject of disability, Case B comments:

> "The point I want to make, [for instance] H might introduce us as 'we'd like you to meet this marine, he's got PTSD' so as soon as I go into that meeting its's like 'you've got PTSD' and I have got a label I feel I have got to address that primarily… Every time I meet people now they know me as the marine with PTSD and I might potentially never have met that person…"
>
> "If you want to show us anything, show us empathy, give us a hand or just get out of the way and let us get on with it, just because B … has missing limbs or issues with sleeping or … confined spaces … it doesn't stop me from living my life…"
>
> "… I had a group of students and one of the lads had one leg shorter than the other. And loads of people would say 'oh he's got a disability' well no coz he can do exactly the same as what everyone else was doing on that wall, he just needs a bit more assistance or whatever"

(6)

Final Interviews, Discussion and Transformative Learning

Recent interviews with Case A and Case B revolved around their transformative learning drawn from their reflections on what they had or had not learned from their recent experiences through stage one of the programme and this forms part of the discussion, conclusion and recommendations.

First, with regard to their teaching and their learners, both Case A and Case B had 'engaged with diversity' and 'otherness' (Daloz, 2000, pp.112–117) and, through Walkerdine's lens, had identified 'constant reworking of the self' (2006, p.16). Case A said that he "changed from being an instructor to a teacher" and recognised "other voices as valid" in that he had modified his attitude towards the learners, rather than telling them that "this is the right way, so tough!" Since he undertook the programme, he felt he was better able to understand the learners' world and did not want to change them. He had become much more pragmatic in his approach saying that, "there is always a different way round" as long as he was "firm and clear".

Case B said he had built up a good rapport with his students, although, similar to Case A, he had to be guarded with his sense of humour. He now understood that 'instruction' was not necessarily teaching and undertaking the Cert. Ed., where practice is rigorously underpinned with theory, had helped him develop a much more heterogeneous portfolio of teaching strategies enabling greater flexibility and adaptability in his approaches.

It seems that the marines had engaged in a number of critical reflections involved with 'doing and reflecting on doing '(Freire, 2001, p.43) and that they had created new knowledge through their recent educative experiences. From initially being an outsider with past knowledge and with values and assumptions derived from military culture, they had also become insiders through their experience of the programme. It follows, therefore, that they now had a good view of both cultures, which resonates with Freire's views that '[re]evaluating what is already known' is important in this process of transition (Freire, 2001, p. 9).

Second, with regard to their peers on the university programmes, Case A was astonished at how "molly-coddled" students were, when he considered that he had worked fourteen days without a break but still managed to hand in his work on time. He recalled that one of his peers said that they had to "house sit and this was their excuse which seemed to be accepted". He was appalled by how one well-qualified member on the programme was depressed because he could not get the job he wanted and he would rather remain on State benefit payments. Case A recounted his thoughts in response, "who are you to deserve this, that is not how the world works". This links to Ecclestone's (2007) views, in particular, the political discourse surrounding emotional wellbeing and personalised learning in a therapeutic culture. It may be possible to learn from these sharp observations as

this marine was originally an ‘outsider’ in the group and not on the ‘inside’ of a culture of learning contextualised in a civilian world. However, through this re-engagement, the marines created new knowledge with an increased understanding of the ‘inside’ that enabled them to evaluate both cultures with greater critical interrogation.

Third, with regard to practical academic skills, Case A claimed that his writing had improved, and he explained that initially he had used a lot of linking phrases and terminology from the report writing style, which is used in the military with the observation that “we don’t waste words”. After the critical incident surrounding “academic snobbery”, he had made sure his work was “iron clad” and he showed his assignments to significant others such as his parents, people he trusted, including his mentor. He has since applied to study on a paramedic course in South Africa and felt he had an advantage over his marine colleagues because he is in “study mode”.

Case B was still struggling with the protocols of academic referencing and writing skills and suggested that an Access course would have been helpful. One of his submissions had to be completed at the time of Remembrance Sunday (11 November) when he was extremely busy and this was, in addition, an annual event that aroused powerful emotions for all UK military personnel, especially ex-combatants, and he felt that his tutor was not aware of, or sympathetic to this. At times he felt it was an “an up- hill battle.” He reiterated that an initial Access course could have ironed out these idiosyncratic and esoteric practical issues. Both the marines expressed concern for other peers who were reluctant to return to the traditional educational routes of GCSEs and A’ levels and wanted acknowledgement of the skills and competencies that they had already achieved.

Both Case A and Case B were moving into what Daloz (2000, p.117) describes as ‘Committed Action’, helping others for the common good, with Case A undertaking a paramedic course and Case B writing a programme of study so that outdoor sports programmes can be run for injured military personnel as he still maintained that there is discrimination surrounding disability.
With regard to disability, while idiosyncratic in many ways, this narrative illustrates the essential trajectory of the transformation process. This research has highlighted that previous views of disability have been couched in policy directives derived from a civilian discourse. In addition, , this research has revealed what limited insight the researcher had of the issues ex-combatants face when they encounter premature discharge through injury from the military. For instance, with regard to Case A’s attitude to his disability, he did not feel that this could be used as an excuse to dampen his achievement or motivation: “anyway it wasn’t anyone’s fault and if I needed any help it was up to me to choose to ask”. He felt all injured marines would like to feel that they had a voice on how they were viewed and would prefer not to be labelled as disabled because they did not feel disabled and if they needed help they would ask for it.

Case B also felt that Royal Marines generally are highly resistant to the admission of disability, even when they have clearly experienced acute physical injuries. He

illustrated using an example of a colleague who has a leg, an eye and half a hand missing but still refuses to admit that he is disabled. Case B said that he had only been diagnosed for 18 months and that "is no time to come to terms with it". He strongly recommended that ex-combatants who presented a disability should seek the support of DAS but that:

> "… and I am not being sexist [but] it would not work if it was some young girl; we would feel silly and would not want to disclose anything … it needs to be an ex-military as we would feel more comfortable where we already have the rapport … he has been through what I've been through".

This corresponds well with Foucault (1979) who, in addition, suggests that individuals become subjected to the social world through the discourses and discursive practices of the social, primarily through language. Further, application of Walkerdine's (2006) metaphorical lens suggests that these marines exist in a duality of both past and present. It is important to avoid what she describes as an 'anxious', even 'violent' border crossing by suppressing their resilience through repeated disclosure of their injurious experiences to civilian mediators who have little experience with such military discourse.

Finally, with regard to mentorial support, both Case A and Case B reiterated the importance of having ex-military as mentors; both mentors had 'helped to shape their values' Daloz, (2000 p.117). Case A illustrated it well when he said that his mentor, in many ways, had been a "shield" as the experience of re-entering a civilian world had been "very isolating" and membership of the programme had been like "swimming upstream". Although his mentor had shielded and protected him in so many ways, his experience of re-entering civilian discourse was described as "a lonely place".

(7)

Limitations

It should be noted that this work is a snapshot from data derived from just two marines and (to date) one mentor. Further, as a part-time student, Case B was not always easily available. Therefore, this research has limited generalised application and more research in the area of injured military personnel and their pathways to HE is clearly required.

(8)

Recommendations and Conclusion

It is recommended that HE courses need to show greater sensitivity in relation to ex-combatants at important times such as national remembrance ceremonies, with easier approval of extenuating circumstances for late submission of assignments. Access programmes which provide accelerated programmes of study for returning adult learners to qualify for entry into university (higher education) need to be reinstated to augment transition to foundation degrees, and there needs to be a review to find accreditation for prior learning, which could legitimise some existing military training qualifications within higher education.

It is suggested here that all ex-combatant injured applicants undertaking programmes within HE should automatically be registered with DAS and provided with all the appropriate information relating to the university support available, with a tailored form that acknowledges their unique circumstances. Ex-military professional support could be employed by DAS in order to enhance an understanding of these quite different needs. There should be some re-categorisation of questions relating to disability currently asked with perhaps a bespoke form for ex-military personnel to complete for DAS and, ideally, a change of title to Ability Assist (ABAS).
It is recommended that mentors or significant others drawn from a military background or similar, who have 'crossed the border', need to be identified to help ex-combatants transition into civilian pathways in higher education.

A higher education programme for ex-combatants has been shown to enable a transition between the military and the civilian world, where the marines have re-evaluated existing assumptions and developed new frames of reference to make sense of the civilian world. Case A shared his final thoughts on the programme:

"It's a good transition but intense and I don't get wound up and don't care as much. I sit there and smile, much more confident in my ability" "It's easier to deal with the world as a result".

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Appendix 2: Programme Handbook

Plymouth University
School of Education

Higher Education (HE) taster course

Programme Handbook
Reconnaissance of the terrain:
is Higher Education for you? (RTHE)

Autumn 2011

Reconnaissance of the terrain: is Higher Education for you? (RTHE)

Welcome to the Programme

RTHE Programme of study

The RTHE programme will incorporate elements such as study skills and critical thinking, as well as building upon existing skills and interests, to create relevant educational future pathways. It will include advice and guidance so potential future students are better informed about the possible routes open to them. As far as possible, the RTHE programme will be tailored to meet the specific needs of a given group.

The RTHE programme has five aims:

1. Prepare for successful learning in higher education, developing study skills, academic writing and critical thinking to augment continuing professional development.
2. Develop knowledge and understanding enabling the student to make an informed judgement as to whether 'Higher Education is for [them]'.
3. Identify and build on existing skills and interests to create relevant educational pathways for the future.
4. Develop an action plan that facilitates a successful application for their chosen programme of study.
5. Provide the student with an Academic reference upon completion of the programme.

The following programme outline gives a flavour of what will be covered as well as the involvement of other Plymouth University teaching and support staff. As it is a bespoke programme, suggested topics by potential participants have been included and synthesised with their own opinions about re-engagement with study.

All the very best wishes for a successful programme.

RTHE Team

Entry Requirements

All appropriately qualified candidates will be given equal consideration during the selection process. Plymouth University does not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, colour, disability, religion, nationality, age, sexual orientation or any other irrelevant distinction.

Students are required to provide evidence that they have gained Level 2 Literacy and Numeracy or equivalent. This will be a prerequisite entry on to the RTHE programme.

Programme Outline

Pre-Course Introduction Week (where arranged)
Location: TBA
Tutors and other staff:

Admissions/Widening Participation staff to identify educational routes, APL/APEL and any educational needs to maximise a successful application.

DAS representative.

Introduction to taster programme on offer (RTHE) and prerequisite entry level, Level 2 Literacy and Numeracy.

Content / Outline of Topics

- 'Touching Base'- Two ½ day visits to the Plymouth University Campus.
- This is an opportunity for those who have shown an interest in studying at a Higher Education Institute to see what goes on at a University and what each Faculty can offer.
- One to one advice and guidance with Admissions/Widening participation staff.
- An opportunity for students to discuss the course choices and entry requirements.
- Where appropriate this is a natural exit point for graduates wishing to study at Post-Graduate level.
- An individual action plan would normally be developed with IAG staff and the student (identify choices to send to relevant faculty).

Follow up letter inviting course applicants to participate in a taster course outlined below to develop learning for HE by addressing their **"skills fade",** and to find out whether 'Higher Education is for [them]' and acknowledging their skills to identify an achievable degree programme that they might wish to pursue.

The programme is entitled:

Reconnaissance of the terrain: is Higher Education for you? (RTHE)

Applicants will be advised to provide evidence that they have gained Level 2 Literacy and Numeracy or equivalent. This will be a prerequisite entry on to the RTHE programme.

By the end of this taster programme the participants will have:

- **Devised an Action Plan**
- **Written a CV**
- **Written a personal statement**
- **Written an abstract for a subject specialist task of 1500 words or equivalent**
- **Created a PowerPoint presentation as a small group task**
- **Completed a subject specialist task of 1500 words or equivalent**
- **Produced a 500 word précis of a book chapter/text selected by the participant**
- **An academic reference**

Induction

Thursday 20th October 2011 (14:00 – 16:00)

Location: Babbage Building, Lyhner Room

A two hour visit to make sure all are inducted into Plymouth University.

Induction includes sessions from Nigel Larcombe-Williams (14:30 – 15:30) Gateway (15:30 – 16:00).

Nigel Larcombe-Williams is from the Disability Service for the Plymouth University, Disability ASSIST Services (DAS). DAS supports disabled students across the campuses.

The Student Gateway provides a high profile information, advice and guidance hub for all of our students, featuring four main components:

- **Learning Gateway** - bringing together Disability ASSIST and Learning Development to provide advice and support linked to your academic studies.
- **International Student Gateway** - a high profile information and advice space for our international students, providing help with areas such as visa queries or simply adapting to living in the UK.
- **Career Gateway (previously Gateway)** - as well as careers information and advice, you will be able to access opportunities such as the Plymouth Award, student competitions, and our new 'Student Jobs' service, advertising part time jobs on and off campus.
- **Student Information Gateway (based on main University Reception desk)** - from this information desk we will be able to provide you with comprehensive information and signposting to all of our student services, plus help with any aspect of studying at the University and living in Plymouth.

Week One

Session One. Monday 24th October 2011 (09:00 – 13:00)

Location: Babbage Building, Lyhner Room.

Tutors: WLH, RS

Content / Outline of Topics

- Studying in Higher Education and continuous professional development.
- Sources of support, time management managing stress.
- Motivation.
- Teaching strategies used in Higher Education.

Introduction to the Library

- Using the library and internet to research.
- New students will be given library cards and computer accounts.
- Activity: Students research their potential subject area or course and identify specific areas of interest.
- Activity: Students Select papers or book/s on chosen topic area to read either a chapter or a paper/article.
- What type of support, guidance and skills and entry level requirements the student may need for a given course.

Suggested reading: Selected by learner, study skills guide, https://staff.plymouth.ac.uk/learndev/intranet.htm .

Directed Study:

- Read chosen chapter or paper.
- Continue to practice research skills for further papers and texts, order library books, begin to review study skills etc.

Session Two. Tuesday 25th October 2011 (09:00 – 13:00)
Location: Babbage Building, Lyhner Room
Tutors: RS, TD
Content / Outline of Topics • Recap on previous material and discussions about reading. • Active reading. • Introduction to forms of writing and writing a précis.
Suggested reading: http://www.learningdevelopment.plymouth.ac.uk/wrasse (plus hand-out with reading list links)
Directed Study: • Using notes and any other material produce a 500 word précis of a book chapter and reference using appropriate grammatical terms.

Session Three. Thursday 27th October 2011 (09:00 – 13:00)
Location: Babbage, Lyhner Room

Tutors: SE, TD

Content / Outline of Topics

- Review Précis. Using peer feedback develop areas for improvement including spelling and grammar.
- **Assessment strategies used in Higher Education.**
- **Referencing:** Revisit referencing, What is referencing?, Conventions (referencing activity).
- **Avoiding plagiarism.**
- **Critical thinking skills:** What is critical thinking? Why critical thinking is important. Ways to develop critical thinking.

Suggested reading: Pears, R. and Shields, G. (2010) *Cite Them Right*, London: Palgrave

Faculty Specific Referencing https://staff.plymouth.ac.uk/refman/

Guided Study:

- Prepare for student seminar around selected texts 7th November 11.
- Complete and correct referencing exercise.

Week Two

Session One. Monday 31st October 2011. (09:00 – 13:00)

Location: Babbage Building, Lyhner Room

Tutors: SE, TBA

Content / Outline of Topics

- Student led seminars on previous guided study reading of selected in week one from library visit.
- Discussion of the key points from articles/texts chosen. Learning to compare and contrast/evaluate reading

Skills Audit and Action Plans – devised from own assessment of work so far on the programme.
Suggested reading: Skills Audit, Action Plan
Directed Study: • Prepare for individual tutorials 1st November. • Continue to prepare a detailed breakdown of current skills and experience for Action Plan in Student folder (CPD).

Week Two

Session Two. Tuesday 1st November 2011. (09:00 – 13:00)
Location: Babbage Building, Lyhner Room
Tutors: RS, WLH
Content / Outline of Topics • Report writing and using PowerPoint. • Small group/individual tutorials.
Suggested reading: http://www.learningdevelopment.plymouth.ac.uk/LDstudyguides/pdf/7Reports.pdf , www.technicallyfunny.com
Directed Study: Using PowerPoint, student groups will present their chosen area of study to fellow group members, including some critical evaluation, entry requirements, pros/cons, the content of the course, assessment strategies and subsequent employment opportunities. Included will be the role the subject plays in the wider social contexts as well as significant challenges which may be faced and ways of planning to overcome them.

Week Two

Session Three. Thursday 3rd November 2011. (09:00 – 13:00)
Location: Babbage Building, Lyhner Room
Tutors: WLH, SE
Content / Outline of Topics • Student PowerPoint presentations (set previous session)
Suggested reading: selected by student
Directed Study: • Research subject area through Portal in preparation for Week 3 session 1, meeting subject specialists. • Continue developing Action Plan

Week Three

Session One. Monday 7th November 2011. (09:00 – 13:00)
Location: Babbage Building, Lyhner Room
Tutors: TD TBA
Content / Outline of Topics • Meet subject specialists (subject specialist to set an appropriate academic undergraduate task) exchange e-mails

- Recap of sessions so far and development of Action Plan.

Suggested reading: As appropriate to task set by subject specialist

Directed Study:

- Continue to develop Action Plan
- Start research task as set (equivalent to 1500 words)
- Contact subject specialists for further guidance on draft submission dates and review dates
- Arrange with subject specialist contact to visit sample lecture in selected subject area on 10th November

Week Three

Session Two. Tuesday 8th November 2011. (09:00 – 13:00)

Location: Babbage Building, Lyhner Room

Tutors: WLH, TD & Widening Participation Staff

Content / Outline of Topics

- Individual meetings with Admissions staff to discuss programme entry requirements and how to prepare for the application stage.
- Individual Action Plans to be further developed for CPD in the light of meetings with subject specialists and Admissions team.

Suggested reading: Further reading around subject specialism

Faculty Specific Referencing https://staff.plymouth.ac.uk/refman/
Directed Study: • Continue to develop Action Plan. • Research into alternative routes, additional courses to support applications and development of any identified skills gap.

Week Three

Session Three. Thursday 10th November 2011. (09:00 – 13:00)
Location: Babbage Building, Lyhner Room
Tutors: TD /SE & Specialist subject tutors
Content / Outline of Topics • Recap on academic writing. • Essay planning. • Action plans. • Attend subject lectures as arranged – or on alternative date as arranged with subject specialist
Suggested reading: Cottrell, S. (2008) *The Study Skills Handbook.* (3rd edn) Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Greetham, B. (2008) *How to Write Better Essays.* (2nd edn) Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Faculty Specific Referencing https://staff.plymouth.ac.uk/refman/
Directed Study: • Research for references linked to essay title. • Continue with subject specialist set task

Week Four

Session One. Monday 14th November 2011. (09:00 – 13:00)
Location: Babbage Building Lyhner Room
Tutors: TBA Admissions & Careers Gateway
Content / Outline of Topics • Course application process. • Personal statements, CVs, experience.
Suggested reading: Research Plymouth University application process including advice and guidance sections
Directed Study: • Write a personal statement.

Week Four

Session Two. Tuesday 15th November 2011. (09:00 – 13:00)
Location: Babbage Building Lyhner Room
Tutors: WLH, RS
Content / Outline of Topics • Review personal statements. • Progress with research for 1500 word, or equivalent, written task. • Writing an abstract.

Suggested reading: read a range of journal article abstracts, Faculty Specific Referencing https://staff.plymouth.ac.uk/refman/
Directed Study: • Write reflective summary on their learning on programme and action points to include the way forward. • Write an abstract for essay or equivalent task.

Week Four

Session Three. Thursday 17th November 2011. (09:00 – 13:00)
Location: Babbage Building Lyhner Room
Tutors: SE, WLH, TD
Content / Outline of Topics • Abstracts, summary statements, plans and drafts. • Action Plan • Individual and group tutorials. • Course evaluation.
Suggested reading:
Directed Study:

• Write up essay/subject specialist task producing a comprehensive draft to send to first marker for feedback before final submission date. (Subject specialists will set the final submission date).
Follow up action: • Academic references from tutors – to be based on tutor reviews and feedback from subject specialist task once received.

Working together

Working together, Plymouth University and its Students' Union are committed to challenging discrimination in its many forms.

We recognise the very real benefits enjoyed by our diverse University community, a community of individuals who value and respect one another, creating and sustaining a safe environment - a Safe Space - in which people can live, work and learn.

Both Plymouth University and the Students' Union have an Equal Opportunities Policy to promote and protect rights to equality of opportunity.

However, we recognise that policy alone is not enough. To be successful it must be underpinned by a philosophy that will not tolerate discrimination in any form.

Complaints

The University has a Student Complaint Procedure, full details of which can be found under Rules and Regulations at: www.plymouth.ac.uk/studenthandbook

The University encourages informal resolution of complaints wherever possible, so as a first step talk to the person most immediately involved with the issue (e.g. your tutor). The Procedure explains what to do if you cannot resolve the problem in this way.

Examples of Recommended Reading for the Study Skills

Burns ,T, Sinfield, S (2004) *Teaching Learning and study Skills* London: Sage

Cottrell, S. (2005) *Critical Thinking Skills Developing Effective Analysis and Argument*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cottrell, S. (2008) *The Study Skills Handbook.* (3rd edn) Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Greetham, B. (2008) *How to Write Better Essays.* (2nd edn) Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rose, J. (2001) *The Mature Student's Guide to Writing.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Soles, D. (2005) *The Academic Essay. How to Plan, Draft, Write and Revise. (*2nd edn) Abergele, UK: Studymates.

Terry, J. *Moving On, The University of Warwick Collaborative widening participation project,* Universities, Coventry, Worcester and Warwick. http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/dcs/teaching/movingon/ accessed 3 July 2011

University of Plymouth www.learningdevelopment.plymouth.ac.uk

Contact details

Name	E-mail address
Wendy Lambert-Heggs	wendy.lambert-heggs@plymouth.ac.uk
Sue Exley	S.Exley@plymouth.ac.uk
Tony Dixon	Tony.dixon@plymouth.ac.uk
Russell Shobrook	Russell.Shobrook@plymouth.ac.uk
Slafka Scragg	davslav@yahoo.co.uk

Appendix 3: Ethical Approval Phase 3

School of Education **Faculty of Health, Education & Society**	**Application No:** 11/12-116 (for EdREC use)
APPLICATION FOR SCHOOL ETHICAL APPROVAL **Part A: Ethics Cover Sheet** **Part B: Ethical Review Statement** **Part C: Ethics Protocol Proforma**	

This form consists of three sections. Parts A and B must be completed in ALL cases. Depending upon the method of data collection / analysis, Part C may also be required (see the Ethics Review Statement).

All documentation should be submitted **electronically** to Claire Butcher, Administrative Assistant (Research), tel: 85337, claire.butcher@plymouth.ac.uk. At the same time, a hard copy of this application form, signed by all relevant parties, should also be submitted to Claire Butcher.

Part A: ETHICS COVER SHEET

1	Principal Investigator: Wendy Lambert-Heggs
2	Other members of project team who will have access to the research data: Professor Jocey Quinn and Ruth Boyask
3	Project Title: What is the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life amongst injured military personnel.
4	Repeat Submission? No: ☒ Yes: ☐ Version Number:
5	Proposed project start date: March 2012
6	Summary of aims, objectives and methods (max 250 words)

This is Phase 3 of a School of Education based project which, in its first phase, entitled 'A fighting chance: exploring pathways to HE for injured military personnel', identified what could be provided by the University to support injured service personnel from Hasler Company (the Ministry of Defence Joint-service Rehabilitation Centre), who may not have formal entry qualifications, but nevertheless have skills and attributes that a mature learner brings with them. This has led to two pilot Higher Education pathways taster programmes, one took place in 2011 and a second programme with a different cohort of students will take place later this year. The second phase drew from staff and student evaluation of the taster course and it is hoped will contribute to a report on the programme to inform future courses, to this EdD dissertation and contribute to papers intended for publication. The aims of this third phase of the project are:

	1.To investigate the transitions of injured personnel through the processes of engaging with a higher education programme of study. 2.Explore how and in what ways decisions are made within networks of family /significant others with regard to injured soldier's decisions to study in higher education. 3. To gain a more informed understanding of what is required with regard to re-settlement support, for a pathway to HE. An approximate number of 15 people will be interviewed and will be recruited from earlier research from Hasler Company. Using grounded theory developing key themes. The project will contribute to my EdD dissertation and to policy briefings and papers intended for publication including attending conferences such as DPR and SRHE. The data analysis will commence November 2013.		
7	What will be the outcomes of this project The EdD research will contribute to policy briefings, papers intended for publication and conferences such as the DPR and SRHE		
8	Tick one: ☒ Staff research		☐ MPhil / PhD research ☒ EdD research
9	Is the project subject to an **external** funding bid?		☐ Yes *(please complete questions 10-14)* ☒ No *(please go to Section B)*
10	Bid amount:		
11	Bid status: ☐ Not yet submitted Submission deadline: ☐ Submitted, decision pending ☐ Bid granted		
12	University Project Finance Team costing approved with Dean's signature:		
	Yes: ☐.	No: ☐ (Please see School Research & Enterprise Officer as soon as possible)	
13	Peer Review	☐ obtained	☐ not yet obtained
14	Partners & Institutions:		
	Name (including title)	School:	Institute / Organisation:

Part B: ETHICAL REVIEW STATEMENT

The purpose of this statement is to clarify whether the proposed research requires ethical clearance through an Ethics Protocol. Please read the relevant section of the guidance notes before you complete your statement.

Please indicate all the categories into which your proposed research fits:

	Data collection / analysis involved:	Action required:	
1	This study does not involve data collection from or about human participants.	☐ *Complete this Ethical Review Statement and add a brief (one page) description of your research and intended data collection methods. No ethics protocol required.*	☐
2	This study involves the analysis or synthesis of data obtained from/about human subjects where such data are in the public domain (i.e. available in public archives and/or previously published)	☐ *Complete this Ethical Review Statement and add a brief (one page) description of your research, the nature of the data and intended data collection methods. No ethics protocol required.*	☐
3	This study involves the analysis of data obtained from/about human participants where the data has been previously collected but is not in the public domain	☐ *Complete this Ethical Review Statement* ☐ *Please complete Part C – Ethics Protocol Proforma*	☐
4	This study draws upon data already collected under a previous ethical review but involves utilising the data in ways not cleared with the research participants	☐ *Complete this Ethical Review Statement* ☐ *Please complete Part C – Ethics Protocol Proforma* ☐ *Submit copy of original ethics protocol and additional consent materials (if relevant) attached.*	☒
5	This study involves new data collection from/about human participants	☐ *Complete this Ethical Review Statement* ☐ *Please complete Part C – Ethics Protocol Proforma* ☐ *Submit information for participants AND consent forms in style and format appropriate to the participants*	☒

Please Note: Should the applicant wish to alter in any significant regard the nature of their research following ethical approval, a resubmission should be made to the School Research Ethics Committee. The resubmission should be made with reference to one or more of the categories laid out in this document. 'Significant' should be interpreted as meaning changing in some fundamental way the research purposes and processes in whole or part.

Applicant contact information:

Address: Floor 2, Nancy Astor Building

Email: wendy.lambert-heggs@plymouth.ac.uk

Fax:

Telephone: 01752 585467

Signed:

Date: 20.2.12

For MPhil / PhD / EdD research:

Director of Studies:

Signed:

Date:

School Approval:

1. **Research not involving human subjects.**

Research has been agreed by the School Research Ethics Committee as not requiring ethical approval

Signed:

Chair, School Research Ethics Committee

Date:

2. **Research requiring an Ethics Protocol**

Confirmation of Ethics Approval

(following consideration by School Research Ethics Committee, or Chair's action)

Signed:

Chair, School of Education Research Ethics Committee

Date 25 May 2012

Plymouth University
School of Education
Nancy Astor Building
Drake Circus
Plymouth, PL4 8AA
Tel: 01752 585467
Wlambert-heggs@plymouth.ac.uk

June 2012

Dear Participant

Research project: What is the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life amongst injured military personnel?

As you know, I am employed by the School of Education at Plymouth University and I am seeking participants from Hasler Company who undertook the HE taster programme here at the University, to take part in the third phase of a research project.

The intention of the third phase of the research is to draw from a sample of service personnel, who attended the HE taster programme and are now considering enrolling on a HE programme of study, and their nominated family and friends. This should enable me, to gain a better understanding of the decision-making process of each of the service personnel whilst they contemplate possible enrolment on a HE programme of study. From this research, I hope to be able to make recommendations for consideration and, in particular, to anticipate what support may be needed for service personnel, whilst they undertake similar education programmes.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project and enclose an information sheet to give more details of what is involved.

Having read this letter and the information sheet and consent form provided, should you decide to participate, I would be grateful if you would sign the attached consent form and return it in the stamped addressed envelope provided within 7 days.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Lambert-Heggs

Research project What is the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life amongst injured military personnel?

Participant Information Sheet

- **Who I am**

Wendy Lambert-Heggs is a Lecturer in Further Education and Placement Co-ordinator in the School of Education at Plymouth University.

- **Background information**

This is Phase 3 of a School of Education based project in which, in its first phase, Wendy Lambert-Heggs identified what could be provided by the University to support injured service personnel from Hasler Company (the Ministry of Defence Joint-service Rehabilitation Centre), who may not have formal entry qualifications, but nevertheless have skills and attributes that a mature learner brings with them. This has led to the first pilot pathways course entitled Reconnaissance of the Terrain: Is HE for you? (RTHE) which took place during October and November 2011 and a second course with a different cohort of students was to take place in May 2012 – but due to unforseen circumstances this has been postponed.. The second phase of the research focused on staff and student evaluations of the taster course in which you participated and it is hoped this will contribute to a report on the programme to inform future courses, and to this EdD dissertation.

The aims of the research project are to:

1. Investigate the transition of the injured service personnel through the processes of engaging with Higher Education (HE)

2. Explore how and in what ways decisions are made within networks of family / significant others with regard to the injured soldier's decisions to study in HE

3. Gain a more informed understanding of what is required with regard to re-settlement support, for a pathway to HE.

The intended outcomes are to:

1. Make recommendations for consideration, to anticipate what support may be needed for injured service personnel, whilst they undertake similar education programmes.

2. Reveal whether studying at HE level could contribute to the rehabilitation of injured service personnel, enabling a more purposeful transition into civilian society

3. Explore the way in which family and friends influence the decision of the service personnel and identify factors that influence this, and enable them to maintain that decision.

3. Identify the influences that encourage service personnel to suspend their studies.

Therefore I would like to:

- Interview service personnel, who attended the HE taster programmes and who are thinking of undertaking a HE programme of study

- Interview their nominated family and friends to gain a better understanding of the service personnel's decision making process, whilst they contemplate enrolling on a HE programme of study.

The data collected will contribute to an EdD dissertation and may contribute to papers intended for publication in relevant journals and presentation at relevant conferences.

Procedures/Data collection

I shall use unstructured interviews as a method for collecting data from the injured service personnel and their family and friends. I hope that these accounts will help me to understand the decision-making process undertaken to start and maintain a HE programme of study.

Participants' voluntary participation/right to withdraw

Participation in the project is voluntary and it is possible to withdraw, up to the point of data analysis, which will commence in November 2013, with no penalty and no obligation to explain or give reasons for withdrawal.

Findings will be presented in such a way that participants cannot be identified. However, this research is overseen by two Doctoral supervisors and I may need to

discuss a particular aspect of the research with them, as well as with those colleagues involved in the taster programme. I will do my very best at all times to protect particpants' information and identity. For those who agree to participate in an interview, I will ask for permission to audio-record and / or take notes to aid transcription. I will email the transcript for agreement that it is an accurate record of the interview. If the participant wishes to add, amend or delete any of their comments at this time, that will be possible, or you can withdraw any of the data which is attributable to you at this stage. After I have received their validation, I will start to analyse the data in November 2013, and it will then not be possible to withdraw it.

- **Confidentiality**

Findings will be presented in such a way that participants cannot be identified. I will use pseudonyms to differentiate between participants. As already stated, I will be the only one who has access to the raw data and this data will be used for no other purpose than that detailed above. Although I cannot guarantee absolute anonymity, I will do my best at all times to protect information and identity. Data will be securely held for a minimum of ten years after the completion of the research project. Electronic data will be stored on password protected computers or laptops. Hard copies of data will be stored in locked filing cabinets and disposed of securely when no longer required.

- **Feedback**

On request to myself, participants can be provided with a summary of my research findings. If they would like any subsequent updating on the research, they can contact me through my university e-mail address below.

- **Contacts and Questions:**

Thank you for your interest in this research project. These notes should provide you with answers to most of your queries. If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, please contact me as follows:

Wendy - Wlambert-heggs@plymouth.ac.uk

If Hasler Company agree to me approaching their service personnel, very many thanks! If so, please complete the consent form below:

Research project : What is the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life amongst injured military personnel?

CONSENT FORM – for Hasler Company

Permission (statement of consent) for seeking participants from Hasler Company

I have read and understand the participant information sheet explaining the conditions of this project. I hereby agree, on behalf of Hasler Company, for you to seek participants from Hasler Company to carry out interviews for the above Research Project.

Signed ……..…..… Date …….....

Name (block capitals) …….....

Thank you for helping with my research.

Plymouth University
School of Education
Nancy Astor Building
Drake Circus
Plymouth, PL4 8AA
Tel: 01752 585467
Wlambert-heggs@plymouth.ac.uk

June 2012

Dear Participant

Research project: What is the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life amongst injured military personnel?

As you know, I am employed by the School of Education at Plymouth University and I am seeking participants from Hasler Company who undertook the HE taster programme here at the University, to take part in the third phase of a research project.

The intention of the third phase of the research is to draw from a sample of service personnel, who attended the HE taster programme and are now considering enrolling on a HE programme of study, and their nominated family and friends. This should enable me, to gain a better understanding of the decision-making process of each of the service personnel whilst they contemplate possible enrolment on a HE programme of study. From this research, I hope to be able to make recommendations for consideration and, in particular, to anticipate what support may be needed for service personnel, whilst they undertake similar education programmes.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project and enclose an information sheet to give more details of what is involved.

Having read this letter and the information sheet and consent form provided, should you decide to participate, I would be grateful if you would sign the attached consent form and return it in the stamped addressed envelope provided within 7 days.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Lambert-Heggs

Research project What is the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life amongst injured military personnel?

Participant Information Sheet

- **Who I am**

Wendy Lambert-Heggs is a Lecturer in Further Education and Placement Co-ordinator in the School of Education at Plymouth University.

- **Background information**

This is Phase 3 of a School of Education based project in which, in its first phase, Wendy Lambert-Heggs identified what could be provided by the University to support injured service personnel from Hasler Company (the Ministry of Defence Joint-service Rehabilitation Centre), who may not have formal entry qualifications, but nevertheless have skills and attributes that a mature learner brings with them. This has led to the first pilot pathways course entitled Reconnaissance of the Terrain: Is HE for you? (RTHE) which took place during October and November 2011 and a second course with a different cohort of students was initailly planned for May 2012 – However due to unforseen circumstances has now been postponed. The second phase of the research focused on staff and student evaluations of the taster course in which you participated and it is hoped this will contribute to a report on the programme to inform future courses, and to this EdD dissertation.

The aims of the research project are to:

1. Investigate the transition of the injured service personnel through the processes of engaging with Higher Education (HE)

2. Explore how and in what ways decisions are made within networks of family / significant others with regard to the injured soldier's decisions to study in HE

3. Gain a more informed understanding of what is required with regard to re-settlement support, for a pathway to HE.

The intended outcomes are to:

5. Make recommendations for consideration, to anticipate what support may be needed for injured service personnel, whilst they undertake similar education programmes.

6. Reveal whether studying at HE level could contribute to the rehabilitation of injured service personnel, enabling a more purposeful transition into civilian society

7. Explore the way in which family and friends influence the decision of the service personnel and identify factors that influence this, and enable them to maintain that decision.

8. Identify the influences that encourage service personnel to suspend their studies.

Therefore I would like to:

- Interview service personnel, who attended the HE taster programmes and who are thinking of undertaking a HE programme of study

- Interview their nominated family and friends to gain a better understanding of the service personnel's decision making process, whilst they contemplate enrolling on a HE programme of study.

The data collected will contribute to an EdD dissertation and may contribute to papers intended for publication in relevant journals and presentation at relevant conferences.

- **Procedures/Data collection**

I shall use unstructured interviews as a method for collecting data from you and your family and friends I hope that these accounts will help me to understand the decision-making process you have undertaken to start and maintain a HE programme of study.

Your voluntary participation/right to withdraw

Participation in the project is voluntary and it is possible for you to withdraw, up to the point of data analysis, which will commence in November 2013, with no penalty and no obligation to explain or give reasons for your withdrawal.

Findings will be presented in such a way that participants cannot be identified. However, this research is overseen by two Doctoral supervisors and I may need to discuss a

particular aspect of the research with them, as well as with those colleagues involved in the taster programme. I will do my very best at all times to protect your information and identity. If you agree to participate in an interview I will ask you for permission to audio-record and / or take notes to aid transcription. I will email the transcript for your agreement that it is an accurate record of the interview. If you wish to add, amend or delete any of your comments at this time, that will be possible, or you can withdraw any of the data which is attributable to you at this stage. After I have received your validation, I will start to analyse the data in November 2013, and it will then not be possible to withdraw it.

- **Confidentiality**

Findings will be presented in such a way that you cannot be identified. I will use pseudonyms to differentiate between participants. As already stated, I will be the only one who has access to the raw data and this data will be used for no other purpose than that detailed above. Although I cannot guarantee absolute anonymity, I will do my best at all times to protect your information and identity. Data will be securely held for a minimum of ten years after the completion of the research project. Electronic data will be stored on password protected computers or laptops. Hard copies of data will be stored in locked filing cabinets and disposed of securely when no longer required.

- **Feedback**

On request to myself, you can be provided with a summary of my research findings. If you would like any subsequent updating on the research, you can contact me through my university e-mail address below.

- **Contacts and Questions:**

Thank you for your interest in this research project. These notes should provide you with answers to most of your queries. If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this research study, please contact me as follows:

Wendy - Wlambert-heggs@plymouth.ac.uk

If you decide to participate, very many thanks! If so, please complete the consent form below:

Research project: What is the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life amongst injured military personnel?

CONSENT FORM – for participants

Permission (statement of consent) for data to be used from interviews

I have read and understand the participant information sheet explaining the conditions of this project. I have read and understand what you want me to do for this study. I hereby voluntarily agree to participate in an interview and understand that I will be able to withdraw the data up until data analysis. I understand all data will be kept securely for a minimum of 10 years and will then be destroyed.

Signed ……..…… Date …….....

Name (block capitals) …….....

Audio recording*:*

I give my consent for you to audio-record / take notes during an interview as part of this study and use the audio-recording and / or notes in the research.

Please initial: _____Yes _____No

Thank you for considering helping with my research.

Research project: What is the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life amongst injured military personnel?

CONSENT FORM – for Hasler Company

Permission (statement of consent) for seeking participants from Hasler Company

I have read and understand the participant information sheet explaining the conditions of this project. I hereby agree, on behalf of Hasler Company, for you to seek participants from Hasler Company to carry out interviews for the above Research Project.

Signed ……..…… Date …….....

Name (block capitals) …….....

Thank you for helping with my research.

Appendix 4: Part C: ETHICS PROTOCOL PROFORMA

Please indicate how you will ensure this research conforms with each clause of the University of Plymouth's *Principles for Research Involving Human Participants.* Please complete each section with a statement that addresses each of the ethical principles set out below. Please note that you should provide the degree of detail suggested. Each section will expand to accommodate this information.

Please refer to Guidance Notes when completing this proforma.

1	**Informed consent** *Please attach copies of all draft information / documents, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules, etc intended for the participants, and list below. When it is not possible to submit research instruments (e.g. use of action research methods) the instruments should be listed together with the reason for the non-submission.*
	1. A participant information sheet about the aims of the project and a consent form will be given to service personnel when inviting them to participate in an interview. This will provide information about the project and seek their consent to participate in an interview and for audio-recording and / or note-taking to take place. **2. The same participant information sheet about the aims of the project and a consent form, will be given to the service personnel's nominated participants, when inviting them to participate in an unstructured interview. This will provide information about the project and seek their consent to participate in an interview and for audio-recording and / or note-taking to take place.** **3. My chosen research method will be informal interviewing, using prompts where topics will be drawn from a literature review but topics that I expect to cover will be experience of schooling, key life events, and hopes for the future, etc.** **The participant information sheet is attached.**
2	**Openness and honesty** *It is generally accepted that research with human participants would not involve deception. However if this is not the case, deception is permissible only where it can be shown that all three of the following conditions have been met in full.* *1. Deception is completely unavoidable if the purpose of the research is to be achieved.* *2. The research objective has strong scientific merit.* *3. Any potential harm arising from the proposed deception can be effectively neutralised or reversed by the proposed debriefing procedures. If deception is involved, applicants are required to provide a detailed justification and to supply the names of two independent assessors whom the Committee can approach for advice. Please attach relevant documentation and list below.*
	The methods do not require any form of deception. The researcher will seek to act with honesty and openness throughout the research.

	The professional colleagues will be my supervisory team and others who have previously worked with Hasler Company. However, all who are involved in this research will also be asked to agree to maintain confidentiality in accordance with this ethics protocol.
3	**Right to withdraw** *Please provide a clear statement regarding what information has been provided to participants regarding their right to withdraw from the research.*
	Participants will be informed that they may withdraw at any point, up until the point of data analysis, which will commence November 2013 with no penalty and no obligation to explain or give reasons for their withdrawal.
4	**Protection from Harm** *Indicate here any vulnerability that may be present because of the:* *o participants e.g. children or vulnerable adults. o nature of the research process.* *If you tick any box below, please indicate in "further information" how you will ensure protection from harm.* *Does this research involve:*

Children	☐
Vulnerable adults	☒
Sensitive topics	☐
Permission of a gatekeeper in place of consent from individuals	☐
Subjects being academically assessed by the researcher	☐
Research that is conducted without full and informed consent	☐
Research that could induce psychological stress and anxiety	☐
Intrusive intervention (eg, vigorous physical exercise)	☐

Further information:

The researcher involved has experience in teaching military personnel and experience working with groups and individuals on a range of difficult and sensitive issues. Such work has taken place in both education and counselling settings.

Do ALL researchers in contact with children and vulnerable adults have current CRB clearance?	Yes: ☒.	No: ☐	N/A: ☐

If Yes, Please give disclosure number(s).(Use extra sheet if necessary)

	Name Number
	Wendy Lambert-Heggs 001123832230 If No, please explain:
5	**External Clearance** *I undertake to obtain written permission from the Head of any external institutions (school, social service, prison, etc) in which research will be conducted. (please check box).* It any participants are still employed with Hasler Company I will send a copy of the information sheet and as before will seek permission from their Colour Sargent who is in charge of the service personnel concerned So far Hasler have been extremely supportive with this research.
6	**Participant/Subject Involvement** *Has this group of participants/subjects already been the subject of research in the current academic year?* Yes □ No ☒ **All programmes are evaluated and the taster course was no exception, three possible participants who evaluated the course in the second phase of this research may be asked to take part in this third phase. As stated above the second phase drew from staff and student evaluation of the taster course where it was hoped that it would contribute to a report on the programme to inform future courses, and this EdD dissertation. That said evaluating programmes is normal practice when attending programmes of study.**
7	**Payment** *Please provide details of any payments, either financial or in kind, made to participants for participation, compensation for time given, etc.*
	N/A
8	**Debriefing** *When? By whom? How? Please provide a clear statement regarding what information has been provided to participants regarding debriefing.*
	The participants will be able to view their data to check that it is an accurate record of the interview and they can add, amend or delete any of their comments at this time, or can withdraw data which is attributable to them at this stage. They will also be informed that the data gathered will contribute to an EdD dissertation and possible publication. On request to me, participants can be provided with a summary of my research findings. Participants who would like any subsequent updating on the research will be advised to make contact through university e-mail addresses which are on their information sheet.
9	**Dissemination of Research** *Please provide a clear statement regarding what information has been provided to participants regarding dissemination of this research.*
	The findings from this research will contribute to an EdD dissertation and may contribute

	to papers intended for publication, in journals such as the British Journal of Sociology of Education, Sociology and Policy briefings and presentation at conferences such as the SHRE and DPR conferences.
10	**Confidentiality** *Please provide a clear statement regarding what information has been provided to participants regarding confidentiality issues.*
	Findings will be presented in such a way that participants cannot be identified. As the researcher, I will be the only one who has access to the raw data although I expect to have discussions surrounding it with my supervisors. Although I cannot guarantee absolute anonymity, I will do my best at all times to protect participants' information and identity. **The university's research ethics policy states that data should be securely held for a minimum of ten years after the completion of the research project. Electronic data will be stored on password protected computers or laptops. Hard copies of data will be stored in locked filing cabinets and disposed of securely when no longer required.**
11	**Ethical principles of professional bodies** *Where relevant professional bodies have published their own guidelines and principles, these must be followed and the current University principles interpreted and extended as necessary in this context. Please state which (if any) professional bodies' guidelines are being utilised.* **School of Education and Plymouth University guidelines have been followed.**

Appendix 5: Example Letter to Participants

Plymouth University
School of Education
Nancy Astor Building
Drake Circus
Plymouth, PL4 8AA
Tel: 01752 585467
Wlambert-heggs@plymouth.ac.uk

Date

Dear

Research project: What is the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life amongst injured military personnel?

I am employed by the School of Education at Plymouth University and I have sought participants who undertook a taster programme here at the University from Hasler Compamy to take part in the third phase of a research project.

The intention of the third phase of the research proposes to draw from a sample of service personnel, who attended the HE taster programme who were thinking of undertaking a higher education (HE) programme of study, **and their nominated family and friends.** This should enable me the researcher to gain a better of the service personnel's experience in their decision making whilst they contemplate possible enrolment on an HE programme of study. From this research, I hope to be able to offer up future recommendations for consideration and, in particular, to anticipate what support is needed for these service personnel, whilst they undertake similar education programmes.

I enclose an information sheet about the project.

The research project would like to:

- Interview service personnel, who attended the HE taster programmes and who are thinking of undertaking a higher education (HE) programme of study

- Interview their nominated family and friends to gain a better understanding of the service personnel's decision making process whilst they contemplate to enroll on a HE programme of study.

The outcomes of the research project:

- Offer up future recommendations for consideration, to anticipate what support is needed for these service personnel, whilst they undertake similar education programmes.

- The research hopes to reveal whether studying at HE level could contribute to the rehabilitation of injured service personnel, enabling a more purposeful transition into civilian society.

- To explore the way in which family and friends influence the decision of the service personnel and identify factors that influence this, enabling service personnel to maintain that decision.

- What influences personnel to suspend their studies.

Having read this letter and the information sheet and consent form provided, should you decide to participate, please sign the attached I would be grateful if you would sign the attached consent form on the information sheet and return it in the stamped addressed envelope provided within 7 days.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Lambert-Heggs

Appendix 6: Example Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

Research project What is the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life amongst injured military personnel?

Participant Information Sheet

- **Who I am**

Wendy Lambert-Heggs is a Lecturer in Further Education and Placement Co-ordinator in the School of Education at Plymouth University.

- **Background information**

This is Phase 3 of a School of Education based project in which, in its first phase, Wendy Lambert-Heggs identified what could be provided by the University to support injured service personnel from Hasler Company (the Ministry of Defence Joint-service Rehabilitation Centre), who may not have formal entry qualifications, but nevertheless have skills and attributes that a mature learner brings with them. This has led to the first pilot pathways course entitled Reconnaissance of the Terrain: Is HE for you? (RTHE) which took place during October and November 2011 and a second course with a different cohort of students was to take place in May 2012 – but due to unforseen circumstances this has been postponed.. The second phase of the research focused on staff and student evaluations of the taster course in which you participated and it is hoped this will contribute to a report on the programme to inform future courses, and to this EdD dissertation.

The aims of the research project are to:

1. Investigate the transition of the injured service personnel through the processes of engaging with Higher Education (HE)

2. Explore how and in what ways decisions are made within networks of family / significant others with regard to the injured soldier's decisions to study in HE

3. Gain a more informed understanding of what is required with regard to re-settlement support, for a pathway to HE.

The intended outcomes are to:

4. Make recommendations for consideration, to anticipate what support may be needed for injured service personnel, whilst they undertake similar education programmes.

5. Reveal whether studying at HE level could contribute to the rehabilitation of injured service personnel, enabling a more purposeful transition into civilian society.

6. Explore the way in which family and friends influence the decision of the service personnel and identify factors that influence this, and enable them to maintain that decision.

7. Identify the influences that encourage service personnel to suspend their studies.

Therefore I would like to:

- Interview service personnel, who attended the HE taster programmes and who are thinking of undertaking a HE programme of study

- Interview their nominated family and friends to gain a better understanding of the service personnel's decision making process, whilst they contemplate enrolling on a HE programme of study.

The data collected will contribute to an EdD dissertation and may contribute to papers intended for publication in relevant journals and presentation at relevant conferences.

Procedures/Data collection

I shall use unstructured interviews as a method for collecting data from the injured service personnel and their family and friends. I hope that these accounts will help me to understand the decision-making process undertaken to start and maintain a HE programme of study.

Participants' voluntary participation/right to withdraw

Participation in the project is voluntary and it is possible to withdraw, up to the point of data analysis, with no penalty and no obligation to explain or give reasons for withdrawal.

Findings will be presented in such a way that participants cannot be identified. However, this research is overseen by two Doctoral supervisors and I may need to discuss a

particular aspect of the research with them, as well as with those colleagues involved in the taster programme. I will do my very best at all times to protect particpants' information and identity. For those who agree to participate in an interview, I will ask for permission to audio-record and / or take notes to aid transcription. I will email the transcript for agreement that it is an accurate record of the interview. If the participant wishes to add, amend or delete any of their comments at this time, that will be possible, or you can withdraw any of the data which is attributable to you at this stage. After I have received their validation, I will start to analyse the data in November 2013, and it will then not be possible to withdraw it.

- **Confidentiality**

Findings will be presented in such a way that participants cannot be identified. I will use pseudonyms to differentiate between participants. As already stated, I will be the only one who has access to the raw data and this data will be used for no other purpose than that detailed above. Although I cannot guarantee absolute anonymity, I will do my best at all times to protect information and identity. Data will be securely held for a minimum of ten years after the completion of the research project. Electronic data will be stored on password protected computers or laptops. Hard copies of data will be stored in locked filing cabinets and disposed of securely when no longer required.

- **Feedback**

On request to myself, participants can be provided with a summary of my research findings. If they would like any subsequent updating on the research, they can contact me through my university e-mail address below.

- **Contacts and Questions:**

Thank you for your interest in this research project. These notes should provide you with answers to most of your queries. If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, please contact me as follows:

Wendy - Wlambert-heggs@plymouth.ac.uk

If Hasler Company agree to me approaching their service personnel, very many thanks! If so, please complete the consent form below:

Research project: What is the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life amongst injured military personnel?

CONSENT FORM – for Hasler Company

Permission (statement of consent) for seeking participants from Hasler Company

I have read and understand the participant information sheet explaining the conditions of this project. I hereby agree, on behalf of Hasler Company, for you to seek participants from Hasler Company to carry out interviews for the above Research Project.

Signed ……..…..… Date …….....

Name (block capitals)

…….....

Thank you for helping with my research.

Appendix 7: Example Questions to IECs

I shall start by saying "As you know I am interested in the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life of injured military personnel. Therefore I would like to explore several areas (ten) with you to find out more about your life experiences.

- **Context**
  - *Name*
  - *DOB*
  - *Town and county where you were born.*
  - *Where do you live now?*
  - *How long have you lived at this address.*
  - *Are you married or in a partnership.*
  - *If yes for how long.*
  - *Do you have children?*
  - *If yes can you give me their gender and ages?*
  - *How long were you in the Royal Marines?*
  - *When were you discharged?*

- **Previous education experience**
  - **Prompts**
    - *Had you attended a college before joining the service**?***
    - *If yes what was the name and location of the institution.*
    - *Qualifications gained whilst in college*
    - *What was your overall experience of education before you joined the military?*
    - Did you enjoy school and what subjects did you like/dislike

- **Reasons for joining the Military (influences and training)**
  - **Prompts**
    - *Please talk about why you joined the military: when and where did you join*
    - *What/who influenced your thinking to join the Royal Marines?*
    - *Friends*
    - *Parents*
    - *Partner/ wife*

- **Experiences in Iraq/Afghanistan (How many tours, how long, what did you do)**
  - **Prompts**

- *Please describe your service experiences in Iraq/Afghanistan*
- *When were you deployed to a war zone?*
- *How many tours have you completed?*
- *Where were you stationed?*
- *How long was each deployment?*
- *What did you do?*

- **What has brought you to this point *what happened*?**

(Be sensitive make sure they understand this is optional and there is no need if they do not wish to talk about what happened)

  - **Prompts** *(If participant describes events)*
    - *When were you injured?*
    - *Is your recovery on going?*
    - *How is the treatment and medication effecting you?*
    - *Effect of injury on self-family and friends.*
    - *Have relationships changed improved deteriorated*

- **Leaving the marines**
  - **Prompts**
    - *What impact did it have on you and your family?*
    - *What support package / counselling anything else.*
    - *Who/ what influenced your decision*
  - **Prompts** *(if it was not their decision)*
    - *What support /packages/ counselling did you receive*
    - *When will they finish*

- **Decision to undertake a higher education programme**
  - **Prompts**
    - *The subject*
    - *When will you complete*
    - *What influenced your decision to go into HE friend's parent's partner/ wife?*
    - *What are you hoping this will lead to?*
    - *What have been /will be the biggest challenges.*
    - *What support is needed?*
    - *When will it be completed?*

- **What do you hope to gain from undertaking a degree programme of study**
    - **Prompt**
        - *Type of career*
        - *Widen network of friends outside the military*
        - *To help transition into a civilian career*

- **What do you think are your biggest challenges whilst undertaking a degree?**
    - **Prompt**
        - *What kind of support do you think you would need to help you while you are there?*
        - *Who would you go to discuss issues or problems?*
        - *University support systems /wife friends*
        - *Do you have a wide circle of friends?*
        - *What do you talk about?*

- **Policy changes**
    - **Prompt**
        - *If you met David Cameron what would you ask him to do to help injured military personnel in relation to their rehabilitation into the civilian world?*
        - *Armed forces*
        - *Plymouth University*

I shall conclude by asking if there anything else they wish to add that they have considered during the interview

Appendix 8: Example Questions for Chad

I shall start by saying "As you know I am interested in the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life of injured military personnel. Therefore I would like to explore several areas (ten) with you to find out more about your life experiences.

- **Context**
  - *Name*
  - *DOB*
  - *Town and county where you were born.*
  - *Where do you live now?*
  - *How long have you lived at this address.*
  - *Are you married or in a partnership.*
  - *If yes for how long.*
  - *Do you have children?*
  - *If yes can you give me their gender and ages?*
  - *How long were you in the Royal Marines?*
  - *When were you discharged?*

- **Previous Education experience**
  - **Prompts**
    - *Had you attended a college before joining the service**?***
    - *If yes what was the name and location of the institution.*
    - *Qualifications gained whilst in college*
    - *What was your overall experience of education before you joined the military?*
    - Did you enjoy school and what subjects did you like/dislike

- **Reasons for joining the Military (influences and training)**
  - **Prompts**
    - *Please talk about why you joined the military: when and where did you join*
    - *What/who influenced your thinking to join the Royal Marines?*
    - *Friends*
    - *Parents*
    - *Partner/ wife*

- **Experiences in Iraq/Afghanistan (How many tours, how long, what did you do)**

- **Prompts**

  - *Please describe your service experiences in Iraq/Afghanistan*
  - *When were you deployed to a war zone?*
  - *How many tours have you completed?*
  - *Where were you stationed?*
  - *How long was each deployment?*
  - *What did you do?*

- **What happened?** (sensitive no need to discuss this if you do not wish to)
  - **Prompts** (If participant describes events)

    - *When were you injured?*
    - *Is your recovery on going?*
    - *How is the treatment and medication effecting you?*
    - *Effect of injury on self-family and friends.*
    - *Have relationships changed improved deteriorated*

- **Leaving the marines?** (Applied at present to only CHAD)
  - Are you able to stay on in the marines?

- **If not**
  - **Prompts**

    - *What impact did it have on you and your family?*
    - *What support package / counselling anything else.*
    - *Who/ what influenced your decision*

  - **Prompt** (if it was not their decision)

    - *What support /packages/ counselling have you received*
    - *Other support, what do you need.*

- **Decision to undertake a higher education programme**
  - **Prompts**

    - Do you still wish to undertake a Higher Education programme (Chad Only?)
    - *The subject*
    - *When*
    - *Initially what influenced your decision to think about an HE programme* friend's parent's partner/ wife?
    - *What are you/were hoping this will lead to*

- *What have been /will be the biggest challenges.*
- *What support is needed?*

- **What do you / did you hope to gain from undertaking a degree programme of study**
  - **Prompt**

    - Type of career
    - Widen network of friends outside the military
    - To help transition into a civilian career

- **What do you think are your biggest challenges**
  - **Prompt**

    - *Whilst undertaking a degree, or an acting career/generally*
    - *What kind of support do you think you would need to help you?*
    - *Who would you go to discuss issues or any problems?*

- **Policy changes**
  - **Prompt**

    - *If you met David Cameron what would you ask him to do to help injured military personnel in relation to their rehabilitation into the civilian world?*
    - *Armed forces*
    - *Plymouth University*

I shall conclude by asking if there anything else they wish to add that they have considered during the interview

Appendix 9: Example Family Network Questions

I shall start by saying "As you know I am interested in the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life of injured military personnel. Therefore I would like to explore several areas (ten) with you to find out more about your life experiences.

- **Context**
  - *Name*
  - *DOB*
  - *Town and county where you were born*

- **Previous Education experience**
  - **Prompts**
    - *Have you attended college or University?*
    - *If yes what was the name and location of the institution?*
    - *Qualifications gained whilst in college/ University*
    - *What was your overall experience of education?*
    - Did you enjoy school and what subjects did you like/dislike?
    - Do you have aspirations' to return to education?

- **Decision to join**
  - **Prompts**
    - Did …. ask your advice
    - How did you feel about him joining the marine's armed forces?
    - Were you part of the decision making to join the marines/navy?
    - If yes what were your thoughts on with the prospect of him going away on tour.

- **Networks experience whilst husband/partner/friend /son was away on tour in Afghanistan**
  - **Prompts**
    - How long was he away? How many times?
    - What effect does it have on your day to day life with him going on tour?
    - Who do you seek support from whilst he is away?

- **What happened**
  - *When was he injured?*

- *How did you find out?*
- *Tell me about his recovery process*
- *How is the treatment and medication affecting him?*
- *How is it affecting you?*
- *Have relationships changed improved deteriorated and in what way*

- **Leaving the marines**
  - **Prompts**

    - Whose decision
    - Who/ what will influence his decision
    - Financial
    - Roles
    - What support package / counselling anything else is available
    - When will these finish
    - What support do you get as his family?
    - What support is there for the children (if applicable?)
    - What support do you think should be available other than what he has been given?

- **Decision to undertake a Higher education programme**
  - **Prompts**

    - Initially what do think influenced his decision to go into HE friends parents yourself
    - The subject
    - How did the taster course influence the decision to do the course?

- **The future** (this question only applies to Chad's network)
  - *Chad has now decided not to take a higher education programme were you part of that decision?*
  - *How do you feel about this?*

- **All the family network**
  - *What are you hoping this new career/ studying in HE will lead to?*
  - *Type of career*
  - *Widen network of friends outside the military*
  - *To help transition into a civilian career*

- **Challenges**
  - *What do you think will be his biggest challenges in the future?*
  - *What about you what will be your biggest challenges in your support for him to do this.*

- **Policy changes**
  - **Prompt**

    - If you met David Cameron what would you ask him to do to help injured military personnel in relation to their rehabilitation into the civilian world?
    - Armed forces
    - Plymouth University

I shall conclude by asking if there is anything else she wishes to add that she might have considered during the interview

Appendix 10: Example Participation Information Sheet for Children

- **Who I am**

I am a teacher and my name is Wendy.

- **Background information**

For ages and ages I have been talking to people who know your dad /father because he is no longer in the navy. I talked to your father /dad and other people who had been in the marines and the navy who your father /dad knows because I want to know why he and some of the others wanted to go to University (grown-up's school again).

I also wanted to know whether your father/dad and the others like learning at school and if they do why do they like it.
But I also want to know if he and the others don't like it and why they do not like it.

I think it is important not to leave anyone out in the family so I have talked to your mother /mum too. I thought it important to know how she felt about your dad going back to school too.

Now it is your turn and I thought it would be nice to talk to you too to see how you felt about your father /dad going back to school.

- **The aims of the research project are to:**

1. I am asking all of these questions so I can write something about what everyone says including you to try and help these grown- ups know what it is like for marines and their families who decide to go back to learn at school.

2. I want to know if everyone knew that your dad was thinking about going back to school including you and what everyone thought about it

3. I would like to understand what it is like for everyone in the family when daddy goes back to school and if it is possible to help make it easier for all of you.

- **The intended outcomes are to:**

4. I want to make things better if there are some things your father/dad and others in the family find hard to deal with.

5. I want to know if your father dad going back to school will help him find a happy new life after leaving the marines.

6. I want to know who decides if it is alright for marines like your dad to go back to school and who helps him stay there.

7. If they leave I would like to know why they stop going to grown-up school

- **Therefore I would like to:**

Now it is your turn and if you are ok about this I thought it might good to talk to you and ask you how you feel about all this. What do you think? Is it ok for me to ask you some questions about your father/ dad going back to school? You can draw stuff if you like.

- **Procedures/Data collection**

I would like to use a tape recorder to record your voice. You can listen to your voice whilst we practice if you like and you are happy with what you hear being played back to you. Once we have finished, much later I will then type out into my computer what you say on the tape recorder.

- **Your voluntary participation/right to withdraw**

Whilst I am taping if you want to stop at any time that is ok.

- **Confidentiality**

I will not use your names when I write so no one will know who it is except of course your mum and dad.

- **Feedback**

Mum and dad will receive part of what I end up writing where some of which you can see as well if they agree.

- **Contacts and Questions:**

Thank you for agreeing to see and talk to me.

Please can you ask me about anything you don't understand?

Name …….....

Date …….....

Wendy - Wlambert-heggs@plymouth.ac.uk

Appendix 11: Example Questions for Children

I shall start by saying that I have talked to their mum and dad about their father going to University and will show them the tape recorder and explain that I just want to talk to them both too.

I will have coloured crayons and paper in case they want to draw.
Although I have questions and prompts my main approach will be to be flexible and I will respond to what the children wish to talk about.

- **Context**
    - *I shall ask them their names*
    - *I shall ask them how old they are (DOB)*

- **First of all your dad /father is going to university so I was wondering if you know what a university is?**
    - **Prompts**
        - *What do you think he does at University*
        - *It is like a school for grown-ups.*
        - *He is learning like you do at your school*
        - *You are called school boy and school girl*
        - *Your father/dad is called a university student*

- **Where do you go to school?**
    - **Prompts**
        - *Which school do you go to?*
        - *Do you enjoy school?*
        - *What subjects do you like/dislike?*
        - *Do you think what you do at school is similar to what your dad is doing?*

- **What does your dad say about going to university?**
    - **Prompts**
        - *Does he talk to you about it?*
        - *What does he say?*
        - *What kind of things does he like doing there?*
        - *Do you think he likes being a student?*
        - *Does he talk to your mother about his studies there?*
        - *Does he talk to anyone else?*

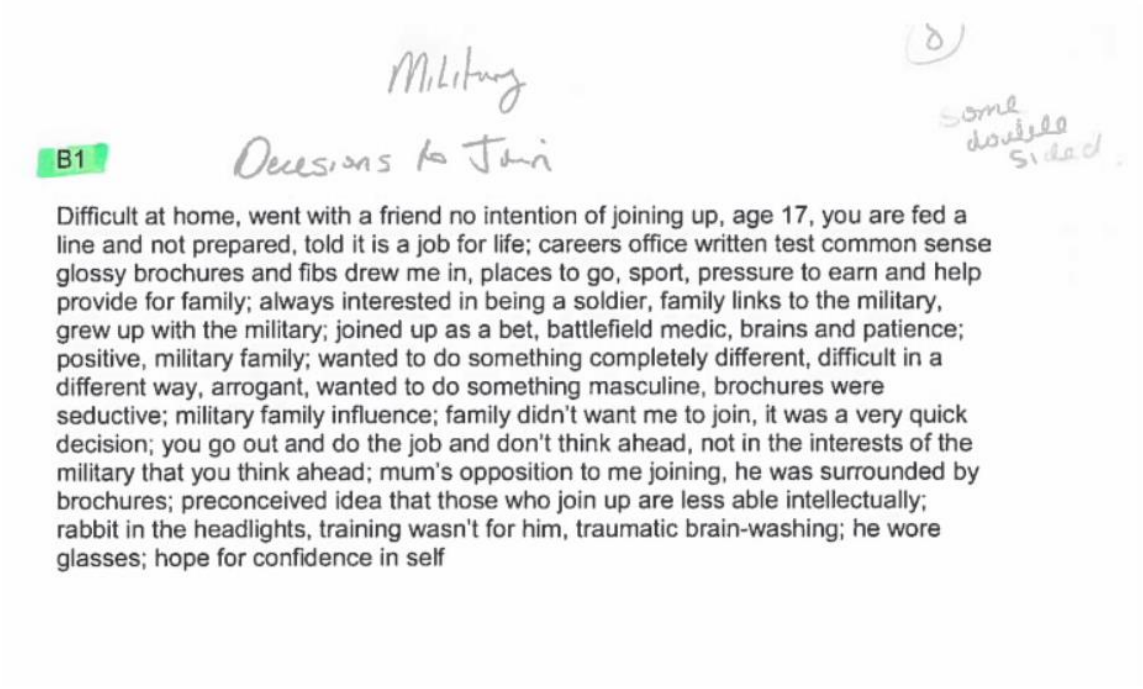
- **How do you feel about your dad / father studying/ going to school again?**
    - **Prompts**

        - *Have you been to your father's/University?*
        - *What did you think about it?*
        - *Do you think your dad likes being there?*
        - *Are there any things he has said he doesn't like?*
        - *Do you help your dad?*

I shall conclude by saying a great big thank you for coming and say it has been really good to meet them.

Appendix 12: Example Coding

Example 1



Military

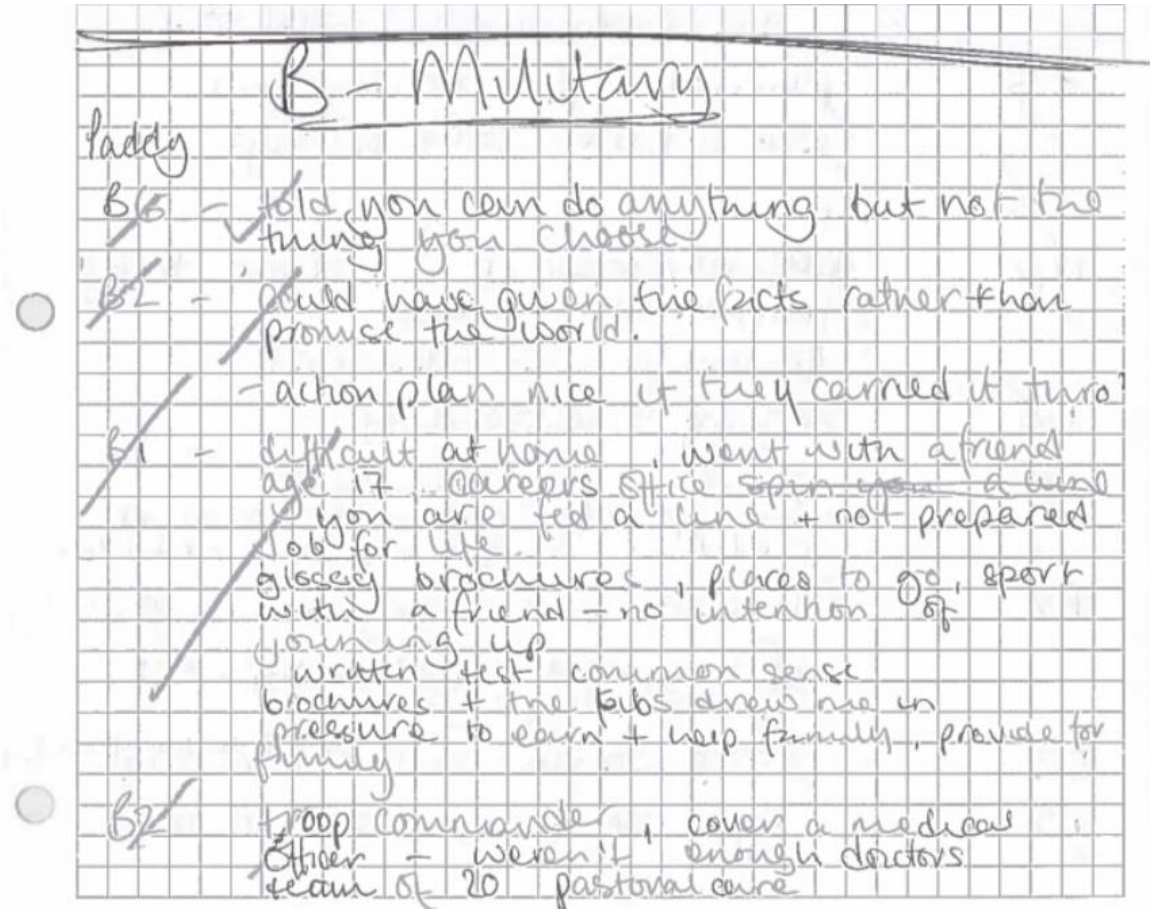
Decisions to Join

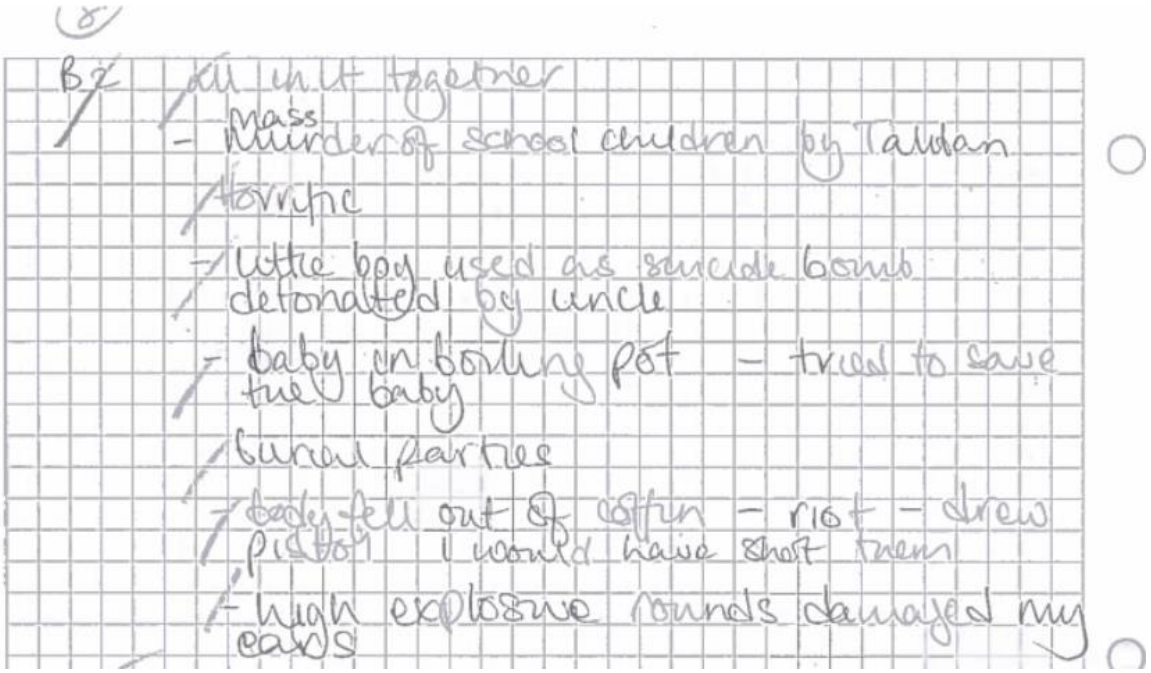
B1

some double sided

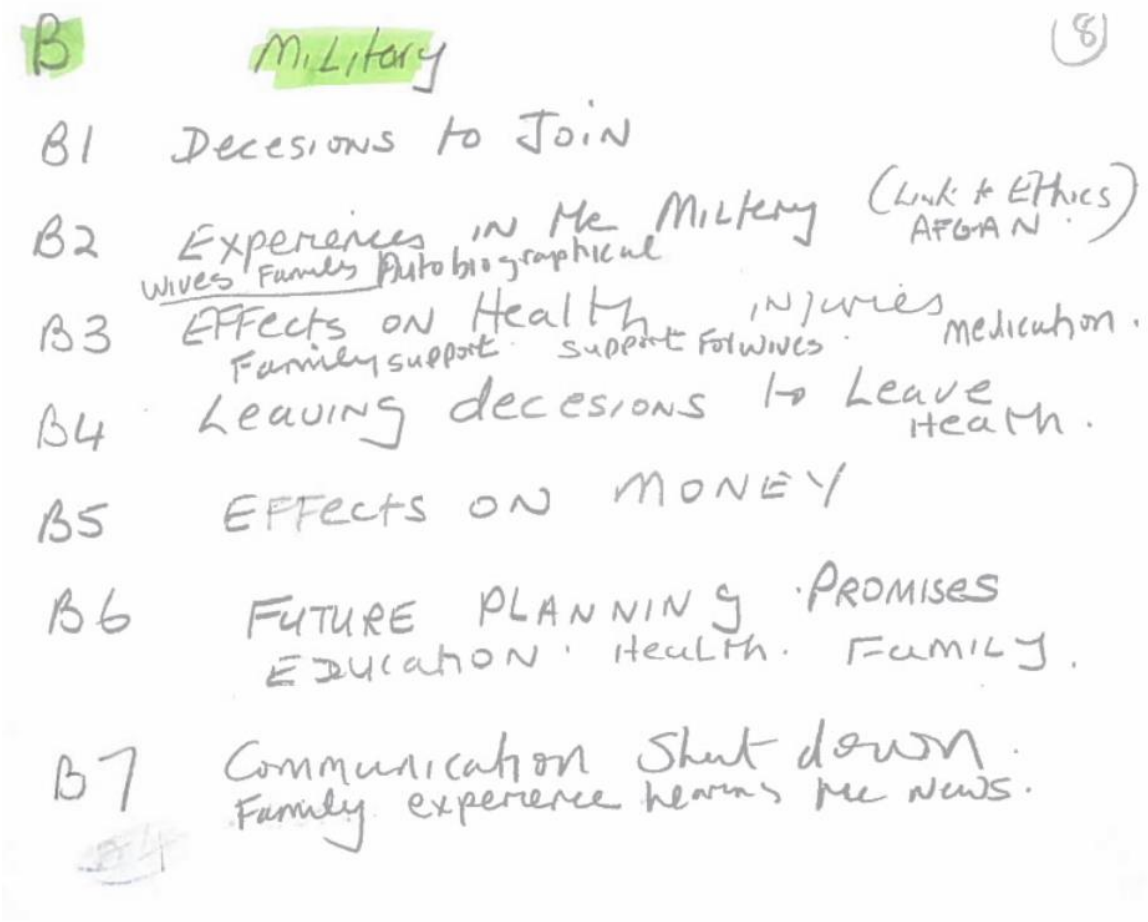
Difficult at home, went with a friend no intention of joining up, age 17, you are fed a line and not prepared, told it is a job for life; careers office written test common sense glossy brochures and fibs drew me in, places to go, sport, pressure to earn and help provide for family; always interested in being a soldier, family links to the military, grew up with the military; joined up as a bet, battlefield medic, brains and patience; positive, military family; wanted to do something completely different, difficult in a different way, arrogant, wanted to do something masculine, brochures were seductive; military family influence; family didn't want me to join, it was a very quick decision; you go out and do the job and don't think ahead, not in the interests of the military that you think ahead; mum's opposition to me joining, he was surrounded by brochures; preconceived idea that those who join up are less able intellectually; rabbit in the headlights, training wasn't for him, traumatic brain-washing; he wore glasses; hope for confidence in self

Example 2


B - Military
Paddy
B6 - told you can do anything but not the thing you chose
B2 - could have given the facts rather than promise the world.
- action plan nice if they carried it thro'
B1 - difficult at home, went with a friend age 17 Careers office spun you a load you are fed a line + not prepared Job for life
glossy brochures, places to go, sport with a friend - no intention of joining up
written test common sense
brochures + the jobs drew me in
pressure to earn + help family, provide for family
B2 troop commander, cover a medical officer - weren't enough doctors
team of 20 pastoral care


8
B2
All in it together
- mass murder of school children by Taliban
Horrific
- little boy used as suicide bomb detonated by uncle
- baby in boiling pot - tried to save the baby
burial parties
- body fell out of coffin - riot - drew pistol I would have shot them
- high explosive rounds damaged my ears

Example 3


B Military (8)
B1 Decesions to Join
B2 Experences in the Military (Link to Ethics) AFGHAN
Wives Family Autobiographical
B3 Effects on Health injuries medication.
Family support support for wives.
B4 Leaving decesions to Leave Heath.
B5 Effects on Money
B6 Future Planning · Promises
Education · Health · Family.
B7 Communication Shut down.
Family experence hearing the news.

Appendix 13: Example Questions for Len

I shall start by saying "As you know I am interested in the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life of injured military personnel. Therefore I would like to explore several areas (ten) with you to find out more about your life experiences.

- **Context**
  - *Name*
  - *DOB*
  - *Town and county where you were born*

- **Previous education experience**
  - **Prompts**
    - *Have you attended college or university?*
    - *If yes what was the name and location of the institution.*
    - *Qualifications gained whilst in college/ university*
    - *What was your overall experience of education?*
    - *Did you enjoy school and what subjects did you like/dislike*

- **How they met**
  - **Prompts**
    - *How when and where*

- **What happened**
  - *When was he injured?*
  - *Tell me about his recovery process*
  - *How is his treatment and medication affecting him?*

- **What happens when men are injured and have to leave the marines**
  - **Prompts**
    - *Whose decision?*
    - *Who/ what influences this decision?*
    - *What in your opinion is the impact?*
    - *How do you think it will affect Chad?*
    - *Financial*
    - *Roles*
    - *What support package / counselling anything else is available?*
    - *When will these finish?*
    - *What support do the wives get?*

- *Although Chad has no children yet is there provision and support children?*
- *What support do you think injured soldiers need other than what has been given?*

- **Decision to undertake a higher education programme**
  - **Prompts**

    - *What do think influenced initially Chad's decision to go into HE*
    - *The subject*
    - *What changed his mind friends parents yourself*
    - *In your opinion was the taster course successful*
    - *What did you hope it would lead to?*

- **How do you think higher education programmes of study will help injured soldiers?**
  - *Type of career*
  - *Widen network of friends outside the military*
  - *To help transition into a civilian career*

- **Challenges**
  - *What do you think will be his biggest challenges to try and facilitate injured soldiers into higher education?*
  - *What about you what will be your biggest challenges in your support for Chad others to do this?*
  - *How Chad and others could be better supported in encouraging them to go into HE*
  - *If so what*

- **Policy changes**
  - **Prompts**

    - *If you met David Cameron what would you ask him to do to help injured military personnel in relation to their rehabilitation into the civilian world?*
    - *Armed forces*
    - *Plymouth University*

I shall conclude by asking if there is anything else she wishes to add that she might have considered during the interview

Appendix 14: Published Work

Publications

Lambert-Heggs, W. (2011) The 'F' word: Conflicts and tensions in a community of practice when mentors confront the possibility of failing a training in teaching observations. Teaching in Lifelong Learning. A journal to inform and improve practice. *Volume 3 Issue 1 29-39 A Cross-CETT Collaboration.*

Wheeler S, and Lambert-Heggs W, (2009) Connecting Distance Learners and Their Mentors Using Blogs. The Mentor Blog project. *The Quarterly Review of Distance Education,* Vol. 10 (4), pp.323-331

Edworthy J, Hellier E, Walters K, **Clift-Matthews** W, Crowther M. (2003) Acoustic, Semantic and Phonetic Influences in Spoken Warning Signal Words. *Applied Cognitive Psychology 17: 915-933*

Edworthy J, **Clift-Matthews** W, Hanson M, (1998) *Contemporary Ergonomics 316-320, CRC Press, Ergonomics Society.*

Submitted for Publication

Lambert -Heggs, W. (2011) Fighting Chance: Border Crossing *Journal of Transformative Education*. Submitted for publication

Bayliss, P. Hughes, S. Lambert -Heggs, W. (2011) Inside Transformation: student teachers' placements in prison *Journal of Transformative Education*. Submitted for publication

Presentations, Workshops and Conferences Attended

Lambert-Heggs (2015) What is the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life for injured military personnel? 'Research as transformation'. IH/C EdD Postgraduate Research Student Conference. 20th June Plymouth University.

Hey Valerie, Professor (2015) review chapter published by Valerie in Maxwell and Aggleton (2013) (attended 6. 06 15)
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Lambert-Heggs, W. (2013), Teacher Education in Lifelong Learning (TELL) May 3rd 'What is the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life amongst injured military personnel' (*Theme supporting students in education*)

Lambert-Heggs, W. (2013) IH/C EdD What is the role of higher education in the transition to civilian life for injured military personnel (*Theme "Is it us")* Postgraduate Research Student Conference. 17h June 2013 Plymouth University.

Lambert-Heggs, W. (2010) *Fighting Chance: Border Crossing* Paper for Discourse Power and Resistance Conference April 5th University of Plymouth

Lambert-Heggs, W. (2009) The 'F' word Conflicts and tensions in a community of practice when mentors confront the possibility of failing a training in teaching observations. Postgraduate Research Student Conference. 15th June 2009 Plymouth University

Research Project

(2011) Joint Ministry of Defence, (Hasler Company) and Plymouth University Enterprise project. *Reconnaissance of the terrain: is higher education for yo*u? Higher Education taster course for injured Naval and Royal Marines based at Hasler Company.