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THE EXPERIENCES OF FORMER UK MILITARY PERSONNEL RE-ENTERING THE CIVILIAN WORLD

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Sir Isaac Newton once said that he had seen so far because he stood on the shoulders of giants. I now know how he must have felt, for without standing on all of your shoulders I would not have seen so much, or so far.

Abstract

The Experiences of Former UK Military Personnel re-entering the Civilian World

This thesis focuses on the experiences of former UK military personnel from all three armed services re-entering the civilian workplace. There is a distinct lack of research in this area with only limited studies carried out which tend to focus on the difficult transitions or the actual mechanics of engaging with the civilian labour market. This thesis provides a unique insight into the experiences of military personnel and their journey out of the military environment and into the civilian environment.

This study uses a qualitative methodology based upon an interpretive approach to gain insights into the experiences of former military personnel who left the military for a variety of reasons. The study examined the stories of a main research cohorts of 16 individuals and a second cohort of 10 individuals were engaged to further challenge theoretical saturation. The research subjects were selected using a 'snowball' approach and selection filtered using a specific set of criteria. Their military experiences span a range of times since discharge and a range of civilian employment since leaving.

Following a review of existing literature encompassing career theory, transition theory, narrative analysis and activity theory, open interviews were conducted with participants simply asked to "tell me your story". The transcripts of the interviews were then analysed using three analytical frames: activity theory, storytelling and perceptions of the self. The participants mainly identified tensions in their relationships with new communities, mediated by the changed social rules and divisions of labour that they encountered in their transition. Those who identified the lowest levels of tension tended to tell their stories in a heroic mode and demonstrated multiple or mixed senses of the self, whilst those who identified the highest tensions tended to tell their stories in a tragic mode and privileged their military identity above their other identities. The data suggests that some of these experience may be connected to the concept of the unquestioned organisation that was expressed by all the research cohort and the unthinking transfer of agency that occurs on joining and leaving the military.

Keywords:

Military careers, career transition, adjustment, agency, unquestioned organisation, social rules, division of labour, activity theory, story telling

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1   A Personal Story

At the tender age of 17 I arrived at the Royal Air Force Officer's and Aircrew selection centre at the famous Battle of Britain fighter station at Biggin Hill in Kent. Over 3 days I was tested, assessed, interviewed, poked, prodded and analysed. Six of us potential officers shared a barrack room for our short stay and, at the end of each day, there would be another one or two empty bed spaces as the candidates fell at one hurdle or another until, finally, there were only two of us left. It was a similar story in the other rooms.

On the final day the few remaining candidates gathered together and with a mix of excitement that we had made it thus far, and apprehension that we still did not know if we had been selected, we said our farewells to one another and moved onto another phase of our young lives. Two weeks later I received a letter from the Royal Air Force informing me I had been successful in my application and that I was to report to the Royal Air Force College Cranwell on the 16th of September 1979. I duly did so and then, in what appeared to be the blink of an eye it was July 2001, almost 22 years later, and I was leaving the only organisation I had worked for as an adult and entering the world of civilian work. As I said my farewells and moved onto another phase of my, now not so young life, that mix of excitement and apprehension was there again.

My transition back into the civilian world was, in my view, relatively painless and easy, but it was none the less a major change. I was married with two young children and in preparation for my departure we sold one house, an investment property we had never really lived in, brought a larger one and moved from our 13th military married quarter in the South of England to our new home in Inverness. For my last 12 months of service my family established themselves in our new home whilst I commuted at weekends and saw out the last days of my service. I took full advantage of the 'resettlement' packages on offer, worked on my CV and building up my networks and was selected for the first job I applied for. My wife found work easily and we found ourselves living in a larger (and in my view much nicer) house than the married quarter that we had recently left, our disposable household income was the same as when I had been serving, our children were settled in school and nursery and we knew that in a couple of years we would not have to go through the upheaval of a 'posting'. Yet, sometimes I found myself questioning if I had done the right thing. My new

work colleagues were very nice, but somehow there was something missing. I once found myself sitting in a very boring meeting staring out of the window and asking myself "what am I doing here?" However, overall I was content, I was sure that I had done the right thing and the demands of family life kept me busy and focussed.

However, for some of my former service colleagues the transition was not so easy and their experiences very different from mine, but there was not one common theme. Some had found it extremely difficult; others had struggled to cope with their new situation, some made the transition apparently easily. However, appearances can be deceptive. Seemingly successful people confided in me that they had experienced difficulties, regretted their decision to leave or that the process had been a lot harder than they had imagined. Others found that they were earning more than they had in the military said that they could not believe their luck and they should have left the Armed Forces earlier. One who had, to my view, built a very successful second career confessed to me that he: "had never demobbed" and mourned his former life in the military. At about the same time an informal group of friends and acquaintances developed, led initially by a good friend of mine, and the only real connection in the group was that we had all served in the military. We would meet up infrequently to socialise and swap tales of both our military past and our civilian present. Again the experiences were wide and varied but we had all made a transition and had all had different lived experiences as a result.

With all of us having experienced a very structured work environment in which, by and large, outcomes could be predicted and where there was always a training course that would equip you with the necessary skills and knowledge for whatever situation that you found yourself in, I was intrigued as to why our transition had been so very different for all of us. I mulled this over for some time and the more that I thought about the transition process the more I needed to investigate the phenomenon of the transition from military to civilian. As previously stated I could see no discernible patterns of circumstances or behaviours that would explain this variety of experiences and my own knowledge was clearly imperfect. From there I looked to see what had been written on the subject and whilst I could find articles and research on those who had had a traumatic time in the military or those whose transition ended in homelessness or addiction I could find very little that examined the transition of the 'ordinary' ex-serviceman or woman. From this position of ignorance and curiosity the idea for this thesis was born and thus I began my research journey.

1.2   Overview

Every year approximately 17,500[1] people leave the UK Armed Forces and enter the civilian world of work. For some it may be the first time that they have worked in a civilian environment whilst others will have had some experience of the civilian world of work prior to their military service. Regardless of their exposure to the civilian workplace, they bring with them a range of skills, knowledge and attitudes that, potentially, may be of benefit to employer organisations across the private, public and voluntary sectors. However, anecdotal evidence, and a very small body of academic research, suggests that many former military personnel face difficulties re-entering the civilian workplace and developing a civilian career. Thus the initial research project aimed to explore these experiences and in particular how career development and changing careers are conceptualised pre-change and how individual experiences modify or alter these concepts.

Within the career literature there is relatively little that is specifically and directly relevant to former Armed Forces personnel. Much of the research that has been completed has focussed on the more problematic areas of former Armed Forces personnel such as mental health issues (Gabriel and Neal 2002, Iversen et al 2005), homelessness, addiction and substance abuse (Higate 2001, Milroy 2001, Iversen et al 2005). This focus on the problematic and difficult experiences of military personnel transitioning back to civilian life, whilst valid and laudable, can been seen to skew the views and perceptions held by the rest of the population and indeed may contribute negatively to the issue. Much of the research relies largely on data from the United States (Milroy 2001; Gade 1991; Alpass et al 1997, Moskos and Wood 1988, Hargreaves 2014) where studies into the experiences of military personnel have been biased towards those suffering from some form of post-traumatic stress and ignores the range of situations that former military personnel undergo during the transition to civilian life. Further examination of the available literature has revealed several initially similar approaches to address the research gap as identified by the researcher. However, closer examination of this research suggests that, in fact, it tends to be limited and quite specific in its approach as will be discussed in Chapter 2 (Bridle 2001, De Beere 1999, McDermott 2007, Bergman, Burdett and Greenberg 2014, Walker 2012). Whilst these studies have provided an insight into certain aspects of the transition journey, and they add value because they illuminate different aspects of the transition process, these limitations and the scarcity of such research suggests that there is a still a major research gap in this area.

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[1]   Taken from UK Defence Statistics 2006 for the period 2003-2006

Much of the literature pertaining to military career transitions is not contained within one set of literature but in fact ranges across a number of disciplines including social sciences (e.g. Burgman et al 2014), health (e.g. Buckman et al 2012), mental health (e.g. Iversen et al 2005), human resource management (e.g.Young 2009), organisational studies (e.g. Brown 2015), psychology (e.g. Griffin and Hesketh 2003), career studies (e.g. Murtagh et al 2011), geography (e.g. Herman and Yarwood 2014) and military studies (e.g.Ledwidge 2012 and 2013).

1.3   Rationale for the Selection of the Topic

The UK armed forces comprise the Royal Navy (RN), the Royal Marines (RM), the Army and the Royal Air Force (RAF). Each service has both a regular (full time) and a reserve (part-time) component. Only the regular element of the armed forces are considered in this research. They are supported by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, the Civil Service and defence contractors. These support organisations are also not included in this study. The overall size of the armed forces has declined over recent years falling from a total of 196,680 personnel in 2007 to 163,670 in 2014, with the Army accounting for 59% of the total, the RAF 21% and the RN and RM 20% (MOD 2014). Further reductions in size are planned so that by 2020 the Army will be comprise of approximately 82,000 personnel, the RAF 33,000 and the RN and RM 30,000 (MOD 2014).

Personnel normally join the UK military at the lowest level (sailor, soldier, airman or junior officer) and are promoted internally. Whilst some specialist personnel may enter the military at higher ranks this is the exception and the military is essentially a 'closed system' in career terms. Whilst a small number of personnel may join the military at 16, the usual minimum entry age is 18 and personnel can continue to serve until the age of 55, although there are complex contracts of employment and various age related points at which individuals leave the military (MOD 2014, Strachan 2000).

Exiting the military normally takes place at the end of a particular engagement, with the exit date known well in advance and with career transition programmes in place for the individual. This may be at a point of retirement with an immediate military pension or may be after only a few years of service. However, unexpected exits from the military can occur as a result of redundancy programmes, injury, the onset of medical conditions that make continued military service impossible or at the request of the individual (Citizens Advice Scotland 2012).

The research topic has become even more topical in the past 5 years with government and public interest in former service personnel, or veterans, increasing, probably as a result of the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan (Dandeker et al, 2003, Hines et al 2014, Burdett et al, 2012). However, publicly funded research and subsequent programmes to assist the military community tend to focus on the extreme examples of transition and there is sparse research into those former military personnel who transition without coming to the notice of the authorities or service charities and where it does exist it still tends to highlight areas where there are problems, rather than where there are positive experiences (Citizens Advice Scotland 2012). This is an understandable and rational stance. Governments want to be seen to be 'doing something' to help their war heroes and the spectre of the one legged veteran reduced to selling matches in the depression era between the world wars still haunts those in political office today. In the eyes of the public, whilst the causes for which they fought may be questionable, and the politicians who committed them to those wars may be reviled, the service men and women who fought in those wars are regarded as heroes who must be looked after. From the point of view of charities involved with ex-military personnel it is in their interests to focus on the small percentage of personnel who experience difficulties. In doing so they purposely do not set the context. If you inform the public that 95% of people who leave the services do well and only 5% have a problem then you are unlikely to garner either much sympathy or support. If you leave out the context and focus only on the most extreme of the 5% then raising money will be comparatively easy.

In looking at the majority of military leavers it is difficult to find large amounts of empirical evidence as to their experiences and outcomes of transition. The overall limited research available suggests that most people make a successful transition from the military to the civilian world. However, we do not understand the journey they have made and the experiences they have undergone during this process (Iversen *et al* 2005a, 2005b). If we can understand these journeys better then perhaps we can prepare people more for the experience. Knowing what to expect may make a potentially difficult journey a positive experience and possibly more beneficial to the individual and society in general.

In terms of the research the following key terms are defined:

Transition is taken to mean the process of leaving the military and the subsequent events that follow. The start and end of this process is as defined by the research subjects themselves.

Experiences are those events, actions and emotions as reported by the research subjects themselves during the period of transition.

Former military personnel are those individuals who have served in the regular component of any of the UK armed forces, regardless of when they left military service.

Civilian world is any defined as any context outside the regular military environment of the UK armed forces.

1.4   Aims and Objectives

Thus the aims and objectives were developed with the overarching aim being to explore the experiences of former UK military personnel re-entering the civilian world, with second order objectives being:

- Conduct a literature review to bring together the academic work on military careers and career transition from a number of disciplines
- Conduct interviews with selected former military personnel to record their narratives about the process
- Analyse the recorded narratives through a number of lenses in order to attempt to understand the transition experience
- Draw together a number of findings, conclusions and recommendations to add to the existing body of knowledge in this area
- Reflect on the research process in order to develop research methods and techniques at both a personal and broader academic level

1.5   Methodology

Initially the methodological approach considered was a positivist approach as this was, somewhat unthinkingly, considered to be the researcher's 'natural' paradigm, this being reductionist, logical and deterministic (Creswell 2007). In initially considering a quantitative approach it soon became apparent that such an approach may have reported on the *outcomes* of UK military personnel and their transition to a civilian career rather than an *understanding* of those experiences. It was therefore concluded that a qualitative, social constructivist world view should be pursued which seeks an understanding of the world in which individuals have multiple and subjective views of the world in which they exist (Creswell 2007). Thus the research seeks complexity of views rather than simplicity, narrow views and core rules or concepts. Ultimately a phenomenological hermeneutic approach was adopted, as such an approach can be considered subjective, inductive and dynamic (Reiners 2012) and Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology (Heidegger 1962), tends towards the *interpretive*, where meaning is constructed from the background and experiences of both the researcher and the research subjects. In other words understanding of the world is derived

from experiencing it and interpreting it (Reiners 2012) and the world consists of the self-interpretations of both researcher and research subjects and is thus made up of multiple, interconnected realities (Laverty 2003). Data were collected using open interviews with a range of subjects and transcripts of the interviews were subjected to thematic analysis using 3 lenses of analysis: activity theory, storytelling and sense of self until a satisfactory level of theoretical saturation had been achieved and verified using a series of confirmatory interviews with a separate cohort of research subjects (O'Reilly and Parker 2012).

1.6   Limitations

This research is necessarily bounded by limitations and assumptions. Specifically its findings and recommendations must be interpreted in light of the fact that the study is of UK military regular personnel and the main literature has been from a UK/Western academic tradition. Its applicability outside of this context must therefore be treated with some caution. Similarly there are specific limitations as to the research subjects. These are explained in detail in Chapter 3, paragraph 3.7, but overall the research excludes those who have experienced a physical, mental or social trauma as part of their transition, those that have left with less than 4 years' service and those UK military personnel who are not White British.

1.7   Outline of the Thesis

Chapter one has provided some background to the sector, defined key terms, discussed the rationale for the study and explained the researcher's personal motivation for undertaking this research. The remainder of the thesis is set out as follows:

Chapter two reviews the existing literature, specifically career theory, military careers, career transition and change, self-identity, narrative and storytelling.

Chapter three presents the research methodology employed, the analytical lenses used, ethical issues, data collection, the research sample, and issues of rigour and trustworthiness;

Chapter four describes the data collected and then demonstrates the three layers of analysis, showing how each was undertaken and ends by summarising the findings;

Chapter five discusses those findings with respect to the extant literature in order to frame the contribution of the thesis;

Chapter six concludes the thesis with a number of recommendations and identifies areas for further research.

1.8   Summary

This research has been conducted as a result of the experiences of the researcher, an identified gap in the existing body of knowledge and the possible implications for a small but significant element of the UK population. It seeks to explore the experiences of former UK military personnel re-entering the civilian world using a phenomenological hermeneutic approach with data collected using open interviews with a range of subjects. Using thematic analysis through 3 lenses: activity theory, storytelling and sense of self, theoretical saturation was achieved and tested and a number of findings and recommendations are presented. Throughout the research a reflexive approach has been used and articulated.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1   Introduction

The literature review for this research has been very much a systematic, iterative process with the literature being reviewed and revisited as each phase of the research progressed. Whilst this Chapter represents the main findings from the literature review it does not truly represent the volume of literature that was read and reviewed. All of it was informative and educational, but not always, eventually, relevant to the production of this thesis. Therefore this Chapter can be said to capture the salient points of the literature reviewed, with the main ones discussed and debated, but is not, and can never be, truly representative of the width and depth of the literature review journey the that the researcher undertook. With the classic naivety of a research student the literature review began as exactly that; a review of the existing relevant literature with a view to identifying theories of models that might support, or otherwise, the research question. However, over the journey the literature review became much more of a vehicle for the sense-making approach that the researcher came to over time and the question of what literature existed and what was relevant was a recurring challenge on that journey.

2.2   Literature Review as a Process

The literature review process was planned on the basis that it must be systematic, explicit, comprehensive and reproducible (Fink 2005) and approached in an open-minded and transparent manner (Okli and Schabram 2010). It was designed so that an initial scoping exercise would be conducted around a research question to gauge the existing range of work on the topic and identify specific areas where literature may be located. From this scoping phase it was planned to develop inclusion and exclusion criteria. The next phase was planned to be a systematic search using various search engines as appropriate to the subject. The following phase was planned to be a writing of the literature review with subsequent phases focussing on extending and expanding on particular areas of interest. With the final phase being the completion of the synthesis of the results thus obtained and the final writing of the literature review. Throughout this process a record keeping system using a combination of a manual set of record cards, physical copies of key documents, and

an electronic record together with either electronic copies of literature or links to locations was utilised.

The general research question of 'What are the experiences of UK Armed Forces personnel re-entering the civilian world?' was used as the basis for the initial scoping phase. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were considered in the scoping phase and initially inclusion factors were that all research into the career experiences (keywords: career, careers, career development, career transition, career choices, career change, employment, employment choices, unemployment) of personnel from all services and branches (keywords: military, military services, armed forces, armed services, Army, Navy, Air Force, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force, uniformed services) of the United Kingdom (keywords: United Kingdom, UK, British) military would be included. There were initially no exclusion factors included in the planning, as an initial search of the potential sources of the existing literature suggested that this was an area of research where very little literature actually existed. Thus it was decided at the scoping stage that exclusion criteria would only be developed once the exact range of the available literature had been gauged. Even in the case of appropriate timeliness of the literature there was no specific cut-off date applied as during the scoping phase it became apparent that it may be necessary to go back to original texts and first principles in the areas that would be of the most direct relevance. With these criteria an initial thematic review was conducted specifically searching for 'military career transitions' (keyword combinations added to the military list above: for example: career AND transition; career AND change) and similar keyword searches across a range of search engines and databases, the most profitable ones being Emerald, Web of Science and EBSCO.

From this first stage review it quickly became apparent that the subject in question was not contained within one set of literature but rather was spread across a number of disciplines including social sciences (e.g. Burgman et al 2014), health (e.g. Buckman et al 2012), human resource management (e.g. Young 2009), organisational studies (e.g. Brown 2015), psychology (e.g. Griffin and Hesketh 2003), career studies (e.g. Murtagh et al 2011), geography (e.g. Herman and Yarwood 2014) and military studies (e.g. Ledwidge 2012 and 2013). It also became apparent that the inclusion criteria of UK military was too narrow due to the lack of research in this area, and this was widened to include studies conducted on military personnel in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and some European nations.

With the inclusion criteria thus amended and the thematic searching widened to a multi-disciplinary approach, a parallel approach of snowballing or reference harvesting was employed utilising references from key writings. A technique of backwards referencing was employed, where key references were followed up and 'harvested' from other publications. In tandem with this approach a technique of 'citing forward' was employed where: a) key authors were then searched to see if they had produced other work that may have been of interest to the research project, and b) work citing key papers was searched. Using these two techniques of referencing backwards and citing forwards particular themes or authors were explored until it was considered that saturation of that particular topic had been reached as no new sources were found.

Simultaneously, and partly as a consequence of the results of the snowballing approach, the literature review was also organised around several core themes each being developed in an iterative manner as more references were harvested. These core areas were careers, military careers, the nature of military service, career transitions, storytelling/narrative, self-identity, identity location and activity theory. In searching these specific areas several techniques were employed. For example career theory literature was researched backwards to understand the context of military careers but also researched forwards to understand the contemporary state of careers literature. Following this process, specific sub-sets of the literature were examined; for example career transitions and career decisions. For the specific theoretical lenses 'seed pieces' were utilised in the first instance, namely core texts around which the concepts or theories were based. For example activity theory commenced with a review of one the researcher's supervisor's own writings on the topic. Thus not only was there advice and guidance on where to find relevant literature but also there were numerous opportunities to discuss and refine thinking on the topic and thereby both expand, and at the same time focus, the literature search. In the case of storytelling the works of Gabriel (2000) were the starting point and forward citing and backward referencing provided a well tried and tested method of expanding this area of the literature review. Similar processes were used for the concept of the self (Jenkins 2008 and McAdams 1993).

Thus the literature review whilst planned and systematic also became in some ways opportunistic, in so much that it followed a set of research boundaries but because of the multidisciplinary nature of the research was also free ranging in its approach and relatively unconstrained by strict search and inclusion/exclusion criteria. Of note was the need for the review to visit original source materials as the broad nature of the review necessitated often going back to first principles in order to understand and then synthesise concepts from across a range of academic disciplines, something that would not have been possible if strict

exclusion criteria had been applied. Additionally the search for non-peer-reviewed literature such as reports and government figures, known as 'grey' literature was a significant part of the literature review and would have been more difficult had strict inclusion criteria have been applied such as the impact factors of journals consulted.

Whilst to those who are used to a more detailed systematic approach to the construction of a literature review this approach may at first appear to have somewhat unstructured but this is not the case. Due to the absence of a core of research in this area the existing body of knowledge is spread across a wide range of academic disciplines and sources and thus the literature review has necessarily been complex. This complexity should not however be confused with being illogical and unstructured. The literature review is perhaps best compared to a maze rather than a highway: there have been many twists and turns along the way, some dead ends and some false starts, but ultimately the destination has been reached and one can argue that the quality and completeness of the literature review has benefitted from this, as it has been a journey of richness and fullness and perhaps the ultimate test of the literature review is not only the destination, but also the journey itself.

2.3   Background

Initially the focus of the literature review was on the concept of a career, as the key premise was that the transition from the military environment to the civilian environment was essentially a change of career. Thus the review sought to define what a career was, and examine the various career theories and then seek to relate these to the experiences of former military personnel and their transition to civilian life. It was hoped that a new area of career theory could be identified and the research would thus add to the body of knowledge of career theory and in particular the field of career change or transition. However, as the research progressed it became clear that a narrow focus on career theory alone would not truly enable a sense-making approach or indeed answer the research question. As the research progressed the experiences of the individuals undertaking the transition from military to civilian life became the focus of the research, and consequently of the literature review, and questions such as who were the people who were leaving the Armed Forces, what were their lived experiences, their world views, and their expectations began to dominate the research. Given this new focus, the nature of the research subjects themselves led to a widening of the literature review from a narrow career theory perspective to include an examination of the nature of military careers and how, if at all, these differed from civilian careers. This widening of the literature review in turn then begged the question of whether career transition could be interpreted simply as a mechanistic process or was the nature of the individual a major factor, thus the literature review once again expanded to include an

examination of the theories surrounding the influences, choices and attitudes of those involved in the career transition process. Once on this pathway the review also expanded to examine the nature of the self and how individuals may view themselves and how society may view individuals; and if mental attitudes or perceptions may impact upon the process of change. Whilst this was a fascinating excursion into Freudian and Jungian theories it did prove to be too wide an expansion of the literature review, and therefore whilst these theories are referred to, and may underpin some of the theories and models discussed, due to the complexity and ambiguity that they present, they do not form a major part of the review. However, as the research progressed and linked to development of the use of narrative as the main research methodology, as discussed in Chapter 3, the nature of storytelling or narrative as a basis for understanding not only one's career, but in broader terms one's life were also examined. Again as the research progressed and the activity theory was developed as a key analytical tool in the sense-making approach adopted then a review of the literature concerning activity theory was undertaken and incorporated into the literature review.

The dominant cultural perspective in this literature review is taken from a Western Europe and North America view for two reasons. First, the subjects that have formed the basis of this research thesis have been exclusively Western in their culture, background, experience and the context of their experiences; and second the bulk of the previous research on careers has taken place in this Western context. However, whilst there is much contemporary research available from China and Asia, and some of this has been explored as part of the literature review, the dominant perspective is a Western one and the possible limitations of the ethnicity of the research subjects and the Western approach adopted is discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

Given this background the literature review as presented now examines the concept of careers in general and the historical development of career theory. It then examines contemporary career theory and the concept of military careers. From there it explores the nature of military service and the mental and psychological processes involved in military service, before exploring the understanding of the self and self-perception. It then examines the nature of storytelling and narrative in this process of understanding and rationalisation, and then it reviews activity theory and its application in this research. Finally the key issues from this review are discussed with respect to the researcher's position and gaps in the existing body of knowledge are identified.

2.4   Careers – a History

The concept of a career appears to be deeply rooted in contemporary Western society and it can be argued that it still influences the thinking of individuals, organisations and society (Brown 2002, Gunz and Peiperl 2007). However, the dominance of the career may be waning as discussed later. It can be claimed that Max Weber in his classic 1958 work 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' identified the theology of Calvinism as the starting point for our Western way of thinking about careers. In broad terms Calvinism takes the view that God had given everyone skills and talents and it is an offence against God and nature not to use those skills to the very best of advantage. In the western Protestant school of thought hard work was valued over recreation and frivolity. God was not only praised in church but also through the work of the individual. Oft repeated sayings such as "the Devil makes work for idle hands" and "there is no shame in honest toil" symbolised this Calvinistic approach to work, industry, recreation and idleness. Linked to this philosophical approach was the formal organisation of labour that controlled the pursuit of a particular trade or vocation through the Guild and apprenticeship organisations. It is interesting to note that what would now be called 'Professions' such as medicine, law and accountancy were not regulated in the same way and could in effect be practised by anyone with an education, but what would now be considered technicians or skilled labour were heavily regulated and controlled by statute. Thus young men were formally and legally apprenticed to a Master craftsman and legally bound to fulfil a period of training, usually for low, or in some cases no pay, during which time they would be taught the skills of their chosen trade. Apprenticeships often lasted several years and successful completion of their apprenticeship they would then join the Guild for their chosen trade. The Guild strictly controlled who could practice their particular trade with legal sanctions against those who transgressed. Whilst these 'traditional' apprenticeships have now largely fallen into disuse, the concept of being a 'time-served' tradesman is still alive and well in the UK. (CIPD 2004). For the vast majority of people who did not follow this regulated path they were classed as 'unskilled' and would find themselves barred from carrying out work protected by the industrial Guilds or professional societies and their employment opportunities would be limited. Belonging to a Guild was not therefore simply an economic benefit but conferred status upon its members, who viewed themselves as occupying a certain social standing within society and importantly, were also viewed by the rest of society in a similar way. Progression through the ranks of a Guild can be argued is the early manifestation of the 'career' and it is important to note this deep rooted and historical concept of a career.

The advent of the industrial revolution and mass production methods challenged the notions of the skilled worker. Political thinkers such as Marx and Engels (1888) saw this erosion of

the previous notions or careers, progression and the division of skilled and unskilled workers as part of a great class struggle and a means of attempting to subjugate the working class masses:

> *"The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers."*
>
> —MARX AND ENGELS (1888), P5

The growth of the middle classes in the UK in the 19th and 20th centuries saw the establishment of careers as being socially driven together with the desire for a 'good career' and the social standing that it would bring. The status of the Guild could now be obtained by a larger part of society and the trade union movement, it can be argued, was instrumental in coalescing large groups of working people of the same occupation or sector of the workforce and thereby, either explicitly or implicitly, identifying a common 'career' and the ambition for advancement or improvement, be that in working conditions, pay and reward, job security or indeed progression within a particular trade or occupation (Moore, Gunz and Hall 2007). This desire for social advancement and the attitudes towards various occupations was cleverly satirised by George and Weedon Grossmith in the classic 'The Diary of a Nobody' (2006). Thus the concept of a career and an occupation has also led to notions of status, self-worth and standing in the community. The career was how many individuals were defined by both themselves and the rest of society and linked very strongly to notions of class. Changing careers, either through choice or circumstance could be viewed as positive or negative, but was probably something that created personal and family dislocation or crisis during transition from one career or occupation (Cascio 2007). The tangible benefits of work to the psychological well-being of the individual have been explored by numerous writers. Studies suggest that work is beneficial to both the physical and mental well-being of individuals and that work and a career offers at least the hope of personal reward and personal development (Sonnenberg 1997, Guest and Sturgess 2007).

Against this historical background the formal academic identification of careers as a concept effectively began in the 20th century although Brown (2002) traces the origins to the 15th Century with the watershed identified as Parsons' work on vocational choices in 1909 (Brown 2002). Parsons' work advocated that if individuals actively chose their career rather than being passive victims of the hunt for a job then they will be more satisfied in their chosen work, their efficiency will increase and employers' costs will decrease. These ideas formed the basis of career choice theory which in essence is about establishing the best fit between the individual and the organisation. The development of intellectual testing around the time of

the First World War was expanded to include interests and attitudes in an attempt to use a scientific underpinning for identifying aptitudes for specific roles (Bingham 1919). This 'scientific' method was used extensively during the Second World War for identifying those with aptitudes for specific roles (Moore, Gunz and Hall 2007). For example the testing of volunteers for aircrew in the United States Army Air Force took one and a half days including general knowledge tests, graph reading skills, motor skills, hand-eye coordination and reaction times as well as psychological interviews. Half of those who volunteered failed this selection process (Ambrose 2001). In the UK similar processes were developed and the War Office Selection Board (WOSB) that was developed for identifying potential officers. In the post war years the WOSB transferred to the civil sector and became the forerunner of what we now know as the Assessment Centre (Bloisi 2007).

The development of the theory of career choice being based upon a natural aptitude or inherent skill set was further developed by Roe whose Psychology of Occupations theory was published in 1956. Roe suggested that career development was rooted in Maslow's needs theory and in personality theory. Essentially Roe postulated that individuals are predisposed to certain occupational groups and in attempting to move thought Maslow's hierarchy of needs their career, job or vocational choices will be a compound of their desire to achieve Maslow's levels and their inherent predisposition to certain roles (Hall 1986).

Further work was carried out in the first half of the 20th century with the work of Shaw and Moore (1931) and Hughes (1958) examining the relationship of the individual to the social environment over time in the context of the career. This early approach focussed very much on the sociological aspects of the career with the individual being the focus of the perspective.

The post-World War 2 period in Europe and North America saw the formalization of the career as a concept through the development of vocational or career guidance developing as a separate profession (People could now have a career in careers!). Brewer (1942) identified 4 causes of the development of the career guidance movement in the United States. First, there was the increasing division and specialization of roles in the labour market. This could be attributed to, but not solely as a result of the second factor, namely the growth of technology. Third, there was the extension of vocational education to the majority of the working age population, and fourth, the spread of modern forms of democracy. In the same period there were influences of political and social developments such as improved employment legislation, economic shifts and crises, changes in social values, and civil rights movements (Herr 2001). Thus career theory was developed in order not just to match people

to jobs but also jobs to people and optimize the beneficial effects of employment for the corporation, the individuals and society.

Thus in the second half of the 20th century the organisational context of the career seemed to dominate. Career theory explored the relationship between the needs of the organisation and the needs of the individual. Some of these theories took their approaches from existing academic disciplines, primarily sociology and psychology, but there emerged the development of career theory as a separate discipline. From this came the important works of Argyris (1964), Schein (1978), Hall (1986) and Sonnenfeld and Peiperl (1988). The emphasis here was on matching the business needs of an organisation to the career needs of the individual and obtaining not only 'best fit' for each party, but also analysing future organisational needs and putting into place formal career structures within the organisations together with mechanisms for developing individuals to fill that future need. This approach was developed against the backdrop of the large corporation where individuals joined at the start of their working life and retired after 40 or so years of long and faithful service. It was the era of 'Company Man'. Careers were seen as long-term, progressive, and ordered. In some senses they were also viewed as being predictable. Long term planning was possible, indeed desirable, and individual workers were intermeshed with bureaucracies that supported career development (Schein 1978). This career development was largely internal to one company or industry. However, the careers research of this period tended to focus on civilian corporations and what little research was conducted on military careers tended to be based on the experience of the United States military (Norman 1971).

2.5   Careers – A concept

Therefore it can be seen from a historical perspective that the concept of an individual's engagement in the world of work or the 'career' is one which has been central to professional lives for hundreds of years. Countless individuals have apparently gauged their worth against such a concept and western societies have used the career as a yardstick by which to measure achievement.

However, the career concept is not one that has been fixed since its inception and it has been subject to scrutiny over time and contemporary theories call into question much of the long held understanding of the concept. Such a challenge to these conventionally held views poses many questions as to how we rationalise our engagement with the world of work and may have a profound effect upon our whole notion of work, the individual and society. Guest and Sturgess suggest that:

"The traditional model of the career as a series of upwardly mobile steps towards some pinnacle of life-time achievement is deeply embedded in the Western industrial psyche. It reflects modernist ideas of progress, with progress for the individual and society manifested as growth and as movement onward and upward."

<div align="right">—GUEST AND STURGESS IN GUNZ AND PEIPERL (2007), P310</div>

In contemporary everyday conversation, most people would probably still define their career as being work related and would probably define some sort of relationship, over time, between themselves and their employer or employers. However, most would also probably frame their description in some sort of progressive way, highlighting how they had moved from one employment position to another using such language as promotion and advancement. This is summarised by Gunz and Peiperl who define career as: "the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time" (Gunz and Peiperl, 2007: p4).

Thus the general concept of a career is probably not simply a sequence but also about progression in the work place over time (Schein 1978 and Hall 1986). In his work 'Careers in and Out of Organisations' (2002) Hall states that in popular and behavioural science literature there are four distinct meanings in which the term career is used. First, career as an advancement; this entails the idea of vertical mobility in which to be 'successful' an individual must move upwards within an organisation's hierarchy. However, lateral moves or moves to other organisations to 'better' positions are also permissible in this concept. Overall *directionality* (up is good, down is bad) is the pervasive theme in understanding careers. Second, careers as profession; this view suggests that certain occupations that have an advancement themes are 'careers', whilst those without advancement themes are not. For example doctors and lawyers have careers, car park attendants and secretaries have jobs. Those with careers will go through regular movements from one status to another. Third, career as a lifelong sequence of jobs; this tends to be a more neutral and less value laden view of careers in which a career is simply a sequence of jobs or positions held over a period of an individual's working life, regardless of occupation or level of responsibility. Fourth, career as a life-long sequence of role-related experiences; in this definition a career represents the way a person experiences the sequence of jobs and roles or activities that constitute a work history. To understand this concept both the *objective* career (the sequence of jobs) and the *subjective* career (the experiences of those jobs) need to be considered as equal facets of the same process (Hughes 1958).

From these four standpoints the concept of career success and progression can be viewed as important from two perspectives. Firstly there is the perspective of the individual. Fundamentally self-worth and self-actualisation are seen from the stance of the individual.

Hughes (1958) termed this as the *subjective career*. Thus career 'success' is judged by the individual as they analyse and evaluate their working life (Van Maanen 1997). What constitutes success is therefore a matter of personal definition and these definitions will probably be altered as individuals move through employment and as life changes. For example financial reward may be very important at the start of someone's working life but as family responsibilities increase, perhaps security and stability might become more important than financial reward. As Hall states:

> *"Career success or failure is best assessed by the person whose career is being considered rather than by other interested parties, such as researchers, employers, spouses, or friends."*
>
> —HALL (2002), P.11

Thus the success or otherwise of a career should be judged from the perspective of the individual, but part of that may come from how the individual perceives the rest of society perceives their success. The age old question of 'How do others see me?' is probably still relevant for many people (Colin 1997, Lawler 2008).

However when viewed externally, from the perspective of society, careers are classed as *objective careers*. Thus external benchmarks such as promotion, income levels, qualifications are used to validate or give worth to a career based upon what society considers to be 'success' (Hughes 1958). Again as societal norms and expectations change then so might the definition of success. Loyalty and long service as a criterion for success may give way to profit or income generated in the short term. Therefore the stance that where a career is viewed from becomes important as does the time at which the career is evaluated. Contemporary writers claim that the subjective career view may become more important as the world of work changes in the 21st century and the traditional notions of success as viewed by society give way to individual reflections on the worth and value of a life (Hall and Chandler 2005).

The researcher experienced this aspect of career success being viewed from a particular standpoint in time anecdotally (there were no formal research records kept) when working with Second World War Veterans in the mid-1990s at numerous events to commemorate the various 50th anniversaries connected with the Second World War. In many cases the veterans had relatively little military service, usually only 2 or 3 years, and of those only short periods spent on operations, in some cases only a few weeks. After war service they had then had traditionally 'successful' careers, such as teaching, the legal profession, business and engineering. However, they viewed their 'successes' not by what they had achieved in their peacetime activities but what they had achieved in their brief military careers. So whilst

the researcher saw a successful teacher who had become a headmaster, the individual concerned saw an able seaman who had survived the Arctic conveys. It is a graphic example of Hughes' subjective and objective careers theory in action. Both views of career success are equally valid.

A synthesis of these views on what a career is provided by Hall who provides a working definition of a career as:

> *"The career is the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviours associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person's life"*

—HALL (2002), P12

There is no doubt that these theories were appropriate for the context of the time and their influence over corporate structures, culture and spending should not be underestimated (Jones and Dunn 2007). In the context of the British military some of this corporate career theory is probably still dominant. Entry to the military is still at the lowest level with an expectation that individuals will join early in their working lives, rise through the ranks and eventually leave the military having achieved a certain level of 'success' (Jolly 1987, 1996). The ability to enter the military organisation later in life and with an established work record is limited to a few specialists such as medical or legal professionals and even transfer between the 3 services in the UK is difficult and the exception (Strachan 1997). Although recent downsizing of the British Armed forces has led to the shedding of thousands of personnel the career structure is still in place for those who stay. In the meantime, the working environment outside the military has changed significantly and this may be a key factor in the experiences of military personnel in re-entering the civilian workplace and developing a civilian career (Jolly 1996, De Bere 1999, Strachan 1997 and 2000, Bridle 2001). The change from an ordered hierarchical organisation with strict career protocols into a less defined and sometimes non-existent career structure is a significant challenge for military personnel entering the civilian workplace (Boyatzis 2007).

As career theory advanced so did the exploration of more specific areas of career development such as women's careers (Sterrett 1999, Marshall 2002, Greenhaus and Foley 2007, Ensher, Murphy and Sullivan 2002, Parker 2000), dual career couples, career transitions (Hall 2002, Feldman 2007) carrier barriers (Albert and Luzzo 1999 and London 1997) and career loss though redundancy or retirement (Beehr 1986, Vickers 2009). However, most of this took place against a background of the 'traditional' career model of well-defined career paths or ladders in large corporate organisations or professional careers (Sonnenfeld 1984, Sonnenfeld et al 1988, Lawrence and Talbot 2007, Baruch and Peiperl

2003). Of particular note was the concept of career anchors (Schein 1978) that may be particularly relevant for understanding the careers of military personnel whilst also recognising the unique social networks and career structures of military personnel (Jolly 1987 and 1996, Jessup 1996, Strachan 1997 and 2000). Schein's career anchors theory was developed in the 1960s and 70s and based upon a longitudinal study of Business School graduates. Schein suggests that a career anchor is a set of self-perceived talents, motives and values that guide stabilise and integrate a person's career over time. Career anchors are used as a way of organising experience, identifying self-contribution to a career, generating criteria for where an individual wants to work and setting the criteria for ambition and success. Schein identified 5 basic career anchors: autonomy, creativity, technical or functional competence, security and stability and finally levels of responsibility. Thus the career anchors can be viewed as those concerns or values that a person will not give up if a choice has to be made and indeed, career anchors may not be visible until choices are faced (Schein 1978). Identifying career anchors for former military personnel may be useful for examining their experiences. The importance of anchors has been explored in other areas such as the occupational identities (Fraher and Gabriel 2014, Brown 2002 and 2015), self-identity (Giddens 1991, McAdams 1993) and non-work identity (Hall 1986, Ramarajan and Reid 2013).

2.6   Contemporary Career Theory

In the late 20th century however, a paradigm shift could be said to have occurred in the western world. In the global economic downturn of the 1990's and the global financial banking crisis of the 2000's many previously certain careers simply vanished as large corporations downsized, de-layered or merged with their rivals. This also affected the UK military which saw a relatively rapid reduction in the size of the armed forces and step changes in the roles of the military (De Beere 1999), a process which continues apace with the British Army set to become the smallest in size since the Boer War by 2020 and the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force lacking key capabilities (Ledwidge 2013, Elliot 2015). Simultaneously new industries based upon the rapid growth of information technology saw the rise of large organisations where the traditional notions of a career were replaced by an emphasis on the individual and creative practices, a return perhaps to the approach of the early career theorists (Lawrence and Tolbert 2007, Bloch 2005, Chen 2003, Currie et al 2006, Dobrev 2012).

In this paradigm shift Adamson, Doherty and Viney (1998) identified 3 key changes to the career landscape: First, the employer-employee relationship was seen as short term instead of long term. Second, career progression was no longer seen as one of hierarchical

movement. Third, the concept of a logical ordered and sequential career may no longer be clear to either the individual or the organisation. From this emerged some new thinking about careers. Of particular note was the concept of the psychological contract. The idea of a psychological contract between the employee and the employer, or employing organisation, was published by Schein in the 1970s (Schein 1988, Schein 1978). Through a series of symbolic and actual events an implicit and unwritten contract is formed between employee and organisation which defines what inputs and commitment the employee will put into the organisation and the rewards and recognition they will receive in return. As this is an unwritten and often unspoken contract the term 'Psychological Contract' was coined as it exists largely in the minds of the employee (Academy of Management 2003, Johnson 2004). Some elements of the implied rewards and recognition include the promise of promotion or career advancement as well as salary and acceptable working conditions and a level of dignity in the workplace. When either side fails to meet these mutual expectations then serious consequences will follow (Schein 1988, Lucas 2015). However, the paradigm shift of the employment market described above resulted in a breaking of the perceived contract between employer and employee (Sturges et al 2003, Jepsen and Sheu 2003). This had been fundamentally altered by the new uncertain business environment as previous assumptions about organisations and their business models were no longer valid (Rousseau 1995; Slay and Taylor 2007).

Sonnenberg (1997) identified five factors that have led to career uncertainty. These are:

1. Changes in arrangements in the workplace generally involving losses of previously secure jobs and opportunities such as de-layering, downsizing, remote working, portfolio careers, temporary and zero hours contracts and technological advances leading to new skill requirements or automation.

2. A shift in the nature of expectation about future employability with a subsequent increase in disillusion and fear for the individual.

3. Greater isolation and less sense of collegiality at work. Thus the workplace, and work itself, becomes a less pleasant prospect.

4. The expectation for autonomy and self-motivation (self-career management) by certain individuals whilst other fear that they lack the capacity or appetite for such autonomy.

5. Pragmatism, expediency and cynicism replacing loyalty and commitment as the glue in employment contexts.

Thus there have been:

> *"Profound changes in arrangements, mutual commitments of employer and employee, and loosening of obligations such as are occurring in the workplace (described in the perhaps intentionally sanitised euphemisms such as downsizing and delayering), which result in the **loss** of many of the psychological benefits of work, are clearly having considerable emotional impact."*
>
> —SONNENBERG (1997), P468

Arnold and Jackson (1997) also argue that one of the main contemporary careers issues is the perceived lack of certainty:

> *"For many people, working lives are less predictable and more fragmented than-until recently-they might reasonably have expected. Some phenomena which contribute to this are labour flexibility, project work, speedy obsolescence of skills and a consequent need for lifelong learning, job insecurity (perceived and actual), and increased workloads and pressures for short-term performance."*
>
> —ARNOLD AND JACKSON (1997), P428

This lack of clarity or uncertainty, it is suggested is having a detrimental effect upon the working population and related aspects such as the perceived requirement for continual individual self-development, may be resulting in increased mental exhaustion in the working population and a consequent rapid rise in the frequency of depression (Brinkmann 2008). Other writers such as Sonnenberg (1997) also suggest that some of the mental effects of unemployment such as anxiety, depression and a lack of self-worth, are also being experienced by those working in the new conditions of employment (Arnold 1997, Duberley, Cohen and Mallon 2006).

Concern over this aspect of the new career environment and expectations was raised both those inside the UK military and those closely associated with it (Bondy 2004, Hargreaves 2014, McCartney 2010). Such was the depth and breadth of concern that the psychological contract between UK military personnel and the government and indeed the UK public were somehow being eroded that the government of the day commissioned an inquiry into this aspect of the military-civilian relationship (MOD 2011a). This resulted, eventually, in the development of the 'Military Covenant' which set out to formalise the responsibilities of the UK Government to its military personnel and counter what had been seen by many as the erosion, and in some cases the breaking, of the psychological contract between state and soldier (MOD 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2015, Strachan et al 2010, McCartney 2011, Lord Ashcroft 2014).

Also of note was the emergence of the 'boundryless' career in which the previous linear career progression was replaced by a complex series of employment experiences that may develop in unexpected ways (Lichtenstein and Mendenhall 2002, Gunz, Peiperl and Tzabbar 2007). However, the concept of a boundaryless career and the reality of career boundaries or barriers are exercising the minds of academics and human resource practitioners alike (Gunz, Evans and Jalland 2000). Whilst the career has never been seen as a purely linear process it was seen to take place within a framework of well-defined boundaries, Schein (1978) described this a 'climbing frame', where progression was not only upwards but could be sideways or even down if that enabled a future upward career move to be taken. Thus whilst careers might appear somewhat random to an outsider there was a definite career framework for those within the organisation.

If we accept the concept of the boundaryless career, then it can be argued that the career paradigm has shifted from certainty to complexity (Cadin, Bailly-Bender and Saint-Giniez 2000). Hall (2002) describes this as a shift from an organisational career to a protean career in which the individual is responsible for the direction of their career and consequently the psychological success of that career to them. This aspect of the change from a regular career in the military, in the school of Schein and Sonnenfeld, to Hall's protean career is an area of particular interest for this research. Of particular note may be how different personal attitudes or conceptualisation of careers may be a factor in the lived experience of the career transition (Alpass et al 1997, Gade 1991). However, this is set against the background of an increasingly complex work environment and may result in a complex process of social and psychological adaptation (Bridle 2001).

Sennett (2006) argued that the contemporary organisational environment (new capitalism) can be characterised by the deficit of loyalty, informal trust and adaptive information as compared to old capitalism, in which the career theories were generated. Thus the whole environment in which careers take place has undergone a shift change and our base line assumptions and understanding may no longer be valid. New organisational forms have developed, freedom and autonomy has increased at all levels and management has shifted from direct techniques to indirect techniques (Sandberg and Targama 2007). This may create particular issues for military personnel who have been indoctrinated and socialised into a system based upon loyalty, trust and direct management techniques when moving from the military world to the civilian world (De Bere 1999).

Lichtenstein and Mendenhall (2002) describe this new environment as a dynamic system in which non-linearity, interdependence and emergence form the core of understanding and explaining 21st century careers. There has been a call for a new interdisciplinary approach to

careers research (Arthur 2008) in which the various 'traditional' schools of career theories engage with scholars outside their own schools and the field of careers research, in examining the contemporary world of work and making careers research central to our understanding of the nature of human economic activity (Hassard et al 2012). How far these contemporary changes have permeated the modern British military and the experiences of moving from the military career structure to the contemporary organisational environment may be a major area of research. The approach taken during the research has to some extent answered that call by delving into the concept of the self and social identities (Usborne and Taylor 2010) and military identities (Woodward and Jenkins 2011) and psychological well-being.

Bowden (1997) develops this theme in the Career States Systems Model. Central to this is the premise that: "t*he influences of societal, occupational, organisational and personal environments create a highly complex backdrop to careers.*" Bowden 1997 p487. In this model personal, organisational, managerial and the macro environment are considered and careers are seen to exist in a number of states: launching, static, growing vertically, growing laterally and searching.
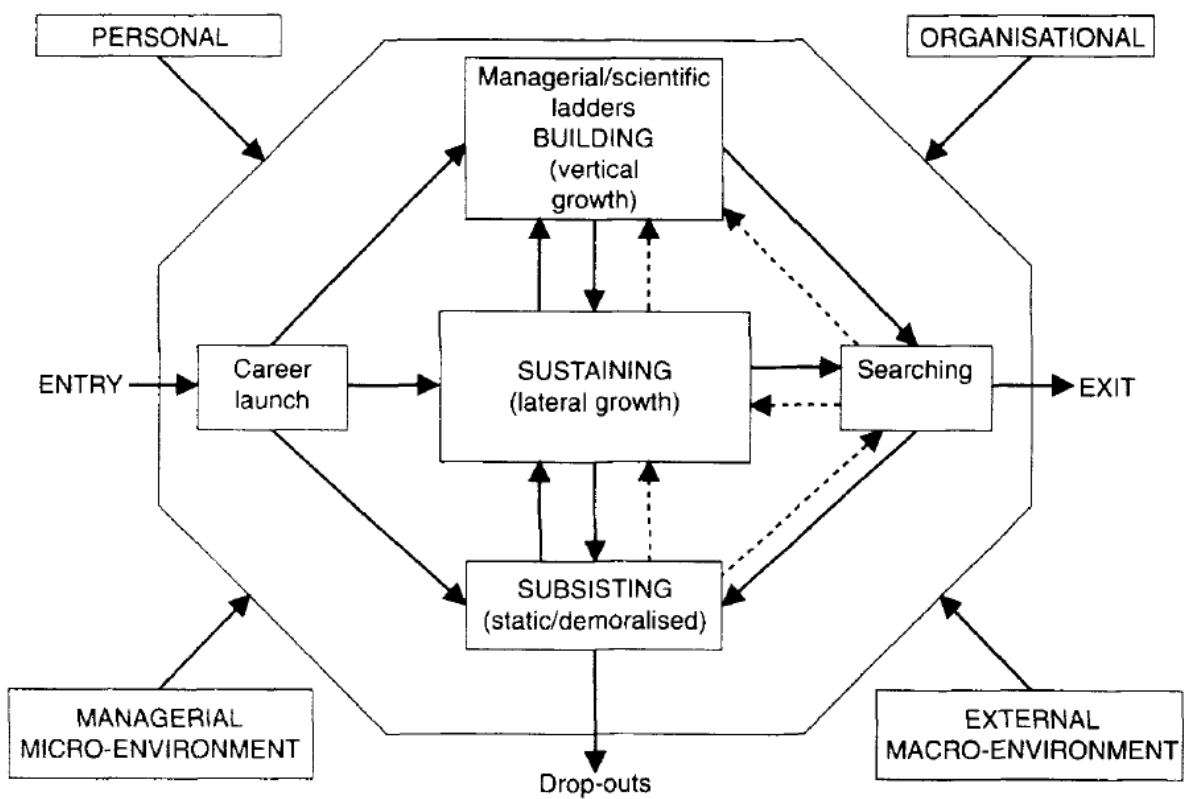

Figure 1.   Career States Systems Model (Bowden 1997)

This model highlights the processes of acquiring knowledge and skills in self-understanding and self-reliance in order to undertake the career transitions that individuals are likely to undergo. It suggests the need for continuing professional development as well developing new skills in order to exploit career opportunities or meet the changing requirements of the workplace.

However, this model can still be seen as a traditional linear career model that whilst acknowledging the context and environment of careers it is still rooted in the scientific approach. Writers such as Bloch (2005) argue that the career theories have been developed in an attempt to identify career structures and processes using a scientific approach:

> *"The predominant career theories, what might be called "classic career development," have been based primarily on the reductionist paradigms of science prevalent in all fields throughout the 19th and most of the 20th centuries. Reductionist approaches rely on an underlying understanding that finding and isolating all the parts will lead to the total or sum of knowledge about a phenomenon or organism, yielding reliable predictions of replicable interventions. This is the basis of what has been called the scientific method. The focus is on identifying structures and processes."*
>
> —BLOCH (2005), P195

However, Bloch and others such as Collin (2007) and Chen (2003) argue that this scientific approach is too limiting and fails to recognise the complexity of careers. Collin (2007) argues that careers cannot be simply isolated into component parts and then reconstructed without understanding the context in which the career takes place. The complexity of possible connections and inter-relationships between events and choices must be taken into account (Blunstein 1997). Thus career interpretation is necessarily open-ended, fluid and tentative. Therefore understanding is complex, messy and continuous. This calls into question the objectivity of previous career theories:

> *The concept of a career is necessarily ambiguous. Its definition depends on the perspective and purposes of the person looking at the career. This could be someone looking at their own career, or a friend, researcher, or someone else. There can, therefore, be no one conceptualisation of as career: it, too, will depend upon perspective and purpose."*
>
> —COLLIN (2007), P 442

Chen (2003) argues that understanding the context of careers is essential, as any experience only becomes explainable when the context in which it occurred is considered. If the context in which careers take place is altered then the interpretation of the career can alter significantly:

> *"Meaning making cannot occur if its context is not fully described, examined, and taken into account."*
>
> —CHEN (2003), P210

This school of thought suggests that careers are a continuous and dynamic interaction between the individual and the environment that they exist in. Thus economic, social, cultural and individual factors such as personality and life experience join together to create a career. Therefore a more holistic approach is required to try and make sense of a complex and inter-related phenomenon and an integration of career, economic and psychology theory is suggested (Cascio 2007, Murtagh, Lopes and Lyons 2011, Young 2009).

Bloch (2005) puts forward the concept that careers should be viewed as complex adaptive entities. These can be described as self-organizing structures that continuously adapt in order to remain in being. They have connections within a network system that allows for the open exchange of matter and energy between those connections. The borders of those connections are seen as borders between order (the existing form) and chaos (potential new forms) and it is on these borders that new forms can emerge. On these borders life is unpredictable and tiny differences in conditions and the environment can result in very different outcomes. Predicting these outcomes is difficult and complex:

> *"The moments on the border between chaos and complexity afford the greatest opportunity for growth (and conversely for failure)."*
>
> —BLOCH (2005), P198

According to Bloch (2005) complex adaptive entities have 11 characteristics:

1. Complex adaptive entities have the ability to maintain themselves, although their components and even shapes may change.

2. Entities are open and sustain themselves through the flow and interchange of components or energy.

3. Entities are parts of networks.

4. Entities are parts of other entities.

5. Entities are dynamic.

6. During phase transitions entities seek fitness peaks (the point that will yield the greatest chance of survival).

7. Phase transitions are best explained by nonlinear dynamics.

8. Small changes bring about large effects.

9. An entity's life and shape are limited by different types of attractors.

10. However, it may change its life and shape through the creation of new forms (emergence).

11. Complex adaptive entities only exist as part of nested inseparability or connectedness.

If we view careers as complex adaptive entities then traditional career theory with its linear progression, rational actor assumptions and reductionist philosophy is simply not able to understand and explain the nature of careers (Cannon 1997, Arnold 1997, Bowden 1997, Bloch 2005, Arthur, Peiperl and Anand 2002).

Similarly Chen (2003) rejects the notion of the traditional career theory as being adequate to explain the complexity of careers. The traditional career theories have been influenced by the positivistic paradigm as found in the modern scientific movement. In particular, vocational psychology has taken an objective approach to understand careers and individual career decisions. In this traditional approach, career related behaviour is viewed as a being a logical, rational choice, determined by an individual's, knowledge, skills and attitudes, the opportunities of the work environment and economic demands and desires. This behaviour can be predicted and indeed enhanced using scientific methods. The whole theory is underpinned by objective observation and measurement and rational reasoning and behaviours:

> *"The positivistic school of thinking tends to focus primarily on a linear and rational methodology in defining knowledge."*
>
> —CHEN (2003), P205

Chen advocates a social constructivist perspective to understand and explain vocational psychology in a different way. This perspective views a career as: "a socially constructed process that reflects both individual actions and the person's interactions with others" Chen (2003) p207. Central to this perspective is the proposition that an individual's sense of self plays a central part in their life and career decisions. Careers and their development are

viewed as a continuously evolving process that is both dynamic and reactionary to opportunities and threats as they arise. What constitutes a threat or an opportunity is seen subjectively by the individual concerned and understanding this subjectivity is key to understanding careers. Thus understanding the context of the career is also essential as subjective interpretation of career opportunities and decisions is inextricably bound up with the context in which they occur. Add to this the problem of language that is used to communicate both meanings and understandings and the complexity increases.

> *"Rather than objectively measuring and assessing a person's traits, career development is viewed as a complex, dynamic, and ever-evolving process. The person's subjective intention and perspective are the essential vehicles in this process. Thus, constructs such as narrative, action, joint action, context, and interpretation become the principal aspects in framing people's understanding of themselves and the world in which they exist."*
>
> —CHEN (2003), P205

Arnold and Jackson (1997) ague that new career theories are essentially subjective career theories with the recognition that it is now the individual who defines their career rather than a scientific based, reductionist career model. In other words career success is defined by the individual and not by a socially agreed or approving norm. Thus personal experience, aspirations, histories, attitudes and beliefs will be used to define what career success means to them:

> *"The new career recognizes both the changed objective realities in which careers are being developed and also the universality of people's intense involvement with the subjective aspects of their career."*
>
> —ARNOLD AND JACKSON (1997), P428

However, another school of thought suggests that the paradigm shift in organisational structures and therefore careers may be overstated (Alvesson and Thompson 2005). Whilst there has no doubt been a change in the *form* of organisations the change to *function* may not be so readily identified. Thus whilst organisations may claim to be 'flatter', 'leaner', or 'matrix managed' there still exists a hierarchy and bureaucracy in most organisations and to suggest that we have now entered a world of 'post-bureaucratic' organisational structure may be premature (Clegg and Courpasson 2004).

The experience of the British military would actually tend to support Alvesson and Thompson's (2005) claims. Whilst the context in which the military operate has changed, the structure and organisation has not undergone the profound changes that Lichtenstein and Mendenhall claim has happened to the rest of society. A soldier, sailor or airman who served in the Second World War would notice more similarities in the organisation and structure of

the 21st Century Armed Forces than differences. So is this just a question of 'the Emperor's new clothes"? Indeed it can be argued that there is a tendency to seize upon new forms of theory without the longitudinal studies necessary to establish a true trend rather than a fad (Collins 2006).

However, these things considered, Sennett (1998) argued that the new organisational paradigm has a negative effect upon the individual that has eroded the character, or long term emotional experience of the individuals within the organisations. Whilst this may not be true of the present day military organisation, if it is true of the civilian organisations that military personnel will transition to, then this may be of particular relevance to their experiences of their transition. If the organisational paradigms of the various branches of the military are significantly different from those encountered on the transition journey then this suggests that adapting and adjusting may be a significant challenge, but the key question is why that is the case.

2.7   Careers and the Military Context

Within the career literature there is relatively little that is specifically and directly relevant to former military personnel. Much of the research that has been completed has focussed on the more problematic areas of former military personnel such as mental health issues (Iversen et al 2005, McManners 1993, Gabriel and Neal 2002, Jones et al 2007, Fossey 2010). Iverson focussed on the experiences of those personnel who had served in the Gulf War of 1990-91 and Bosnia between 1992 and 1997 and a control group who had served in the military but not been deployed on operational service. It was consequently suggested that 44% of respondents had suffered from some form of psychiatric disorder, a proportion far higher than would be expected in the general population. Homelessness, addiction and substance abuse among former military personnel (Milroy 2001) have also been the subject of studies. Milroy researched the incidences of homelessness amongst service leavers in London and has subsequently set up a charity dedicated to their care. Again this focus on the 'hard' end of the experiences of military personnel transitioning back to civilian life, whilst valid and laudable, can been seen to skew the views and perceptions held by the rest of the population and indeed may contribute negatively to the issue. Much of the research relies heavily on data from the United States (Janowitz 1964, Milroy 2001; Gade 1991; Alpass et al 1997, Sherman 2010) where studies into the experiences of military personnel have been heavily biased towards those suffering from some form of post-traumatic stress (McManners 1993, Mokas and Wood 1988, Gabriel and Neal 2002, Doyle and Peterson 2005). This view of the former serviceman or woman has been popularised and dramatised by the entertainment industry focussing heavily in the 1980s and 90s on the experiences of the

Vietnam War veterans. Again this may have led to stereotyping of former military personnel on both sides of the Atlantic (McManners 1993) and ignores the fact that the range of situations that former military personnel undergo during the transition to civilian work is varied; from those returning from traumatic operational experiences, possibly wounded or disabled, to those retiring after a long uneventful career with readily marketable skills (Hatch et al 2013, Hargreaves 2014, House of Commons 2008). Thus much of the limited amount of literature available is specific in its nature and thus this suggests that a research gap exists.

Further examination of the available literature has revealed several initially similar approaches to address the research gap as identified by the researcher. However, closer examination of this existing research suggests that, in fact, it tends to be limited in its scope and quite specific in its approach. One such study focussed on the issue of mental adaptability (Bridle 2001). Whilst this has provided a useful insight into one aspect of the transition process its scope was limited specifically to former Army personnel and the psychological model of 'Readiness to Change Self' and its applicability to this particular group. Other studies have likewise been service specific and limited to a small number (20) of military families (De Bere 1999) or non-commissioned ranks who have completed a pension earning 22 years of service (McDermott 2007). All these studies have provided an insight into certain aspects of the transition journey. They add value because they illuminate different aspects of the transition process, for specific groups at a certain point in time. Whilst they have undoubtedly contributed to the body of knowledge on this subject, the limitations outlined above suggest that there is a still a major research gap in this area.

The research subject has also become more topical in the past 5 years with government and public interest in former military personnel, or veterans, increasing, probably as a result of the recent conflict in Iraq and the ingoing military operations in Afghanistan (Dandeker et al, 2003). The establishment of Armed Forces Day in June of each year to celebrate the unique contribution of the Armed Forces to society, the issue of a Veterans Badge by the UK government for former members of the military and the appointment of Veterans' Champions in Local Governments all reflect the changing attitudes of the public towards the military and its place within society (McCartney 2010). However, many of these initiatives as described previously focus on the difficult aspects of the transition process and there is relatively little research on those who transition without coming to the notice of these various organisations. Notwithstanding that the weight of research tends to be focussed upon the more extreme transitions, and the issues surrounding them, there does appear to be willingness to more fully understand the experiences of military personnel re-entering the world of work. However, it still tends to highlight areas where there are problems, rather than where there

are positive experiences (Citizens Advice Scotland 2012). Whilst it is difficult to find empirical evidence, the overall limited research available suggests that most people make a successful transition from the military to the civilian workplace.

> *"Two key findings emerge from the above results. The first is consistent with the findings of a majority of the international literature on veterans: most people do well when they leave the armed forces. The vast majority of our cohort who left between phases 1 and 3 were in full time employment (87.5%). It was a minority who fared badly. Although we did not look specifically at combat experiences, using Gulf service as a proxy measure there was also no robust evidence that deployment to conflict per se disadvantaged people."*
>
> —IVERSEN ET AL (2005B), P181

> *"Alternatively, we wondered if those who had served for longer in the military would find it difficult to cope on separation, something anecdotally called the 'The Military Retirement Syndrome'. Again we found no evidence for this frequently advanced hypothesis. Instead, we found that symptomatic mental health remains fairly static after leaving. Those who are well, remain well, those who are symptomatic, remain symptomatic."*
>
> —IVERSEN ET AL (2005B), P183

However, we do not understand the journey they have made and the experiences they have undergone during this process (Iverson *et al* 2005). If we can understand these journeys more then perhaps we can prepare people more for the experience. Knowing what to expect can make a potentially traumatic journey less traumatic and possibly more beneficial to the individual and the organisations that they engage in.

2.8 Career Transition and Change

The development of the research for this thesis led the author to broaden the scope of the literature as the narratives that were being collected suggested that there was more than a career change involved in the transition to civilian life. The experiences of British service men and women transitioning to civilian life after the end of the Second World War were documented by Allport (2009) in his work 'Demobbed' and whilst this is a historical record, set in a particular context of the aftermath of a World War, it did highlight the disparity of what the service men and women were expecting and what actually happened. This mismatch of expectation and reality was a common theme during the research of this thesis and highlighted the differing environment that military personnel had inhabited perhaps compared to their new circumstances.

Every organisation can be said to exist in a cultural web (Johnson and Scholes 1993) in which the symbols, stories, rituals and routines, power structures, organisational structures and control systems of the organisation determine the culture of the organisation, or in other words 'the way we do things around here'. Thus socialisation into an organisation is commonplace. Usually socialisation includes introduction and orientation of new employees to the organization, and often they are assigned mentors or 'buddies' to help guide them through the organization. These structured, purposeful experiences communicate the norms and values of the organization to the new employees. If these experiences are positive, the new employee develops a self-image or identity consistent with those of other members and the organisation itself (Griffith 2009). In the military context Hale (2008), suggests that an individual entering the military goes through a process of relocating themselves from a civilian socio-cultural world into a military socio-cultural world and that the individual is continuously engaged in an active process of conferring a personal meaning to the locations, culture and symbols that they now encounter. Hale further suggests that entry to the military is generally found to be a 'shocking' experience with both mental and physical demands placed upon individuals that they had never experienced before with the imposition of discipline being a significant aspect of this process. The transition that takes place when individuals become militarised is referred to as a 'rupture '. The nature and duration of this rupture is not uniform. It depends upon age, background, gender and the part of the Armed Forces that the individual enters (Thornborrow and Brown 2009, Higate 2001 and 2003, Bergman et al 2014, Hockey 2003, Hopton 2003).

The military cultural web is perhaps more overt and obvious than many organisations (Shamir *et al* 1998). During a service career individuals are subject to a standardised selection process that reinforces the values, culture and expectations of the organisation. Formal entry into the organisation is almost universally celebrated in the form of a public 'passing out' parade (Strachan 1997, Keegan 1976, Dixon 1976). Throughout the career of the individual, formal rituals and symbols are used to denote significant milestones or events such as promotions and significant anniversaries.

However, the rituals for leaving the services are less formal and usually ad hoc, even when very senior officers of the organisation retire (Schwarzkopf 1992, Jackson 2007, Smith and Stewart 2011, Atherton 2009, Begman et al 2014):

> *"Military culture comprises strongly structured symbolic systems. Its systems of rules, specific ritual objects and hierarchical social structures confer shared meanings to actions, changes and transitions. Military culture is one of the few traditional social structures which provide people with a time perspective and a consistent system of values, as well as social regulations that are linked to uncertainty and loss".*
>
> —HALE (2009), P 308

Whilst they may appear archaic to an outsider the rituals of the military can probably be found in a similar form in most organisations (Trice and Beyer 1984). Indeed Petterson (2008) argues that many activities that are claimed to be strategic processes, such as planning and budgeting, are in fact rituals and ceremonies performed in a routine manner that have in some cases become almost meaningless. However, it can be argued that rituals in organisation do provide meaning, exemplify and reinforce the social order, communicate important values, enhance group solidarity and manage anxiety (Smith and Stewart 2011, Dixon 1976). The former military person is therefore removed from culture manifested in a set of overt rituals and placed into a new organisation where the culture may be very different and the overt rituals or clues missing, leading to a sense of disorientation and possible mourning for the former certainties that they have left behind (Howard League 2011a, Allport 2009, Thornborrow and Brown 2009, Bergman et al 2014).

The idea that the military was somehow 'different' from the civilian world was also a recurring theme in the research process. The consequence of military service is possibly death (Marshall 1947, Freedman 1994) and the demands on the services on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have been well documented (Ledwidge 2012 and 2013, Strachan 2013, Elliot 2015) and it is therefore not surprising that the military is viewed as different. As well as having its own rituals symbols and unique characteristics, the military can also be viewed as being an ideological community (Janowitz 1964, Jessup 1996, Parker 2000, Parker and Arthur 2000). Parker argues that ideological communities have strong shared values of service, strong identification with their work and the purpose of their work. Thus service in the military may be viewed as a calling or vocation (Hall and Chandler 2005). Changing from a 'vocation' to a 'job' and leaving the ideological community of the military environment is likely to be a significant change with consequent results for those involved and leaving such a calling for something that might be viewed as somehow less than a vocation could lead

individuals to struggle with identity, adaptability and self-confidence (Fraher and Gabriel 2014). Service in the military can be seen as unique:

> *"Military culture can be described as a unique way of life and notably distinct from civilian institutions and organisations"*
>
> —HALE (2008), P306

Mokos and Wood (1988) argue that the military is not just an organisation, but is in fact an institution. They argue that an institution is differentiated from an organisation by three basic conditions. First, that leadership in an institution must demonstrate that they are wholly involved in the institution and are prepared to put the goals of the institution before their own careers. Only by doing so will the institution's followers accept the difficulties and hardships that their function within the institution inflicts upon them. Second, there must be a clear and articulated vision of institution's core function and where all the sub-components of the institution fit within it and contribute to the ultimate goals of that institution. Finally, members of an institution are driven more by values rather than by reward. Downes (1988) echoes these arguments specifically for the British military in that four elements distinguish a military institution from a civilian organisation. First, the military person is committed to the military and subject to a code of discipline that far exceeds a civilian organisation. Second, military personnel are liable to be exposed to extreme forms of danger that are generally far greater than any civilian occupation. Third, military personnel, under normal peace time conditions, are routinely required to endure harsh living and discomfort and finally military personnel are exposed to constant upheaval and uncertainty as part of their normal routine. If we accept these views then joining the military requires a unique transformation process that writers such as Bergman et al (2014) Thornborrow and Brown (2009) and Higate (2001) argue that in doing so individuals can become 'institutionalised', whilst Jackson et al (2012) argue that recruits undergo significant changes to their personalities during the transition from civilians to the military. Whilst these changes are seen as being largely beneficial to the military and to the individual (Griffith 2009, Hale 2008, Thornborrow and Brown 2009, Bergman et al 2014) there may be some drawbacks for the individual (Jackson et al 2012).

Bondy (2004) hypothesizes that the purpose of military socialization is to create high levels of trust and cohesion amongst the members of the military, essential for them to be able to carry out their roles in extreme circumstances.

Palmer (2012) however, argues that the military socialization can lead to the development of obsessional behaviours:

> *"The Armed Forces make even the most mundane of jobs obsessional. Through repetitive over-learnt behaviours (drills) they ensure that these behaviours become reflex in situations of danger. Drills assuage anxiety through action, action that everyone knows – an example of where obsessionality, of sticking to the rules, saves lives."*
>
> —PALMER (2012), P113

However, leaving behind an organisation based upon such an obsessional based behaviours may be problematic for some military personnel when they leave behind the familiarity of rituals and routines that they have been bound up in for often significant periods of time (Atherton 2009, Howard League 2011a, 2011b, Regan de Bere 2003). The socialisation resulting from military service that promotes self-reliance and courage in the face of adversity, qualities that may not be beneficial when help is needed:

> *"The most common reason for veterans not seeking help was a sense of resilience and stoicism: 'it's a problem I should be able to deal with myself'. The nature of military culture, with its emphasis on resilience, courage and masculine stereotypes almost certainly amplifies this reticence."*
>
> —IVERSEN ET AL (2005A), P484

Leaving the known and comfortable military environment has been described as a 'culture shock' (Bergman et al 2014). Taking Oberg's classic (1960) paper where culture shock was defined as:

> *"Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. The signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life"*
>
> —OBERG (1960), P.177

Whilst Oberg was describing culture shock as a phenomenon that affected visitors to overseas countries with different cultures, in particular missionaries, the concept has been developed by writers such as Adler (1975) and Pederson (1995). Bergman et al (2014) have utilised the Pederson's 5 stage model of culture shock: Honeymoon, Disintegration, Reintegration, Autonomy and Reciprocal Interdependence in explaining the process that former military personnel experience when re-entering the civilian world. They call this 're-entry shock' or 'reverse culture shock' and advocate the adoption of a 'culture-shock model' to assist with that transition process. Xia (2009) proposes a similar culture shock model and suggests that encountering a new culture creates psychological stress. Understanding and preparing for culture shock may reduce the levels of psychological stress encountered during

the process. Xia also postulates that during the experience high levels of self-confidence and optimism, and an ability to accept the new culture and high levels of social support can also reduce levels of psychological stress.

This body of literature would therefore suggest that leaving the military is as much a psychological experience as a physical one. The former military person is leaving behind not just an organisation, but an institution, and in doing so is leaving behind a military culture and with it all the signs, symbols and cues that go with it. Indeed they are leaving behind an institution that sets them apart from their civilian counterparts and they are now entering a civilian organisation with its different standards, values and expectations, whilst at the same time retaining the personality changes that they underwent in their transition into the military.

Joining the military is marked by significant rites of passage. These rites of passage have been described, and sometimes parodied, in numerous examples of popular, fact-based fiction in films and plays such as Carry on Sergeant, The Way Ahead, Full Metal Jacket, Band of Brothers, Chips with Everything, to name but a few and countless numbers of memoires, novels and biographies. As has been shown, in academic circles the rites of passage on joining the military have been studied extensively and the physical, psychological and social changes that occur during the transition from civilian to military are well documented (Thornborrow and Brown 2009, Higate 2001, Bergman et al 2014, Strachan 1997, Keegan 1976, Dixon 1976, Bondy 2004, Palmer 2012). However, the rites of passage that occur in the transition from military to civilian are less well known. The lack of research in this area makes it difficult to accurately assess the extent and scale of the processes that individuals go through when leaving the military. However, it appears from the limited amount of research available that the rites of passage on leaving the military are usually ad hoc and in many ways insignificant, even when very senior officers of the organisation retire (Schwarzkopf 1992, Jackson 2007).

The research cohort did not generally comment upon the nature of their leaving but one research subject did comment:

> *"It was sad, there's no fanfare at the gates when you leave they just lift the barrier and say, "Oh see you later" that sort of thing."*
>
> —SUBJECT C

Similarly a senior General in the US Army, Norman H Schwarzkopf recalled the reaction of his driver on his (Schwarzkopf's) departure after 35 years of distinguished service:

> *"Sir, it's not right. Thirty-five years in the military and you just sign a piece of paper and it's over? Sir, it's not right. We ought to **do** something."*
>
> —SCHWARZKOPF (1992), P.495

The lack of a rite of passage when leaving the military is a huge contrast to the rites of passage when joining the military. Given the physical, psychological and social changes that occur when joining the military it could be assumed that there are similar physical, psychological and social changes on leaving the military. As the rite of passage of joining the military is considered to be so significant by the military organisations, the individuals within those organisations and wider society, it is somewhat paradoxical that the rites of passage when leaving should not attract the same significance. Indeed leaving the military can be compared to leaving similar bounded communities such as prison, hospital, school, university (Herman and Yarwood, 2014). It is interesting to note that there are well defined and practised rituals for leaving school and university but not so for leaving prisons or hospitals. It can be argued that leaving the military is a form of reverse culture shock (Bergman et al 2014, Xia 2009, Yue and Le 2012) and a formal rite of passage might mark the beginning or indeed the end of that process. Such rites of passage on joining the military may be linked to the understanding of the military and former military personnel, by the rest of the population (Hines et al 2014) and similarly the lack of formalised rites of passage on leaving the military may also play into this understanding and may also impact upon the perception of any legacy of military service as being either a positive or negative experience (Higate 2001). This in turn may be liked to attempts by former military personnel to create a new identity by re-writing their life narrative to make sense of their changed situation (Walker 2012) and in particular how and what being a former military person or veteran actually means (Burdett et al, 2012).

2.9   Self-Identity

Thus far the literature would seem to support Bloch's and Chen's theories that careers are complex adaptive entities and the unique nature of military service is likely to be a key factor in the outcomes of career transition for former military personnel. With this concept in mind as the research progressed a theme that emerged that was worthy of further examination was that of the attitude of mind of the subjects and how it was related to their experiences of the transition. As previously mentioned the study by Bridle that focussed on the issue of

mental adaptability did examine some of these aspects of the transition from military to civilian, however it was specific to a particular 'readiness to change' model (Bridle 2001).

From the literature reviewed thus far a picture begins to crystallise in that whilst no two situations were exactly the same, there were strong common themes in the experience of transition, such as a dislocation of familiar norms, values, routines, rituals and symbols and need to adapt to new norms, values, routines and symbols. Whilst it was difficult, if not impossible, to isolate all the intervening variables that might affect one person's experience vis-à-vis another it did appear that an attitude of mind or sense of self might be a key determinant of the positive or negative (as described by the subject themselves) aspect of the transition. Therefore an examination and exploration of the underpinning theory of the perceptions of self was undertaken.

"Who am I?" has been a question that has been asked since man first became self-aware. How we see ourselves, how we define ourselves and how we feel about ourselves are fundamental to our self-worth (Sennett 2006). The ancient Greek and Roman philosophers suggested that there was a distinction between the mind and the body and that the health or otherwise of these two distinct elements were interlinked: '*Men Sana in Corpre Sano*' (A Sound Mind in a Sound Body). However, in the case of choice, freewill, control over emotions and attitudes it was suggested that this did not belong to the individual but to the 'will of the gods'. It was later in western philosophy that Descartes proposed that man did indeed have a mind and a body under his own control. However, whilst the body, or external element of man, was public and subject to the laws of the physical world, the internal element of man, the mind, was private and unique to the individual. Therefore an individual can only take direct cognisance of the world through the states and processes of their own mind. An individual therefore lives through two 'histories' one that takes place in the public, physical world of the body and the other that takes place through the private, mental world of the mind (Collinson 2003). Using this Descartian approach to understanding how a person's mind and body influence one another is a notoriously complex theoretical process (Ryle 1949). However it sets the basis for the philosophical understanding that mankind has a mental ability that he or she can control that is interconnected with but distinct from the physical body. At this point the research took a diversion into the world of Freud and Jung, however, this direction of travel, whilst interesting, did not prove fruitful in attempting to understand the experiences of career transition from military to civilian and is therefore not discussed in detail.

On resetting the research journey following this diversion the theory of metacompetencies was explored. The idea of a metacompetency was proposed by Briscoe and Hall (1999). A

metacompetency is a capacity that enables an individual to acquire more specific skills. The two metacompetencies that are key enablers with regard to career transitions are self-awareness and adaptability. Self-awareness is the ability to gather and assimilate appropriate feedback to form accurate self-perceptions. This links into the Freudian and Jungian theories where self-awareness is seen as key to achieving a balanced psychological state. In Freudian terms this would be identifying the Ego and the Id and in Jungian terms this would be identifying and balancing the relevant archetypes, in particular the shadow side of the psyche (Brown, McDonald and Smith 2013). From this feedback and current self-perception the individuals can then change their self-concept as necessary (Briscoe and Hall 1999).

Adaptability on the other hand is the ability to change; that is, having both the motivation to change and the competencies necessary to implement that change (Morrison and Hall 2002). These two metacompetencies enable an individual to recognise when change is required and carry out that change as necessary. Thus it can be argued that the ability to successfully change from one career to another is as much about mental abilities and attitudes as it is about experience, skills and competencies (Gade 1991, Hall and Chandler 2005, Murtagh, Lopes and Lyons 2007, 2011).

In exploring these themes further, the idea that mental attitudes played a key role in understanding the transition experience came to prominence. Of particular note was how individuals perceived themselves and their situation or experiences. It has been argued that our identities are formed, not only by our actions, but also by our relationships and our sense of place (Gecas and Schwalbe 1983, Siri and Groddeck 2012, Ramarajan and Reid 2013, Herman and Yarwood 2014). It is also argued that our identities are not fixed in time and indeed they change overtime and our previous experiences, as well as our aspirations for the future, all contribute to the sense of who we are (Taylor 1989). So a body of thought exists that suggests our self-identity is based upon our interpretation of who we are.

Advancing this theory, Brinkman (2008) suggests that we have four levels of self-interpretation.

1. Societal and explicit self-interpretation: Societal self-descriptions (shared self-understandings expressed in laws, media etc).

2. Societal and implicit self-interpretation: social institutions and practices (the tacit understandings embedded in educational, work and family practices for example).

3. Individual and explicit self-interpretation: Reflective self-image (persons' self-concepts).

4. Individual and implicit self-interpretations: Pre-reflective sense of self (bodily habits, feelings, *habitus*).

For military personnel self-interpretation is probably greatly influenced by being in the military. The formation of a military, as opposed to a civilian identify has been explored by numerous writers (Hale 2008, Griffith 2009, McCartney 2011, Smith and Stewart 2011, Woodward and Jenkins 2011, Palmer 2012). Military culture can be described as a unique way of life and notably distinct from civilian institutions and organizations. It consists of strongly structured symbolic systems with rules, rituals and hierarchical social structures. It is one of the few social structures that provide a time perspective, consistent system of values and social regulations (Hale 2008). Woodward and Jenkins (2011) highlight 3 common themes through which individuals conceptualise their military identity. The first is through professional expertise and skills that were clearly identifiable as military tasks. These might be obvious, such as marksmanship or patrolling skills; less evident such as operating complex military equipment, or somewhat obscure or trivial such as rolling camouflage netting in a particular way to prevent it tearing. The second is strong emotional bonds between individuals and across groups flowing from the idea that military life is a collective endeavour that is founded on teamwork. The third theme was the idea of individual participation in a military event. These could be dramatic, such as operations in war or more benign such as ceremonial events or visits to other countries. The military identity is therefore both a personal identity and a group identity. In addition individuals may also have other identities such as husband/wife, father/mother, profession (engineer for example). Changes to these identities, through the transition to the civilian world, may have an effect upon that transition, the other identities and the well-being of the individual (Woodward and Jenkins, 2011).

The link between having a clear identity, or sense of self, and psychological well-being has been suggested (Erikson 1968, Gao and Riley 2010). Research by Campbell (1990) and

Stinson, Wood and Doxey (2008) suggest that individuals with high self-esteem have clearer or stronger concepts of the self than individuals with low self-esteem. High self-esteem may well be the result of having strong multiple identities whereby changes to one do not materially affect the other identities. Individuals whose sense of self is rooted in a single identity, such as the military, may well have high self-esteem but if this identity is challenged or damaged during transition it may result in low self-esteem. It can be argued that individuals with high self-esteem and well-being are more able to cope with change such as the career transition experienced by military personnel returning to civilian life (Gecas and Schwalbe 1983, Griffith 2009, Loretto, Platt and Popham 2010, Griffin and Hesketh 2003).

Further development of this concept also suggests that personal identity is important to well-being, but so is a collective or cultural identity (Taylor, C. 1989, Taylor, D. M. 2002). Collective identity is defined as that part of an individual's self-concept or identity that is derived from their membership of a social group or groups (Usborne and Taylor 2010, Griffith 2009, Gecas and Schwalbe 1983). This might be based upon gender, cultural, occupational groups or other shared experiences. Thus a clear collective identity can be constructed based upon an understanding and acceptance of the group's values, norms and characteristics (Usborne and Taylor 2010). Individuals may have several collective identities and they may belong to numerous groups simultaneously. However, this contributes to an overall collective identity rather than several discrete but simultaneous collective identities and individuals may have multiple social identifies that become integrated into an individual's personal identity over time (McAdams 1993, Griffith 2009). These multiple social identifies are likely to be self-reinforcing rather than mutually exclusive (Amiot et al 2007). However, there are exceptions. For example being a pacifist and serving in the military might seem to be mutually exclusive, but being a pacifist and serving as a medical orderly in the military is not. Thus collective identities can be complex and not necessarily obvious to the outside observer. It has been suggested that a clear cultural or collective identity can also act as a psychological basis or contributor towards the construction of a clear personal identity (Hammack 2008). However, understanding the processes of how multiple social identities develop and become part of individuals' self-concepts over time is complex (Amiot et al 2007). In particular isolating and separating identities and giving weight to those differing identities is problematic.

The link between a strong or clear collective identity, personal identity and self-esteem and well-being is suggested by Usborne and Taylor (2010) and is shown in diagrammatic form below.
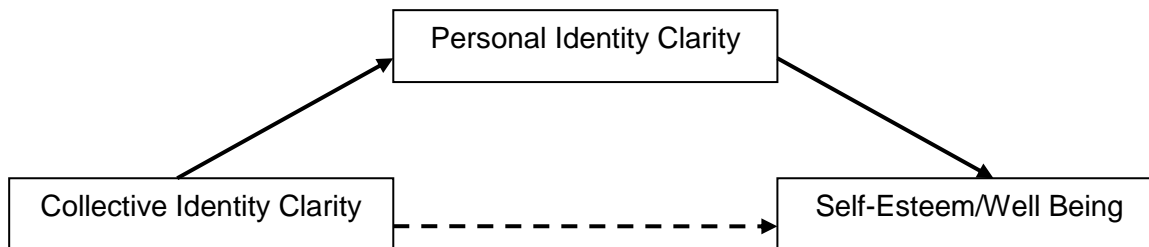
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                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │ Personal Identity Clarity │
                    └──────────────────────────┘
                 ↗                              ↘
┌──────────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────────┐
│ Collective Identity Clarity │ - - - ►│  Self-Esteem/Well Being  │
└──────────────────────────┘          └──────────────────────────┘
```

Figure 2.   Identity Triangle after Usborne and Taylor (2010)

If the military identity, both personal and collective, is eroded or indeed lost completely during the transition process this may impact upon the individual and their subsequent 'success' of transition and renegotiating an identity, in particular a group identity is an important process after a major change in identity (Amiot et al 2007).

Brinkmann (2008) argues that practical experience, tacit understanding and implicit situational knowledge is only possible with an understanding of the history of how a group was formed and how it relates to other groups (Taylor 2004 p 25 in Brinkmann 2008 p405). Furthermore groups and social practices are interconnected and can only be understood in their relations to other groups and social practices within a common understanding, cultural norms and social practices (Brinkmann 2008). Thus changing from an established group and its norms to a group where the tacit understanding and implicit situational knowledge is absent has the potential to create disruption and dislocation to the individual. However, a counter-argument is that changing from one established group to another gives an opportunity for growth, new challenges and new prospects. Thus change can be very much a positive experience as a negative one. Whilst the initial transition may be unsettling or uncomfortable the challenge of adapting to a new environment, learning the new norms and histories may actually be a stimulus to personal growth and satisfaction (Stinson, Wood and Doxey 2008). A general critique of the identity theories is that they tend to focus on the negative whilst perhaps not exploring the positive opportunities that transition might bring.

In this vein Jenkins (2008) argues that the essence of identity is what is same and what is different. Identity is not fixed and can change over time and indeed history is not fixed and can change over time. For example we all interpret events in our own way. Popularised in the phrase 're-writing history' narrative tends to be constructed that emphasises the positive

whilst ignoring or omitting the negative. Obituaries are an example of how we, or our loved ones, can write our own history: the stories that we tell about our past determine our future and stories change over time and with each telling. Our recollection of facts is imperfect, we embellish stories and we simply forget.

> *"Individuals are unique and variable, but selfhood is thoroughly socially constructed: in the ongoing interaction during which individuals define and redefine themselves and others, throughout their lives."*
>
> —JENKINS (2008), P40

Jenkins argues that the world is constructed as 3 different orders:

1. Individual order – embodied individuals.

2. The interaction order – relationships between individuals.

3. Institutional order – pattern and organisations, the established way of doing things.

These orders are interrelated; they do not operate in isolation and are mutually dependent. For example the individual order depends upon the interaction order and the institutional order: "It is not enough simply to assert an identity; that assertion must also be validated, or not, by those with whom we have dealings. *Identity is never unilateral.*" (Jenkins 2008 p42). The institutional order is based upon established processes, recognised by others. In other words 'the way things are done around here'. Institutional identities are distinctive as a result of the combination of the individual and the collective:

> *"Thus individual and collective identities are systematically produced, reproduced and implicated in each other."*
>
> —JENKINS (2008), P45

Changing orders, and therefore identities can be seen as a natural human progression. It can be argued that individuals have the capacity to reflect upon their lives and see themselves as separate from the natural and social world and have some control over their lives rather than merely reacting to events. This sense of separation enables an awareness of the past processes and future possibilities and the potential to re-construct and change an individual's world and exercise control over outcomes (Usborne and Taylor 2010). It also enables individuals not only to 'see' themselves, but also compare and contrast themselves with others (Collinson 2003). Whilst change can be a positive experience it can also compound insecurity and anxiety. Individuals may hold multiple identities but in changing one of those identities there is likely to be a change, in some form, of the other identities.

The situation is best summed up by Lawler (2008) who asserts that identities are never unified and in late modern times, they have become increasingly fragmented and multiple; and constructed across different positions. They are often amended and adjusted through the process of 'historicization' and are constantly being changed and transformed.

In reviewing the literature on career theory and sense of self and identity it became apparent that each was very tied in with perspective. The perspective of the individual, how they saw themselves, and the perspective of the rest of society, how others saw them, or indeed how they perceived others saw them. A golden thread that ran through all of this was the notion of the telling and re-telling of a story; a story of careers and a story of the self, both of which are complex and continually changing. In parallel with this work the actual conduct of the research and the methodology used (Chapter 3) led to the use of storytelling and narrative as a both a research technique and an analytical tool.

2.10   Narrative, Careers and Self

In conducting the research using story-telling analysis a broad definition of what constituted a story was initially utilised, and the terms 'story' and 'narrative', as used in the context of this thesis, are therefore interchangeable. (Brown, Gabriel and Gherardi 2009). Similarly initially there was no distinction made between individual narrative and organisational narrative as some of the research subjects effortlessly slipped between telling their story and repeating and replaying some of the organisational narratives that had formed part of their service lives (Polkinghorne 1991). The individual and the organisation became, at times, indistinguishable and the myths, symbols and rituals of the organisations they had served in became as much the story of the individual as the story of the organisation (Woodward and Jenkins 2011). Cognisant that some scholars might argue that there is a subtle difference between stories and narratives and individual and organisational narrative the literature proved to be somewhat in agreement on this issue. Many writers argued that the complexity of the individual and the environment was such, that it is impossible to extract one from the other as they are inextricably intertwined and dependent upon each other (Giddens 1991, McAdams 1993, Brown et al 2009, Gabriel et al 2010, Fraher and Gabriel 2014, Vough et al 2015).

This led the researcher to conclude that in narrowly defining the terms it immediately meant that some things were included, but at the same time, some things were excluded, for if something is inside a definition then, 'by definition', some things must be outside. Whilst categorisation would put order, and in some ways, simplicity into the research, so much would have been lost in the process and a rich, complex and indeed somewhat chaotic bundle of material with all its interconnections and associations offered much more scope for

meaningful analysis rather than dry sterile, neatly ordered data sets. Thus the researcher adopted the notion of a 'broad church' of storytelling/narrative analysis and opted to use the broadest definition of story-telling as possible to include all aspects of the method. This chimes with the thoughts of Brown, Gabriel and Gherardi:

> *"There are, in particular, no hard and fast rules for distinguishing between stories and narratives or storytelling and narrativization. Nor is there consensus on how stories and narratives may be distinguished from definitions, proverbs, myths, chronologies and other forms of oral and written texts."*
>
> —BROWN, GABRIEL AND GHERARDI (2009), P.324

As each of the research subjects relayed a particular story about their transition from the military to the civilian world, in doing so they created, to them, a meaningful account of their experiences, an essential part of the human condition. Polkinghorne (1991) suggests that humans do not encounter the world as a confused and unstructured environment but rather as a structured meaningful place as a result of the innate narrative process. In our everyday existence, we receive cues from our physical senses, our internal emotions and sensations and our memories. Our memory bank is something that we that we continue to develop as we live and is connected to our physical senses and emotions and sensations and these factors influence each other in an iterative way (McAdams 1993). For example a particular physical sense, such as the ringing of a telephone, can trigger different emotions or sensations in us, because of the memories we associate with that sense. Thus a telephone ringing can be a 'good' or 'bad' thing depending upon our memory but the physical sense is still just a phone ringing. By using narrative we are able to organise and order these events into a meaningful plot, which gives us a sense of purpose and order and interconnected and related events. We can take our own narrative, adapt and change it to link our personal narrative with the narratives of other individuals, together with the narratives of organisations and the communities that we exist in, thus linking diverse elements of our lives into understandable patterns and consequent narratives:

> *These stories are about the self. They are the basis of personal identity and self-understanding and they provide answers to the question 'Who am I?' "*
>
> —POLKINGHORNE (1991), P.135-136

An important caveat in using story-telling, as both a research gathering technique and as a method of analysis, is that the researcher bears in mind that the stories are exactly that: stories, and should not be taken as, in any sense, an objective truth. They are the construct of the individual and as such will always contain meaning, some element of morality and

ethical position and may frequently trigger various emotions both within the person hearing the story and the story teller themselves (Gabriel, 2000).

The research suggested that on leaving the armed forces the research subjects reviewed, changed and developed their existing life narratives to take account of their changed circumstances, it was in effect the start of a new chapter in their life narrative (Roberts 2015, Fraher and Gabriel 2014). In these new chapters, without exception, the research subjects stories reflected narratives that were constructed, partially, around their professional military experience, often different or incomparable to civilian experience or understanding, and their self-worth was always tied, in some way, to their military achievements and experiences and the subsequent status, both formal and informal, that this conferred upon them (Hale 2008, Vough et al 2015). The strength of these ties varied from individual to individual some being very strong, others being almost coincidental, but none the less every research subjects' story contained a strong element of their achievement within the military environment (Hale 2008, Hatch et al 2013). This is hardly surprising given the fact that they were being asked to tell the story of their transition from the military to the civilian worlds, however, none of the subjects was dismissive of, or downplayed the importance of their military life, even those who, through the way in which they had been required to leave, may have had grounds for doing so. Thus within the stories military service was seen as a positive experience and a way (but not the only way) in which each individual created a sense of self-worth (Gabriel et al 2010).

The concept that self-worth was tied into the narrative or story that the research subjects suggested that somehow the individual was anchored into their life narrative and it was through this that they created their notions of career and success and well-being. Gabriel observes that:

> *"Unlike younger people who are capable of deriving satisfaction and meaning from different experiences and dreams, older professionals tend to anchor their identities and values on their working lives and career success"*
>
> —GABRIEL ET AL (2013), P.58

This chimes with Schein's concept of 'career anchors' that are founded in an individual's self-concept made up of self-perceived talents and abilities, motives and needs and attitudes and values and which develop over an individual's life-experience and become more fixed as that life experience progresses. (Schein 1978). Therefore the literature might suggest that the older the subject and the longer they had served in the military then the more difficult the transition to civilian life might be. However, this presupposes that a move from military to civilian life requires a cutting loose of the career anchor and the establishment of new ones.

The literature was unclear as to whether retaining 'career anchors' or stories that maintained their feelings of self-worth was an important part of the transition process. In constructing life narratives it was not clear whether for former military personnel holding onto the value that their military service bestowed upon them, in their own narratives, was to a lesser or greater degree important in their stories. Some work on occupational identities perhaps could provide some clues. As Fraher and Gabriel argue:

> *"It can be argued that the same key opens the door to identity construction of other occupational groups that view themselves as following their vocation. It is noteworthy that members of such groups are known for being able to endure disappointments and privations without fundamentally derailing their occupational identity; thus a musician or a former paratrooper may still draw his/her identity by identifying with their profession, long after their last successful gig or their last professional achievement."*
>
> —FRAHER AND GABRIEL (2014), P.945

Therefore it could be argued that a key determinant of the experience of transition was how the subjects constructed their narrative, how they maintained their anchors and self-worth in the stories that they told themselves and how they held their military service to be a positive, ongoing part of their story. The key emphasis here is *part* of that story, for those who constructed a rich story full of different parts, characters and events seemed to have a more positive experience than those whose stories were less rich, less full and where the military aspects were dominant. Gabriel et al (2010) argue that the process of coping with transition is not a rational and purposeful activity. Story telling enables individuals to cope with often uncomfortable or painful events, such as career transition, by creating a story that plots the events into a story that offers consolation and maintains and sustains a sense of worth and selfhood (Roberts 2014, Fraher and Gabriel 2014, Gabriel, Gray and Goregaokar 2013).

Gabriel et al (2010) describe this phenomenon as 'Narrative Coping' whereby adapting or creating a story to make sense of a significant event (in Gabriel et al's case this was a study of older executives who had been made redundant) enables an individual to cope with the event in a positive manner:

> *"Narrative coping is achieved when a person has managed to create a story that is both credible in explaining the disruption and brings consolation for the loss, enabling them to move on as someone who has experienced the trauma without being defined by it. Far from looking at coping as rational, purposive behaviour aimed at returning a person to a comfortable state of equilibrium, our study suggests that narrative coping has more to do with maintaining an unfinished narrative, rather than seeking space in a finished one, by seeking to rediscover the meaning of earlier events in the light of subsequent ones and, maybe, never reaching a state of narrative closure."*
>
> —GABRIEL ET AL (2010), P.1707

However, that is not to say that narrative provides a universal panacea for all of life's events. A study looking at life after losing political office suggests that individuals whose identifies were almost entirely created and sustained by their political role and whose social identities and networks were also tied up in their political lives suffered most when they lost political office (Roberts 2015).

The available literature would seem to suggest that where the part of an individual's life spent in the services is incorporated into the life story as an important but not necessarily exclusive part of the narrative then they may find the transition process 'easier' than those whose life story was founded upon and wholly focussed upon their military service (Alpass et al 1997, Spiegel and Shultz 2003, Howard League 2011a, 2011b). Thus their military career may define them, but not too much, and it might be a fine line where their military experience changed from being a positive part of their story to becoming a negative part. In a study examining airline pilots and their identities', Fraher and Gabriel sum up this point very well:

> *"This then was a lived paradox for these pilots: their occupational identities both sustained them and hindered them."*
>
> —FRAHER AND GABRIEL (2014), P.944

2.11   Making Sense of the Literature

Having explored the literature above the researcher was only too aware of the limitations of the review. A vast amount of theory had been explored some of it considered worthy of inclusion in the review and much of it considered worthy in its own right but not wholly appropriate to the research question. Whilst all of the literature reviewed had contributed to

the research process and the intellectual processes and considerations in producing the thesis, eventually four areas were identified as being important to the research question. Whilst each of these areas is discussed below, they all overlap and indeed interact with each other. Thus the original intention of finding models or theories and concepts that would simplify and explain the situation that the researcher found having completed the research was somewhat thwarted. Indeed the process of the literature review exposed how complex, connected and congested the existing body of knowledge was and rather than moving from a situation of complexity to simplicity the journey has been one of complexity to simplicity and on towards more complexity. However, the key finding has been that the complexity initially was confusing and difficult to understand. The complexity is now less confusing and sense can be made of it but it has required a shift in thinking that would not have been possible without the literature review journey. Each of the four areas identified is now summarised and the researcher's stance identified, the interrelationships between these areas are then discussed in the conclusion and finally a closing position is given to inform the rest of this thesis.

2.12   Career Theory – Complexity and Interrelationships

The classic career theory as postulated in the scientific school suggested that careers were rational deliberate constructs that attempted to achieve the best fit between an organisation and its needs and an individual and their needs (Argyris 1964, Schein 1978, Hall 1986 and Sonnenfeld and Peiperl 1988). However, the opposing view that careers are subjective and created by the individual for the individual (Hughes 1958 and Van Maanen 1997) suggests that any match between the individual and the organisation is a happy coincidence. Whilst careers may be viewed objectively (Hughes 1958) this standpoint is from that of society rather than the individual. The complexity of careers within this dichotomy is what the researcher is drawn to and even the concept of a subjective and objective career appears to be somewhat simplistic when viewed against the research that has been carried out and the findings and analysis as discussed in Chapter 4.

Thus the researcher was drawn more towards Boden's Career States Systems Model (2007) which at least attempts to add a temporal dimension to career development within the confines of the personal, organisational, managerial and the macro environments with careers existing in a number of states including launching, static, growing vertically, growing laterally and searching. Again whilst this model does address some of the complexity issues encountered within the research it simply does not, in the opinion of the researcher, address the total complexity of the concept of a career. Indeed this, along with the other career theory models sets the career (a progression through working lives) at the centre, when perhaps the

career is a major part of a person's existence, it is not the centre around which everything else revolves. Indeed the researcher would argue that rather than a solar system model, careers models should be more chaotic and seemingly random, irrational as opposed to rational and as driven much by ignorance, fear and circumstance as by knowledge, ambition and planning.

This view is echoed in the works of Chen (2003), Bloch (2005) and Collin (2007) who argue that the scientific approach is too limiting and fails to recognise the sheer complexity and seemingly randomness of careers. Chen (2003) argues from a standpoint of complexity. Career may only be understood if they are viewed as complex entities that must be viewed not just in simplistic linear terms but set within the temporal and mental context at the time of key decision making and only by taking these aspects into account can career decision making be understood. If the context is altered then the interpretation of the career can alter significantly. Bloch (2005) builds upon this position and argues that careers can only be viewed as complex adaptive entities if we are to have any understanding of them. As previously described this concept sees careers as self-organizing structures that continuously adapt in order to remain in being. In doing so they develop sophisticated and complex network systems and the borders of these systems are where disturbance and thus change occur, similar to the concept of the zone of proximal development in activity theory systems (Engeström 1987, Blacker, Crump and McDonald 1999, Avis 2009). Predicting what outcomes will result from these changes is difficult and simply adds to the complexity of attempting to understand careers and career choices. Developing this theme Collin (2007) argues that careers cannot be simply isolated into component parts and then reconstructed without understanding the context in which the career takes place. The complexity of possible connections and inter-relationships between events and choices must be taken into account. Thus career interpretation is necessarily open-ended, fluid and tentative. Therefore understanding is complex, messy and continuous. Indeed 'careers' can be a wicked problem (Grint 2008), in so much that they are so inter-related and complex that action in any one point of the system will have an effect on the rest of the system thus changing the whole system in turn.

This general school of thought suggests that careers are a continuous and dynamic interaction between the individual and the environment that they exist in. Thus economic, social, cultural and individual factors such as personality and life experience join together to create a career. Therefore a more holistic approach is required to try and make sense of a complex and inter-related phenomenon and an integration of career, economic and psychology theory is suggested. This theory is the one that the researcher is drawn to. The

sheer complexity of individual's lives and the choices that they make, would seem to make the attempt to categorise them as rational, logical and freely made decision making processes as somewhat naïve. That is not to say that the classic career theories have no validity. The have provided a basis from which to build the current career theory but in the researcher's mind they do not address the very nature of human existence and its complexity. All that said the researcher did find value in the concept of career anchors for this study.

2.13 Anchors

As previously discussed the concept of career anchors (Schein 1978) was considered relevant in understanding the careers of military personnel whilst the also recognising the unique social networks and career structures of military personnel (Jolly 1987 and 1996, Jessup 1996, Strachan 1997 and 2000). As Schein suggests that a career anchors are based upon an individual's self-perception of what is truly important to them in terms of values, standards and ethics as well as skills, knowledge and abilities it was considered that the model offered a way of gaining insight into experiences of military personnel transitioning to civilian life in the aspect of which anchors remained firm, which anchors drifted and which anchored were weighed in the transition journey. Whilst this model offered an insight to the experiences of former military personnel of the 5 basic career anchors identified by Schein: autonomy, creativity, technical or functional competence, security and stability and finally levels of responsibility, it was the *illusion* of autonomy that was to be the most valuable.

Following on from anchors the concept of a military vocation was also considered to be a possible lens through which the experiences of the research cohort could be understood. The work on ideological communities and vocations (Parker 2000, Parker and Arthur 2000, Hall and Chandler 2005) suggests that changing from a 'vocation' to a 'job' and leaving behind a suggested ideological community like the military environment is likely to be a significant psychological change that might result in individuals struggling with identity, adaptability and self-confidence. Linked to this was the formation of the military ideological community and self-image. The formation of a military identity, distinct from the civilian world has been widely studied and its unique military culture with its strongly structured social systems with rules, rituals and hierarchies is well documented (Hockey 1986, Hale 2008, Griffith 2009, McCartney 2011, Smith and Stewart 2011, Woodward and Jenkins 2011, Palmer 2012) but how this creates unique military anchors for individuals is not totally clear.

So for the researcher the concept of anchors, in their broadest sense, but based upon Schein's original concept, became a powerful tool for understanding the way in which former military personnel viewed their transition and their experiences surrounding it.

2.14 Joining and Leaving

Following on from the concept of anchors and the military anchors the detail of how socialisation into the military occurs was also considered wholly relevant to the research journey. Several writers refer to joining the military as a 'shocking' or 'rupture' process whereby the process of relocating a civilian socio-cultural world into a military one is fraught with extreme mental, physical and disciplinary demands that may never have been experienced before and the conferring of a personal meaning to the locations, culture and symbols that they now encounter. (Hale 2008, Atherton 2009, Herman and Yarwood 2014). Entry into the military is a well-defined and ritualised process. However, the rituals for leaving the military are less formal, usually ad hoc, even when very senior officers of the organisation retire (Schwarzkopf 1992, Jackson 2007). The former military person is therefore removed from a practical, physical and psychological culture that is likely to be very different from any new organisation that they enter which may lead to feelings of loss and disorientation (Allport 2009, Palmer 2012) and it is this aspect of the transition process that requires illumination.

2.15 Self and Storytelling

The terms 'story' and 'narrative', as used in the context of this thesis, are interchangeable (Brown, Gabriel and Gherardi 2009) and the approach taken is to mix and blend of organisational narratives and personal narratives as to try and extract one from the other is too complex and the richness of the data would be compromised (Woodward and Jenkins 2011, Giddens 1991, McAdams 1993, Brown et al 2009, Gabriel et al 2010, Fraher and Gabriel 2014, Vough et al 2015).

In telling their story the research subjects created a structured and meaningful account of their lives and were able to use narrative to make sense of their own individual journey (Polkinghorne 1991). However, as the stories are constructed and developed by the individual they contain a personal sense of self, a personal meaning and will be built upon an individual moral and ethical position. They may create an emotional response both within themselves and their audience (Gabriel 2000). By doing so they will build a sense of their own self-worth, their perceived achievements and lived experiences and from that draw both an internal and external status, that may formally and informally conferred upon them by their social groups. (Vough et al 2015). This therefore links to Schein's concept of career anchors

as discussed previously that are founded in an individual's self-concept (Schein 1978). This in turn links to the notion of identity construction through occupational groups (Fraher and Gabriel, 2014).

Thus self-identity and self-worth is not only constructed but also maintained through narrative and storytelling and the process of transition, which is not necessarily a rational and purposeful activity at the time can be made to seem so by creating a story that plots the events into a story that offers consolation and maintains and sustains a sense of worth and selfhood (Gabriel et al 2010).

2.16   Conclusions

The journey through the literature has been an iterative process and as each phase of the research has been started the existing literature has been reviewed and key theories and models identified in order to try and make sense of both what the existing body of knowledge contains and what has been noted and observed during the data gathering and analysis stages of the research. It has by no means been a linear process but one that could be likened to a journey through a maze, with numerous areas visited and revisited all the time gaining a greater understanding of where the researcher is in relation to the maze until eventually he has a clear mental image of his surroundings. The key theories have been visited and revisited and the researcher has, at times, both grappled with the sometimes seemingly unfathomable complexity and interconnectedness of the research topic and despaired at the sometimes mechanistic and simplistic theories that may relate to it. Over this journey, and through the iterative approach taken, the researcher has been able to synthesise and develop his own views on the existing bodies of knowledge and how they may help understand the complexity of the research question. This has resulted in a combination of career theory, anchors, narrative, joining and leaving the military and concepts of the self and storytelling, in a range of theories from several academic disciplines.

In reaching this position four complex and interdependent areas have been synthesised and in order to explain how this position was reached it is necessary to first review each of these areas in turn. First, classic career theory suggests a logical linear approach to decision making and subsequent outcomes, whilst cotemporary career theory suggests a complex and sometimes seemingly irrational and random series of decisions that explain career choices. Classic career theory helps us to make sense of the past whilst contemporary career theory attempts to help us understand complexity in career choices now and going forward. Both are useful. However, both are primarily based upon multiple perceptions: those of the individual, their communities and society in the round, both looking back (classic career theory), now and

in the future (contemporary career theory). In turn the perceptions of all those involved are shaped and influenced by career, or vocational, or occupational, or life anchors which are derived from the values of the individual, their communities and society. These in turn are founded in the culture, traditions and life experiences of communities and the individual. These are not universally held truths, they are not immutable and are the product of, and constructed by, the individual and the multiple communities that they inhabit. These anchors are a product of the narrative built by the individual about themselves and importantly the narrative that their communities also cooperate in building and sustaining and which fit in with and support the organisational narratives that they are a part of. The narrative is central to everything. The narratives constructed on joining the military by both the individual, their peers and the organisation are powerful psychological rites of passage and may become a strong anchor for both the individual and for society. On leaving the military, the military past and its complex, but at the same time straightforward, narrative may crystallise as a significant anchor or set of anchors for both the individual, their communities, their subsequent organisations and society. These military anchors may be the benchmark against which both the individual and society creates a new narrative to give value and meaning to the individual and the military. On departing the military a new narrative will be created and in doing so the individual will develop a different sense of their own self and they will attempt to rationalise and make sense of their new lives and transition to the civilian world by telling a new story. This new story will define both themselves and their careers, and it will be a story that they tell themselves, tell others, and society will tell about them. Their sense of self will be created and reflected in that career story and so we return back to career theory.

To summarise in the view of the researcher, a 'career' is a story that we tell ourselves in order to make sense and give value to the lives that we have lived so far. In changing that life we will create a new narrative that will reflect our thoughts and feelings and relate our experiences to the rest of society who, in turn, will create a new narrative to explain and give value to our experiences. In doing so we will retain those things that we hold to be valuable and worthy as 'anchors' and we will create a narrative that will preserve the value of those anchors whilst making sense of our new condition. For former military personnel, given the unique psychological processes that they undergo when joining the military the importance of the story that they tell themselves, and the narrative of others; individual, organisational and societal, will feature greatly in their sense making and sense of self-worth.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1   Introduction

The development of the research methodology occurred throughout the research process and indeed the methodology can, in some ways, still be said to be being developed. The journey has started and will possibly have no end. The journey of the research methodology itself has been an interesting one; sometimes frustrating and sometimes very rewarding. It started from some very firmly held views and beliefs that have been in some cases destroyed and rebuilt, in others modified and adapted, and in others new beliefs and values established though the experience of the research journey. A great deal of self-awareness has been achieved but paradoxically now the researcher is also conscious of how little self-awareness he actually has. Essentially the journey was an inductive one: first the researcher's paradigm needed to be explored and defined; this was no easy task and some long held assumptions were challenged. Consequently some fairly fundamental unconscious assumptions about the researcher, by the researcher, were brought to the surface. These were then critically examined and explored. Some were revised in view of the insights gained during this process, others were confirmed. At the same time differing views, stances and assumptions were explored and subsequently discarded. The whole journey was found to be simultaneously stimulating, frightening, reassuring and cathartic. Undoubtedly the researcher has a far deeper and wider understanding of his own world view, but also is acutely conscious of how little he knows about his own world view and how this is constantly being challenged and changing as he progresses though his own life journey. He is also aware of the sheer complexity of the world views of all those around him and how his paradigm interrelates with the paradigms of those around him and on a deeper philosophical level much begs the question of what constitutes reality.

Against this background of philosophical debate the various, and seemingly endless, range of data collection methods were examined and experimented with. As the researcher's paradigm shifted so did the research methods considered and tried. Initially a quantitative approach was believed to be the most appropriate but as the research progressed there was swing towards a qualitative approach and rather than focussing in on a particular method the research widened out to become less specific. This can be described as a reverse funnel

effect. This aptly reflects the transformation of the researcher's paradigm. Initially a specific, focussed, hard data-oriented approach that widened out to a broad spectrum of thoughts, feelings and perceptions that are difficult to interpret analyse and evaluate.

As the data was being gathered it was interpreted and analysed using various concepts and theories. As each concept was tried it was tested against the previous ones used. Initially the researcher was concerned with finding the 'Holy Grail', the one model that would provide all the answers and fit perfectly with the data, but like all quests for the Holy Grail he was unsuccessful. Notably the researcher followed a path that led him to spend a significant amount of time considering the works and theories of Freud and Jung; this proved to be an interesting diversion into Freudian and Jungian theory, but one that ultimately was to prove fruitless. Eventually the researcher used activity theory, storytelling theory and concepts of self as the three lenses through which to analys and interpret the data recovered and the three theories were used in conjunction with each other to provide triangulation of the results. These results were then assimilated into the research journey loop and refinement made before they were applied again thus using a cumulative, iterative process to arrive at the eventual findings. Whilst this appears to be a logical, planned and methodical approach in reality as progress forward was made, it was also necessary to constantly revisit previous workings and often the researcher felt that the journey consisted of 'one step forward, two steps back' and even though the research journey is almost at an end, there are still refinements that could be made.

Reflecting back on the experience the researcher believes that the journey has been a tremendous learning and life experience. Whilst several lessons specific to designing and conducting an academic research project have been identified and will be undoubtedly be included in future research, the main outcome has been the growth of the researcher's own self-awareness of his world view and consideration of the world views of others.

3.2   Paradigm Development

The concept of a paradigm is in itself a complex issue and worthy of much research in its own right. The very word itself means different things to different people and it can be argued that the concept of a paradigm has been used inconsistently in academic circles and freely interchanged with terms such as perspective, theory, discipline, method or school (Shepherd and Challenger 2013). Notwithstanding this the concept is still a key concept in management research and sets the conditions under which research questions are defined, concepts are applied and methodologies are selected (Gill and Johnson 1997) and these must be applied with rigour (Donaldson et al 2013). In order to provide focus to the question of the

researcher's paradigm he started by adopting adopted Guba's definition: "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (Guba, 1990, p17). From this very basic standpoint he then began to evaluate his own set of beliefs that formed his paradigm.

Prior to the publication of Kuhn's 1962 work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, it appeared to be generally accepted that research was a logical, rational, cumulative progress. Kuhn challenged this view, arguing that research is conducted within a space that is composed of scientific values, metaphysical beliefs and previous research findings, or exemplars. He argued that when anomalies in research arise that cannot be reconciled within the paradigm then the paradigm itself, together with its constituent scientific values and metaphysical beliefs changes or shifts. Such shifts may be gradual or may result in crisis and revolution (the realisation that the earth was in fact a sphere and not a disc; that the earth rotates around the sun and not the sun around earth; and Einstein's theory of relativity are all examples of this dramatic paradigm shift). Kuhn also postulated that research conducted within one paradigm is incommensurate with research conducted within another paradigm (incommensurability) for two reasons. First exemplars from one paradigm have been developed in a different metaphysical and values space and therefore cannot be compared with exemplars that have been constructed in a different space. Second, he argued that each paradigm develops its own meanings in language or semantics and thus the paradigm-specific structural linguistics of each paradigm prevent useful comparison between research conducted in differing paradigms (Shepherd and Challenger 2013). It may also be that the views held in a particular paradigm are so compelling to the holders of that world view that any challenge to these is explained away, as in conspiracy theory, and no evidence, no matter how overwhelming will shift them from their position. Thus Kuhn views each paradigm as a closed system that prevents cross-paradigm comparison and evaluation, although he later modified this view arguing that translation might be possible between the linguistic construct of paradigms and indeed such translation could be beneficial to researchers as they learned different paradigm specific language (Tadajewski 2009). However, a differing view of the paradigm was put forward by Burrell and Morgan in their 1979 work *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis*. They suggested that research was conducted within four distinct paradigms: radical humanism, radical structuralism, interpretivism and functionalism. Like Kuhn they argued that each of these paradigms was founded upon separate beliefs, theories and assumptions about science and society held by differing communities of researchers. They also argued that these theories and assumptions, and beliefs, made each of the four paradigms mutually exclusive. However, they did argue that communication and debate between the different paradigms was possible, but that a researcher could not operate in more than one paradigm at a time

since by accepting the assumptions of one paradigm, then one could not simultaneously accept the assumptions of the other paradigms. However, it could be argued that cognitive dissonance (Festinger and Carlsmith 1959, Slater 2004, Grint 2008) does in fact allow individuals to hold competing and conflicting positions at the same time; however do individuals actually hold competing and conflicting positions simultaneously or do they simply rapidly switch between positions, thus only ever inhabiting one paradigm at one point in time? Whilst the work of Kuhn and Burrell and Morgan has been debated over the years, particularly with regard to paradigm incommensurability (Jackson and Carter 1991), paradigm integration (Pfeffer 1993), paradigm pluralism (Weaver and Gioia 1994) and paradigm dissolution (Van Maanen 1995a) it nonetheless raises a critical issue for the researcher, namely the importance of considering and defining the paradigm in which the research has been conducted and its subsequent influence on research methods, data analysis and evaluation of the research.

From the researcher's position Kuhn's view of the uniqueness of a paradigm is the dominant theory that he supports. The space in which research is conducted is unique with its own scientific values, metaphysical beliefs, previous research findings and specific structural linguistics. In order to understand the research findings they must be understood in the context of the paradigm in which they were devised and this is where a massive challenge arises. How can the paradigm be effectively described when it is unique to the researcher? How can someone within one paradigm understand the findings from another? How can the language, with all its nuances, meanings and significance, of one paradigm effectively translate to another? This is a position that the researcher has arrived at through a rather 'messy' process of the research journey. It was not a linear logical process as the researcher first thought it might be but rather one of twists and turns, often ending up back in the place where the question had first been asked. So, in planning the design of the research, initially the researcher did not systematically set about to considering his own paradigm or world view, rather he was working upon a series of unconscious assumptions. Initially the positivist approach was considered to be the researcher's 'natural' paradigm, this being reductionist, logical and deterministic (Creswell 2007). Perhaps this was the result of the researcher's own lived experience. His early education was geared towards 'hands on' practical engineering with attendant emphasis on the physical sciences. Despite moving onto an undergraduate humanities degree he then spent a career in the military where logical, ordered and disciplined behaviour, within the strictly bounded and defined context of the military, was rewarded (Norman 1971, Jolly 1987, 1996, Alpass et al 1997, Hale 2008, Atherton 2009, Palmer 2012). This approach probably led the researcher to assume that his natural approach to any situation was a positivist/quantitative one and could be summarised in the

vernacular as "show me the data". However, this was only an assumption as there had never been a point where the researcher had actually reviewed this approach objectively. So whilst the *assumed* approach was a positivist one, the initial consideration to the research methodology was to use a quantitative study and gather a large amount of data through the use of such tools as surveys, questionnaires and structured interviews combined with secondary quantitative sources such as employment/unemployment rates and comparative earning figures (Gummesson 2000). However, when the research question was being developed the researcher began to have some reservations about quantitative approach and it was considered that such an approach would have two distinct drawbacks. First, there was a practical one in that the sheer volume of the data that could be generated was potentially massive with many thousands of responses. This could have led to a simple data overload on the researcher and even using modern software analysis tools it would probably have been prohibitive for the researcher to collate and analyse by himself (probably a reflection of his positivist/quantitative experience).

However, the second and more important realisation was that the analysis of the data would probably have given *outcomes* of military personnel and their transition to a civilian career rather than an *understanding* of the experiences of military personnel and their transition to a civilian career. Thus the approach that was considered was most appropriate suddenly became less attractive. This realisation led to a re-examination of the assumed paradigm and the researcher's own position within the research itself.

In order to achieve this re-examination the researcher utilised the five philosophical assumptions advanced by Guba and Lincoln (2005) and adapted by Creswell (2007): ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological. By working through these assumptions the researcher was able to consider how he could define and refine his paradigm using the questions below:

Ontological – What is the nature of reality?

Having considered many differing theories, in particular those of Freud, Husserl, Heidegger and Jung, the researcher did not assume that there was a single reality (Owen, 2006, Jung, 1933, 1987, Freud 1997, 2005, Frankel 1946). His assumed position was that reality is subjective and unique and exists only as it is perceived by an individual. Furthermore an individual's reality is the direct, and indirect, result of the lived experiences of the individual. Thus it follows that the researcher's reality is not the same as the research subjects' realities and that interpreting the experiences of the research subjects is achieved through the filter of the researcher's own paradigm with the inherent bias that his entails.

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Epistemological – What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?

Following on from the assumptions about the nature of reality the researcher concluded that he had a broadly similar history to the research subjects, although in detail the experiences were vastly different. The researcher and the subjects had a largely similar set of experiences and this shared experience was both a benefit and a hindrance. The researcher could be viewed as an insider or 'friendly forces' and this relationship could influence responses. On one end of the spectrum it could be that the research subjects would be more open and willing to confide in someone with whom they identified; at the other end of the spectrum it might be that the closeness of the shared experience might limit the objectivity of the researching in both conducting and analysing the research. The extent to which the relationship between researcher and researched would influence the responses was a key consideration. Deciding what the optimal 'distance' between the researcher and the subjects was problematic and very early on the researcher made a conscious decision not to include people with whom he had a close relationship in the research cohort.

Axiological - What is the role of values?

The researcher acknowledged that the research is value laden and that there are inherent biases in the research as the researcher brought with him his own values and beliefs. Some of these biases were conscious, some were undoubtedly unconscious. Several mechanisms were considered in order to identify and militate against biases influencing the research and its findings. However, the approach was taken to embrace the inherent biases in the research with a large 'health warning' articulated throughout the research narrative. It was the researcher's position that no research can be wholly objective due to the ontological and epistemological positions taken by the researcher, therefore the values of the researcher and the values of the research subjects were interlinked and must be considered when taking a view on the findings of the research.

Rhetorical – What is the language of the research?

The researcher undoubtedly had a shared lexicon with the research subjects, a lexicon and vocabulary that is probably not familiar to the academic world. This was considered to be an advantage as the interviewees could express themselves using a particular style. This was not just an issue over language but also and issue of culture and the fact that former military personnel cannot be considered as a single homogenous body (Iversen et al 2005). Each service, and indeed, each specialisation within each service will have its own culture and views the other specialisations and services in a different light from themselves. The researcher was fortunate in so much that he had at one point or another served alongside

personnel from all the UK services and had a broad understanding of the nuances between the different services and branches within those services and the subtle differences that exist in terms of culture and language. He also had shared operational experience with many of the interviewees and whilst it may not have been in the same theatre of operations he was considered to be someone who had "done the business" and thus had a certain amount of credibility and affinity with the subjects. He was therefore considered to be one of the group. Thus the military jargon that was used to articulate the subjects' experiences was understood by the researcher and the challenge was how to translate it into appropriate academic language in order to present the research findings. The researcher favoured a formal writing style, and a conscious decision was made to compose the research presentation in a third person narrative in an attempt to bridge the gap between an informal and often vernacular qualitative research data and a formal academic presentation of results.

Methodological – What is the process of research?

Ideally academic research should detail the context of the research and its contribution to understanding using a process of inductive logic and developing an emerging design to the research that requires the researcher to work with particulars before attempting to generalise. Throughout this process there is an expectation that a continuous process of revision to the research question will take place, based upon the experiences of the data gathering and analysis (Gill and Johnson 1997, Creswell 2007). This was the approach adopted by the researcher, however, in reality it was less of a logical process with many twists and turns on the journey. Initially the researcher had a particular outcome in mind for the findings of the research, in so much as he wanted to show that former military personnel were a 'special case', however, this outcome was soon discarded as the researcher realised that he simply wanted to understand the experiences of former military personnel. Had he continued with this outcome in mind then it would have represented a serious challenge the research in terms of its validity and acknowledgement of inherent bias or self-interest.

The working through of these questions and really examining the assumptions that the researcher had made in the initial stages of the research project revealed some interesting insights. In hindsight it can be suggested that in considering exactly how the researcher viewed the topic there was initially a somewhat natural desire to demonstrate that former military personnel were somehow a special case, probably as a result of the researcher's own lived experience. He was after all one of the group of people he was studying. His pre-understanding was considerable and this was a positive advantage (Gummerson 2000). However, could this pre-understanding without the ability to change his paradigm and generate new concepts models and theories actually be achieved? With closer introspection

the researcher considered that he may be approaching the research from a position of self-interest, but even if there was limited self-interest there was no doubt a tendency towards the advocacy or participatory paradigm (Creswell 2007). However, the advocacy/participatory position suggests that the research should result in a definite change in the lives of the participants including the researchers themselves. Often this approach will deal with marginalised or oppressed groups and may seek to give these groups a 'voice' that will lead to positive change for those being researched. In this case the researcher had no stated desire to treat the research subjects as such; and at the outset the proposed purpose of the research was to try and understand a phenomenon and not actually change outcomes for those involved. Although the findings may lead to recommendations that might be beneficial to the group being studied this was not the primary driver for the research question and could be considered a fortunate by-product of the research. Therefore although there may have been an element of researcher self-interest, the advocacy or participatory paradigm was not considered to be the true paradigm that the researcher inhabited.

All that said, there was also probably a desire to produce a practical outcome from the research, perhaps linked to the advocacy paradigm and the positivist career experience of the researcher and thus another tendency towards the pragmatist paradigm. The pragmatist view is concerned with solutions and outcomes (Patton 1990). As a result the pragmatist approach can use multiple methods of data collection and analysis and will inevitably concentrate upon practical outcomes for the research. However, with no clear outcome in mind and no burning desire to show former military personnel as a special case, or a practical application of the research suggested, the researcher moved towards the position that subject really needed to be understood before any of those things could be considered.

With this in mind the researcher was coming back to his original position of the positivist or postpositive approach. This would be a rigorous, logical process of data gathering and analysis from which an understanding of the research question could be gained and then further outcomes or actions determined. However, as the research question was framed and developed and the initial data gathering took place, it became clear to the researcher that this approach was at odds with his own reality.

The researcher now found himself tending towards a social constructivism approach world view. This view seeks an understanding of the world in which individuals have multiple and subjective views of the world in which they exist (Creswell 2007). Thus the researcher with this worldview seeks complexity of views rather than simplicity, or narrow views and core rules or concepts. With this in mind, at this stage in the research journey the researcher was

now moving away from a quantitative research methodology towards a qualitative research methodology.

Bluhm et al (2011) suggest that there are four defining characteristics of the qualitative research approach that seemed to coincide with the paradigm that the researcher was beginning to describe and understand. First, qualitative research can be said to occur within the organisation that is being researched. Whilst this was not strictly true of the research topic in question as it was not taking place within the military itself, it was to some extent in so much that it was taking place in the community of former military personnel, of which the researcher was very definitely a member. As will be seen later when discussing research subject participation this community is very loosely defined and indeed is self-defining. Second, qualitative data is drawn from the participants' own reality, in other words their perception of events as they experienced them. This, in the researcher's opinion was certainly true of the research carried out and indeed this view was reinforced as the research interviews were being conducted. Indeed the opportunity to relate their narrative was welcomed by all those who took part in the data gathering process. Several respondents commented upon the cathartic and in some cases liberating sensation they felt as a result of telling their narrative. It was an opportunity for their voice to be heard and their experience to be shared. Third, qualitative research is considered to be reflexive in so much as once the data gathering and analysis is underway the design of that data gathering and analysis can be altered, modified or indeed completely changed as the research situation develops. This was certainly the case in the researcher's experience. The initial data gathering techniques were modified several times and the analysis moved from a range of separate individual techniques to a triangulation using three distinct but interrelated analysis tools. In addition the researcher's own held beliefs, biases and assumptions were challenged again and again and the researcher felt himself to have significantly shifted altered his own reality as a direct result of the experience of the research journey. Fourth, the methods of qualitative data collection and analysis are not standardised. Unlike quantitative techniques the range and data collection techniques and analysis techniques can be very flexible in their application. The researcher found that as the research evolved the techniques were adapted and modified to meet the requirements of the research as it was refined. In addition Bluhm et al (2011) suggest there are two further characteristics that are found in qualitative research, those of inherent researcher bias and the systematic reduction of data to provide meaning from that data.

Researcher bias is covered in more detail later in this section, however the researcher does hold with the assertion of Bluhm that:

> *"Qualitative researchers interpret data based upon the totality of their own experiences, training, social position, etc" and that "there is a general acceptance of the non-objectivity of these methods. Indeed it is impossible to remove oneself completely even from quantitative research, but the effort to do so is less prevalent in qualitative research than in quantitative."*

> —BLUHM ET AL, (2011), P1871

In light of these characteristics the researcher was drawn towards a qualitative approach towards research design, collection and analysis.

Given this, and the developments in framing the researcher's own paradigm, the research approach was then considered. Five different research approaches were considered: narrative, grounded theory, ethnographic, case study and phenomenological (Creswell 2007, Richie and Lewis 2003). These approaches were all considered in some depth with serious consideration given to how each of the approaches might be used within the research and the outcome of these considerations is summarised below.

The narrative approach, essentially research subjects telling a story which is then analysed, (Creswell 2007) was an approach that the researcher initially felt uncomfortable with. The narrative approach seemed to the researcher to be somewhat narrow in its approach and he was not convinced that it would adequately explore the experiences of the research subjects. However, as the research progressed using narrative or story telling as an analytical tool (Gabriel 2000, Tietze, Cohen and Musson 2003) and as a data gathering technique (Richie and Lewis 2003) was considered and implemented.

The grounded theory approach, in which it is intended to generate or discover a theory (Creswell 2007) was discounted as it posed the same problems as outlined in the paradigm considerations: before a theory could be produced the phenomenon needed to be understood. As indicated in the literature review the amount of research already conducted into the subject is somewhat limited. Therefore rather than aim to build a theory that could be proved or disproved the aim of the research was primarily to gain an understanding of the experiences of former military personnel entering the work of civilian work and extract any theory that may result from the findings of the research. Once the experience had been understood then perhaps theories could be advanced and be the subject of further research. However, at this stage of the development of the subject matter it was considered that understanding was the key requirement. Although the researcher is not employing grounded

theory in the strict sense as advocated by Glaser and Strauss, it should be noted that the analysis presented here could be described in a general way as taking a broadly grounded approach.

The ethnographic approach is one where an entire cultural group is studied (Creswell 2007, Spradley 1979, 1980, Watson 2011). Whilst this approach had its merits there several issues became apparent. First, it was felt that the ex-service personnel were simply too big and disparate a cultural group to be studied effectively using this approach, given the limitations of the researcher's time, the time requirements of the PhD process and the sheer volume of data that would need to be generated and analysed. Second, and perhaps more importantly, could former military personnel actually be considered as a discrete cultural group? Once they had left the military they all had a shared past but what was the nature of their identity once they had made the transition back to the civilian environment and as has been highlighted before other studies have argued caution in viewing ex- military personnel as an homogenous group (Iversen et al 2005, Jolly 1996). By adopting an ethnographic approach the researcher may have been placing former military personnel in a cultural group which simply did not exist. How former military personnel saw themselves was something that was explored in the research and the sense of self, where they belonged and how they made sense of their position in society were all areas of discussion in the data gathering phase. Perhaps the issue of whether former military personnel form a distinct cultural group is an area for further research.

The case study approach was considered at some length. The case study is defined by Ritchie and Lewis (2003) as being a multiplicity of perspectives rooted in a specific context. The data gathering may be structured around the context rather than the individuals themselves. It may focus on a process or an organisational context itself. At first glance this approach did have some merits if the *process* of transitioning to the civilian world were being studied, however, as it was an *understanding* of the experience that was eventually decided as the focus of the research then this approach would be inappropriate. Additionally, it was considered that a series of case studies would need to be undertaken, perhaps looking at different segmentations of the target study group, and that this might be beyond the capacity of the single researcher, and even then it may only provide a *description* of the experiences of military personnel and their transition to a civilian career by different segments, rather than an *understanding* of those experiences of the group as a whole. Also case studies may require multiple data streams (Yin 2012) and it would be difficult to apply this to individuals in a wide range of different contexts.

Whereas the narrative study generally focuses on the story of a single individual and the case study focuses on a number of individuals and their experiences of a processor organisational context the phenomenological approach describes the experiences and meanings for a number of individuals within a particular context or phenomenon (Creswell 2007, Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Given that the aim of the research has been to understand the individual, but shared, experience of transitioning from the military to the civilian world this approach was considered appropriate. By attempting to understand the experiences of the research subjects and identify the common elements of the experience though clusters of meaning, then it was considered that utilising the phenomenological approach would provide the best approach for achieving that understanding in describing what was experienced and reducing those experiences to a universal essence (Creswell 2007). In choosing this approach the researcher was acutely aware of the need to identify and articulate his own place within that phenomenon and the impossibility of separating himself form the phenomenon and his own influence upon the research outcomes.

3.3   Reflective Analysis of the Paradigm

As outlined above the initial research paradigm held by the researcher was one of the positivist, but following reflection this changed to social constructivism and the research approach selected was that of phenomenology. In taking this approach there are a number of issues that arise over the reflective analysis.

Firstly there was the issue of the researcher's influence on the research subjects. The researcher had a lived experience or life-world approach (Husserl 1970) and this may well have influenced the responses from the research subjects. As the researcher's lived experience had many elements in common with the research subjects then this influence may well have been significant. Additionally the analysis of the data gathered and the interpretation of the research results will also probably have been influenced by the researcher's life-world approach. For example, in one initial interview, the research subject, knowing the researcher's own background, commented that: "*its ok for you, you have done well since you left*", indicating that the subject was comparing their experiences with those of the researcher and potentially influencing their response. Thus it was difficult to separate the subjective reality and objective reality (Sandberg and Targama 2007) of the researcher. One approach that was considered was the use of bracketing (Husserl 1970) in which the researcher may try and set aside their own experiences. However, after considerable internal debate the researcher did not consider this an intellectual process that he could achieve. Initially, the researcher did believe that it was possible to set aside his own values and experiences and be the detached, objective, academic, but this was during the initial stages

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of the research journey when the researcher assumed that his natural approach to any situation was a positivist/quantitative. However, as the research journey progressed so this position shifted. Eventually the researcher came to the position of using the hermeneutical approach (Van Manen 1990) to phenomenology in which the experiences of the researcher are considered along with those of the research subjects and no attempt at bracketing is made. Thus the background of the researcher and his own reflection upon his experiences has been included in the presentation of the research findings. The researcher is part of the research and no attempt is made to separate the researcher from the researched, although hopefully it has been demonstrated that the analysis and findings are evidence-based and not simply the thoughts or opinions of the researcher. This hermeneutical approach also complements the concept of pre-understanding (Gummerson 2000) whereby the researcher's understanding of the research is based, in part, upon his own personal experience. This pre-understanding and the experience of the research subjects, others involved in the research and other intermediaries are all considered key to the research process. In using reflective analysis the experience of the researcher and its potential influences was considered at all stages of the research journey.

Secondly, at times throughout the research journey the researcher did find it problematic to reflect upon the complexity and uncertainty of the research results. This was partly as a result of the development of the paradigm in which the research was taking place. Understanding the context was at times difficult and exactly what the researcher's values, world-views and lived-experience were was under scrutiny, review and indeed changed over time. Two techniques were employed to deal with this issue: frame analysis and repertoire-building (Schon 1983). In frame analysis the intellectual or philosophical frameworks in which analysis takes place were reviewed and thus the analysis was re-framed as the intellectual or philosophical frames themselves developed and changed. Although it seems a very logical process, this was far from the case and at times the data analysis conducted in a changing paradigm became very messy and complex. It was very much an iterative approach whereby using the repertoire-building technique, if the research results did not fit into the readily available theories or models of the phenomena then similarities in other models or theories were sought in an attempt to enable reflection on the results. Thus there was an almost continuous comparison of data to models at some parts of the research. Indeed at times it became difficult to track the exact path of the research journey. It was not a linear process with well-defined and recorded milestones along the way, rather it was a voyage of discovery where sometimes promising paths petered out into nothing whilst other less promising paths led the researcher to sometimes broad sunny uplands and at others back to the start point.

Thirdly, the ability of the researcher to challenge his own assumptions, values and beliefs in the process of reflective analysis did raise some issues. This reflection was unlikely to have happened unless the mechanisms were in place to facilitate these challenges (Sandberg and Targama 2007). In the case of this research the academic supervision protocols formed a major part of this mechanism. The routine reviews were able to challenge the assumptions of the researcher and signpost areas for exploration. In addition the presentation of some of the findings to interested parties at various stages of the research was also invaluable as these brought a fresh perspective to the research and the values and assumptions underpinning it and were in some cases extremely challenging. Whilst at times, and particularly in the early stages of the research, this process did seem to be a diversion from the collection of the data and the production of the research findings, in hindsight they were an invaluable part of the process.

3.4   The Approaches and Lenses Used and Their Relationships with Each Other

The adoption of a phenomenological hermeneutic approach was considered wholly appropriate to both the research subject and the researcher, as such an approach can be considered subjective, inductive and dynamic (Reiners 2012). The two approaches; phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology are often considered to be interchangeable without clear distinction being made between them (Laverty 2003, Reiners 2012). However, at a practice level there are essential differences between the two approaches. Husserl's phenomenology (Husserl 1970) tends towards the *descriptive,* and the experience and understanding of the researcher were attempted to be set outside through the technique of bracketing. Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology (Heidegger 1962), on the other hand, tends towards the *interpretive*, where meaning is constructed from the background and experiences of both the researcher and the research subjects. In other words understanding of the world is derived from experiencing it and interpreting it (Reiners 2012) and the world consists of the self-interpretations of both researcher and research subjects and is thus made up of multiple, interconnected realities (Laverty 2003).

Having rejected Husserl's descriptive approach and the inability of the researcher to set aside or bracket his own lived experiences, Heidegger's interpretive approach and its rejection of impartiality seemed to fit well with the narrative research approach that was used. By asking participants to simply "tell me your story" the creation of the participants' reality was within their gift and was, as far as possible, unconstrained or influenced by the researcher, however, at the same time the researcher was part of that narrative construction. Thus the analysis of the narratives created enabled the researcher to interpret the nature of

actually living, or being in the experience, of transition from the military to the civilian worlds, rather than just attempting to describe the process. The narrative approach enabled the researcher, with his own conscious and unconscious, lived experiences and constructed realities, to interpret the stories that the research subjects told.

The lenses through which these narratives were interpreted were storytelling, activity theory and the sense of self and these were all, in turn, self-created narratives. They are all founded upon the interpretation and reflections on the reality that the individuals had created in their lived experiences. Storytelling was a very personal creation and presentation of that reality. It was a unique and, usually, rich source of how the individual placed themselves in their own story. Activity theory enabled the identification of tensions within that individual story and to shine a light on the relationships contained within the activity theory framework. Enmeshed with all of this was the individual sense of self and how the individuals represented themselves within the context of their lives and their interpretation of their own lived experiences. The combination of the hermeneutic phenomenology approach with a narrative research approach and utilising the theoretical lenses of storytelling, activity theory and the sense of self produced a powerful combination of methodological approach and research tools that together enabled an interpretation and understanding of the transition from military to civilian life centred around the lived experiences and interpretations of the those who had lived them. It enabled the research to be both unique and rich, but also speak to the many not just the few. Therefore at the level of practice and using these approaches as lenses of interpretation within a philosophical stance that is broadly interpretive was considered wholly appropriate.

However, it was also necessary to be confident that at a theoretical and philosophical level the fusion of these approaches was appropriate. The philosophical basis of hermeneutic phenomenology is founded upon an interpretive view of existence; put simply it is concerned with *being* in the world rather than *knowing* or *describing* the world. Activity theory has its roots in Russian (not Soviet) psychology where the world is constructed socially, through activity, which forms the basis of understanding and culture. Thus it is also concerned with *being* as opposed to *knowing.* Storytelling is based upon a philosophy of occupational psychology where the world is experienced and constructed through interpretation and storytelling. Thus it is concerned with how *being* in the world is constructed at both an individual, occupational, organisational and societal level. The theory of self is based upon a philosophy of the psychology of constructivism, where individuals place themselves in context of their being by constructing their own sense of *being.*

Thus it can be argued that hermeneutic phenomenology and the three lenses of interpretation all share a similar philosophical basis of *being* rather than *knowing*. They are not exactly the same but are underpinned by common philosophical basis. A purist may argue that they are all essentially based upon different assumptions and therefore could not be used in concert with each other. However, the common philosophical root suggests that the differences are not so large that they cannot be used together. There may be some areas of tension when these assumptions are not completely aligned, but this research has not identified any such tensions. It is therefore argued that this lack of conflict indicates that the fusion of hermeneutic phenomenology together with activity theory, storytelling and theory of the self is wholly appropriate in the context of this research and can be replicated in future studies of this nature.

3.5   Ethical issues

No research can be conducted without consideration of the ethical issues involved (Lipson 1994; Cresswell 2007). In conducting this particular research the ethical issues were considered and the general philosophy of '*do no harm'* is one which the researcher pursued. It is not thought that this philosophical approach somehow limited or devalued the research conducted, but that was considered to have been a consequence that the researcher was prepared to accept. In the process of consideration of potential ethical dilemmas, five specific points were considered:

First, was the issue of informed consent procedures and how they were going to be carried out and recorded. It was axiomatic that all participants were fully informed of the reasons behind the research, how it was going to be conducted, the confidentiality mechanisms that were in place, how and where the research will be published and the potential uses of the research once it is completed. In order to achieve this, a standard set of briefing notes were used to ensure that participants were are all given this information and, importantly, to check that they fully understood the safeguards that were in place and that their consent was confirmed (see appendix 1). In addition all the subjects were given the absolute right to withdraw consent to their participation in the study at any stage. Confirmation of this and recording of this freely given and informed consent was achieved using a simple signed declaration included in the briefing notes. As most of the research was conducted face to face this system worked well. On the one occasion when the research was conducted over the telephone a recorded agreement to participate in the research was obtained and subsequently transcribed in the interview notes.

Second was the issue of confidentiality towards participants. Whilst some research subjects indicated that they would be quite happy to have their participation in the research attributed, others did not express a view and seemed very happy with the confidentiality agreement that was in place that said that they would have anonymity in the final written research. However, for the researcher's purposes records needed to be kept, such as taped interviews, transcripts of interviews and notes from interviews whilst the research was being conducted. Therefore the balance between maintaining research subject anonymity and academic credibility was an area that required special consideration. To that end the participants agreed that access to the raw data before it was made anonymous would be restricted to the researcher, his academic supervisors and the transcribers, all of whom were covered by legal and ethical contracts and safeguards. Physical security of the research data was also maintained through the use of password protected storage systems, physical security of the hard copies of research (lock and key) and the use of pseudonyms and random numbers on all transcripts and written research results included in the final submitted thesis. One issue that is still to be decided is the length of time that the original research data and records need to be maintained before they can be destroyed.

Third, was the issue of research subjects disclosing inappropriate or unwanted information to the researcher. There were a small number of occasions when the very personal nature of the experience being described or relived, led to some information being disclosed to the researcher that it was considered inappropriate to include in the recorded data. Interestingly this was almost always after the recording of the interview had been concluded and did not have a common theme. Whilst this type of disclosure, in the researcher's view, was not significant and added little to the overall data collected it did emphasise some aspects of the recorded data. Thus it was considered that it might have been advantageous to include this information in the research the ethical considerations dictated that the personal nature of the disclosure did not warrant its inclusion. Even with the benefit of hindsight and reflective practice the researcher still considers this to have been the correct decision in the circumstances.

Fourth, there was the issue of the influence of the researcher on the participants themselves, as discussed in the reflective analysis section of this thesis. As the researcher had undergone a similar experience to the research subjects his presence undoubtedly influenced the responses of the subjects and this inherent bias was acknowledged. In order to ameliorate this bias care was taken to ensure that the preamble to the interviews focussed on the research topic itself and not the experiences of the researcher. Indeed the researcher actively tried to avoid any mention of his own experiences and background during the data

collection process interviews. However, the researcher did not completely avoid his own background as to do so may have had another influence on the interview process. Sharing experiences was only done when it was considered appropriate as part of the interview flow. However, it was assumed that the very presence of the interviewer would affect the input of the research subjects. As the interviewing process developed the researcher adopted a minimalist approach to the data gathering. Conscious of his own potential influence and also that one of the analysis methods used was going to be storytelling, he simply opened each interview with an opened ended question with no limitations of scope or subject: "*Tell me your story*". Subjects were then allowed to talk uninterrupted and questions only used to clarify where necessary and usually at the end of the 'story'. The use of silence was found to be a particularly powerful technique. So for example when there was a pause in the narrative, rather than ask a question or prompt the subject the researcher simply remained silent and the respondents simply filled that silence with more of their narrative. In this way the researcher sought to guard against imposing his own thoughts or bias on the data collection, or steering the subjects, consciously or unconsciously, in a particular direction of thought.

The final issue that was considered was how to deal with potential for the research subjects' to become distressed, given the deeply personal and possibly upsetting nature of the research topic for some of the subjects. The researcher was aware of this possibility and before the interview process began he had rehearsed possible responses to this type of situation. Similarly he implemented a mental check list for each interview which included how to deal with this type of issue. Each interview was constantly monitored to ensure that if such a situation developed the interview could be suspended and appropriate action taken. In preparing for each interview the researcher was cognisant of his limitations and ensured that he knew where professional assistance or counselling could be obtained by the subjects should this have been necessary. Fortunately only a small number of subjects indicated any minor signs of distress whilst relating their narrative and this was resolved without any need for intervention by the researcher or any need to obtain any professional assistance. However, the researcher did encounter such situations in other research that he was conducting during the same period. In these cases the ethical protocols that he had developed for this research were implemented and proved to be effective. However, the main reason for deliberately excluding those who had experienced extreme transitions was not the inability of the researcher to deal ethically with such situations but because there is already a significant and growing body of research that deals with these transitions.

3.6   Data Collection

The primary aim of the research was to produce an account of the experiences of former military personnel and their journey of the transition back to the civilian world and the evolved paradigm was a phenomenological approach. Given this context several data collection methods were considered. The use of surveys was considered at the development stages of the research, a reflection of the quantitative approach that the researcher favoured at that point in the research programme. A number of survey questions were considered and the outline development of a survey together with the statistical models that might be used was undertaken at the very start of the research journey. Whilst these could have been able to involve large numbers of research participants and generate large amounts of raw data, the analysis of that data would probably have proved problematic. Selecting the survey questions would have undoubtedly skewed the results of the survey, and ensuring that the survey findings were robust and valid was a constant issue (Oppenheim 1992). As this work progressed the approach began to move towards a qualitative approach and the production of a quantitative method and the resulting set of findings and may not have helped understand the experiences of former military personnel. Thus the research methodology moved towards the development of a phenomenological approach and outcome.

With this change of direction the ethnographic approach was considered. Ethnography is the work of describing a culture (Spradley, 1979 and 1980) and: "rather than *studying people*, ethnography means *learning from people* (Spradley, 1979, p3). Thus an ethnographic approach would have required the researcher to spend time observing and obtaining tacit knowledge about former military personnel (Spradley 1980, Van Maanen 2011). However, as previously discussed, the researcher did not consider that former military personnel necessarily constitute a distinct community and therefore the ethnographic techniques of living with and being part of a community ruled out this data collection technique. Similarly participant observation techniques were also initially considered. However, the use of participant observer techniques would have given data on the current situation of study cohort but was unlikely to have provided large amounts of data upon the past experience of the group, i.e. their transition from the military. That is not to say that some aspects of this could have been deduced from current behaviours or that references by the participants to the transition may have provided some insight into those experiences. However, it was considered that the amount of data obtained in this way would probably not have been sufficient for the purposes of the study. Additionally the practical aspects of the ability of the researcher to observe former military personnel in their workplace and home over time was judged to be too time consuming for the expected small amounts of data that would be obtained.

As the research philosophy developed, the use of interviews became was considered as a primary data collection technique. Numerous forms of the interview were considered and developed over time. At one point group interviews were considered as it was perceived that the advantage of these would be that a large amount of data could probably gathered in a relatively short space of time. However, on further consideration these were rejected for two main reasons. First, the selection of a group for the interview was considered to be problematic in terms of the research outcomes. If the group was self-selecting then there was a strong possibility that the conscious or unconscious mechanisms for the group selection would exclude some categories of the cohort being studied. If the group were selected by the researcher then there may have been issues of group dynamics with more vocal or stronger members dominating the interview process. This leads onto the second point of the influence of the group on the research outcomes. Thus for example if certain members of the group held a particular view such as their transition had been a traumatic this was likely to influence the responses of the rest of the group and issues of 'herd' mentality could arise and members may also have felt uncomfortable discussing personal issues and feelings in such a public setting. Additionally the researcher had previous experience of group interviews, both as a researcher and as a participant, and was uncomfortable with the process and the validity of the data obtained. Thus he acknowledged his own lived-experience and the biases that this might bring to the use of this data gathering technique.

With these considerations in mind individual interviews were considered as the most appropriate primary data gathering technique for the research question. The use of individual interviews addressed the concerns of selection, group bias and influence and the researcher's own lived experience. Initially a semi structured interview approach was considered and 3 pilot interviews undertaken. These were conducted with the interviewer asking a series of open ended questions and taking notes of the responses. The initial results of these interviews indicated that the approach had significant merit. However, an early lesson in data management was learned when the physical notes taken at the interview together with the interview consent forms were misplaced by the researcher and there were no copies or backups made of the notes of these initial interviews. This data is therefore not included in the interview data presented and analysed here. This was one factor that persuaded the interviewer to digitally record the interviews and have them transcribed. Thus there were electronic copies of the data in different forms that could be easily copied and secured safely in multiple locations. The next set of interviews moved towards less structured interviews until eventually the interviews were essentially free flow interviews that were opened with a simple request: "Tell me your story"

3.7   Sample

From the outset of the research it was decided that extreme cases would not be included in the research. Extreme cases were considered those former military personnel who had experienced severe problems whilst transitioning back to the civilian world, for example those who had been homeless, had issues with drug or alcohol abuse or had been involved with the criminal justice system. This was for 2 reasons. Firstly, extreme cases probably only account for approximately 5% of former military personnel who return to civilian life, and the large majority of those who leave the military do well. (Iversen et al 2005). However, despite this disparity between the vast majority who transition effectively and the small minority who experience problems, and as indicated in the literature review, there has been much research into these extreme cases, particularly in the US, but little into the experiences of the UK Armed Forces and even less into the 'average' transition process (Iversen et al 2005). Secondly, inclusion of these extreme cases, given the small sample size, would probably skew the findings significantly. A wide spread of experience across a small, sample size was therefore considered. The aim of the sample size was to achieve a maximum variation across a range of characteristics such as gender, branch or service, time since leaving the military, reasons for leaving the military and profession since leaving the military. The sample range is shown in the table 1.

Table 1.   Sample Range

Gender	Service	Time since Exit (years)	Reason for leaving	Profession
M	Army	5	Option point	Medical
M	Army	2	Retirement	Oil Industry
F	Navy	5	Medical	Public Sector
M	Air Force	3.5	Option	Engineering
M	Navy	28	Voluntary Redundancy	Own Business
F	Army	5	Retirement	Accountancy
M	Air Force	25	Voluntary Redundancy	Own Business
M	Army	8	Voluntary Redundancy	Oil Industry
M	Air Force	-2	Retirement	NK
M	Army	2	Medical	Own Business
M	Army	4	Retirement	Retail
M	Air Force	3	Option	Public Sector
F	Navy	9	Own request	Human Resources
M	Navy	12	Option	Engineering
M	Navy	27	Retirement	IT
F	Air Force	23	Pregnancy	Charity

The interview subjects were in effect self-selecting and volunteered their services when they heard of the research project and its aims. The common response was "you must interview me/my partner". Subsequently there was a 'snowballing' effect when subjects recommended others who would be willing to take part in the process (Easterby-Smith et al 2015). Some potential subjects were not interviewed on the basis that they were too close to or too well-known to the researcher. It was considered that the researcher's inherent bias may have affected the outcomes of the interviews and the distinction between the researcher as an academic professional and as a friend or relative may have been too blurred. Given the number of willing volunteers it was decided that it would be prudent to eliminate this potential problem with bias by not interviewing those who were considered to fall into this category. Some other potential subjects who volunteered were not interviewed because they fell into the category of being extreme cases, but care was taken to explain that they did not fit the required profile without being specific about the reasons why.

3.8   Conduct of Interviews

The interviews took place in a variety of locations. Some were conducted at the researcher's home others were conducted in the homes or offices of the research subjects. However, one was conducted over the telephone as the researcher was unable to arrange a face to face interview due to the distances involved. There appeared to be a natural preference for the research subjects to conduct the interviews on a face to face basis. When offered the choice of a face to face or telephone interview all the research subjects expressed a preference for a face to face interview. They also expressed a preference for the interview to take place in a private location, rather than a public place and with no one else present. Perhaps this is the fundamental essence of telling a personal story; it is intimate and private.

At the start of each interview the safeguarding of information protocols were explained together with the ethical safeguards regarding informed consent by the research subjects. A standard interview consent form was used which is shown at Appendix 1, which the subjects were required to sign and date so that an audit trail was maintained. The interviews were conducted with no one else present with the exception of one married couple who carried out a joint interview. The interviews were recorded using digital recording which was then transcribed by a professional services company. Brief notes were taken during the interviews by the researcher but these were mainly used a prompt for points of clarification or questions at the natural end of the interview. The interviews were kept as free and wide-ranging as possible with the invitation simply to "tell me your story". This was purposely done in order to prevent the researcher steering the interview, either consciously or subconsciously, and thus preventing the richness or otherwise of the data being skewed in a particular direction. The recorded interviews lasted on average for 37 minutes with the shortest being 17 minutes and the longest being 58 minutes. In addition approximately 15 minutes was taken before each interview explaining the background to the research, the ethical safeguards and ensuring that there was truly informed consent by each of the participants and gaining some basic background information such as dates of service and time of exit. After the recording had been concluded a period of time was spent afterwards with the research subjects and some of the issues raised in the recorded interview were discussed. Whilst the length of time for this after recording period varied it is estimated that an average 30 minutes were spent after the end of the recording. It was during this 'off recording' period that some of the more personal aspects of the transition journey were discussed. Overall, on average each interview lasted in the region of one and a half hours.

3.9   How the Stories were Told

The use of the question "tell me your story" was a powerful opening to the data collection. The wording was kept deliberately open so that the researcher did not influence the framing of the response. So for example questions such as "tell me about your journey from the military" or "describe your experiences on leaving the military" were not used as it was considered that these phrases or the use of a particular word such as journey or experience would potentially nudge the research subjects in a particular direction. It was noted that of the 16 interviews conducted with the main cohort 12 of the respondents started their narrative from the time that they actually joined the military. Typical examples are:

"I joined up in 1982 and served for 26 years"

-    SUBJECT D

"I joined up just after I was 18 years old"

-    SUBJECT E

"I joined in 1993 and just the same as everyone else went to basic training at (name of establishment)"

-    SUBJECT G

"I joined the (Name of Service) in 1970 at the age of …."

-    SUBJECT J

"I joined up as an (name of trade) and apprentice back in the good old days of 1974"

-    SUBJECT M

"So I joined the (Name of Service) when I was seventeen and a half"

-    SUBJECT P

Of the 3 subjects who did not narrate their story starting with when and why they joined the military, they all started their narratives at the point at which they were leaving the military.

"I had an option point at my 44 option point"

-    SUBJECT H

"I was aged 44 and I got a chance and applied for a redundancy programme on a whim really."

<div align="right">

\- SUBJECT L

</div>

"I'd like to start back to when I was getting close to the 22 year mark"

<div align="right">

\- SUBJECT O

</div>

However, even these research subjects tended to take a chronological approach to their narrative albeit from a different starting point. The stories of the research cohort were structured in a very linear, time-related manner and often highlighted the progressive nature of both their military and subsequent civilian careers. Perhaps that is the most interesting point of the way in which the narratives were structured. They had a definite beginning, were progressive in both time and perceived achievement and were usually left open ended. The story was not yet finished, the ending was yet to be decided, acted or made up.

3.10   Rigour and Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research

The issue of establishing and demonstrating rigour and trustworthiness of qualitative research as opposed to quantitative research is an ongoing debate and whilst criteria for assessing quantitative research are well established, those for qualitative research are less developed or agreed (Cassell and Symon 2011, Golafshani 2003, Shenton 2004). It is suggested that this might be a somewhat natural positon as the academic publishing environment is often rooted in a positivist, deductive and quantitative philosophy and seeks to apply tests of reliability, validity, replicability and generalisation. (Tracy 2012, Sandberg 2012). These tests are well established in the scientific disciplines and have been applied to other non-quantitative approaches. However, applying these tests to the qualitative research presented in this thesis would be problematic and meaningless. For example, the (for a quantitative study) small sample size would rule out the possibility of the findings being generalizable in a statistical sense, and the difficulty in replicating the data collection exactly, and the interpretative nature of the analysis would rule out replicability.

However, alternative tests of rigour and trustworthiness may be more suited to evaluating qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue for tests of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, whilst Cassell and Symon (2011) argue that criteria such as contribution to the literature, development of theory and epistemological integrity may be better tests of validity for qualitative research, with more specific tests on such aspects as data collection techniques, interview questions and quality of analytic process being applied

as required. However, despite these suggestions there is, as yet, no agreed and universally applied test of rigour and trustworthiness for qualitative research.

By applying Lincoln and Guba's tests to this thesis as suggested by Shenton (2004) it is argued that the research is *credible* in so much as the research has been framed following the review of previous research (literature review). The research methods (interviews) are appropriate and well recognised and analysis has been triangulated using 3 lenses (narrative, activity theory, identity), all of which are established approaches within their base disciplines. Finally reflective commentary has been used extensively throughout the thesis in order to both demonstrate the reflexive nature of the research approach and be open about the researcher's own background and viewpoint. It is argued that *transferability* is demonstrated as sufficient background data has been provided to establish the context of the study and detailed descriptions of the research have been provided to allow comparisons to be made. *Dependability* is demonstrated by the in-depth methodological description that would allow the study to be repeated. This aspect is also used to demonstrate *confirmability* along with recognition of the study's limitations and the admission of the researcher's background, beliefs and assumptions.

Using Cassell and Symon's tests it is argued that the thesis makes a *contribution to the literature*, as it has been demonstrated that a research gap exists and the existing literature is sparse, speaks to the few and is spread across a wide range of academic disciplines. This research draws together the existing literature and focuses on the many and adds a unique addition to the body of knowledge in this area. The thesis also contributes to the *development of theory* by surfacing patterns of experience within the military transitions, and deepening the academic understanding of this social group and their views and needs. Finally the *epistemological integrity* has been demonstrated by the extensive reflexive approach taken by the researcher and the exposure of the researcher's background, beliefs and experience in relation to the research subjects. The hallmarks of rigour discussed in relation to Lincoln and Guba's tests above also provide indicators of the epistemological integrity of this research.

It can be argued therefore that whilst it may be difficult to apply tests of rigour and trustworthiness to the type of research presented in this thesis, it is possible. Using the above tests it can be argued that the research has demonstrated both rigour and trustworthiness. However, until there is a generally accepted set of criteria, as there are in quantitative research, it will remain an area where the status of research of this type is open to debate.

3.11 Conclusions

The research methodology journey has been probably the most significant part of the whole research journey. It occurred throughout the research process from the very start and indeed is still continuing and may possibly have no end. It began with the researcher in what can now be seen as a state of unconscious ignorance about his own world-view. This consisted of some seemingly rational and very firmly held views and beliefs but during the research journey these have been modified and adapted and in some aspects new beliefs and values established though the experience of the research journey.

As these beliefs and values were challenged adjusted and changed, so too did the conduct of the research in terms of the research question itself, and in particular the fundamentals of whether the research trying to describe something, explain something or truly understand something. Eventually the researcher found himself tending towards a social constructivist approach world view in which he was seeking a complexity of views rather than simplicity, or narrow views and core rules or concepts. With this paradigm assumption the research methodology moved towards a qualitative research approach and rather than focussing in on a particular method the research widened out to become less specific in a reverse funnel effect moving away from a specific, focussed, hard data-oriented approach towards a broad data capture technique of thoughts, feelings and perceptions that are difficult to interpret analyse and evaluate.

As the data were being gathered they were interpreted and analysed using various concepts and theories. Eventually the researcher used activity theory, storytelling theory and concepts of self as the three lenses to analyse and interpret the data recovered and the three lenses were used in conjunction with each other to provide triangulation of the results.

Reflecting back on the experience the researcher believes that the journey has been a tremendous learning and life experience. Aside from the lessons and experience directly related to designing, conducting and presenting an academic research project, the development and growth of the researcher's own philosophy and his own self-awareness of himself and others has been the key outcome of the whole journey. It is only now, at this final stage that the researcher realises why it is called a Doctor of **Philosophy.**

Chapter 4

Findings and Analysis

4.1   Introduction

The introduction (Chapter 1) to this thesis outlined the research question and the reasons behind it: what are the experiences of former military personnel transitioning to the world of civilian work? From this followed the literature review (Chapter 2) which suggested that not only was this a sparsely researched area of knowledge but the largest proportion of research that has been conducted has concentrated on the small percentage that have experienced significant problems in the transition process. Thus it was concluded that this is a research question worthy of further examination and that the successful development and analysis of the question will add to the existing body of academic knowledge of this phenomenon. From that there are practical applications of this knowledge that may be considered for implementation by those responsible for the transition process and those individuals who, in the future, will find themselves undertaking this transition process.

The rationale for using a qualitative research methodology including the selection of the research cohort was explored, explained and decided upon (Chapter 3) and this approach did bring with it limitations as discussed. Whilst the selection of a qualitative approach, and in particular one with a multi-layered series of inter-related analyses has produced a strongly saturated understanding of the cases, the number of cases that could be recorded and analysed in this way was necessarily limited.

The core purpose of the analysis was essentially a sense-making approach and this core purpose was used as a touchstone for the researcher in conducting all the subsequent analysis and reaching the findings. The analysis was conducted using an iterative approach and the interview transcripts were reviewed again and again as the analysis was conducted. As things were observed in one transcript they were then reviewed against the other transcripts. The analysis was in itself a journey that revisited and retraced paths of analysis. Using the concepts from career theory, activity theory, narrative theory and social psychology each transcript was analysed and reanalysed in an attempt to make sense of the experiences of the research cohort.

In reviewing the composition of the sample size the initial analysis examined the cohort on the basis of gender, service, time since leaving the service, civilian profession, reasons for leaving and rank. Each of these factors was considered in turn and benchmarked and compared to the population from which it was drawn. It was considered that the sample, whilst small, was reasonably typical of the ex- military population and was not significantly skewed towards any one particular set of former military personnel, although it was noted in some areas, such as the ratio of male to female participants there was, as there is in the military itself, a variation from the population norms as a whole.

In terms of identifying obvious patterns across the research cohort the results were less obvious and initially no discernible patterns were identified that might signpost towards areas for further detailed analysis. There was no clustering of results by either gender, service, time since leaving the service, civilian profession, reasons for leaving and rank, and thus the initial analysis was of limited utility in identifying areas for further analysis. At this point in the research the approach might appear to have strayed into a somewhat qualitative approach in terms of assessing sample size and spread. However, this was not the case as the researcher was attempting to decide whether the sample was sufficiently different or unique. As discussed in Chapter 3, the choice of the methodological approach was an iterative process that eventually sought to gain an *understanding* of the unique experiences of former military personnel and their transition back into civilian life. In taking this approach the uniqueness and richness of their experiences was the main focus and the *quality* of the research data was the important factor, rather than the size or *quantity* of the research. As will be discussed later the internal debate that the researcher had with himself was whether he had sufficient richness of data in order to have a meaningful exploration of the research topic rather than simply a sufficient amount of data, and indeed whether saturation had been reached. Therefore following this initial analysis a detailed analysis of each research subject was undertaken using the lenses of career theory, social psychology, activity theory and narrative theories in order to understand their experiences of the transition to civilian life.

Initially the analysis was conducted separately using each of these models in turn. The career theory and social psychology models of analysis were used briefly but the limitations of each of these soon became apparent. The main issue was that these theoretical models were so wide and so diverse that it was difficult to identify a particular theory from these disciplines that suited both the subject being investigated and the philosophical stance of the researcher. However, activity theory and narrative theory were considered to be much more appropriate tools for analysis and they fitted with the researcher's own epistemology as discussed in Chapter 3. Whilst the social psychology models of identity and theory of self

were not used for the detailed analysis the observations on the sense of self were included in the summary for each of the participants as it was considered that these added to the understanding of the story-telling mode that the participants adopted in the course of their interviews.

The activity theory analysis suggested that the main issue that former military personnel faced was their understanding of the environment in which they were required to operate in the civilian workplace, particularly with regard to the social rules and the concepts of activity as defined in the activity theory model. The analysis of the research using the narrative theory suggested two significant clusters: those that saw themselves as heroes in their own narrative and those who portrayed themselves as victims in their narrative.

Once the individual theory analysis had been completed an overall analysis of the research cohort was undertaken using triangulation of the two theories through the medium of thematic charting. From this is was suggested that those subjects who saw themselves as heroes in their own narrative had less difficulty in understanding, and adapting to, their new work environment. Conversely, those who saw themselves as victims in their own narrative and experience had more difficulty in relating to their new environment.

Using the sense making approach as described, the analysis was then taken to the next level and an explanation as to why this finding might be was explored. Again the iterative process of revisiting the transcripts was employed. From this process two further themes were identified. Namely the concept of the unquestioned organisation and the concept of agency. As alluded to these factors were not obvious. They were not specified in any of the transcripts, rather they were implied in transcripts. Once they had been identified again the iterative process was employed the transcripts revisited and the 'eureka' moment was achieved and the process was finally truly sense making.

These suggested associations between the experiences of the research cohort are explored in detail in the Discussion (Chapter 5) together with the potential for any practical applications of this knowledge.

4.2   Initial Analysis

The main cohort consisted of 16 subjects who volunteered to take part in the study. A number of trial interviews were completed in addition to these but the results of these interviews were used to shape and develop the research methodology and are not included for analysis with the final study cohort. The interview subjects were in effect self-selecting and volunteered their services when they heard of the research project and its aims and

there was a 'snowballing' effect when subjects recommended others who would be willing to take part in the process. As the interview process proceeded the make-up of the cohort was reviewed in an attempt to ensure that the cohort was inclusive of a wide range of differing representatives of the range former military ersonnel. Once the interview process had been completed this was confirmed by an initial analysis of the cohort. The cohort, shown below, was grouped according to the categories of gender, former service, time since they had exited the service, the reason they left, their civilian profession at the time of interview, rank on leaving the service and time served in the military.

Table 2.   Cohort Breakdown

Gender	Service	Rank	Service (yrs)	Reason for Leaving	Civilian Profession	Time since Exit (yrs)
F	Navy	JNCO	8	Medical	Public Sector	5
F	Navy	JNCO	5	Own Request	HR	9
F	Air Force	Off	18	Pregnancy	Charity	23
F	Army	SNCO	22	Retirement	Accountancy	5
M	Army	JNCO	8	Voluntary Redundancy	Oil Industry	8
M	Navy	JNCO	12	Option Point	Engineering	9
M	Air Force	JNCO	7	Voluntary Redundancy	Own Business	25
M	Navy	Off	27	Retirement	IT	9
M	Air Force	Off	32	Retirement	NK	-2
M	Army	Off	32	Retirement	Oil Industry	2
M	Navy	Off	20	Voluntary Redundancy	Own Business	28
M	Army	Off	10.5	Option Point	Medical	5
M	Air Force	Off	23	Option Point	Public Sector	3
M	Army	SNCO	8	Medical	Own Business	2
M	Air Force	SNCO	26	Option Point	Engineering	3.5
M	Army	SNCO	22	Retirement	Retail	4

The cohorts were then grouped under these headings and an initial analysis conducted under each heading to determine if there were any common characteristics by the sub-groupings:

4.2.1   Gender

The gender split of the research cohort was 25% female to 75% male. The actual percentage of female to male in the UK Armed Forces in 2013 was 9.7% (MOD 2013), although this

varies by service. The RAF has the highest percentage at approximately 14%, the Navy 9% and the Army 8% (MOD 2014). Therefore females were actually overrepresented in the research sample. However, given the small sample size it was considered that this ratio did not unduly influence the conduct of the research. The female subjects had served across the 3 services and had all left for different reasons. They had entered different professions and the length of time since they had left the services ranged from 5 to 23 years. For the males in the cohort the initial analysis by gender was approximately the same as for the females. They had served across the 3 services, and there was a spread across the sub-groupings identified. Therefore it was considered that there were no common characteristics connected with gender in the sample that would impact on the detailed analysis.

4.2.2 Service

The split by service was approximately a third to each service; army (6), navy (5) and air force (5). This does not reflect the current make-up of the regular armed forces at approximately 60% Army, 20% Royal Navy and 20% Royal Air Force (MOD 2013). However, it does represent an equitable split of experience across the three services for the research cohort and given the relatively small sample size it was considered to be an acceptable split.

4.2.3 Time Since Leaving Service

The time at interview since leaving the service for the cohort ranges from minus 2 years to 28 years. The mean time of interview since leaving was 8.8 years whilst the median time was 5 years and the mode was also 5 years. The only observation of note was that the longest time since leaving for the former Army members of the cohort was 8 years, compared to 28 years for the Navy and 25 years for the RAF. With this in mind the detailed analysis was reviewed to see if there were any differences by service, which may have been influenced by this aspect of the sample but no concerns were identified.

4.2.4 Civilian Profession

The civilian professions at the time of interview are shown in table 3.

Where there was more than one subject in the gross classification of the professions these were further broken down to provide detail of the professions. These are shown in table 4.

Table 3.   Civilian Occupations

Engineering	Oil Industry	Own Business	Public Sector	Private Sector	3rd Sector
Project Management	Remotely Piloted Vehicle Supervisor	Printing	Emergency Call operator	Recruitment	Charity Volunteer
Maintenance Engineering	Contingency Planning	Bakery	Police Service Civilian Support	Accounting	
Information Technology		Locksmith	Debt Management		

From this there was no obvious clustering of profession at the time of interview. However, previous employment and professions that had been carried out between leaving the service and the time of interview were also considered. These were randomly listed as shown in table 4 below and it was concluded that there was also no clustering of professions held before the current subjects' professions.

Table 4.   Previous Occupations

Insurance Services	Immigration Services	Fire-fighter	Financial Services
Charity	Airport Services	Driver	Tourism

4.2.5   Reason for Leaving the Military

The reasons for leaving the military were also analysed and the results are contained in table 5.

Table 5.   Reasons for Leaving the Military

Gender	Service	Reason for Leaving
F	Navy	Medical
F	Navy	Own Request
F	Air Force	Pregnancy
F	Army	Retirement
M	Army	Voluntary Redundancy
M	Navy	Option Point
M	Air Force	Voluntary Redundancy
M	Navy	Retirement
M	Air Force	Retirement
M	Army	Retirement
M	Navy	Voluntary Redundancy
M	Army	Option Point
M	Air Force	Option Point
M	Army	Medical
M	Air Force	Option Point
M	Army	Retirement

With the exception of 2 instances the reasons were a reflection of the reasons why people generally leave the serve (MOD 2013), either at the end of a particular period of employment contract or engagement (option point), retirement with a service pension (retirement), as part of a redundancy programme (voluntary redundancy) or by leaving before the end of a contract (at own request). It was noted that none of the cohort had left as a result of forced redundancy and this could be considered a gap in the research range. The first of the exceptions was one subject who had left the services when females were required to leave the military on becoming pregnant. Whilst this practice ceased in the mid-1990s, the subject was required to leave for this reason. However, due to the length of time she had spent in the military the subject was also eligible to leave at an option point having qualified for a pension, but she was officially discharged on the grounds of pregnancy. She could therefore also be counted as leaving at an option point or retirement. The second exception was the two subjects who left on the grounds of medical disability. Whilst these subjects represent 12.5%

of the sample size the actual rate of discharge for medical reasons across all three services in 2013 was 3.5% (MOD 2013). The main reason for medical discharge from the military is musco-skeletal injury or damage (MOD 2013) and one of the subjects left for this reason. The other left as a result of a non-combat related medical condition that would probably have occurred regardless of military service. With this in mind it was considered that this was a sufficient variety of reasons for people leaving the military across the sample.

4.2.6 Rank

The rank held by the research subjects on leaving the military was analysed by grouping the subjects into rank bands as Other Ranks (OR), Junior Non-Commissioned Officers (JNCO), Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCO) and Officers (Off). Five of the cohort left as JNCOs, 4 as SNCOs and 7 as Officers. Two issues were identified with this breakdown. First, no ORs were included in the research and second, the breakdown appeared to be skewed towards officer ranks. In the case of the absence of ORs this reflects the relatively rapid promotion to JNCO rank in the UK Armed Forces. Across the services the average time for promotion to JNCO is 3 years (MOD 2014) with some trades are promoted to JNCO rank on completion of their specialist training. The average length of service of personnel leaving the military varies from approximately 10 years (MOD 2013) to 17.1 (Hatch et al 2013) depending upon the sources consulted. Whilst the survey sample could realistically be expected to exclude ORs as leavers of this rank are in a minority this lack of an OR perspective may be considered to be a gap in the sampling. In the case of the skewing towards officer ranks, 3 of the 7 former officers had started their careers as ORs and have progressed through the rank structure from OR through JNCO and SNCO before being commissioned. Thus they represented 43% of the former officer subjects. Overall the lack of an OR perspective was not considered to represent a gap as 75% of the research cohort had entered the military and served as ORs before being promoted.

4.2.7 Ethnicity

The ethnic make-up of the research cohort was wholly White British. This was not a deliberate choice by the researcher but was a result of the snowballing effect of the research in regard to the availability and suitability of the research cohort. Indeed in the course of the research data gathering only one subject who was not of White British ethnicity offered to participate in the research process. However, the nature of their departure from the military and their ongoing issues placed that individual outside the selection criteria as they represented an extreme case. Given that Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) personnel make up 7.1% of UK regular forces (MOD 2013) it was considered that given the small sample size

of the research cohort the lack of BME participants was an acceptable risk to the validity of the research outcomes. However, the lack of BME participants is noted as a limitation of the research, and future research based upon these research findings should include a BME element perspective. Indeed given the increase in recruiting of personnel from the British Commonwealth, particularly into the British Army, it would be an area worthy of further research to examine the experiences of non-British BME former military personnel, particularly if it involves a relocation back to their country of origin.

4.3 Saturation

4.3.1 The Concept of Saturation

When reviewing the research analysis the question of 'how much is enough?' was a key consideration for the researcher. As has been previously discussed in Chapter 3, the journey in deciding the methodological approach was an iterative process that eventually sought to gain the richness and uniqueness of experiences of former military personnel and indeed to attempt to *understand* that experience. Thus the uniqueness and richness of the experiences, the *quality*, was the object of the research rather than the size or *quantity* of the research. However, within the published works on qualitative research there are debates as to whether there are specific criteria for the actual quality of qualitative research (Caelli et al 2003, Tracy 2012). Some suggest that, the very diversity of qualitative approaches suggest that a single criteria to assess the quality of research would be impossible to achieve (Guba and Lincoln 2005). As the qualitative approach adopted in this research journey seeks to explore the experiences and issues encountered by former military personnel when they transition into civilian work the key factor for the researcher was the richness of the data obtained rather than the quantity. It was considered that the number of research subjects in the study depends upon the data obtained and the resources available. Therefore the key considerations in attempting to decide whether saturation had been reached were appropriateness of the data and the adequacy of the data and the validity of the sample was judged not on the size of the research cohort but the richness of the data obtained (O'Reilly and Parker 2012).

Therefore the researcher adopted a thematic saturation stance. Thematic saturation can be said to occur when no new themes or emergent patterns of data occur (Green and Thorogood 2004). However, there are limitations to this definition. Given that the qualitative approach taken seeks to understand the uniqueness of the research subjects' experiences can it ever be said that saturation has been reached as surely there will always be something to be discovered from the uniqueness of the individual narratives (O'Reilly and Parker 2012).

Pragmatically however, there needs to be a decision made as to when saturation had been reached. Whilst the point at which this decision is reached will largely be based upon the initial and detailed analysis of the data recorded there are also 2 other considerations that must be made. First, the resources of the researcher to carry out further research given the practical and academic restrictions on time, finances and capacity. To conduct further research beyond the point of saturation becomes a situation of reducing benefit. Time spend on data gathering beyond saturation may otherwise be used more productively in analysing the existing data and writing up the results. Second is the subjective view of the researcher. If saturation is reached in the researcher's mind then the robustness or validity of the subsequent research and analysis may be called into question.

4.3.2 Recognising Saturation

In this research project recognising saturation was a gradual process as each interview was conducted and analysed. It became apparent that the thematic charting process began to identify common areas of tension in the subjects narrated activity systems, concepts of self and storytelling modes. However, only once the initial 16 interviews had been conducted and analysed was it considered that a saturation point had been reached in terms of the research question. It appeared that no new insights were being gained by continuing to conduct more interviews. Whilst using a qualitative methodology, in theory, interviews could have been conducted indefinitely as each research subject was unique there came a point where there was both academic saturation and researcher saturation.

4.3.3 Academic Saturation

Academic saturation was taken to be as described, no different insights were being observed from the latter interviews. Again this caused some dilemmas for the researcher. A larger sample size might be seen as a 'better' or more robust technique if a quantitative approach was being used and there were echoes of the dilemma explored in Chapter 3 in discarding a history of a quantitative bias on the part of the researcher. However, it was quality rather than quantity that was being sought and again the core purpose of the research approach, a qualitative one, was reaffirmed. It was being conducted in order to make sense of complexity not to make a complex situation simple. Merely producing large quantities of data would not necessarily achieve this and once again the research analysis was revisited. Having reviewed the analysis the researcher was content that academic saturation had been reached.

4.3.4   Researcher Saturation

At this point there was also a sense that researcher saturation had also been reached. The researcher was only able to conduct so much analysis within the time and financial constraints of the research project. Thus the data gathering and analysis had reached a culminating point. To conduct more research would then have started to adversely affect the overall outcome of the research project as time, effort and resource would have been consumed in gathering more data with less time, effort and resource being available for the remainder of the research project. This was a considerable dilemma for the researcher and where to draw the boundary between data gathering, analysis and writing was a constant theme in the latter half of the research journey.

4.3.5   Confirming Saturation

As the writing-up phase of the research project commenced it was considered that whilst theoretical saturation had been reached the research would be strengthened if this were confirmed by conducting more field work. This was in order to conduct discriminate sampling in order to both confirm and verify the existing data and to test the analysis conducted (Strauss and Corbin 1990). An opportunity to conduct 10 more interviews in order to demonstrate that theoretical saturation had indeed been reached was subsequently identified. However, the cost benefit analysis as discussed above was still an issue. A cohort of a further 10 research subjects was identified using the snowball effect once again and detailed interviews planned to be carried out. In order to address the cost benefit issue and save time and financial resource the interviews were planned to be recorded and not transcribed. The recordings were then to be analysed using thematic analysis, looking for either new or previously unobserved issues and for issues that had been identified in the previous main set of interviews. The process was carried out, but not without some difficulty. The initial set of discriminatory interviews did not progress as well as planned. Some subjects subsequently decided not to participate, some wished to participate but were unavailable in the timescales required and some were found to be unsuitable for the reasons already discussed in Chapter 3. Subsequently replacement subjects needed to be located. This was achieved using the snowball effect, however, this did result in half the subjects coming from a single service, the RAF. However, this was not considered to be significant but could be considered a critique of the makeup of this second cohort. The breakdown of the second cohort is detailed in table 6.

Table 6.   Breakdown of the Second Cohort

ID	Gender	Service	Rank	Service (yrs)	Reason for Leaving	Civilian Profession	Time Since Exit
A1	M	RAF	SAC (Tech)	5	Voluntary Redundancy	Oil and Gas engineering	2
B1	M	RAF	Wg Cdr	20	At own request	Strategic Management	3
C1	M	RAF	Gp Capt	22	Retirement	Communications manager	2
D1	M	RAF	Flt Lt	16	Retirement	Facilities Manager	6
E1	F	RAF	Sqn Ldr	16	Retirement	Head Office Manager	10
F1	F	Army	Maj	19	Retirement	HR Manager	15
G1	M	Army	Capt	5	End of engagement (no opportunity to reengage)	Estate Manager	20
H1	M	RM	Sgt	11.5	Own Request	HR Manager	25
I1	F	Army	Sgt	12	End of engagement	Leisure Industry	13
J1	M	Army	WO2	24	Retirement	Electrician	8

Despite these issues the research effort was considered worthwhile as will be demonstrated below. However, there were several issues identified during this phase of the research project. First, whilst this additional research was being carried out the researcher was very conscious of the danger of the 'halo effect' or seeing what he was looking for (Nesbitt and Wilson 1977). Despite all the discussions as to whether a researcher can ever be truly objective in Chapter 3 this was a very real dilemma for the researcher. The use of the question 'tell me your story' with no preamble or discussion of the findings so far proved to be a suitable method of attempting to avoid bias or pre-understanding in the research subjects and thus influence their responses.

Second the dilemma of whether to discuss the research findings so far after the recorded interview was considered by the researcher. It was decided that this subject would only be discussed and only if it was raised by the subject. Surprisingly the majority of the subjects asked the question after the recorded interview had taken place. When the initial findings were outlined to the subjects there was universal agreement with the positions stated even when these had not been specifically mentioned or raised during the recorded interviews,

particularly issues around the unquestioned organisation and the unthinking transfer of agency that are discussed later.

The analysis of the second cohort did not identify either any new or previously unobserved issues, thus confirming or validating the existing data. It also reinforced the existing observations and analysis thus suggesting that theoretical saturation had been reached. The post interview discussion of the findings from the first research cohort, with the second cohort, also confirmed the analysis and was considered to be a valid test of saturation as the appropriateness of the data was confirmed (O'Reilly and Parker 2012).

Consequently it was concluded that following the discriminate sampling and analysis that saturation had indeed been reached in the main research cohort and that the detailed analysis was supported by the experiences of the second cohort.

4.4   Detailed Analysis

As detailed in Chapter 3, the detailed interview technique was selected after a considerable process of refinement. After the ethical and consent processes had been completed the interview was opened with the researcher simply asking the interviewee to: "Tell me your story". The resulting transcripts were then reviewed using 2 different frames of reference: Activity Theory, Narrative or story telling theory.

4.4.1 Activity Theory Analysis.

Activity theory, when applied to management and organisation studies:

> *"…analyses expertise by exploiting how people achieve their knowledge and doing. This approach points to the recurrent and embedded nature of human activities, the tentative nature of knowledge and its action orientation and significance for collective learning of the tensions that inevitably develop within and between activity systems."*
>
> —BLACKER, CRUMP AND MCDONALD,(1993), P 6

Initially developed from a Marxist perspective, and developed form the work of Lektorski (1984), activity theory as described by Yrjö Engeström (1987) contends that any activity undertaken by an individual is conducted by that individual (the subject) using tools and or knowledge, resulting in the production of an object or outcome, be that an actual physical object, or a design or a theory or any output or activity. This relationship is shown in the diagram below:
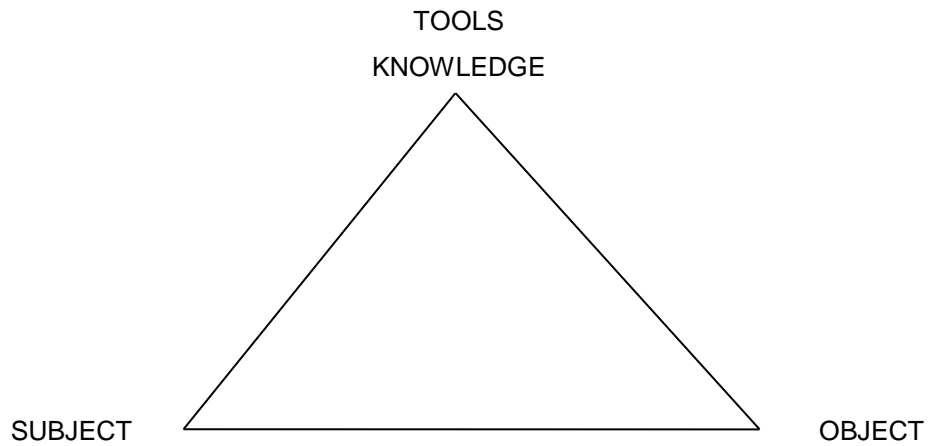
```
                              TOOLS
                            KNOWLEDGE
                               /\
                              /  \
                             /    \
                            /      \
                           /        \
                          /          \
                         /            \
                        /              \
                       /                \
            SUBJECT  /_____\  OBJECT
```

Figure 3.　　　*Activity Relationship*

However, Engeström also contends that this activity does not take place in isolation and any human activity takes place in a community that is governed by its own rules and explicit or tacit agreements on the division of labour. In the perfect world these six areas would be in perfect harmony or balance. However, as the world is not perfect, inevitably tensions will exist between each of these aspects. This complete human activity system is shown below.
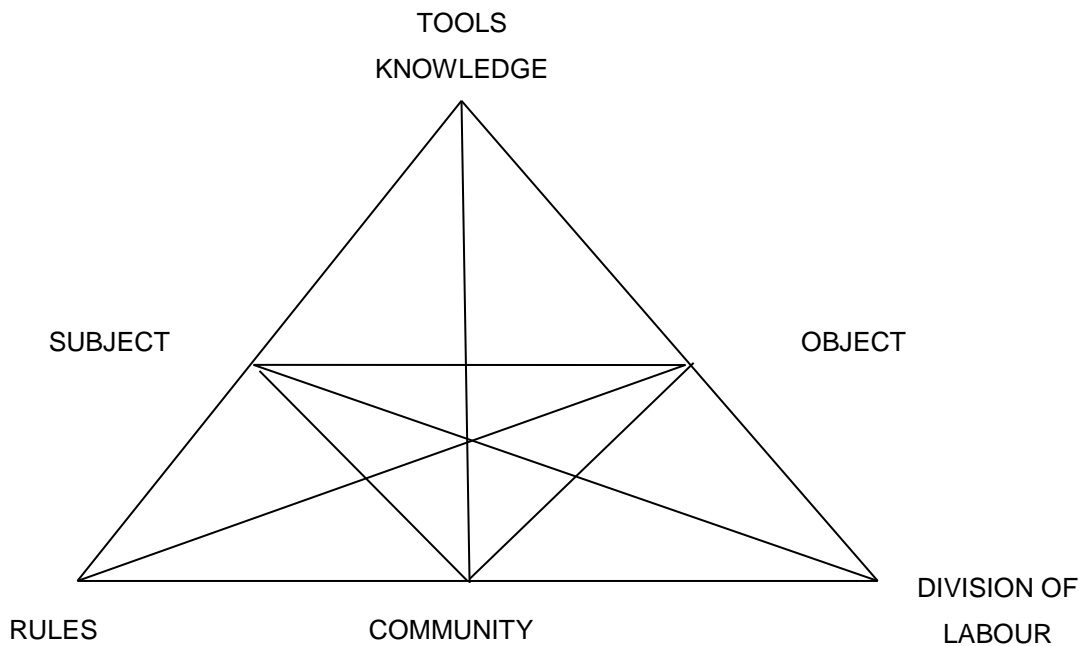
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                              TOOLS
                            KNOWLEDGE

            SUBJECT                        OBJECT

       RULES          COMMUNITY         DIVISION OF
                                          LABOUR
```

Figure 4.　　　*Complete Human Activity System*

Much of Engeström's initial work focussed upon the delivery of health care in Finland and was thus very specific in both the context that it was applied and developed; therefore one must be aware of this philosophical, political and environmental background when the theory is applied to other environments. Later the theory was applied to organisational analysis (Blackler 1993 and 1995, Holt and Morris 1993, Blackler, Crump and McDonald 1999, Jarabkowski 2003, Johnson et al 2003) and these sought to broaden the applicability of the theory to organisations in a wider context. Whilst the wider academic application of the theory was relatively sparse, in relation to this research the theory was particularly attractive as it seeks to understand the relationships between the various factors identified in the model, similar to the way in which this research seeks to understand the experiences of military personnel re-entering the civilian world and their relationships with such things as tools, knowledge and concepts, rules, communities, the division of labour and the outcomes achieved (Hashim and Jones 2007).

A central tenet of activity theory is that it is a *dynamic system* that seeks to understand the relationship between the individual and the environment in which activity takes place (Engeström 1987 & 2000). This environment consists of the individual, the community in which they operate, including work colleagues, co-workers, other professionals or specialists, and the activity in which they are engaged that leads to an outcome. The relationship and interaction between these aspects of the system are represented by the inner triangle as shown in green below.
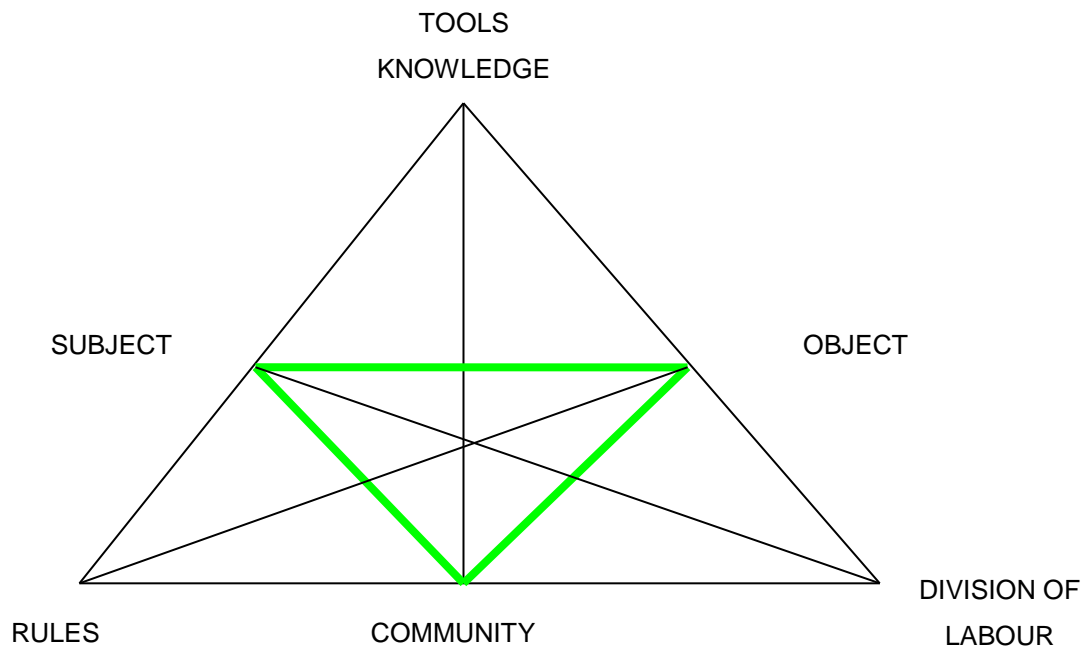
Figure 5.   *Dynamic Activity System*

The *processes* that contain the inner triangle and determine the relationship between the various factors within the system are represented in the outer triangle and are shown in red below. As previously stated, in an ideal world this system would be in dynamic harmony, with a natural balancing process: as one element of the system changed the others would adjust to maintain the equilibrium in the system. However, the activity system theory emphasises the tensions that occur in the system rather than the harmonies. Indeed Blackler, Crump and McDonald (1999) suggest that activity systems are best understood as *disturbance* producing systems. From the Marxist social theory origins of the model it can be argued that the disturbances within the system provide the vehicle for people to develop and learn and thus are the drivers for innovation and change (Avis 2009).
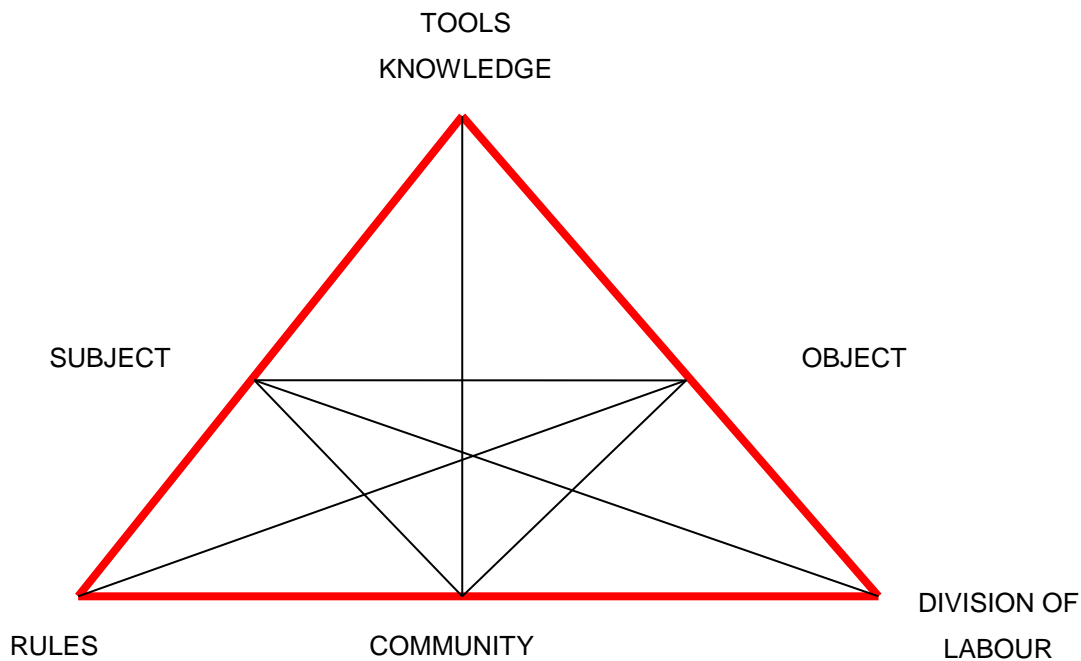
Figure 6.   Activity System Processes

It was this emphasis on tensions driving improvisation, adaptation and change that makes the activity theory model attractive to this research study. By identifying those tensions between military lives and civilian lives it may be possible to achieve an insight into the process of adaptation and change that military leavers undergo in the transition process back to the civilian world. Patterns or clusters might be identified, and from those patterns common themes or groupings suggested. The process of tensions and possible development was encapsulated in the diagram below by Blackler, Crump and McDonald (1999). The process has been annotated for the process of transitioning to civilian life from military life and whereas in the original diagram the flow arrow from stage 6 goes back into stage 1.
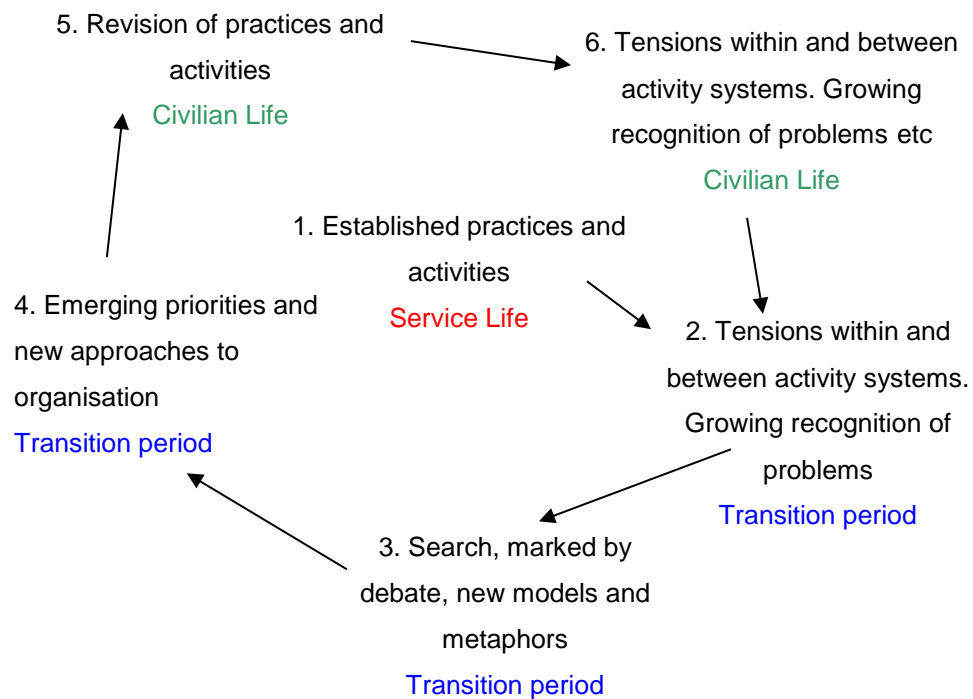
Figure 7.   Activity Systems Tensions and Possible Development (after Blackler, Crump and McDonald,1999)

It is also emphasised by Blackler, Crump and McDonald (1993) that:

> *"the activity theory approach does not assume that this process is unproblematic;…..Rather the cycle of collective learning envisaged here is characteristically hesitant and uncertain."*

—P9

In the context of applying the model to this research question this seems wholly appropriate as the actual experience of transition from the military to the civilian worlds appears to be a 'messy' process as one research subject explained:

> *"I mean I used to be up half the night you know doing things because there was a hell of a lot of fright involved."*

—SUBJECT L

Whilst another explained:

> *"I thought I'd share this with you because when you said what you were doing…because I might be typical I don't know, but I thought I would find it easy and I haven't. I'm admitting I haven't found it easy"*
>
> —SUBJECT E

However, in attempting to apply activity theory in the context of this research project there were a number of issues that arose.

First, the theory itself had, largely, been applied in an organisational setting (Blackler 1993, 1995, Holt and Morris 1993 and Blackler, Crump and McDonald 1999, Daniels and Warmington 2007, Engeström 2000, Engeström and Kerosuo 2007). However, in this case the researcher was attempting to apply the theory in two levels: an individual level as each interview transcript was analysed, and at a cohort level as the overall experiences of the participants were explored. Both of these levels differ significantly from the previously applied organisational setting. Whilst the cohort had similar life experiences they could not be described as a homogenous group, and indeed other researchers have specifically counselled against treating the ex- military population as a homogenous entity (Iversen et al 2005a, 2005b, Wood et al 2007). Thus the researcher is attempting to apply the model to a group that simply shared a *similar* experience: similar rather than a common experience, as each individual had experienced a similar process of leaving the military and re-entering civilian life but they had experienced it in a different context and at different times; rather than an organisation with its own explicit and implicit rules, rituals, culture and common purpose or reason for existence may have implications for the validity of the model and its appropriateness for complex multi-aspect analysis (Avis 2009, de Souza 2008). However, it was considered that because the model essentially focussed on relationships between elements of the model and the tensions that may occur between them, that it could be applied in the manner envisaged, especially as it was seeking to understand the psychological aspects of the tensions and its origins in Marxist/Russian philosophy suggest that this would be a suitable approach (Bakhurst 2009). The model was first applied to a number of the individual interview transcripts. From the language used it was possible to identify areas of tension in the relationships and these were then applied in a diagrammatic format to the model for each individual case, with the tensions being highlighted in red; the higher the tension the thicker the line.

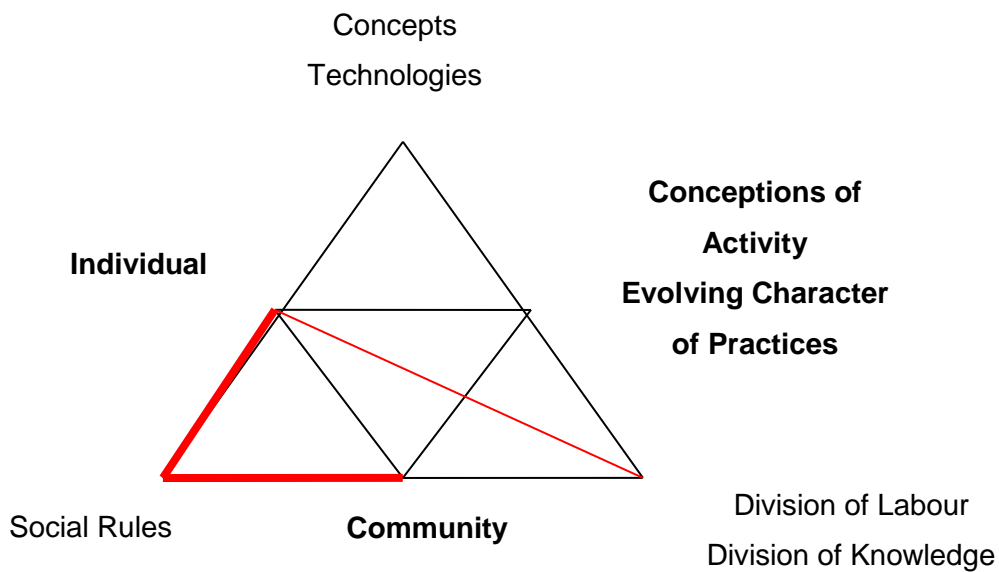An example of the tension diagram is shown at figure 8:

Concepts
Technologies

Conceptions of
Activity
Evolving Character
of Practices

Individual

Social Rules   **Community**

Division of Labour
Division of Knowledge

Figure 8.   *Individual Activity System Tension Diagram*

Once these had been completed for each interviewee the individual diagrams were then grouped in a single document so that they could be visually collated to identify patterns or clusters or thematic charting (Ritchie and Lewis 2003)

The individual diagrams are presented in the detailed findings as part of a multi-lens, within case analysis, within the detailed analysis tables and commentary below with a brief commentary annotated as to the overall conclusion of the synthesis of the three analytical lenses used. Thus by combining the findings from three lens and synthesising these findings a novel perspective has been produced on the research question.

From the above, a second criticism of the use of activity theory in this way is the somewhat subjective approach in its analysis as the tensions were identified using language contained in the transcript and a weighting was given dependent upon the language used and the frequency with which the issue was discussed or alluded to. This critique has its roots in the origins of the theory itself. Based upon a Russian concept of the social self, activity is seen through a philosophical and psychological lens, whereas a the Anglo-American concept rather sees activity as simply activity, necessary for everyday survival and not rooted in any deep philosophical tradition and having little if any philosophical or psychological meaning (Bakhurst 2009). Therefore used in this research context, the researcher was using activity theory in its original form, seeking to attach philosophical and psychological meaning to activity through analysis and it can be argued that activity may not be adequate as an

analytical tool because it simplifies too much the complexities of the situation it seeks to understand (Yamagata-Lynch 2010, Bakhurst 2009 and de Souza 2008).

As the interviews were completely unstructured and were driven by the interviewee with no or little direction from the researcher, it may have been that the issue may have been important but was simply not considered in the moment of the interview. However, as explored in Chapter 3 the use of the unstructured interview was considered to be an appropriate method of data gathering and the limitations of this qualitative analysis approach is well documented (Ritchie and Lewis 2003, Creswell 2007, Bluhm et al, 2010). Indeed the main outcome of the research was never actually stated by any of the participants, rather it was implicit in the interview but required a second or third level of analysis in order for the issue to be articulated.

Another critique of using activity theory in this manner is that individuals can be engaged in multiple activity systems simultaneously and that individuals are not engaged in a single activity system but are most likely involved in chains of activities and multiple activity systems (de Souza 2008, Avis 2009). Thus the activity system pertinent to the research is that of the transition process as seen from both the researcher's and the participants' view. However, what is not visible are the other activity systems that the research subjects may be engaged in at the same time and how these might influence the outcome of the analysis. Similarly multiple activity systems may be overlapping or interlocking and directly influencing the other activity systems that they are in engaged with. It could therefore be argued that there is an incomplete view of the total experience of the individual.

Developing this critique further the temporal aspect of activity systems has not been explored. Activity systems are dynamic, changing systems creating tensions within the system. (Avis 2009). The analysis therefore has been conducted viewing the research at a single point in time when the interview was conducted. The activity systems that have been identified are therefore historic and the dynamic nature of the theory is not fully articulated within the analysis (Martin and Pelm 2009). Activity systems may also be seen as being hierarchical, with some being of greater importance than others and thus there are systems within systems, or systemic relationships between different, but interrelated, activity systems (Yamagata-Lynch 2010).

Indeed it can be argued that within the multiple activity systems that individuals are engaged in are there those that activity systems that have run their course and no longer exist. However, the experience of these systems remains with the individual and may affect their participation within other contemporary systems. These 'ghost' systems may affect the

perceptions and behaviour of the individuals and whilst they no longer exist and the individual is no longer a participant in them the legacy of the ghost system may still impact on the current systems. This is aspect may be particularly pertinent for those who have left behind well-defined socialised and psychologically important activity systems and is explored more fully in Chapter 5.

4.4.2   Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis can be described as the interpretation and allocation of meaning to the story that the research subjects told in their interviews. The concept of storytelling is as old as humanity itself and is a way in which we can make sense of the physical and philosophical world that individuals inhabit (Gabriel 2000). However, we must not lose sight of the fact that story telling has also been used as an entertainment, as a way of illustrating morals and behaviours, as in the use of fables, and as pure propaganda (Gabriel 2000). We must also consider that the use of stories is not value neutral and individuals and organisations can use stories and storytelling in a variety of ways to the benefit of themselves (Boyce 1996). If we accept this view then we must question how many of the stories that people tell about themselves and their experiences are sense-making in the truest form? Can it be supposed that they are all somehow shaped by the need to present ourselves in a particular way or explain our choices and behaviours? Do we accept that we are all trying to produce a narrative that will show us how we wish to be viewed and if so what is the narrative that we are trying to create about ourselves?

It can be argued that our own lives are given meaning by the stories that we tell *about* ourselves and *to* ourselves. Thus our lives are made up of the reality which we encounter and our interpretation of these realities and the interpretation that others put on our realities and our stories. This social constructivist perspective can be described as a blend of a social reality and symbolic interaction. So 'reality' is a collective of experience that has been constructed by events, our social interactions and our individual narrative. Thus, this is how we engage in the construction of our personal life meaning (Berger and Luckmann,1967). We can therefore argue that our own worlds are created both by ourselves and those who we interact with, throughout our lives. The life narrative is something that begins as soon as we are born and continues possibly after our deaths; perhaps this might explain why obituaries are so popular.[2] The building and sustainment of our personal narrative and the

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[2]   The researcher once had a role that required him and his colleagues to carry out a daily 'death check' in the death and obituary notices in the Times and the Telegraph newspapers to see which

narratives of those that we interact with can be seen as being core to our existence as human beings. These narratives enable us to make sense of ourselves, others and the world in which we exist. Schein claims that without these narratives then we would face a difficult and confusing existence:

> *"we spend several decades building assumptions about ourselves, illusions which serve to maintain our self-esteem, and we define our relationships with family members, friends, and work associates in terms of these illusions or masks……the falling away of our masks, the destruction of our illusions, is not only a threat to the individual, but also challenges the social order in that we might find it difficult to in social relationships to deal with others' realities. There are thus powerful forces operating in all relationships to maintain our own masks or facades, and to help others maintain theirs."*
>
> —SCHEIN (1978), P180

Likewise, Gabriel (2000) argues that the narrative is an essential concept and condition to enable us to make sense of the complex and often conflicting world that we inhabit. We lack control of our lives and seemingly random events impact upon us every day and we only seem able to make sense of the world and believe that we have an explanation of our lives, if not control, if we frame those experiences as a story:

> *"the world (both outer and inner) is irrational, disorderly, puzzling, and threatening, our actions often lead to unanticipated results, and, in spite of our best attempts to control our lives, we constantly face situations that we have not anticipated. Under these circumstances, science, with its multi-causal analysis, its statistical and probabilistic links, can at best partially meet our sensemaking needs. So, we turn to narrative forms of explanation, interpretation, and sensemaking. By attributing motive, agency, or purpose to our human predicaments, we may make them sensical, capable of being understood. When motive, agency, or purpose cannot be found, we lapse into meaninglessness and despair."*
>
> —GABRIEL (2000), P 240

Given the centrality of the narrative to forming, shaping and giving meaning to our lives Boyce (1996) suggests that storytelling is a 'fundamental form' through which individuals express values and reasoning and subsequently make decisions for action. Therefore, understanding storytelling and the narrative requires a multidisciplinary approach drawing upon the areas of folklore, anthropology, communication theory, sociology, philosophy and critical theory (Boyce, 1996).

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prominent people had died. He often met the relatives and colleagues of those who had featured in obituaries and was struck by the manufactured nature of the lives portrayed in the obituaries.

So assuming that we accept that narrative is not only an essential, but also a complex and extensive part of the human condition its use as an analytical tool is not without its challenges. Mangham and Overington (1987) suggest that in a post-modern interpretation, stories and experience are intertwined as stories, as retold by individuals transform into the experience of those individuals, but also lived experience is turned into stories. Therefore separating experience from stories is a complex, and one might argue, impossible task. Additionally, whilst it may be common in all narratives, is it possible that in the case of former military personnel, there may be a temptation to look upon their period of military service as a 'golden age' and this idealised view of the past may lead to an embellished or even 'false memory' version of the past. Whilst this specific aspect of the narrative is outside the scope of this paper, the anecdotal experience of the researcher prior to undertaking this research and the comments observed in the course of this research, suggests that former military personnel do tend to look upon their military experience as being a unique part of their lives and they may be more susceptible to taking a nostalgic view of their military past. It may be that the intensity of the experiences (particularly combat or danger) that former military personnel have encountered during this part of their lives makes it stand out as so different from the rest of their life experience that it is afforded a special or unique part in the narrative. However, it is often the social aspects of their military lives that seem to hold a special place rather than the more extreme elements:

> *"Looking back I did love every bit of it and it still makes me laugh and the things we did"*
>
> —SUBJECT A

> *"I've met some lovely people and I've got some really good new friends but I think those friends that you make in the forces are friends that you keep forever and the ones that you could rely on 100%".*
>
> —SUBJECT B

> *"The only thing I really miss about the Army now is the social side – social interaction with the people….And I miss the banter, the crack, the sense of humour."*
>
> —SUBJECT E

> *" I still miss it now, the camaraderie, and all that and there's no one you could, you could meet all the old forces people, any forces person I think will get on with somebody else from the forces."*
>
> —SUBJECT G

This is an area that is probably worthy of further evidence-based research as this may could be an important factor in understanding veterans' issues. However, more specifically Gabriel suggests that the nostalgic view is potentially present in all narratives:

> *"This gives us a clue to what we called the nostalgia paradox – namely, the pleasurable recollection of a past irredeemably lost. The rarer, the more unique the experience, the greater its value. Just as collectors of stamps take greater pride in the rarest items they possess, or even the rarest items they once possessed, in nostalgia we take special pride in our most unrepeatable experiences."*
>
> —GABRIEL (2000), P 183

The key word in this quote is 'unrepeatable' as for all the subjects of this research their military experiences they had were largely unrepeatable. They would never again experience the transition from civilian to military life and the processes rituals and symbols that it entails and the life changing aspects of the process (Gade 1991, Hale 2008, Thornborrow and Brown 2009). They would never find themselves in the operational scenarios and risks that they faced and they would certainly never regain the youthfulness and physicality that they experienced as young men and women:

> *"..you're covered in snow and freezing cold and all that, and you're not going to enjoy that point but the second you warm up its fun because you're laughing with all the other guys"*
>
> —SUBJECT A

> *"I've been there and I've done that and I've got the T shirt and I've got a rack of medals and I'm really happy and I wouldn't change a day of it and if I had to live it all again, wild horses wouldn't stop me."*
>
> —SUBJECT E

Therefore, in attempting to use narrative analysis is there a core issue with the story as told by the subject? What image is the subject trying to create or convey, either consciously or unconsciously? A danger of any story-based research is the risk that the story will be presented as fact especially if the storyteller believes that the events related in a narrative 'actually happened' or that they had been present or that they had actually witnessed them (Gabriel 2000). Thus how can the researcher extract fact from fiction, narrative from reality? Probably, it is impossible to distinguish between reality and the narrative, however, that is not to say that the narrative cannot be used as an analytical tool. Boyce (1996) suggests that this issue can be overcome by accepting that it is impossible to separate reality from the story and that the narrative is a mixture of the two. However, by identifying common story themes and identifying links between values, reason and action it is possible to use narrative

analysis. Having considered this position the researcher came to the conclusion that indeed he could not separate fact from the narrative stories and came to the position that reality was the narrative, and the narrative, was indeed, reality. This was a moment of extreme clarity and changed the world view of the researcher: reality is all about the narrative that we tell, the narratives we hear and, most importantly, the narratives, our own included, that we choose to believe. Objective 'truth' may not actually exist.

However, when attempting to apply this approach during the analysis of the data, the researcher came across a further issue, namely the biases that the researcher brings to the research himself. This issue had been explored in chapter 3, however, using narrative analysis this was brought into sharper focus. As Gabriel states:

> *"The most evident danger of story-based research is the selective use of organizational narratives to amplify or reinforce the researcher's preconceived ideas or assumptions…..As every journalist knows, through selective presentation, editing, head-lining, and framing, a narrative may be put to work within virtually any overall story".*

—GABRIEL (2000), P 151

Thus this was a key consideration by the researcher during the analysis. In interpreting the transcripts of the interviews the researcher was very conscious of their own inherent bias in the process. For example the quotes used above can only really be fully understood if the whole transcript is read and indeed if the reader had been present at the actual interview when it took place. Thus the researcher has filtered the information for the reader and presented it to support a particular argument, but in doing so he may be guilty of the charges that Gabriel outlines above.

Gabriel identifies 4 generic poetic modes: Comic, Tragic, Epic and Romantic; and 4 secondary poetic modes: Humour, Cock-up, Tragi-comic and Epic-comic. Using these modes the stories of each individual research subject were analysed in order to identify the main modes that they fell into. This was achieved by identifying key words that were used within the narrative. Words that described the subject's view of their experience: for example 'lucky', 'naïve' and 'fair', were highlighted and the frequency and the context in which they were used was analysed. As well as the specific word search a general sense of the story was considered by the researcher and an overall impression of the view that the subject had of themselves was considered by the researcher. These individual results were then grouped together and a search for patterns was initiated to identify clusters or groups of the similar modes used in the narratives and suggest associations with these patterns and those from the activity theory and identity analysis.

4.4.3   Identity

In the course of the research a common theme that began to emerge from the activity theory and narrative analysis was that of a military identity and the challenge, or otherwise, of casting off that military identity and acquiring a 'new' civilian identity. However, the issue was not as simple as merely exchanging one identity for another, for during the course of the research interviews it became apparent, that all the research subjects held multiple simultaneous identities of varying importance to them.

Brown (2014) argues that informed discussion of identity, and the self, began with Plato and has been continued for the past 3000 years through various religions, with modern Western debates stemming from the Enlightenment philosophers. Identity has been a popular research topic in social sciences since the 1950s with the last 30 years seeing them move to a more central position within intellectual debates. The vast amount of theoretical research that has been conducted into identity is far too great to be included in this paper in a meaningful way so three fundamental positions have been taken by the author in this respect.

The first is that as self-conscious, sentient, reflexive organisms human beings have a sense of time and space, of history and of future possibilities. It enables them to attempt to exercise control over circumstances and the environment. It enables them to be aware of themselves, those around them and compare and contrast themselves with those that they interact with and therefore create an identity both for themselves and for others (Brown 2014, Collinson 2003). Identity is thus based upon both similarities such as race, gender, profession, education and differences such as race, gender, profession, education, for what marks us as being the same also marks us as being different, depending upon the society or environment in which we find ourselves. Our identities are therefore created both by ourselves and by those around us, and, linking to the previous section on narrative analysis, our identity is created through story telling:

> *"We endlessly tell stories about our lives, both to ourselves and to others; and it is through such stories that we make sense of the world, of our relationship to that world and of the relationship between ourselves and other selves. These stories are not simple acts of description but are complicated procedures for making sense of the world, of the details of our days and, ultimately our lives. They are the interpretive devices through which people make sense of, understand and live their lives."*

> —LAWLER (2008), P 12/13

Thus identity is a relative creation. It is relative to our environment and society and how we and others perceive that we interact within that environment and society and the narrative that we, and others create about ourselves and others. It helps us to create and impose order upon which would otherwise be a chaotic and random universe in which we have no control and thus no meaning.

The second is that, as suggested by classic identity theory, that an individual's identity will have many facets and that this identity is not fixed and changes over time and within contexts:

> *"One's identity - one's identities, indeed, for who we are is always multi-dimensional, singular <u>and</u> plural – is never a final or settled matter. Not even death freezes the picture: identity or reputation may be reassessed after death."*

> —JENKINS (2008), P17

Thus identities have many facets and the emphasis on any one of those facets will change depending upon the environment and the company that we are in. Additionally these different aspects of identity are not separate or independent but rather interconnected and dependent upon one another.

> *"Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation."*

> —HALL (1996), P17
> IN DU GAY, EVANS AND REDMAN (2000)

Thus an individual will have numerous strands to their identity. In the case of this research the identities of the research subjects can be seen as their military role or rank, their family role (husband, wife, mother, father, daughter, son) their professional role (engineer, doctor, accountant) their social role (good mate, good laugh) their recreational roles (motorcyclist, skier), previous roles (veteran, ex- military, apprentice,) and any other aspect of their life by which they, or others define themselves. With role being defined as different masks that individuals choose to adopt in their ongoing constructions of themselves and society (Simpson and Carroll 2008).

Following on from this the third assertion is that changes in environment and role identity will have an impact upon an individual. Moving from the military to the civilian worlds is no doubt a major life transition (Hatch et al 2013) and the socialisation processes that individuals go

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through in obtaining and developing their military identities have a strong influence upon their identities (Thornborrow and Brown 2009 and Hale 2008). The military can be characterised as an extreme example of prioritizing order over chaos:

> *"All military forces cultivate obsessional behaviour in order to function and achieve their Mission. Obedience, hard work, trust, mutual support, interdependency and integrity matter and are all obsessional traits to a greater or lesser degree. Unlike many other jobs, attention to detail is necessary in the Armed Forces as it can be the difference between life and death."*
>
> —PALMER (2012), P113

And the more an individual or organisation prioritises order, the more likely they are to be threatened by change to that order (Collinson 2003). Of interest in this case, Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly (2014) describe the theory of a work-related identity (WRI) in which identities are tied to a membership of work related, groups, professions or bodies. The loss of such an identity or identities requires an adjustment of the part of the individual:

> *"A WRI loss triggers an interruption to existing identity, it creates the need for development of a new sense of self, and…it involves a liminal state between letting go of the old and moving on to a new identity."*
>
> —CONROY AND O'LEARY-KELLY (2014), P67

A liminal state is described as being betwixt and between conditions (Garsten 1999) and can be summarised as a time in which the sense of "who I was" gives way to a sense of "who I am becoming" and is a period of identity instability (Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly 2014). The transition from one identity state to another was common to the all the research subjects. And there was no doubt that for some that loss of their military identity was a significant event:

> *"The transition affected me, myself emotionally inside. It wrecked me for about a year and a half."*
>
> —SUBJECT C

> *"I said to myself it would be at least two years before I got the military out, completely out of my system…you know I still miss it and so but that's diminishing with time you know."*
>
> —SUBJECT H

Whilst Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly's model of WRI loss and transition undoubtedly assists in understanding the issues facing the research subjects, it does not take into account the other facets of the identities of the research subjects that were held simultaneously as the military

facets of their identities. With this in mind the interviews were analysed with a view to identifying those subjects that referred to, or identified, multiple aspects of their identity and those who identified a strong identify rooted mainly in their military role. This was achieved by multiple reading of the transcripts in order to identify key words or phrases that would indicate these traits. Some were straightforward:

> *"I was gonna be drum major, I was gonna be the person in the battalion that everyone would see on parade all the time, you know there's 20,000 sergeants in the Army, there's only one [Name of Regiment] drum major and you know I was absolutely looking forward to that sort of thing."*
>
> —SUBJECT C

Others were more subtle:

> *"It's still an alien environment in terms of who's in charge"*
>
> —SUBJECT H

The results were simply grouped into three categories. Those who demonstrated a multi-faceted personality, those who demonstrated neither a strong multi-faceted or strong military personality and those who demonstrated a strong military personality.

4.4.4 Patterns and Groupings

Having carried out detailed analysis using the three independent techniques: activity theory, narrative theory and identity theory the three analyses were then collated in order to identify any connections or correlation between the three areas. This was done by creating a profile for each participant. These are shown below:
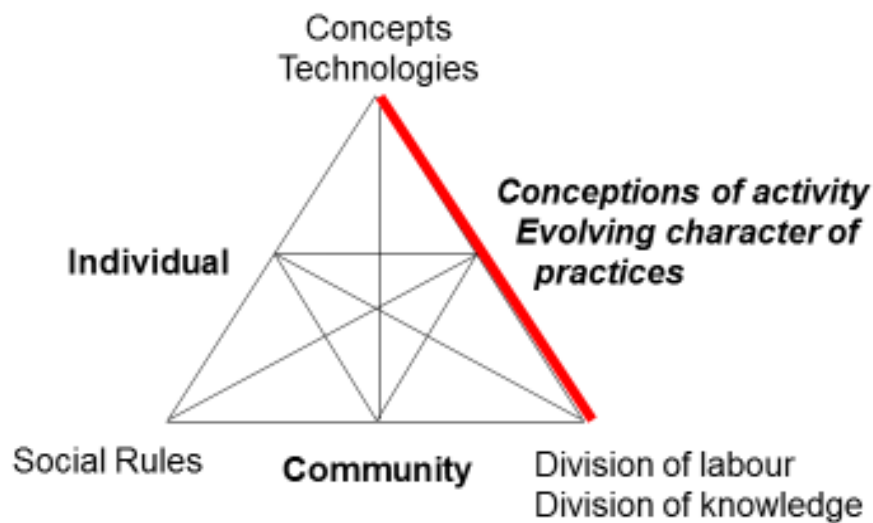
4.4.4.1 *Subject A*

History

Subject is male and served in the British Army for 8 years. He qualified as an engineer apprentice before joining the Army and served in the Royal Engineers. He qualified as a diver and plant operator. He left at his own choice under a redundancy scheme and became an operator of undersea vehicles in the oil and gas industry. At the time of the interview he had been out of the Army for 17 years. He has experienced few tensions in the activity theory grid and uses a comic hero mode of storytelling. He has a definite identity as a civilian and whilst he remembers his time in the military with fondness he does not have a strong military identity.

Activity Grid analysis

Subject A experienced a long transition time from leaving the military to entering the civilian workplace. Their main issues were establishing themselves in a new field of employment that was similar but also significantly different to their civilian job before joining the military, and their role within the military. The main tensions were thus identified as understanding new technologies, new working practices and how they fitted in technically rather than socially.

Social Rules	"The army kind of finished and it wasn't like Monday you're out, Tuesday you're, you know you're now not in the army because what I'd done is I moved into a flat in (name of town) about three months before the end so I was living out of barracks anyway and so I was all kind of...so it was just a case of, you're now not getting paid but I had twenty grand in my bank so I didn't really"
Concepts Technologies	"Obviously as you built up your experience, but you could never go into that from the army because you didn't have the…you wouldn't have the speed or the skill."
Division of Labour **Division of Knowledge**	"Only because of the lifestyle I have and the army - they pretty much - they're not the same but…I do four weeks away - I work away; I work in Malaysia, I can work in Australia, I've given you a list of Belize, Falklands or what have you and say, yeah, I've worked here and I've worked there; Malaysia last year; I'm flying out to Dublin on Wednesday; I'm doing that for four or five weeks and then I'm home for four or five weeks."
Individual	"But I never, I never thought anything bad about leaving the army it was just...I loved it, it was great fun, you got paid to drink and be merry and you got shouted at now and again"
Community	"I loved every minute of it in fact and that's more...looking back I did love every bit of it and it still makes me laugh and the things"

	we did"
Concepts of Activity **Evolving Character of Practices**	"But whatever time, if it's a small amount of time, they need to gear it, and say, "Right, you do need to know how to do a computer, you've been digging a hole for most of your life, but now you need to learn how to use a computer."

Identities

The subject demonstrates multiple identities – former soldier, husband, father, friend and technical expert and seems comfortable with all of these identities. He does not demonstrate any particular loss of his military identity although he does have fond memories of his time in the military: "*But I never, I never thought anything bad about leaving the army it was just...I loved it, it was great fun, you got paid to drink and be merry and you got shouted at now and again*".

Story Telling Mode

Subject uses a lucky hero mode when relating his story. He paints himself as a 'lucky' individual who had a 'good' army career but though no particular effort on his part has built a successful career: "*it was just the fact that everything fell into place and just you know it was just great to a point I'd met this guy we got on, he was the one in the office at that time who read my CV and the whole kind of thing fell into place*".

Summary

Subject experienced a successful transition' due in part to his own efforts and some luck. He experienced few tensions and those were mainly concerned with adapting to the new technologies in his workplace. He has multiple identities but does not privilege his military identity over any other.
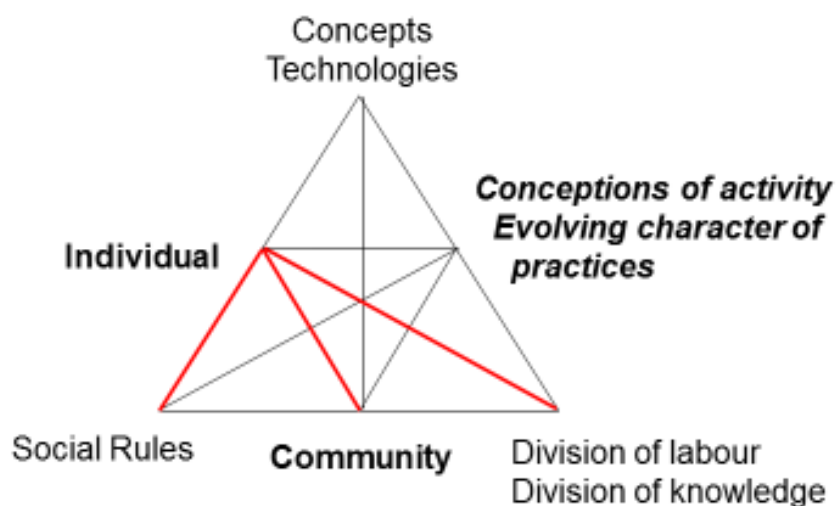
4.4.4.2   Subject B

History

Subject is male and served in the Royal Navy for 8 years as an engineer, mostly spent at sea, aboard destroyers and frigates. He left the Navy after 8 years at his own choice. His main reason for leaving was that he wanted to leave before he committed to a full career in the Navy. He was single whilst serving in the Navy and when he left, although he had met his now wife in the latter part of his Navy career. On leaving the Navy he had planned work overseas as a hydraulics engineer, however, his emigration status prevented this and he worked as a service engineer traveling around the UK. He then became a maintenance engineer for a multinational company in the life-sciences sector and is now working as a

production engineer for the same company. He had been out of the Navy for approximately 10 years at the time of the interview. He is married and has a young daughter.

Activity Grid Analysis

The subject was professionally qualified as a mechanical engineer on leaving the Navy and had a readily transferable set of professional skills and he obtained employment using those skills very quickly. As such he identified few tensions in the activity grid analysis other than minor tensions over working practices: "*but it was just how kinda self-reliant you suddenly had to be especially if you're sorry travelling erm, you had to sort out all your accommodation and in the forces kinda that's kinda done for you isn't it".* and the minor tensions about behaviours in the civilian workplace versus the Navy environment: "*You kind of jumped into a completely different world with all rules and names for people that you've got to call them isn't it."* Overall there appear therefore to be very few tensions identified at all.

Social Rules	"You kind of jumped into a completely different world with all rules and names for people that you've got to call them isn't it*."*
Concepts Technologies	"I love engineering, I love having something that's broken and fixing it. It's not as hands-on as I would like but unfortunately the hands-on jobs don't pay as much as the jobs which are paperwork driven even though it's engineering."
Division of Labour Division of Knowledge	"Aye the job I had with (name of company) was really good I got paid a lot of overtime, I had a free company car it was hard work but that was the first job out of the navy and it was quite a big pay cut I remember and I was thinking, but because it was my garage you have a free car it was like oh well it will do me until I can find something else erm."

Individual	"I never felt constrained by the forces or any rules at all. Yeah, I mean we are lucky we're very lucky. I think what we've got and what we've achieved has been worked for, do you know what I mean? It was the best 8 years of my life, it was brilliant."
Community	"I suppose I think we're lucky cause we've got what we wanted but that's not like you woke up one day and its fell in your lap, its you've worked into that direction.
Concepts of Activity **Evolving Character of Practices**	"the big change for me was just working in a domestic environment as a service engineer you were it." "There's not anybody else with anymore knowledge that's 20 feet away from you erm if you couldn't fix it, it didn't get fixed and erm I'm fairly self-reliant and a very quick learner but even so you're seeing so many variations of sort of like problems along the way that you're keen to get stumped and lucky we had mobile phones in there as somebody you could generally phone and talk through the issue but it was just how kinda self-reliant you suddenly had to be especially if you're sorry travelling erm, you had to sort out all your accommodation and in the forces kinda that's kinda done for you isn't it."

Identities

Although the subject holds several identities: husband, father, engineer former serviceman, the only one that was specifically mentioned in the interview was that of an engineer: "*I love engineering, I love having something that's broken and fixing it."* However, it does not appear that he defines himself specifically as an engineer but it does appear to be a common anchor in his identity. His sense of self is probably predominantly an engineer but he appears to also hold other identities all of which are as important to him, but not as clearly articulated. He therefore probably holds a range of identities with an engineer being the most dominant.

Story Telling Mode

The dominant story telling mode is that of the lucky hero. The word 'luck' or 'lucky' is used frequently during the interview. Whilst acknowledging that he and his wife have worked hard for their 'luck': "*I suppose I think we're lucky cause we've got what we wanted but that's not like you woke up one day and its fell in your lap, its you've worked into that direction."*

Summary

From the subjects perspective the transition from military to civilian had been a success. Whilst he appears to have multiple identities the predominant one is that of an engineer and his transition has been one of engineering in a different context whilst still holding the anchor identity of an engineer. He appears to have experienced few tensions apart from minor tensions encountered between the social rules of the Navy and the civilian workplace and the different contexts of engineering and the division of labour and the division of knowledge. His

story telling mode is that of the lucky hero who, through his own efforts, has transitioned from the military to the civilian world successfully, and whilst luck has played its part it is not the main cause of his success.
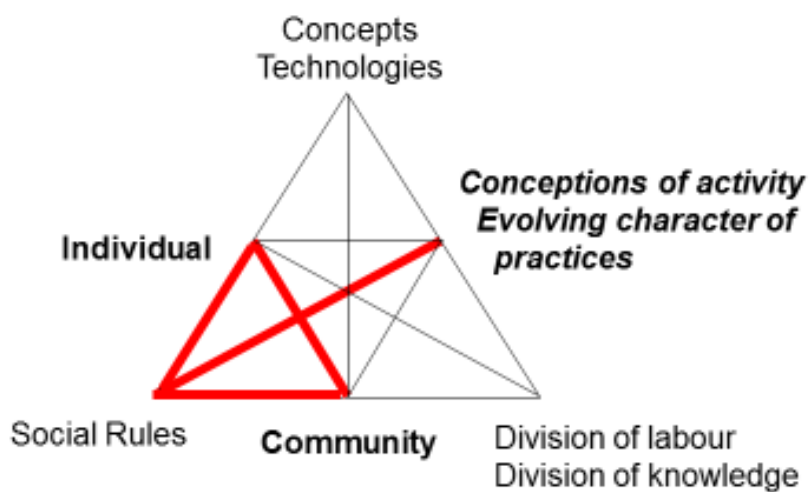
4.4.4.3   *Subject C*

History

Subject is male and served in the British Army for approximately 16 years and the interview took place 2 years after he had left. He was medically discharged from the Army against his will and he has struggled to come to terms with his new life, sense of identity and workplace.

Activity Grid analysis

The main tension identified is between subject's sense of individual self and place in the community. There is a great sense of loss from leaving behind the Army: "*I wasn't ready to leave, I wasn't by any means*", and difficulty in establishing himself in his new environment. Adapting to his new community and his sense of himself and his place in his community, including his workplace, social and family communities are the main focus of his interview. Some tension between the social rules (adjustment to new surroundings) and division of labour such as the processes of billing clients and accounting were identified: "*if you want to do all the (profession) thing you need to work to get the money.*" The technologies and activities do not appear in his interview as he appears to have acquired the necessary skills and experience to function as a technical specialist.

Social Rules	"There's still things that...you do a little *routine* in the morning, I still have my morning *routine*, I still like to get out, I still *like* to do fitness although it is restricted." "I'm sure you notice yourself you get *standards* and nobody's got *higher standards* on yourself it's what you do yourself sort of thing."
Concepts Technologies	"I think probably without him at the end of a phone, there was hundreds of times, "Right, I'm *not doing* this I'm gonna get a job at Tesco, I'm gonna be in charge of the beans"
Division of Labour **Division of Knowledge**	"So I'm gonna go down to (name of town) and check, yeah I've got to go down and prove that the lock can be picked open you know quite...on the inside or whatever. They've probably asked the *wrong guy to check* but...and then they want a report for the Court, I've *never* written a report"
Individual	"I *never ever* wanted to be anything else but a (name of Regiment) soldier" "I *wasn't ready* to leave, *I wasn't by any means*" "and I was leaving which it was *sad*, there's *no fanfare* at the gates when you leave they just lift the barrier and say, "Oh see you later" that sort of thing." "I do *miss* it that way, you know there's no denying that it's just that you've got to appreciate if a situation's changing you've got to take...make all the you know the decisions that you can, it's down to you and then make every other step a positive step" "I was *never ready* to get out of the Army you know it wasn't an easy sort of thing to do but it was an important step that I had to do and then say, "Right that's it" "But you know and I was *loving* that and my next career progression was back in the battalion, I was gonna be drum major, I was gonna be the person in the battalion that *everybody would see* on parade all the time, you know there's 20,000 sergeants in the Army, there's one (name of Regiment) drum major and you know I was *absolutely looking forward* to that sort of thing."
Community	"It's just, it's a *lone existence*. Even as a, as a Corporal you still have 10 other people in the platoon that you live with day in, day out, work with, ate your meals, show slides with at night and you knew all their *intimate* problems you know everything that was going on in their days." "And suddenly you know that's the sharpest call suddenly you *don't live there any more*, they're not interested their lives have moved on" "But I don't think you ever get that childish sort of thing back and that's what *I do miss, I do*, that's *more than anything* is what you *miss* but it is sort of quite, it *still stings* a bit when you look back at it all."
Concepts of Activity **Evolving Character of Practices**	"But I think probably if you want to keep going the fact is you *can't run a charity*, that's the thing and I just thought...slowly started to realise that and realise that if you want to do all the locksmith thing you *need to work* to get the *money*."

Identities

Subject still has a strong identity as a soldier. The loss of that identity, through ill health, seems particularly acute: "*If I could go back to being a* (name of Regiment) *soldier, if I could go back 5 years and be at that point where I was being you know about to go onto Seniors, I was gonna be the Drum Major, I was gonna have a military career, I would have still been in the* (name of Regiment)*, I would...I do miss it that way, you know there's no denying that.*" His identity as a father and husband and lock smith appear to be less important to him.

Story Telling Mode

Subject uses a Tragic-Hero mode of storytelling. He retells stories of his physical heroism: "*we got hit with a suicide bomber*", "*we hit an improvised explosive item, it was hidden underneath the road, and it blew our vehicle sixty foot in the air, sixty foot off the road.*", "*were war fighting in Basra my very first ever live section attack was against an Iraqi machine gun post*", and also relates the sadness of his physical leaving of the Army: "*you know that was the time and I was leaving which it was sad, there's no fanfare at the gates when you leave they just lift the barrier and say, "Oh see you later" that sort of thing.*"

Summary

The subject found it difficult to understand the social rules and labour/knowledge rules in the new environments in which he worked and he continues to experience this tension. He holds multiple identities: father, husband, lock smith, soldier; but his overriding one appears to be deeply ingrained in his army identity and loosing this identity prematurely through ill health has been a source of considerable angst. He did not choose to leave the military and he relates his narrative in a tragic mode which probably reflects his continuing difficulty in adapting to his new situation.

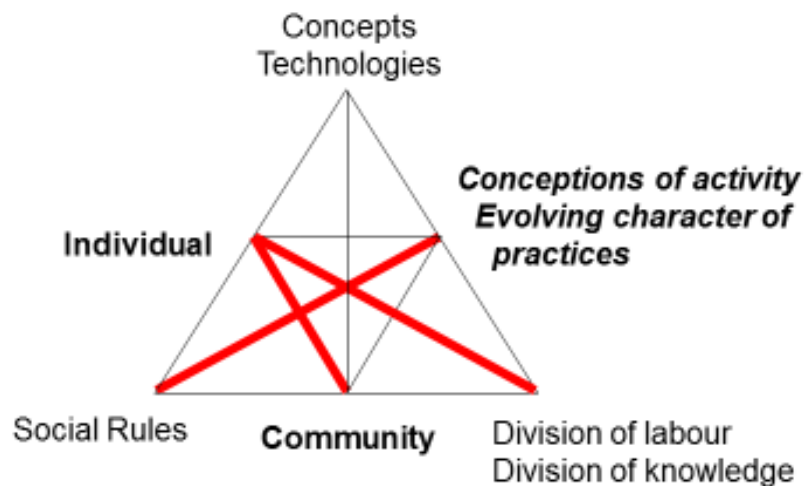### 4.4.4.4   Subject D

History

Subject is male and served for 26 years in the RAF as an aircraft engineer reaching the rank of Flight Sergeant. He left the military at an option point and although he states it was his decision to leave it was very much tied up with his wife's career opportunities. The question is did he really choose to leave or did he leave against his will? : "*So we discussed it and decided that I would come out and XXX could pursue her career and we set ourselves up financially based on XXX working with my pension, plus anything else as bonus*". On leaving the RAF He originally worked in the aviation industry before becoming an engineering manager in the oil and gas industry, based on-shore. The interview was conducted 3 and a half years after he had left the military.

Activity Grid Analysis

The major tension was identified between the social rules, the individual and the division of labour and the division of knowledge. The subject found it difficult to understand the social rules and labour/knowledge rules in the new environments in which he worked and he continues to experience this tension: "*It's still an alien environment in terms of who is in charge*". He still finds it difficult to adapt to the new ways of working: "*So their structure I would say is non-existent. Again that's something that I still struggle with because I'm so used to having procedure*". These tensions have also impacted upon his individual wellbeing and he appeared to be somewhat adrift in his community that had been almost exclusively military. However, the engineering and project management skills he possesses mean that the concepts and technologies and the activity he undertakes are not a source of tension but how he fits into the organisation where he uses those skills is.

Social Rules	"I don't think you realise in the service that when you do a good job you get rewarded or you get praise or you get a pat on the back. That doesn't seem to happen very often in civilian life. being in a civilian environment where you don't know your boundaries and what's appropriate to say and what's not appropriate to say You're not used to bartering for your wages! know 80% or 90% of civilian jobs are far more haphazard and the one piece of advice I would give to him is live his working life a week at a time and don't take anybody seriously"
Concepts Technologies	"So now what I've done, its bog standard RAF stuff. Plastic brain. On the wall. All of the projects that we've got. All of the different trades that we got. We've got welding, NDE, coating specialists and a general one at the bottom. I just … every job is issued with

	its own specific number. So you get a project number and then the first task is 01. Project number 02. Just like an aircraft 700."
Division of Labour **Division of Knowledge**	"I thought they were just, you know "naysayers" and you know putting doom on it, but actually they were absolutely right. It is completely alien"
Individual	"I didn't leave the service because I didn't like it. I loved doing what I did and I loved being in the service. I liked the job security and the fact that I was established and I would like to think well respected within my trade as well. So for me personally that was a lot to give up, but in terms of my wife's career, my family stability and putting down some more firm roots, it was definitely the right thing to do."
Community	"So I did kind of regress into myself. We moved away. We had a lot of friends in (name of town). A lot of service colleagues who are your mates as well. We were away from them and with the best will in the world, its fifty miles. The more you feel down about not being happy with what you're doing, the more regressed I got."
Concepts of Activity **Evolving Character of Practices**	"It's still an alien environment in terms of who is in charge. So their structure I would say is non-existent. Again that's something that I still struggle with because I'm so used to having procedure. The other thing that constantly … not constantly … worries me … is job security because for 26 years I never gave it a second thought. Don't try and change the world. Don't try and change other people because they are set in their life experience and that's how they behave. Don't try and change their behaviour, just try and work with and recognise how they operate"

Identities

The subject's sense of self and worth appeared to be deeply rooted in the military. However, he also appeared to be very aware of his identities as a husband and father and the responsibilities that these bring. "*In my heart of hearts, if I could have stayed and been a Flight Sergeant and then a Warrant Officer, it would have been great.*" "*So for me personally that was a lot to give up, but in terms of my wife's career, my family stability and putting down some more firm roots, it was definitely the right thing to do*" and it appears that there is still a tension between his own military identity and aspirations and the obligations of his husband and father identities: "*Worried that I had failed my family; worried that I had failed my kids; worried that I wouldn't be able to get a job; worried what my wife would think if I was on the dole; all of those kinds of things*"

Story Telling Mode

Subject's story telling mode is one of the Tragic mode. He paints himself as the non-deserving victim: "*were getting close to me being happy with the job that I had done and also content that they were actually meeting their obligations. Then they got into financial difficulties*". His supportive helper is his wife: "*The more you feel down about not being happy with what you're doing, the more regressed I got. So I got a kick up the backside off my wife!* There is no humour, comedy or romance in his story and no real epic tale. "*if you fret and worry and get yourself frustrated and angry, all you are doing is you're hurting yourself mentally and you are hurting those around you and nobody else gives a monkeys*"

Summary

The subject found it difficult to understand the social rules and labour/knowledge rules in the new environments in which he worked and he continues to experience this tension. Although he is a well-qualified and experienced engineer, understanding how the new organisations work has been a major difficulty for him. This in turn has led to effects on his health and wellbeing. He has multiple identities but his main one appears to be rooted in his military identity and loosing this identity seems to have affected him considerably. Although he did choose to leave the military it is questionable if he really wanted to leave the military. He tells his story in a tragic mode that may reflect his ongoing difficulty in adapting to his new situation.

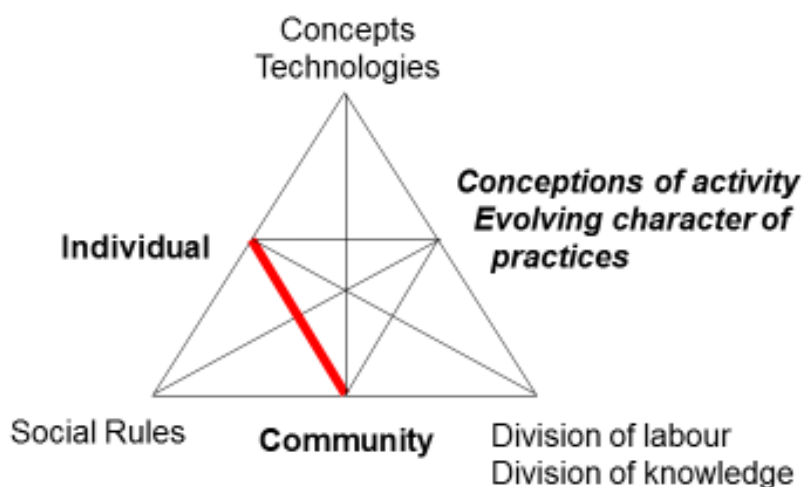#### 4.4.4.5   Subject E

History

Subject is male and served for 32 years in the British army. He joined as a private soldier at 18 after 2 years of unfulfilling civilian work and rose through the ranks ending his service as a commissioned officer. He left at the age of 50 although he wished to continue serving until he was 55 but was not selected for service beyond 50. He therefore did not choose to leave the army but was required to do so at the end of his contract. He qualified in health and safety management and in financial services working very briefly in financial services before taking on his current training role. At the time of the interview he had been out of the services for 2 years and had found the transition difficult, including some family and personal difficulties. He still has a sense of loss for his status, salary and role in the Army.

Activity Grid analysis

The main tension identified is between subject's sense of individual self and place in the community. There is a great sense of loss from leaving behind the Army and difficulty in establishing himself in his new environment. Adapting to his new community and his sense of

himself and his place in his community, including his workplace, social and family communities are the main focus of his interview. It is interesting to note that his social community from his hometown has been maintained whilst there was only mention of one of his former military colleagues in his interview. Some tension between the social rules (adjustment to new surroundings) and division of labour (his place within the organisation) were identified. The technologies and activities do not appear in his interview as he appears to have the necessary skills and experience to transfer this knowledge and skill from one environment to the other.

Social Rules	Somewhat ill at ease with the 'new' social rules.
	"I *miss* the banter the crack, the sense of humour, I mean there are people here who share that, but you have to be *careful* what you say, you have to be *a bit more 'pc'* here."
	"you have to *watch* what you say"
Concepts Technologies	No real issues with concepts or technologies identified.
Division of Labour **Division of Knowledge**	Has some issues with the new divisions of labour:
	"I see issues with the *rank* structure"
	"sometimes I am thinking 'I am going to reorganise this' but no, take a step back"
Individual	Sense of individual is dislocated. Uses very strong language: "Being in the Army was my life and I *loved* it".
	"I thought I would be in the Army *forever*…I'd be Mr *important*, high ranked, good pay, to be *respected* by people *forever*."
	"When I was told 'service no longer required' I didn't like that.
Community	Sense of loss of community. "I miss *hugely* the social life".
	"The only thing I *really* miss about the Army now is the social

	side – social interaction with the people"
	"I thought I would find it easy and I haven't. I'm *admitting* I haven't found it easy"
Concepts of Activity **Evolving Character of Practices**	No real issues identified.

Identities

The subject demonstrates multiple identities – soldier, manger, husband, father, and friend but seems uncomfortable with some aspects of all these identities. His loss of his military identity seems particularly acute: "*I still have no idea what I would like to do after the army. Because being in the army was my life and I loved it.*" His identities seem to be somewhat in flux and he appears somewhat dislocated. Of note is his reconnection with his old school friends and a re-establishment of his identity in his hometown.

Story Telling Mode

Subject uses a tragic mode when relating his story. He paints himself as a worthy individual who had a 'good' army career but though no choice of his own has been forced to leave the army*: I always wanted to come out when it was my choice to come out not when I was told, 'Service no longer required'. I didn't like that.*" He sees himself as being forced into a career change that has affected his relationships "*But I think it's the actual coming out of the army into civilian life that caused that because of the change in my lifestyle completely.*"

Summary

The subject found it difficult at times to completely understand the social rules and labour/knowledge rules in the new communities that he now occupies. Although he has established himself in his new role he still has a nostalgia for his former military life and still sees himself as being forced into a new situation against his wishes, which has, in his view, led to effects on his family relationships. He has multiple identities, some of which appear to be in flux, and losing his military identity is of particular concern to him. He uses a tragic mode of storytelling when relating his narrative that may reflect his sense of loss of his military identity and the consequences that this has entailed.

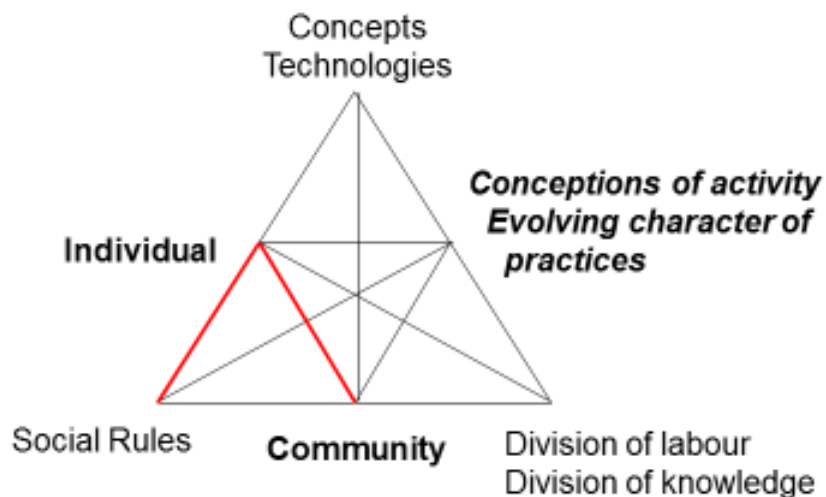### 4.4.4.6   *Subject F*

History

Subject is female and served in the Royal Navy for 5 years as an engineer, mostly spent at sea, aboard destroyers and frigates. She left the Navy after 5 years at her own choice primarily as she felt that she had outgrown the communal living aspects of Navy life. She

was single whilst serving in the Navy and when she left, although she had met her now husband in the latter part of her Navy career. She gained employment immediately on leaving the Navy and worked in the insurance industry and now is an established recruiter working for a multinational company mainly recruiting scientists and engineers for the life-sciences sector. She had been out of the Navy for approximately 10 years at the time of the interview. She is married and has a young daughter and her husband is a graduate engineer.

Activity Grid Analysis

Although the subject was professionally qualified as an electrical and mechanical engineer on leaving the Navy she also had a range of administrative and management skills and experience that transferred across into her new roles and so no tensions were identified between concepts and technologies, division of knowledge and division of labour, concepts of activity and character of practices. However, minor tensions were identified between the individual and social rules; mainly concerned with the level of 'banter' that was acceptable in the Navy as opposed to that which is acceptable in a civilian setting: "*They hardest bit for me was learning that you couldn't have the same banter in an office to what you could have*" There appear therefore to be very few tensions identified at all.

Subject F

Social Rules	"the most daunting thing for me was there was man there and he was saying "so I am the Master of Arms and you will call me Master" and I just thought it was hilarious, I was like I can't call someone Master.
	They hardest bit for me was learning that you couldn't have the same banter in an office to what you could have..."
Concepts Technologies	

Division of Labour Division of Knowledge	" I did some temping work which I was lucky just to get in with no real admin experience Adaptable. I think I'm adaptable, I've taken on new roles I'm not scared to take on new challenges, I'm not daunted by that"
Individual	"I think my whole career and I think we've been really, really lucky in that we've had some real lucky breaks along the way and things have just fallen into place and things have happened for a reason they really invested the time although we were only there 2 years they were ever so good to me and sort of gave me a lot and I learnt a lot as well. I feel that I've been successful and I now do a job that I really, really enjoy and I would say 90% of my job is suited to my skills and what I enjoy so I suppose yeah I'm one of these people who go to work and actually enjoy it most days."
Community	"I don't know there is an interest in people and I think definitely for me people are taking a risk on me but thought it's a calculated risk because I know she's got good discipline and I know she's actually gonna turn up, and I know she can..."
Concepts of Activity Evolving Character of Practices	"I didn't have an appreciation of the whole engineering term if you like because the navy was fairly – you didn't have project engineers you just had maintenance engineers, you know you were there fixing the equipment and making sure that your fire equipment and stuff were there and you were the fire fighter and stuff like that. You could do all that. Yeah I know it was good. If I could change it I wouldn't go back and do anything different, maybe not be as gobby (laughing)."

Identities

There were no clear identifies explicitly identified by the subject during the interview, even when directly prompted by the interviewer: "*Adaptable. I think I'm adaptable, I've taken on new roles I'm not scared to take on new challenges, I'm not daunted by that.*" Implicitly the subject has identities as a mother, wife, professional recruiter, engineer, ex-service person. However, she does not define herself in any of these identities. Her sense of self is probably therefore held across a range of identities with no one being the dominant.

Story Telling Mode

The dominant story telling mode is that of the lucky hero. The word 'luck' or 'lucky' is used frequently during the interview. "*We got jobs but yeah everything just kinda like my dad always says "she'd fall on a pile of pooh and come out smelling of roses" but we'd been very lucky*". Whilst acknowledging that she has worked hard there is a self-deprecating tone of the interview interspersed with much laughter: "*If I could change it I wouldn't go back and do anything different, maybe not be as gobby (laughing)".*

Summary

From the subjects perspective her transition from military to civilian had been a success. She appears to have multiple identities, mother, wife, professional recruiter, engineer, ex-service person, none of which is dominant or defines her. She appears to have experienced few tensions apart from minor tensions encountered between the social rules of the Navy and the civilian workplace. Her story telling mode is that of the lucky hero who, through her own efforts, has transitioned from the military to the civilian world successfully with a significant amount of luck.
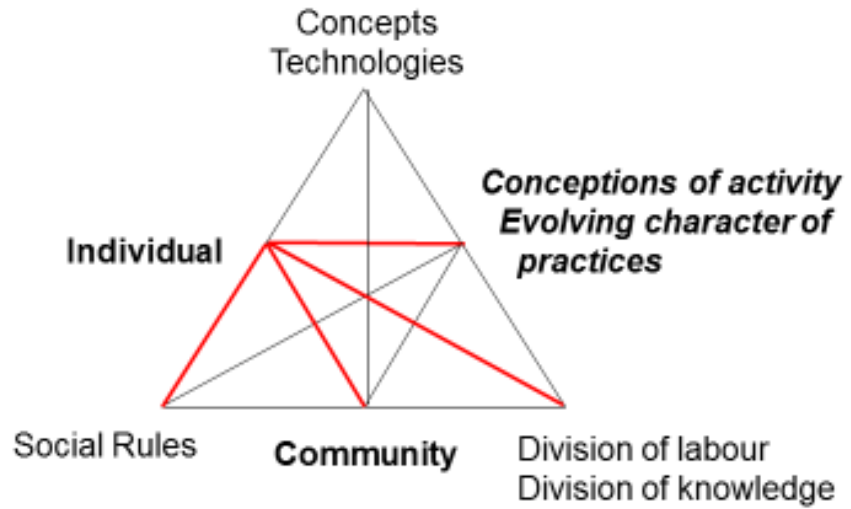
4.4.4.7 *Subject G*

History

Subject is female and worked in the financial services industry for 6 years before she joined the Navy. She served in the Royal Navy for 9 years as an electronic warfare operator, mostly spent at sea, aboard destroyers and frigates. She was medically discharged from the Navy against her will following a significant injury. She was single whilst serving in the Navy and was single at the time of the interview. She gained employment on leaving the Navy and worked in the charity sector but is now established as a civilian operator in a local Police Service. She still suffers from the after effects of her injury. The interview was conducted 12 years after she had left the Navy.

Activity Grid Analysis

Subject G left the military without a clear idea of employment options and eventually became employed in a role that had some similarities to their military role. However, the main, albeit minor, tensions identified were understanding the changed social rules and finding a place in the community of the new work environment. A further tension was identified in understanding the divisions of labour and responsibility in their new role.

Subject G

Social Rules	"know I felt there was a point when, where I thought I will just probably just go home then. It seemed like a natural thing to do. I am not here therefore I may as well go home. I think the only thing stopping me at the time was the fact that I had bought the house. I did feel like I needed a bit of back up as obviously there was the fear what if I don't get a job. I don't think that it is a bad thing for it never leaves you. Even if it is only Jack Speak or the odd word or too but... and you know who you can say them too."
Concepts Technologies	"I think that I have adapted well because its shift working as well and there is also the radio speak which I was more than comfortable with because I've done that for years."
Division of Labour **Division of Knowledge**	"I think that I have adapted well because its shift working as well and there is also the radio speak which I was more than comfortable with because I've done that for years. To be honest in my role, in my shift, in the whole building is chockers like ex-service men and women. It just seems to be a position that just suits and fits in well."
Individual	"Well I think an element... I mean it has to be lucky, you can do all your prep, you can do all your training, you can do all your research and all your filling in of your forms and applying, but I think you still need that little element of luck. Obviously there are people who haven't been so lucky. plus it was important for me when I was in the Navy to buy the house to get independent even from the Navy if you like"
Community	"I did get to a stage where I did not want to do that anymore. They actually made a job for me and created....my boss was brilliant and he actually created if you like an office position for me"

Concepts of Activity **Evolving Character of Practices**	"I had a few interviews some were unsuccessful. I did have one with the police a year previous to the year I got in but that application was unsuccessful.
	I went for admin jobs at car garages, local news stations etc. And then eventually I got an interview at...well I didn't actually know what it was going to be for".

Identities

Subject still has a very strong identity of being a military person, but who has now moved on whilst she remembers her service time fondly it does not really define her: "*it's all good I love my time…Honestly I think it was the best thing ever".* However, during the interview no other identities were implicitly identified, but the overall impression is one of being a former military person: "*I don't think that it is a bad thing for it never leaves you. Even if it is only Jack Speak or the odd word or too but... and you know who you can say them too*" and: "*Yes so I sound like an old woman now, you see of them especially young ones that join the shift and think, they just don't seem to know anything, but may I have to correct myself and think well I did spend 9 years travelling the world and learned a few things and they haven't done that, so I have to give them the benefit of the doubt I suppose*".

Story Telling Mode

The main story telling mode is the heroic/tragic. The loss of her naval career was tragic: *And I did at the time have a lot of ill will towards them when I was thrown on the heap, especially when I wanted to stay. It was a bit of a shock at the time….But it's turned out alright"* but she sees herself as a heroic figure who has battled against adversity: "*So I was determined to do that and I did that and then I think probably being in the Navy or the services in general probably hardened me up even more. They most instil about independence in you and about common sense and about worldliness and initiative. You have got to use your initiative.*" Whilst it is conceded that she has had a fair share of luck none the less this is not seen as comic but reinforces the heroic nature of her journey: "*Yes you do have to have a bit of luck and you do have to make your own chances haven't you as well, which makes things happen. Things won't come to you, you have got to go out and make it happen.*" Her story is probably best summed up by: "*I am just disappointed cos I would be going outside since time done and I would love to have done it, I always wanted to go for my Petty Officer and carried on then but it wasn't meant to be. My Gran always says what's will not go by you and that's for a reason".*

Summary

From the subjects perspective her transition from military to civilian had been a success. She appears to have a strong ex- military identities and implied other, unspecified identities She appears to have experienced few tensions in the activity theory grid apart from minor tensions encountered between the social rules of the Navy and the civilian workplace and initially understanding the civilian environment and finding employment. Her story telling mode is that of the tragic hero who, through her own efforts, has transitioned from the military to the civilian world successfully largely by her own efforts.
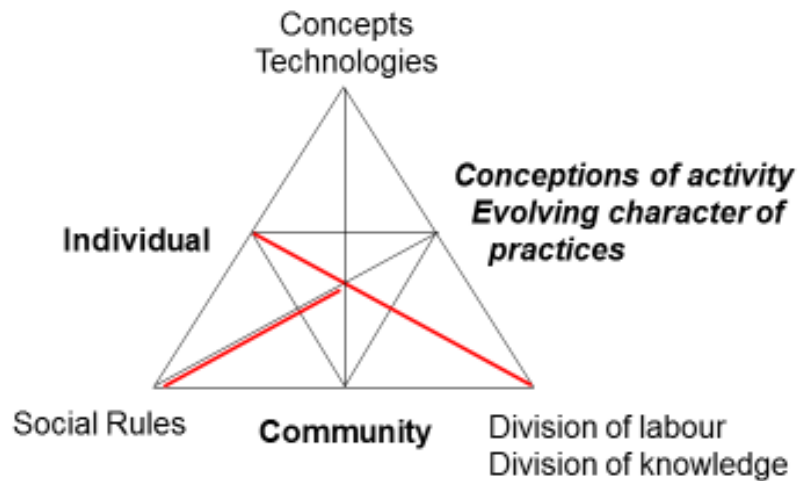
4.4.4.8   *Subject H*

History

Subject is male and served in the Royal Air Force for 25 years as a commissioned officer, including several operational deployments to Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, Iraq and Afghanistan. He left the military at an option point by his own choice driven by a combination of wishing to provide a more settled life for his wife and child and a desire to do something different rather than remaining in the RAF. He gained employment immediately on leaving the RAF as a civilian manager with a local Police service and had been out of the military for 3 years at the time of the interview.

Activity Grid Analysis

Subject had a range of management skills and experience, particularly project management experience that transferred across into his new role and so no tensions were identified between concepts and technologies, division of knowledge and division of labour, concepts of activity and character of practices. However, tensions were identified between the individual and social rules and division of knowledge and division of labour. The main tension therefore appears to be in the adaptation to a new environment with its own set of rules and culture and understanding how the subject negotiates his position and relationships within this new environment. "*I thought the Police and the military would be a fairly similar environment but actually very, very, different environments you know which has been challenging*" The subject seems to have negotiated this challenge and is 'comfortable' in his new role, but there are still occasional instances where he still has to adapt to his new environment.

Subject H

Social Rules	"I thought the Police and the military would be a fairly similar environment but actually very, very, different environments you know which has been challenging"
Concepts Technologies	"I've got new experiences and a new knowledge and new processes and how I do things have now moved on from that and I'm probably becoming more reliant on them than I am relying on my old military kind of processes and stuff"
Division of Labour Division of Knowledge	"actually the Police are probably more rank conscious which I find kind of fascinating, actually more rank conscious and you know again speaking fairly candid you know, "Well I'm a Chief Inspector I know best" you know and that was probably how the military was when I first joined but actually its transformed itself since then you know and you do ask people for professional advice and go to the specialists and you know...but in the Police there's still very much that, "I'm a Chief Inspector, you have to do your time and stuff like that"
Individual	"if I was gonna fly the desk well am I not just better off flying a desk closer to home where I could see the family you know and I'd still be in employment and I am employing a lot of the skills I've learnt I think in the military and applying that I've got an ambition to retire at 55, that's always kind of been the end plan you know and that's when the pension kind of whacks back up again and stuff like that you know to enjoy the leisure years you know and not that I have an organised life plan but I would like to retire when I'm 55 and you know enjoy retirement at that early age"
Community	"You know from a family perspective you know all the things that I anticipated about leaving have come to fruition you know I get home every night, you know we have a steady income, you know I see the family every night by making my home up here, being part of the community you know was another thing on the plus side for leaving.

	I just don't feel there's that kind of you know that and again camaraderie is the best term, there's just not that closeness of bond in there."
Concepts of Activity **Evolving Character of Practices**	"And one of the biggest kind of changes I've had is from being you know well I always considered an Operational Officer, and operation focused to being a supporter rather than an operator and that's been quite a transition
	So that military ethos has still kept with me you know and I still have pride in my work and stuff like that. Where its changed is I you know I'm quite happy to not work at weekends
	you know it is a job and not a vocation cos you know I find it easy to walk away"

Identities

Subject's identity seems to be rooted in multiple identities. He sees himself as a former RAF officer, a project manager with the Police, a husband and a father. He does not appear to have a single dominant sense of identity but rather a multiple number of understated identities. "*So that military ethos has still kept with me you know and I still have pride in my work and stuff like that. Where its changed is I you know I'm quite happy to not work at weekends, I won't do, you know although I do work extra hours you know I'm very much focused on you know family life at the weekend, you know I will adapt my you know if I need to...the family takes more of a priority I think than it ever did*"

Story Telling Mode

Subject puts himself in the Epic Comic role when telling his story. Although he has an impressive array of qualifications, skills and experience he deflects from this by putting himself somewhat as an unintentional hero: "*I've been very lucky. I think I've been very lucky although you do make your own luck.*" Similarly he downplays his expectations: "*then suddenly find I was being offered a job which to be honest I was gobsmacked about you know.*" and attempts to explain away his success as a coincidence or unintentional good timing: "*I was surprised you know cos I was lucky I was surprised how easy it is you know but I think again economy you know did I jump ship just at the right time, yeah and stuff like that*".

Summary

It appears that the subject's sense of self was tied up in the military and is now re-established in a new set of social rules and a new division of labour/knowledge. However, his community (family, friends) and his own place and identity within that community remain anchored and may have been strengthened by his transition. He appears to have multiple senses of understated identity. Technologies and practices have changed but there is no sense of tension in these changes. The major tensions appear to have occurred in

understanding the new social rules and the division of labour and division of knowledge in his new working environment. He tells his story from the standpoint of Epic/Comic hero who has succeeded by his own efforts with a substantial element of good fortune.
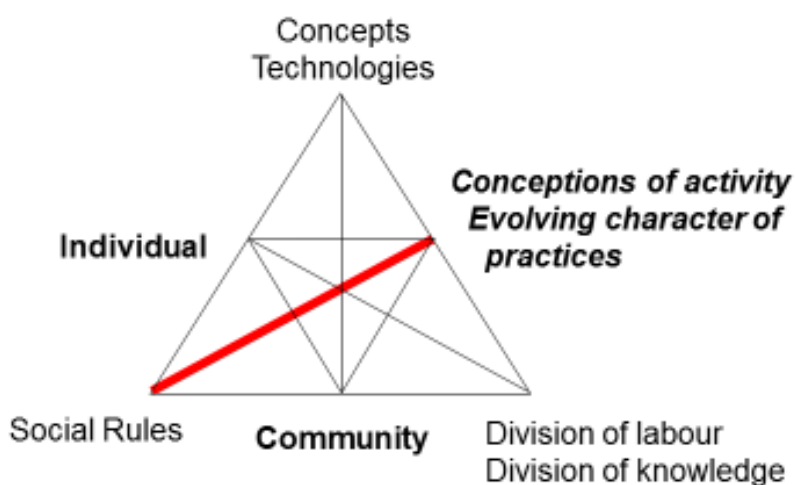
4.4.4.9   *Subject I*

History

Subject served as a doctor in the British army for 10 and a half years, the first 3 years being sponsored by the army to complete his medical training. He left the army at an option point, so it was his choice to leave. He could have remained in the army for another 7 and a half years and retired with an immediate pension but he chose to leave as there was a great deal of uncertainty as to the nature of his future employment within the Defence Medical Organisation. At the time of the interview he had been out of the army for 5 years. He was still practicing as a doctor carrying out locum GP work as this fitted in with his wife's employment as a medical professional working in the offshore oil industry.

Activity Grid Analysis

His medical and professional skills were easily transferable and his managerial skills (managing a general hospital overseas) were more widespread and general compared to his colleagues. His background training in occupational health matters also meant that he was very well qualified compared to his peers. As he already possessed these common skills and experiences there were no major tensions identified between concepts and technologies or the division of knowledge or the division of labour. However, the main tension identified is between the social rules and the concepts of activity and how the civilian world (NHS) works. Establishing the culture of the organisations that he was employed in was a major issue "*So yeah the pure mechanics of doing the job I'd made sure I knew and I could go and do surgeries to get some practice cos I did, I'm gonna help them out and so on and I had work prepared for when I left and so on but in terms of, yeah, the organisation and working out who's who and how to get to things done, no.*" "*A shock of there being no rules that I described was different, something I had to get used to*" Interestingly the subject worked as a locum for the military in a number of organisations as he felt more at ease with the military culture and working practices "*I found I've actually come full circle and work with the military more at the moment than previously and that's, that's cos I feel comfortable with that...*"

Subject I

Social Rules	"they had to sort of tone down their presentation so they were less threatening so you're going in and you're very qualified and you're experienced and you're used to selling yourself, people find that threatening I think from the other way round so you've gotta tone it down and try and go in and try and convince them you're not gonna go in and change everything which is their perception. some of the people jump up and introduce themselves by their name and their job so you immediately know who they are and what they are, that doesn't happen in civilian life, people don't do that as much, they do in some organisations but not...certainly in public sectors they don't and so you're left wondering who someone is and you have to explicitly ask seems a bit rude but you just have to do it sometimes."
Concepts Technologies	"I find meetings are less structured and I think it's particularly a thing with the NHS there's no obvious point to the meeting."
Division of Labour **Division of Knowledge**	"So yeah the pure mechanics of doing the job I'd made sure I knew and I could go and do surgeries to get some practice cos I did, I'm gonna help them out and so on and I had work prepared for when I left and so on but in terms of, yeah, the organisation and working out who's who and how to get to things done, no."
Individual	"So we had a house and somewhere to live, we'd been used to paying bills and living out of the institution and my wife being ex-military as well had left 4 years before me and I actually started work before I left"
Community	No observations
Concepts of Activity **Evolving Character of Practices**	"What I found when I left I realised what I was doing in the Forces was different from what I thought I was doing at the time. I thought my job was just a straight forward GP seeing people but actually a lot of it had an occupational element I was overseas in (name of country) you're it and you do everything from managing your own community hospital with

| | deliveries through to if someone's got a serious illness you manage that, you liaise and you sort out whether they need counselling and you just do everything. You then come out and trying to admit someone to a hospital is a nightmare and you haven't got the same thing you know of how to do it cos it's a different skills to learn really, yeah. |
| | In civilian life as I found in partnerships you can all agree to something or think you have then people go off and do their own thing, that I found...I did find difficult but now I just accept" |

Identities

Subject's identity was very much rooted in his professional status. He was a doctor first and foremost and this appeared to be his main anchor as to his identity. Although other identities were mentioned in the interview (father, husband) by far the strongest identity was that of the professional medical doctor. His military identity did not seem particularly strong and his military career was something that he did, but he had now moved on: *Yeah I left, I left because I wanted to leave, I was gonna leave anyway, I left when I wanted, I had stayed a bit longer to do something I wanted to do and I've tried other things and I've found actually I, I do...I've kept on changing things through my working life or career, yeah and trying...I've always needed to do something slightly different, not doing the same thing all the time."*

Story Telling Mode

The main story telling mode used is that of the Epic Hero, with himself at the centre of the story. "*I'm happy with what I've done*" Although somewhat understated his story is that of success brought about by his own efforts with no one else being cited in his story other than a brief mention of his wife and family. "*Well I think we've done very well*". There is no element of luck, chance or fate mentioned in his story and no humour or comedy used to illustrate his story.

Summary

From the subjects perspective his transition from military to civilian had been a success. His identity seems very much that of a professional medical doctor and the main tensions encountered between the social rules and concepts of activity and character of practices, in other words understanding the culture and rules of the civilian medical world and how he could navigate his way in the new environment. His story telling mode is that of the hero who, through his own efforts, has transitioned from the military to the civilian world successfully. This appears to be a case of a professional moving between environments without any major shifts in their own identity.
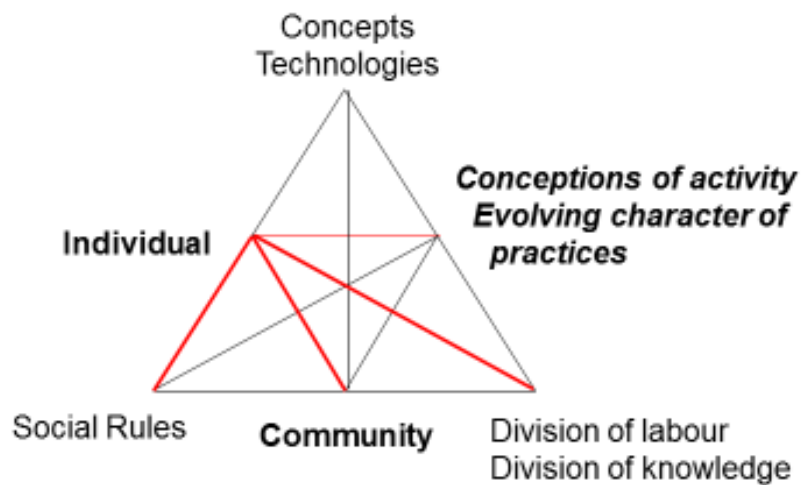
4.4.4.10 *Subject J*

History

Subject served in the RAF for 18 years. She left on becoming pregnant (as was required at the time by RAF regulations) but because she had served for over 16 years she was awarded a pension. On leaving the RAF she worked in a variety of administrative roles and raised her family as well as supporting her husband who was a senior officer in the RAF. She is now retired from paid employment but still works in a voluntary role for a charity. The interview was conducted 22 years after she had left the RAF.

Activity Grid Analysis

Subject J transitioned into similar roles in civilian life as they had been employed in whilst serving. The only tensions, albeit minor, identified were understanding the social rules, their place in the work community, the divisions of labour and knowledge and the characters of practice in the new environment.

Social Rules	"Air Force just moulded me into a much more outgoing person, and I think the longer you're in a service environment the more outgoing you become and people are kind of wary of that when you step back into the civilian world, particularly if you're a woman. Service women or service men walk into a room of strangers and just go up and put their hand out and say 'hi, I'm so and so and so', people seem to think that's in a civilian environment that's an awfully forward thing to do. You've got to back pedal I think sadly. Hopefully the world is changing but that's my perception. So the Air Force made me the sort of outgoing person I am."

Concepts Technologies	
Division of Labour **Division of Knowledge**	"I found it quite hard to take instruction from some of my line managers"
Individual	"I am a professional administrator and also horribly bossy (laughter). I think what, if you've been in the service it does, it even just leaving the service and becoming a wife I think that's quite a hard job, especially if you've been in for 18 years"
Community	"Well I think I've been extremely fortunate I would say. I was a member of the services when there were tremendous opportunities to be had and I'm very privileged to have been on a military pension from the age of 38 onwards, very privileged Few people have been as fortunate as Paul and I to come through the whole experience so it's payback time."
Concepts of Activity **Evolving Character of Practices**	"I didn't earn very much money during that job, it was very stimulating but I really felt I wanted to have a management job and I finally got my management job which I very much enjoyed until I decided to go part-time and that job wasn't compatible with part-time. So you learn over time that you've got to sort of reign yourself back and I think I was quite successful at the (name of organisation) when I was money advising in reigning myself back but it was difficult."

Identities

Subject has multiple identities. She identifies herself as a professional RAF officer: "*By the time I was 30 I was a Squadron Leader and very much enjoying the power because there weren't very many WRAF Squadron Leaders at the age of 30, if any. I had some very challenging jobs*". She identifies herself as a wife in a supporting role: "*I was very much the Station Commander's wife that supported him in all sorts of fashions, entertained on a weekly basis, ran the charity shop, the wives club, all the things military wives were expected to do at that stage*" She identifies herself as a mother: "*I thought I could manage with two children of primary school age*", as a political activist: "*I was quite politically active*" and as a charity worker: "*I now spend more hours per week working for the (name of charity) than I actually did for my part-time job*" and as a professional administrator: "*I am a professional administrator*". She appears at ease in all of these roles and whilst she values her military career it does not define her: "*I just think I was 20 when I joined the Air Force and I suppose the Air Force made me what I am really, yeah*".

Story Telling Mode

The subject story telling mode is a heroic one. She presents herself as a successful individual whose success is significantly rooted in her military experience: "*I am a professional administrator and also horribly bossy (laughter). I just think I was 20 when I joined the Air Force and I suppose the Air Force made me what I am really, yeah.*" She acknowledges her opportunities but success is seen very much as a result of her own efforts: "*Well I think I've been extremely fortunate I would say. I was a member of the services when there were tremendous opportunities to be had and I'm very privileged to have been on a military pension from the age of 38 onwards, very privileged*". However, she refers to the obligation that this also brings and the idea that she must heroically or nobly repay her good fortune: "*And that's why I work with (name of charity) because I feel I need to give something back. Few people have been as fortunate as (name of husband) and I to come through the whole experience so it's payback time.*"

Summary

Subject experienced few tensions in her activity system during the transition process from military to civilian life. This may be because she in effect underwent a protracted withdrawal from the military as she was still filling the role of a military wife whilst her children were young. She has multiple identities that she is comfortable with and does not privilege any particular one above the others but she does acknowledge the advantages that she has received from her military career. She also identifies a sense of duty to repay her good fortune to the military through her charitable works. She tells her story in a classic heroic mode.
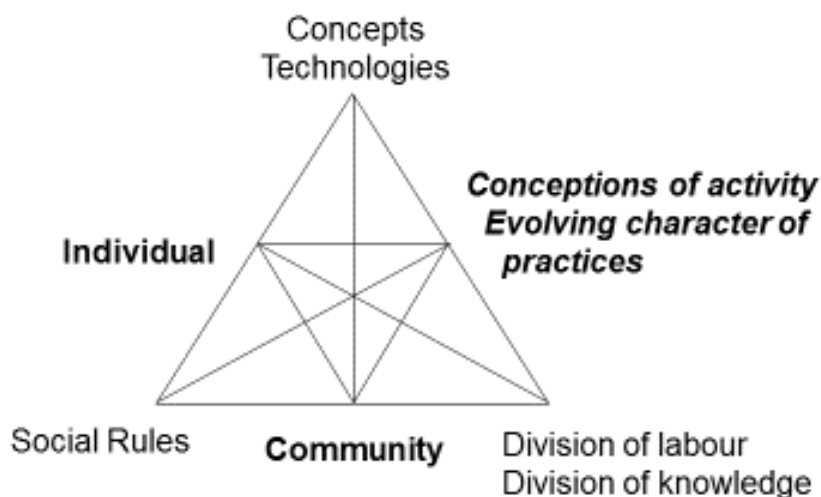
4.4.4.11 Subject K

History

The subject is female and served for 22 years in the British Army. Initially she joined as an accounting clerk and later became qualified as an accountant (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants) and retired from the army as a warrant officer. She left the army at the end of her engagement as she saw this as "*an opportunity*". On leaving the Army she worked as an accountant in both the public and private sector and now works as an accountant for a large international corporation. The interview was conducted approximately 5 years after the subject had left the Army.

Activity Grid Analysis

No major tensions are identified. The transition from the Army to civilian life seems to have presented no conflicts. A common theme appears to be the ease of transfer of skills,

technologies and competencies (accountancy has by and large universal rules that are standard across activities). If anything a conflict over division of labour and division of knowledge was apparent in the Army that does not seem to have manifested itself in civilian life.

Subject K

Social Rules	"to be honest personally I feel like I fitted sort of straight in. I didn't have any problems whatsoever because I think because of the nature of the job that I did in the army"
Concepts Technologies	"I know that I heard that some people struggle a bit more when they leave the forces then maybe just the fact that I was more independent and was used to living outside"
Division of Labour Division of Knowledge	"quite similar work to some of the project work that I'd done in the forces where you were learning new things"
Individual	" I've always said that I see myself as an accountant that to be in the army" "I had always wanted to be an accountant or at some point maybe a Maths teacher or something like that" "I was probably more independent because I had my own house."
Community	"certainly at XXX the social side of things is there is very good because they have walking clubs, they have running clubs, they have book reading clubs, they have social events organised, they have like just every now and again they have like a curry night or something like that. So fairly similar I suppose"
Concepts of Activity Evolving Character of Practices	"I suppose even though I didn't you know I wasn't missing the army I was still having a lot of similar sort of experiences"

Identities

Subject appears to have a strong sense of identity as an accountant: "*I had always wanted to be an account*", even when discussing her Army career she states:" *I've always said that I see myself as an accountant that happened to be in the army*" However, she also has a sense of pride and identity in her Army career:" *how can you not miss that element I suppose but you've always got memories and you've got that as an experience that gives...that the other people you know haven't been able to experience*" and "*I would have definitely not developed as the person that I am now had I not been in the army, whether I was an accountant or not.*" She also has an identity as an independent person that is not tied to either being in the Army or an accountant: "*I perceive rather I was probably more independent because I had my own house*" and "*I know that I heard that some people struggle a bit more when they leave the forces then maybe just the fact that I was more independent and was used to living outside*". She did not proffer any evidence of any other identities.

Story Telling Mode

Subject uses an understated Epic story telling mode. Epic in the sense that there is a strong element of achievement and success within the narrative: "*you know I got on my courses really and I worked hard and got promoted and it was recognised, you know it seems like you know my hard work was recognised and I did get...I passed all my promotion courses and got promoted really early*". There is also a justifiable pride in those achievements: "*I had only been at the company for a couple of months, well not even a couple of months I suppose, a few weeks when my boss had said to me, "Actually you're due loads more and you're far above what you know we're looking for, we're bumping you up and giving you a salary increase and what have you" so I was very pleased with that and to be honest personally I feel like I fitted sort of straight in I didn't have any problems whatsoever because I think because of the nature of the job that I did in the army...* "and some element of nostalgia for her former Army life: "*I mean with the traditional regimental dinners to me I think you're really honoured to be able to have experienced that but to experience them in such beautiful settings.*" There is no indication of comedy, tragedy or romantic modes.

Summary

The subject appears to have experienced no conflicts in the activity theory model. She regards her ongoing accounting career as very successful; of which the first 22 years of that career were spent in the Army. She also views herself as being very independent, but still has fond memories of her time in the Army. Perhaps it is her deep rooted sense of identity as an accountant and the universal rules of accountancy that are constant regardless of the

environment in which they are practised, that has resulted in the lack of tensions. Her story telling mode is definitively in the Epic mode with herself as the hero.
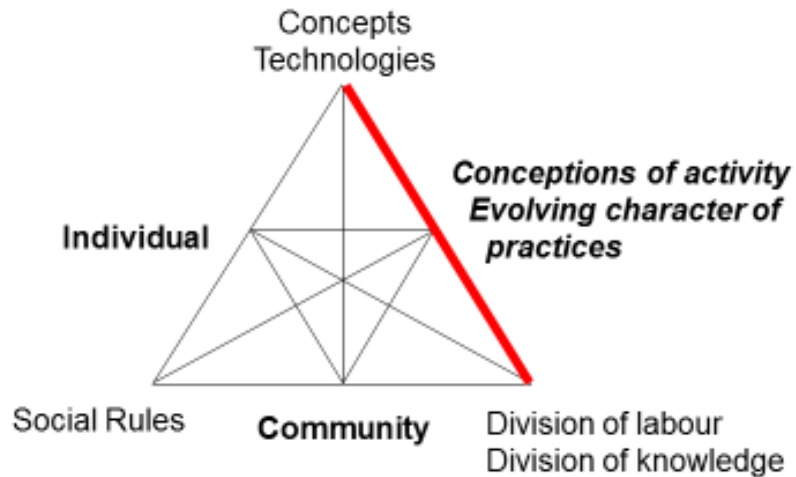
4.4.4.12 *Subject L*

History

Subject is male and served as an officer for 25 years in the Royal Navy in the submarine service, including operational sea command and work in the development of future submarines. He left the Navy as a Commander under a voluntary redundancy programme as he saw his chances of promotion reduced by a third and "*had some sort of feeling that I wanted to do something else with my life before it was too late".* On leaving the military he established a successful printing firm specialising in high quality stationery for the high end market. After running the business for 28 years he finally retired in his early 70's having sold the business. He is regarded as an expert in traditional printing methods and has been engaged as a technical expert by the BBC for its historical programmes and has won several industry awards.

Activity Grid Analysis

On leaving the Royal Navy the main tension occurred around the technicalities of running a business. Whilst the technical aspects of printing were relatively straightforward the other aspects of running the business, such as pricing, profit margins, cash flow and employing staff were more difficult. And even when he had mastered these aspects of his life he still reported tension in his with the ongoing responsibilities of running a business: *"it wasn't all plain sailing and you know the other thing is of course that you just, with the staff, you have to make that money not for yourself but to pay them and their mortgages and everything else and that's quite a trial*". His military experience was definitely seen as an asset and a factor in his success. No tensions we noted in the individual or community aspects of the activity grid.

Subject L

Social Rules	"the confidence to ask your friends, well ask anybody for money at the end of the day or to pay their bills on time, is really quite a hard step for a serviceman"
Concepts Technologies	"the things that we were taught in the service actually are absolutely paramount in civilian life."
Division of Labour Division of Knowledge	"I think the serviceman has...takes an enormous amount of good things into civilian life which the civilian world can and should use to the upmost."
Individual	"I had 25 years, very happy years, in the Royal Navy I still think I'm a serviceman in many ways When I compare myself to people who maybe have got to Captain but left the Navy at 53 or something and are really a bit lost, I think I have been lucky"
Community	"I had this conception that the civilian world was all about a load of crooks and we were the only ones that were the goodies"
Concepts of Activity Evolving Character of Practices	"I think one of the things that a serviceman finds really difficult when he leaves the service is to understand that you have to charge the right price for the right job and somehow we never talk about money in the service, we never discuss money, we never think of money, that's not our prime motivation."

Identities

In many ways he still sees himself as a service person and has a strong sense of his military identity. The experience that he gained in the Royal Navy is seen as a really valuable asset and in many ways instrumental in his success. He also projects that identity onto other military personnel pointing out how much they have to offer to the civilian world. However, his

identity seems not to be wholly rooted in his military identity. He is also views himself as a successful businessman who: "*had the most remarkable 28, 20 years in printing starting from knowing very little about it and ending up with printer of the year and making a huge number of friends and contacts and it's been something totally different and I think I've become a more confident person through it*". Of note is his pride in having set up a successful business rather than working in a large corporation. He also has an identity rooted in being a husband and father which in some ways he projects upon his workforce in his paternalistic approach as he highlighted what he saw as the huge responsibility of ensuring that he could pay his employees each month.

Story Telling Mode

He uses a mixture of epic and comic references when telling his story. Epic in so much as he made a success of starting a business that succeeded and was recognised as such. The tale of starting with a small printing machine working from home and not charging enough and convincing the bank manager of the viability of his venture, through buying his own premises to employing 12 people and being nationally recognised in his industry is a heroic tale. However, he also uses Comic references and a comic mode in his telling of his story. He uses the word 'lucky' frequently throughout his narrative and is almost self-effacing in telling his story: "*So my eyes have been opened in many ways and I just think I've been extremely lucky.*" It is a paradox in so much as he is clearly proud of his achievements and places himself at the centre of the story. It is interesting to note that no one else is citied as having been instrumental in the success of the business, although he refers to his employees as being 'good' employees he also points out that he treated them well and paid them well. So he is the main, indeed the only, character in his story. However, at the same time he reports that much of his success is a result of luck almost trying to downplay the Heroic aspect of his story.

Summary

The subject has had what he regards as successful career after his time in the military and the only tensions that were observed were around the running of a business, tensions that did not reduce over time but were constant over time. With a strong sense of his military identity, his business identity and his paternalist identity he appears to have experienced few difficulties transitioning from military to civilian life. His story telling mode puts him at the centre of his story and relates an Epic tale using Comic references to moderate the Epic tale. This subject has been out of the military for the longest period of time and has completed a second phase of professional employment and was interviewed shortly after entering a 'retirement' phase.
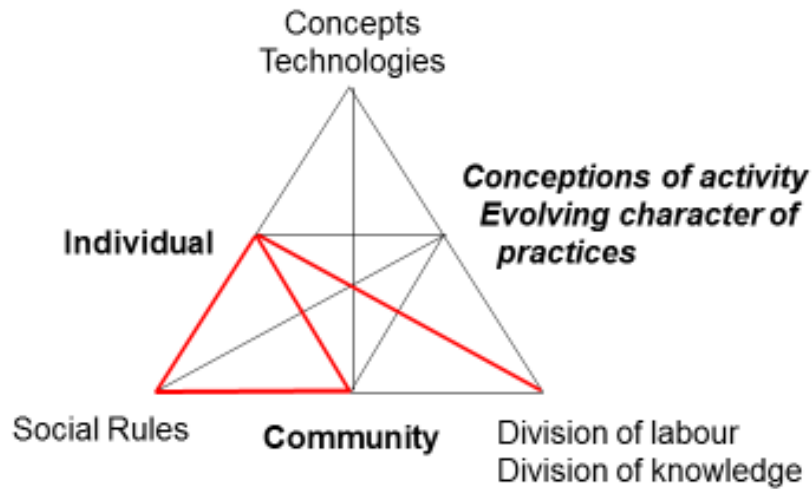
4.4.4.13   *Subject M*

History

Subject is male and served in the Royal Navy for 28 years. He joined as a seaman engineer and was later commissioned as an officer. He spent a significant amount of time at sea, including several operational deployments to the Gulf region. He left the military at an option point by his own choice driven by a combination of wishing to provide a more settled life for his wife who had compromised her nursing career to accommodate his naval career and as he viewed his future promotion prospects within the Navy as limited. He initially managed his self-build house project before set up his own small Information Technology company and had been running a successful business for 10 years at the time of the interview. His wife has pursued a successful (name of profession) career gaining promotion and his children have completed the education and moved into work. The interview was conducted 12 years after he had left military service.

Activity Grid Analysis

Subject M transitioned into a similar role in civilian life as they had been employed in whilst serving. The main tensions identified were understanding the social rules, their place in the work community, the divisions of labour and knowledge and the characters of practice in the new environment. In particular the subject mentioned several times the apparent lack of structure that he had found in his civilian work: "*I found it quite strange that there was a complete loss of structure around my life and I had to replace that structure*" and: "*Coming out, and especially in business, who do you target, you know, because the person who presents themselves to you as the person in charge, isn't necessarily the person with the power*".

Subject M

Social Rules	"One thing I do remember and I remember quite vividly, the first time I ever went into an office – a civilian office of workers – and I didn't know who to talk to. A huge problem! Who was the boss?! I'd end up talking to the lady there who was the PA of this bloke over in the far corner, who, very pleasant chap but I had absolutely no idea he was the one in charge, and that was a huge lesson for me, that …because in the past you know, I had been very used to structure, I'd been very used to ranks and could see who somebody was immediately you looked at them – all the badges of rank and everything else you know, you knew which one was more important than the other, and so you exactly knew who to target."
Concepts Technologies	No observations
Division of Labour **Division of Knowledge**	"I found it quite strange that there was a complete loss of structure around my life and I had to replace that structure and actually in retrospect, I think sort of building the house replaced a lot of that routine and everything else which I had missed. Coming out, and especially in business, who do you target, you know, because the person who presents themselves to you as the person in charge, isn't necessarily the person with the power,"
Individual	"the biggest thing I think that I…problem I had was actually recognising who was in charge you know? I'm actually quite content. I'm actually able to make decisions that affect me, much easier…more easily than I used to be able to do. Family decisions are still made as a group;"
Community	"That learning process for me, coming out, was really quite…it was shocking initially, because I didn't know how the civilian world existed."

Concepts of Activity Evolving Character of Practices	"that took me quite a while to sort of get into that sort of onset I think and that was always a huge, huge problem for me initially – dead easy now. I wait and let them reveal themselves! I think the lack of structure as well, I had to put my own sort of systems in place in order to replace the stuff but that structure that struck me as quite shocking really, I think, because I'd spent my whole … I wouldn't say my whole career but most of my career thinking that whatever the military did was the best – we are the best. Because that's how you get trained and that's how you get brainwashed when you join and go through your career. But yeah, that was an eye-opener – quite an eye-opener for me."

Identities

The subject had multiple identities, former military person, businessman, husband, and father and seemed content in each of them. He particularly mentioned the obligation that he felt to his wife: *"I decided that 28 years was enough. I didn't mind leaving, I actually felt it was a bit of a payback because my wife had made all sorts of career choices based on my career and I thought well it's only the least I could do was to let her have a go at a big plumb job"* and also to his family: "*Family situation being the way it was, I didn't want my family living in a naval port or near (name of town) and they didn't want to live there either so it was a fairly easy decision to make, to be honest. It was also sweetened by the fact that my wife was going to be getting a good job and so the worst case scenario was we'd live off her salary…"*

Story Telling Mode

His primary storytelling mode is a heroic one, although it is more implied than explicit. He portrays himself as a worthy individual: "*But no, I think…I like to think of myself as a sort of a well-rounded person and I'm always ready, always ready to help any other person – servicemen first, civilians second, but I would help anybody.*" He identifies himself, along with his fellow service personnel, as being noble, hardworking and successful: "*I think a serviceman's…majority of servicemen have a degree of self-reliance and self-motivation that you know, means that they're going to succeed and the majority will succeed, provided that they believe in themselves and carry on," …."You know, I firmly believe that the military gives an excellent grounding to people and it tends to make people quite tolerant of each other*". He also portrays a sense of noble support to his wife: "*I actually felt it was a bit of a payback because my wife had made all sorts of career choices based on my career".*

Occasionally he lapses into a comic mode: "*My situation was such that I'd just finished a good tour – a NATO tour where I was flying around Europe, albeit cattle class because they'd finished the first class, but hey, you know, you can't have everything can you?*

Because the cut backs were affecting even NATO – blimey it was serious! " but overall his narrative is a noble one.

Summary

It appears that the subject views his transition as a successful one. He has, and still does, identify major tensions in activity theory analysis of adapting to a new set of social rules and a new division of labour/knowledge. However, his community (family, friends) and his own place and identity within that community remain anchored. His identity as a husband may even have been strengthened by his transition as he has enabled his wife to pursue her career whilst he is in support, a complete juxtaposition to when he was serving in the navy. He appears to have multiple senses of that he is comfortable with. He uses a heroic mode to tell his story interlaced with the occasional hint of a comic mode
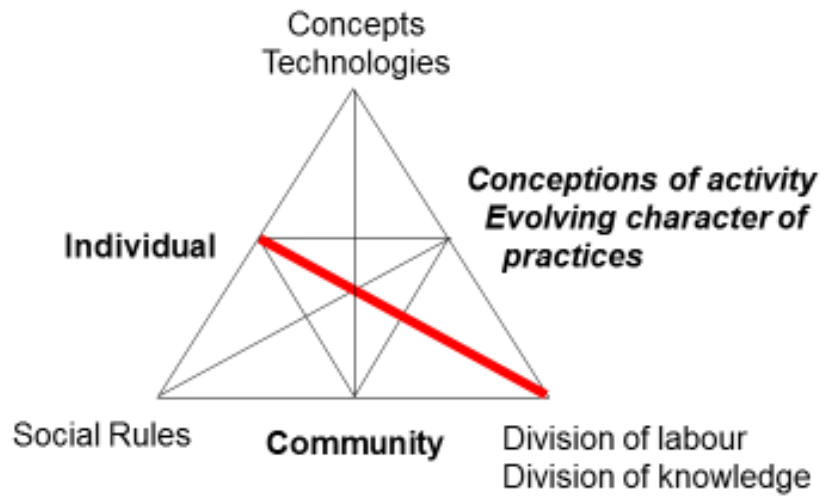
4.4.4.14 Subject N

History

Subject is male and served in the RAF as a driver for 7 years, leaving as a Corporal. After leaving the RAF he was employed as a driver and then became a civilian fire-fighter in Germany where he moved with his wife who was working for NAAFI. He returned to the UK as a civilian fire-fighter and then joined the MOD fire service and served at a variety of locations including overseas tours in conflict zones in Bosnia and Iraq. He then left the fire service and bought a bakery business running a successful business before selling the business to take early retirement. The interview took place 25 years after he had left the RAF

Activity Grid Analysis

There were no major tensions identified other than having to learn new skill sets (including languages) over several years and changes in employment. It is interesting to note that apart from a short period as a driver for a civilian company and owning and running his own business he has largely worked in a uniformed service environment with similar rules regulations and culture. This may explain the lack of tension in other areas. The subject is nostalgic for his time in the military but not defined by his time in the service: "*Well 99% of me is still service really, to be honest. And it's still...I mean actually...I can tell a service person...I can see a service person I mean as soon as they walk through the door you know they've been in the services*".

Subject N

Social Rules	"Well 99% of me is still service really, to be honest. And it's still...I mean actually...I can tell a service person...I can see a service person I mean as soon as they walk through the door you know they've been in the services, its knowing which one it is, you just know there's something about them."
Concepts Technologies	No observations
Division of Labour **Division of Knowledge**	"if I'm doing bakery let's do it right and I'll learn to bake and I went in and worked with the bakers for 6 months, every day for 6 months and just basically they told me what to do, showed me how to do it a couple of times and then I'd take over, that's it"
Individual	"I miss the...I still miss it now, the camaraderie and all that and there's no one you could you meet all the old forces people, any forces person I think will get on with somebody else from the forces and you've all got a common theme like something to talk about, "Oh where you've been in the world" "Oh I was out there" yeah and you miss all that really. Yeah you never lose it and I think that's a really good thing"
Community	"I mean when I was in the forces I was socialising every single day, or especially every weekend we were always at someone's house for a barbeque. Now we don't see anybody and that has changed. But I don't miss that."
Concepts of Activity **Evolving Character of Practices**	No observations

Identities

Subject still sees himself as a service person: "*Well 99% of me is still service really, to be honest*" and values his military experience: "*Yeah you never lose it and I think that's a really*

good thing". However, he also has an identity as a fire-fighter and is nostalgic for the camaraderie of that environment: "*I miss the...I still miss it now, the camaraderie and all that*". Although he mentions his other identities father, husband, partner, he does not dwell on these identities although they are probably of importance to him.

Story Telling Mode

Subject uses an Epic/Comic story telling mode. Epic in so much as he is the hero of his story, and has been successful in a variety of roles including starting his own successful business, however, he also uses comic references: "*we couldn't put anything out like a fire to be honest. Our main job really for the Colonel was to wash his tanks*" and : "*It's amazing within 6 weeks I could hold a conversation, I couldn't get the grammar right but it was fine. I did that so I was in the watch room and I used to dread the phone ringing*". He portrays himself as the unwitting hero who in many respects has achieved unexpectedly.

Summary

The subject has only identified tensions between his personal capabilities (skills) and the new environments in which has been working. He has been out of the RAF for 25 years but still sees himself as a military person. However, for the majority of his time out of the RAF he has worked in a uniformed service environment, much of it for the Ministry of Defence. Therefore his identity is rooted in a uniformed service (in support of the military) role. He has multiple identities but there does not seem to be a dominant identity. His story telling mode is Epic/Comic.

4.4.4.15   Subject O

History

Subject is male and joined the Royal Air Force at the age of 18. He was promoted to Sergeant and subsequently commissioned and is due to retire from the military at his 55th birthday in the rank of Flight Lieutenant. The interview took place 2 years before he was due to leave.

Activity Grid Analysis

His main perceived tensions will be between concepts of activity and character of practice and acquiring relevant and applicable concepts and technologies that will enable him to work in the civilian workplace: "*they don't understand it and so you have to transfer the skills into the right language*" and: "*that's why it's important to have all those CIPD experiences and knowledge so that I'm not just bringing in military skills I've got all the other skills as well*".

Subject O

Social Rules	"the language that's used in that academic study which I wasn't aware of which I think is very useful"
Concepts Technologies	"I feel I've got so much knowledge and experience and development and I feel like I'm a late starter but actually I've got so much to offer now and I hope that despite being that age I feel young and energetic and I feel like I've sort of topped everything and now know how to approach things much better as a Manager, as a leader"
Division of Labour Division of Knowledge	"they don't understand it and so you have to transfer the skills into the right language the worst thing that you can do I think is ignore the language that's used in Civvy Street and to just brush it aside"
Individual	"so we have now managed to get a house towards the end and we're paying a mortgage and its very important towards the end to get some of that paid off but I will have to use my lump sum to pay off most of that mortgage, now I have to find another job at 55 in order to continue"
Community	"What I wanna do is be able to work from...even working from home but working the normal community, the normal civilian life with a street, with a house and all those sorts of things and yet give my support, experience and knowledge and all those things to help something in a civilian life."
Concepts of Activity Evolving Character of Practices	"through the CIPD I learnt the language and I learnt a lot about the...hopefully the business world but also realised what I had to do to fill in those gaps and the CIPD Personnel Course gave me the most literature and materials in order to identify how to progress to being recruitable as it were in a civilian world I'm looking forward to my three day CTP which will give me the knowledge I need to CV's and things like that but I would imagine that would be quite useful,"

Identities

He has multiple identities husband, ex-husband, father, RAF officer and seems comfortable in all of these identities: "*I have two more young children now to put through University and that is a really difficult thing for me to do financially but I will just try and do it.*" This is an unusual case in so much as he has yet to leave and the transition process may strain these identities and developing new identities may cause tensions.

Story Telling Mode

Subject uses an heroic mode of storytelling and sees himself as struggling against the odds: "*so we have now managed to get a house towards the end and we're paying a mortgage and its very important towards the end to get some of that paid off but I will have to use my lump sum to pay off most of that mortgage, now I have to find another job at 55 in order to continue*".

Summary

Subject has yet to make the transition from the military but predicts that the tension will be between concepts of activity and character of practice and acquiring relevant and applicable concepts and technologies that will enable him to work in the civilian workplace. He holds multiple identities and tells his story in an heroic mode.
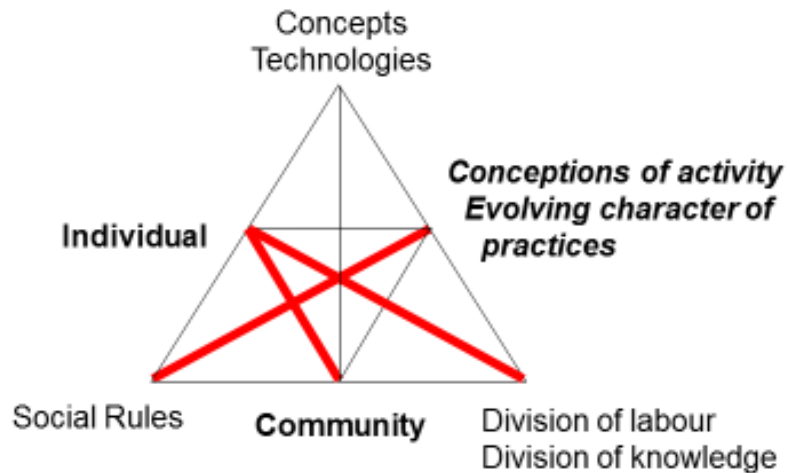
4.4.4.16   Subject P

History

Subject joined the Army at 17 and a half and served for 22 years before retiring at an option point. The interview was completed approximately 4 years since leaving the Army. Initially serving in the Parachute Regiment the subject qualified as an administrator and reached the rank of Warrant Officer. Since leaving the Army the subject has worked part-time in a DIY chain. He appears to have complex tensions about his sense of self, his place in his community, the social rules of the civilian world and concepts of activity and practices.

Activity Grid Analysis

There appear to be major conflicts between individual and society norms, especially in the workplace. The social rules that he now encounters are at odds with his Army experience: "*And I remember when I was younger before I even joined the army everybody seems to know that the army was a good place to be or that you know if you know if you'd been in the army you had some respect and the army seems to count for nothing when you go for a job*" The subject does not seem to be able to fit into the community of work and division of labour and the division of knowledge does not relate to his Army experience. Overall he finds this disorientating and confusing: "*And I think you have a status in the army because everybody knows who they are and*

you know you see somebody wearing a rank or a badge in a unit and you know exactly where you fit into that you know that pigeon hole. It's great. But life outside is very I don't know people...I think people outside have friendships but they don't owe any allegiance to anyone or anything".

Subject P

Concepts Technologies

**Conceptions of activity
Evolving character of practices**

Individual

Social Rules   Community   Division of labour
Division of knowledge

.

Social Rules	"I kind of like the parameters that the army sets on you, you know, it's a bit like become a part of society, society has rules and you know if you wanna be part of society you adhere to the rules and the army is like that but more so you know because you have to be that way. I used to say to people, you know I've been in places where a cardboard box was a prized item because you can make some furniture from it you know or...and, yeah they just don't understand, they don't, they have no comprehension whatsoever about you know the reality of the world"
Concepts Technologies	No observations
Division of Labour **Division of Knowledge**	"I've had times when I'm like absolutely banging my head off the walls thinking, "How the hell do people get anything done like this", ...managers in Civvy Street are managers by name aren't they?"
Individual	"I mean I definitely saw myself as a soldier before a clerk."
Community	"I think you have a status in the army because everybody knows who they are and you know you see somebody wearing a rank or a badge in a unit and you know exactly where you fit into that you know that pigeon hole. It's great. But life outside is very I don't know people...I think people outside have friendships but they don't owe any allegiance to anyone or anything."
Concepts of Activity **Evolving Character of Practices**	No observations

Identities

The subject has a very strong identity rooted in his military career: "*I mean I definitely saw myself as a soldier before a clerk.*" His other identities are not really discussed and are only alluded to briefly in the interview. He almost appears to be mourning the loss of his military identity and has not yet replaced it with a civilian identity: "*You know I do miss the army. I do miss what the army is but from a...you know it's difficult to put it into words*".

Story Telling Mode

Subject tells his story in the tragic hero mode. He sees himself as the heroic soldier that has defended society but now society does not recognise his efforts: "*I can't help that 22 years of my life was about war fighting you know in some way, shape or form*" and " *I think...I don't know whether this is the right term but I think society's let me down, I'm disappointed with society*" and "*there are people out there that the minute you mention the army they you know they throw your application in the bin, you know.*"

Summary

The subject has strong multiple tensions in the activity theory grid and, by his own admission, has found the transition difficult. Whilst he has multiple identities: husband, clerk, shop-worker and soldier; his main and dominant identity is firmly rooted in his military past. He has struggled with no longer being in the military and sees himself very much as still being a soldier. He related his story as a tragic, but noble, victim in his life narrative.

4.5   Summary

Having completed the detailed thematic analysis for each of the research subjects, the overall profile for the research cohort based upon the three analysis techniques was collated in tabular format below:

Table 7.   Subjects' Overall Profiles

Subject	Activity Theory Tensions	Storytelling Mode	Identity
A	Minor	Lucky Hero	Multi
B	Minor	Lucky Hero	Multi
C	Severe	Tragic Hero	Military
D	Major	Tragic	Military
E	Major	Tragic	Mixed
F	Minor	Lucky Hero	Multi
G	Minor	Tragic Hero	Mixed
H	Minor	Epic Comic	Multi
I	Minor	Epic Hero	Professional
J	Minor	Heroic	Multi
K	None	Epic	Professional
L	Major	Epic Comic	Military
M	Minor	Heroic	Multi
N	Minor	Epic Comic	Mixed
O	Minor	Heroic	Mixed
P	Severe	Tragic Hero	Military

Using colour to highlight the rankings of the level of activity theory tensions identified is shown in the table below:

Table 8.   Individual Levels of Activity Theory Tensions

Subject	Activity Theory Tensions	Storytelling Mode	Identity
A	Minor	Lucky Hero	Multi
B	Minor	Lucky Hero	Multi
C	Severe	Tragic Hero	Military
D	Major	Tragic	Military
E	Major	Tragic	Mixed
F	Minor	Lucky Hero	Multi
G	Minor	Tragic Hero	Mixed
H	Minor	Epic Comic	Multi
I	Minor	Epic Hero	Professional
J	Minor	Heroic	Multi
K	None	Epic	Professional
L	Major	Epic Comic	Military
M	Minor	Heroic	Multi
N	Minor	Epic Comic	Mixed
O	Minor	Heroic	Mixed
P	Severe	Tragic Hero	Military

Reordering the table by the level of activity theory tensions identified gave the following table:

Table 9. *Re-ordered Individual Levels of Activity Theory Tensions*

Subject	Activity Theory Tensions	Storytelling Mode	Identity
P	Severe	Tragic Hero	Military
C	Severe	Tragic Hero	Military
L	Major	Epic Comic	Military
D	Major	Tragic	Military
E	Major	Tragic	Mixed
A	Minor	Lucky Hero	Multi
B	Minor	Lucky Hero	Multi
F	Minor	Lucky Hero	Multi
G	Minor	Tragic Hero	Mixed
H	Minor	Epic Comic	Multi
I	Minor	Epic Hero	Professional
J	Minor	Heroic	Multi
M	Minor	Heroic	Multi
N	Minor	Epic Comic	Mixed
O	Minor	Heroic	Mixed
K	None	Epic	Professional

From this it can be seen that those subjects who identified the strongest tensions in the activity theory analysis tended to have an identity still rooted in the military and also tended to narrate their story in a Tragic mode. Those who identified only minor tensions in the activity theory analysis tended to have multiple or mixed identities where their military identity was not especially privileged and tended towards using an Heroic mode of storytelling. Of note were the two research subjects whose identities were very much rooted in their professional identity who experienced no, or only minor, tensions in the activity theory analysis and both used an Epic form of storytelling. Further consideration suggested that investigation into time since leaving might be a factor in the ranking of the analysis. Therefore the time since exit that the research interviews were conducted was included in table 10.

Table 10.   *Time Since Exit*

Subject	Activity Theory Tensions	Storytelling Mode	Identity	Time since Exit
P	Severe	Tragic Hero	Military	4
C	Severe	Tragic Hero	Military	2
L	Major	Epic Comic	Military	28
D	Major	Tragic	Military	3.5
E	Major	Tragic	Mixed	2
A	Minor	Lucky Hero	Multi	8
B	Minor	Lucky Hero	Multi	9
F	Minor	Lucky Hero	Multi	5
G	Minor	Tragic Hero	Mixed	5
H	Minor	Epic Comic	Multi	3
I	Minor	Epic Hero	Professional	5
J	Minor	Heroic	Multi	23
M	Minor	Heroic	Multi	9
N	Minor	Epic Comic	Mixed	25
O	Minor	Heroic	Mixed	-2
K	None	Epic	Professional	5

From this it can be noted that the two subjects who expressed severe tensions in the activity theory analysis had only been out of the military for less than 5 years. Also two out of three subjects who identified major tensions in the activity theory analysis had also left the military in the last 5 years.

With these general observations in mind the research considered what might help to understand the transition experience and this is discussed in the next Chapter.

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1   Introduction

The previous chapters have presented the research journey of attempting to understand the experiences of former military personnel and their transition into the civilian workplace. In doing so a range of existing literature and theory was explored in Chapter 2 and the methodological approach and the process by which the final approach was reached was described in Chapter 3. The findings and analysis of the research are discussed in Chapter 4. This Chapter now seeks to understand the findings and analysis using the insights gained in Chapter 2. In doing so it will summarise the findings and then discuss the 6 key findings. First, it will discuss Career Theory and how applicable the various models are to the findings. Second, it will discuss the notion of the self and what part this may play in understanding the research question. Third, it examines how narrative or storytelling has been used by the research subjects and how this may aid in our understanding of the research question. Fourth, it examines the concept of personal anchors and how these are important to the subjects. Fifth, it examines the concept of the unquestioned organisation and discusses this phenomenon and how it impacts on the experiences of the research subjects. Sixth, it discusses the importance of agency and how understanding agency may help to understand the experiences of former military personnel. Finally it will highlight some of the limitations of the research as it was conducted and suggest areas for further research.

5.2   Summary of the Findings

Classic career theory is a sense making vehicle. It is a rear facing lens that helps us to make sense of, and give value to, our lived experiences. Classic career theory provides a common storytelling format that enables the stories we tell ourselves, the stories we tell others, and the stories that are told about us to have a recognised form, understanding and acceptance.

Contemporary career theory is more useful for explaining career choices as it sees careers as contextual, complex, adaptive entities that are not necessarily linear, rationale and progressive. Career decisions and career choices are bounded and of their time. Only by understanding these restraints and constraints can we make sense of these career decisions

and choices. Thus cotemporary career theory may help us explain career decisions, but not necessarily understand career transitions.

Activity theory is a powerful analytical tool for identifying areas of tension and change at both an individual, group and organisational level. The analysis of multiple activity systems that are impacting simultaneously may represent a step change opportunity in its application. By using activity theory in this research it demonstrates that those who experienced the least tension in their activity systems during the transition from military to civilian life see their transition as being more successful. Those who experiences severe or major tensions saw their experiences as less successful. However, by 'objective' standards all the research subjects had made a successful transition to civilian life; they were all employed and their mental and physical health, as far as they shared with the researcher, seemed to be normal. Thus the research finds that a 'good' or 'bad' transition is as defined by the individual concerned and not by any outward or objective standards of measurement, therefore success is self-defining.

Storytelling is a powerful sense making tool. It enables us to make sense of what might otherwise be seen as a random, chaotic and meaningless existence. Stories enable us to give meaning and value to our lived experiences. It requires not only us to tell stories about ourselves, but also about others and for others to tell stories about us. There must be a mutual acceptance of the stories told in order for the stories to be part of the collective myth that is our community and society. The way we tell our stories gives us our place in that community. The research did not find that stories regarding transition from military to civilian life were recurring or rehearsed stories or an archetype. None of the research subjects had told their stories before and many commented on how the telling of their story was a novel, but satisfying experience. For some it was the first opportunity that they had taken to reflect on their transition and several commented that it had been a cathartic experience and some had an emotional reaction when recalling their transition. Thus the research finds that these stories regarding transition from military to civilian were novel, unique and unrehearsed and cannot be compared to other classical archetype stories. They are therefore a rich form of data that can only be accessed once. To re-interview the subjects would create a transition 'myth' for the individual and the development of a transition archetype.

Concepts of the self are an elemental part of storytelling. Concepts of the self can be singular, multiple or mixed. Multiple identities are discrete identities that are held simultaneously. Mixed identities are a complete identity with many different intermixed and interrelated elements of identity. Singular identities are rooted in a particular concept of self, such as a profession, to the effective exclusion of other identities. The research cohort had a

range of identity types that could not be linked to other factors such as age, gender, length of service or any other variables identified during the research.

Identities have anchors that relate to the attitudes, values and talents that contribute to the core beliefs and motivations held by an individual. Anchors can change over time but are formed from the lived experiences of the individual. How these anchors are subsequently developed over a life time can be both a help and a hindrance. The research finds that those who experience the strongest tensions in leaving the military and adapting to a new set of rules and a new community tend to have very strong military identities and they also tend to have left the military within 5 years. However, time since leaving the military does not seem to be a significant factor, as others who experience minor tensions have also left within 5 years. Therefore having a strong military identity is likely to lead to severe or major tensions, in activity theory terms, when leaving the military.

The literature suggests that the physical, social and psychological process of joining the military probably contributes to the formation of powerful life anchors that are likely to remain significant anchors throughout the life experiences of former military personnel. This is confirmed by the research findings and the power of military anchors is significant. However, the research also finds that failure to modify and adapt military anchors is likely to create significant tensions and challenges for the individual. Paradoxically if you are good at being in the military, you may be bad at being out of the military and strong military anchors that privilege a military identity over multiple or mixed identities are likely to result in significant tensions.

In every individual case the research finds that the military is an unquestioned organisation. With some research participants this is a very strong view in others it a less strong view and almost implicit. What is significant is the lack of criticism of the military per se in any of the interviews conducted, regardless of any other factors such as age, length of service, time since exit and reason for leaving. The unquestioned organisation is a universal truth for all the research cohort and the unquestioned military organisation is a significant life anchor and central to the life story of former military personnel.

The research finds that there is an unthinking transfer of agency when joining the military that manifests itself in the rules, structures, symbols, rituals and myths of the organisation. Individual agency is bounded and limited. On leaving the military there is an unthinking return of agency from the organisation to the individual. There are no longer the rules, structures, symbols, rituals and myths to act as a guide and new ones have to be learned. However, there is no rite of passage or physical, social or psychological process to enable this transfer

of agency back to the individual. This unrecognised transfer of agency may be the cause of significant tensions in the transition process back to civilian life. In particular, those who have a strong military identity as opposed to a multiple or mixed identities are likely to suffer severe or major tensions when agency is transferred from the military back to them.

The literature review suggests that joining the military entails a significant outward and public rite of passage however rites of passage when leaving the military are not as well researched or documented. The research finds that rites of passage when leaving the military are at best ad hoc, at worst there are none. Whilst a causal link cannot be demonstrated, a strong association between this lack of a rite of passage and the unthinking transfer of agency is suggested by the research. Subsequently it can be argued that this lack of a rite of passage may contribute to the unawareness of the return of individual agency, it may prevent the realisation that military anchors need to be adapted, it may prevent the ending of a particular chapter in the life story, it may hinder the development of a different sense of self, and it may prevent the writing of the next stage in the classic career theory.

5.3   Career Theory

Chapter 2 examined career theory in detail as the initial thinking was that as a change of career from a military career to a civilian career was taking place then career theory would probably hold the clue to understanding the experiences of military personnel as they transition. However, as has been demonstrated, career theory offered few insights into understanding the research question. Whilst career theory could *describe* the process, it could not offer an *understanding* of the process. As has been previously discussed traditional career theory with its linear progression, rational actor assumptions and reductionist philosophy is simply not able to understand and explain the nature of careers (Cannon 1997, Arnold 1997, Bowden 1997, Bloch 2005, Arthur, Peiperl and Anand 2002).

With this wealth of career theory to draw upon it may have been expected the findings and analysis would have highlighted the prominence of 'the career' in the research. However, career as a concept was not something that was prominent in the research or analysis. The concept of a career was used by the research subjects but interestingly fell into two distinct types. First the actual word 'career' was exclusively used when referring to the time that had been spent in military service. Careers were something that had taken place whilst the research subjects were in the military. This career was seen as logical, ordered and rational. Those subjects who referred to their military career did so with pride and described them in a positive light. In this sense then, traditional career theory with its linear progression, rational

actor assumptions and reductionist philosophy was applicable. This was how the career was observed and reported by the subjects.

Conversely 'career' as a word was seldom used in the context of the situation that the research subjects found themselves in following their transition from the military to the civilian world or looking ahead to their new employment. Looking ahead, or describing their experiences since leaving the military, the career and its possible pathway was much more linked to notions of contemporary career theory where careers and their development were seen as a continuously evolving dynamic process reacting to opportunities and threats. The pathway is not clearly defined with prominent milestones along the way. Rather personal aspirations, histories, attitudes and beliefs were going to be used to define career success. Future careers were going to be dependent upon the individual and the opportunities that arose. These were going to be subjective careers constructed through the individual's own world view and their own sense making of the world around them. Central to this perspective is the proposition that an individual's sense of self plays a central part in their life and career decisions.

Therefore both traditional objective career theory and contemporary subjective career theory are valid for understanding the transition of military personnel into civilian work. In order to make sense of their lives, looking back traditional, objective, rational career theory seems to be applicable. It makes sense of, and gives value to, their lived experience so far. Perhaps this is as a result of the structure and nature of the military, in the perception of the research subjects: an ordered, logical and rational organisation, whilst the new situation they find themselves in is, relative to the military organisations that they remember, less ordered logical or rational. Notions of a 'civilian' career are less obvious, rather it appears that the research subjects see themselves now as having a job (or series of jobs) and indeed in none of the interviews did the subjects refer to their new 'career'. This suggests that life outside the military is characterised by the absence of a traditional career.

The researcher would argue that looking back the subjects made sense of their work choices and experiences using the construct of a career. The career is logical ordered and rational. Looking forward a career is less well defined. The career is now portrayed as continuously evolving process that is both dynamic and reactionary to opportunities and threats as they arise and decisions are inextricably bound up with the context in which they occur. The research therefore suggests that traditional career theory is a sense making theory of what has gone before, a pot-hoc rationalisation of life, whilst contemporary career theory is a sense making theory of what might be. This links to the concept of the life narrative, or story telling as discussed later. Careers are as much a narrative as any other part of life. They are

stories we tell ourselves and we tell others. We make sense of our working lives, and indeed out whole lives, through the construction or our career narrative.

The notion that a military career is significantly different to a civilian career is also supported by the research. Without exception the research subjects held what could be described as a nostalgic view of their military service. Even those who had been forced to leave the military in very testing circumstances viewed their service in the military as a positive experience. Most of the subjects talked about the uniqueness of their military service and the experiences that they could not have had as civilians. Several referred to the rituals and routines that were unique to the military. The socialisation aspects of their service were also alluded to by the majority of respondents. Thus the theory that military socialisation is a significant factor in the experiences of the transition process is supported by the research. The research supports the theory that the process of joining the military and the reinforcement of the values, standards and norms of the military organisation by the rituals, routines, stories and symbols are significant. Changing from this type of organisation appears to be a significant factor in the transition process.

A common theme in the interviews was how the structure of their new civilian occupations was different, how it was difficult to know how to act, who was in charge and what was acceptable behaviour in their changed environment. The unique bond between military personnel was also frequently discussed. However, the assertion in the theory that military service was seen as a vocation rather than a job was not supported by the research. Whilst all the respondents took pride in the service that they had undertaken, nowhere was there any explicit or implicit sense that being in the military was a calling. Whilst it may be the case that some individuals who serve in the military may see their service in this way there was no evidence to support this view amongst any of the research subjects. The concept of an ideological community was also explored in the analysis and again there was no evidence to support this theory. There were no strong shared values or beliefs espoused by the research subjects that would suggest that they had a strong shared set of values or life views. Rather the diversity and richness of their opinions and beliefs suggests that they occupied a far from ideological community. Whilst all the respondents had a shared history in the fact that they had all served in the armed forces at some point in their adult lives there was no suggestion that somehow they were all part of an ideological community. The concept that the experiences of the research cohort were as a result of them leaving an ideological community and entering a different work based community was not supported and whilst this theory may be valid for other professions or vocations the researcher does not believe that it

can be applied to former military personnel in order to try and understand their experiences of transition into the world of work.

5.4   Self

Throughout the research journey in attempting to understand the experiences of former military personnel re-entering the world of civilian work the research was very much focussed on the experience of individuals and as has been highlighted before former military personnel do not form a homogenous group. Given this position the perceptions of self were explored in the analysis and in particular the idea that mental attitudes played a key role in understanding the transition experience. Of particular note was how individuals perceived themselves and their situation or experiences. Of particular significance were the theories that identities are formed, not only by only by actions, but also by relationships and a sense of place (Gecas and Schwalbe 1983, Siri and Groddeck 2012, Ramarajan and Reid 2013) and that identities are not fixed in time (Taylor 1989) and that self-identity is based upon self-interpretation (Brinkman 2008). In line with this school of thought it was considered that for military personnel self-interpretation is probably greatly influenced by being in the military and the formation of a military, as opposed to a civilian identify (Hale 2008, Griffith 2009, McCartney 2011, Smith and Stewart 2011, Woodward and Jenkins 2011, Palmer 2012). As has been discussed in the previous section military culture has been described as a unique way of life and notably distinct from civilian institutions and organizations. It consists of strongly structured symbolic systems with rules, rituals and hierarchical social structures. It is one of the few social structures that provide a time perspective, consistent system of values and social regulations (Hale 2008, Woodward and Jenkins 2011). In particular the three common themes through which individuals conceptualise their military identity was highlighted by Woodward and Jenkins (2011). The first is through professional expertise and skills that were clearly identifiable as military tasks. The second is strong emotional bonds between individuals and across groups flowing from the idea that military life is a collective endeavour that is founded on teamwork. The third theme was the idea of individual participation in a collective military event. It is suggested that a military identity is therefore both a personal identity and a group identity. In addition individuals may also have other identities such as husband/wife, father/mother, profession (engineer for example). Changes to these identities, through the transition to the civilian world, may have an effect upon that transition, the other identities and the well-being of the individual (Woodward and Jenkins, 2011). The analysis of the research supports this idea/notion. During the interviews all the participants identified a strong military identity, even in those who had left military service for some considerable time. That military identity was both an individual identity and a collective

identity. Several of the subjects reported how that identity had been developed though collective endeavours:

> *"enemy aircraft inbound in the Gulf and all you are is in a plastic minesweeper you know, and your hoping like Christ, that the goalkeeper, type 22 and 42 that were out-boarding were doing the business, you know, but there's nothing quite like action stations at 2 o'clock in the morning – sets the old blood running doesn't it?"*
>
> —SUBJECT M

However, most of the subjects identified other identities not just military: professions, family members and other relationships. Generally these multiple identities existed alongside each other and no single identity predominated or privileged the other. Therefore the concept of identities being based upon self-interpretation was generally considered to be useful for explaining these lived experiences and supported by the research findings.

However, there was a suggested association between how 'successful' individual subjects viewed their transition to civilian life and the identities that they presented. The link between having a clear identity, or sense of self, and psychological well-being has been suggested (Erikson 1968, Campbell 1990, Stinson, Wood and Doxey 2008). High self-esteem may well be the result of having strong multiple identities whereby changes to one do not materially affect the other identities. Individuals whose sense of self is rooted in a single identity, such as the military, may well have high self-esteem but if this identity is challenged or damaged during transition it may result in low self-esteem. It can be argued that individuals with high self-esteem and well-being are more able to cope with change such as the career transition experienced by military personnel returning to civilian life (Gecas and Schwalbe 1983, Griffith 2009, Loretto, Platt and Popham 2010). Whilst the research could not specifically prove a causal link in this respect it does suggest that this theory has merit. Those who experienced a 'successful' transition tended to have high self-esteem and multiple identities available to them. Those who had a more difficult transition tended to have lower self-esteem. However, the research could not identify whether self-esteem was a consequence of a difficult transition or conversely a difficult transition was a consequence of low levels of self-esteem. This is an area where further research would be helpful.

Further development of this concept also suggests that personal identity is important to well-being, but so is a collective or cultural identity (Taylor 1997, 2002). Collective identity is defined as that part of an individual's self-concept or identity that is derived from their membership of a social group or groups (Usborne and Taylor 2010, Griffith 2009, Gecas and Schwalbe 1983). Thus a clear collective identity can be constructed based upon an

understanding and, acceptance of, the group's values, norms and characteristics (Usborne and Taylor 2010). Individuals may have several collective identities and they may belong to numerous groups simultaneously. However, this contributes to an overall collective identity rather than several discrete but simultaneous collective identities and individuals may have multiple social identifies that become integrated into an individual's personal identity over time (McAdams 1993, Griffith 2009). These multiple social identifies are likely to be self-reinforcing rather than mutually exclusive. Whilst the initial transition may be unsettling or uncomfortable the challenge of adapting to a new environment, learning the new norms and histories may actually be a stimulus to personal growth and satisfaction (Stinson, Wood and Doxey 2008). In this vein Jenkins (2008) argues that the essence of identity is what is same and what is different. Identity is not fixed and can change over time and indeed history is not fixed and can change over time. The analysis of the research suggest that the collective military identity of the subjects was largely preserved. Whilst the identity might be seen through a nostalgic lens, nonetheless, the collective identity was still strong in all the subjects:

> *"Well I still stand for my 2 minutes at 11 o'clock on the 11th November"*
>
> —SUBJECT C, 3 YEARS AFTER LEAVING THE MILITARY

> *"No, it's never over. (transition from the military to being a civilian) It's never over".*
>
> —SUBJECT E, 2 YEARS AFTER LEAVING THE MILITARY

> *"It never leaves you. Even if it is only Jack Speak or the odd word or too".*
>
> —SUBJECT G, 10 YEARS AFTER LEAVING THE MILITARY

> *"but will I ever get rid of that, (The military) no I won't get rid of that"*
>
> —SUBJECT H, 5 YEARS AFTER LEAVING THE MILITARY

> *"I still think I'm a serviceman in many ways"*
>
> —SUBJECT L, 25 YEARS AFTER LEAVING THE MILITARY

> *"Well 99% of me is still service really, to be honest".*
>
> —SUBJECT N, 20 YEARS AFTER LEAVING THE MILITARY

However, other collective identities were less obvious. Those who were members of a profession maintained a collective professional identity but out with these examples there were no explicit or implicit examples of other collective identities. That is not to say that they do not exist but there was no evidence found. Therefore the theory of a strong collective

identity being important to individual well-being is ambiguous in this study. Whilst all the participants had a strong collective *former* military identity it is not clear how significant this is to their well-being, or how other collective identities may exist or the extent to which they influence individual well-being. This is a potential area for further research.

In the discussion concerning both career theory and sense of self and identity the issue of perspective is of great importance. The perspective of the individual, how they saw themselves, and the perspective of the rest of society, how others saw them, or indeed how they perceived others saw them. A golden thread that ran through all of this was the notion of the telling and re-telling of a story; a story of careers and a story of the self, both of which are complex and continually changing. Thus storytelling and narrative are examined in the next section.

5.5   Story telling

As previously discussed the narrative analysis was used to interpret and allocate meaning to the stories that the research subjects told in their interviews. In order to do this the researcher subscribed to the theory that storytelling is one way in which we can make sense of the physical and philosophical world that individuals inhabit (Gabriel 2000). However, it was also borne in mind that story telling is also used as an entertainment method, and as a way of illustrating morals and behaviours and as such the use of stories by individuals is not value neutral and they, and the organisations that they are describing, also use stories and storytelling in a variety of ways to the benefit of themselves (Boyce 1996). In accepting this view the researcher also accepted that the stories that the subjects told were probably shaped by the need for the research subject to present themselves in a particular way and/or explain their choices and behaviours in the story and in doing so they created a narrative about themselves. The purpose of that narrative was to give meaning and value to the subjects' experiences and were as much a story *about* themselves as *to* themselves and in doing so they were constructing and sustaining a life narrative in order to make sense of themselves, those they interact with and the world they inhabit. The work of Schein (1978) suggests that individuals spend, literally, a lifetime of building illusions, assumptions and a narrative about themselves in order to build and maintain relationships and to maintain their self-esteem. If these narratives are destroyed or damaged then not only does this threaten the well-being of the individual but also jeopardises the social relationships and social order that, not only the individual has, but also the social order and narratives of those around them. Thus narrative illusion is essential in order to maintain individual and communal well-being. Likewise, Gabriel (2000) argues that the narrative is an essential concept and condition to enable us to make sense of the complex and often conflicting world that we

inhabit. We lack control of our lives and seemingly random events impact upon us every day and we only seem able to make sense of the world and believe that we have an explanation of our lives, if not control, if we frame those experiences as a story. In other words, storytelling *is* sense making. Indeed Mangham and Overington (1987) suggest that in a post-modern interpretation, stories and experience are intertwined as stories, as retold by individuals transform into the experience of those individuals, but also lived experience is turned into stories. Therefore separating experience from stories is a complex task.

When viewed from this standpoint the research and analysis confirms the hypothesis of storytelling as a sense making tool. All the respondents related a complex and lengthy narrative to the researcher. As has been previously discussed the narrative tool was powerful and simply being asked to "Tell me your story" elicited fulsome responses, in some cases well over an hour, without the need for further prompting or questioning from the researcher. The language that was used by the research subjects was often rich and frequently lapsed into the vernacular of military vocabulary:

> *"You've got the Tate and Lyle on your shoulder"*
>
> —SUBJECT D, REFERRING TO BADGES OF RANK

> *"I've got the T shirt and I've got a rack of medals"*
>
> —SUBJECT E, REFERRING TO OPERATIONAL SERVICE

> *"All of the shore drafts were in Scotland"*
>
> —SUBJECT F, REFERRING TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

> *"I came alongside and fell down the quarterdeck"*
>
> —SUBJECT G, REFERRING TO AN INJURY

> *"So I deployed everything tactically and they're all sort of looking at me a bit strangely"*
>
> —SUBJECT L, REFERRING TO THE FIRST DAYS IN A NEW JOB

> *"enemy aircraft inbound in the Gulf and all you are is in a plastic minesweeper you know, and your hoping like Christ, that the goalkeeper, type 22 and 42 that were out-boarding were doing the business, you know, but there's nothing quite like action stations at 2 o'clock in the morning – sets the old blood running doesn't it?"*
>
> —SUBJECT M, DESCRIBING OPERATIONAL SERVICE

Whilst it may be common in all narratives, is it possible that in the case of former military personnel, there may be a temptation to look upon their period of military service as a

'golden age' and this idealised view of the past may lead to an embellished or even 'false memory' version of the past. Whilst this specific aspect of the narrative is outside the scope of this research, the anecdotal experience of the researcher prior to undertaking this research and the comments observed in the course of this research, suggests that former military personnel do tend to look upon their military experience as being a unique part of their lives and they may be more susceptible to taking a nostalgic view of their military past. It may be that the intensity of the experiences (particularly combat or danger) that former military personnel have encountered during this part of their lives makes it stand out as so different from the rest of their life experience that it is afforded a special or unique part in the narrative. However, in this research it seems that often the social aspects of their military lives that seem to hold a special place rather than the more extreme elements:

> *"Looking back I did love every bit of it and it still makes me laugh and the things we did"*
>
> —SUBJECT A

> *"I've met some lovely people and I've got some really good new friends but I think those friends that you make in the forces are friends that you keep forever and the ones that you could rely on 100%".*
>
> —SUBJECT B

> *"The only thing I really miss about the Army now is the social side – social interaction with the people….And I miss the banter, the crack, the sense of humour."*
>
> —SUBJECT E

> *"I still miss it now, the camaraderie, and all that and there's no one you could, you could meet all the old forces people, any forces person I think will get on with somebody else from the forces."*
>
> —SUBJECT G

This is an area that is probably worthy of further evidence-based research as this may could be an important factor in understanding veterans' issues building on the work of Gabriel (2000) and the importance that nostalgia plays in the construction of the narrative. It was generally concluded that the military experiences related to the researcher were largely unrepeatable.

The four generic poetic modes: Comic, Tragic, Epic and Romantic; and four secondary poetic modes: Humour, Cock-up, Tragi-comic and Epic-comic as postulated by Gabriel (2000) were used in the narrative analysis by identifying key words that were used within the narrative. Words that described the subject's view of their experience: for example 'lucky',

'naïve' and 'fair', were highlighted and the frequency and the context in which they were used was analysed. As well as the specific word search a general sense of the story was considered by the researcher and an overall impression of the view that the subject had of themselves was considered by the researcher. This worked well to an extent. However, the range of modes could be argued to be too wide. In this case the research tended towards the four main modes and the secondary modes were difficult to distinguish. Perhaps with a larger sample size or indeed different set of subjects the full range of modes may have been utilised but from this study the secondary modes were not fully utilised.

5.6   Anchors

As previously discussed of particular note was the concept of career anchors (Schein 1978) that may be particularly relevant for understanding the careers of military personnel whilst the also recognising the unique social networks and career structures of military personnel (Jolly 1987 and 1996; Jessup 1996; Strachan 1997 and 2000). If we accept that career anchors are founded in an individual's self-concept made up of self-perceived talents and abilities, motives and needs and attitudes and values and which develop over an individual's life-experience and become more fixed as that life experience progresses. (Schein 1978), then it might be supposed that the older the subject and the longer they had served in the military then the more difficult the transition to civilian life might be. However, this view presupposes that move from military to civilian life requires a cutting loose of the career anchor and the establishment of new ones, rather than the retention of existing anchors. The literature was unclear as to whether retaining 'career anchors' or stories that maintained feelings of self-worth was an important part of the transition process from military to civilian. In constructing life narratives some research subjects clearly held onto the value that their military service bestowed upon them and, in their own narratives, this value was important in their stories. The past was important in creating a life narrative and as Fraher and Gabriel argue:

> *"It can be argued that the same key opens the door to identity construction of other occupational groups that view themselves as following their vocation. It is noteworthy that members of such groups are known for being able to endure disappointments and privations without fundamentally derailing their occupational identity; thus a musician or a former paratrooper may still draw his/her identity by identifying with their profession, long after their last successful gig or their last professional achievement."*
>
> —FRAHER AND GABRIEL (2014), P.945

Therefore it could be argued that a key determinant of the experience of transition was how the subjects constructed their narrative, how they maintained their anchor and self-worth in the stories that they told themselves and how they held their military service to be a positive,

ongoing part of their story. The key emphasis here is *part* of that story, for those who constructed a rich story full of different parts, characters and events seemed to have a more positive experience than those whose stories were lees rich, less full and where the military aspects were dominant. Gabriel et al (2010) argue that the process of coping with transition is not a rational and purposeful activity. Story telling enables individuals to cope with often uncomfortable or painful events, such as career transition by creating a story that plots the events into a story that offers consolation and maintains and sustains a sense of worth and selfhood (Roberts 2014, Fraher and Gabriel 2014, Gabriel, Gray and Goregaokar 2013).

The narratives of the research subjects portrayed the military as an unquestioned organisation which is discussed in detail in the following section. However, the creation of an unquestioned organisation can be seen as retaining a career anchor. Military service is seen as a career anchor itself as it gives meaning and value to the life story of the individual. The experience of the individual cannot be understood without an understanding of the anchors that the individual has created. However, military service may only be one of the anchors that the individual has and this may be reflected in the identities that they present. It may be that multiple identities, as previously discussed are founded upon multiple anchors. If this is the case then those whose identity is anchored primarily in their military identity may find the transition more difficult than those who have multiple anchors upon which they create their sense of self and their life narrative. So for the researcher the concept of anchors, in their broadest sense, but based upon Schein's original concept, became a powerful tool for understanding the way in which former military personnel viewed their transition and their experiences surrounding it.

5.7 Unquestioned organisation

The research interviews were analysed on numerous occasions, each time with a view to try and identify common themes or patterns however, it was not until relatively far into the analysis process that it was noted that there appeared to be an unquestioning acceptance of the positive nature of military service. It appeared that almost none of the research subjects questioned the apparently beneficial nature of the military organisations to which they had belonged and service in the military was almost universally portrayed in the narrative as being a positive experience. Even those who had left the military in a less than planned way, against their will, viewed their time in the military as a very positive experience:

> *"And I did at the time have a lot of ill will towards them when I was thrown on the heap, especially when I wanted to stay. It was a bit of a shock at the time. But it's turned out alright..."*

> —SUBJECT G, MEDICAL DISCHARGE WITH PERMANENT DISABILITY

On the basis of this initial observation a detailed thematic review of the narratives was undertaken searching for negative and positive language to describe the various military organisations. From that thematic review it was deduced that the positive aspects of the military organisations contained in the narratives, far outweighed the negative aspects and the overall picture is one of the organisation being almost unquestionable in terms of its positive aspects. Even where there are negative aspects associated with military service these are tempered with corresponding positive statements within the narrative. The only exception to this general observation of the unquestioned organisation was Subject O who made no positive or negative comments about the organisation they served in. This is of interest as the narrative of Subject O was recorded prior to their exit from the military, and as Subject O had served for all of their adult life, so far, in the military there was no comparator to the military available to them. The first issue that this analysis raised was why had the researcher not spotted this obvious pattern earlier. Perhaps it was because it was so obvious that it was not obvious or, to put it another way it was hiding in plain sight. As almost all of the research subjects held this unquestionable view of the organisations they had served in several explanations were considered.

The first consideration was that somehow all the research subjects had been so indoctrinated into the military organisations that they had become unthinking advocates of the system, or military zealots. Within the military this is described colloquially as being 'Army Barmy' or a 'NATO Potato' and suggests an unthinking acceptance that the military system is always right, and even when things go wrong it is not the organisation that is at fault but the people or individuals within it, or indeed those outside the military who interfered in its smooth running (usually politicians). This simplistic 'brainwashed' approach did not stand up to initial scrutiny as the interview subjects had demonstrated levels of critical thinking and analysis that suggested that they were far from the unthinking zealots that this explanation might have inferred. However, it did beg the question that there might a more subtle explanation as to why the military organisations were unquestioned by such a diverse but clearly intelligent group of individuals whose only common experience was service in the military.

As has previously been explored joining the British military is a major event in the life of an individual. They are leaving behind a known world and entering an organisation that has its own distinct and unique culture. Within that general military culture there will be major differences resulting in sub-cultures: the Royal Navy, The Army and the Royal Air Force all have different organisational cultures (Strachan 1997). Within those sub-cultures there will be sub-sub cultures such as submariners in the Navy, paratroopers in the Army and fast-jet

pilots in the Air Force and even within those sub-sub cultures there will be sub-sub-sub-cultures. These diverse cultures lead to the individuals experiencing what can be described as a unique way of life that is notably different and distinct from most civilian institutions and organisations (Hale 2008). On entering the military most people experience a complete dislocation of their previous existence and often undergo a period of shock, fear and excitement and a rupture of the existing known world. They enter a sociocultural world that is starkly different from that which they have lived before (Hale 2008). Thus joining the military and successfully entering its confines is not just a social or sociological phenomenon but is in fact a psychological phenomenon (Sherman 2010). On entering into the military the interdependent nature of the organisation is emphasised to an extent that is probably unique to the military and is developed through training from day one and reinforced by the rules, rituals, symbols and routines of each sub-culture (Thornborrow and Brown 2009). These rules, rituals, symbols, routines and hierarchical structures are put in place to deal with chaos, uncertainty and loss; the aspects of the military persons' ultimate purpose, war, that distinguishes them from any other organisation that they may have been involved in (Keegan 1976). In this context the qualities required of a member of the Armed Forces can be summed up as sufferance, a quiet mind, sense of the ridiculous, physical fitness and professional competence (Jary 1987), a combination that is unlikely to appear on any other job description.

Given the unique nature of the military environment this could explain the common narrative of the unquestionable organisation. The research subjects had lived and worked in a unique socio-cultural environment for a number of years and this may have led to an unthinking acceptance of the organisation as a benign and benevolent force in their life stories. As previously discussed in Chapter 2 the actual evidence to suggest that military service is a life or career enhancing opportunity is mixed. Some US Studies suggest that service in the military does not actually have significant economic benefits or enhanced life opportunities when comparing those who have served in the military against their civilian counterparts who have never served in the military, whilst other suggest that there is a positive effect (Cade 1991). More recent UK studies suggest that former military personnel are more likely to be employed and earn more than their civilian counterparts who have never served and experience better medical, physical and mental health (Iveson et al 2011). However, a causal link between these circumstances and service in the military has not been demonstrated per se. So rationally, there would not be an overwhelming case to support the view of a positive military experience held in an unquestioning narrative. Therefore it would be reasonable to expect more occurrences of the military organisation being questioned as to its positive effect.

A second consideration was that the narrative of the unquestioned organisation was part of an occupational fantasy. An occupational fantasy can be seen as a firm and invariant point that sustains and supports an individual life narrative. It is in effect an anchor that gives both meaning to the life narrative and also acts as an anchor in that life narrative (Fraher and Gabriel 2014). By using an occupational fantasy as part of their narrative individuals can endure hardships, disappointments and change without derailing their occupational (in this case military) identity. A common occupational fantasy can draw members of a profession together and provide continuity in the personal narrative. This has been described as an Ideological Community where persons of a similar vocation or calling are sustained by a similar set of beliefs and value systems (Hall and Chandler 2005). However, as previously described there was no evidence found to suggest that the research cohort either considered themselves part of an ideological community or demonstrated any aspects of an ideological community. However, it might be reasonable to suggest that given the peculiar and unique process of joining the military as discussed above, that ex-military personnel share a retrospective common occupational fantasy. The unquestioned organisation narrative may provide the military, and ex-military, with the continuity of the occupational fantasy in its idealised form. It provides a core set of values and norms against which everything else is measured and provides a way of valuing the narrative, for both the story teller and the listener. Thus the unquestioned organisation is part of an identity enhancing narrative (Vough et al 2015). It would therefore be very difficult to question the very organisation that had been, and still is, one of their life narrative anchors in the form of a common occupational fantasy. The process of leaving the military may actually expose people to the fact that the world is messy and complicated, unequal and unfair, particularly as the perceived order, rationality and rules, rituals, symbols, routines and hierarchical structures of the military become idealised versions of the past and the idealised version of the unquestioned organisation simply becomes a way of coping with that uncertainty.

A third consideration was that the narrative of the unquestionable organisation was part of a personal myth that gives credibility to a chosen existence where individuals need to structure a myth within the ethical, social and historical context in order to give meaning and purpose to their lives and the centrality of the services to the myth or narrative was a cornerstone to their life view. This subjective view that leads to what Hall called psychological success (Hall 1986) is an important method of sense-making and creating self-esteem and a strong sense of purpose (Hall and Chandler 2005). Therefore the unquestioned organisation could be seen as an anchor by which careers and life self-assessment is conducted as part of the self-reflective quest for personal and professional purpose and meaning (Hansen 1997 and Hall and Chandler 2005). The unquestioned organisation could be a mechanism for re-telling the

personal narrative in order to make sense of the world and experiences in a process of 'stories that heal' (McAdams, 1993).

Given the phenomenon of the unquestioned organisation further analysis of the research narratives was undertaken with a view to identifying the possible links between the unquestioned organisation and the tensions that were identified in the activity theory analysis.

5.8   Agency

Whilst it might be expected that the activity theory analysis would identify a spread of tensions across the model it appeared that the main tensions existed in the bottom left hand corner of the model, between the individual, the rules of the new situation and the work community that they now inhabited, whilst tensions between the individual and the division of labour were a noticeable cluster as shown in the diagram below.

Figure 9.   Clusters of Tensions by Research Subject
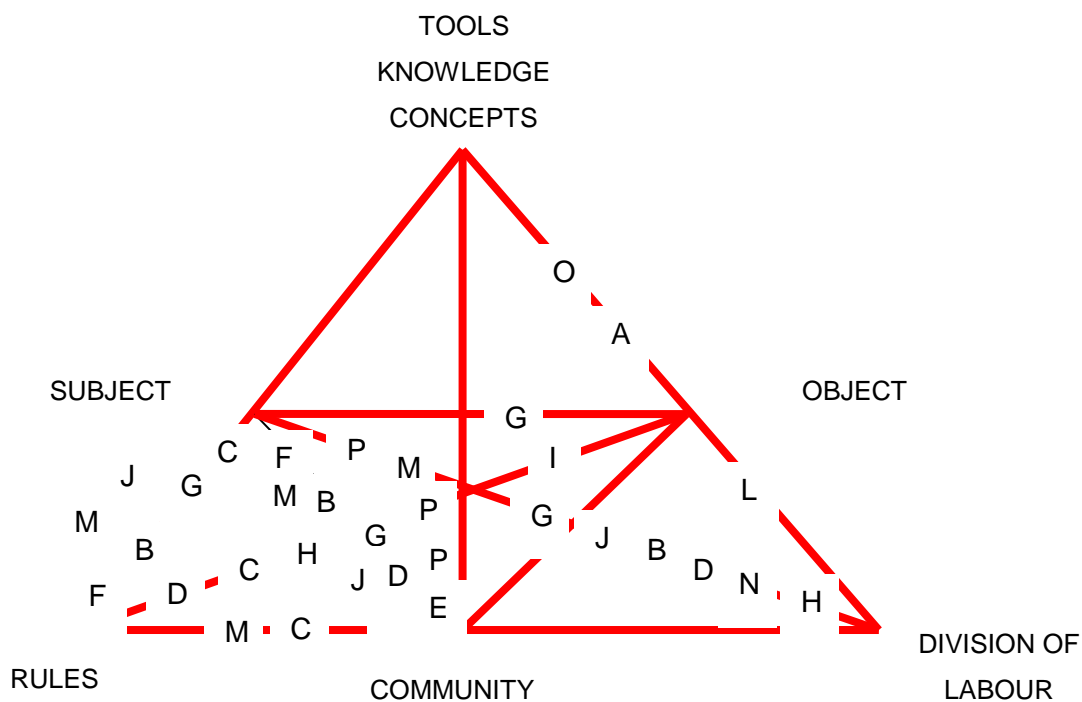
This realisation led the researcher to consider what changed when the individual moved from the military into the civilian workplace. The previous academic research in this area offered few clues, but the work on *structurisation* by Giddens (1991) examining the relationship between self and social structures provided a useful starting point. In a very brief overview, a

classical sociological theory, structuralism argues that the *structure* of society is what determines an individual's role, place and very existence in that society and this has formed the basis for some forms of Marxism and functionalism. An opposing classical theory is that *agency*, or an individual's ability to act under their own free will, is what defines society. Giddens attempted to move away from the binary and opposing views of structuralism and agency, arguing that *reflexivity* or the ability of an individual to actively and consciously alter their place in the social structure, and in doing so alter the structure of society and this was a process of *structurisation* where structure and agency were inextricably linked and each influenced the other in a constant dynamic. Linked to Giddens theory of reflexivity is the notion of self-identity which Giddens defined as a person's own reflexive understanding of their biography or own personal narrative (Giddens 1991). Thus the relationship between structure and agency might provide insights into the notion of the unquestioned organisation.

The phenomenon of the unquestionable organisation may be explained by the relationship between the individual and the surrendering of their agency to the organisation. Agency is defined as the ability for individuals to think, chose and act independently (Giddens 1991). The proposition is that on joining the military an individual surrenders their agency to the organisation in order to become a functioning part of the organisation (Hale 2008). During their period of service that agency is retained by the military and only returned on exit from the military. Thus the tensions that are encountered on transitioning back to civilian life are rooted in the return of agency and the dilemmas that his may present (Hatch et al 2013).

On joining the military, agency is effectively transferred from the individual to the organisation. Not only is the individual put through a process that socialises them into the military and its culture that manifests itself in the often bizarre rituals, routines and symbols but their effective agency is willingly given to the military organisation (Hale 2008).This transfer of agency is almost total, for example individuals still have the right to leave the military, albeit often under strict terms and conditions, but effectively decision making is largely taken out of the hands of the individual and handed over to the military. Thus not only are 'careers' managed by the organisation but every aspect of the individual's life is also placed into the control of the military organisation. Where people serve, the jobs that they do, the positions that they hold, and the salary that they receive, are all directly controlled by the military. Often it will be more: when people sleep, when they eat, the food that they eat and the clothes that they wear. Indirectly, other aspects of their lives such as where their families live, the schools that their children can attend and the employment opportunities that their partners and families have are also controlled, to a great extent, by the military. Thus joining the military sees an almost total transfer of agency from the individual to the military.

However, this transfer is not done unwillingly. It may be argued that there is an unexamined, rather than unthinking, handover of agency from the individual to the military on joining and an unexamined return of agency on leaving the military, but it is not a process in which the individual is not fully compliant. In return they receive unambiguous structures, strict routines, regular employment, clearly defined roles, transparent reward systems, clear measures of success and paths to advancement. Giddens (1991) would argue that the military provides a formed framework for the individual's existence and at the most basic of levels of need provides the individual with a sense of *being* as opposed to *non-being*, which is an essential part of the human existence. The discipline of routine that constitutes this framework is not only desirable but actually essential for ontological security.

As all-volunteer forces the British military is manned by willing individuals (Palmer 2012).There is no compulsion to join and it is an individual choice to enter the military and they accept the limitations and disadvantages that military life imposes upon on them along with the perceived advantages that it also confers. Whilst they actively seek the desired identity of being in the military (Thornborrow and Brown 2009) it is unclear how much they actually realise the extent to which they have surrendered their agency and the impact that this has once it is returned to them (Hatch et al 2013).

As previously discussed entering the military is as much as psychological rite of passage as a physical or mental process (Hale 2008). The development of the military mentality and the indoctrination of the individual into the collective organisation is a process that rather abruptly sees agency transferred from the individual and passed to the organisation. It does so because the military services need that agency in order to be able to function in the chaos of conflict and extreme violence (Keegan 1976). In order to be able to do so it must be able to control the individuals within the organisation, however, it is somewhat of a paradox of the organisation gives the impression of autonomy and agency for individuals. Thus it places an emphasis on flexibility, adaptability and using initiative through such vehicles as "mission command" for example, but in reality it operates through a rigid hierarchy, a chain of command and a command and control style of leadership (Hockey 1986, Kirke 2000). Thus whilst individuals might have the illusion of agency, their reality is one of non-agency. This is perhaps a case of an organisational narrative that has been crafted to give an impression of control and freedom in order to retain its members whilst its actual organisational narrative is one of absolute control. However, the running of these two narratives together in parallel may indicate that the surrender of agency is not fully appreciated by the individuals. Whilst it may not be a completely unconscious process, the surrender of agency may possibly be thought of as an unthinking process. It happens because that is "how the military operates" and so on

entering the military it is an accepted part of the joining process as much as wearing of uniform and the cutting of hair. Unthinkingly some may actually welcome handing over the difficult decision making to, what they see as, a benign organisation. Where to live, what to do, whether to try for promotion, are all decisions by and large taken out of the hands of the individual. The spurious organisational narrative that there is a choice in all this may be a comfort. It may be the self-delusion that the individual is in control and it is their choice to be loyal to the organisation and thus accept that unexpected posting or lack of promotion as part of the contract between the individual and the organisation. They believe that, within limitations, the military will do what is best for both them and the organisation and only a few such as subject P will actually have any insight into the reality of the organisation:

> *"you know people seem to think they had some input into it and if they weren't the right square peg to go in that square hole then it was irrelevant what they did, you know so I suppose from that point of view I think I started to look at the army as a...it really is just a job… But it was a bit of a reality check as well you know because you did see how people were not disadvantaged but you could sort of see in advance, years in advance, that like some guy was not actually ever going to make it."*

Tourish (2013) points out the dangers of over attribution of agency to leaders. Whilst his work focusses on leadership it could be argued that it can cross over to organisations. The 'Halo' error that Tourish identifies, everything 'good' happens as a result of the leader whilst everything 'bad' happens due to other circumstances outside the control of the leader, is a direct result of the over attribution of agency. It can be argued that there is a direct correlation between this view and the unquestioned organisation discovered in the research in so much that everything 'good' is due to the organisation and not just the leaders. Indeed the general impression is that the research subjects saw the military organisation as being universally 'good' and when things went wrong that was attributable to other factors rather than the organisation. The nostalgic view taken by many of the research subjects of their service in the military reinforced this view of the benevolent organisation. In a similar vein Hockey (1986) in his ethnographic study of a British Army infantry company suggests that soldiers live by a commonly accepted value system which is characterised by hierarchy and subordination of the individual to the overall goals and outcomes of the organisation, be it at a low level or indeed the highest levels of the organisation itself. However, whilst they are not completely passive in the relationship between themselves, either as individuals or in their own groups, and the organisation. They do hand over agency to the organisation but this agency relationship is negotiated to some extent depending upon the context in which they are operating. Thus whilst in routine in barracks individual agency is reduced and whilst on operations it is increased, but there is still nonetheless a fundamental transfer of agency from

the individual to the organisation with only minor and limited negotiation of *conditional* agency back to the individual:

> *"A parallel here might be with the parental indulgence often accorded children; while authority and discipline must be maintained one should not, in doing so, crush the spirit"*

—HOCKEY (1986), P.120

So if the surrendering of agency can be seen as a major factor in a person's joining the military and their subsequent service in the military, then the transfer back of that agency when they return back to the civilian world must also be a significant event. However, revisiting the research transcripts failed to find any evidence that the return of agency or control, as a reason for wishing to leave the military and indeed nor was it highlighted as a factor that had been observed or experienced as part of the transition back into the civilian world. However, it could be argued that as in the same way that transferring agency on joining was an unthinking process then regaining agency on leaving the military could be seen as an unthinking process also. As there was no direct indication that the regain of agency was a significant factor in the transition process the results of the activity theory analysis were revisited.

The main clusters of tension across the research subjects was found between the individual and the social rules with tensions between the individual and the division of labour being a second dominant cluster. Initially this was considered to be a reflection on the question of 'who am I?' and 'where do I fit in?', or in other way 'how do I think of myself?' (McAdams 1993). However, when the question of agency is considered alongside these observations a more nuanced understanding appears. Is can be argued that the return of agency is the underlying issue that creates these tensions and whilst the question of 'how do I think of myself?' is the manifestation of the tensions the real underlying question is 'who do I want to be?' for now the individual has the opportunity, indeed the necessity, to make those decisions that answer that question (Wheaton 1990). Now the individual is required to make everyday decisions about every aspect of their lives such as Where will I live? Where will I work? What clothes shall I wear? And if they want to change then it is in their gift to actively decide to change things. Suddenly a significant amount of agency has been returned to the individual and the power to become something different from the military has been placed back in their hands. The scale of this transfer back of agency is probably immense. A common theme in the research interviews was not knowing who was in charge in the civilian world. In the military it was considered easy. Rank was easily recognised and relative positions in the military hierarchy were instantly and automatically computed without any

conscious effort on the part of the individual. In the civilian world these cues, other than in the civilian uniformed services, are by and large missing. Thus the individual now has the agency to actually 'decide' who is in charge and this was not always easy. Thus a tension arose between the individual and the social rules and the division of labour and the division of knowledge, a tension that had not been present before. A simple but powerful example of how agency had been removed during military service and returned on leaving was described by one research subject:

> *"One thing I do remember and I remember quite vividly, the first time I ever went into an office – a civilian office of workers – and I didn't know who to talk to. A huge problem! Who was the boss?! I'd end up talking to the lady there who was the PA of this bloke over in the far corner, who, very pleasant chap but I had absolutely no idea he was the one in charge, and that was a huge lesson for me, that …because in the past you know, I had been very used to structure, I'd been very used to ranks and could see who somebody was immediately you looked at them – all the badges of rank and everything else you know, you knew which one was more important than the other, and so you exactly knew who to target."*

> —SUBJECT M

Whilst this may explain the tensions identified in the activity theory analysis the next step was to relate this theory to the concept of the unquestionable organisation. In understanding the scope of the issue it was considered that voluntarily, if unthinkingly, handing over a significant amount of individual agency is a major commitment, almost akin to joining a religion or cult that dominates every part of a person's life (Tourish 2013, Hall and Chandler 2005). In order to make sense of this commitment and subsequent life events it can be argued that the organisation has to become unquestionable in order to sustain the life narrative of the individual. Having an unquestioned organisation helps to cope with the 'now' by providing a continuity of sense-making of an individual's life 'then' and sustains the sense of worth that a person has about themselves and their own understanding of their own life-story or biography (Tourish and Pinnington 2002). Consequently if one were to deny the organisation that had been freely given one's agency then one is to deny oneself. In order to maintain the life narrative framed in the positive it is necessary to maintain the narrative of the unquestioned organisation.

It could be argued that maintaining the unquestioned organisation is necessary to maintain the idealism of the military story. Here idealism is taken to mean a pure ideal that exists only in the psychological. Idealism of the military becomes the mechanism by which the messy 'here and now' negotiation of life choices can be accomplished. The anchor of the 'perfect' organisation is a comparator against which decisions can be made. It enables the purity of

the past to be maintained whilst the impure present is dealt with. The unquestionable organisation creates the ability to construct life narratives that can help make sense of lives and indeed help to explain or understand episodes that have been difficult or traumatic. The concept of stories that heal (McAdams 1993) suggests that by having an unquestionable organisation former military personnel may be able to use this as an anchor (the ideal organisation) that forms the basis for stories that heal. They can explain away less than perfect episodes in their lives by creating a narrative that explains why things happen and the unquestioned organisation not only gives a 'perfect' world for them to frame their narrative against, but also the lack of individual agency factor in constructing a positive narrative – 'I had no choice'. This can be likened to the operation of a cult (Tourish 2013, Tourish and Pinnington 2002) and although the comparison of the military to a cult may be inappropriate the military certainly share many of the attributes of a cult or the mono-cultural organisation (Schein 1961).

Whilst the transfer of agency issue is considered to be a significant finding of the research analysis, regrettably it could not be explored in further depth due to the constraints of time and resources. It is, in the view of the researcher, a very important finding and with hindsight one which could have formed a research question in its own right. Whilst this research paper has provided some novel and useful analysis and discussion it is considered that this is an area that is worthy of much more detailed research to add to the body of knowledge of this area of research.

5.9   Limitations of the Research

As with any research there are limitations inherent in the research journey and the findings and analysis, discussion and conclusions must be read and considered with these limitations in mind. That is not to say that the limitations detract from the overall robustness of the research however, in line with the methodological approach that has been described in detail, the context in which the research has been conducted must be considered so that the research may be viewed in light of both its strengths and its limitations. The limitations described below were arrived at both during the conduct of the research itself and during the review process of the thesis, and whilst other minor limitations may be identified it is considered that there are 3 main limitations that need to be considered. These are namely: the fixed point in time nature of the research versus a longitudinal study, the lack of early service leavers in the research cohort and the lack of non-British subjects and a wider range of ethnicities in the research cohort, particularly in relation to the possibility of culture shock theory and transitions.

5.9.1   Fixed point in time versus a longitudinal study

All the interviews were conducted at a fixed point in time since exit from the military for each of the research subjects. This fixed point in time was different for each of the participants, with some having only left the military environment within 2 years whilst others had left the military over 20 years before. The mix of these fixed time points across the research cohort allows for a wide sample of experiences to be considered and indeed adds to the richness of the data acquired. As it was richness and uniqueness of data that was sought in the qualitative methodology this was considered to be a wholly appropriate and wholly valid approach. Also, given the richness of the data obtained in the original cohort and thematic saturation confirmed in the subsequent cohort of research subjects the fixed point in time approach was wholly defensible.

However, the disadvantage of the fixed point in time approach is that the researcher simply has a snapshot of the experiences of the individual at a particular point in time and as the theme of the research was to understand the complexities of the experiences of military personnel re-entering the civilian environment it could be argued that the whole journey of the individual should be considered. In this approach the fixed point in time data gathering could be repeated along the temporal continuum of research subjects' journey at for example the 2 year point, the 5 year point and the 10 year point. In this way changes over time might be observed and an understanding of the whole journey may be obtained. Certainly this might add to an understanding of the journey of former military personnel, however, it is questionable as to whether a series of snapshots have been more valid than a single snapshot, given the limitations of this approach as already discussed. Additionally, given the practical time constraints a longitudinal study of that length would have been outside the scope of the time permitted by the extant academic regulations. Finally in taking such a longitudinal approach the start point of where to begin the research and where to the end the research would need to be decided. It could be argued that such a research journey should begin before the individuals' joined the military in order to discover if personality changes actually take place as part of the social and psychological conditioning that joining and serving in the military actually occur. Alternatively the journey may need to start before the individuals leave the military in order to understand how they prepare for the transition that they are about to undertake and then compare how expectations match actual experience. Finally, deciding when such a study should end might be problematic. Does the journey end when a 'successful' transition has taken place, and who decides what 'success' entails, or does the journey only end when the life of the individual ends, because as one subject stated: "You never demob".

A different approach might have been to undertake an ethnographic study where the researcher became one of the community (and it can be argued that given his background the researcher as a former military person is part of the community being studied) and observed and recorded the community over time and gathered data for analysis in this way. However, a fundamental flaw in this approach is the assumption that ex-service personnel are a homogenous group and as was discussed in the literature review this is not considered to be the case, and whilst it is convenient to consider former military personnel as a distinct group for political and social reasons, actually there is little evidence to suggest that this is the case; simply sharing an experience in the past does not make a community. The same limitations to this approach would apply as with a longitudinal study: when to start, when to end and the constraints and restraints of the academic regulations in force. However, notwithstanding these limitations, that is not to say that there is not merit in both of these approaches and for a study outside the constraints of a formal Doctoral thesis these approaches would certainly be worthy of further consideration.

5.9.2   Lack of early service leavers

The research cohort was drawn from across all three services and across all ranks and as has been discussed previously were considered to be a robust sample of former military personnel, bearing in mind that this research was conducted using qualitative methods where richness and uniqueness of data was the object not quantity or statistically representative samples. However, on reviewing the cohort it was observed that there were no early service leavers, or those that had served for less than 4 years. Some literature might suggest that this group of individuals, mainly from the Army and mainly male, are a distinct sub group within former military personnel and experience greater difficulties in reintegrating into society and are more likely to become involved in alcohol and substance abuse, homelessness and involvement with the criminal justice system (Buckman et al 2012). The omission of early service leavers within the research cohort was not a conscious decision, as the research cohort were largely recruited through the 'snowballing' process and it so happened that no early service leavers presented themselves or were recommended. However, those who had experienced difficulties described above were precluded from the study, and therefore it could be argued that this approach may have inadvertently omitted early service leavers if the proposition in the literature is valid. On this basis then the research does not address early service leavers and it can be considered a gap in the research findings.

5.9.3   Non-British service leavers

Similarly the research cohort did not include any persons who were not of British White ethnicity. Whilst this was considered in the analysis of the data it was not considered to be significant with regard to the validity of the cohort and the richness and uniqueness of the data, when considered against the concepts of culture shock as discussed in the body of the paper it would be interesting to see if this aspect of the literature could have been examined further given the writings on culture shock. Whilst in this study reverse culture shock has been partly rejected as a theory to understand the experiences of former military personnel, were the ethnicity of the research cohort to be varied then the conclusions may have been somewhat different. The British White ethnicity of the research cohort is not considered to detract from the findings but it is an area where some theories may have been tested more fully if the ethnic make-up of the research cohort included other than British White research subjects.

5.9.4   Mixed Use of the Third and First Grammatical Person

The thesis has been written using both the first and third person. This has been done deliberately as it narrates both an academic research journey and a personal reflexive journey. Where the academic research journey is described it is written in the third person and where the personal reflexive journey is described it is presented in the first person. However, this approach is somewhat at odds with the conventional approach to a PhD thesis that is traditionally written in the third person and it is acknowledged that switching between these two grammatical persons in the various sections may be somewhat challenging for the reader. However, this approach was taken deliberately in order to add richness to the personal reflexive description of the research journey.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

6.1 Conclusions

In concluding this thesis three areas will be examined: first, what contribution has been made to the existing body of knowledge by this thesis, second, what areas of further research fall out from this thesis and third, recommendations for what can be done practically as a result of this research.

6.2 Contribution

Deciding the contribution that a piece of research has made to the existing body of knowledge is notoriously difficult (Locke and Golden-Biddle, 1997, Whetton 1989). However, the contribution made by this thesis, notwithstanding the difficulty or imprecision involved, is articulated by examining four aspects namely the empirical contribution, the methodological contribution, the theoretical contribution and the analytical contribution.

6.2.1 Empirical Contribution

In terms of the volume of data gathered during the course of this research project the empirical contribution cannot be said to be great. Indeed if the methodology adopted had been quantitative then it could be argued that the empirical contribution is small. However, as a quantitative approach was adopted and the concern was with the richness and uniqueness of the data, rather than the volume of data, the empirical contribution can be argued to be small but of high quality. However, that said, as has been demonstrated there is a clear research gap in this area of study and therefore any contribution to the data available in this area of research has value. In this case saturation has been demonstrated and it can be argued that the quality, richness and uniqueness of the data obtained does add to the body of empirical data in this area of research, albeit in a limited quantity. Only a larger study, possibly a longitudinal study as recommended at the end of this chapter, might produce large volumes of empirical data. However, obtaining such large quantities of data with the richness and uniqueness required would be a considerable research challenge. Also, if saturation has been demonstrated it can be argued that obtaining even more data is a fruitless exercise and even more data would not necessarily alter the outcomes of the research project.

6.2.2 Methodological Contribution

The methodological contribution of the research has been to develop the use of a qualitative methodology, combining narrative cases with a hermeneutic phenomenological approach in order to understand the experiences of former UK military personnel entering the civilian world and identify the common elements of the experience though clusters of meaning. Whilst all these elements are common research methods, the combination of them to study this particular phenomenon is probably unique. The approach has been borrowed from different disciplines; organisation studies, career theory, narrative research, psychology and social geography to name but a few. This unique combination may suggest that it is possible to make limitless combinations of approaches from across a wide range of academic disciplines in order to make sense of the world. Whilst academic purists may not agree with this approach it is perhaps a way in which complexity can be understood. Such an approach is complex, messy and unconventional, however, the phenomenon studied in the this research journey is also complex, messy and unconventional and the as the purpose of the research was to understand complexity, rather than simplify complexity, perhaps this approach is wholly appropriate and sets a challenge for future researchers to develop this approach even further.

6.2.3 Theoretical Contribution

In terms of theoretical contribution the main contributions are based in the area of career theory. Paradoxically, career theory is both challenged and agreed with. Classic career theory that sees careers as a rational, linear, progressive process is supported as a post hoc construction used to make sense of our lives and the lives of others. As such classic career theory is a rear looking lens that we can use to give meaning to our lives. Even when, as the data shows, the lived experience would tend to negate this view, new careers actually unfold at the same time and the need to present them as rational and purposeful choices is unmistakeable. Conversely contemporary career theory that views careers as a dynamic process that is constantly adapting to threats and opportunities and personal aspirations, histories, attitudes and beliefs is a forward looking lens and success depends the individual's own world view and their own sense making of the world around them. Thus career theory is both forward and rear looking at the same time, but different theories are used depending upon the lens being used. However, the common link between these lenses is the theory of career anchors that were used to cope with transition and complexity by individuals. Anchors were found to be a valuable analytical tool in attempting to understand the process of career and life changes and their manifestation in narrative construction and sense making,

particularly with regard to creating the unquestioned organisation, which in itself became a significant career and life anchor for the research participants.

6.2.4   Analytical Contribution

In terms of analytical contribution activity theory has been developed along the lines of previous enquiry to examine the relationships between the various parts of the activity theory dynamics. In particular the use of plotting and identifying the main clustering of tension within the model in relation to the research subjects is a development of applying activity theory to a phenomenological study. In this case the plotting of the observed tensions onto the activity theory grid gives a visual representation of how these tensions are both observed by the researcher and perceived by the research subjects themselves. From this study it appears that the main tensions revolve around the individual and their place in their new communities and the social rules that they are required to adopt in order to succeed. Those who experienced the highest tensions tended to have a strong military identity whilst those who had the least tensions tended towards having multiple identities, of which the military was but one. Put simply, this analysis suggests that those who are 'good' at being in the military are 'bad' at leaving the military. However from the research conducted it cannot be claimed that the opposite is true as the research has not focussed on this aspect of the subject's experience. However, the use of activity theory clustering analysis would likely to be a suitable analytical tool to examine those aspects. Similarly activity theory clustering analysis could also be applied to other research areas. In respect of this research activity theory clustering analysis has only been applied in a single aspect and as previously discussed activity theory systems are likely to be multiple, interlocking, over-layered, temporal and 'ghost' in their nature. The use of activity theory clustering analysis in these complex environments could be developed further to include these situations. Thus the thesis has developed the use of activity theory and the general applicability of activity theory to a range of situations has been advanced.

6.2.5   Overarching Contribution

Notwithstanding these four specific contributions there is also a general contribution that the research has made by drawing from a wide range of disciplines in order to understand the experiences of transition to civilian life for former military personnel. The synthesis of research from these diverse research streams that are not normally associated together suggests that this is an under researched area (Locke and Golden-Biddle, 1997) and by drawing these disparate areas of research into a coherent review of available research develops not only this specific area of research, but also demonstrates how elements from

separate areas of research can be synthesised. In this same vein, the research has studied the normal experiences of former military personnel and addressed the research gap that existed. This study has therefore focussed on the experiences of the many, rather than the few, as has previously been the case.

6.3   Further research

As this research journey has ended then the spring boards for further research have been put in place. Whilst there has always been more to be done, more literature to be reviewed and more data to be gathered and more analysis to be performed there are five significant areas for future research that have been identified during the course of this research project. These are: a longitudinal study of former military personnel and their experiences of transition back into the civilian world; the role of nostalgia; an exploration of the role of rites of passage on leaving the military; a consideration of whether early service leavers' experiences are significantly different; and how ethnicity might affect individual experiences.

6.3.1   Longitudinal Study

As discussed in the previous chapter, one of the limitations of the research project has been the fixed point in time nature of the collection of data from the research subjects themselves. Whilst the cohort represented numerous fixed points from 5 to 25 years since leaving military service, individuals were not tracked over time. Given the findings around tensions encountered in negotiating their changed environments as illustrated using activity theory analysis, the links to the unthinking regaining of agency and how the individual research subjects constructed their life narratives to explain and understand their experiences a longitudinal study would be able to track changes over time in these 3 areas. It was noted in the discussion that generally (as with any research there are exceptions) time since leaving the military did not necessarily correlate to the severity of tensions in activity theory analysis and there was no clear pattern in story telling modes that could be explained by time since exiting the military. However, as this was not one of the aims of the research it is not surprising that the evidence is inconclusive. However, building on this research project it would interesting to explore whether individually perceptions changed over time. It might be argued that activity theory tensions could be expected to be higher at the start of the transition, that the unquestioned organisation might be more questioned at the start of the transition process and that the unsettling effects of the unthinking regaining of agency might also be greater. Over time these issues might subside in importance thus changing the narrative and storytelling mode, reinforcing the military as an unquestioned organisation and leading to a nostalgic view of the military and the life anchors that it provided. The life story

itself might, over time, change to reflect changed circumstances and reinforce the nostalgic view of the military. However, whilst this might be a reasonable proposition, the research conducted thus far does not yet adequately support this and a longitudinal study examining these aspects would certainly add to the existing body of knowledge in this area.

6.3.2   Nostalgia

Whilst the research identified the concept of the questioned organisation the role of nostalgia in the transition process was not explored to its fullest extent. Whilst the role of nostalgia in the construction of narrative was briefly explored and the links between the unquestioned organisation and life anchors are also explored, these were not framed in a nostalgic context. The use of nostalgia to construct life narratives for both the research cohort individuals, those that they interacted with in their new contexts and the institutions that they had inhabited and the organisations they now inhabited is worthy of future research. The construction of an unquestioned organisation for both the individuals within it, and the organisation itself, may be largely based upon nostalgia, both looking back at the narratives created to explain the past and the narratives projected forward to make sense of the future and their organisations role within it. However, whilst there are indications within this research project that this may be the case there is a need to develop this line of enquiry further in order to understand the role that nostalgia plays in shaping our lives on both an individual, corporate, political and philosophical level.

6.3.3   Rites of Passage

The rites of passage on joining the military have been studied extensively and the physical, psychological and social changes that occur during the transition from civilian to military are well documented in both academic research and popular fiction. However, the rites of passage that occur in the transition from military to civilian are less well known. As has been briefly discussed in the body of the thesis the rites of passage when leaving the military are usually ad hoc and in many ways insignificant.

The lack of a rite of passage when leaving the military is a huge contrast to the rites of passage when joining the military. Given the physical, psychological and social changes that occur when joining the military it could be assumed that there are similar physical, psychological and social changes on leaving the military. As the rite of passage of joining the military is considered to be so significant by the military organisations, the individuals within those organisations and wider society, then the similarly the rites of passage when leaving should be considered significant when leaving the military. However, the only significant rites of passage that are publically observed for individuals exiting the military are the ceremonies

connected with the repatriation of the bodies of those killed on operations. However, it is not clear if this lack of a rite of passage on leaving impacts upon the experience of the individuals concerned and their subsequent journey back into the civilian world. It may be that it is not a factor or it may be a significant factor, but at the moment it is simply unclear and further research into this area would be a significant contrition to the understanding of the experiences of military personnel re-entering the civilian world and could consequently have practical implications for the military.

6.3.4   Early Service Leavers

As discussed in the limitations section of this research thesis the research cohort did not include any early service leavers, or those that had served for less than four years. Some of the literature reviewed might suggest that this group of individuals, mainly from the Army and mainly male, are a distinct sub group within former military personnel and experience greater difficulties in reintegrating into society and are more likely to become involved in alcohol and substance abuse, homelessness and involvement with the criminal justice system. However, the literature that suggests this is largely drawn from those studies that focus upon the more difficult transitions that individual's experience, rather than from a study such as this that has examined those who have had a less extreme experience. Thus it is not clear whether early service leavers do in fact form a specific sub-group within the ex-service population and if they do, if their experiences are significantly different from the remainder of the ex-service population. It is also not clear how those experiences relate to some of the theories discussed within this paper. It could be argued that early service leavers, because of their age and limited adult life experiences that have been largely formed within a particular military institute experience culture shock in its literal sense whereas those with more adult life experience do not. However, without research this is mere speculation and this suggests that an interesting and significant research gap exists in this area which would merit further investigation.

6.3.5   Service Leavers Who Are Not White British

Again, as discussed in the limitations section of this research thesis the research cohort did not include any persons who were not of British White ethnicity. There are a number of Non-White British subjects who serve in the military (Ware 2012). Their experiences may be similar to the research cohorts, but there is not evidence to support this supposition as they have not been examined in this research. The literature review did not reveal any significant research into their experiences. This may therefore suggest that this is an area of potential further research. There has also been a significant increase in the number of recruits from

the commonwealth countries, particularly to the British Army in recent years (Ware 2012). Consequently there may be a number of service leavers who, if they elect to remain within the United Kingdom upon leaving the military, may experience a double culture shock of leaving the military and entering a society that they may not be completely familiar with. The very fact that there may be this compounding of effects would be an interesting examination into the concept of culture shock and a wider sociological field of research. A comparison study of those former military personnel who return to their country of origin upon leaving the military and those who chose to stay within the United Kingdom would possibly be most illuminating. The results from such a study would probably have wider reaching implications for the issues of migration, multiculturalism and expatriate communities and more specifically could have practical implications for the UK armed forces in the practical support that they give to their non-British and personnel as they begin their transition back to their civilian lives.

6.4 Recommendations

The military, society in general, government at all levels (national, regional and local), veterans' organisations, service charities and not least former military personnel themselves benefit from a 'successful' transition from the military into the civilian world. In order to contribute to this process, this research must not only add to the academic body of knowledge of this subject but also recommend practical applications of this research. Therefore the following recommendations are made based upon the research outcomes from this thesis. They do not address the resource allocation required from already committed and stretched public funding nor do they recommend how things should be taken forward. They do however, recommend what practical application may be made of this research.

6.4.1 Recommendation 1

Socialisation into the military, socialisation out of the military.

As has been discussed, socialisation into the military is a lengthy, complex and highly valued rite of passage. However, socialisation out of the military is quite the reverse. Service leavers, at best, receive an ad hoc limited rite of passage on leaving and, at worse, nothing at all. It is recommended that a formal rite of passage on leaving the military be trialled that marks the formal departure from the military and with it the transfer of agency back to the individual from the military, and recognises both the service of the individual to the military and the contribution that they are about to make as a civilian.

6.4.2   Recommendation 2

Further research is required into the experiences of early service leavers

Some research suggests that early service leavers are more likely to experience a difficult transition from the military to civilian life, however, there are many intervening variables that may affect the transition of this group of former military personnel, and the experiences of early service leavers are not fully understood. Those studies that have been completed tend to focus on those early service leavers who have experienced difficult transitions and the experience of other early service leavers appears to be an area of sparse research. It is recommended that the military commission further study into the experiences of early service leavers that is conducted across the whole range of early service leavers and not just those who present themselves with significant difficulties during the transition process in doing so the military may come to understand the experiences of the many and not just the few.

6.4.3   Recommendation 3

Longitudinal studies are conducted to understand the whole life experience of former military personnel.

This research, and other studies, have mainly focussed upon 'snapshot in time' research. Consequently understanding the experiences of the transition from military to civilian is necessarily fragmented. A longitudinal study of military personnel starting from the time before exit and following the research subjects for some considerable period of time would address this research gap and probably greatly increase our understanding. It is recommended that a longitudinal study of former military personnel is undertaken.

6.4.4   Recommendation 4

Measures are put in place to enable the universal identification of former military personnel

As has been discussed former military personnel are not a homogenous group who are easily identifiable. Most research into former military personnel requires self-referral by the individuals who agree to take part in the research. Therefore all the research completed so far can be said to limited by this aspect of self-referral. In pure research terms not knowing the size and make-up of the target population is a significant limitation that has repercussions for the research sample and the subsequent validity of any research. This not only has implications for academic research but also for government agencies, veterans' organisations and service charities in identifying their target audiences. It is recommended that a mechanism, such as a marker on the national insurance number or NHS number of

former military personnel for example, be put in place in order to enable the identification of the former military personnel for research purposes. This will enable long term and large scale qualitative study of this significant and distinct social group.

6.4.5 Recommendation 5

The findings of this research are disseminated to the military and agencies concerned with managing the transition to civilian life.

Whilst this research has its limitations it also adds significantly to the existing body of knowledge about the experiences of former military personnel transitioning to civilian life. For those who are involved in managing this transition, including individual service leavers, knowledge and understanding of the process can only be helpful and whilst individuals may choose to ignore this information, it should be made available for their education and information. In particular the potential tensions in adapting to a new activity system or systems as identified in this research and the importance of regaining individual agency on leaving the military should be emphasised along with the advantages of developing multiple identities and adjusting life and career anchors prior to leaving the military. It is therefore recommended that the results of this research are disseminated to the military and agencies concerned with managing the transition to civilian life.

6.5   Final Conclusions

In one sense the contribution to the existing body of knowledge, areas for further research and recommendations identified might suggest that the research conducted thus far has been somehow incomplete. This is probably true, as there are many areas that the researcher would have liked to explore further and discuss in this thesis and a greater contribution to the existing body of knowledge is undoubtedly possible, but the practical limitations of time and word count have precluded this. However, in another sense the fact that these areas have been identified, and indeed these are only considered to be the main ones and, in the researcher's opinion, there is far more research to be carried out on the main topic, demonstrates that this is an area of academic endeavour that requires more effort and research. Notwithstanding these limitations the in-depth knowledge gained from this study of military career transitions challenges some aspects of career theory whilst supporting others. In particular the novel concepts of the unquestioned organisation and the unthinking transfer of agency extends our understanding of both joining and leaving the military and potentially our understanding of other career transitions both into and out of other organisations. If these concepts are applied to other settings then the implications of

this research, and the further research suggested, may reach far beyond the military and ex-military communities and indeed contribute to a whole range of management, social science, psychology and philosophical disciplines. The journey should continue.

Postscript
A Reflective Account

Why did I ever start a PhD? This question has been asked by me time and time again over this journey. I admit it was because it was the next logical step in my academic 'career' (and I use that word in light of the rest of this thesis), because the subject was interesting and in many respects personal to me, and, I freely admit it, because I wanted to be called 'Doctor'. However, had I known the trials and tribulations that it would cause me I doubt I would have ever started the process. Perhaps ignorance really is bliss.

My initial approach was that this would be a huge, but straightforward process, sort out the research question, make a plan, gather the data, write up the results and pass the viva – easy, simple, what's the fuss? I recall an early session when it was explained that gaining a PhD is a journey and I scoffed at this 'academic speak'. How wrong can you be?

The first realisation that it would not be a straightforward mechanical process came with the literature review. The development of the literature review was, like the rest of the Doctoral journey, one of growth, exploration, numerous excursions from the main path, and one which will continue well beyond this thesis. An abiding feature of the literature review was one of boundary setting. Like a spot of oil dropped onto a wet surface, the literature review seemed to spread out inexorably, each new piece of literature in turn producing more references, more ideas and more concepts that in turn begged to be explored right up until the final submission. Deciding when to stop and what was relevant (and there is still a small voice that says *everything* is relevant) what to include, what to leave until later (it might be useful later on) and what to disregard, has taxed the researcher and continues to do so.

The research methodology was also an experience that was completely unexpected. It was not enough to decide on an 'appropriate' approach, but it required the peeling back of many layers of veneer, the challenging of many long held assumptions about the world and myself and the laying bare of what I really thought; of what my world view really was. During this process I went to some uncomfortable places, confronting yourself is seldom comfortable, and sometimes I did not like what I had found. I also went to some bright sunlit uplands, where a sudden flash of inspiration, realisation or explanation exploded on the scene. Finally I came to a conclusion for the purposes of the research, but I am still not completely sure of what my world view is today, and that journey continues unabated.

Conducting the research itself was a privilege. That these subjects allowed me into their experiences and shared some of their innermost thoughts and feelings with me was a humbling experience. I could not help feeling a weight of responsibility that I had not anticipated in ensuring that their stories were safeguarded. There are things that have not been included in this research that I will never divulge to anyone else. It is simply not appropriate and I owe my research subjects a duty of confidentiality and care that will last for a lifetime. Many of the research subjects said that they enjoyed the experience of telling me their story, it was for some a cathartic experience, a chance to pull together their thoughts and feelings and tell their story. For some it was a relief, it was a story that they wanted to tell but didn't realise they needed to, for others it was just fun to tell their tales.

Analysing the research was another huge task that I had not really appreciated. There were so many interpretations that could be put upon the data; there were so many models that could be used. The final analytical tools came about as a result of some great prompting by my supervisor, (I will probably never really appreciate the extent that the invisible hand of sound supervision guided me on my journey) and I was eventually satisfied with the outcome.

Finally, writing the study was definitely a marathon and not a sprint. Some days Minerva visited and the words flowed easily, often she was painfully absent and words were rare, but the adage of write something rather than nothing was sound advice, and I will always remember, and apply, the saying: "Rome wasn't built in a day, but parts of it were".

So having completed my journey looking back on the winding, halting path what have I learned? First, that the research subjects told me their 'stories' is the key revelation to me and probably the one personal outcome from this research. Everything is a story. My world is constructed by stories that people have told me and stories that I have told to other people and to myself. Things happen, but how those things are interpreted and retold means that even if we are there to witness an event my interpretation of that event is different to someone else's. I will tell my story in a particular way and people will make sense of that event from my re-telling and then tell it themselves. From the words we hear, to the books we read, to the news we see, to everything there is a story and so can we ever really know the truth (if there is such a thing). This realisation can take you to some very dark places, it can be very liberating, but it always leads back to the question who am I?

Second, how much agency I, or anybody else has, is a question that I will constantly ask myself. I am so much more aware of how readily and unthinkingly I routinely handover my agency, my freedom to act and accept the controls and decisions of others. I am not averse

to doing so, it's how things happen, and otherwise the world would be a chaotic meaningless place. However, I am more aware of it now and perhaps I do not handover my agency unthinkingly anymore.

Third and finally, I have relearned the pleasure and pain of sticking at something. There have been days when I have been ready to give up and give in, but with support from my supervisors, family and friends I have stuck with it and the lesson from that is that you do not do things by yourself and I am much more aware of the 'we' as opposed to the 'me'.

So at the end of this leg of my life journey I reflect back and ask myself two questions: would I do it again? and was it worth it? The answers are definitely not and yes.

Appendix 1
Interview Consent Form

Interview Consent

Introduction

David Caddick is undertaking research into individuals who have served in the armed forces and their experiences of leaving the military and moving into civilian life. The research is part of his Doctoral research programme (PhD) and is being undertaken as a student of the Robert Gordon University Business School.

All information obtained is subject to safeguards. These are:

- All paper based information and records are kept under lock and key.

- All electronic information and records are kept under pass word protected security systems

- Primary information and records are only accessible by:

  - The researcher

  - Academic supervisors

  - Interview transcribers
    (All of the above are subject to ethical and confidentiality agreements)

- Once the primary research has been obtained it is then made anonymous (for example names are replaced by numbers and geographical information is remove)

Agreement

I freely consent to taking part in the research process. I understand that any information obtained may only be used for the purposes of the research as explained. I also understand that I can withdraw from the research process at any time by notifying the researcher.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

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