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Experiences of Military Transition

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

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List of Abbreviations

IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NHS	National Health Service
RR	Rest and recuperation
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

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Declaration

This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or to any other institution. Emergent findings from the empirical paper were submitted as a poster presentation at the British Psychological Society's psychological well being of the military in transition conference. The thesis was carried out under the academic and clinical supervision of Dr Helen Liebling (Clinical Psychologist, Coventry University), Dr Dan Barnard (Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Coventry & Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust, Dr Sarah Simmonds (Clinical Psychologist, Coventry University) and Dr Mathew McCauley (Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Ministry of Defence), all of whom were involved in the initial formulation of ideas and the development of the research design. Apart from the collaborations stated, all the material presented in this thesis is my own work. The literature review is written for submission to the Journal of International Women's Studies and the empirical paper is written for submission to the British Journal of Psychology.

Summary

Periods of military transition contain unique experiences. For those serving this includes the transition to military deployment, and upon leaving the armed forces, this includes the transition into civilian life. Given the implementation of Britain's armed forces community covenant, which aims to bridge the gap between military and civilian communities, further exploration of the needs of military personnel is required. This thesis informs understanding of military transition experiences at a time when, following the recent restructuring of the UK armed forces the number of veterans, reservist personnel and their families requiring care from the National Health Service is likely to increase significantly.

Chapter one is a critical review of the qualitative research exploring the influence of military deployment on women military spouses. Following both database and manual searches twelve studies were included and reviewed. Spouses described complex experiences that contained both challenges and opportunities for positive growth. Differences between spouses of those from reserve or regular armed forces are explored. The review highlights the heterogeneity of the population and the need to modify current conceptualisations of deployment experiences, to understand the complexity of individual needs. Suggestions for future research are discussed.

Chapter two is a qualitative research study that explored Army veterans' lived experiences of relationships built with military comrades, and how these might have influenced the transition into civilian life. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis, it provides an in-depth account of military relational experiences and the integral role that these experiences had in the formation and maintenance of military identity. Implications for future research, alongside suggestions for clinical practice and service development are discussed.

Chapter three is reflective account, exploring the interface between the researcher's self and the research process. It explores the position of the researcher and the parallels between the research topic and their own impending professional transition into qualified life.

Overall word count: 18,349

Chapter 1: Literature Review

The impact of military deployment on women military spouses: A critical review of the qualitative literature

Written in preparation for submission to *Journal of International Women Studies*.

(See appendix A for author guidelines and email from editor)

Overall chapter word count (excluding tables, figures and references): 7840

1.0 Abstract

Military deployment is a transitional experience unique to military culture. Although this experience is most commonly associated with serving personnel themselves, military spouses are also similarly affected. In recent years there has been an increase in qualitative literature on this subject, providing not only a platform for the voices of military spouses, but knowledge from the experiential expert that has significant clinical value. The aim of the present review was to critically evaluate the empirical findings of qualitative research that has explored the influence of deployment on women military spouses. A systematic literature search yielded twelve studies. Spouses described complex and multifaceted experiences that contained not only challenges but also opportunities for positive growth. Further, the present review provides evidence of possible differences between spouses of those from reserve or regular armed forces. Clinical and research implications are considered.

Keywords: *military, spouse, review*

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Military deployment in context

Since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the frequency and pace of military deployments have increased (Booth & Lederer, 2012). In 2001, more than two million United States (US) military personnel were deployed to conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan (Manos, 2010). In the United Kingdom (UK), 46,000 military personnel were deployed to Iraq in 2003 (Ministry of Defence, n. d.). National guidelines recommend that no soldier should be deployed for more than thirteen months over a period of three years. However, as of September 2007, over ten thousand UK Army personnel exceeded this guideline (House of Lords Debate, 2008).

1.1.2 Impact of military deployment on spouses

Despite a large volume of research investigating the impact of deployment on the health and wellbeing of military personnel, there is a relative paucity of research that has focused on its impact on military spouses (DeBurgh, White, Fear, & Iversen 2011). It has been stated that ‘when the nation deploys its armed forces...it is also asking military families to share in that sacrifice’ (Laurence & Matthews, 2012, p. 366) and existing research suggests the deployment cycle creates multiple challenges for military spouses (Booth & Lederer, 2012). Other authors propose that deployment is stressful as it involves prolonged separation and high levels of fear and uncertainty for the non-deployed spouse (Huebner et al., 2007; Peebles-Kleiger & Kleiger, 1994), alongside many logistical challenges, including raising children independently (Booth & Lederer, 2012), increased levels of depression and anxiety (Mansfield et al., 2010), and family

stress (Pittman, Kerpelman & McFadyen, 2004). Further research has found that deployment can decrease marital health (McLeland, Sutton, & Schumm, 2008). Whereas, Deburgh et al's., (2011) review of quantitative research in this field, suggested a more complex and unclear impact on marital health (DeBurgh et al., 2011). Most research so far has highlighted the challenges of deployment and has steered towards how this impacts negatively on military spouses, as opposed to examining the strategies they adopt to cope with their deployment experiences (Rosetto, 2013).

1. 1. 3 Methodological issues

Researchers investigating the effects of deployment on military spouses have predominantly adopted quantitative methodologies. This research method is based on the assumption that there is a single objective reality (Robson, 2002).

Alternatively, qualitative methodology is based on interpretivism, viewing reality as multiple and socially constructed (Robson, 2002). This approach affords the opportunity to explore the lived experiences of individuals that have multiple meanings and perspectives. With this in mind, the voices of military spouses have now been given attention within the empirical literature. Their narratives also offer the opportunity to inform and enhance national guidelines, including documentation on the “emotional cycle of deployment” (Ministry of Defence, 2011a, p. 22: See Appendix B.).

1. 1. 4 Rationale for current review

The majority of the understanding on military spouses' experiences is gleaned through non-empirically based investigation, or what is termed 'grey literature.' This is credible information brought together through engaging key organisations and informs important relevant documentation (for example, Fossey 2012). A review of the empirical qualitative research is now required to ensure that this important material is brought forward to help influence and support appropriate policy, alongside the 'grey literature'. It is also of particular relevance due to recent restructuring of the UK armed forces. This is set to substantially increase the numbers of UK reserve forces and therefore the number of their spouses, a proportion of which may require care from the National Health Service (NHS) (Ministry of Defence, 2013).

1. 1. 5 Aims

The primary aim of this review is to critically evaluate empirical findings of qualitative studies that have explored the influences of deployment on women military spouses. Within this specific attention is paid to:

- How military spouses experience the process of deployment.
- How military spouses cope with their deployment experiences.

1.2 Method

1.2.1 Searches

1.2.1.1 Database search

A systematic literature search was conducted between August and October 2014. The following electronic databases were used: Cumulative Index of Nursing and

Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), PsychINFO, Published International Literature on Traumatic Stress (PILOTS), Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, Web of Science and MEDLINE. Alerts were arranged on all databases, which ended in March 2015. The key terms used included: combat OR “armed forces” OR military OR “defence forces” OR army OR navy OR naval OR “royal air force” OR veteran OR soldier AND wife OR wives OR partner* OR spouse* AND deploy* OR operation OR tour OR theatre OR “active service” AND qualitative OR "grounded theory" OR phenomenological OR narrative OR ethnographic OR IPA. These search terms were similar to those used in a recent quantitative review (DeBurgh et al., 2011), but were extended to identify qualitative methodologies. To gain a historical view of how knowledge had developed over time no date limit was included in the searches.

The titles and abstracts of the references were assessed for relevance. However, as Evans (2002) suggests, searching for qualitative studies can be problematic due to the use of descriptive titles and variable abstracts. With this in mind, a wide focus was taken whereby studies were only excluded straight away when the author(s) stated that the sample was not military spouses. The remaining references were retrieved and assessed for inclusion in accordance with the inclusion/exclusion criteria.

1.2.1.2 Manual search

Following the database search, a manual search for additional references was conducted. The reference lists and citations of each article were checked for

relevant studies. The titles and abstracts were then checked in line with the inclusion/exclusion criteria. The entire search procedure is displayed in Figure 1.1.

1.2.2 Selection criteria

1.2.2.1 Inclusion criteria

- Studies where at least one of the primary aims was to investigate military deployment using a qualitative methodology.
- Participants were women spouses of military personnel from the UK or North American military.
- Studies written in English.

1.2.2.2 Exclusion criteria

- Quantitative studies with no qualitative data.
- Personal accounts of deployment with no analysis.
- Studies where it was not possible to separate spouse data from data gathered from the serving personnel or another family member.
- Studies that were not peer reviewed.

1.2.3 Search results

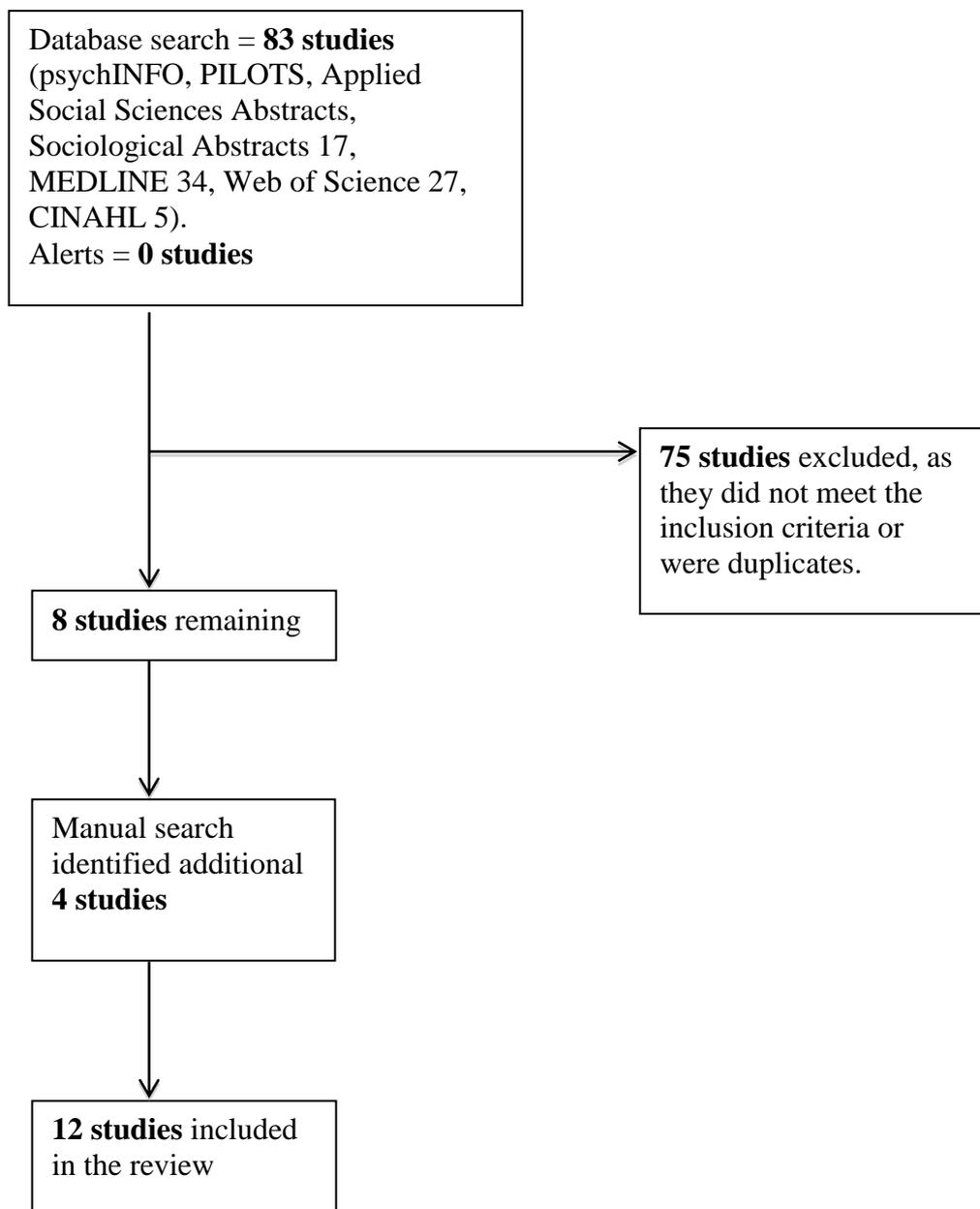


Figure 1.1 Procedure for study selection

1.2.4 Quality framework

On completion of the systematic search those studies that were included were assessed using a quality assessment framework (Kmet, Lee & Cook, 2004), (see Appendix C). This framework had been used in a recent review in a similar subject area (Blakely, et al., 2012). Studies were scored from 0-20, with the existence of quality indicators gaining a higher score.

Some debate exists on the appropriateness of using quality rating systems in qualitative reviews, as these frameworks have traditionally been developed upon quantitative values and appraisals of quality (Hammersley, 2007; Kuper, Lingard & Levinson, 2008; Mays & Pope, 2000). The present review used the scores to assist in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of articles only, as opposed to the conventional use of quality rating scales that may use quality-rating scores to exclude studies from analysis. As Kuper et al., (2008) proposed, appraisal of quality in qualitative research is “an interpretative act” that “requires informed reflective thought rather than the simple application of a scoring system” (Kuper, et al., 2008 p. 687).

1.2.4.1 Results of quality appraisal

Studies scored between 13 and 20 with a mean score of 17.17. There were some consistencies between studies regarding the quality criteria achieved. For example, only one study did not demonstrate the use of credibility procedures (Wood, Scarville & Gravino, 1995) and all studies clearly outlined their objectives.

However, the assessment process also identified some areas of concern. Three studies did not include any information about the location of deployment (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2011; Werner & Shannon, 2013; Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). Although the main aim of these studies was not based on specific deployment locations, it may have been helpful to have this information to provide context for the findings.

All but one study (Wood, et al., 1995) provided information on sampling strategy. Additionally, the majority of the studies contained samples with a variety of characteristics. For example, in half of the studies, partners were deployed to a variety of locations (Aducci, Baptist, George, Barros, & Goff 2011; Maguire, Heinemann-LaFave, & Sahlstein, 2013; Marnocha, 2012). Further to this, some studies recruited spouses of both regular and reservist personnel and utilised a grounded theory approach (Lara-Cinisomomo, et al., 2011; Sahlstein, et al., 2009; Merolla, 2010; Maguire, et al., 2013). Grounded theory is a qualitative method that aims to develop a theoretical model from participant's experiences. With this in mind, grounded theory may benefit from a degree of heterogeneity in the sample to refine a proposed model. However the lack of homogeneity with some participant characteristics may limit the richness of the analysis, as nuances in the experiences of deployment, between different groups could be missed.

A key characteristic of grounded theory is the production of a theoretical model grounded in participant's experiences. However, out of the six studies that used a grounded theory approach, only one produced a model (Rosetto, 2013).

Furthermore, the study by Rosetto (2013) was the only study that explicitly used data saturation, another key element of grounded theory. Regardless of qualitative approach, two studies provided limited quotes to ground the findings in the voices of military spouses (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2011; Wood, et al., 1995). Lara-Cinisomo et al., (2011) study provided qualitative findings drawn from a larger mixed methods study, hence this may have impacted on the fidelity to the qualitative approach.

In relation to reflexivity, only two studies provided detailed information about the position of the researcher (Aducci et al., 2011; Davis, Ward & Storm, 2011). Further information about the researcher's relationship to the study, particularly if they had connections to the military, would have been beneficial, as hermeneutics argues that the researcher's position influences findings.

1.2.5 Analysis

Qualitative researchers with a post-modernist position argue that qualitative research is dependent on context. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that experiences have homogenous meanings (Sandelowski, Docherty & Emden, 1997). This suggests that bringing together qualitative findings on a topic area is of limited value. As Campbell and colleagues (2003) suggest however, this is more of an epistemological debate between post-modernist and modernist movements. The position in the present review leans to a modernist persuasion, believing that there is a tendency to operate on shared meanings of our environments, whilst acknowledging that it is important to reflect on the context specificity of these meanings.

With this in mind the present review identified the context and main concepts from each study. Following this, findings between articles were systematically compared to identify reoccurring themes, after which the convergence and divergence between the findings were explored. These techniques were originally cited in previous research (Britten et al., 2002; Campbell et al., 2003) and later modified in a review of qualitative studies by Emslie (2005). However, to ensure the findings reflected the voices of military spouses, the present review uses quotation excerpts from studies where appropriate.

1.3 Results

1.3.1 Findings of studies

Study findings are presented thematically within each aim of the review. The first aim was to uncover military spouses' experiences of deployment and the second aim was to explore how military spouses cope with their experiences. The findings of ten studies primarily addressed the first aim. All studies reviewed contained some findings in line with the second aim. Where relevant, particular attention was given to the experiential differences between spouses of regular and reservist personnel.

For ease of reading, throughout the results and discussion sections, the term spouse is used to refer to all women military spouses, and the term partner is used for serving personnel. Further information on relationship status and other characteristics of the studies are provided in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Characteristics of the reviewed studies.

Author, date, country of origin and quality rating (QR).	Sample size, strategy and location of recruitment.	Aims and areas covered.	Data collection (method, location, timing, researcher position/information) and data analysis (credibility checks).	Participant details: sex of partner, participant age, ethnicity, relationship status and length, dependents, type of military service and component, number of deployments experienced, location of deployment.	Summary of key findings
Aducci, C. J., Baptist, J. A., Jayashree, G., Barros, P. M., and Goff, N. (2011). USA QR = 20	25 Purposive sampling. Recruited through flyers and newspaper adverts, or through referral from Army Family Readiness Groups (support groups for military families), chaplaincy or other military sources. Specific information on these sources was not given.	<i>Aims:</i> To explore military wives experiences of, deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan, their relationships with the military and deployment, how the deployment experience shaped their spousal relationship. <i>Areas covered:</i> Relationship during deployment, how deployment affected them personally, negative and positive effects of deployment, what has helped them cope with the deployment experience.	Semi structured interview. Location and nature of interview not given. Interview length between 45-90 minutes. None of the researchers were currently connected to the military. Extensive information was given on four of the authors who conducted the data analysis. Data analysis was influenced by feminist theory. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Triangulation of analysis between four of the authors.	Male Mean age of 32 years. Age range from 19 to 48 years. White (n=19), Mexican American (n=1), American Indians/Alaska Natives (n= 4), Other (n=1). All married. Mean length of relationship was 7 years, ranging from 1 to 23 years. No information on dependents given. Army. Regular component. First deployment experience (n=21), second deployment (n=4). Iraq and Afghanistan.	Two main themes: <i>1. Recipe for being a good military wife</i> <i>2. Managing split loyalties.</i> Within these two main themes the following subthemes emerged: <i>1. Recipe for being a good military wife.</i> - Managing groundlessness alone. - Assuming androgynous roles - Emotional caregiving - Relearning the dance - Recognizing the strength <i>2. Managing split loyalties</i> - Walking the walk - Split loyalties - Listening from the side lines
Chambers, J. (2013). USA. QR = 19	8. Originally 10 but 2 participants were withdrawn due to not verifying transcripts. Purposive sampling. Recruited through a	<i>Aims:</i> To explore military wives experiences of the Iraqi wartime deployment on a physical, psychological and spiritual level.	Semi-structured interview. Face to face in the participants home. Interview length between 45 and 60 minutes. Researcher is a military wife.	Male Mean age 28 years. Age range from 25-33. Ethnicity of sample not provided. All married, 6 newly married. Length of	Seven main themes identified: <i>1. Grief and loss,</i> <i>2. Separation feelings of emotional turmoil,</i> <i>3. Fear of the unknown,</i> <i>4. Impact on couple communication,</i> <i>5. Effect on family dynamics and functioning,</i> <i>6. Problem-focused coping strategies,</i>

	flyer posted online on Operation Homefront's website. Operation Homefront is a non-profit military families organisation.	<i>Areas covered:</i> Experiences prior to, and during deployment, past experiences of deployment and whether there was anything different from experiencing their first deployment compared to other deployments, how deployment affected them physically, psychologically and spiritually.	Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen's phenomenological model of data analysis by Moustakas (1994). Peer audit	relationship was not given. 9 had children. Army (n=4), Marines (n=2), Navy (n=2). Regular component. First deployment experience (n=9), second deployment (n=1). This figure was not recalculated following the 2 participants who were withdrawn from the study. Iraq	7. <i>Acceptance, motivation and resiliency.</i>
Davis, J., Ward, D. B., and Storm, M. (2011). USA QR=19	11 Convenience sampling Recruited through announcements made at unit events. Further details not given. 6 civilians were also recruited to take part in a reflecting team with the 11 military wives.	<i>Aims:</i> To explore Army wives experiences of wartime deployment and the influence of civilian communities upon their experiences. <i>Areas covered:</i> Experience of deployment, how they survived the deployment and what they wished the civilian community knew about their experiences.	Semi structured interview and reflecting team. Location and nature of the interviews not given. Reflecting team discussions were face to face, however the location was not given. Length of interviews and reflecting team was not provided. First author is a military wife. Bracketing interview and research journal was completed. Grounded theory Peer audit. Respondent validation with the entire military wives sample.	Male Mean age of 26 years. Age range from 20-34 years. White (n=6), Italian (n=2), Hispanic (n=1), Irish (n=1), Columbian/Italian (n=1). All married. Mean length of marriage was 3.5 years, ranging from 4 months to 10 years. No children (n=5), one child (n=6). All Army wives. Regular component. First deployment (n=6), second deployment (n=5). Iraq	Two main themes were found: 1. Rollercoaster theme Wives described experiencing deployment as an emotional rollercoaster. Army wives coped with the deployment experience through positive thinking, self-determination, staying busy and support from others. 2. Silenced and un-silencing themes Wives described feeling silenced by some military wives and civilians. However, through the process of the research, wives reflected on feeling un-silenced, empowered and supported by others who were listening to their experiences.

<p>Lara-Cinisomomo, S., Chandra, A., Burns, R. M., Jaycox, L. H., Tanielian, T., Ruder, T. and Han, B. (2011). USA Data was collected as part of a larger mixed methods study QR= 16</p>	<p>50 Stratified sampling by service (i.e. Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, Navy, Marines) and component (active, or reserve). Following stratified sampling, military spouses were randomly selected for interview. Recruited through the Operation purple camp applicant pool. This is a free camp for military children.</p>	<p><i>Aims:</i> How deployment affects home caregivers daily activities and communication with the deployed service member, and how they manage the changes. <i>Areas covered:</i> The deployment experience, their relationship with their child and deployed partner, their changing roles during deployment, their mood and sense of self, and the quality of communication with their deployed partner.</p>	<p>Semi structured interviews. Telephone. Projected interview length of 45 minutes, but information on the actual length of interviews was not provided. Researcher position not explored. Thematic analysis. Inter-coder reliability on 3 randomly selected interviews.</p>	<p>Male Age of participants not given. Ethnicity of sample not provided. Reports that most of the participants were married, but further information was not given. No information given on length of spousal relationship. Children (n=50). Army (34%), Air Force (34%), Navy (24%), Marines (6%), Coast Guard (2%). Regular component (50%), National Guard (30%), reserve (20%). Information not provided on number of deployments experienced. Information not given on location of deployment.</p>	<p>Four key themes emerged: 1. <i>Household management hassles:</i> spouses reported an increase in household chores. Just over half of the spouses experienced an intensified parenting role 2. <i>Consequences of changes in responsibility:</i> experiences were shared about how the change in responsibilities influenced them. 3. <i>Coping with changes in household responsibility:</i> coping strategies were used such as seeking social and instrumental support, and the use of distraction. 4. <i>Quality of communication in relationship:</i> some spouses reported difficulties in negotiating what difficulties to discuss with their deployed partner.</p>
<p>Maguire, K. C., Heinemann-LaFave, D. and Sahlstein, E. (2013). USA QR= 17</p>	<p>50 Snowball sampling Recruited through military chaplains and military family support group leaders.</p>	<p><i>Aim:</i> To explore the strategies Army wives use to maintain the relationship with their husband during wartime deployment. Additionally, to explore the unintended consequences of using some of the relational maintenance strategies. This study was a</p>	<p>Semi structured interviews, guided by retrospective interview technique. Face to face. No information given on location of interviews. Average interview length of 90 minutes. Researcher position not highlighted. Grounded theory, utilising</p>	<p>Male Mean age of 31 years, ranging from 18-45 years. No ethnicity information given. All married. Average of around 7 years. No children (n=16). Children (n=44). Average of around 1 child. Army regular component or</p>	<p>Findings were guided by the relational maintenance strategies found in Merolla's (2010) study. Although similar findings to Merolla's study were reported, only additional findings were explored in detail. The additional findings that emerged included: 1. <i>Intrapersonal maintenance strategies</i> 2. <i>Dyadic partner interaction</i> 3. <i>Social network support</i> An additional finding reflected the unintended consequences of using some of the relational</p>

		<p>replication and extension of the study by Merolla (2010). Unlike Merolla's study, this study explored throughout the deployment cycle, including post deployment.</p> <p><i>Areas covered:</i> Relational maintenance experiences when notified of the deployment, during deployment and the rest and recuperation period, and if applicable, during the post-deployment.</p>	<p>the categories already found in Merolla's (2010) study.</p> <p>Inter-coder reliability.</p>	<p>Army National Guard. Information not provided on number of deployments experienced.</p> <p>Iraq ($n=22$), Afghanistan ($n=26$). Participants who did not provide information on location of deployment ($n=2$).</p>	<p>maintenance strategies.</p>
<p>Marnocha, S. (2012). USA QR= 18</p>	<p>11 Snowball sampling Recruitment process not given.</p>	<p><i>Aim:</i> To explore military wives perceptions of transition, adaptation, and coping with deployment.</p> <p><i>Areas covered:</i> Wives were asked to describe their marriage, their experiences of deployment and the feelings that were triggered by this experience.</p>	<p>Semi structured interview. Face to face. Participants home or a quiet office setting. Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes. Researcher position not highlighted</p> <p>“Seven step method for qualitative analysis developed by Collazzi”</p> <p>Member checking with 3 participants.</p>	<p>Male Age range from 22-42 years. No information provided on ethnicity. All married. No information provided on length of marriage. No children ($n=4$). Children ($n=7$). No information provided on the amount of children. Army. Reserve. One deployment experience ($n=6$), “multiple deployments” ($n=5$). Iraq and Afghanistan.</p>	<p>9 themes emerged and were separated into three phases of deployment.</p> <p><i>News of deployment.</i> Two themes were identified: <i>emotional chaos</i> and <i>making preparations.</i></p> <p><i>During deployment</i> Five themes emerged: <i>taking the reins, placing focus elsewhere, emotional and physical turmoil, staying strong, and reaching out.</i></p> <p><i>After deployment</i> Two themes were identified: <i>absence makes the heart grow fonder, and re-establishing roles.</i></p>

Merolla, A. J. (2010). USA. QR= 17	33 Convenience sample. Recruited through social networks of graduate and undergraduate students of a local university.	<i>Aim:</i> Explore military spouses relational maintenance during deployment <i>Areas covered:</i> Within the above aim they specifically explored factors that shape, facilitate or complicate relational maintenance.	Semi-structured interviews. Face to face. No information given on location of interviews. Interview length ranged from 30-60 minutes. Researcher position not highlighted. Grounded theory. Peer audit and inter-coder reliability.	Male Mean age of 30 years, ranging from 21-62 years. Caucasian (76%), African American (3%) and Native American (3%). 6 of the participants didn't identify ethnicity. All married. Average length of 8 years. 36% had children. Army (27%), Navy (18%), Air Force (15%), Marines (12%). Regular component. Remaining 6% were from "various reserve components". Important to note that these figures do not add up to 100%. No explanation about this was provided. Information not provided on number of deployments experienced. Iraq (61%), Kuwait (9%), south Korea (3%) and Japan (3%). 7 of the participants did not report deployment location.	3 main relational maintenance strategies were reported. These included: <i>1. Intrapersonal maintenance strategies:</i> This involved activities that wives used outside of partner interaction. <i>2. Maintenance strategies through mediated interaction:</i> This included communication strategies with the deployed husband. <i>3. Social network support.</i>
Rossetto, K. (2013). United States of America (USA). QR = 18	26 Mixed sampling strategy including online outreach, organisational outreach and	<i>Aims:</i> To explore the ways in which military spouses cope relationally with the deployment experience and how these coping	Semi-structured interview. Face to face (n=20), telephone (n=6). Face to face interviews, location varied from the participant's home to the	Male Mean age 27 years. Age range from 20-40 years 21 White/ Caucasian. 3 mixed ethnicity. 2 Hispanic/Latina.	Identified 2 relational coping strategy themes: <i>1. Mediated interpersonal interaction</i> <i>2. Choosing open versus restricted communication</i> Within each theme, the relationship function of each coping strategy was discussed.

	<p>snowball sampling. Initially recruited through websites, then through military groups. USA. Exact regions not given.</p>	<p>strategies promote resilience.</p> <p><i>Areas covered:</i> Experience of deployment, how the experience has affected them, the difficulties and benefits of deployment, how they manage it.</p>	<p>interviewer's office. Interview length between 47 and 128 minutes. Researchers position and information not provided.</p> <p>Modified grounded theory. Member checks with 2 military wives (one who was not part of the original sample) and peer debriefing with another researcher.</p>	<p>2 engaged (1 engaged for 4 months, 1 engaged for 2 years).</p> <p>Length of marriage ranged from 1 month to 11 years. Did not state how many participants were married.</p> <p>15 had children living at home.</p> <p>Army, Air Force or Marines. Regular component.</p> <p>First deployment experience ($n=10$), second ($n=6$), third ($n=7$), fourth ($n=2$) fifth ($n=1$).</p> <p>Combat and non-combat zones. Iraq ($n=14$), Afghanistan ($n=6$), Korea ($n=3$) Kuwait ($n=1$), and undisclosed locations ($n=2$).</p>	<p><i>1. Mediated interpersonal interaction</i> Mediated interpersonal interaction promoted two relationship functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Intimacy & positivity</i> - <i>Confronting realities & fears</i> <p><i>2. Choosing open versus restricted communication</i> Open communication promoted relationship involvement functions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Closeness</i> - <i>Smooth reunion</i> - <i>Outlet</i> <p>Restricted communication fostered protective functions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Avoiding worry</i> - <i>Work-life separation</i>
<p>Sahlstein E., Maguire, K. C. and Timmerman, L. (2009). USA QR = 17</p>	<p>50 Primarily snowball sampling. Military chaplains and leaders of military family support groups made announcements at meetings. Flyers were also placed in military stores on base.</p>	<p><i>Aims:</i> Guided by relational dialectics, to explore how military wives manage the both the separation of deployment and appreciate their independence.</p> <p><i>Areas covered:</i> What contradictions the military wives experience during the deployment cycle, and</p>	<p>Semi structured interviews, guided by retrospective interview technique.</p> <p>Face to face.</p> <p>Interviews conducted in the participant's home or another private location, for example a quiet area of a café.</p> <p>Average interview length of 90 minutes.</p> <p>Researcher position not highlighted.</p>	<p>Male Mean age of 32 years. No information given on ethnicity. All married. Average length of 7 years. 31 out of 50 participants were mothers. Average of 2 children. Either Army (regular component) or Army National Guard. Information not provided on number of deployments</p>	<p>Three contradictions occurred during different stages of deployment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Uncertainty-certainty:</i> wives reflected on pre-deployment as an uncertain and powerless time. <i>2. Autonomy-connection:</i> during deployment, 31 out of the 50 wives reflected on struggles with parenting children. Wives reported a tension between wanting togetherness and wanting to be apart from their husbands <i>3. Openness-closedness:</i> upon reunion, couples found it difficult to know when, what and how to communicate.

		what praxis patterns they use to negotiate these contradictions.	Grounded theory. Peer audit.	experienced. Currently or recently deployed from Iraq (n=29) or Afghanistan (n=19). Two participants did not give information on the location of their husband's deployment.	
		Contradictions refer to the relational dialectics between two opposing poles, for example autonomy and connection. Praxis patterns refer to how individuals manage the contradictions, for example the couple may deny the presence of the contradiction or alternatively they may try to balance the contradiction by partially fulfilling the need of each.			
Werner, T. L. and Shannon, C. S. (2013). Canada. QR = 18	10 Purposive sampling. Recruited via recruitment posters displayed in a Military Family Resource Centre, the military base retail store and gymnasium. A email was also sent out to all base employees.	<i>Aim:</i> To explore women's experiences with leisure during deployment and the role and meaning leisure played during this period. <i>Areas covered:</i> Structure of women's lives and leisure prior to and during deployment, support provided to them during deployment and how this influenced their	Semi structured interviews. Face to face. Interviews conducted in participants home. No information given on interview length. Photo elicitation was also used to stimulate discussion. Participants were asked to bring 3 photos taking during deployment. Researcher position not highlighted, however the use of bracketing and a reflective journal were	Male Mean age of 32.9 years, ranging from 23-40 years. Caucasian (n=9), mixed race (n=1). Married (n=7), engaged (n=2), not married or engaged (n=1). Length of relationship was not provided. One child (n=2), two children (n=5), three children (n=3). Army. No information given on component.	Findings indicated that the deployment experience was influenced by spouse's emotional reactions to their deployed partner's absence and feeling as though they were temporarily a single parent. Spouses reflected on the consequential impact; having to manage household and parenting duties alone. However, family leisure activity was maintained as a way of ensuring family consistency and normalcy for their children.

		leisure activity.	reported.	Information not provided on number of deployments experienced.	
			Heideggerian hermeneutical phenomenological approach.	No specific deployment. Participants asked to reflect on their deployment experiences in the last year.	
			Respondent validation with 7 of the 10 participants.		
Wheeler, A. R. and Torres Stone, R. A. (2010). USA QR= 14	9 Convenience sample. Recruited through flyers, newsletters and word of mouth.	<i>Aim:</i> To explore the impact of deployment on Army National Guard spouses. <i>Areas covered:</i> Impact of deployment on themselves, husband, children, marital relationship, what they found to be helpful ways of coping with the deployment and any factors that helped them cope.	Semi structured interviews. Face to face. Conducted in participants home or in on-campus offices. Interview length ranged from 45-120 minutes. Researcher position not highlighted. Grounded theory. No information provided on credibility checks.	Male Age range from 21-46 years. All non-Hispanic Whites. All married for at least one year. Longest marriage was 25 years. Children (n=5). Information on amount of children not provided. Army National Guard Information not provided on number of deployments experienced. Information not provided on location of deployment.	Three key themes emerged. 1. <i>Stressors:</i> the stressors of deployment included: difficulties with childrearing responsibilities, the emotional and physical impact, and feeling uncertain about future involvement with the military. 2. <i>Coping strategies:</i> wives used a variety of coping strategies including: support from friends and family, spirituality and religiosity, relying on technology for communication. 3. <i>Awareness:</i> As a consequence of experiencing deployment, wives reflected on positive changes.
Wood, S., Scarville, J. and Gravino, K. S. (1995). USA QR= 13	35 Information on sampling strategy and recruitment process not given.	<i>Aim:</i> To explore the resources, conditions, and experiences associated with wives adjustment to separation and reunion. <i>Areas covered:</i> Experiences over the four stages of the deployment cycle: - Before deployment - During deployment	Interviews. Detail on the type of interview was not provided, other than “casual discussion style”. Face to face conducted in “nonstructured settings”. Interview length ranged from 60-90 minutes. Participants were interviewed at each of the four deployment stages. In addition to interviewing the wives, the researchers	Information on participant characteristics is on the original sample of 42 wives, prior to the withdrawal of 7 participants. Male Participant age groups were split into two groups. Mean age of junior enlisted wives was 22 years. Mean age of wives of non-commissioned	Various experiences were identified across the four stages of deployment. <i>Pre-deployment:</i> mixed feelings. Those who had experienced previous deployments felt they would survive using previously learnt coping strategies, such as keeping busy. <i>Deployment:</i> wives described a period of acute loneliness and changes in managing household responsibilities and routines. Children provided physical comfort during this period. Communication eased loneliness, helped to maintain the relationships with their husband. <i>Pre-union:</i> wives described positive personal

- Immediately prior to reunion with serving spouse.	interviewed the Rear Detachment Commander, the chaplain and commanders wife.	officers was 27 years. Ethnicity of sample not provided.	changes. These feelings were combined with anticipation about preparing for reunion, and renegotiation their newly developed roles when their husband returned.
- 6-8 weeks after reunion.	Across the deployment cycle observations were also conducted at military events, functions and family support groups.	All married. No information provided on length of spousal relationship. No children (<i>n</i> =9), one (<i>n</i> =18), two (<i>n</i> =8), 3 (<i>n</i> =6), 4 (<i>n</i> =1).	<i>Post-union</i> : some wives described a struggle negotiating the new lives they had built. However, most wives also found that their husband was more considerate and thoughtful.
	Researcher position not discussed.	Army. Regular component. Information not provided on number of deployments experienced.	
	Thematic analysis. No information provided on credibility checks.	Sinai.	

1.3.1.1 Aim 1: How do military spouses experience the process of deployment?

1.3.1.1.1 Emotional impact

A key finding concerned the emotional impact of deployment on the spouse. This manifested in a variety of ways:

Loss and grief were experienced for the deployed partner. In one of the studies, loss was poignantly experienced as if the partner “had died” (Wood, et al., 1995, p. 222). However, across the majority of these studies loss was associated with loneliness (Chambers, 2013; Marnocha, 2012; Wood, et al., 1995). Conversely, for others, experiences of loss were also associated with the loss for all things that could not be regained (Davis, et al., 2011). For example, the partners’ deployment was extended therefore they missed more events than expected i.e. two birthdays. This loss was re-experienced for spouses during rest and recuperation (RR) periods when partners had to depart again (Maguire, et al., 2013).

In one study feelings of loss were not only experienced during the deployment, but were anticipated prior to the partner’s departure (Marnocha, 2012). For example, one spouse described how she picked up the phone and thought “Oh boy, here we go” when she received a phone call from the US government delivering news of another deployment (p. 3). Additionally, spouses described how partners had to leave home unexpectedly for pre-deployment training sessions. These loss experiences prior to deployment were salient findings of Marnocha’s study only. It is important to note that this study used spouses of Army reservists only, where there can be less time for preparation for

deployment, in comparison to regular forces. It could be that this leaves spouses of reservist personnel under constant anticipation of when the next deployment could happen.

A key experience within nearly half of the studies was a fear for the deployed partners' safety (Aducci et al., 2011; Chambers, 2013; Davis, et al., 2011; Werner & Shannon 2013; Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). A further concern associated the danger of the mission in comparison to previous deployments. For example, in one study a spouse reflected on the perceived danger of one deployment, in comparison to previous experiences i.e. "now there's so much of a threat that it just really bothered me" (Werner & Shannon 2013, p. 69).

For some spouses, the uncertainty about their partner's safety broadened out to many aspects of their lives (Davis, et al., 2011). Deployment left spouses feeling out of control and in some cases at the "mercy" of the military, for example not being able to rely on exact return dates (Davis, et al., 2011, p. 56; Sahlstein, et al., 2009). However, this did not occur for those spouses who had experienced multiple deployments (Sahlstein, et al., 2009; Wood, et al., 1995). Labelling themselves as "gung ho" these spouses felt confident in their ability to manage multiple insecurities (Sahlstein, et al., 2009, p. 429). Whereas, those who had experienced only one or two previous deployments, remained feeling uncertain (Davis, et al., 2011). It therefore could be that multiple deployment experiences influence military spouses' resilience.

In addition to the uncertainties of deployment, in over half of the studies, spouses described feeling emotionally and physically overwhelmed both prior to, and during deployment. Spouses reflected on the deployment experience as an emotional “rollercoaster” experiencing feelings of anger, anxiety and physical exhaustion (Aducci et al., 2011, p. 245; Chambers, 2013; Davis, et al., 2011; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2011; Marnocha, 2012; Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010; Wood, et al., 1995). This experience was described by all spouses in two studies regardless of the number of previous deployments experienced (Chambers, 2013; Davis, et al., 2011).

1.3.1.1.2 Managing daily tasks alone

Despite feeling emotionally and physically overwhelmed by deployment, spouses also had to manage household tasks alone. As a result, they described struggling to cope with children (Chambers, 2013; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2011; Marnocha, 2012; Sahlstein, et al., 2009; Werner & Shannon, 2013; Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010; Wood, et al., 1995). For young mothers, or for those that were both new to the military and motherhood, this was a particular challenge (Chambers 2013; Wood, et al., 1995).

Specific concerns included having to make decisions independently regarding their children’s health (Werner & Shannon, 2013) and worry about how to respond to children’s emotional needs (Marnocha, 2012; Sahlstein, et al., 2009; Werner & Shannon, 2013). Spouses of reservists anticipated concerns for childcare prior to deployment. Consequently, during deployment, one spouse

reported having to end a part-time job, due to limited childcare support (Marnocha, 2012).

Spouses also reported an increased role in household duties and chores (Chambers, 2013; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2011; Marnocha, 2010; Wood, et al., 1995). This resulted in some spouses adopting what they perceived as androgynous responsibilities, including home maintenance roles (Aducci et al., 2011; Werner & Shannon, 2013). More specifically, the latter study reflected spouses' lack of personal leisure time (Werner & Shannon, 2013). In terms of reservists, a noticeable difference was the increase in household duties prior to deployment as partners' alternative employment increased, for example, "(he) tried to pick up extra shifts for money" (Marnocha, 2010, p. 3).

1.3.1.1.3 Relational impact

Alongside their previous experiences, spouses felt that deployment impacted on the relationship with their deployed partner.

Spouses reflected on the negative impact on couple communication due to problems including limited network services, for example telephone, email (Chambers, 2013; Maguire, et al., 2013). Further to this, a lack in the quality and quantity of contact impacted on spouses' security and satisfaction with the relationship (Chambers, 2013; Maguire, et al., 2013; Marnocha, 2012). In particular, an escalation of fear was reported when spouses had not heard from their partner or when disruptions in the contact had occurred (Chambers, 2013; Davis, et al., 2011; Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). In comparison, some

spouses reflected on the negative impact of communication. For example, conversation using webcam led spouses to miss their partner more as they “couldn’t touch him” (Maguire, et al., 2013, p. 263).

A key finding in two studies included spouses’ descriptions of feeling torn between loyalties to a career in the military, however, simultaneously feeling resentment about the relational difficulties deployment imposed (Aducci, et al., 2011; Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). However, in comparison to the spouses of regular military personnel in Adduci et al., (2011) study, more than 50% of the women in Wheeler and Torres-Stones’ (2010) study expressed concerns about future involvement with the National Guard (a component to the reserve forces), as deployment frequency was not as expected i.e. “you sign up for one weekend a month, two weeks a year...and we didn’t really bargain for this” (p. 550).

Additionally, spouses in this study described feelings of anger that were associated with what they felt was a “broken promise”, directed at the US military for not using the National Guard in the way it should be (Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010, p. 548). Nevertheless, this resentment was not noted by the spouses of Army reservists in Marnocha’s (2012) study, therefore it is difficult to ascertain whether this is a deployment experience related to reserve forces only.

In four of the studies, spouses’ felt that their deployment experiences had led themselves and their partners to be changed as individuals. This affected both spouses and partners as they renegotiated their roles in the relationship. This occurred as spouses had taken up duties during the deployment, that upon return, the partner wanted to reassert control over (Aducci et al., 2011; Marnocha, 2012; Sahlstein, et al., 2009; Wood, et al., 1995). In one study with spouses of reservist

forces, these struggles continued into parenting, as children resisted their father's direction post-deployment (Marnocha, 2012). This parental experience was only expressed by the spouses in Marnocha's (2012) study despite other research containing spouses that were parents. It may be that like spouses of reservists, children of reservist families were less prepared for deployment, which impacted on their adjustment following their fathers' return.

In addition to having to regain a balance in household and parenting roles, in two studies spouses reflected on perceived changes within their partner. For example, in one study spouses felt that their partners personalities had changed (Sahlstein, et al., 2009), however, in another study a change in personality was anticipated prior to the reunion i.e. "It's scary, the man I'm married to, who's become a stranger, is coming home tomorrow" (Wood, et al., 1995, p. 225).

1.3.1.1.4 Positive growth

In over half of the studies reviewed, spouses experienced positive growth. Across the majority of these articles spouses learnt to adjust to the adverse experiences of deployment, and actually discovered their inner strength and personal agency, consequently leading to improved self-confidence (Aducci et al., 2011; Chambers, 2013; Davis, et al., 2011; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2011; Marnocha, 2012; Wood, et al., 1995). For example, one spouse stated, "I'm stronger than I thought I was" (Davis, et al., 2011, p. 58). For spouses in Wheeler and Torres-Stone's (2010) study, an increase in awareness and understanding of world politics was reported, as well as a reprioritisation of what was important in their lives and a greater appreciation for the situations of others less fortunate.

However, in line with “being changed individuals” (1.2.1.1. 4), some returning partners struggled with their spouse’s autonomy (Aducci et al., 2011; Sahlstein, et al., 2009; Wood, et al., 1995). In two studies this struggle was imagined prior to reunion with some spouses expressing concerns that their partners might want to take over the roles they wished to keep for themselves, and fears that their partners may not accept their new lifestyles (Aducci et al., 2011; Wood, et al., 1995).

Despite positive growth being reported by both spouses of reservist and regular personnel, spouses of reservists reported no difficulty negotiating an increase in autonomy upon their partners return (Marnocha, 2012). However, it is worth noting that similar experiences were found in Lara-Cinisomo et al., (2011) study that contained a mixed sample of spouses of active and National Guard personnel. Hence, this finding suggests that interpersonal struggles regarding positive growth in spouses may not be unique to spouses of regular personnel.

Alongside interpersonal struggles, positive growth also occurred within spousal relationships, including an increase in closeness and appreciation for each other (Aducci et al., 2011; Marnocha, 2012; Wood, et al., 1995). Two of the studies contained spouses that also reported partners struggling with their increased self-confidence, perhaps highlighting the complexity of the impact of deployment on relationships (Aducci et al., 2011; Wood, et al., 1995). Unlike the previously noted negative changes within partners, two studies argued that the deployment

experiences had led their partner to become more sensitive and considerate (Marnocha, 2012; Wood, et al., 1995).

Positive growth in other relationships was also reported. For example Davis et al., (2011) argued that the deployment experience had drawn spouses closer to family members and Wood et al., (1995) reported it nurtured new friendships, including those developed from military related support groups.

1.3.1.1.5 Summary

A critique of the articles in the current literature review found that military spouses identified a range of deployment experiences. Some of the main challenges included the emotional impact on spouses and an increase in household and parenting duties. Relational difficulties were reported, including problems maintaining quality contact with the deployed partner. Although spouses with previous multiple deployment experiences were more confident in their ability to cope, all spouses in the studies described the deployment experience as an emotionally turbulent time. Alongside the difficulties of deployment, the challenges provided spouses with the opportunity for positive growth, on both a personal and relational level.

The majority of the deployment experiences were identified in both spouses of reservist and regular forces personnel. However, some differences between the groups were found. For example, in spouses of reservists, the lack of pre-deployment preparation seemed to accentuate the emotional experience prior to deployment (Marnocha, 2012). These experiences may help to understand why

some reservist spouses questioned their partner's future career with the military (Wheeler and Torres-Stone, 2010). However, differences between these groups were difficult to ascertain, as they were not consistently reported between both studies of reservist spouses (Marnocha, 2012; Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). Furthermore, the reviewed studies contained heterogeneous samples, which may have led to the discrete experiential differences between the groups being overlooked.

1.3.1.2 Aim 2: How do military spouses cope with the deployment experience?

1.3.1.2.1 Practical facilitators

The use of letters and communication technology, i.e. telephone, webcam, e-mail, was a key way spouses coped with the relational distance (Marnocha, 2012; Merolla, 2010; Rosetto, 2013; Sahlstein, et al., 2009; Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010; Wood, et al., 1995). Across studies spouses reported that this enabled them to maintain their relationship. Technology was used to share feelings, (Rosetto, 2013, Wheeler and Torres-Stone, 2010), and activities, such as house viewings (Rosetto, 2013). Two studies found that spouses had particular preferences for the type of communication method (Merolla, 2010; Rosetto, 2013). Termed as “snail mail”, for one spouse, letters were helpful as they provided something tangible (Rosetto, 2013, p. 575).

1.3.1.2.2 Interpersonal coping

Alongside the methods used to communicate, a salient feature across the studies was the spouse's decisions regarding the level of communication with their deployed partner i.e. whether to communicate openly or whether it would be

beneficial to restrict communication. In two studies the ambivalence surrounding this decision was explicitly identified (Rosetto, 2013; Sahlstein, et al., 2009). For example, in Sahlstein, et al., (2009) study this decision occurred upon reunion, as both military spouses and their partners were unsure what information to share. Furthermore, some uncertainty was expressed due to communication having variable consequences, for example, open communication both mitigated and increased fear for the deployed partner (Davis, et al., 2011).

Differences were found both between and within studies concerning spouses' communication decisions. Some spouses reported wanting to openly communicate (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2011; Maguire, et al., 2013; Merolla, 2010; Rosetto, 2013; Sahlstein, et al., 2009; Wood, et al., 1995) and interestingly one spouse commented, "our relationship *is* communication, we can't filter that out" (Rosetto, 2013, p. 578).

Spouses' voiced a variety of functions for open communication and how this enabled them to cope with the deployment experience. In some studies, open communication was chosen as spouses felt it preserved closeness (Rosetto, 2013; Sahlstein, et al., 2009; Wood, et al., 1995) and more specifically, enabled the spousal relationship to continue progressing in spite of deployment (Rosetto, 2013). In five of the studies, open communication supported spouses' during the deployment phase, whilst also ensuring a smooth reunion (Maguire, et al., 2013; Merolla, 2010; Rosetto, 2013; Sahlstein, et al., 2009; Wood, et al., 1995). For example, communication enabled partners to stay updated with family business arrangements (Rosetto, 2013) and household duties (Maguire, et al., 2013).

Further to this, Sahlstein, et al., (2009) found that spouses needed to remain connected with their partner to support parenting upon reunion. In a similar vein, spouses in Merolla's (2010) study found that talking about future plans helped to retain a hopeful attitude that extended beyond deployment.

However, there were several challenges in communication. One spouse reflected upon difficulties when she wanted to discuss topics that her partner was reluctant to engage with, for example discussing will arrangements prior to deployment (Maguire, et al., 2013). Alternatively, upon reunion, some spouses' wished to remain ignorant to aspects of the deployment, whereas others wished to discuss topics including combat experiences (Sahlstein, et al., 2009).

In contrast to the decision to openly communicate, some spouses protected themselves by restricting communication (Maguire, et al., 2013; Rosetto, 2013; Sahlstein, et al., 2009), for example, deciding to remain emotionally distant from their partner to prepare for deployment separation (Sahlstein, et al., 2009).

Outside of direct communication, some spouses reflected on other methods of relational distancing from their partner, through focusing on themselves and their children (Sahlstein, et al., 2009). However, this was difficult when family members, or others, provided reminders of deployment adversities. Similarly, spouses' in Merolla's (2010) study decided to ignore the media reporting's of war.

Restricted communication was also used to protect others, for example, not sharing information with the deployed partner, for fear of burdening him (Davis, et al., 2011; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2011; Rosetto, 2013). However, some spouses withheld information as they thought their partner would be uninterested or unable to help with concerns (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2011). The protection of others extended to protecting children by restricting media coverage within the household (Marnocha, 2012; Werner & Shannon, 2013). Some spouses reported retaining a positive attitude “for the sake of the kids” or concealing information to protect family members (Davis, et al., 2011, p. 59).

Interestingly, differences were also found within studies concerning spouses’ decisions on communication levels. For example, three of the studies found that spouses chose to communicate openly and restrict interaction (Maguire, et al., 2013; Rosetto, 2013; Sahlstein, et al., 2009). These findings highlight the complexity and variety of interpersonal coping strategies spouses used to cope with deployment. Across studies it appeared that each coping strategy served a variety of functions at different times, including to protect themselves or their partner and others. However, differences in interpersonal coping within samples were difficult to separate as findings between spouses were often grouped together. Without this information it was hard to determine whether the same spouse was utilising different communication strategies at different times, or whether, as implied, each spouse had different ways of coping.

1.3.1.2.3 Reaching out to others

Spouses drew upon the support of other relationships. In half of the studies spouses found validation from fellow military spouses beneficial (Aducci et al.,

2011; Chambers, 2013; Davis, et al., 2011; Merolla, 2010; Werner & Shannon, 2013; Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). Some spouses in Merolla's (2010) study described the different types of support family and military spouses provided; hence they made explicit choices about who supported them best at different times. For example, family provided distraction, whereas, the military community provided understanding and containment (Merolla, 2010).

Spouses also found that support from military communities could be unhelpful. For example, one spouse felt that other military spouses made assumptions about her experiences when the length of her partner's deployment was longer (Davis, et al., 2011). Further problems included the accessibility of support. For example, military support groups ran at times when spouses were working (Werner & Shannon, 2013). Isolation from military networks was also found in a study with spouses of regular personnel (Chambers, 2013), and in a study with a mixed sample of spouses from both the National Guard and regular forces (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2011). Differences between the groups were not explored in Lara-Cinisomo et al., (2011) study, so without this information it was hard to determine if spouses from both regular and reservist components to the forces experienced isolation from military networks.

Alongside support from military communities, spouses drew upon the support of their children, as they provided physical comfort (Davis, et al., 2011; Merolla, 2010; Wood, et al., 1995). Further to support from children, spouses across three studies reported gaining support from friends and family. This included instrumental support (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2011) and distraction (Wheeler &

Torres-Stone, 2010; Merolla, 2010). However, some spouses found contact with friends and family an unhelpful coping strategy due to a lack of understanding and sensitivity to their situation, particularly within the wider civilian community (Davis, et al., 2011; Merolla, 2010). Conversely, 14% of spouses in Maguire, et al., (2013) study decided to separate themselves from others to devote time to their partner. Information was not provided on whether this was pre or post-deployment, or during RR periods. Spouses in Werner and Shannon's (2013) study did not gain support from friends and family, but reasons for this were not explored.

1.3.1.2.4 Intrapersonal coping

Spouses used a variety of intrapersonal coping strategies, which varied between and within studies.

Some spouses described coping with deployment through denial, prior to their partner's departure (Chambers, 2013; Sahlstein, et al., 2009) as well as during the deployment period (Aducci et al., 2011; Davis, et al., 2011; Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). Additionally, some spouses reported coping by becoming occupied with other activities (Davis, et al., 2011; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2011; Merolla, 2010; Maguire, et al., 2013; Marnocha, 2012; Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010; Wood, et al., 1995). Some examples of this included increasing working hours (Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010) and making sure there was something to "look forward to every month" (Davis, Ward & Storm, 2011). Interestingly, Wood, et al., (1995) suggested that spouses who kept busy appeared to adjust quicker to deployment. Conversely, other studies found that this method of

coping had unintended consequences. For example, spouses reported that involvement with a lot of activities also increased stress (Maguire, et al., 2013) and decreased availability for telephone calls from partners (Davis, et al., 2011).

During deployment, spouses tried to reduce parental stress by developing new routines to support children. Concerns were expressed about interruptions to this routine during their partners RR period. However, spouses struggled to balance the need for control with also wanting their partner to feel welcomed back into the family home (Sahlstein, et al., 2009). Conversely, spouses in Werner and Shannon's (2013) study managed parenting stress by maintaining consistency (Werner & Shannon, 2013). The desire to maintain consistency helps to understand why some spouses in Werner and Shannon's study decided to manage independently, as noted in "reaching out to others" (section 1.3.1.2.3).

In line with independence, spouses reflected on how they encouraged their own inner strength through the use of positive self talk (Chambers, 2013) and positive thinking (Davis, et al., 2011; Merolla, 2010; Wood, et al., 1995). One spouse described how she just "sucks it up" and draws on her resilience to manage the adversities of deployment (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2011, p. 379). Despite the multiple challenges spouses had to manage, only some of the spouses in one study reported benefits of self-care and relaxation (Werner and Shannon, 2013). Spouses across four studies briefly reflected on the benefits of spiritual and religious beliefs, using prayer as a source of comfort and a way to feel more connected with their partner (Chambers, 2013; Marnocha, 2012; Merolla 2010; Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010).

1.3.1.2.5 Summary

Analysis of the studies revealed that military spouses used a range of coping strategies to manage deployment. This ranged from interpersonal coping that was shared between partners and others, to intrapersonal methods where spouses drew upon their own inner strength. The adoption of different coping strategies varied both between and within studies, and findings suggest that spouses used particular coping methods for different functions. For example, some spouses used support from military networks for containment but support from family for distraction (Merolla, 2010).

The variability found in spouses' coping suggested that coping with deployment is idiosyncratic and different between each military spouse. This variability is perhaps not surprising given the systemic influences. For example, spouses wanted to distance themselves from their partner's experiences but found this to be difficult as family members would frequently enquire about them (Sahlstein, et al., 2009). With this in mind, coping choice was not only influenced by the spouse, but also influenced by others around them.

A critique of the literature indicated that there were few apparent differences in coping between spouses of reservist and spouses of regular personnel. However, as discussed previously (see section 1.3.1.1.6), the lack of refined samples and clarification between groups within study findings may have impacted on this. For example, within Lara-Cinisomo et al., (2011) study it was difficult to distinguish whether it was spouses from regular or reservist forces that

experienced isolation from military networks. Further exploration of the contact reservists families have with military social networks, particularly during deployment, would be beneficial. This is particularly relevant to the UK, as unlike families of regular personnel, reservist families are not entitled to live on military bases. Consequently, there is the potential for this group of spouses to have limited contact with the military community.

1.4 Discussion

The aim of this review was to critically appraise the qualitative empirical literature that explored the influences of deployment on women military spouses. Attention was given to how military spouses experience, and cope with deployment. Where possible, the review identified experiential differences between spouses of reservists and regular personnel.

The complexity of spouses' deployment experiences supports previous findings. For example, reports from military spouses suggested that the deployment experience creates both challenges and positive growth on an interpersonal level. With this in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that a recent review of quantitative literature in the field, found that the impact of deployment on marital relationships was unclear and complex (DeBurgh et al., 2011). Furthermore, DeBurgh et al., (2011) found that spouses who were parents were at an increase risk of stress and depression during deployment. Findings from the present review supports the argument that parenting creates challenges that appears to increase individual's vulnerability to stress. However, this review further highlights that alongside the challenges parenting may present, children were a protective factor for spouses during deployment (Davis, et al., 2011; Merolla,

2010; Wood, et al., 1995).

In comparison to reviews of the quantitative literature, it appears that the use of qualitative methodologies helped to elucidate the range and complexity of both the deployment experience and coping methods used to manage this. The majority of studies were conducted from 2009 onwards, with one study being conducted in 1995. Despite this time range, there were no significant differences between experiences or coping noted by spouses in Wood, et al's., (1995) study. This is interesting, as experiences have remained somewhat constant despite the developments in support for military families that may have altered the way spouses manage deployment.

An important finding related to the positive growth experienced by spouses, on both a personal and relational level. This occurred across over half of the studies, even though the majority of the research did not specifically aim to explore positive growth from the outset. Additionally, in spite of the use of heterogeneous samples and a range of methodologies, positive growth occurred consistently. This highlights the importance of positive growth within military spouses' experiences of deployment. The current review has argued for the recognition of the inherent strength of spouses to manage the multiple challenges of deployment, providing a platform for an experience that has previously been conceptualized as a "disenfranchised resilience" (Aducci et al., 2011, p. 244).

Currently, there is a model within national UK guidelines for military families on the emotional experiences of deployment (e.g. Ministry of Defence, 2011a). This conceptualises deployment in stages from emotional disorganisation to a period of stabilisation. The model proposes that spouses move forward through the

cycle, however they can be temporarily withheld at a stage if experiencing difficulties, or likewise, can move back to a previous stage, if in crisis. The adoption of this approach may be helpful for spouses as it could be validating to view their experiences as a model.

However, as this review has found, although there are some thematic similarities between spouses, generally both the experience of deployment and coping with it, is idiosyncratic and dependent on a number of characteristics. For example, findings suggest that there are subtle differences between spouses of reservist and regular personnel. However, this model is used for spouses from both components of the forces (Ministry of Defence, 2011b). Additionally, as noted by Davis, et al., (2011), and reinforced in this review, regardless of previous deployment experiences, deployment is essentially an emotionally unsettling experience. However, the proposed model for these experiences formulates the cycle as a predominantly linear process, and therefore does not take into account that spouses may be experiencing many different emotional “phases concurrently” (Davis, et al., 2011, p. 56). Furthermore, as indicated in the coping literature, family members influence the way spouses manage deployment. However, the current model does not take account of systemic factors, which the current review has shown as important. The present review further indicates that adjustments to current frameworks, including the emotional cycle to deployment, would be beneficial, particularly to account for the context specificity and sensitivity of military spouses deployment experiences.

The use of heterogeneous samples has enabled the review to take a wide perspective. However, as highlighted throughout, the lack of refined samples has

meant that nuances in experiences between spouses of reservist and regular personnel have been difficult to establish. Notably, this inconsistency also occurred between the two studies with reservist's spouses only (Marnocha, 2012; Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). Whilst the methodologies may have impacted on what emerged from spouses' experiences, this is nonetheless interesting. However, it is worth noting that the US military often uses its reserve forces in different ways, hence the experiences between spouses from various components of the reservist forces could be different. For example, Marnocha's (2012) study used spouses of Army reserve, whereas Wheeler & Torres-Stone (2010) had a sample of spouses from the National Guard. Historically, the National Guard was rarely deployed overseas, however, in the post the 9/11 era deployment frequency for this group has increased. It is perhaps not surprising that spouses expressed anger about the way the US military use the National Guard, as this was an unexpected change to their traditional role.

1.4.1 Research implications

All of the studies reviewed were conducted within the US or Canadian military, highlighting the need for UK based qualitative studies. Although UK deployment policies are developed on UK based quantitative empirical evidence, the credibility of these guidelines could be improved if they were also based on the voices of studies carried out with UK military spouses.

To gain a better understanding, future research would benefit from refining samples, using purposive sampling techniques. This would enable a richer understanding of a specific group of military spouses, including reservist

spouses, and other disenfranchised minority groups such as military spouses in homosexual relationships, or perhaps spouses from families who are geographically dispersed.

Alongside individual groups, further exploration of specific aspects of deployment experiences would enhance current knowledge. Given the findings on positive growth, this is a possible area that would be interesting to explore further. Additionally, spouses' voices indicate that deployment experience has systemic features, therefore, future research may benefit from triangulating data collection between family members. Exploring the specific area of positive growth during deployment, from a systemic stance, would be useful given some of the suggested difficulties that certain serving partners face following their spouses increase in autonomy (e.g. Aducci et al., 2011).

1.4.2 Clinical implications

The present review supports the finding that deployment is a complex and emotionally turbulent experience. Validation of the multiple influences that this unique experience can bring may be beneficial; this could be delivered through pre-deployment education packages. Additionally, as the coping literature suggests, spouses found their own ways of not only coping, but for some thriving as a result of deployment. Taking this into account, therapeutic approaches that draw upon individual strengths, including narrative therapy, may be usefully applied to the military spouse population (Morgan, 2000). This could be delivered through a wider resiliency based service model, particularly for those spouses who are new to the military. Additionally, it is suggested that systemic

approaches could be applied to support the military community (Everson & Figley, 2011). Given some of the systemic findings in this review, this approach could also be usefully applied to support military spouses and is worthy of further investigation.

Given the likely increase in reservist families seeking support from the NHS, it is essential that clinicians have an awareness of the clinical needs of military spouses (Ministry of Defence, 2013). The implementation of the military community covenant may help with this, however, as highlighted in national documentation, it is essential that clinicians ask individuals if any member of their family have served, or are currently serving in the armed forces (Ashcroft, 2014). Additional aspects to assessment could include exploration of self-care, particularly during deployment given the potential for multiple demands. The use of third wave cognitive approaches, including compassion-focused therapy, may be helpful to ensure that military spouses engage with self-compassion activity (Gilbert, 2010).

1.4.3 Limitations

The current review excluded studies that were not published in English and studies where it was not possible to separate spouse data from data gathered from the serving partner or family member. These exclusion criteria could have limited the findings, particularly given the need for systemic exploration of the subject. Only four studies from the full search were excluded for this reason. The exclusion of non-empirically based and non-peer reviewed literature, may have excluded potentially valuable findings. However, as this work has already been

collected in national guidelines (Fossey, 2012), the decision to review the qualitative empirical evidence was taken.

Lastly, another method for synthesizing qualitative findings is through a meta-synthesis, which can involve the reinterpretation of published data (Campbell, et al., 2003). However due to the range of methodologies, and at times limited quotes from spouses, a reinterpretation of the published data would have been difficult. Following the suggested refined research topics (section 1.4.1), future meta-synthesis of qualitative literature in this field may be beneficial.

1.5 Conclusion

In recent years there has been an increase in deployment frequency. As a result, the assistance for military families, who provide support for serving personnel, has also become a salient topic. This concern, alongside the predicted rise in reservist families requiring support from the NHS, means it is particularly important for both military and civilian clinicians and service managers to understand the needs of military spouses. However, current understanding is predominantly based on quantitative or non-empirically driven literature. With this in mind, the aim of the present review was to critically evaluate the empirical findings of qualitative research that has explored the influence of military deployment on women military spouses. The findings indicated that both the deployment experience and the methods used to manage this are complex and idiosyncratic, with both challenges and opportunities for positive growth.

The present review highlighted the need for UK based qualitative investigation and the use of homogenous samples to help elucidate the potential differences between groups within the forces. Clinically, the need for civilian clinicians to increase awareness of this group has been highlighted. Additionally, the potential to work therapeutically from both a narrative and systemic approach is indicated as well as utilising service models that draw on a resilience framework. Findings indicate that there is a need to enhance current conceptualisations of the emotional experience of deployment to improve what is otherwise a predominantly linear model, which does not differentiate between spouses' experiences.

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Chapter 2: Empirical Paper

Transition into civilian life: Exploring Army veterans' experiences of military relationships

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2.0 Abstract

Aims: Transition from military service into civilian life is a complex and life-altering experience. However, currently little is known about military veterans' experiences of the transition from the armed forces. Recent research has alluded to the significance of military relationships; an area that the veterans themselves have guided the research towards. The present study aims to provide an in-depth account of veterans lived experiences of the relationships they build with their military comrades, and how these experiences might influence their transition into civilian life.

Method: Six participants were recruited. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Results: Three superordinate themes emerged from the findings: 'Construction of military identity', 'Loss' and 'Reconstruction of military identity'. The concept of identity was common across all participants' experiences of military relationships.

Conclusions: Participants lived experiences are considered in light of the existing evidence base and service policy. Clinical implications and directions for future research are discussed.

Key words: *veteran, ex-servicemen, transition, civilian life, phenomenological.*

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Military veteran context

Leaving military service is recognised as a significant life transition (Hatch et al., 2013). Approximately 20,000 military personnel leave the United Kingdom (UK) armed forces each year and are then given the title of veteran (DASA, 2007).

In recent years veteran care has become a national priority (Ashcroft, 2014; Macmanus & Wessely, 2013; Murrison, 2010). The UK government has affirmed its commitment to the military community by enshrining in law guidelines on their care (Armed Forces Act, 2011). This impetus is timely considering recent guidelines outlining the restructuring of the regular Army and rebranding of reservists (Ministry Of Defence, 2013), which is likely to increase the number of Army veterans requiring National Health Service (NHS) support.

2.1.2 Transition into civilian life

Research argues that for many veterans, transition into civilian life is a successful process. Literature also suggests that for some it can precipitate a range of health and social difficulties (Hatch et al., 2013; MacManus & Wessely, 2013; Murrison, 2010).

Iversen et al., (2009) found similar prevalence rates of common mental health difficulties, including depression and anxiety, amongst both military and general populations. However, substance misuse, particularly the high rate of alcohol consumption, was found to be significant within military culture (Fear et al.,

2007). Whilst the Ministry of Defence (MOD) provides support for those currently serving, for veterans this care becomes the responsibility of the NHS. However, Iversen et al., (2011), argue that veterans experience significant difficulties accessing appropriate support from civilian services (Iversen et al., 2011). Of particular concern are those that left the armed forces prior to completion of their contract, known as early service leavers. Within the UK it has been found that this group of veterans are at a greater risk of mental health difficulties (Buckman et al., 2012).

2.1.3 Military relationships

The armed forces are one of the most well known organisational groups with a unique identity and culture. Central to effectiveness in combat is the need for personnel to subordinate to the group, which may require sacrificing their own life for their colleagues (Freeman, Moore & Freeman, 2009).

This required group unity is linked to why serving personnel often develop enduring friendships with military colleagues (Hatch et. al., 2013). Frequent reference is made to ‘camaraderie’ which is viewed as being far more than friendship, but is built upon shared hardships, a sense of uniformity and common purpose, and a shared dependency on one another’ (Howard League for Penal Reform, 2011, p. 2). With this in mind, Hatch et al., (2013) found that reduced social interaction led to veterans having an increased risk of common mental health difficulties.

Military relationships can be understood using psychological theories. Theories of social identity and group conformity have been used to explain the process of

group identification that occurs during military training, referred to as 'indoctrination' and are key in enabling the transformation from civilian to soldier (McGurk, Cotting, Britt & Adler, 2006).

Attachment theory has also been applied to military relationships (Mayseless, 2004). This proposes that early primary caregivers are the essential source of comfort, security and relief from distress. Later in development it is believed that individuals explore other ways of meeting these needs, through attachments to peers or romantic partners (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2010). Based on this understanding, researchers have applied this theory to explore how relationships within groups are experienced as attachment bonds and that a person can seek connection and comfort from the group in times of need (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Smith, Murphy & Coats, 1999).

Within an Israeli military sample, Mayseless (2004) found that the fulfilment of attachment needs appeared to transfer from parents to military comrades during military conscription.

2.1.4 Qualitative research with veterans

The majority of current empirical literature has focused on exploring the negative consequences of leaving the military. Further, studies exploring military relationships have mainly utilised quantitative methodologies. Although this research has increased knowledge, quantitative research is based on the assumption that there is a single objective reality and therefore the multiple perspectives of transition still need to be explored. Consequently, little is known about veterans lived experiences of transition into civilian life.

However, the voices of veterans have recently been given attention within the empirical literature. For example, Green, Emslie, O'Neil, Hunt, and Walker, (2010) explored ex-servicemen's constructions of masculinity and responses to emotional distress. It revealed that a soldier's identity was constructed around masculine behaviours, the use of aggression and violence, but simultaneously built on a sharing ethos and strong dependent bonds between comrades. The use of banter was found to play a key role in building a soldier's identity and resulted in acceptance from other comrades. Although this research provided a welcome platform for the voice of the veteran, it did not explicitly focus on transition experiences.

However, Brunger, Serrato and Ogden (2013) explored veterans' transitional experiences, with a primary focus on re-employment. The authors found that veterans experience significant feelings of loss when leaving the military, particularly of financial security compounded by difficulties gaining re-employment. Additionally, feelings of loss regarding social connection in civilian life were experienced, as well as a significant loss of self-identity. Although not explored in detail, veterans spoke about a loss of everything that reinforced their military identity, including camaraderie. It is worth noting that whilst the aim of this study was to explore employment experiences in civilian life, the loss of military relationships emerged as a prominent experience.

2.1.5 Aims of current research

There is a lack of qualitative research investigating veterans lived experiences of transition. There are many features to the transition process (Ashcroft, 2014).

Recent research has started to suggest that the experience of military

relationships is important within the transition experience; an area that the veterans themselves have guided the research towards (Brunger, et al., 2013). Furthermore, the experience and impact of the social transition of veterans continues to be an area of concern in both empirical research and policy (Adler et al. 2011; Li, Mahan, Kang, Eisen, & Engel, 2011; Ministry of Defence, 2007; Woodhead et al. 2011).

The present study aims to further knowledge, providing an in-depth account of veterans' lived experiences of the relationships built with their military comrades, and how these might influence transition into civilian life. An immersion into veterans' experiences, through a detailed idiographic approach, affords the opportunity to guide future policy and clinical support for this growing population, from the voice of the experiential expert, the veterans themselves.

2.2 Method

2.2.1 Research design

To gain an exploratory focus in line with the research aims, a qualitative research design was chosen. Within this, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected as an appropriate method of enquiry due to its phenomenological and idiographic basis. This enabled a focused and comprehensive exploration of individuals' experiences, and their meanings. Additionally, IPA is an established methodology for understanding the experiences of those undertaking a life transition (Smith, et al., 2009).

2.2.2 Participants

In line with IPA methodology, a small sample size was chosen. Six male Army veteran participants were recruited. This enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding, and consider the similarities and differences between their experiences (Smith, et al., 2009). Inclusion and exclusion criteria are outlined in Table 2.1. Participant characteristics are detailed in Table 2.2. Names given are pseudonyms chosen by participants to protect their anonymity.

Table 2.1 Participant inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	i) Male Army veteran ii) Transitioned into civilian life at least 6 months ago iii) Involved in active service for at least one operational tour
Exclusion criteria	Non-English speaking

Table 2.2 Participant characteristics

Participant	Age	Regiment	Length of time served (years)	Year of transition into civilian life	Reason for leaving the Army	Operational deployments completed
Dom	44	Royal Logistics Corp	7	1997	Medical discharge due to physical health.	Operation Granby. Belize.
Vic	50	Royal Engineers	6	1986	End of term.	Northern Ireland. Falklands. Beirut.
Terry	65	Royal Artillery	22	1990	End of term.	Aden. Northern Ireland (4 tours).
Richard	57	Royal Artillery	22	1997	End of term.	Northern Ireland (3 tours).
Glyn	63	Royal Fusiliers	20	1993	Agreed redundancy.	Northern Ireland (5 tours).
Joe	48	Royal Fusiliers. Later transferred to another regiment *	*	*	Medical discharge due to physical health.	Northern Ireland.

* Information is deleted to ensure anonymity.

2.2.3 Procedure

2.2.3.1 Ethical procedures

The research was designed and conducted in line with the British Psychological Societies ethics guidelines (BPS, 2010). Ethical approval was granted from Coventry University (Appendix E).

2.2.3.2 Materials

In accordance with IPA methodology a semi-structured interview was utilised (Smith, et al., 2009). The schedule was presented in a visual framework, with the intention of supporting the researcher to be flexible and guided by the participant's experiences (Appendix F). Questions were developed in accordance with the research aims. Supervisors, professionals, and veterans were consulted through the Midlands Military Research Group.

2.2.3.3 Recruitment

Participants were recruited through a military veteran's charity. Upon attendance, potential participants were given a participant information sheet (Appendix G) and those interested left their contact details with a professional at the charity. The researcher then contacted those interested to answer further questions and arrange an interview date. All participants who expressed interest in the research were recruited.

2.2.3.4 Interview procedure

Prior to the interview participants were asked to examine the participant information sheet again. Time was given for concerns to be explored, following which written consent was obtained (Appendix H). Basic demographic information was gathered and interviews were conducted at the charity base. All interviews were audio recorded and ranged from 75 to 135 minutes, (mean of 120 minutes). On completion of the interview a verbal debriefing and veteran's information pack was given, with information on appropriate support services (Appendix I).

2.2.4 Analysis

On completion of each interview, audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and any identifiable information was removed. Data was analysed in line with Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009) procedure for IPA methodology (Appendix J). Excerpts from two transcripts are provided to demonstrate the process of analysis (Appendix K). For cross comparison between accounts, each participant's emergent themes were placed onto coloured paper enabling the researcher to develop a visual map of emerging themes. Clusters of themes were then produced, with sub-themes within the superordinate themes (see Appendix L for a photo of this process).

2.2.4.1 Credibility of the study

Mays and Pope (2000) outlined credibility criteria in qualitative research, which were applied to the present study. Firstly, a member of the supervision team checked the initial coding and emergent themes, following which reflections

were shared. Secondly, participants were involved in checking their transcripts and were invited to validate emergent themes. All participants consented to respondent validation at the outset of the study. Only half of the sample could be contacted to complete this process, whereby the researcher fed back the final analysis (see Appendix M for an example of respondent validation). Thirdly, emergent findings were presented at the BPS Military in Transition Conference and at an NHS veterans' event. Both participants and other veterans reported a strong recognition of the themes.

2.2.4.2 Researchers position

Previously employed as an Assistant Psychologist for an NHS Trusts' veterans' project, the researcher, a Trainee Clinical Psychologist, had prior contact with the charity involved in recruitment. This established relationship was beneficial for the recruitment of the participants, recognised as being poor engagers with mainstream services (Ashcroft, 2014). The hermeneutic foundation of IPA methodology enables the researcher to adopt a reflexive position regarding their thoughts and influences on the research process. A bracketing method was utilised, involving an interview and continual reflective practice within the researcher's supervision team. During this process, the researcher explored their experiences and views, and in line with attachment theory was curious about why veterans continually sought support from other veterans at the charity.

2.3 Results

On completion of data analysis three superordinate themes emerged; 'Construction of military identity', 'Loss' and 'Reconstruction of military

identity'. Each superordinate theme consists of subordinate themes. These findings are displayed in Table 2.3 and are highlighted using verbatim quotations from participants. Throughout the chapter, consideration is given to convergence and divergence within themes.

Table 2.3. Superordinate and subordinate themes

Superordinate theme	Subordinate themes
Theme 1. Construction of military identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) "From a civvie into a soldier" b) "It's in your blood" c) "Special bond"
Theme 2. Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) "Empty and alone" b) "That military section is just dead"
Theme 3. Reconstruction of military identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) "I just can't grasp that mentality" b) "It's like you're home" c) "Still ain't wore a beret yet though"

2.3.1. Theme 1: Construction of military identity

All participants communicated their reflections regarding the construction of a military identity. This emerged through discussion of their relationships with military comrades and contains the subthemes, "From a civvie into a soldier", "It's in your blood" and "Special bond".

2.3.1.1. *Theme 1a: "From a civvie into a soldier"*

Five participants reflected on their experiences whilst serving when the transformation from a civilian to a soldier took place. Dom, Glyn, Terry and Richard all reflected on this as a positive process that they felt increased their self-esteem. Dom, for example, described how joining the Army was the "only way" he could flee the austerity of civilian life. Dom reflected further describing how the Army had provided him with the opportunity for personal transformation:

They (the Army) just break you down...the civilian weren't in me any more, the Army was...being a lazy civilian lay about to a fighting machine.

(Dom, lines 656-660)

Dom's reflections emphasize how military conscription enabled him to remove the "lazy civilian" and transform to an improved self. His use of depersonalising language, including the word "machine", suggests he had transformed from a human being to a fighting entity.

However, for Richard and Terry, the responsibility they gained from military relationships installed a sense of satisfaction. It was this sense of reliance that built their self-esteem, as Terry described:

I became sort of motherly...I felt a sense of responsibility...and the more I, the more I saw others helped the more satisfaction I got from it.

(Terry, lines 218-225)

Terry's reflections about becoming more "motherly" demonstrated his care and responsibility for other military personnel, which evoked a deep-seated sense of protection, similar to that between a mother and child.

Joe however, felt the adoption of military identity decreased his self-esteem. Throughout his account, Joe reflected on the devastation and turmoil caused by joining the forces, as fellow comrades bullied him. He described how his "self-worth was removed" and that he did not "fit" the unit's identity, leading him to feel as though he was in the "wrong place". He described his experience further, reflecting that attachment to belongings was not permitted:

You come to realize that attachment to anything doesn't happen. I knew at home that if I put something down, it would still be there next week... In the block, you know, you lock something away in your locker and go away for the weekend to come back and your locker has been smashed in and its been taken.

(Joe, lines 279-282)

Joe's fear of not being able to leave his personal belongings has a wider representation linked to his civilian identity. Perhaps the fear for the permanency of his personal objects was also a portrayal of concern for his existence, and whether, like the objects, he could be taken and not survive the bullying to "still be there next week". The concern for the survival of his civilian identity and the poignancy of these traumatic experiences was reinforced later in his narrative:

“The Army left me dead, I tell you that, they really did.”

(Joe, line 702)

The strength of the impact of the bullying is made clear with Joe’s reflections that perhaps not only his civilian identity, but also his entire self-existence is “dead”. In addition to the accounts above, all participants explicitly described how their identity as a soldier was built on particular relational qualities. For example, Vic, Terry and Glyn reflected on the importance of trust and reliability, the significance of these was described during serving experiences. They also discussed valuing these qualities within relationships in civilian life:

If I say I am going to do something you might as well consider it done...I would never let anyone down...hell or high water I don't.
Umm, so that's one thing, that's military.

(Vic, lines 589-593)

In addition to trust and reliance, for Dom, Vic, Richard and Glyn “banter” and “camaraderie” shared with military comrades were reoccurring themes. This was described as a sense of humour and “one up manship” whereby fellow comrades would take “the Michael out of each other”. Dom discussed how “banter” played a “strong bonding” role in building relationships. Conversely, Richard related how banter was an interpersonal coping strategy to manage adversity:

Say if something went totally wrong, say one of your guys is injured or whatever...you'd have the...the banter would come out...well I suppose it's a release of tension.

(Richard, lines 164-166)

Richards's description of how banter would "come out" to "release tension" implies it was part of a military toolkit that helped comrades manage adversities experienced during service.

2.3.1.2 Theme 1b: "It's in your blood"

All participants, except Glyn, made explicit reference to how military identity was embodied, feeling like part of their body. Dom, for example, described military identity as being "in your blood". Whereas Vic commented:

If you had cut me in half it would have said Army like a stick of rock.

(Vic, lines 11-13)

Integral to embodied military identity were relationships with fellow comrades. Specifically, for Dom, Vic and Terry, embodied military identity was a collective entity. Terry described how experiences during military training built a collective identity as new recruits were "thrown into the same pot". Terry reinforced this later when reflecting upon active service:

And yeah I get in with the company and then active service is something different altogether, because that again breeds something different into you. This sense of reliance...so I had that bred into me at 18 years old. I just soaked it. I was like a sponge.

(Terry, lines 273-279)

For Terry, collective identity, built on relational qualities including reliance (see Theme 1a), was “bred” into him through active service. The personification of military identity, through the words *bred* and *breeds*, suggests the military is a homogenous group unified by shared characteristics. Additionally, perhaps like Vic’s metaphor of a stick of rock, if reproduced they could all be similar if “cut in half”. However, Terry’s descriptions of being like a “sponge,” suggests how he was searching, like a sponge does for water, to “soak up” the reliance and military identity.

However, unlike the experiences described above, for Joe the embodiment of military identity was encapsulated by the bullying inflicted on him. Joe explained how this interpersonal trauma had left him “marked”. Additionally, unlike other participants, Joe reflected on the embodiment of military identity that was part of him prior to joining the Army and said:

I need to get the soldiering bit out of me...self

(Joe lines 168-169)

This description was about Joe’s ambition to join the military. However, when using this reflection to make sense of Joe’s wider experiences, it appears that the use of present tense to comment on the past portrays how in the present he is still trying get rid of the “soldiering bit” in him. Unlike his ambition for joining the military, he is left trying to eliminate the soldier identity that is captured by his experience of military interpersonal trauma. This is particularly difficult for him as he felt the trauma was part of him, leaving him “marked”.

2.3.1.3. Theme 1c: “Special bond”

At the core of military identity, and termed a “special bond”, all participants reflected on the enduring connection they shared with comrades. For Richard, Terry, Dom and Vic references were made to the closeness and security these relationships provided. Richard, for example, commented:

There’s always...even though the banter could be harsh and quite cutting at times, you knew at the end, when things got really bad, those guys were there for you, you know. So you had your little group of special people.

(Richard, lines 208-211)

Dom, Terry and Vic discussed the strength of military relationships further, describing it as a friendship like no other, one where there was the potential to put their own life at risk for the protection of their comrades.

I mean it is literally a life and death commitment, I mean I have been married twice and I ain’t got the same commitment...its your life...its your life in somebody else’s hands, its beyond a wife, beyond a partner its...yeah its your life ain’t it?

(Vic, lines 862-867)

Vic’s comparisons to other relationships may be his way of trying to make sense of, or portray to the civilian researcher, the significance of his relationships with his comrades. For Vic these relationships were a “life and death commitment”. His repeated descriptions of it being “your life” depicts how these relationships were all consuming, and everything that his life and identity represented.

Given the significance of these relationships, half the participants compared their military friendships to a family unit. Vic made frequent reference to the military being his “immediate family”. For both Terry and Glyn, however, the relationships with military comrades provided them with a new positive relational experience, as Glyn shared:

They (military comrades) were like a mum and dad, cus I was a single person in some terms, I was after a family type thing, because I felt alone, on my own and it’s like putting a needle in a hay stack...I was like the needle, no they were like the needle and I was trying to find it. That family environment and somebody I could get on with.

(Glyn, lines 170-177)

Glyn described his relationships with comrades as the family he was longing for. This was furthered in the metaphor of his military comrades being the “needle,” which appears suggestive of Glyn’s searching for the belonging that was difficult to find.

Unlike other participants Joe had negative experiences with comrades in one regiment. However, this changed when Joe left this regiment of the Fusiliers and joined a different one:

So you know, for a change I had been given some respect and I had people talking to me for me...It was...it was like a light shining, like the sun coming out, it was really different...unexpected.

(Joe, lines 393-396)

Relationships in the new regiment provided Joe with a different positive relational experience that he had been longing for, like Glyn. Joe's comparison of this experience to "like the sun coming out" evokes a sense of enlightenment; one that was different and "unexpected" in comparison to the darkness he experienced as a consequence of the bullying in the previous regiment.

2.3.2 Theme 2: Loss

For five participants a central theme concerned the process of loss when transitioning into civilian life. This was a complex experience that included feelings of sadness and shame. The superordinate theme "Loss" contains the themes "Empty and alone" and "That military section is just dead".

2.3.2.1. Theme 2a: "Empty and alone"

A marked experience after leaving the forces was isolation and feelings of sadness. All participants, other than Joe, articulated this experience. Dom poignantly reflected this as feeling "empty and alone". An extract from Vic's account describes his sense making of a similar experience:

Well it is...Jesus...well it is the ultimate loneliness I
spose...err...middle of the desert, nowhere, yeah...nothing,
blank, black.

(Vic, lines 880-882)

Vic's comparison of civilian life to a desert suggests a feeling of being abandoned in a featureless, inhospitable place, for him that being "civvie street". His use of the words "blank", "black" and "nothing" could be representative of the loss of his military comrades and career into a kind of desolation in civilian life.

For Vic, Terry, Richard and Glyn, reflections on their experiences focussed more on the loss of relationships with comrades:

It's like walking out on your family, you have had the security, in some cases the love, and people looking out for you in your family and you just walk out. And that is exactly what it is like, and nobody knows you, nobody cares, that's a big part.

(Richard, lines 855-858)

Richard's comparison of leaving the forces to "walking out of a family" appears suggestive of the shame he may have felt for not only for being abandoned himself, but for abandoning his family, notably his military comrades. For him, this experience is accentuated by the feeling that nobody cares.

During discussion about the loss of military relationships, participants referred to the difficulty articulating the despair they felt. This was a salient experience for Vic, Terry and as Richard explained:

It's hard to talk about, it's hard to put into words, and it's raw.

(Richard, line 864)

Richard left the forces almost eighteen years ago, however the loss of relationships with his comrades was still omnipresent, the strength of its impact being conveyed through the use of the word 'raw'. This discussion was situated near the end of Richard's interview, perhaps reinforcing how difficult this was for him to verbalise.

As four participants described, in civilian life they were no longer surrounded by their comrades and those who had previously helped them cope with emotions through banter, as discussed in Theme 1a. With this in mind, participants had not only experienced the loss of others, but also a loss of a means of coping. This helps to understand why some participants found it difficult to articulate their emotional experiences, as the banter could now no longer "come out" and "release tension", as Richard previously described.

2.3.2.2. Theme 2b: "That military section is just dead"

Given the integral role relationships had in the formation of military identity (see Theme 1), the loss of contact with comrades also represented the loss of part of themselves. This was portrayed through Vic, Terry's and Richard's experiences.

As Vic described:

Well obviously, in my case in particular, when I came out of the military. Bosh! That military section is just dead! It's gone!

(Vic, lines 247-248)

Vic's description of the "military section" being "dead" may have two meanings. Within the military the term *section* is used to describe a particular subunit within a regiment. Therefore, Vic may be talking about the loss of the military comrades in his section, as described in Theme 2a. However, consistent with military identity being a collective and embodied one (Theme 1b) it could be that transition into civilian life, and the loss of military relationships, meant the "military section" of his body was "dead". Additionally, Vic's use of the word "dead" and "it's gone" seemed to be reiterating the finality of this loss. The loss of military identity, experienced within their bodies, is also reinforced in Richard and Terry's narrative.

Richard described the transition into civilian life, as "like having your head cut off," implying that leaving the forces was not only a loss of his military identity, but potentially the fatal loss of his whole existence in its embodied form. In a similar vein Terry commented:

I was your real Army barmy guy, and being wretched away from that...I really was an Army barmy guy.

(Terry, lines 793-794)

Similar to Richard, Terry's description of "being wretched away" from his existence as an "Army barmy guy" could indicate something having been torn

away from his body. The use of past tense to repeat that he “was an Army barmy guy” reinforces how military identity is no longer part of him. However, his repeated description could be suggestive of his continual struggle to make sense of the loss of military identity that was an integral part of him.

2.3.3 Theme 3: Reconstruction of military identity

A salient feature of all participants’ experiences in civilian life, concerned the process of reconstructing their military identity. This is represented by the sub-themes “I just can’t grasp that mentality”, “It’s like you’re home” and “Still ain’t worn a beret yet though”.

2.3.3.1. Theme 3a: “I just can’t grasp that mentality”

Isolated from contact with their military comrades, all participants reflected on a struggle to negotiate military relational values with civilians. Richard provides an illustration of this reflecting on the lack of reliance and collective responsibility, describing civilians as “self, self, self”. Richard reinforced this experience later when commenting on a recent work situation:

He (work colleague) turns up, didn’t even think to bring a cup of tea, a coffee, not thinking these guys might need a hot drink or they might need relieving. Nothing...I just can’t grasp that mentality.

(Richard, lines 360-363)

Richard’s narrative portrays the anger he feels when he perceives that civilians are not thinking about others. His comment “I just can’t grasp that mentality”

depicts how this is not just his preference for particular ways of relating, but also one which his military mentality cannot “grasp”.

Terry also described feelings of frustration when civilians did not share his military principles. However, unlike Richard, Terry’s account below, portrays how his anger was also coupled with feelings of shame:

I find often with civilians...it’s me, I am at fault, and I will blame myself, I give them short shrift in a way.

(Terry, lines 774-775)

Joe struggled to negotiate his military self in civilian life and described how this was not just directed at civilians, but at any individual:

There is a lot of shit in here and that’s a lot to ask people to put up with, and I don’t want to do that to anyone.

(Joe, lines 737-738)

Joe’s comment about there being “shit” in him, appears to describe a military identity intertwined with traumatic experiences. It appears this has led him to withdraw from relationships for fear he would burden others, or perhaps an associated fear that he could be bullied again. Linking this extract to his previous comments about being “marked” (Theme 1b), could suggest that there is a permanency to Joe’s interpersonal struggles.

As shared relational values were an integral part to military identity, Dom, Vic, Terry and Richard, described how the struggle to negotiate these with civilians,

triggered what seemed to be an internal conflict. Vic described this leading him to constant attempts to “reinvent” himself as he tried to fit in. However, he commented that this actually led him to feel more “mixed up”:

Well imagine being in a coma, going to sleep tonight and you wake up tomorrow and it's oh, I don't know 2020. Everything's changed, all your old mates moved away or dead, umm the people that you knew as kids have grown up... bosh there you go, start again.

(Vic, lines 693-697)

Comparing the transition experience to waking from a “coma”, where time has shifted, portrays how Vic's transition experience was like waking into a world that was unrecognisable. Being unable to nurture his military identity in civilian life, and becoming isolated from the people he knew prior to serving, appeared to help to make sense of his description of having to “start again.” This is reinforced later in his narrative:

When I come out the military it was like waking up tomorrow and its like jumped 20 years.

(Vic, lines 762-763)

Vic's comment “I come out” is an example of using present tense to reflect on the past, for example, when he *came* out of the military. This appears symbolic of Vic's inner state of confusion, as he still places himself in the military and not in civilian life.

Likewise Vic and Dom reflected internally “fighting” themselves. Dom, like Richard, reflected on this through the context of his work and the following extract portrays how he still feels that the Army is a core part of his identity:

I mean I had a seizure about five years ago...but the first one I had I was at work and when I woke up the paramedic said, ‘what’s your name?’ and I went ‘(rank number and name) Sir!’ That was like 17 years after I left the Army and the first thing I can remember is my number rank and name which is very strange, very strange... so it just shows ya, the Army is still in there even though you’re a civvie.

(Dom, lines 209-219)

The repetitive use of “very strange” suggests Dom was surprised and confused that he woke from a seizure giving his Army rank and number, as opposed to his name. This could be symbolic of the inner battle and confusion he is having between his civilian and military identity.

2.3.3.2. Theme 3b: “It’s like you’re home”

All participants reflected on regaining contact with their military comrades or other veterans in civilian life. This process rekindled aspects of military identity, ranging from regaining a sense of safety and belonging, self-esteem, and for some it enabled them to relive the past, to the extent that it was like “stepping back in time”. When discussing how it felt to regain contact with his military comrades, Dom reflected:

It's...you can't put it into words, it's like you're home, you're home I'd say.

(Dom, line 1592)

Dom's difficulty in finding the words may reflect how the contact with his military comrades was a difficult to describe emotional experience of some depth. The comparison of this contact to being at "home" could represent a sense of safeness and security.

Terry and Richard had similar experiences and Terry described joining military veteran organisations as:

...like a security blanket, a security blanket because you are still part of the club.

(Terry, lines 379-380)

Whilst Richard related:

...It's oh god, I'm safe back in the womb, you know, I am being looked after. It's hard to explain.

(Richard, lines 465-466)

Like Dom, Richard described difficulty finding the words portray the significance of veteran contact. However, his comparison to it being like he was "back in the womb" poignantly describes how this provided security, nurturance and a lifeline that enabled him to grow. This is reinforced at other points in

Richard's narrative, when he comments that contact with veterans has reignited his self-esteem:

It makes you feel special again.

(Richard, line 252)

Glyn shared a similar experience:

Now I have started to meet people in the Army, I am starting to build myself back up now, to get back to where I was before.

(Glyn, line 618-620)

Alternatively, Vic made explicit reference to having "banter" with veterans through contact with military charities. He made frequent reference to regaining contact with military comrades through social networking. Describing the emotional impact of the first time he had re-established contact in thirty-one years, he succinctly summarised it as:

A shocker! A heart attack!

(Vic, line 98)

Vic's use of the words "shocker" and "heart attack" could link with previous descriptions of military identity being embodied. It could be that the "shocker" and "heart attack" was symbolic of the reawakening of his military self that previously refrained to exist when contact with military colleagues had ceased (see Theme 2b).

Conversely, due to his past negative experiences with military comrades, Joe describes refraining from contact with military others:

I don't have anything to do with anyone who I was in the Army with. Saying that, I run the poppy appeal for my area; so you spot the irony. Apart from that I stayed away from all things Army really, which is a shame.

(Joe, lines 937-939)

Comments about it being a "shame" indicated that Joe would like to regain contact. Perhaps the "shame" he described was also symbolic of how he internalised the struggle for acceptance from comrades in his first regiment.

For Joe and Richard contact with veterans or previous comrades was a complex decision as Richard described:

I don't think it has helped because you are always talking about what was and what could have been and that sort of brings you to that wall where I am now.

(Richard, lines 717-719)

2.3.3.3. *Theme 3c: "Still ain't wore a beret yet though"*

Vic, Terry and Dom shared reflections indicating that they were beginning to manage the task of incorporating their military identity into relationships in civilian life as Vic commented:

She (daughter) is really over the moon that I have sort of got back in touch (with military comrades)...still ain't worn a beret yet though.

(Vic, lines 1031-1032)

In the forces, the beret is clothing traditionally associated with military identity. With this in mind, Vic's comments about not wearing a beret might reflect how he was now beginning to come to terms with the existence of both his military and civilian identities.

Dom and Terry shared reflections on how their family provided them with support to manage the transition process and Terry stated:

...had I not had them, I don't know what sort of reaction I would have had, because not having had any sort of responsibility. I don't know I could have easily turned to drink.

(Terry, lines 836-838)

Dom described a similar experience when he had his first child:

...she (daughter) came first and anything else didn't matter. I was there to protect her, to bring her up, to look after her, and yeah, I found a new role in life.

(Dom, lines 1325-1328)

These extracts appeared to convey how Dom and Terry managed to incorporate a sense of responsibility and protection, intertwined with their military identities, into their roles as a father and husband in civilian life.

2.4 Discussion

The present study aimed to explore veterans' lived experiences of the relationships they built with military comrades, and how these influence their

transition into civilian life. Being immersed in the perceptions of these experiences was hoped to further understanding and inform clinical practice.

Three themes emerged from analysis of participants' accounts, which are now discussed within the context of existing literature. Clinical implications, directions for future research and study limitations are also discussed.

2.4.1 Discussion of findings

2.4.1.1 Theme 1: Construction of military identity

This theme conveyed the significance of military relationships whilst serving, and the integral role these played in the formation of military identity.

Previous research has similarly found that construction of military identity is built on particular military relational values, including banter (Green et al., 2010). However, current research findings highlighted the additional role banter played in building bonds between comrades and its use as an interpersonal coping strategy to manage adversities.

The in-depth qualitative approach of the present study enabled detailed exploration of military relationships, uncovering the nuances and complexities of these experiences. For some participants this was positive, where the transformation from a civilian to a military identity built self-esteem.

Additionally, all of the participants described relationships with comrades as a unique "special bond" similar to a family unit. This was briefly highlighted in Green et al's., (2010) study, where veterans described military relationships as

“fraternal” (p. 1483). However, the current study furthers understanding of the poignancy of these relationships, experienced as a significant part of military identity. Notably, for some, these relationships provided participants with new positive experiences, and from a more interpretative perspective, for two participants the belonging they were searching for. This suggests that relational ties built with military others could be conceptualised as attachment bonds. However, unlike traditional attachment bonds in dyadic relationships, these positive relational connections were experienced more widely to all comrades in the military group. This implies that the relational bonds with military colleagues could be more specifically conceptualised as a group attachment bond (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Smith et al., 1999). Additionally, previous research with Israeli serving personnel found that support from military comrades was used to fulfil attachment needs (Mayseless, 2004). Given participants’ descriptions of the safety and security functions of military relationships, the present study lends further support to this in a UK context.

There was divergence within participants’ accounts of their experiences of military relationships. For example, one participant explained a complex experience whereby they had positive relational connections with comrades, but also experienced bullying in a previous regiment. Similar findings were briefly explored in Green et al’s., (2010) study, whereby the failure to adopt masculine values, including toughness, led one serving personnel to be bullied. However, unlike previous military research, this study highlighted how military relationships, an integral component to military identity, were experienced as an embodied entity. For the participant who experienced bullying the embodied

experience of feeling as though he was left “marked” is consistent with previous conceptualisations of embodiment as a result of traumatic experiences (van der Kolk, 2014). The current research seems to be the first UK qualitative study that has started to explore the embodied experience of military relationships and identity.

2.4.1.2 Theme 2: Loss

Upon leaving the forces participants described significant feelings of sadness surrounding the loss of military comrades. Additionally, given the integral role these relationships played in military identity, a loss of these relationships was also experienced as a loss of military identity.

This finding is consistent with research by Brunger et al., (2013). However, the current study extends this further to include the loss of connection with military comrades and all that these bonds represented including care and protection. This loss was present and a salient feature of the interviews despite participants having left the forces between twenty-nine and eighteen years ago.

The strength and complexity of this loss experience can be conceptualised as disenfranchised grief, a grief experience that cannot be openly mourned or recognised (Doka, 1989). Participants’ grief may go unrecognised by others, as although for them the loss of comrades was experienced like a death, their comrades did not physically die. Unable to find connection with others in civilian life, and distant from comrades who provided emotional support, it could be that veterans were left both unable to express and process this loss experience. Green

et al., (2010) also found that serving personnel suppress emotions, as it is less threatening to masculine soldier identity. Similarly, stoicism has been suggested as one of the reasons why military personnel do not seek emotional support (Iversen et al 2005). Consideration of these factors may help to understand why emotions regarding the loss of comrades were raw and difficult to articulate. This, alongside the notion that comrades are metaphorically embodied within participants' military identity, may have left them trying to mourn a loss that would always remain part of them.

2.4.1.3 Theme 3: Reconstruction of military identity

A final theme that emerged concerned participants struggle to negotiate their military identity, specifically their relational values, with civilians. This finding is supported by previous research, which found that the lack of collective values in civilian life resulted in a fractured identity (Brunger et al., 2013). The present study revealed feelings of anger, and shame that accompanied this experience. Additionally, one participant's account regarding the loss of contact with previous civilian relationships extends our understanding about an aspect of the struggle that veterans have when transitioning back to civilian life. For example, unable to reconnect with their previous civilian existence, or to nurture their military identity in civilian life, participants may have not only experienced a loss of their military identity, but similarly to findings in Brunger et al., (2013) study, also experience an identity crisis.

However, all participants described eventually regaining contact with military comrades, or other veterans. This enabled them to rekindle aspects of their

military identity, therefore regaining a sense of safety and belonging.

Additionally, for some it also provided an opportunity to take a step back in time to a position when they felt most comfortable. Historically, the lack of group support has been cited as a salient difficulty when leaving the forces (Spoerl and Heidbreder, 1945). However, this study highlighted the complex decision about maintaining contact with military others. For example, one participant thrived on regaining contact with veterans, however simultaneously acknowledged that the constant reminiscing led him to feel as if he was living in the past.

Brunger et al., (2013) study found that some veterans had started an on-going adjustment with their identity. Similarly, half of the sample in the present study described experiences of beginning to integrate the existence of both their military and civilian identities. The current study highlights how military identity was nurtured through the maintenance of military relational values, in the responsibility and protection of family members in civilian life. The ability of participants to build upon themselves could be indicative of their psychological resilience nurtured as a result of adverse experiences of transition (Seery, Holman & Cohen-Silver, 2010).

2.4.2 Clinical and service implications

The present study sheds light on the poignancy of military relational experiences both whilst serving and upon transition into civilian life. It is argued that for some veterans leaving the forces precipitates the loss of military others and from an interpretative perspective, loss and confusion with regard to self-identity. An awareness of these experiences, particularly the importance of military relational

values, is beneficial to ensure accessible services and the successful development of therapeutic relationships with this community. Additionally, helping to enfranchise a loss experience would be helpful when thinking about the care of this population. For some veterans support in building connections with military others would be beneficial. The MOD could consider the use of a veteran buddy scheme in which others with experience of transition provide the support. It would be valuable to balance this with support for integrating military identity into other relationships.

Prior to transition, the MOD provide Army personnel with an information sheet titled 'the emotional pathway,' which includes brief reference to the loss of identity (Ministry of Defence n. d.). However, information on the experience of the relational loss with comrades is not explored. Were it feasible, findings from the present study could be a helpful addition to this standard documentation and therefore used more widely in psycho-educational packages prior to transition. It is hoped that this could normalise experiences and prepare veterans for feelings that may occur. Findings also suggest the transition process is one that is enduring over time and therefore spreading support across the transition period would be useful.

2.4.3 Methodological limitations

The present study should be considered in light of its limitations. Firstly, only Army veterans were recruited, therefore the results are related to one specific service within the forces. Furthermore, the inclusion of veterans who sought support at a veterans' charity may have biased the sample towards those who had

experienced difficulties with transition. The present findings should be considered in light of these biases.

Secondly, although interviews were an appropriate method of enquiry, triangulating data collection would have further enriched the findings. Given the difficulties that some veterans had in talking directly about the loss of their comrades, the use of photo elicitation may have helped to access other experiences that could not be conveyed by language alone.

2.4.4 Recommendations for further research

Further qualitative exploration of this subject could be extended to other individual groups. For example, how reservist personnel negotiate the frequent relational transition between military and civilian life is worth further exploration. Furthermore, given the finding that one participant experienced bullying, qualitative investigation into military interpersonal trauma experiences is essential to ensure prevention and increase understanding of the needs of those affected.

The idiographic approach of IPA methodology does not enable generalisation of the current findings. However, the present study has highlighted some areas for further exploration and provides an additional understanding of some of the difficulties veterans may experience. Outside of the military context the research has highlighted the potential for individuals to develop interpersonal bonds with work colleagues. Although the military has its own unique organisational culture, research could be extended to other occupational groups, for example the Police force.

2.5 Conclusion

The current study has explored the experiences of military relationships and the influence these have on transition to civilian life. The use of a detailed idiographic approach enabled the complexity of these experiences to be explored. The poignancy of military relational experiences in veterans lives both whilst serving and during transition were highlighted, alongside the integral role these relationships had in the formation and maintenance of military identity. Further support is required for the emotional and relational effects of the transition into civilian life, alongside further awareness of the needs of this population in the wider civilian community.

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Chapter 3: Reflective Paper

Reflections on the research-self interface: the experience of transition in clinical psychology training.

Overall chapter word count (exclusive of references): 2522

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a reflective account on carrying out qualitative research on the subject of military transitions. During clinical psychology training, trainees are encouraged to reflect upon the interface between themselves and clinical work. This is an area that I particularly value, although one that is not without its challenges. The completion of my research has highlighted how the connection between clinical work and the self that exists in clinical practice is also present in conducting research. These reflections were salient features that emerged in my reflective diary, which I kept throughout this research process. For these reasons I have chosen to focus this chapter on the interface between research and the self.

I begin by giving a brief account of reflexivity in qualitative research, and follow by reflecting on my epistemological position. Lastly, I discuss some personal parallels in the research findings that helped to uncover some personal learning. The use of qualitative research as a tool for empowerment will also be discussed.

3.2. Reflexivity

Reflexivity has been defined as a process of ‘examining how the researcher and inter-subjective elements impinge on, and even transform, research’ (Finlay, 2002, p. 210). Berger (2015) extended this definition as the ‘turning of the researcher lens back onto oneself to recognise and take responsibility for one’s own situatedness within the research.’ (Berger, 2015, p.220).

It is important to consider how the co-construction of meaning can be both supported and hindered by who the researcher is. It is recognised that reflexivity

is important across qualitative methods (Berger, 2015). Further, the importance of hermeneutic influences within interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) meant that reflexivity was a central feature within my own research. With this in mind, I will now explore my epistemological position and the interconnections between the subject of my research and my own experiences.

3.3 Exploring my epistemological position within research

Beyond choosing a research methodology that seems most suitable to meet research aims, I have learnt that the decision regarding methodology is more complex than this and can be also interwoven with our own beliefs and values.

Based on positivist principles, quantitative researchers view the world as objective and one in which the researcher is independent of the research enquiry. My identity as a Trainee Clinical Psychologist meant that I struggled to place myself within this understanding. The production of knowledge in the form of quantitative data has its value and place. For example, in the National Health Service (NHS) it is increasingly used by commissioners to determine service design. However, my core values pull me towards wanting to advocate for the experience of being human, one that is not objective, but subjective.

Additionally, the position of the researcher as independent of the research enquiry seems counterintuitive to how we are trained as clinical psychologists. For example, the frequent reflection on ourselves, how we have become the person we are, how this influences our clinical practice and how our clinical practice influences us. I could not see how this continual cycle of internal

reflection stopped when engaging in research activity. I spent time reflecting on this and wondered whether I also felt more comfortable hiding my own insecurities as a novice researcher within the qualitative approach where there is no obvious right or wrong. It may seem to some a more straightforward approach to research however as I have learnt it is very detailed and consuming.

I feel perhaps that my view of the world as one that has multiple meanings and perspectives has led me to a career as a psychologist. Although I am still developing as a researcher, my current beliefs attracted me towards more of an interpretivist position found within qualitative research. With this in mind, although the qualitative design for both previous chapters were appropriate for the areas of enquiry, I also had made a conscious decision to use qualitative approaches for both my literature review and empirical study from the outset.

3.4 An insider and outsider?

Berger (2015) outlines the position researchers can take within research activity, that being either the position of an 'insider' or an 'outsider'. An 'insider' position is a researcher with prior familiarity and experience within the subject area and/or sample. Whereas an 'outsider' position refers to a researcher exploring a topic, without prior connection to the research population or field. I discovered this conceptualisation recently, and it has helped me to understand some of my own earlier reflections both prior to and during my research.

Prior to beginning my research, I worked as an Assistant Psychologist for a NHS veterans' project. Part of this role involved spending time with third sector organisations, including the charity that facilitated the recruitment of veterans for

my research. It was during this period, having read the empirical literature and observed veterans at the charity, that I first had the idea that I wanted to do this research.

This particular charity was set up as a ‘one stop shop’ to signpost veterans to appropriate support and advice, after which they were discharged from the service. However, despite being discharged, veterans would return to the charity base. I was curious about this, and having spoken to them about it, they explained that the contact with military others was valued as civilians “did not get it”. When I started at the charity I was acutely aware of my position as an ‘outsider’. I was the only woman and I was also the only civilian. I remember feeling out of place and vulnerable at times; particularly when negative remarks were made about civilians. I wondered at this point if I was experiencing something of how it felt to be in a minority, and perhaps how my participants felt in civilian life?

Reflecting upon this now, I wonder whether my anxiety about being ‘different’ led me to want to understand and therefore carry out research with veterans. Did I feel uncomfortable in sitting with this difference? By conducting research with veterans was it my way of trying to build some familiarity? On reflection, I wondered whether the decision to conduct my literature review on women was perhaps my own way of trying to find some connection, as I felt so disconnected from the worlds of my participants.

Having this ‘outsider’ perspective was perhaps beneficial as it enabled me to be curious and open to the lived in-depth experiences of my participants. However,

although these experiences led me to feel like an ‘outsider’, having a family member in the Army meant that I had some shared language with my participants. I wondered if this knowledge led them to treat me as though I was a member of the military community as oppose to a civilian, particularly as veterans seemed to share openly some negative experiences regarding the civilian community.

Reflecting on the process of developing my research idea has highlighted how the double hermeneutic circle described in IPA, begins from the moment we encounter the research field, one that is prior to our intention to conduct research. Additionally, as Berger (2015) cited, researchers move from the position of an outsider to an insider during engagement with the research data. However, my reflections portray the complexity of the researcher position, one that can simultaneously take both an insider and an outsider position throughout the research process.

3.5 My transition into “qualified street”

When considering my researcher position as an ‘insider’, I was led back to my previous reflections about the work-self interface. I feel that who we are in work, whether that is in clinical practice or a research project, is always a factor of influence at some level, as we are active agents and constructors of meaning in our own environments. Smith et al., (2009) suggested that research findings should ideally epitomize “what it is to be human at its most essential”, therefore suggesting that as humans we can all be ‘insiders’ in research (p. 38). With this in mind, I feel I was more closely connected as an ‘insider’ to my research topic than I had initially thought.

When I started this research journey I did not expect to encounter some personal learning from my research findings. Whilst becoming immersed in the research data I realised there were some parallels to the research topic on transitions and my own position in my career. As a third year trainee I too was preparing to embark on a professional transition into “qualified street”. The unique experience of being on the course meant I felt connected with my trainee comrades as we embarked on this journey together with its excitement and many challenges. Like veterans had felt with civilians, I too felt at times that only a trainee would understand. I began to pay deliberate attention to this in my reflective diary and notably two central themes from the research findings.

3.5.1 Balancing psychologist identity in personal life

Whilst hearing veterans’ struggles with regards to their own identity it led me to reflect on where I positioned my own professional identity. Similarly to how participants spoke about balancing their military identity in civilian life, I wondered how I balanced my professional psychologist identity with my personal life. I realised that this was a topic I too had been reflecting on prior to carrying out the research. However, it was through engagement with the research data, that these reflections were brought forward.

Throughout training I have often reflected on how it can be difficult to balance my psychologist identity with my personal life. It was almost as if the more I learned about psychology the more relevant it seemed to many aspects of life. Although this insight was of value it was also a hindrance in my personal life, for

example, having the insight without necessarily the circumstance for it to be appropriate to intervene.

Like my participants descriptions of the embodied military identity, I have realised that my psychologist identity is also embodied. For example, there are times when I leave clinical work and think, ‘what have I actually done today? Have I done anything that was particularly psychological?’ From discussions with a peer in my cohort, we agreed that being a psychologist, and thinking psychologically, starts to become more naturally part of ourselves throughout training. Or perhaps was already a part of our make up prior to training then we had realised? When reflecting on this, I was taken back to my research data and felt a renewed appreciation and empathy for my participants’ experiences. Like being a soldier, being a psychologist is not something I can now just turn off as through training it seems to have become increasingly part of me.

3.5.2 Leaving my trainee comrades

Loss is an inherent experience of life as a trainee, such as ending with clients, supervisors and teams every six months on placement. Throughout training I became more prepared for these frequent beginnings and endings. However, a consistency throughout training has been the comfort and belonging I have gained from the other trainees in my cohort.

Psychoanalytic theory suggests that experience of loss and endings can ‘*restimulate other salient experiences of separation such as bereavements, transitions or the ending of other significant relationships*’ (Lemma, 2003, p. 274). With this in mind, I became aware that my research had become more

personally relevant than I had anticipated. Like the participants experiences of leaving their comrades to transition into civilian life, I too would soon be leaving my trainee comrades to transition into “qualified street”. In my personal life I can sometimes feel that no one really understands what it is like to be a psychologist and as such particularly valued the shared experiences with other trainees. With this in mind I wondered whether like my participants, I too could feel “empty and alone” when leaving the course and the security of my cohort.

Although I hope to continue to see the trainees I have got to know in my cohort beyond training, having the frequent contact with others who share similar challenges is one that I will miss greatly, particularly as my qualified post will involve me being a lone psychologist in a team. With this in mind, the participants’ experiences about the importance of regaining contact with other veterans has emphasised just how important it may also be for me to continue to seek support from my psychologist peers on “qualified street”.

3.6 Empowerment in qualitative research

In addition to the personal learning, conducting this research project has heightened my awareness of how qualitative research can also be a valuable tool for empowerment. As Reid, Flowers and Larkin (2005) suggest IPA allows participants “to think talk and be heard” (p. 25).

One of the ways to increase the credibility and validity of qualitative research is through respondent validation (Mays & Pope, 2000), which in my opinion for my research was crucial. I was aware of some of the negative impressions that veterans had of civilians as being for example, unreliable or uninterested. Taking

this into account, I was aware therefore as a civilian myself I had a responsibility to provide my veteran participants with a positive experience of a civilian. It was very important to be a reliable researcher, to be interested and to provide them with feedback.

Having completed the respondent validation, participants not only gave positive feedback about the analysis, but also reflected positively on their experience of participating in the research. Most notably, from what they said to me they had felt empowered and that they had been provided with a platform for their voice to be heard. Although some participants agreed to respondent validation at the time of the interview, not all participants responded to attempts to contact them. Ethically, it was important that participants had the opportunity to not respond and to have changed their mind since consenting to this in the interview. Taking this into account, I have learnt that respondent validation can play an important role in validity and the empowerment of participants. However, respondent validation needs to be considered in light of both ethical and practical implications.

The findings of my research have already been integrated into a local NHS Trusts' veterans' project to develop services for this community. I feel that the use of qualitative research and empowering the expert by experience is of significant importance given the current period of austerity. Cuts to service provision may mean that the individuals we support do not get the quality service they deserve. I have learnt that qualitative research can be a powerful tool for

improving service provision, and to empower and hear the voices of those affected by change.

3.7 Conclusion

Purposefully exploring the researcher's position is essential to managing one's perceptions and subjectivities in the process of carrying out qualitative research. I have found that embracing my thoughts and feelings is a rich and complex experience that has also unexpectedly provided the opportunity to make personal learning. Having initially felt quite disconnected from my participants' experiences, these internal reflections have helped to make some connections to a process that essentially all people will negotiate in their life - the experience of transition.

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Appendix A

Author instructions for the *Journal of International Women's Studies*

General Submission Guidelines

- Submit your article to JIWS@bridgew.edu. Reviews typically take 3-6 months.
- Only completed work should be submitted. The editors cannot provide feedback on work in progress.
- Abstracts and key words should be included in the same file as the article.
- Authors should include a key word or phrase about their research methodology.
- The maximum length of any contribution should be 7,500 words, inclusive of notes and bibliography.*
- Contributions should be double-spaced, including all notes and references. Page numbers should be placed in the upper-right corner, paragraphs should be indented, and all illustrations and tables should be labelled and captioned accurately. Use Times New Roman, 12 point font, left-justified text, and bold-faced headings. Follow APA or MLA citation styles.
- All submissions should include an abstract of 300 words or less and three key words suitable for indexing and abstracting services.
- Final submissions following revisions should be single spaced; right justified; bold headings with no space between heading and paragraph including title and abstract; the phrase key words should be italicized; references/bibliographies should be single spaced with hanging paragraphs. Authors should consult recent editions for guidelines and send inquiries to the editor.
- In the interests of double-blind reviewing, only the title of the paper should appear on the first page. Authors should include their name and affiliation and any acknowledgements on a separate page.
- A brief biographical note of not more than 80 words about each author should be supplied on a separate page.

- Contributors should bear in mind the international nature of the journal's audience. Endnote explanations are necessary for all political & geographic references, popular culture references, as well as academic references. Please do not assume that scholars who are famous in one country bear similar prestige elsewhere.
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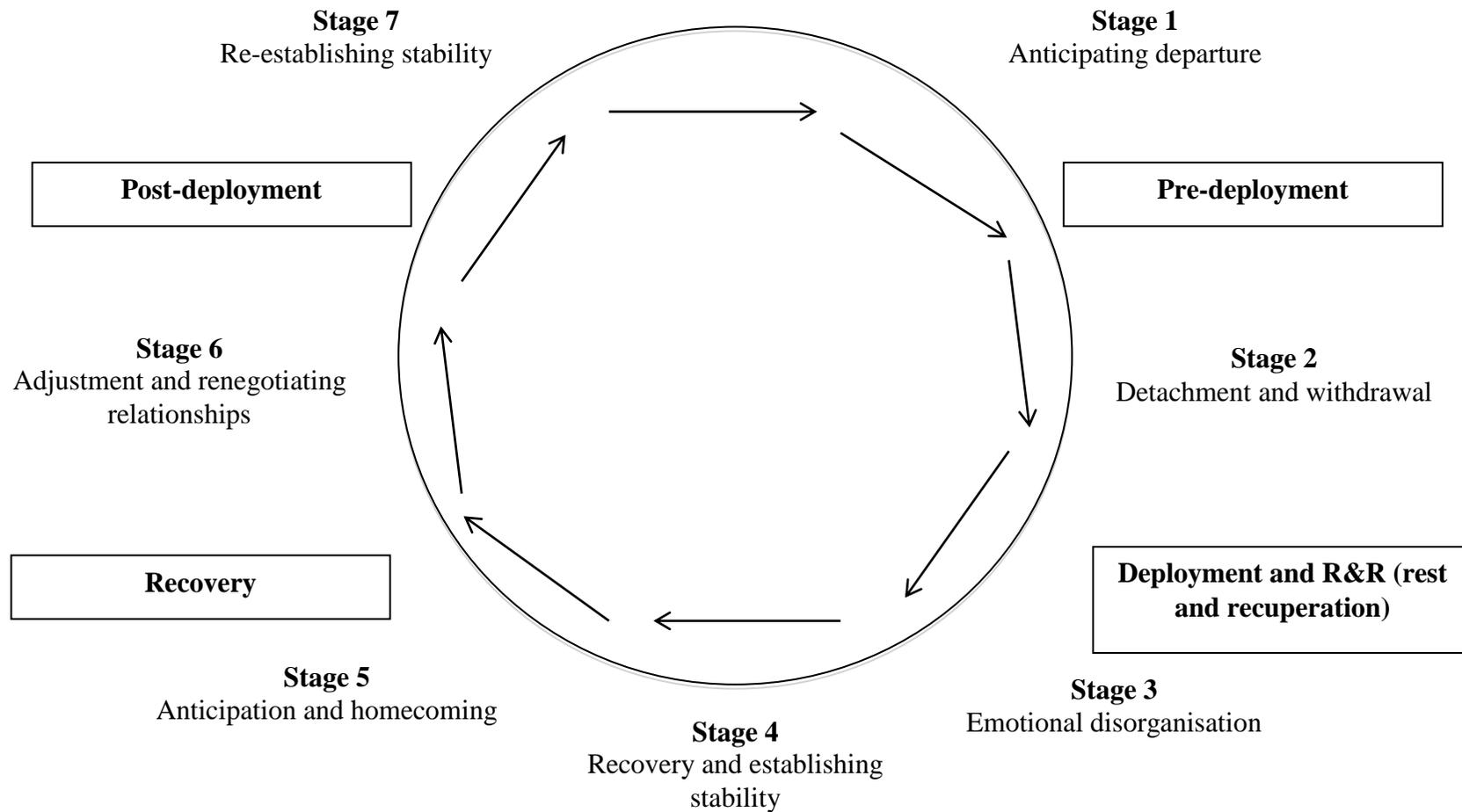
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Figure 1.2 Emotional cycle of deployment
(Ministry of Defence, 2011a; 2011b)

Appendix B

Emotional Cycle of Deployment



Appendix C
Quality Assessment Framework
(Kmet, Lee and Cook, 2004)

Yes = 2 points. Partial = 1 point. No = 0 points.

1. Question / objective clearly described?

- Yes: Research question or objective is clear by the end of the research process (if not at the outset).
- Partial: Research question or objective is vaguely/incompletely reported.
- No: Question or objective is not reported, or is incomprehensible.

2. Design evident and appropriate to answer study question? (If the study question is not clearly identified, infer appropriateness from results/conclusion).

- Yes: Design is easily identified and is appropriate to address the study question.
- Partial: Design is not clearly identified, but gross inappropriateness is not evident; or design is easily identified but a different method would have been more appropriate.
- No: Design used is not appropriate to the study question (e.g. a casual hypothesis is tested using qualitative methods); or design cannot be identified.

3. Context for the study is clear?

- Yes: The context/setting is adequately described, permitting the reader to relate the findings to other settings.

- Partial: The context/setting is partially described.

- No: The context/setting is not described.

4. Connection to a theoretical framework/wider body of knowledge?

- Yes: The theoretical framework/wider body of knowledge informing the study and the methods used is sufficiently described and justified.

- Partial: The theoretical framework/wider body of knowledge is not well described or justified; link to the study methods is not clear.

- No: Theoretical framework/wider body of knowledge is not discussed.

5. Sampling strategy described, relevant and justified?

- Yes: The sampling strategy is clearly described and justified. The sample includes the full range of relevant, possible cases/settings (i.e. more than simple convenience sampling), permitting conceptual (rather than statistical) generalisations.

- Partial: The sampling strategy is not completely described, or is not fully justified. Or the sample does not include the full range of relevant, possible cases/settings (i.e. includes a convenience sample only).

- No: Sampling strategy is not described.

6. Data collection methods clearly described and systematic?

- Yes: The data collection procedures are systematic, and clearly described, permitting an “audit trail” such that the procedures could be replicated.

- Partial: Data collection procedures are not clearly described; difficult to determine if systematic or replicable.

- No: Data collection procedures are not described.

7. Data analysis clearly described, completed and systematic?

- Yes: Systematic analytic methods are clearly described, permitting an “audit trail” such that the procedures could be replicated. The iteration between the data and the explanations for the data (i.e. the theory) is clear – it is apparent how early, simple classifications evolved into more sophisticated coding structures which then evolved into clearly defined concepts/explanations for the data). Sufficient data is provided to allow the reader to judge whether the interpretation offered is adequately supported by the data.
- Partial: Analytic methods are not fully described. Or the iterative link between data and theory is not clear.
- No: The analytic methods are not described. Or it is not apparent that a link to theory informs the analysis.

8. Use of verification procedure(s) to establish credibility of the study?

- Yes: One or more verification procedures were used to help establish credibility/trustworthiness of the study (e.g. prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation, peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, member checks, external audits/inter-rater reliability, “batch” analysis).
- No: Verification procedure(s) not evident.

9. Conclusions supported by the results?

- Yes: Sufficient original evidence supports the conclusions. A link to theory informs any claims of generalisability.
- Partial: The conclusions are only partly supported by the data. Or claims of generalisability are not supported.

- No: The conclusions are not supported by the data. Or conclusions are absent.

10. Reflexivity of the account?

- Yes: The researcher explicitly assessed the likely impact of their own personal characteristics (such as age, sex and professional status) and the methods used on the data obtained.
- Partial: Possible sources of influence on the data obtained were mentioned, but the likely impact of the influence or influences as not discussed.
- No: There is no evidence of reflexivity in the study report.

Appendix D

Author instructions for the *British Journal of Psychology*

The Editorial Board of the British Journal of Psychology is prepared to consider for publication:

- (a) Reports of empirical studies likely to further our understanding of psychology
- (b) Critical reviews of the literature
- (c) Theoretical contributions. Papers will be evaluated by the Editorial Board and referees in terms of scientific merit, readability, and interest to a general readership.

1. Circulation

The circulation of the Journal is worldwide. Papers are invited and encouraged from authors throughout the world.

2. Length

Papers should normally be no more than 8000 words (excluding the abstract, reference list, tables and figures), although the Editor retains discretion to publish papers beyond this length in cases where the clear and concise expression of the scientific content requires greater length.

3. Submission and reviewing

All manuscripts must be submitted via <http://www.editorialmanager.com/bjp/>. The Journal operates a policy of anonymous peer review. Before submitting, please read the terms and conditions of submission and the declaration of competing interests.

4. Manuscript requirements

- Contributions must be typed in double spacing with wide margins. All sheets must be numbered.

- Manuscripts should be preceded by a title page which includes a full list of authors and their affiliations, as well as the corresponding author's contact details. A template can be downloaded from here.

- Tables should be typed in double-spacing, each on a separate page with a self-explanatory title. Tables should be comprehensible without reference to the text. They should be placed at the end of the manuscript with their approximate locations indicated in the text.
- Figures can be included at the end of the document or attached as separate files, carefully labelled in initial capital/lower case lettering with symbols in a form consistent with text use. Unnecessary background patterns, lines and shading should be avoided. Captions should be listed on a separate sheet. The resolution of digital images must be at least 300 dpi.
- All articles should be preceded by an Abstract of between 100 and 200 words, giving a concise statement of the intention, results or conclusions of the article.
- For reference citations, please use APA style. Particular care should be taken to ensure that references are accurate and complete. Give all journal titles in full and provide DOI numbers where possible for journal articles.
- SI units must be used for all measurements, rounded off to practical values if appropriate, with the imperial equivalent in parentheses.
- In normal circumstances, effect size should be incorporated.
- Authors are requested to avoid the use of sexist language.
- Authors are responsible for acquiring written permission to publish lengthy quotations, illustrations, etc. for which they do not own copyright. For guidelines on editorial style, please consult the APA Publication Manual published by the American Psychological Association.

Appendix E

Coventry University ethics permission.

Name of applicant: Felicity Walker **Date:** 11/02/2014

Faculty/School/Department: [Faculty of Health and Life Sciences] Clinical Psychology

Research project title: Transition into civilian life: Exploring Army veterans experiences of military relationships.

Comments by the reviewer

1. Evaluation of the ethics of the proposal:

Excellent proposal, with good supporting documentation.
The ethics of the proposal have been well considered and there is evidence to indicate participants will be given appropriate information, choice with regards participating in, and withdrawing from, the study and debriefing along with signposting to further services if necessary. The reviewer was particularly encouraged to see both the Permission letter and Veteran Information Pack.

2. Evaluation of the participant information sheet and consent form:

Very good Participant and Consent Forms.
Participant Information Sheet, Amend following paragraphs.
This will simply be the chief investigator reporting back to you the things they have noticed and asking what you think to these. This is again to ensure that the analysis is a true reflection of your experiences
Although it is hoped that you find participation in this study enjoyable and interesting, there may be times when you find recalling your particular experiences distressing

Consent Form
The applicant states 'I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 13th August 2013' but the reviewer is unable to identify a date on the Participant Information Form. Please include.

3. Recommendation:

(Please indicate as appropriate and advise on any conditions. If there any conditions, the applicant will be required to resubmit his/her application and this will be sent to the same reviewer).

<input type="checkbox"/>	Approved - no conditions attached
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Approved with minor conditions (no need to re-submit)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Conditional upon the following – please use additional sheets if necessary (please re-submit application)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rejected for the following reason(s) – please use other side if necessary
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not required

Appendix F

Semi-structured interview schedule

Introduction: *Thank you for agreeing to come for the interview today. In short the interview will be split into two parts asking you questions about the relationships with your Army friends whilst in the Army and then asking you about these relationships when you were out of the Army. This will hopefully feel more like a general conversation between us, but I will be led by you as I am interested in you and your experiences. Please take your time in thinking and talking. There are no right or wrong answers but there will be times when I ask you to tell me more about things you have said or there may be times when I stop you to check that you are ok. If you feel you have said all you can about things the interview will come to an end, however if there is still more to say we can follow this up in another interview if you wish.*

Researcher note: *If the participant has naturally begun relaying some experiences following the demographic questions, follow their lead, if not commence the guide to the semi-structured interview.*

Researcher note: *In order to manage potential distress if participants begin to discuss traumatic experiences encourage the individual not to discuss the traumatic event itself in detail but to briefly describe this and the influence they feel this may have had on their relationships with others in the army.*

Demographic Questions:

1. What age are you?

.....

2. What is your ethnicity?

White British

White (other)

White Irish

Indian

Pakistani

Black Caribbean

Black African

Chinese

Other (please state)

3. What is your marital status?

i.e. Single, living with partner, married

4. How old were you when you joined the Army?

5. What was your regiment and role in the Army?

.....
.....
.....

6. How long did you serve in the Army for?

.....
.....
.....

7. What operational tours were you involved in whilst in the Army?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

8. When did you leave the Army?

.....
.....
.....

9. What was your reason for leaving the Army? If this was not due finishing your contract of employment please state i.e. if this due to medical discharge, early service leaver.

.....
.....
.....

10. So, how did you come to join the Army?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Interview map

General question to open the interview if needed:
1. So, how did you come to join the Army?

6. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

5. Post Army and since leaving what have your relationships/friendships been like with people who were not in the Army?
 Possible prompts:
 - How are they different/same to the friendships in the Army?
 - In what way have these friendships with people who were not in the Army help or not help with transition?

2. How did you make friends with others in the Army whilst you were serving?
 Possible prompts:
 -What kept them going?
 -Were they supportive or not? In what way?
 -Were you friends with a lot of others or a few?
 -Did you know them for a long time?
 -What does it mean to have these friendships in the Army?

3. When you were still in the Army, thinking about those friendships with others in the Army, what made the friendships stronger/weaker?
 Possible prompts:
 -What kept them together?
 -What kept them apart?

4. With not being in the Army now, in civvie street how have you experienced those friendships?
 Possible prompts:
 -How have they changed or not changed? Was it a positive or negative change?
 What influenced that change/no change? What helped/didn't help that change?
 - In what way have these friendships helped or not helped with transition?
 -What do you miss / don't miss about these friendships?
 What do you miss the most/least?
 -What is helpful / unhelpful about coming into contact with other veteran peers on civi street?

Interview Map

General prompts/ going DEEPER?

- *Can you tell me more about that?*
- *What did XYZ mean to you*
- *Can you tell me what you were thinking?*
- *How did you feel?*
- **How?**
- **Why?**

Notes / topics to follow up:

.....

.....

.....

Debrief: *Thank you very much for participating in this research study, it has been incredibly valuable and interesting to hear your experiences. I hope that the interview has been enjoyable and interesting for you too.*

If later on you have any further questions please contact the chief investigator Felicity Walker or a member of the research team, you will find our contact details on the participant information sheet. You may find that either now or later after the interview you would benefit from some further support or advice. If this is the case please see the Veteran Information pack for further information on local support services.

Thank you again for sharing your experiences with me.

Ensure the participant has one copy of the consent form, participant information sheet and a copy of the veterans information pack.

Appendix G: Participant information sheet.

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Fax 024 7688 8702

Programme Director
Doctorate Course in Clinical Psychology
Dr Eve Knight
BSc Clin.Psy.D., CPsychol

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK



13th August 2013

Participant Information Sheet

Title of the research study: Transition onto “Civi Street”: Exploring Army Veterans

Experiences of Military Relationships

You are being invited to take part in a study, which is taking place at the Veterans Contact Point.

This research study is one part of a thesis project undertaken as part of the Clinical Psychology Doctorate training Programme led jointly by The University of Warwick and Coventry University. The study is led by Trainee Clinical Psychologist, Felicity Walker. The aim of this research is to understand more about Army Veterans’ experiences of military relationships in the process of transition to civilian life. Before you decide to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with the Chief Investigator, Felicity Walker if you wish. Please do ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

Although some Veterans have a successful transition from the military into civilian life, for many the adjustment back on to Civi Street can be a difficult experience. Currently there is limited research investigating the individual veteran’s experiences of this transition process. Additionally, little is known about veterans experiences of the friendships they develop with their fellow military colleagues / peers and how this might influence their transition back into civilian life.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THE RESEARCH?

You have been invited to take part for three reasons. These are:

1. You are a male veteran of the Army Regulars who transitioned into civilian life at least 6 months ago
2. You have been involved in active service for one operational tour
3. You have been in contact with the Veterans Contact Point.

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Dr Linda Merriman Mphil PhD DpodM CertEd Coventry University Priory Street Coventry CV1 5FB Tel 024 7679 5805

Head of Department of Psychology
Professor James Tresilian BSc PhD University of Warwick Coventry CV4 7AL Tel 024 7657 3009

www.coventry.ac.uk

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. There will be no consequence if you do not wish to participate. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and will later be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time during the interview, without giving any reason and without this affecting the support you receive. However after having completed the interview you will have up to 1st August 2014 to withdraw your results before analysis begins.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME IF I TAKE PART?

If you are eligible you will be invited to the Veterans Contact Point to meet with the chief investigator, Felicity Walker, Trainee Clinical Psychologist.

Participation in the study will firstly involve you completing a short demographic questionnaire and consent form. This will ask general information such as your age, how long you served in the Army and what your regiment and role was. This should take no longer than 5-10 minutes. After completion of this you will be invited to take part in an interview. This interview should take approximately 60-90 minutes. To ensure privacy and confidentiality the interview will take place in a private room at the base of the Veterans Contact Point.

In short, the interview will focus on questions which explore your own unique experiences of friendships with your fellow military colleagues / peers whilst serving and since transitioning back into civilian life.

In order to capture the entire interview, a digital recorder will be used to record the process. You do not have to share information if you do not wish and will have the right to stop the interview at any point without any consequence. Once the interview has taken place the chief investigator would like to meet with you to proof read the transcription of the interview to ensure this was an accurate reflection of the account. This may take place a couple of weeks later but you can have the option of receiving this transcript by post if you prefer.

It may be that once the chief investigator has been through the interview they wish to interview you again to clarify things they have noticed in the interview, this is simply to ensure that they have a deeper understanding of your experience. Likewise, during the analysis stage of the study the chief investigator may wish to spend some time with you to clarify the themes that have emerged from the data. The chief investigator will report back to you the themes that emerge out of your research interview and ask what you think about these. This is to ensure that the analysis is a true reflection of your experiences.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF TAKING PART?

Your participation in this study will hopefully help others understand more about veteran experiences of their military friendships in the process of transition to civilian life. It is hoped that the insights gained from this study will be utilised in the future to help to develop and guide support and research.

Although it is hoped that you find participation in this study enjoyable and interesting, there may be times when you find recalling your experiences more difficult. During the interview I may stop you in order to encourage you not to discuss any traumatic memories, but rather just to describe them briefly and how they influenced your relationships with your military peers/colleagues. This is to ensure your own wellbeing and safety. If this occurs the researcher will provide immediate support and the choice to terminate the interview will be given. Additionally, each participant will be given a Veteran Information Pack. This contains information on support services available to you should you require any further guidance or support.

WILL MY TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

All personal information given will remain confidential. All data will be recorded, stored and maintained in a way that eliminates the possibility of inadvertent disclosure. The data will be stored securely either on a password protected computer or in a locked filing cabinet. In accordance with information governance, this information will be destroyed after five years. Breaches of confidentiality will only occur if the chief investigator is made aware that there is a risk to the safety of yourself or another individual. This is in line with the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009).

In order to ensure your confidentiality pseudonyms (false names) will be given for the publication of this research. No personally identifiable information will be used.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY?

This research study is being completed as part of the researchers thesis, required for the completion of the Clinical Psychology Doctorate Programme at The Universities of Coventry and Warwick. As part of this training, Felicity Walker is required to write a report on the results of this study to form part of their written thesis. Alongside this, it is hoped that the study will be published in relevant academic journals.

As mentioned previously, your name will not be linked to this in any way.

WHO IS ORGANISING AND FUNDING THE RESEARCH?

This study has been developed by Felicity Walker, Trainee Clinical Psychologist, in conjunction with the supervision team. This research study will help to fulfil the requirements of the Clinical Psychology Doctorate Programme conducted by the Universities of Coventry and Warwick.

WHO HAS REVIEWED THE STUDY?

An ethics committee has reviewed the study for compliance with ethical standards. **Consequently, the University Research Ethics Committee at Coventry University has approved this study.** Additionally, the manager of the Veterans Contact Point has given written consent for this study to recruit from service.

WHAT IF I AM NOT HAPPY ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY OR THERE IS A PROBLEM?

If you have any concerns about the research please speak to the Chief Investigator Felicity Walker or Dr Dan Barnard, contact details are outlined below.

If you wish to make a complaint please contact the Chair of Coventry University Ethics Committee on ethics@coventry.ac.uk. Additionally, in the event that something goes wrong, or you feel that you have been harmed by the research and this is due to negligence then you may have grounds for legal action for compensation against Coventry University. However you may have to pay your own legal costs.

IF I WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH STUDY WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?

If you wish to take part in this research study please leave your name and telephone contact details for the chief investigator to contact you.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information or enquiries on this study, please do not hesitate to contact:

Felicity Walker Trainee Clinical Psychologist, Clinical Psychology Doctorate, Health and Life Sciences, James Starley Building, Coventry University, Prior Street, Coventry, CV1 5FB
E-mail: walkerf@uni.coventry.ac.uk

Or alternatively:

Dr Dan Barnard

Consultant Clinical Psychologist & Lead of Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Partnership Trusts Veteran Project. St Michaels Hospital, Clinical Psychology Department, St Michaels Road, Warwick, CV345QW. Telephone: 01926 406714

Appendix H: Participant consent form.

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Programme Director
Doctorate Course in Clinical Psychology
Dr Eve Knight
BSc Clin.Psy.D. CPsychol



13th August 2013

Consent Form

Transition onto "Civi Street": Exploring Army Veterans Experiences of Military Relationships

Name of Participant:

Name of Investigator:

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 13th August 2013 for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have these answered satisfactorily.

Please initial box

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without this affecting my support by services.

Please initial box

I understand that the information that I provide will be processed and analysed as is required by this research study and according to the Data Protection Act. This includes an audio recording of the interview. I understand that this information will be anonymised and then destroyed after five years in line with information governance.

Please initial box

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Head of Department of Psychology

Professor James Tresilian BSc PhD University of Warwick Coventry CV4 7AL Tel 024 7657 3009

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I agree to anonymised excerpts from my interview transcript being quoted verbatim in reports and publications related to the study. **Please initial box**

I agree to participate in the above study.

Please initial box

As stated in the information sheet, it may be that once the chief investigator has been through the interview they wish to interview you again to clarify things they have noticed in the interview, this is simply to ensure that they have a deeper understanding of your experience.

If a second interview is required and you wish to take part please tick the following box

I wish to take part in a second interview

If a second interview is required and you DO NOT wish to take part please tick the following box

As stated in the information sheet, during the analysis stage of the study the chief investigator may wish to spend some time with you to clarify the themes that have emerged from the data. This will simply be the chief investigator reporting back to you the themes they have noticed and asking what you think of these. This is again to ensure that the themes are representing a true reflection of your experiences.

Please tick one of the following:

I DO wish to be contacted for this stage of the study

If you DO NOT wish to be contacted to help with this stage please tick the following box

I DO NOT wish to be contacted for this stage of the study

Appendix I: Veterans information pack.

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Veteran Information Pack

This document contains the contact details of Veteran Support Agencies should you require any further support or advice. Please see below.

Services for veterans and professionals

Big White Wall

The 'Big White Wall' is an online service for not just veterans but also those currently serving, family and carers. The service is set up similar to an online support group which aims at reducing the stigma of mental health.

This is a free and anonymous service, for further information:

Visit: www.bigwhitewall.com

Medical Assessment Programme (MAP)

The Medical Assessment Programme is run by the Ministry of Defence. This service offers a period of assessment (funded by the MOD) but not treatment. Health professionals can refer to this free of charge service.

For further information:

Visit: The Medical Assessment Programme

The Royal British Legion (RBL)

The Royal British Legion provides welfare to the whole armed forces family - serving, ex-service and their dependants.

For further information:

Call: 020 3207 2100 **Visit:** www.britishlegion.org.uk

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Veterans Contact Point (VCP)

This service acts as a one stop shop for veterans, their families and carers living in Coventry and Warwickshire providing support, liason and advice. It is run by veterans themselves but is funded by Warwickshire Probation and SSAFA. However the service works in close partnership with other key veteran charities including Combat Stress and the Royal British Legion.

The VCP is based at Nuneaton and Bedworth town hall and is open Monday-Friday, 10am-4pm, for more information:

Call: 024 7637 6129 □ The manager is Len Hardy (Military Probation Officer) □ **Visit:** www.veteranscontactpoint.org.uk □ **Email:** contactus@veteranscontactpoint.org.uk

Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee (VA&PC)

VA&PC formerly known as the War Pensions Committee, provide support for war pensioners and war widowers. They can help with complaints and claims for war pensions and compensation schemes. Veterans can contact their local VA&PC for help or advice by calling the Veterans Welfare Centre in their local area.

For further information:

Call: Veterans UK helpline on 0800 169 2277 to get the contact details for your VA&PC □ **Visit:** www.veterans-uk.info

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen Family Association (SSAFA)

The SSAFA is a charity aimed at veterans, their family and carers. They offer practical help and assistance with welfare, family support and housing. For more information:

Call: Warwickshire SSAFA on 01926 491317 □ **Visit:** www.ssafa.org.uk

British Limbless Ex-servicemen Association (BLESMA)

BLEMA is a charitable organisation that provides support for currently serving, veterans, families and carers who have lost a limb or lost the sight in an eye in service. Support includes peer support, welfare and rehabilitation.

For further information:

Call: 0208 590 1124 Visit: www.blesma.org

Telephone helplines for veterans and professionals

Combat Stress helpline

This is a 24 hour helpline delivered by Rethink, for the military community and their families.

Call: 0800 138 1619 Text: 07537 404 719 Visit: www.combatstress.org.uk Email: The Combat Stress outreach worker for this area is CPN Alex McCall, you can contact him at: Alex.McCall@combatstress.org.uk

Forcesline

Forcesline is a free and confidential helpline that is completely independent of the military chain of command.

Call: 0800 731 4880

Available from 10.30am - 10.30pm (UK time) Open 365 days a year.

Veterans UK helpline

Formally known as the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA), Veterans UK provides free help and advice about pay, pensions and support services for veterans, their family and carers.

This helpline is in line with the Veterans UK service.

Call: 0800 169 2277 □ Text: 0800 169 3458 □ Email: veterans.help@spva.gsi.gov.uk □ Visit:
www.veterans-uk.info

Appendix J

IPA analysis procedure

Table 2.4. IPA analysis procedure (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Reading and re-reading transcripts	Following each interview the transcript was read repetitively to ensure immersion within the data. Additionally each audio recording was listened to repeatedly to enable reflection on the process and to enhance engagement and awareness with the data. These reflections were kept in a reflective diary.
Initial noting	Transcripts were annotated with initial reflections and notes about each interview. Notes and tentative reflections were written in the right hand margin on the transcript.
Developing emergent themes	Researcher interpretations of the participant's narrative were built into emergent themes. This was written on the left hand margin.
Drawing upon connections across emergent themes	Emergent themes were amalgamated to draw upon the most significant parts of the original transcript. These were also written in the left hand margin.
Repeating the process for each case	The above process was repeated for

	<p>each case. This was a reflexive process to incorporate new themes and to temporarily ‘bracket off’ previously identified themes.</p>
<p>Searching for patterns throughout cases</p>	<p>Organisation of subthemes into broader categories. Each participant was assigned a particular coloured paper. Subthemes from each participant’s account were then put onto the appropriately coloured paper. This process supported the comparison between participants’ subthemes. Final superordinate themes that brought the data into a meaningful and credible account were developed.</p>
<p>Identifying recurrent themes</p>	<p>Examination of the final superordinate themes to ensure they are representative of the entire data set. To demonstrate each theme direct quotes from all participants were used.</p>

Example from participant 4:

Share? ←

Loss
Sadness

852 Its like walking out on your family, you have had the security umm in some

853 cases the love, and people looking out for you in your family and you just walk

854 out. And that is exactly what it is like, and nobody knows you, nobody cares

855 that's a big part... ? Does he know himself??

856 And that sense of walking out of a family, can you tell me any more?

857 No...It's hard to put into words and its raw...

858 Is there anything else that we haven't covered that you think would be

859 important?

860 No I don't think so....

DEBRIEF

leaving forces like walking out of your family
you walk out
nobody knows you
nobody cares
hard to put into words
raw

Alone
Loss of security,
Isolate
Difficulty articulating
Painful?

Right at the end of interview participant's hard difficult to do is?

Appendix L

Photo of data analysis process



Appendix M: Example of respondent validation.

Email feedback from participant 2. Received 22nd March 2015:

Hi Felicity,

I honestly admire and respect your commitment, perseverance and your hold on reality when dealing with us ex-military guys; I did read the documents thoroughly and totally agreed with all your findings.

I hope my thoughts help and I also appreciate the chance to air them to someone who actually cares.

Many thanks,

(Name of participant 2).