‘You can leave the military, but the military never leaves you.’ An ethnographic study examining the influence of a sport and physical activity-based support programme on veterans undertaking the military to civilian transition.

R O’Hanlon

PhD 2021

‘You can leave the military, but the military never leaves you.’ An ethnographic study examining the influence of a sport and physical activity-based support programme on veterans undertaking the military to civilian transition.

Rebecca O’Hanlon

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of

Manchester Metropolitan University

for the degree for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sport and Exercise Science

Manchester Metropolitan University

in Collaboration with Sport England

2021

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr Chris Mackintosh and Dr Hannah Holmes for their invaluable advice, enduring support, and continuous encouragement. It has been a privilege to be your PhD student and this work would not have been possible without your extensive knowledge, guidance, and patience. I am thankful for the confidence you have shown in me, the opportunities you have created for me, and your ongoing drive to push me to achieve more. Across the highs, lows, and many speed bumps, your support has been invaluable.

I am also deeply grateful to Prof Rosie Meek for giving up her valuable time to offer support, open doors, and share her wealth of knowledge and expertise. In Hannah and Rosie, I feel lucky to have such incredible female academics inputting on my work, providing models of excellence, and inspiring me throughout my PhD.

I would also like to thank the wonderful members of the writing group, together we worked through many tough times, writing blocks, and dilemmas. Sharing the last year with you provided me with an endless source of inspiration, motivation, and most importantly the feeling of not being alone.

I would like to pay special regards to the participants, without whom this research would not have been possible. Thank you to the deliverers, stakeholders and veterans who were generous with their time and displayed honesty, integrity, and openness. A special mention is also necessary for the veterans who trusted me with their personal stories, it was a privilege to gain an insight into your world.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for all their support, love, and encouragement. You have always believed in me, and I hope that I have made you proud.

Abstract

In this thesis, the impact of a three-year sport and physical activity-based programme on the transition of veterans from the military into civilian life is explored. Following military service, many veterans enjoy a successful transition into civilian life, yet some do not, experiencing challenges such as poor mental health, social isolation, unemployment, homelessness, addiction, and relationship breakdowns. There are many provisions and initiatives available in the United Kingdom to support veterans transitioning from the military, most of which are delivered short-term, addressing one of these specific challenges. However, the programme at the heart of this research adopts a unique approach in supporting veterans more broadly, embedded within the local community and over a sustained period. This is the first support programme of its kind and, using an ethnographic approach, I evaluate its impact on veterans' transition experiences. The purpose of this research is two-fold; to understand the reality and challenges of organising, developing, and delivering a sport and physical activity-based support programme for military veterans, and to understand the individual experiences of veterans transitioning from the military into civilian life, and the influence engaging in the sport and physical activity-based support programme has on this.

Undertaking both participant observations and interviews, and applying the analytical approach of dialogical narrative analysis, my original contribution to knowledge is the recognition and discussion of varied military to civilian transition experiences, moving beyond the dichotomy of *good* and *bad* that currently exists in the academic literature. There has been little consideration of the variation in transition experience and how veterans negotiate their identity as they reintegrate into civilian life. This research considers how the masculine military identity, alongside other multiple role identities, are managed and performed during this period. A further contribution to knowledge is made to the field of sport for development as this research recognises the potential of sport and physical activity as a long-term tool to support veterans transitioning from the military, considering both competitive sport and physical activity, as well as other important features of programme delivery. This research concentrates on the mechanisms, processes and experiences surrounding the activities that have notable impacts on both the experiences of veterans' transitioning from the military and the stakeholders' delivering the programme.

Drawing on the concepts of identity, presentation of self, policy enactment and neoliberalism, this research identified key processes taking place across the military to civilian transition and within the sport and physical activity programme, that had a significant influence on the actions, experiences and narratives of the veterans and deliverers. Focusing on the veterans' transition experiences, I contend that the negotiation, management, and presentation of identity is a significant process that veterans undertake in the transition process. This includes the management and presentation of the military identity alongside other, multiple role identities, such as those shaped by work, family, and sport, as well as being influenced by gender roles and expectations. The presentation of identity was also enacted within performance teams present in the sporting sessions, which replicated those evident in military service. This research presents identity negotiation as a key aspect in the transition process, expanding the current literature on the military to civilian transition.

Turning attention to stakeholder experiences, I highlight the influence of the delivery organisations' culture and leadership team on the policy enactment process, resulting in the sport and physical activity programme. The hierarchy evident in the organisation and the neoliberal context of delivery contributes towards a competitive atmosphere which shifts focus away from the objectives of the programme. Similarly, as a key policy actor, the analysis highlights how the programme leads' presentation of self influences the policy enactment process and subsequent approach to programme delivery. This individual was a member of performance teams both within and outside of the delivery organisation. However, the analysis identifies these as fragile, influenced by differing interpretations in the policy enactment process, and features of neoliberal society that encourage competition.

Finally, this thesis concludes with empirical, theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of the research, in which the potential of sport and physical activity as a long-term tool to support the military to civilian transition is discussed, alongside practical recommendations for stakeholders and organisations responsible for delivery. Future opportunities for expanding this research are also presented.

Publications Arising from this Thesis

Peer Reviewed Publications

O'Hanlon, R., Mackintosh, C., Holmes, H., and Meek, R. (In Review) 'Moving Forces: Using a Sport for Development approach to support men and women in the military to civilian transition.' *Journal of Sport for Development.*

O'Hanlon, R., Mackintosh, C., Holmes, H., and Meek, R. (In Review) 'Conducting Ethnographic Research in Male Dominated Environments; The Complexities, Challenges and Reflections of a(n) (Emotional) Female Researcher.' *Qualitative Research.*

Book Chapters

O'Hanlon, R. (2020) 'Online Research Methods'. *In* Sims, S. and Mackintosh, C. (eds.). *Qualitative Research Methods*. Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University. E-book.

O'Hanlon, R. (2020) 'Visual Research Methods'. *In* Sims, S. and Mackintosh, C. (eds.). *Qualitative Research Methods*. Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University. E-book.

O'Hanlon, R. (2020) 'Narrative Analysis'. *In* Sims, S and Mackintosh, C. (eds.). *Qualitative Research Methods*. Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University. E-book.

Conference Presentations Arising from this Thesis

O'Hanlon, R. (2019) 'Moving Forces: Using sport and physical activity to support the military to civilian transition.' Paper presented at: *UK Sport Development Network (UKSDN).* London South Bank University, London, July.

O'Hanlon, R. (2020) 'Conducting ethnographic research with military veterans; the complexities, challenges and reflections of a(n) (emotional) female researcher.' Paper presented at: *12th Annual PGR Conference*. Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, March.

O'Hanlon, R. (2021) 'The management and presentation of veteran identities in supportive sporting spaces.' Paper presented at: *12th International Conference on Sport & Society*. University of Granada, Granada, June.

List of Tables

Table Number	*Description*	*Page Number*
1	Programme Participants' Gender Retrieved from Internal Project Data Survey	335
2	Programme Participants' Military Membership Retrieved from Project Data Survey	335
3	Programme Participants' Physical/Mental Health Condition Retrieved from Project Data Survey	335
4	Attendance Demographics of Observed Vet Fit Sessions	11
5	Table of Internal Project Data Survey Completions	12
6	Definitions of Transition Derived from Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins (2017)	28
7	Summary of Studies Using Sport and Physical Activity to Support Military Veterans (Developed from Caddick and Smith, 2014)	56
8	Events Occurring During the Research	96
9	Types of Spaces and Places Ethnography Occurred	120
10	Key Stakeholder Roles Selected for Interview	124
11	Veteran Demographics	125
12	Completed Observation Hours	126
13	Contextual Dimensions of Policy Enactment Derived from Braun et al. (2011)	141
14	Policy Actors and Policy Work Derived from Ball et al. (2011)	141

List of Figures

Figure Number	*Description*	*Page Number*
1	Timeline of COVID-19 Lockdowns (Adapted from Institute for Government Analysis).	336
2	Layers of Abductive Reasoning (Adapted from Blaikie,1993)	98
3	Four Phases of the Data Collection Process	129
4	Policy Actors and Policy Work in the AP and Vet Fit Programme	217

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	***Explanation***
AP	Active Partnership
CSP	County Sports Partnership
CTP	Career Transition Partnership
DNA	Dialogical Narrative Analysis
HIIT	High Intensity Interval Training
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MOD	Ministry of Defence
PE	Physical Education
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RAF	Royal Air Force
SI	Symbolic Interactionist
SIB	Special Investigation Branch
SfD	Sport for Development
TI	Total Institution
UK	United Kingdom
WIS	Wounded, Injured and Sick

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ii
Abstract ii
Publications Arising from this Thesis v
Conference Presentations Arising from this Thesis vi
List of Tables vii
List of Figures viii
List of Abbreviations ix
Table of Contents x
Chapter One – Introduction 1
1.0 Overview 1
1.1 The Research Problem 1
1.2 Contextualising the Research 5
1.2.1 The British Armed Forces 6
1.2.2 Active Partnerships 8
1.2.3 The Vet Fit Programme 10
1.2.4 The COVID-19 Pandemic 13
1.2.5 The Researchers' Story 19
1.3 Overview of Thesis 20
Chapter Two - Literature Review 22
2.0 Overview 22
2.1 Defining a Veteran 22
2.2 Defining Transition 26
2.3 Military to Civilian Transition 30
2.3.1 The Psychology of the Transition 32
2.3.2 Family and Employment 38
2.3.3 Identity, Culture and Networks 41
2.4 Veteran Support 46
2.4.1 Approaches to Delivery 51
2.4.2 Supporting Veterans Through Sport and Physical Activity .. 55
2.5 Sport for Development 64
2.6 The Policy Context: Sport and the Military 72
2.7 Chapter Summary 85
Chapter Three – Methodology 91
3.0 Introduction 91
3.1 Research Rationale 91
3.2 Research Question and Aims 93

3.3 Qualitative Research: What and Why? 94
3.4 Research Philosophy 98
3.4.1 Ontology 100
3.4.2 Epistemology 102
3.4.3 Influence of Philosophy on Methodology 103
3.5 Ethnographic Approach 105
3.5.1 Organisational Ethnography 111
3.5.2 Virtual Ethnography 112
3.5.3 Observations 114
3.5.4 Interviews 117
3.6 Sampling and Participants 121
3.7 Data Collection 126
3.8 Data Analysis 130
3.9 Theoretical Framework 134
3.10 Evaluation Criteria 141
3.11 Ethical Considerations and Reflexivity 144
3.11.1 Online Ethics *149*
3.12 Chapter Summary 151
Chapter Four– Veteran Narratives 154
4.0 Overview 154
4.1 The Immediate Transition Process 154
4.1.1 The British Armed Forces as a Total Institution 155
4.1.2 The Transition Period 163
4.1.3 Transition Challenges 166
4.2 Alignment with Military Identity 169
4.3 Presentation of the Military Identity 173
4.3.1 Military Identity and Gender 183
4.4 Using and Managing the Military Identity 188
4.5 Military Team Performance 200
4.5.1 The Successful Team Performance 206
4.5.2 The Disrupted Team Performance 207
4.6 Chapter Summary 210
Chapter Five– Programme Delivery Narratives 212
5.0 Overview 212
5.1 The Contextual Influences of the Active Partnership 212
5.1.1 The Situated and Professional Contexts 214
5.1.2 Organisational Leadership 215
5.2 The Programme Lead 221

5.2.1 The Programme Lead as a Key Policy Actor 224
5.2.2 The Programme Lead and Multiple Role Identities 232
5.3 Organisation Performance Teams 238
5.3.1 Internal Performance Teams 239
5.3.2 Performance Teams Across the External Partnership Network .. 244
5.4 Chapter Summary 252
Chapter Six – Conclusion 256
6.0 Overview 256
6.1 Empirical Implications 258
6.2 Theoretical Implications 263
6.3 Methodological Implications 265
6.4 Practical Implications 267
6.5 Concluding Thoughts 270
Reference List 276
Appendices 324
Appendix A – Excerpt from Sport England Funding Bid 324
Appendix B – Demographics of Vet Fit Programme Participants.. 335
Appendix C – COVID-19 Timeline.. 336
Appendix D – Example Interview Guide.. 337
Appendix E – Excerpt from Veteran Interview Transcript.. 341
Appendix F – Example Field Diary Observation Note.. 347
Appendix G – Leaving the Field Infographic.. 350
Appendix H - Excerpt from Analysis Table.. 351
Appendix I - Vet Fit Final Evaluation Report: Strategic Recommendations.. 356

Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Overview

In this chapter I introduce the research problem, outlining the need for this study to take place, the research question and subsequent aims, and how this thesis intends to contribute to knowledge. I then contextualise this thesis, discussing the key areas of the British Armed Forces, Active Partnerships, and the COVID-19 Pandemic, as well as introducing the sport and physical activity programme at the focus of the thesis, the Vet Fit Programme. I also present my researchers' story, to establish connections between my identity, experiences, and the research. This chapter concludes with a brief overview outlining how the remaining chapters will unfold.

1.1 The Research Problem

While most serving personnel leave the military and enjoy a successful transition into their civilian lives, a significant majority do not and can experience mental health issues (Mansfield et al., 2011; Bowes, 2017; Bowes, Ferreira, and Henderson, 2018), social isolation (Ahern et al., 2015), unemployment and housing problems (Higate, 2000; Greer, 2017), addiction (Harvey et al., 2011; Albertson et al., 2017) and relationship breakdowns (Thomas, 2018; Sherman and Larson, 2018). Chapter two expands on these areas further, considering the literature's broad focus on these issues and difficulties faced by veterans leaving the military, the subsequent impact on their civilian lives, and the absence of varied transition experiences, including those that would be deemed successful. For those that do face difficulties during their transition from the military, there are several programmes and provisions which offer support, another area of focus in chapter two in which different approaches are

considered as well as the factors that contribute to providing effective support (Collie et al., 2006; Carless, 2014; Delucia, 2016: Palmer, 2017; Peacock, Carless and McKenna, 2018). In 2018, the Directory for Social Change reported that there were 1,691 Armed Forces charities registered in the United Kingdom (UK) (Directory of Social Change, 2018). In a 2014 report on armed services charities registered in England and Wales, 515 were association branches who aim to foster the comradeship of the military, 283 were service funds who promote the efficiency of the Armed Forces and 278 were welfare charities with the aim to provide relief for those in need (Pozo and Walker, 2014). Of the 283 registered service funds, 203 specialised in adventure training, sports, social and recreational activities, which evidences the presence of sport and physical activity in the field of Armed Forces support prior to the commencement of this research (Pozo and Walker, 2014). The Royal British Legion, SSAFA, Help for Heroes, Forces in Mind Trust, and Blind Veterans UK are all examples of veteran welfare charities and these are the top five in England and Wales based on income (Pozo and Walker, 2014). While it is promising that there are a range of services focused on the Armed Forces and the support of military veterans, these organisations often work in silos, lack coordination, and adopt different approaches, interventions, and philosophies. This lack of coordination between options can often leave veterans and their families confused, raising questions around how military charities are regulated and the boundaries between support and treatment (MacManus and Wessely, 2013). Without a standardised, coordinated, clear offer, accessing support and guidance is then unequal in terms of access, type, and quality, with little understanding around the processes and challenges involved in delivering these provisions. There is potential for the programme featured in this thesis to support this, through the

coordination of partnerships and acting as a signposting system to navigate these complex and diverse support opportunities.

The programme at the focus of this thesis is part of a Sport England funded project with the brief to support veterans in their transition from the military, considering social isolation, mental health and wellbeing, and drug and alcohol addiction, using sport and physical activity as the tool to do so (Appendix A). This PhD was included in the funded project with the role of being an independent external evaluator and tasked with identifying key lesson learning. As such, the research questions and aims at the heart of this thesis evolved in response to the learnings identified from the programme.

This commentary highlights the two aspects of the research problem at the heart of this thesis as well as the important relationship between the programme being delivered and the evaluative responsibility of this research, both of which inform the research question and subsequent aims of this thesis. The research question guiding this thesis is as follows; How does the delivery of a three-year sport and physical activity-based programme impact upon the transition of veterans from the military to civilian life in the North West of England? This research question, in addition to the subsequent research aims, emerged from early literature research in an abductive and iterative manner. Firstly, this thesis examines the veteran transition experience, appreciating the variation of these transition experiences across the veteran population, moving away from the existing focus on challenges and difficulties. Therefore, the first aim of this research is to understand the individual experiences of veterans transitioning from the military into civilian life and the influence engaging in the sport and physical activity-based programme has on this. The second aspect of the research problem focuses on the many varied

provisions available to veterans to support and guide them throughout the military to civilian transition, and the lack of understanding around the delivery and organisation process. This informs the second research aim to understand the realities and challenges of organising, developing, and delivering a sport and physical activity-based support programme for military veterans. These aims are specific to a sport and physical activity-based veteran support programme, however it is a further research aim that the learnings and knowledge generated can be used to inform wider policy and practice, with the potential to influence the work undertaken in the military, charity, and sporting sectors, as well as government policy.

This thesis is novel in that it evaluates a veteran support programme which uses an approach that has not been adopted before. The Vet Fit Programme is the first, both in the UK and globally, to use sport and physical activity as a support tool on a long-term basis, taking advantage of assets in the local community, to broadly support the military to civilian transition, as opposed to concentrating on specific *challenges* or *issues*. The methods of evaluation also make this study unique in that only one previously published article clearly used an ethnographic approach in relation to military support provisions (Carless, 2014). Acknowledging the novel and unique features of the thesis, this research makes several key contributions to knowledge. This research goes beyond the existing dichotomy of *good* and *bad* transitions discussed in the literature to consider varied veteran transition experiences. Furthermore, this thesis makes empirical and theoretical contributions to the small body of sociological research focusing on the military to civilian transition, presenting identity as a core concept in this process, a key factor influencing the transition and reintegration into civilian life, and using sociological concepts that have not previously been employed to this area. This is also the first piece of research

regarding veteran support that applies the concepts of policy enactment (Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2014) and neoliberalism (Verhaeghe, 2014) to a sport and physical activity-based support programme to develop an enhanced understanding of programme organisation and delivery mechanisms. This addresses a knowledge gap in sport for development (SfD), demonstrating the impacts of sport and physical activity as a long-term support tool for military veterans and the delivery mechanisms and processes that are crucial to this. This is an approach to delivery that is yet to be discussed in the academic literature, with little focus on the delivery mechanisms, processes and experiences that contribute towards achieving developmental objectives. Overall, these outcomes demonstrate how this thesis will contribute to knowledge and address gaps that currently exist in the associated areas of literature, highlighting the need for this study to be undertaken.

1.2 Contextualising the Research

Having briefly introduced the research problem at the core of this thesis, it is evident that there are many aspects that need to be considered to provide some context and underpin this research. The British Armed Forces is an institution central to this thesis, as it is those who have served who are both the participants and focus of this research. Active Partnerships (AP) will be introduced, with an AP located in the North West of England responsible for the delivery of the sport and physical activity-based support programme. Context will be provided around this programme which, from this point onwards, will be called the Vet Fit Programme. Finally, the COVID-19 Pandemic will also be discussed as it was a global situation that had a notable impact on the research and the delivery of the Vet Fit Programme.

1.2.1 The British Armed Forces

This thesis focuses on individuals that have served in the British Armed Forces, comprising of service personnel in the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force (RAF). They are tasked with protecting the security, independence, and interests of the UK, both at home and abroad, and this includes working across the globe to promote peace, deliver aid, provide security, and fight terrorism (Ministry of Defence (MOD), no date). Recent examples of operations carried out to achieve these aims include Operation Kipon in the Middle East since 2011, Operation Shader in Iraq and Syria supporting and training Kurdish forces, and Operation Toral encompassing the UK's post-2014 contributions to operations in Afghanistan (MOD, 2018a). In a recent publication produced by the MOD (2020d) there are currently 195,050 men and women serving in the British Armed Forces, this is a 1.2% increase from last year. The majority of service personnel are located in the South East and South West of the UK (MOD, 2020b). The fewest are situated in the North East and, considering the region this research focuses on, the North West has the second fewest serving personnel (MOD, 2020b). The Armed Forces are also dominated by white males, with females currently representing 11% of the serving population, missing the 15% target set for 2020, while individuals from ethnically diverse communities represent 11.7% of the serving population, meeting the 10% 2020 target (MOD, 2020c).

These demographics provide a picture of the current serving military population, however information on veterans is not widely discussed or published. It is only through the recent bulletins produced by the MOD that this information is provided. In 2017, it was estimated there were approximately 2.4 million veterans residing in Great Britain, and these veterans were predominantly white, male, and aged 65 plus

(MOD, 2019a). It has been projected that in 2028 there will be 1.6 million Armed Forces veterans living in Great Britain, with an expected decrease year on year due to veteran deaths exceeding the number of service leavers (MOD, 2019b). Of the veterans residing in the UK, 750,000 are working age (16-64 years old), accounting for 2% of the total working age population and, mirroring veterans more broadly, they are also predominantly white males (MOD, 2018c; 2019b). Focusing specifically on the North West, where this research is situated, there are approximately 98,031 working age veterans accounting for 2% of the working age population (MOD, 2018c). This data on veterans and current serving personnel establishes them as a clear population group that can be the focus of policy or support provisions, understanding needs that are specific to them. It would be expected that the demographics of the group engaging in the Vet Fit Programme would be reflective of the statistics presented here, this will be examined in section 1.1.3.

The sparse MOD publications concentrating on veterans also provided insight into the number of veterans currently in prison or probation services. It was estimated in 2010 that veterans accounted for 3% of the prison population and, in 2011, 3.4% of people subjected to probation supervisions (MOD, 2010; 2011). Of the 3% of veterans in prison, 12% were former Navy personnel, 7% former RAF and 81% were ex-Army (MOD, 2011). These figures were ascertained by cross matching MOD and Ministry of Justice databases and therefore it is important to note that they depend on quality and completeness. Despite this limitation, these estimated figures reflect those reported previously by the Home Office in 2001, 2003, and 2004 of 6%, 4% and 5% respectively (MOD, 2010), however more recent figures are not available as they have not been updated since.

For veterans leaving the British Armed Forces, resettlement support is offered through the Career Transition Partnership (CTP), a partnership between the MOD and Right Management. However, the level of support offered depends on length of military service and reason for exit (MOD, 2018e). This service primarily supports veterans in gaining civilian employment and, for veterans who left in 2019/20 and accessed the CTP, 84% were employed within 6 months after leaving (MOD, 2021). It was also reported that service leavers from ethnically diverse communities were more likely to be unemployed compared to white service leavers, and that female veterans were more likely to be economically inactive than male veterans, largely driven by their role to look after the family (MOD, 2021). This data provides insight into the support offered by the MOD, in which the core focus is gaining civilian employment. With no further understanding of the wider support the MOD provides, this suggests that there is space for a broader holistic support offer which considers individual health and wellbeing alongside housing, employment, and finances.

1.2.2 Active Partnerships

The Vet Fit Programme at the focus of this research is delivered by an AP based in the North West of England. APs are charged with addressing the challenges that exist around the promotion of sports participation and lead on coordinating the delivery of sport at a local level (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013). Mackintosh (2011) explains that APs have varying roles, however Sport England uses them as a funding channel with three core functions (strategic coordination and planning, performance management, and marketing and communications) and three work areas (developing pathways for young people, workforce development and club development). APs emerged through the development of the Active Sports

programme initiated in 1999. This development was uncertain, but in 2005 Sport England committed to ongoing funding and the initial network of 45 APs expanded to cover the whole of England (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013). Although there has been a large degree of consistency regarding the position of APs, their specific role has undergone more nuanced change and, while they continue to focus on the work areas outlined, they do so with attention on strategic coordination rather than direct delivery (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013). From the network that existed in 2005, 43 partnerships emerged and were rebranded as County Sport Partnerships (CSP), regional multi-sport programmes targeted at increasing sports participation (Mackintosh, 2021). These varied in staffing size, geographical scope, and organisational status, but all acted as the key strategic agency in setting the vision and framework for an area, with geographical contexts crucial to shaping this (Mackintosh, 2021). In 2019, CSPs were re-branded again as APs and continued to receive core funding from Sport England but also drew down funding from wider sources to enhance their role and ensure sustainability (Mackintosh, 2021). Across the UK there are currently 43 APs committed to improving lives by growing grassroots sport and physical activity, however individual models vary across the country from region to region (Active Partnerships, 2020). Partnerships are central to APs delivering on their core functions and work areas, however some have argued that these partnerships are fragile, illusive, lack meaning, and demonstrate a way of working rather than a clear work model (Philpotts, Grix and Quarmby, 2010; Mackintosh, 2011).

The AP at the focus of this thesis is situated the North West of England, covering ten boroughs located within one county, this is also mirrored in the scope of the Vet Fit Programme. Utilising funding from Sport England, the AP employed three members

of staff who worked directly on the programme, including a Senior Development Officer who acted as the programme lead, and two Development Officers who supported programme delivery and organisation. The Vet Fit programme is a deviation away from the typical role of an AP as they are involved in the direct delivery alongside their main function of strategic coordination. Yet, this programme still contributes the AP's overall commitment to grow grassroots sport and physical activity, with a specific focus on the veteran community.

1.2.3 The Vet Fit Programme

This thesis focuses on a sport and physical activity programme, delivered by an AP, in a city in the North West of England, called the Vet Fit Programme (pseudonym). The Vet Fit programme is aimed at helping Armed Forces personnel stay active during and after their transition from the military into civilian life. There is currently no data available on the physical activity patterns of military veterans, identifying a gap in knowledge this programme and thesis can contribute to. Funded by Sport England to span a three-year period, the first year of the programme was led by a Programme Lead and delivered in one city borough. In the second year, a further two Development Officers were recruited with the plan to expand into three boroughs, with the intention then to expand into all ten boroughs in the final year. However, in practice, delivery was messier and less linear than planned, with wider circumstances dictating that the programme had to move online for a sustained period across the second and final years. This is the first programme of its kind to be delivered, across the UK and globally.

The programme consisted of weekly sport and physical activity sessions delivered by sporting and community organisations which the AP developed partnerships with.

The weekly sessions included football, rugby, climbing, table-tennis, archery, yoga, and tai chi. This was in addition to discounted gym memberships, and one-off experiences such as wild camping weekends, motorsport taster days and family fun days. The programme was open to both male and female veterans of all ages, abilities, and branches of the military (Appendix B). Most sessions were veteran only with links into wider civilian communities, but over time most sessions became more inclusive, facilitating the attendance of veterans and their families (Table 4). Likewise, despite being open to both male and female veterans, some sessions in practice became male only, namely the football, and there were no women's only sessions on the programme (Table 4). Regarding attendance to sessions across the Vet Fit programme, for veterans taking part in the football this was largely the only session they engaged with. However, regarding wider sessions including climbing, archery, tai chi, and yoga, it was evident that the veterans were engaging with multiple varied activities across the programme. This is evident in Table 11, which outlines which sessions the veterans taking part in this research engaged with across the Vet Fit Programme.

Table 4 – Attendance Demographics of Observed Vet Fit Sessions

Session Activity	Gender of Attendees	Service Status of Attendees
Football	Male Only	Veteran Only
Indoor & Outdoor Climbing	Mixed (Male & Female)	Mixed (Veteran & Civilian)
Motorsport Day	Mixed	Veteran Only
Family Fun Day	Mixed	Mixed
Archery	Mixed	Mixed
Yoga (Online and In Person)	Mixed	Mixed
Online Tai Chi	Mixed	Mixed
Online Circuits	Male Only	Mixed
Online HIIT	Male Only	Mixed
Online Accessible Session	Mixed	Mixed

Table 5 - Internal Project Data Survey Completions

Intersection	Total Survey Completions	Survey Completions by Male Participants	Survey Completions by Female Participants	Survey Completions Gender Undisclosed
Baseline	294	243	51	0
3 months	54	45	9	0
6 months	41	33	7	1
12 months	22	19	3	0
Total Completions	411	340	70	1

All participants who engaged in the Vet Fit programme, both veterans and family members, were asked to complete a questionnaire when they initially signed up and then at three-, six-, and twelve-month intervals across their engagement (Table 5). All veterans and family members participating in the Vet Fit programme completed the survey at baseline. Using this as the total figure, at the time intersections of three-, six- and twelve-months the survey completion rates wwereas 20%, 13% and 7% respectively. However, it is important to note that all the individuals engaging in the Vet Fit Programme may not have reached the relevant time intersections, and therefore this will influence the completion rates that have been calculated. Overall, of the total surveys completed, 82% were completed by males, and this is not representative of the UK in which males have accounted for approximately 49% of the population for the past 10 years (Parks, 2021). However, this is representative of the military, in which men account for 89% of the serving population (MOD, 2020c). It is also essential to highlight that ethnicity data was not collected as part of this survey and therefore cannot be considered in the analysis.

Initially this questionnaire was centered around Sport England's' Short Active Lives Survey (Sport England, no date) but, as the programme developed, the

questionnaire evolved with the addition and removal of questions. These developments make it difficult to draw comparisons across the whole data set. It was also not possible to undertake a valuable quantitative analysis using this data as the sample size was too small at each of the intersection points. It is unclear why this is, reasons may include possible engagement drop off and difficulty to retain programme participants, poor or inconsistent monitoring and evaluation procedures due to a lack of expertise and resources, or the fact that data collection was ongoing with some participants yet to reach the relevant intersections. These criticisms have been made of other programmes in the SfD literature, highlighting how interventions are poorly designed, with ambiguous and discrepant outcomes, as well as lacking consistent and robust monitoring and evaluation procedures (Levermore, 2008; Hayhurst, 2009; Kay, 2009; Coalter, 2010b). This is a continued feature of this thesis, discussed in sections 2.5, 5.1, and 5.2, and across sections 6.2 and 6.3 in the concluding chapter.

1.2.4 The COVID-19 Pandemic

On the 11th March 2020 the World Health Organisation (2020) declared a global pandemic in response to the rising cases of an unknown pneumonia, later named COVID-19. This was a virus with delayed symptoms and asymptomatic transfer that rapidly crossed borders and spread throughout the world. In the UK, on the 23rd March 2020, the Conservative government announced lockdown restrictions in response to the rising COVID-19 cases across the country (Appendix C). This had a significant impact on many aspects of life, big and small, personal and professional, including international travel, communication, and the restriction of daily activities. With a significant global death toll and money lost due to cancellations and

postponements, COVID-19 impacted everyone in some way, including the sports industry.

In the sports industry, COVID-19 impacted on practitioners, participants, and spectators alike (Pedersen, Ruihley and Li, 2020). Reviewing some early reports, evaluations, and research focusing on this, the largescale impact is evident. Across the UK, it is suggested that most adults maintained their activity habits despite the pandemic, with just 710,000 fewer active adults between November 2019 and November 2020 compared to the same period 12 months previously (Sport England, 2021). However, the first 8 months of the pandemic did appear to have a huge impact on outdoor activity and saw an increase in the number of physically inactive people (Sport England, 2021). Focusing on the North West, where the Vet Fit programme was delivered, more than 3 million people were less active during the first 7 weeks of the UK lockdown compared to the same period the year before, and disabled people, people aged 70 and over, people with long-term health conditions and people from ethnically diverse communities were disproportionally impacted (Sport England, 2020). Grix et al. (2021) highlights the differential impact of COVID-19 nationally, considering ethnically diverse communities, socioeconomically deprived areas, and those with existing health inequalities. This inequality was also mirrored in the support available to help communities, organisations, and individuals navigate the pandemic. Those located in lower socio-economic and more deprived communities failed to source funding and support compared to other areas of the community sport infrastructure who were able to do so (Mackintosh et al., 2020).

The impact of COVID-19 on practitioners and those involved in community sport was illustrated in reports undertaken by researchers from Manchester Metropolitan University (Mackintosh et al., 2020) and the Sport Research Volunteer Network

(Findlay-King, Reid and Nichols, 2020). Overall, the efforts of practitioners were dedicated towards returning to what they were doing before the pandemic, and volunteers were essential to this (Findlay-King, Reid and Nichols, 2020). During the pandemic volunteers remained committed, however they experienced feelings of fear and uncertainty, needing to work harder to maintain organisational structure (Mackintosh et al., 2020; Findlay-King, Reid and Nichols, 2020). Some organisations repositioned themselves during the pandemic, generating new innovations or offers. Hernandez (2020) recommends that through simple, direct, and creative ways, COVID-19 mitigation schemes can be integrated into community sporting activities, offering a glimpse into how these organisations proceed in the future and suggesting that COVID-19 may fundamentally change the way sport operates (Clarkson et al., 2020; Fitzgerald, Stride and Drury, 2020; Parnell et al., 2020; Doherty, Millar and Misener, 2020), in the need to prioritise inclusion (Fitzgerald, Stride and Drury, 2020) and embrace innovative approaches (Clarkson et al., 2020). Many of these innovations employed technology, such as Zoom and online booking systems, allowing organisations to run as they did previously, but requiring considerable effort from volunteers. (Mackintosh et al., 2020; Findlay-King, Reid and Nichols, 2020). This became a way of life during the pandemic, using digital platforms to reconnect coaches, participants, and volunteers (Doherty, Millar and Misener, 2020), however they also highlighted a technological divide, in which digital poverty prevented engagement in these new innovative ways of accessing sport (Mackintosh et al., 2020).

As well as having significant impacts for organisations, clubs, and participants, Grix et al. (2021) draws attention to the impact of COVID-19 on spectators and policy makers. With the identification that COVID-19 was enhanced through social

gatherings, significant decisions were made on the staging of large-scale sporting events involving thousands of spectators. Throughout the pandemic elite sport took place with reduced numbers of spectators or none at all. Grix et al. (2021) suggests that those in policy decision-making positions should recognise the events of the pandemic as an opportunity to reconsider investment decisions in sport, follow the growth of remote working and the use of online platforms to conduct business, and the growth of e-sport, which all occurred during the enforced lockdowns (Grix et al., 2021).

To continue delivery during lockdown, the Vet Fit programme delivered sessions, such as yoga, tai chi, and circuits, using Zoom. This change to delivery was reflective of circumstances at the time. During lockdown restrictions in the UK, activity choice was severely limited, only being allowed to leave the house once a day for exercise. Sport England (2020) reported a 7.1% decrease in activity levels, and a 7.4% increase in inactivity. It was also identified that activity levels during lockdown restrictions varied across different demographics. Both men and women were impacted by the pandemic, however women saw a smaller drop in activity levels (5.4%) compared to men (8.9%) (Sport England, 2020). It is suggested that women found it easier to adapt to online and at home alternatives whereas men were more likely to engage in team or racket sports which were severely restricted by the lockdown and therefore resulted in greater reductions (Sport England, 2020). Considering the different age groups, those aged 16-34 years were significantly impacted and this is demonstrated by a decrease of 10.1% with the proportion of those who were active dropping below two thirds (Sport England, 2020). It is suggested by Sport England (2020) that young adults make up a greater share of activities that were severely restricted or less relevant during lockdown, such as

team sports and active travel. Those aged 35-54 years showed more resilience than other age groups, with minimal change in activity levels, however those aged 55 plus displayed the greatest decrease in activity (Sport England, 2020). Only one third of adults aged 55 years or older were active during the lockdown period and those classified as inactive rose above 50%.

With a focus on socio-economic groups, activity levels fell for all, but these reductions were larger amongst lower social groups, resulting in a widening between lower and higher socio-economic groups during this period (Sport England, 2020). Similarly, activity levels for disabled adults and those with long-term health conditions decreased (Sport England, 2020). In the report produced by the Activity Alliance (2021), they outline new barriers the pandemic created that disabled people need to overcome to engage in sport, including self-isolation, fear of contracting the virus, and concerns about social distancing (Activity Alliance, 2021). It is also highlighted that disabled people are more affected by a lack of space and support at home (Activity Alliance, 2021). Regarding ethnicity, decreases in activity were larger amongst those from Asian, Black, and Other ethnic backgrounds, and these reductions were greater for men from both Asian and Black backgrounds (Sport England, 2020). To summarise, individuals with long-term health conditions or a disability, those from lower socio-economic groups, women, and those aged between 16-34 years or above 55 years found it hardest to stay active (Sport England, 2020).

Sport England (2020) collected data regarding mental wellbeing and loneliness, to understand how lockdown restrictions impacted on these. It was identified that, during the lockdown period, happiness fell as anxiety increased, with the suggestion that this is influenced by individuals not getting the wellbeing benefits of physical

activity. Specifically, women, those with a disability or long-term health condition, and those aged 75 years or older all experienced the greatest increases in anxiety, but overall, there appeared to be no change in feelings of loneliness (Sport England, 2020). Mind (2021) also collected data regarding mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, undertaking a survey of 10,023 adults and 1,756 young people. Findings highlighted that those who struggled with their mental health before the pandemic, reported an increased severity in the challenges they faced during it, as well as concerns for the future (Mind, 2021). There was hope among the participants that their mental health will improve after the pandemic, but this was accompanied with a fear about leaving lockdown (Mind, 2021). This report also outlined that the pandemic has heightened existing inequalities, with links between poverty and mental health having significant impacts for those in lower socio-economic groups (Mind, 2021).

Focusing on the activities undertaken while lockdown restrictions were in place, walking for leisure was the primary activity adults engaged in, with more than 21 million going for a walk. Cycling for leisure and sport also increased by 1.2 million. In contrast, there were 1.9 million less people engaging in team sport, a reduction of 2.8 million in swimming, and a 3% decrease in engagement in fitness activities. However, alternative ways of exercising were evident in some of these figures with people switching to digital and self-led fitness classes and fitness training at home. Overall, the pandemic had a significant impact on individuals' participation behaviours as well as the delivery of sporting provisions at both elite and community levels. This is evident in the Vet Fit programme with the shift in delivery from face-to-face activities, dominated by team sports and activities which require specialist

equipment (e.g., climbing and archery), to digital fitness classes which can be completed at home using minimal equipment via online platforms.

1.2.5 The Researchers' Story

The decision to undertake a study on the topic of the military to civilian transition was informed by personal experience, as well as personal and academic interest. As the primary researcher in this thesis, I had never served in the military, but have family that served across all three branches of the Armed Forces. Both my parents served in the RAF, with my Dad serving for a total of 29 years, which spanned across much of my childhood, leaving in 2009 when I was 15 years old. Looking back at this time, I have several memories that are heavily influenced by his military service. For example, living in Cyprus for three years on an overseas posting, my Dad being deployed to Iraq for six months and surprising us on his return by picking us up from school and, finally Dad shining his shoes and ironing his uniform every Sunday night in preparation for the upcoming week. Initially, this had never been an area of academic interest I had considered pursuing but, growing up immersed in military life, being part of my parent's military experiences and witnessing them undertake the transition back into civilian life sparked a personal interest that encouraged me to consider this as an area of study.

Growing up on military bases, I would be considered a 'Pad Brat', the military slang for a child of a service man or woman who has grown up living on military bases. While this may be considered insulting to some, in the context of this research, it granted me a status which offered insight and understanding of military life, from the perspective of a family member. Regarding most intersections of my identity, I stood out as different from the participants in this research, for example in terms of age,

gender, and civilian status. This will be discussed at greater depth in section 3.11, considering how this impacted the research and my experiences. However, being a 'Pad Brat' and having the understanding I developed growing up with parents in the military, provided a common aspect that I was able to draw upon in the research setting. Ultimately, I recognised that I was not a veteran and would never know what it was like to join and serve in the military, however I did have a degree of knowledge and understanding that provided me with a great basis for starting conversations, building rapport, and embedding myself in an environment that I was certainly an 'outsider' in. Yet, it is important to stress that I did not know it all and there was still a lot for me to navigate, learn, and negotiate undertaking this research.

1.3 Overview of Thesis

The remainder of this thesis unfolds as follows. Chapter 2 explores the academic literature relevant to the military lifestyle, the military to civilian transition, and the use of sport as a vehicle for support and to achieve wider social objectives. The literature presented in this chapter cuts across several research areas including life transitions, the development and delivery of veteran support programmes, SfD and its criticisms, as well as sport and military policy. In chapter 3, the methodological, paradigmatic, and theoretical aspects of this research are outlined, justified, and discussed, in addition to the researchers' identity that was briefly discussed previously. This includes the methods and processes of data collection, the approaches and techniques used for data analysis, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 concentrates on the veterans' narratives around leaving the military, reentering civilian life, and engaging in the Vet Fit programme, regarding identity and presentation of self. Chapter 5 turns to focus on the narratives around programme

delivery connecting the micro to the macro and linking presentation of self and role identities with policy enactment, meritocracy, and neoliberalism. The final chapter draws this thesis to a close, pulling together conclusions from the research, summarising its contribution to knowledge and outlining implications for future research and practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Overview

This chapter will critically examine literature relevant to the military lifestyle, the transition of veterans into civilian life, and the use of sport as a vehicle to support and achieve wider social objectives. It will position this thesis in the wider context of sport policy and sport development policy and practice in both the UK and globally. This review will cut across several research areas including life transitions with a specific focus on the military to civilian transition, the development and delivery of veteran support programmes, SfD and its criticisms, as well as sport and military policy. Focusing on this breadth of areas, this literature review provides an overview of the key themes, concepts, ideas, and theoretical approaches relevant to each and how they underpin or contribute to the research undertaken in this thesis.

2.1 Defining a Veteran

A veteran is a social construction and defining this is widely contested, with no agreed definition and differences in meaning depending on when it is applied, by whom and in what context (Caddick and Smith, 2014; Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins, 2017). For example, a Government's definition of a veteran may relate to the qualification for benefits or support services. Yet, the definition applied by the public could depend on how much has been accomplished during service and doing enough to achieve a veteran status. In their review of the literature Caddick and Smith (2014) identify differences across definitions, listing multiple terms used to describe a veteran and variation in how they have been defined and applied by different countries and governments. In the UK, the Government adopts the

following definition of a veteran: all personnel who have served more than one day, inclusive of their dependents (Dandeker et al., 2006). This is a broad and inclusive definition, with no restrictions excluding any ex-service personnel. However, definitions adopted by Governments and policy makers in other countries do feature certain limitations that can exclude some ex-service men and women. The definitions used in America, Australia and the Netherlands refer to a minimum period of service, serving in active deployment overseas and engaging in war or other international peacekeeping operations (Dandeker et al., 2006; Burdett et al., 2012). Outlining specific requirements, this definition is restrictive with only individuals who have undertaken a service that meets these extra conditions being identified as a Veteran. This contrasts with the definition adopted by the UK because even those that did not complete their basic training qualify as a veteran as they meet the requirement of serving at least one day. Dandeker et al. (2006) suggest that a key reason for variation across definitions is due to differences in historical context. In the UK, during World War II, the full population was mobilised and there was a shared sense of suffering and loss by civilian and military populations, this contrasts with American and Commonwealth civilian populations who were not involved to this extent. Therefore, in the UK, being a veteran does not hold a significant degree of exclusivity, unlike the other countries mentioned where the veteran identity holds a special status and additional benefits.

Concentrating on the UK's definition, this can have both positive and negative consequences, and impact upon government policy (Dandeker et al., 2006; Burdett et al., 2012). Drawing on potential negative impacts first, adopting a broad veteran definition, including every individual who has received a day's pay, means that reported veteran figures will be high as no one is excluded. This can put pressure

on the government to ensure the care of a significant number of military personnel both during and after service. Dealing with this high volume and an all-encompassing definition of a veteran, resources could become inadequate, raising the question as to where limited resources should be prioritised and who is most in need (Dandeker et al., 2006). Another negative consequence of adopting this definition is the minimal or basic awards associated with being a Veteran, with so many individuals eligible, it would not be feasible for benefits or rewards to be given to each (Dandeker et al., 2006). This inclusive definition of a veteran employed in the UK also has positive consequences, especially in its clarity and simplicity. It can be viewed as a recruitment incentive with the knowledge that joining the military and fulfilling a day's service, identifies the individual as a veteran giving them access to subsequent benefits and support. Another potentially positive consequence of adopting this inclusive definition is that it can serve to achieve broader social objectives, linking to wider government policies and population groups (Dandeker et al., 2006). Having focused on the UK definition of a veteran, and with this research situated in the UK, this definition will underpin this thesis.

Having explored and understood the varied definitions used by different countries and governments, it is also important to consider how this aligns with the view of the public and ex-service personnel. In a 2002 survey carried out with over 2,000 members of the British public, 57% of respondents believed the term veteran referred to those who served in either World War, and only 37% considered the term to refer to all ex-service personnel (Burdett et al., 2012). Drawing on these findings, it could be argued that the UK definition does not reflect the views of the public. However, this survey was carried out in 2002 and these results should be considered

with caution as opinions and attitudes may have since changed because of the UK's involvement in wars in Iraq, starting in 2003, and Afghanistan, commencing in 2001.

Burdett et al. (2012) undertook a questionnaire with 202 veterans, identified using the UK definition, which asked; would you describe yourself as a veteran? This sample was drawn from an ongoing study of UK military personnel in service at the time of the 2003 Iraq War. A total of 10,272 regular and reservist personnel completed a questionnaire (Burdett et al.,2012). Of the individuals that consented to a follow up, a random sample was taken, determined by General Health Questionnaire scores and stratified by regular or reservist status, producing a final sample size of 821 (Burdett et al., 2012). Of this sample, 202 had left the military at the time of data collection and were asked to complete a further questionnaire regarding their veteran status (Burdett et al., 2012). It is important to recognise that the scope of this study includes those who were serving in the military in 2003, and while this makes the findings relevant to modern veterans, it excludes older veterans who left before this time (Burdett et al., 2012). Older veterans are a population who are likely to have spent less time on deployment compared to recent service leavers, due to involvements in Iraq and Afghanistan. Of the 202 veterans asked if they would describe themselves as a veteran, 52% answered yes, suggesting that the definition used to inform policy and government actions in the UK does not align with the views of the veteran population and veteran's self-identity. Examining these definitions of a veteran and understanding how they are applied illustrates how a veteran is a social construction and can be outlined, defined, and understood in a variety of different ways, depending on the individual, organisation or government using it. While this thesis employs the UK's definition, the research carried out will

consider the variation in what is understood to be a veteran and how this aligns with veterans' self-identity.

2.2 Defining Transition

Everyone experiences transitions at different stages of their life, including changing jobs, retiring, getting married, leaving education, or becoming a parent. These can be anticipated or unanticipated, but they all alter life in some way (Schlossberg, 2011). Schlossberg (1981:5) defines transition as,

> an event or non-event [that] results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships.

Transition is not the key focus in the academic literature, instead Schlossberg (2011) proposes four key aspects surrounding the transition that influences the individual. Schlossberg (2011:159) states that 'these transitions alter our lives - our roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions'. This is employed in this research focusing on the alterations, changes and adjustments made to roles, relationships, assumptions, and identities when ex-service personnel transition from the military and rejoin civilian life. The publication of the Armed Forces Covenant[1] in 2016

[1] The Armed Forces Covenant is an agreement between the Armed Forces community, the nation, and Government, and its underlying principle is that members of the Armed Forces community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services (MOD, 2013). From 2015, £10 million per annum was committed to ensure the continued achievement of the government's Armed Forces Covenant commitments (MOD 2016). In central Government, the MOD leads on this, working closely with local authorities, and public, charitable, and private sectors to deliver the Covenant. For local councils the Covenant is a voluntary, non-binding commitment to support members of the Armed Forces community in their area, and every local authority in the UK has signed up to this (MOD, 2013). For businesses, the covenant is a voluntary pledge to demonstrate their support for the Armed Forces community, and thousands of companies have signed up to this including Asda, Vodafone, Facebook, Virgin Media, and Royal Mail (MOD, 2013). For Government, the Covenant is a driver of policy and action, setting out activities relevant to healthcare, education, housing, and commercial services to support the Armed Forces Community (MOD, 2013).

ensures that all Armed Forces personnel are supported, treated fairly, and do not experience disadvantage, as such the military to civilian transition is a process that is now visible in society (MOD, 2016). This publication has not been widely commented on in the academic literature, exposing this as a research gap, and those that sign up apply this agreement in varied ways, depending on what suits their own needs or requirements. However, this publication has brought awareness to the support and care for veterans undergoing the military to civilian transition in the UK, even if this has occurred much later compared to other countries involved in military combat, such as America, Canada, and Australia (MacManus and Wessely, 2013).

Despite the military to civilian transition receiving more attention both in society and academia, this specific transition has not been clearly defined or underpinned in military literature. Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins, (2017) undertook a review of the health and social sciences literature, examining transition, reintegration, and readjustment, to understand how these terms have been used in relation to the military. This review consisted of 117 articles published between 1990 and 2015, in which duplicates, those not published in English, and those that did not include the selected search terms in the body of the article were excluded (Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins, 2017). While the breadth of this search, and lack of specificity, could be considered a weakness, the scope was deliberately broad to include definitions from various perspectives and to identify trends in terminology use. It was identified that the terms *transition* and *reintegration* were both relatively new to the research domain, increasing fourfold in military literature between 2012 and 2015, whereas the term readjustment had been evident for several decades (Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins, 2017). Acknowledging the multiple terms and the variety of definitions used

across the literature, Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins (2017) sought to establish clear unified definitions (Table 6). Drawing on these definitions, transition refers to the whole process, while readjustment and reintegration relate to specific aspects of this, resulting in some overlap. Acknowledging this, and the research aim to understand the varied experiences of veterans in the military to civilian transition, this thesis will draw on all these terms, recognising the different scope of each to develop a more enhanced understanding around the veterans' experiences.

Table 6 - Definitions of Transition Derived from Elnitsky, Fisher, and Blevins (2017)

Term	Definition
Transition	The time period or process of moving from military to civilian life.
Readjustment	The process of readapting to civilian life
Reintegration	A veterans' return to the social or occupational roles filled prior to joining the military. This also refers to psychological, social health related and community related modes of functioning.

While there has been little focus on underpinning and defining the terms around the military to civilian transition, there is a research focus on the transition itself and the application of transition theories. Both sociological and psychological theories have been applied to the military to civilian transition to enhance understanding and propose strategies for support. For example, Greer (2017) draws on Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg's (2014) Transition Theory, applying this to female veterans transitioning from the military. This is classified as a theory of adult development, allowing a better appreciation of what individuals experience during a transition period, and has been applied across a variety of populations including individuals recovering from substance abuse (Stokes, Schultz, and Alpaslan, 2018), student athletes (Flowers, Luzynski, and Zamani-Gallaher, 2014), nurses (Wall,

Fetherston, and Browne, 2018) and adolescent mothers (Gbogbo, 2020). Greer (2017) concentrates on the second component of this theory, which is 'Taking stock of coping resources: The 4-S System' (Schlossberg, Waters and Goodman, 1995), using the four S's of situation, self, support and strategies to understand how servicewomen cope with their transition from the military, dependent on the resources available to them. This was a psychological theory applied to a veteran population however, there have also been theories developed specific to the military transition. For example, Deployment-to-Home Theory focuses on deployment variables and how they influence the transition experience across physical, emotional, cognitive, and social domains (Adler, Beliese and Castro, 2011). Each of the domain's impact on the veterans' quality of life in a dynamic process whereby not all domains will evolve at the same rate, resulting in both positive and negative experiences across the transition process (Adler, Beliese and Castro, 2011). Reviewing the literature, no papers were identified as using this theory, suggesting that it is not a core framework in this area, possibly reflecting the emerging and developing nature of this research field. Another military specific transition framework is the Military Transition Theory (Castro and Kintzle, 2016). This theory focuses on three interacting and overlapping phases that can influence the transition, considering individual, interpersonal, community and military organisational factors (Castro and Kintzle, 2016). Emerging empirical support for this framework is evident in military research examining successful transition (Gamache, Rosenheck and Tessler, 2000), military-related suicides (Castro and Kintzle, 2014), military sexual assaults (Castro et al., 2015), and psychosocial factors influencing the transition (Bowes, Ferreira, and Henderson, 2018). In defining and understanding the transition process, life transitions have been clearly outlined and thoroughly

discussed (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011) for a sustained period, in which there are several established psychological and sociological transition theories (Schlossberg, Waters and Goodman, 1995; Anderson, Goodman and Schlossberg, 2014). However, there is an emerging school of thought. Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins (2017) highlight the growing use of transition and reintegration terminology in military literature since 2012 and extend this by establishing clear and unified definitions. Similarly, there is a growing focus on military specific transition theories such as the Deployment-to-Home theory (Adler, Beliese and Castro, 2011) and Military Transition Theory (Castro and Kintzle, 2016), yet these have not widely been applied, reflecting the emergent nature of the field. Of most relevance to this thesis is the terminology presented by Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins (2017), this will underpin the understanding of language, and be applied to explore and examine the veterans' transition experiences. Furthermore, sociological theories of the military transition are especially pertinent, as this thesis will draw on a sociological lens, using theoretical concepts from the field of sociology, as a framework for data analysis. This will be discussed further in section 3.9 and across chapters 4 and 5.

2.3 Military to Civilian Transition

Most veterans do well after leaving the military, it is the minority who appear to fair badly (Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier, 2014; Cooper et al., 2018). Yet, it is this minority that dominates the research in this area focusing largely on the negative impacts of the transition (Iverson et al., 2005b). A small body of literature identifies this negative slant and outlines what a broader approach could offer. Higate (2001) applies poststructural theory to explore the military to civilian transition and the transformative effects of military service. Poststructural theory encourages the

deconstruction of the universal military identity presented in society, to reflect on individual subjectivities and how service personnel articulate their own sense of self (Higate, 2001). In another attempt to adopt a more balanced approach, Morin (2011) focuses on demographics to identify predictors of *good* and *bad* readjustments to civilian life, however it could be suggested that this is limited by the quantitative methods used as they do not provide explanations for these predictors. This thesis seeks to contribute to this existing knowledge, adopting a qualitative approach that can examine the reasons and explanations that underpin *good* and *bad* readjustment experiences. In another example, Mobbs and Bonanno (2018) map different behaviours relevant to the military to civilian transition, making an example of the narrow focus in the literature on PTSD when wider factors appear to have a greater significant impact. Mobbs and Bonanno (2018) suggest that only a small number of veterans experience PTSD, most experience some form of transition stress, which has received limited attention in the academic literature, again highlighting a negative standpoint around the military to civilian transition. In the scope of this review, only one publication was recognised to adopt a positive approach towards the military to civilian transition. McDermott (2007) identifies factors that promote *good* military to civilian transition experiences, as well as highlighting how a considerable proportion of the military literature focuses on negative impacts. Consequently, McDermott (2007) suggests that there is a clear dichotomy around the transition where veterans are judged to either do well or be left *broken*. This approach has enhanced understanding and contributed to knowledge, however there is no evidence in the published literature of where these learnings have informed policy or practice, applicable to the military prior to transition, and within civilian life once the transition process is underway. A more balanced view needs to be taken to

develop this further, including an appreciation of the multiplicity of outcomes and transition experiences which cannot simply be defined as *good* or *bad*, as well as clear links being identified as to how this knowledge can be put into practice, shaping government policy, informing organisational strategies, and enhancing the provisions focused on military and veteran communities. Herman and Yarwood (2014) support this, suggesting that there needs to be a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the cultural, social, and spatial changes involved in the transition, in addition to Brunger, Serrato and Ogden (2013:97) who share this view, recommending that 'a more person-centred and bi-transitionally considered approach is required'. Thus, it could be suggested that it is not a case of having a positive or negative slant to the research, but instead developing an understanding around the different factors influencing the transition process, how and why they occur, acknowledging that these will not be the same across all veteran experiences, and applying these learnings through clear recommendations for policy and practice. It is this understanding that this thesis develops, addressing the negative one-sided slant evident in the existing literature, in addition to working in partnership with a veteran support provision in which the research findings are applied and refined to provide clear recommendations and learnings for future policy and practice. The next section of this review will explore some of these factors, focusing on mental health and psychology, military identity and culture, social support networks, family life, relationships, and employment.

2.3.1 The Psychology of the Transition

Psychology and mental health are dominant themes in the literature focusing on the military to civilian transition, including causes of poor mental health and protective

factors. Bowes (2017) and Bauer et al. (2017) have undertaken systematic reviews in this area focusing on mental health, emotion regulation and wellbeing. In a literature search, using terms linked to emotion regulation and mental health, Bowes (2017) identified 2,805 studies which were screened and reduced to 23. Reviewing these articles, Bowes (2017) identifies that veteran mental health significantly correlates with emotion regulation strategies, with mental health symptoms decreasing with the increased use of acceptance, reappraisal, and problem-solving strategies, and increasing with the increased use of avoidance, rumination, and suppression. However, this review is limited in that it excludes documents not published in English, dissertations, conference abstracts and grey literature (Bowes, 2017). Furthermore, the literature included in this review was not representative of all veterans as it focused on American-based research undertaken in specialist veteran inpatient centres where veterans' mental health needs are more complex (Bowes, 2017). This was also reflected in the review undertaken by Bauer et al. (2017) focusing on the effectiveness of interventions to promote the psychological wellbeing of ex-military personnel. Searching more electronic data bases, Bauer et al. (2017) identified 9,132 articles which were screened and reduced to 12. This was achieved using a different inclusion criteria to Bowes (2017), however shared the same limitations in that it excluded documents not published in English and the final 12 papers were all based in America. Recognising both reviews' focus on American studies, this thesis reviews research undertaken across the globe, with specific consideration to the implications for veterans located in the UK and how this knowledge can be implemented to enhance support provided to them. From this review, Bauer et al. (2017) summarises that well-being focused interventions were

most effective with veterans who had demonstrated some mental health symptoms at baseline, as well as having a positive impact on other family members.

Literature on the psychology of the military to civilian transition also draws on the themes of self-harm and suicide. Mansfield et al. (2011) identifies that combat exposure is directly related to symptoms of PTSD and depression after deployment, and only effected thoughts of self-harm and suicide through these mediators. Lusk et al. (2015:844) draws on 'The Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide' to identify that suicide factors, such as lack of belonging, burdensomeness and numbing to pain, were particularly evident in veterans three months after leaving the military. However, these studies are cautious in that they are examining associations rather than causations, and it could also be suggested that they do not fully represent the veteran population. Both studies are based in America, and feature criteria that excluded female personnel as well as veterans who were medically evacuated or hospitalised. Therefore, it could be argued that these findings around suicide and self-harm are not representative or generalisable to diverse veteran groups and veterans in other countries due to differences in military structures, cultures, and support systems.

In the literature it has been suggested that mental health and psychology can be indicators of quality of life or life satisfaction. In a group of 150 veterans across Scotland, Bowes, Ferreira, and Henderson (2018) observed that as mental health difficulties increased so did challenges in readjusting to civilian life. Quality of life also reduced when these difficulties occurred. Conversely, Senecal et al. (2019) investigated correlations between life satisfaction, combat excitement and camaraderie. Using correlation and regression analysis, it was identified that, after active duty, high levels of combat excitement correlated with lower levels of life

satisfaction and lower civilian camaraderie for veterans in civilian life. Senecal et al. (2019) suggest this could be caused by veterans not feeling satisfied with their civilian career as it does not fill the emotional void and replicate the combat excitement they felt during active service. Therefore, to replicate these feelings, veterans are more inclined to undertake risky behaviours and sensation seeking, thus increasing their life satisfaction. Both studies are limited by the fact they cannot conclusively identify causation, accounting for the broader factors that may also be impacting on quality of life or life satisfaction, however the study undertaken by Senecal et al. (2019) is restricted further due to its definition and understanding of combat excitement. In this study, combat excitement was defined, as 'the soldier's desire to engage in combat and enemy contact, inclination to engage in high-risk behaviour, and positive anticipation of such events' (Senecal et al., 2019:13). Despite initially hypothesising using the term combat excitement, the results and discussion did not relate to this, instead focusing on sensation seeking with only one item relevant to combat excitement. Therefore, it is unclear whether combat excitement or sensation seeking is being measured and, which of these have the demonstrated correlations with life satisfaction. Highlighting these limitations, and deviating away from psychology briefly, Thompson et al. (2013) propose that overall physical health has a greater impact on quality of life compared to mental health. Focusing on Canadian veterans, physical health conditions were twice as prevalent as mental health conditions and continued to increase with age. Linking this to quality of life, Thompson et al. (2013) suggest that adapting to physical difficulties is important to the transition as quality of life will remain at a good level where mental health is relatively high or stable, even if physical health is poor. This is an interesting finding in the scope of this review as few other articles referred to the

physical effects of transitioning from the military, unless focusing directly on amputees or war-related injuries.

The literature presented thus far has focused on specific themes relevant to mental health and the psychology of the transition, however there is a body of literature that addresses these areas more broadly. Harvey et al. (2011) identifies that, after deployment, an increase in mental ill-health, reporting of probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse is associated with difficulties in social function. Likewise, Hourani et al. (2012) investigate the relationship between resilience and mental health during the military to civilian transition, identifying that resilience can maintain functionality even in the presence of mental health problems, with social support reinforcing this and stress eroding it. However, it could be argued that these pieces of research are limited in terms of representativeness and generalisability as they only focus on one aspect of the veteran population, namely reservists (Harvey et al., 2011) and Marines (Hourani et al., 2012). This limitation is addressed in this thesis, as it encompasses all branches of the British Armed Forces. Another potential limitation is the lack of recognition for how mental health and the associated factors could change over time after the transition. However, this could be recognised a strength of the research undertaken by Hourani et al. (2012), who carried out a follow-up survey nine months after baseline, to understand how mental health and the associated factors changed over that period. Similarly, to understand how veterans appraise their post-deployment experiences, Wright et al. (2015) examined military stress and psychological health in veterans ten years after Gulf War deployment, considering how these appraisals may have changed over time. Despite this, this research has the potential to be limited by not only the stability of the veterans recall but also the lack of consideration as to how this perspective may vary between

individuals, recognising that poor mental health is not fixed and can be characterised differently between members in this participant group. Wright et al. (2015) identifies that military stress was associated with poor mental health and impacted on how veterans evaluated their service. Particularly, a lack of recognition increased military stress, whereas personal development and an appreciation of life and country reduced this and encouraged positive appraisal (Wright et al., 2015).

To summarise these discussions, it could be suggested that resilience and social support are protective factors of psychological health, whereas stress can erode it. Meanwhile, personal development, (Hourani et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2015) social functioning (Harvey et al., 2011) and an appreciation of life and country (Senecal et al., 2019) are all wider factors that, when present, can facilitate a more positive transition experience. It is an assumption across some areas of literature that PTSD is the most prevalent mental health issue among veterans (Mansfield et al., 2011; Harvey et al., 2011), however, Iverson et al. (2005a) investigates the prevalence of mental disorders in depth and challenges this, suggesting that depression was in fact the most common diagnosis. This thesis contributes to this area of work by challenging the assumed high prevalence of PTSD among veterans, instead presenting the varied mental health challenges that can occur, and how these may shift, improve, or become more challenging as time passes across the transition period for a diverse veteran population. This addresses some of the weaknesses in this area of literature, namely the narrow focus on certain branches of the military and the lack of recognition as to how mental health, the associated factors, and the veterans' perspective on this can change over time across the transition.

2.3.2 Family and Employment

In the broad literature focus on the military to civilian transition, attention has also been brought to the themes of family and employment. In addition to influencing ex-service personnel, serving in and leaving the military can also impact upon family life and relationships. Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier (2014), draw on a body of literature from different countries and combat eras, identifying that marital conflict, divorce and parenting problems are all identified as challenges to reintegration, highlighting that serving in the military not only affects veterans but also spouses and children. Thomas (2018) describes the stress veterans' families experience during the transition as being charged with anxiety, uncertain of the unknown, and needing to adapt and adjust to a changing environment. Thus, it could be argued that reintegrating into family life is a key aspect to overall civilian readjustment, but this can be a challenge for the family as well as the veteran. In a systematic review of the literature examining the effectiveness of interventions promoting the well-being of ex-service personnel, Bauer et al. (2017) included interventions involving family members and support networks, identifying that in some instances these had a greater impact on the veterans' partner or spouse. It was a real strength of this research to include and consider the family members of veterans, where they have previously absent, excluded or considered separately in the veteran support literature. Consequently, Bauer et al. (2017) suggests that partners, spouses, or family members should be included in support provisions and interventions given the unique pressures they experience. Many of the support services available are mental health focused and it is important to recognise that families of veterans may also need access to this (Thomas, 2018). Furthermore, Sherman and Larsen (2018) recommend that the provisions available to veterans also need to be understanding

of the shift in culture and the challenges faced by the family. These recommendations and observations highlight a limitation of the literature in which veterans' families, spouses, and children are often not recognised as part of the transition process and therefore largely absent from the literature. In this review, only one article was identified which interviewed the veterans' families, understanding their transition experiences. In these interviews with parents, siblings, and spouses, behavioural, social, and emotional changes were identified, offering an alternative approach to understanding the military to civilian transition, inclusive of family members experiences (Graf et al., 2011). However, this study was undertaken with a small sample, and being the only study to take this approach, further research would be necessary to understand if this is representative of the broader veteran population and their families.

Linking to family life, gaining civilian employment was another important factor in the literature around the military to civilian transition. The focus of many military resettlement services is employment, with psychological support only offered where there is a clinical diagnosis (Higate, 2001). Some of the research identifies a veterans' military service as positively contributing towards gaining civilian employment. For example, Iverson et al. (2005b) suggest that for veterans involved in the Gulf War this helped with employment, due to employers being impressed with their military service. Similarly, Higate (2001) notes that ex-service personnel are largely successful in gaining employment when they move into civilian professions that have a degree of continuity with the Armed Forces, where their skills are transferable, for example uniformed civilian services such as the prison, police and defense or security industries. However, despite aspects of military service being beneficial in gaining civilian employment, there are also several barriers which

dominate this literature area. Poor psychological health is an indicator for leaving the Armed Forces early, and those that do often remain unemployed as a civilian and face stigmatization (Iverson et al., 2005b; Walker, 2010; Boulos and Zamorski, 2016; Keeling, Kintzle and Castro, 2018). Focusing on a female only sample, Greer (2017) suggests that ex-servicewomen suffer from higher rates of civilian unemployment and that female veterans are a unique population with unique needs that must be considered when supporting them. With the military being a male-dominated institution and most military research drawing on male participants, it was a strength of this research to focus on solely female veterans, and this is illustrated through the unique insights that are presented. It is also suggested that veterans are predisposed to life on the road, becoming addicted to travel and a fleeting fixedness to place that replicates aspects of military life, making it increasingly difficult to interact with civilian housing and employment (Higate, 2000). Unable to gain employment and therefore dealing with potential financial issues, it has been suggested that veterans are more at risk of becoming incarcerated after they leave the military (MacManus and Wessely, 2011). While exact figures are unknown, the MOD state that veterans account for 3.5% of the English and Welsh prison population (MOD, 2010). Therefore, it could be argued that reintegrating back into family life and gaining civilian employment can allow for a more positive transition experience and act as a preventative factor for homelessness, incarceration, and financial and emotional instability. This is in addition to recommendations that future research should be more aware of the experiences of veterans' family members during the transition, including them in support provisions.

2.3.3 Identity, Culture and Networks

It has been suggested that sociologists have generally shown little interest in war and peace, with military research dominated by psychological or scientific approaches, and most social science inquiries adopting a design which aims to make the Armed Forces more 'efficient and effective' (Higate and Cameron, 2006:221). Psychology, as a discipline, has been privileged as the most suited to solving the needs of the Armed Forces, and it if for this reason military sociology continues to be on the margins (Higate and Cameron, 2006). Despite this, there is evidence that military sociology is beginning to gain more attention, particularly around the themes of identity (Higate, 2001; Brunger, Serrato and Ogden, 2013; Grimell, 2017, 2015; Herman and Yarwood, 2014), culture (True, Rigg and Butler, 2015; Cooper et al., 2018) and networks (Albertson, Irving and Best, 2015; Edelmann, 2018). It is understood that, when joining the military, individuals become socialised into this environment through a process of militarisation, reducing civilian socialisation skills and adopting a masculine military identity (Higate, 2001). This includes emotional and embodied characteristics of military life such as being highly masculinised, displays of hostility, and a sense of purpose or belonging (Brunger, Serrato and Ogden, 2013). Using Identity Process Theory, Brunger, Serrato and Ogden (2013) track the impact and influence of identity across the full journey from soldier to civilian. This theory understands identity as a result of 'an interaction between both the capacities for memory… and societal and physical structures', within this there are four suggested principles – self-esteem, continuity, positive distinctness and self-efficacy- and changes in these influence changes in identity (Brunger, Serrato and Ogden, 2013:88). Mapping this onto the identity experiences of ex-service personnel, Brunger, Serrato and Ogden (2013) highlight an increase in

self-esteem during the formation of the military identity, a reduction in self-efficacy regarding help-seeking behaviours, a desire for continuity between military and civilian life, and an uptake in coping mechanisms such as alcohol and substance abuse to counteract identity threats that arose during the transition. These findings show how civilian identities can be in opposition to military identities and demonstrate how this can act as a barrier or challenge when transitioning back to civilian life. Likewise, drawing on Dialogical Self-Theory and specifically the concept of I-positions, Grimell (2017) examines the different I-positions of the dialogical self in relation to a veteran during the process of leaving the military. An I-position is 'a specific voice which creates a certain story of who I am' (Grimell, 2015:137), and the dialogical self consists of two types of I-position emphasising the dimensions of space, time, and relations between them (Grimell, 2017). The first type of I-position is linked to the internal domain of self which are located inside the person (e.g. I as ambitious), the second is linked to the external domain and located outside the person but still part of the self (e.g. my children) (Grimell, 2015, 2017). Applying this to the experiences of a veteran during the military to civilian transition, Grimell (2017) highlights that military and civilian I-positions are opposing narratives and it is not as simple as moving from one to the other, as different aspects of each identity are at play at different times. Therefore, in the transition from the military, these I-positions need to be reorganised and adapted to deal with civilian life. Despite military sociology being on the margins of this literature field, drawing on the sociological frameworks outlined provides insight into changes, challenges and impacts of identity across the military to civilian transition.

Specifically considering the military identity adopted by those joining the Armed Forces, it has been suggested in the literature that this can influence transition and

readjustment to civilian life, potentially making it easier or more challenging. Taking a holistic person-centred approach, Herman and Yarwood (2014) describe identity as a process influenced by space and place, with military identities formed in spaces where military practices occur and, when transitioning out of this environment, veterans exist in a liminal space. Some veterans felt a sense of loss leaving the military, with their military identity being left behind, whereas others, who enjoyed a smoother transition, experienced a sense of closure on their time in the military and were able to integrate into civilian identity without the influence of their service history (Herman and Yarwood, 2014). It is important to note that this data was dependent on the veterans' own, individual understanding of a successful transition, and therefore the threshold for a transition to be considered *successful* would be different for each. As highlighted in section 2.3, there are many factors involved in the transition with vary degrees of significance, and this will differ between veteran experiences. Therefore, the data in this study does not fully account for individual nuanced nature of transition in which there are multiple influencing factors at play. Binks and Cambridge (2018) also suggest that those who have a distinct separation from their military service and did not fully internalise the military identity were able to have a clean break and a more positive transition experience. However, those who formed closer friendships and kept in contact after their service faced a more difficult transition (Binks and Cambridge, 2018). Internalising the military masculine identity can also be a barrier to accessing support (True, Rigg and Butler, 2015; Shields, Kuhl and Westwood, 2017). Shields, Kuhl and Westwood (2017) examine transition difficulties and explain how they could be perceived as a masculine fall from grace, with the complexities surrounding the masculine military identity preventing veterans from accessing support. However, creating safe social bonds, a culturally

appropriate environment, and encouraging veterans to take control can encourage them into receiving help (Shields, Kuhl and Westwood, 2017). This study is based on a small sample, yet these findings mirror and reinforce that which has been already been discussed in the literature, including those taking alternative research approaches (Pease, Billera and Gerard, 2015; Derefinko et al., 2018).

Some literature focusing on identity, also makes connections to culture. Linking to the discussion above, military culture is an influencing factor in veterans accessing support or healthcare. True, Rigg and Butler (2015) outline how the military cultural norms of stoicism, self-reliance, and prioritising others over the needs of their own can shape veterans' views towards seeking support or treatment, creating barriers. While this study took a novel approach, the use of photovoice was a strength as it explored the hidden and allowed for a deeper understanding of the barriers to accessing care, which would have been difficult to capture through a structured questionnaire. Drawing on sociological theory, adopting Bourdieu's theoretical concepts, Cooper et al. (2018) look at culture and identity together, exploring the relationship between them. Cooper et al. (2018) explain that individuals adapt their identities to suit the field they are in, and in these different fields, different types of capital are valued. Through a process of militarisation, individuals adapt their identity to suit the military environment, however when transitioning back to civilian life the identity and capital that has been built up is then not valued in the civilian field (Cooper et al., 2018). Thus, they have a greater degree of cultural competence in military contexts compared to civilian. It has already been highlighted that sociological theory has not been widely applied to military research, therefore this study makes a valuable contribution and offers an alternative understanding on the military to civilian transition.

Building on identity and culture further, the literature also features military networks which can impact on and support the transition into civilian life. Edelmann (2018) uses Culturally Meaningful Networks to focus on interactions and highlight the cultural gap that exists between military and civilian life. Investigating the networks surrounding veterans leaving the military, it was identified that 'the higher the proportion of alters (e.g., "contacts") with a military background in the network of leavers before discharge, the *worse* they fair after discharge' (Edelmann, 2018:327). This study and its findings are of interest as it begins to appreciate how cultural understandings and relationship networks work together in these moments of transition, and examining how veterans make sense of their relationships and interactions with consideration to both social meaning and cultural structures, was a strength of this research. Also adopting a theoretical approach to focus on networks, Albertson, Irving and Best (2015) draw on recovery capital and therapeutic landscapes of recovery to understand the effects of networks and social support on those who faced difficulties after transitioning out of the military. They highlight the importance of social networks for social learning and encouraging correct behaviours, suggesting that individuals that require support do not always look for the recovery community that can offer this (Albertson, Irving and Best, 2015). Albertson, Irving and Best (2015) recommend that, to support veterans who may be involved with alcohol, drugs, or crime as the result of a difficult transition, the model of recovery needs to be intrinsically social and embedded into a network that enables social support and identity change. While this is a theoretical piece of research and another study is needed to provide empirical evidence, this is an example of how the theoretical concept of networks, and specifically therapeutic landscapes, can support veterans who have faced a difficult transition into civilian life

and are involved with crime, drugs, and alcohol. Yet, linking this back to the opening comments made in this section of the literature review, it is the minority who are in positions such as these having faced a difficult transition from the military, with issues such as PTSD less prevalent in the veteran community than is assumed (Iverson et al., 2005b: Mobbs and Bonanno, 2018). Instead, it could be argued that the significant literature focus on these issues magnify and portray them to be more common than they possibly are. This should be considered in the Vet Fit programme, and their objectives focusing on mental health, isolation, and addiction, to ensure that PTSD and those experiencing a difficult transition do not become an overwhelming focus, excluding veterans who may experience a positive transition, and supporting just a fraction of the overall veteran population. Moreover, this thesis makes rich contributions to military sociology literature, examining the veterans' negotiation and presentation of identity across the military to civilian transition and how broader factors, such as mental health and masculinity, impact upon this. This will be discussed at depth throughout chapter 4, considering identity, multiple role identities, performance teams, and how these are managed and presented across the military to civilian transition.

2.4 Veteran Support

This section will examine the academic literature focusing on support provisions targeted towards military veterans. This includes examining features presented in the literature that promotes effective support or acts as barriers, as well as recommendations as to how key learnings can be implemented to improve the quality of support provided. In section 2.4.1 the different delivery approaches used to provide support are discussed, namely drama, art, and peer groups, as well as

section 2.4.2 dedicated to sport and physical activity-based support provisions. The support available to veterans during the process of leaving the military is another theme apparent in the literature, particularly barriers to accessing support (True, Rigg and Butler, 2015; Derefinko et al., 2018), what good support is (Albertson, Irving and Best, 2015; Shields, Kuhl and Westwood, 2017) and how it can be improved (Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier, 2014; Pease, Billera and Gerard, 2015; True, Rigg and Butler, 2015). Much of this literature focuses on an American context with MacManus and Wessely (2013) explaining that the incentive for veteran care arrived here much earlier compared to the UK. In the UK, once a veteran leaves the military, responsibility of care falls to the National Health Service (NHS), a mainstream service that is ill-equipped to identify and respond to specific veteran needs (MacManus and Wessely, 2013). MacManus and Wessely (2013:302) explain that veterans can 'fall between the cracks of existing services' as the issues they face may be too complex for the NHS but considered not to cross the threshold necessary to access specialist services. There has been a rise in third-party veteran specific care providers looking to fill this void, with a report from the Directory of Social Change (2020) suggesting that there are 1,843 operating in the UK as of April 2019 and identifying specific increases in the number of welfare charities, service funds and associations between 2012 and 2019. Yet, these many charities have also caused confusion in the sector due to the variety of different approaches, interventions, and governance procedures. Despite this, it has been identified that a shared understanding and combat experience are defining factors for the choice and direction of help, meaning that veterans are more inclined to confide in colleagues rather than professionals (Verey and Smith, 2012). Veteran specific care providers look to address this by ensuring professionals are understanding of military

pressures and the difficulties faced by veterans during their service and transition, often employing ex-service personnel to facilitate this. Measuring the psychosocial factors influencing adjustment to civilian life for 154 veterans in Scotland, Bowes, Ferreira, and Henderson (2018) recommend that professionals working with veterans need to better understand the issues they face when transitioning from the military, improving their relationships with veterans improves veteran engagement and results in positive impacts and cost-effective services. These recommendations suggest that, to improve the support provided to veterans and the likelihood of veterans accessing it, the professionals involved need to be more understanding of their experiences and needs (Verey and Smith, 2012; Bowes, Ferreira, and Henderson, 2018). However, with veteran care being a focus that has arrived in the UK later than other countries, this is certainly an area where further developments can take place (MacManus and Wessely, 2013).

The UK system of care is different compared to America and therefore it could be argued that literature focusing on one would not be generalisable to the other. However, research focusing on the support of American military veterans is much broader compared to that which has been undertaken in the UK. Literature focusing on an American context spans several different themes around support, including potential barriers, features of effective support and recommendations to improve support provisions. The logistics of accessing support can act as a barrier for some veterans, including getting an appointment, travelling unreasonable distances and unaffordable care (Derefinko et al., 2018). Similarly, True, Rigg and Butler (2015), suggest that veterans' own mental health symptoms and self-management strategies can also be a barrier to initiating and following through with support. It was a strength of this research that these barriers were identified and illustrated through

photos taken by the veterans as part of the photovoice methods, a data collection approach that enabled veterans to present their own views and experiences, and detail the stories behind the photos they took. True, Rugg and Butler (2014) continue to outline that, for ex-service personnel who do then access support or care provisions, the intake and screening questions were often insensitive towards the military posing another potential obstacle. This demonstrates that some actions or questions which may be routine can in fact result in veterans being reluctant to engage. Therefore, the wording used in any necessary documentation, the setting and location of support, and the processes around how support is accessed, should all be considered in order to minimise the barriers identified in the literature.

Some literature evaluates veteran support provisions, identifying barriers as well as makes them successful. After outlining alienation as a barrier to veterans' reintegration into civilian life, Ahern et al. (2015) highlights the importance of peer-to-peer support and the use of veteran ambassadors. Overall, support appears to be most effective when veterans are helping each other and helping civilians understand them, and this conclusion is drawn by papers focusing on different veteran populations (Albertson, Irving and Best, 2015; Derefinko et al., 2018). Shields, Kuhl and Westwood (2017) take a qualitative approach to examine narratives around veterans engagement with support, highlighting that successful support programmes enabled a safe cultural and social space where veterans appreciated each other as masterful rather than weak, reframed support within military language, and ultimately put responsibility onto the veterans to move themselves towards productive, healthier lives. In summary, these observations suggest that creating a safe space, where veterans are among their peers and able to appreciate each other, but also placing the responsibility onto them to engage with

and act upon the support they are receiving, are critical factors to support provisions having an impact and being successful. This thesis makes contributions to this literature due to the nature of the Vet Fit Programme, where veterans are undertaking sports and activities among peers, who hold a shared understanding and provide support for each other.

After identifying barriers and aspects of successful support, the American literature also suggests recommendations to develop existing learnings. Pease, Billera and Gerard (2015) call for a recovery orientated, health promotion approach to be adopted, which can be less stigmatizing for veterans, and reconsiders the existing prevention only focus. Similarly, Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier (2014), recommend a more comprehensive approach, calling for partnerships between Government, private sector organisations, and the public. This has been repeated in wider literature with the suggestion that a more integrated approach is required, placing a focus on health promotion and recovery with the veteran at the centre of it (Thompson et al., 2013; Pease, Billera and Gerard, 2015; True, Rigg and Butler, 2015).

In the literature focusing on veteran support, there is a large scope of research that has taken place in America and much of this converges on peer support (Ahern et al., 2015; Albertson, Irving and Best, 2015), considering the setting of support provisions (Derefinko et al., 2018), and taking a more health focused comprehensive approach (Sayer, Carlson and Frazier, 2014; Pease, Billera and Gerard, 2015). Greater attention is needed, on research focusing on veteran care and support in the UK, to be able to have this comprehensive understanding of barriers, aspects of good support and development recommendations. This could be identified as a broad weakness or gap in the British literature and, to further existing knowledge, a

greater understanding of veteran care and support in the UK is necessary. As the Vet Fit programme is a support provision based in the UK, this thesis contributes towards this identified and existing weakness in the literature.

2.4.1 Approaches to Delivery

Now concentrating on the delivery of veteran support, multiple approaches have been taken focusing on different aspects of the veteran population, including a focus on disability or physical injury (Sporner et al., 2009; Brittain and Green, 2012), PTSD (Collie et al., 2006; Balfour, Westwood and Buchanan, 2014; Ley, Barrio and Koch, 2018; Peacock, Carless and McKenna, 2018), addiction (Albertson et al., 2017), and community integration (Wainwright et al., 2017; Drebing et al., 2018). This section, and subsection 2.4.2, will discuss the diverse approaches that have been employed to engage and support military veterans, including art (Collie et al., 2006; Lobban, 2014; Delucia, 2016, Palmer et al., 2017), drama (Balfour, Westwood and Buchanan, 2014), peer support groups (Albertson et al., 2017; Wainwright et al., 2017; Drebing et al., 2018) and sport or physical activity (Otter and Currie, 2004; Sporner et al., 2009; Brittain and Green, 2012; Roger Mallinson and Peppers, 2014; Caddick and Smith, 2014; Carless et al., 2014; Shirazipour et al., 2017; Reinhardt et al., 2018; Ley, Barrio and Koch, 2018; Peacock, Carless and McKenna, 2018). In the academic literature, there are variations across how these support provisions have been examined, investigated, and evaluated. This has been largely dominated by quantitative perspectives, however there are now a growing number of qualitative studies, in response to the calls for more qualitative research in this area (Peacock, Carless and McKenna, 2018).

Art based therapy is one support approach that has been discussed in the literature, most of which is based in America. Provisions that use art as the vehicle for support have done so to address a spectrum of needs and issues, including PTSD (Collie et al., 2006), bonding and camaraderie (Lobban, 2014; Palmer et al., 2017), and integration into civilian communities (Delucia, 2016). It was agreed across these studies that using an art-based approach developed a sense of camaraderie and bonding, which allowed veterans to share and express their stories, especially those that were difficult to voice (Collie et al., 2006; Lobban, 2014; Delucia, 2016; Palmer et al., 2017). This was evident across provisions that were delivered on a long term, weekly or one-off basis suggesting that programme duration had little effect on the positive impacts of engaging in art, in which veterans bond with likeminded individuals and share their experiences via an alternative medium. It has also been proposed that this has therapeutic qualities in which sharing stories through art normalises stress and mental health challenges faced by veterans (Collie et al., 2006; Palmer et al., 2017). Collie et al. (2006) particularly focuses on art therapy as a treatment for PTSD and, while mirroring findings reported in other studies focusing on art-based support, they also suggest that producing art allows veterans to master their feelings, improve their emotional self-efficacy and encourage positive emotions, contributing towards treating PTSD, minimising immediate symptoms, and overcoming avoidance. Similarly, Delucia (2016) highlights a unique quality of art therapy in which veterans can integrate and engage with the local community, sharing their art in a gallery to raise the publics' awareness of veterans and open a dialogue between the two. This consideration of art, and more specifically a veteran art gallery, as a space in which civilians can engage with veterans' experiences, begin to understand their needs, and start a dialogue between the communities is a

unique approach and a strength of this piece of literature, extending and enhancing the use of art as a support mechanism for military veterans and other individuals experiencing PTSD. Overall, in the academic literature, art therapy is reported to have largely positive impacts on supporting veterans in civilian life, with specific attention on PTSD and community integration.

Drawing on similar principles of an art-based approach, Balfour, Westwood, and Buchanan (2014) use drama to support ex-service personnel with PTSD. This was a ten-day programme involving veterans writing about major turning points in their military and civilian lives, then enacting them to the group. Replicating findings of the art-based programmes, using the performance process enabled veterans to confront their experiences, without speaking about them directly, developing a new relationship with the events that had previously caused them discomfort (Balfour, Westwood, and Buchanan, 2014). This programme did not treat PTSD but enabled veterans to manage the condition, seeking to 'integrate posttraumatic stress issues with posttraumatic growth' (Balfour, Westwood, and Buchanan, 2014:176). Equally, it was identified that the most enduring support to develop from this programme was not related to drama, but the veterans keeping in contact once the programme had ended and offering ongoing peer support (Balfour, Westwood, and Buchanan, 2014). Having already been highlighted in this review, peer support is a key theme in the literature focusing on the military to civilian transition.

Peer support groups are another tool that has been used to assist veterans in the military to civilian transition. Drebing et al. (2018) recommends that these groups are specifically beneficial for veterans who need to expand their social networks, who need support transitioning into their local community, who need information or advice about an illness, treatment or recovery process or veterans who want to

provide prosocial behaviors and support others. Typically, peer support groups tend to centre around themes such as substance use, addiction, mental illness, disability, and other life changes, yet Drebing et al. (2018) focuses on American peer support groups for veterans which are simply coffee socials aiming to create an environment that allows veterans to access both informal and formal support, assisting their integration into the local community. Similarly, in their evaluation of a UK peer support project focused on crime and addiction, Albertson et al. (2017) explains that peer support ultimately improved function and wellbeing, and aided reintegration into civilian society, with veterans more likely to access services that were military or veteran specific. For veterans who have been incarcerated, prison does not provide a supportive environment for disclosing their troubles. However, peer support in the form of regular group meetings encouraged veteran inmates to access further support and fostered a sense of camaraderie (Wainwright et al., 2017). This was reinforced by prison staff raising their awareness of the military and building trust with ex-service inmates at their establishment. From this research, Wainwright et al. (2017) concludes that peer mentoring was the most effective method to provide resettlement support that is currently lacking for veterans in prison. These studies agree in the recommendation that community-based peer support is a widely available, inexpensive, and effective means for veterans to gain social support and reengage with the local civilian community, yet this has not been recognised by clinicians with the potential for it to be used more extensively (Albertson et al., 2017; Wainwright et al., 2017; Drebing et al., 2018). With the core of this thesis dedicated to a sport and physical activity-based provision, the next section will continue to focus on veteran support, specifically considering the existing literature that uses sport and physical activity as a vehicle for this.

2.4.2 Supporting Veterans Through Sport and Physical Activity

The benefits of engaging in regular sport and physical activity have been widely documented in the academic literature, highlighting social benefits (Mills, Dudley and Collins, 2019), improvements to mental wellbeing (Conti and Ramos, 2018), as well as the obvious physical advantages (Warburton, Nicol and Bredin, 2006; Vogel et al., 2009; Lewis and Hennekens, 2016) and these impacts have been demonstrated across a variety of populations, ranging from young children (Eime et al., 2013) to older adults (Vogel et al., 2009). As such, there is a consensus that sport, physical activity, and exercise can promote various benefits across numerous populations. Recognising these benefits, it has been suggested that sport and physical activity can be used as a vehicle for change or support (Spaaij, 2009) and, in the academic literature, since 1996 there have been 15 studies published relating to the use of sport and physical activity to support military veterans (Table 7).

Table 7 - Summary of Studies Using Sport and Physical Activity to Support Military Veterans (Developed from Caddick and Smith, 2014).

Study	Participants	Methods	Sport or Activity	Main Findings
Hyer et al. (1996)	219 veterans diagnosed with PTSD.	Questionnaires addressing PTSD, Depression, locus of control, and anxiety. Qualitative self-report data.	5 day 'Outward Bound Experience' (outdoor adventure pursuits).	No distinct impact on PTSD symptoms. Self-report data highlighted benefits as improved self-esteem, enjoyment of the outdoors, overcoming negative emotions, being more in control, and enhanced relationships.
Cordova et al. (1998)	44 male disabled veterans.	Questionnaires addressing self-concept and leisure satisfaction administered prior, during and after a sports clinic.	National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic.	Total leisure satisfaction and self-satisfaction scores improved across three data collection points.
Otter and Currie (2004)	14 male veterans diagnosed with PTSD.	A series of focus groups conducted at weeks 10, 25 and 40 of the programme.	40-week community exercise rehabilitation programme.	Participants reported positive impact on work and lifestyle habits, motivation, daily habits and energy levels, social support, and reduced anger.
Sporner et al. (2009)	132 disabled veterans.	Questionnaires addressing self-esteem, quality of life, and community participation.	National Veterans Wheelchair Games and Winter Sports Clinic.	Participants rated overall improvements in self-esteem and quality of life, interaction with other disabled veterans, acceptance of disability, and mobility skills as important outcomes of participation.
Mowatt and Bennett (2011)	67 veterans diagnosed with PTSD.	Narrative analysis of letters written by veterans to programme leaders.	2-day therapeutic fly-fishing programme.	Fishing provide a context and location to experience camaraderie, enjoyment and relaxation, an opportunity for reflection and positive experience of the outdoors.
Lundberg et al. (2011)	18 male veterans with acquired disability and/or PTSD diagnosis.	Questionnaires addressing mood, quality of life and perceived competence.	5-day adaptive sports and recreation programme.	No impact on quality of life. Less mood disturbance and increased vigor post-programme. Increase in perceived competence post-programme.
Hawkins et al. (2011)	9 male and 4 female injured combat veterans.	Interviews.	3-day military sports camp.	Participation provided a source of motivation, sense of competence, autonomy, relatedness, connection with previous interests, general perceived health and fitness benefits, and normalisation of disability.
Dustin et al. (2011)	10 male and 3 female veterans diagnosed with PTSD.	Journal writing and observational methods.	4 day 'river running' trip.	Reduced PTSD symptoms, enhanced perceived coping skills, confidence and self-efficacy and 'Ecotherapeutic' impact of nature
Brittain and Green (2012)	Injured or disabled veterans reported on in the media.	Synthesis of media coverage from a life course theory perspective.	Elite sport – Paralympics.	Participation in elite sport provides a source of inspiration and achievement, fosters self-actualisation and direction in life, and facilitates re-integration and acceptance of disability.
Burke and Utley (2013)	4 injured male veterans.	Multiple semi-structured interviews and observations.	9 day climbing challenge on Mt. Kilimanjaro.	Participants approached the challenge with a sense of self-determination and experienced it as a form of active coping. Strong sense of social support evident between veterans.
Carless et al. (2014)	11 male veterans with either physical disability, chronic illness, or mental health problems.	Multiple narrative life story interviews and participant observation methods.	5-day inclusive adapted sports and adventurous training course.	Participants experienced a 'rekindling' of things that were previously important to them including doing things again, reconnection to others and sense of purpose. Also experienced a sense of 'broadened horizons' in terms of new activities, being valued, respected and cared for, and being inspired by others.
Rogers, Mallinson and Peppers (2014)	14 veterans who were diagnosed with PTSD and/or major depressive disorder	Self-report questionnaires addressing military history, diagnosis and treatment history, and measures of motivation, PTSD symptoms, depression symptoms, and daily time use.	5-week ocean therapy (surfing) programme.	Participants reported a meaningful improvement in PTSD symptom severity and in depressive symptoms.
Ley, Barrio and Koch (2018)	1 veteran who was a war and torture survivor diagnosed with PTSD and depression.	Participant observations and semi-structured interviews.	3-month sport and exercise therapy programme Movi Kune.	Participants experienced improvements in body awareness, coping behaviour, and affect regulation. Also experienced improved performance, presence, enjoyment, and mastery experiences, pointing toward distraction and motivational-restorative effects.
Reinhardt et al. (2018)	51 veterans diagnosed with PTSD.	Questionnaires addressing PTSD and distress caused by traumatic events.	10-week yoga intervention.	Participants experienced significant decreases in reexperiencing symptoms and PTSD symptoms.
Peacock, Carless and McKenna (2018)	25 veterans	In-depth semi-structured interviews and focus groups.	5-day inclusive residential adapted sport and adventurous training programme.	The participant valued the adventure training programme within their recovery journey addressing both social and psychological factors.

Caddick and Smith (2014) undertook a systematic literature review of eleven studies examining the impact of sport and physical activity on the wellbeing of veterans after combat-related trauma. The literature in this review spanned from 1996 to 2013 and included a balance of qualitative and quantitative approaches using a variety of different sports and activities as a vehicle for support. Caddick and Smith (2014) conclude that participating in sport and physical activity had a positive influence on many aspects of the veteran's lives, such as providing enjoyable and pleasurable activities and helping shape the veteran's personal growth and development. Several additional observations were made, the first being the importance of the type of sport or physical activity, where there were crucial differences in this depending on the group of veterans being targeted (Caddick and Smith, 2014). Access and exclusivity was also significant, with veterans being given the opportunity to engage in costly or specialist activities they would not ordinarily have access to (Caddick and Smith, 2014). Another observation made by Caddick and Smith (2014) was the uncritical promotion of sport and physical activity in most of the studies included in the review. This point will be raised again in section 2.5 discussing the mythopoeic status of sport in SfD. Caddick and Smith (2014) state that it is necessary to guard against the view that sport and physical activity is a panacea for improving veterans lives overall, suggesting a more balanced model of rehabilitation is necessary to incorporate features such as employment, finance, and future planning. The final observation was the emerging interest in nature-based physical activity and, with further research, the potential role this could have in supporting veterans' well-being (Caddick and Smith, 2014).

Table 7 outlines studies published since 1996 that use sport and/or physical activity as a tool to support military veterans. Across these studies it is evident that the

programmes have a clear aim or specific *issue* to address, namely PTSD, physical injury, or disability. This establishes this thesis as unique, making a novel contribution to knowledge, as the Vet Fit programme adopts a broader focus, considering PTSD, injury and disability, alongside other complex transition challenges. In the literature, provisions focusing on PTSD adopted a variety of different approaches. Ley, Barrio and Koch (2018) use a sport and exercise therapy programme, inclusive of modified sports, dance, games, relaxation techniques and basic movement skills, as a therapeutic process to support war veterans experiencing PTSD. They found this contributed towards an improved sense of wellbeing and respite from PTSD symptoms (Ley, Barrio and Koch, 2018). Likewise, Reinhardt et al. (2018) implemented a ten-week yoga programme to support veterans diagnosed with PTSD, concluding that yoga has the potential to minimise symptoms and should be used as an adjunctive intervention. This study was undertaken with a small sample due to a high level of drop out, especially among the veterans in the yoga treatment group compared to the control group, however this recommendation has been echoed elsewhere in the literature (Ley, Barrio and Koch, 2018). Focusing on a 5-week ocean therapy programme, and specifically surfing, Rogers, Mallinson and Peppers (2014) recommend the use of this activity as an effective adjunctive therapy, with participating veterans reporting an improvement in the severity of PTSD symptoms. Also using outdoor activities, such as rock climbing, caving, kayaking and adapted sports, Peacock, Carless and McKenna (2018) adopt a qualitative storytelling approach to understand the role of an adventure training programme in the PTSD recovery process of ex-military personnel. The veterans' stories highlighted the value of the adventure training programme in their recovery journey, especially in relation to social and

psychological factors. Otter and Currie (2004) also suggest that veterans diagnosed with PTSD experienced psychological, social, and physical benefits but instead focus on a community-based exercise class. Overall, the findings presented from this area of literature are positive, suggesting that sport and physical activity has the potential to remedy challenges faced by veterans, especially in relation to PTSD. Yet, linking this to Caddick and Smith's (2014) observations, the literature is uncritical in this promotion of sport and physical activity and does not consider other, wider factors that may also influence these positive outcomes.

Caddick and Smith (2014) observe that there are crucial differences in the type of sport or physical activity used in support programmes depending on the groups of veterans being targeted. Much of the literature in this review concurred with this. Programmes focusing on veterans diagnosed with PTSD employed physical activities such as yoga (Reinhardt et al., 2018), surfing (Rogers, Mallinson and Peppers, 2014), adventure activities (Peacock, Carless and McKenna, 2018) or exercise classes (Otter and Currie, 2004; Ley, Barrio and Koch, 2018). In contrast, programmes focusing on veterans with a disability or physical injury used competitive and/or adapted sports. Brittain and Green (2012) investigate how Paralympic sports are an effective method of rehabilitating physically injured soldiers, with some fast tracked into Paralympic programmes. They suggest that engaging in competitive sports helped veterans to negotiate their life change, which included physical injury or disability because of war related trauma (Brittain and Green, 2012). Similarly, Sporner et al. (2009) investigate competitive sports, in the context of a national multi-sport event, and the impact they had on the lives of veterans with disabilities. Both articles agree that engaging competitive sport encouraged veterans to accept their disability or injury and think more positively

towards it, contributing both psychological and social benefits (Sporner et al., 2009; Brittain and Green, 2012). Yet, despite suggesting that physical activities are more suited to programmes focusing on veterans with PTSD, adventure training, alongside adapted sports, has also been employed in programmes for veterans experiencing physical disability or injury as a result of active military service. Using a qualitative storytelling approach, Carless et al. (2014) focus on the veterans' stories and what personal meaning or value they attach to the adventurous training and adapted sport programme. Findings from this support what has already been discussed on the positive impacts gained from engaging in the programme, however the stories also highlight the significance of veteran's personal experiences, how the programme shapes their wellbeing, and the complex interplay between physical, psychological, and social factors (Carless et al., 2014). The research demonstrates the differences between programmes and the use of different sports and activities depending on the target audience, with the given examples of PTSD and physical injury or disability. This also highlights the positive and powerful image that is portrayed, proposing sport and physical activity as the remedy to *issues* or difficulties faced by veterans after their service.

Across all the programmes discussed there was variation in programme length. Some were delivered on a short-term basis for a maximum of 5 days (Carless et al., 2014; Peacock, Carless and McKenna, 2018) and others were delivered over longer periods ranging from 5 to 10 weeks (Rogers, Mallinson and Peppers, 2014; Reinhardt et al., 2018) or up to 3 months (Ley, Barrio and Koch, 2018). The longest programme was delivered for 40 weeks (Otter and Currie, 2004), however this is still very different to the Vet Fit programme at the focus of this thesis, which spanned 3 years with additional periods before and after to focus on set up and legacy. Despite

these variations in programme length, all articles reported positive but diverse results (Table 7), suggesting that sport and physical activity can act as a vehicle of support for military veterans. However, in this review, there were no studies that featured a follow up in the research design to understand if the highlighted benefits of the programme were sustained or dependent on programme length. Furthermore, the studies that have been discussed all took place over a set timescale with a set goal, none were open ended or catered for a variety of needs. Future research should consider follow up studies or longitudinal research to understand if the benefits of engaging in the programmes are sustained and how these impacts can be maximised. This thesis centres on a sport and physical activity-based support programme delivered over three years and does not focus upon addressing a specific *issue,* such as PTSD or disability, thus contributing new knowledge to this area as an intervention of this kind has not been investigated previously.

As with the literature focusing on veteran support provisions more broadly, research on sport and physical activity- based support also identifies factors that maximise the success and impacts of this approach, as well as the barriers. Shirazipour et al. (2017) investigates what constitutes a good quality experience in physical activity for veterans with a disability, suggesting that it depends on the quality of what is being delivered. This includes good group cohesion, veterans having a role in the group, being challenged, and having a degree of independence and choice (Shirazipour et al., 2017). The conditions around access were also important, feeling comfortable in the physical environment, having the support of family and friends, public perception, the programme having a good structure, and encouraging coaches or instructors (Shirazipour et al., 2017). Despite focusing on veterans with a disability, none of these suggested features necessary for a good activity experience are specific to

this, therefore it could be argued that these are generalisable to other programmes targeting different or wider veteran population groups. Reinforcing a reoccurring theme across this review, Shirazipour et al. (2017) highlight the importance of family and friend support, in addition to camaraderie within the group. Veterans felt united by a shared background, shared understanding of experience and shared work ethic, fostering a camaraderie in which peers supported each other when faced with challenges (Shirazipour et al., 2017). This highlights the significance of peer support in these provisions, including those that use sport and physical activity as well as the broader contexts discussed previously (Shirazipour et al., 2017; Albertson et al., 2017; Wainwright et al., 2017; Drebing et al., 2018).

While peer support can maximise the impact of a programme there are also factors that can limit this or act as a barrier. In the literature, veterans' attendance to programmes and dropout rates were a significant limiting factor. In the yoga-based intervention delivered by Reinhardt et al. (2018) 51% of veterans dropped out, meaning that just over half did not complete the full programme. This figure is at the higher end of the drop out range for studies published in this area with Reinhardt et al. (2018) suggesting this could be due to the time commitment needed from the veterans and the group setting in which it was delivered. In contrast, Rogers, Mallinson and Peppers (2014) reported 73% attendance for their PTSD focused surfing intervention and note this as a positive considering the veterans had to make their own arrangements to attend, with some travelling over 20 miles to do so. However, this was delivered on a shorter 5-week timescale compared to the yoga, which was delivered over 10 weeks, potentially confirming the suggestion posed by Reinhardt et al. (2018) that time commitment was a reason for the significant drop out rate. In their study investigating the relationship between military life and

engagement in leisure and physical activity, Taff et al. (2016) highlight time as a barrier as well as further limiting factors. These include fatigue, family obligations, financial limitations, physical injury, and the inflexibility of military life. These factors are specific to military personnel, yet they are important to consider as they could extend into civilian life and negotiating them could improve engagement and develop more appropriate support provisions tailored specifically to a veteran audience.

In summary, reviewing the literature available on provisions that use sport and physical activity as a tool to support veteran and military communities, it is evident that there are gaps in this area for knowledge to be developed. Many of the provisions featured in the literature were focused on short- and medium-term delivery with attention on addressing a specific *issue*, namely PTSD, or a physical injury or disability. Some consideration was also made to programme impacts, barriers, and what constitutes a quality experience, but no connections were made to consider implications for delivery. Peer support was once again outlined as being significant, yet there were only a small number of examples that put this into practice, embedding peer support in the sport or physical activity programme. Overall, this thesis makes a key contribution to this literature through the long-term delivery of sport and physical activity-based support programme focused on the military to civilian transition, with a broader focus that goes beyond addressing a single *issue* and blends peer support into these activities as an important mechanism of the overall support process.

2.5 Sport for Development

This section will now take a sidestep into an area of literature that recognises sport and physical activity as tools for development and vehicles for support and social change (Spaaij, 2009; Coalter, 2010a, 2012). It has been suggested by some that SfD is a new and emerging field (Darnell, 2007; Kidd, 2008; Kay, 2009; Guilianotti, 2011). Yet, this is *new* movement has experienced rapid growth in the last decade, rooted in longstanding assertions about the nature and contributions of sport and physical activity (Coalter, 2013; Schulenkorf, Sherry and Phillips, 2016). Sport and physical activity can capture large audiences and use the momentum that surrounds them as a vehicle to implement and achieve wider developmental goals (Schulenkorf, Sherry and Rowe, 2016). An increasing number of organisations at local, national, and international levels are capturing this potential and delivering sports-based projects focused on contributing positive development in areas that are, in some aspect, considered underprivileged including conflict resolution, gender empowerment, and crime reduction (Hartmann and Depro, 2006; Sugden, 2010; Coalter, 2010b; Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011; Jeanes, 2013). This mythopoeic status of sport and its potential power to build character and make social change has been acknowledged by academics, yet it has also been contested, with the claims that sport can address personal and social issues described as being ill-defined and vague (Coalter, 2010a, 2012).

SfD lacks clarity, is open to interpretation, and in the literature several definitions have been proposed. Coalter (2010a) discusses these definitions acknowledging that SfD is a continuum and classifies SfD programmes based on the objectives they set out to achieve. Across this continuum there are 'traditional forms of provision for sport, with an implicit assumption…sport has inherent developmental properties for

participants', also '*sport plus*, in which sports are adapted…to maximize their potential to achieve developmental objectives' and finally '*plus sport*, in which sport's popularity is used as a type of 'fly paper' to attract young people to programmes of education and training…' (Coalter, 2010a:298). Programmes will sit at different points across this continuum, not always falling clearly into one of the classifications, but this demonstrates how sport is being used as the engine for development initiatives (Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011). This is useful for this thesis as it helps to identify the types of programme used to support military and veteran communities. Referring to the provisions outlined in Table 7, most, including the earliest programmes published in this area (Hyer et al., 1996; Cordova et al., 1998; Otter and Currie, 2004; Sporner et al., 2009; Mowatt and Bennett, 2011; Hawkins et al., 2011; Dustin et al., 2011; Brittain and Green, 2012; Burke and Utley, 2013; Reinhardt et al., 2018), adopt an approach that draws on traditional sport and the assumption that it has inherent developmental properties. However, a small number of provisions, mostly those published more recently (Lundberg et al., 2011; Carless et al., 2014; Rogers, Mallinson and Peppers,2014; Ley, Barrio and Koch, 2018; Peacock, Carless and McKenna, 2018), could be classified as *sport plus*, as adaptations are made to the sports and activities relevant to the programmes objectives to maximise the potential of them being achieved.

SfD has been widely used as a tool to address a spectrum of social and developmental matters, and while there is no single model that suits all, different approaches have been developed and applied to achieve various outcomes. Burnett (2009) outlines three distinct approaches to creating SfD programmes; *top down government planning* where programmes are predesigned and implemented in different contexts, *inside out* in which the programme is community driven

addressing local needs, and *outside in* where strategic partnerships are formed to deliver on a pre-conceived agenda (Burnett, 2009). SfD projects will be devised and delivered using one of these three approaches, however they can each be applied to achieve a range of different outcomes, such as social change, raising awareness or making an improvement. Likewise, Levermore (2008) suggests that SfD provisions fit within one of the following categories based upon their outcomes or aims; conflict resolution, building physical, social, sport and community infrastructure, raising awareness (particularly through education), empowerment, direct impact on physical and psychological health, and economic development.

Understanding the Vet Fit programme, at the heart of the research, as a SfD provision, it can then be situated within the different structures outlined in the literature. Within Coalter's (2010a) classification continuum, the intentions and plans for this programme fit as both *sport plus* and *plus sport*, using sport and physical activity as a fly paper as well as adapting the activities to maximise the developmental objectives. However, in reality, it could be argued that the programme is more aligned to traditional forms of sport provision maintaining the assumption that sport has inherent developmental properties, an argument that will be considered in discussion chapters 4 and 5. The AP, who are the driving force behind the programme, made partnerships with key stakeholders across the sport and third-party sector as well as numerous veteran support organisations. These partnerships were important to delivery and working towards achieving the overall programme aims and objectives, which fit into the following categories outlined by Levermore (2008); to build a community and social infrastructure, to raise awareness, to positively impact on physical and psychological health, and to empower. With these aims and objectives set, the approach taken to achieve them

spans across Burnett's (2009) approaches of both *inside out* and *outside in*. This is because the agenda was preconceived and partnerships were formed to deliver on this, but over the course of the programme adaptations were made to make it more community driven and address local needs.

Supporting veterans in the military to civilian transition is one of many contexts in which SfD has been applied. Across the globe, SfD programmes have been delivered to address a variety of different aims and objectives and within numerous different contexts, all with a shared focus on using sport and physical activity as a vehicle for social change. For example, it has been acknowledged that SfD provisions can thrive in areas of social and political conflict, facilitating interventions and contributing towards harmony (Kay, 2009; Sugden, 2008, 2010; Malnati et al., 2016). SfD has also been used to raise awareness through education, for example sport-based HIV prevention seeks to raise awareness, increase knowledge, improve attitudes, and change behaviours in relation to HIV, considering both young people and their families (Kaufman, Spencer, and Ross, 2013; Jeanes, 2013). Some SfD programmes with this objective, additionally place a focus on empowerment, particularly empowering young women, and girls to challenge discrimination, violence, inequality, and gender norms (Zipp, 2017; Seal and Sherry, 2018). SfD programmes have also been utilised to build physical, social, sporting and community infrastructures, inclusive of social integration, crime reduction and the development of safer communities, in contexts such as young offender prisons (Meek and Lewis, 2014a; Parker, Meek and Lewis, 2014), inner cities (Nichols, 2004; Hartmann and Depro, 2006; Johns, Grossman and MacDonald, 2014) and refugee communities (Park and Ok, 2017). These numerous examples demonstrate the

broad use of SfD to achieve differing objectives across various contexts, and while this approach has been widely applied, it has also been subject to several criticisms.

In the circumstances outlined, sport is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the outcomes of the programme to be achieved, highlighting a recent crossroads in the field which is still subject to criticism, despite a well-intended desire for sport to contribute to aspects of development (Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011). Sport or physical activity is not the condition or factor necessary for developmental changes to occur, instead attention needs to be placed on the mechanisms, processes and experiences that surround it. This stance will be adopted in this thesis, concentrating on features surrounding sport and physical activity in the Vet Fit programme, to understand how they impact the support provided to personnel transitioning from the military. Coalter (2017) describes this as de-centring sport to understand what works, in what conditions and why, reframing sport as the site of change rather than the cause of it. Coalter (2010b) argues that organisations who deliver these programmes are essential to this. As does Hartmann and Kwauk (2011) who suggest that achieving developmental objectives is dependent on programme organisation and delivery, as it is the organisations who create partnerships and mobilise resources that facilitate this. Sport is just part of the package. Effective partnerships are central to enabling sport to make a positive contribution, however they have highly complex dynamics and little research has focused on this in a SfD context (Lindsey and Banda, 2010). Lindsey and Banda (2010) suggest that, in SfD, partnerships are fragmented due to a lack of coordination and there is an absence of understanding, with sport viewed as a form of play, lacking any seriousness, impacting on the partnerships and resulting programme successes or outcomes. Similarly, many major development agencies are reticent towards developing

partnerships and initiatives within SfD because of the well-documented unease in which sport has been viewed, such as being male-dominated, a diversion from that which is important, and encompassing problematic traits including violence, discrimination and cheating (Levermore, 2008). The main institutions that do work in collaboration to promote SfD are often from the sports sector, voluntary organisations, or non-governmental organisations, but with development as a secondary interest behind the main priority of constructing a sporting infrastructure (Levermore, 2008).

Another criticism of SfD centres around monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL). The role of MEL is to produce data measured against agreed outcomes which is then used to inform funders and hold deliverers accountable (Oatley and Harris, 2021). Oatley and Harris (2021) highlight the challenge of producing data from MEL that captures the complexities of designing, developing, and delivering a SfD programme, while adhering to the given circumstances and frameworks. These established frameworks can constrain monitoring and evaluation practice, with an overriding focus on positivistic evidence and tracking changes, as opposed to facilitating evaluative thinking, learning about the SfD programme's impacts, and incorporating practitioner knowledge (Nicholls, Giles and Sethna, 2011; Ahmad, 2021; Oatley and Harris, 2021). Previous literature reviews on MEL in SfD have identified existing MEL frameworks as ineffective, with reasons for this including the inability to identify a causal explanation linking the changes caused by a SfD project to the outcome, the inability to capture and accurately reflect on programme outcomes and impacts, the lack of involvement of practitioners and participants in MEL processes, and inability to use data and learnings from MEL processes to enhance SfD provisions and inform decision-making within policy and funding

(Levermore, 2008; Hayhurst, 2009; Kay, 2009; Coalter, 2007, 2010b; Harris and Adams, 2014, 2016; Ahmad, 2021; Oatley and Harris, 2021). In the UK, these MEL frameworks which focus on positivistic evidence have been shaped and informed by the existing neo-liberal agenda, or 'indicator culture' as termed by Ahmad (2021:195; Oatley and Harris, 2021). This will be discussed in greater depth in section 2.6, but in the context of this discussion, it relates to the emphasis placed on accountability, being able to prove impact, and obtaining *objective* data to meet performance indicators and act as a measure of success (Ahmad, 2021; Oatley and Harris, 2021). Within these MEL frameworks there is also a limited role for stakeholders, failing to reflect local interest or need, with Harris and Adams (2016:104) suggesting that SfD would be well served to consider, learn from, and understand practitioners 'relationship and view of evidence'. With this criticism in mind, it is agreed that existing MEL practices limit the current evidence base demonstrating the broader contributions and value of sport in achieving broader policy objectives, therefore, there is a growing need for improvement and alternative approaches to MEL in SFD (Coalter, 2007, 2010b; Kay, 2009; Oatley and Harris, 2021). Oatley and Harris (2021), among other scholars (Coalter, 2009; Henry and Ko, 2014; Harris, 2018; Spaaij et al., 2018), advocate for participatory based approaches to evaluation, however these alternative MEL processes can also include new lines of questioning, challenging what evidence or knowledge is considered legitimate, how it can be obtained, who is asking for the evidence, and how this meets the needs of all the stakeholders involved (Ahmad, 2021; Oatley and Harris, 2021). These innovations in MEL are pivotal to SfD provisions and, as stated by Ahmad (2021:195), they are 'increasingly becoming critical to the sustainability of the SDP [SfD] field'.

Scoping the field of SfD, different theoretical frameworks and concepts have been applied to this area. In an iterative review, undertaken by Schulenkorf, Sherry and Rowe (2016), it was highlighted that many of the frameworks used to underpin research in this field were borrowed from wider social studies or a community development context. The most prominent frameworks included, Positive Youth Development and Social Capital Theory, with only eight papers identified to consider Identity Theory. Lyras and Welty Peachey (2011) have called for more theory building within SfD literature, but Schulenkorf, Sherry and Rowe (2016) argue that the breadth and diversity of this field means it is unrealistic to establish one theory. As such, there is debate around whether SfD as a research area is welcoming or resistant to an overarching theory, or if the tendency for borrowing and applying frameworks and concepts from other disciplines will continue. Building on this notion, this thesis borrows concepts from the field of sociology, outlined in section 3.9, focusing on identity, policy enactment and neoliberalism (Goffman, 1959; Verhaeghe, 2014; Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun and Ball, 2014), and uses them to examine the delivery, engagement and impacts of the Vet Fit programme.

Having reviewed the literature in SfD, understanding its purpose, aims, objectives, approaches, applications, and criticisms, this can be applied to sport and physical activity-based programmes targeting military or veteran communities. Drawing on the learnings in this area, focusing on other population groups, these can be applied to veteran or military specific initiatives to improve the quality of delivery, programme impact, and how this is evaluated and used to inform policy and future provisions. In Table 7, most provisions adopted a delivery approach based on traditional sport and its inherent developmental properties, only a small body of literature considered a *sport plus* approach (Coalter, 2010a). Whilst links have been made between the

articles in Table 7 and the SfD literature, this was not reflected in the content of these papers, as there was no consideration of how SfD can contribute towards shaping and developing sport and physical activity-based support provisions for veterans. This highlights the unique nature of this thesis, providing a novel contribution to knowledge through the connections made between SfD and military research, links that have not been identified previously.

2.6 The Policy Context: Sport and the Military

Making links between sport and the military, militarism has had a strong influence in shaping Physical Education (PE) either side of the 20th century (Phillips and Roper, 2006; Armour and Kirk, 2007). The earliest form of PE in government funded schools was referred to as drill, a combination of marching, military maneouvres, and exercises drawn from systems of gymnastics prevalent at the time (Phillips and Roper, 2006; Armour and Kirk, 2007). The inclusion of military exercise and drill in PE was based on the view that working class children had to be controlled and disciplined, and even when this was suggested to be inappropriate and potentially harmful, there was a reluctance to change due to the belief that it was essential for maintaining law and order in schools and society (Armour and Kirk, 2007). In contrast, private schools, exempt from the government syllabus, endorsed a games ethic, playing games and sports that were believed to develop physical abilities and foster desirable characteristics such as discipline, obedience, perseverance, courage, morality, and leadership (Phillips and Roper, 2006; Armour and Kirk, 2007). It was through private schools that this games ethic evolved, developed, and was disseminated (Phillips and Roper, 2006). In 1906, team games were added to the curriculum for government funded schools, and the biggest shift in government policy

occurred in 1933 with the publication of a new PE policy (Armour and Kirk, 2007; Griggs, 2015). In this policy, the term PE was used alongside physical training, the importance of daily exercise was stressed, and the link between exercise and health was identified and endorsed (Armour and Kirk, 2007). These important changes, resulted in a movement towards the games ethic, away from military drill, and can still be recognised as a significant influence on PE and wider policy practice today. The discussions presented in this review on SfD and the origins of PE have highlighted the use of sport and physical activity to contribute to wider social objectives and outcomes. Sport policy in the UK is characterised by this duality, with government involvement and investment illustrated by the dual purpose of extending social rights of citizenship in addition to emphasising the wider social benefits of participation (Coalter, 2007). Hylton (2013) suggests that, regarding government policy, these wider externalities produced by sport can include national prestige, foreign policy and international diplomacy, tourism and city regeneration, local community development, health, readdressing social divisions and exhibiting qualities of public good. It is within some of these areas that the Vet Fit programme can play a contributing role, not only using sport and physical activity to support the transition from the military, but also improve veterans' health, address social divisions across military and veteran communities, and support local community development through programme delivery and facilitating veteran integration. Despite this recognised potential and duality of sport, illustrated via the Vet Fit programme, sport policy occupies a contested space on the margins of government policy discourse (Hylton, 2013).

Since the mid-1960's, the government has played a significant role in determining the direction of sport and physical activity and this sustained government interest

began with the publication of the 1957 Wolfenden Report, which offered an insight into the state of sport and recreation provisions in the UK (Bloyce et al., 2008; Bloyce and Smith, 2010; Wilson and Platts, 2018; Mackintosh, 2021). The publication of this report caused 'a ripple effect' (Wilson and Platts, 2018:8) which culminated in the appointment of the first Minister for Sport in 1964 and the establishment of the Sport Development Advisory Council, with Wilson and Platts (2018) suggesting that these are the first signs of community sport and physical activity being viewed as something Government should be involved in. By 1972, the Great Britain Sports Council was granted funding powers with a Sport for All agenda (Hylton and Totten, 2013; Houlihan, 2014). Working in partnership with local authorities, they aimed to create new opportunities for people from all sections of society to participate in sport, this was an approach that shifted over the years following (Bloyce et al., 2008; Bloyce and Smith, 2010; Hylton and Totten, 2013; Wilson and Platts, 2018). Over the course of the 1980's sport was a largely neglected and stagnant area of public policy. This could be attributed to Margaret Thatcher, Conservative Prime Minister between 1970 and 1990, who held a negative attitude towards sport and framed any government involvement in a broader neo-liberal agenda (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013). This agenda included the privatisation of publicly owned organisations, the introduction of private sector provision of local government services, the introduction of market-based management of services and the encouragement of market competition (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013; Wilson and Platts, 2018). These economic processes of the 1980's have consequences on how sport development and management operate today, including the encouragement of market competition and the increase in private sector delivery (Wilson and Platts, 2018). Despite feeling negative towards sport, Thatcher perceived it as a potential resolution to the social

unrest occurring in various inner-cities during the early 1980's and established the Action Sport programme, which targeted particular social groups and deprived areas (Coalter, 2007; Wilson and Platts, 2018). As a defining moment in the evolution of sport development in the UK, Action Sport targeted young people, ethnic minorities, women, and those aged 55 years and over (Houlihan and White, 2003; Collins, 2010a). Yet, in a time when the British military were involved in The Troubles in Ireland and the Falklands War, there appears to be no mention of veterans or military personnel as one of these target groups who may benefit from the Action Sport programme having been involved in these instances of social unrest. Action Sport was the first dedicated SfD programme within a community setting, and this shifted the view of sport and leisure from being a human need to a form of 'benign policing' (Green, 2006:225), as well as increasing the willingness of Government to dedicate funds to the Sports Council for specific social programmes (Coalter, 2007; Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013). The need to justify the contribution of sport to wider policy objectives was then evident in the Thatcher government and beyond, however veteran and military communities continued to be absent from this.

John Major, who succeeded Thatcher as Leader of the Conservative Party, had very different views on sport and his approach significantly differed to previous administrations. The changes in government policy and the approaches to sport under Major were to have a continued influence, even after his premiership (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013; Wilson and Platts, 2018). Major was a keen sportsman, and his personal passion shaped the increasing interventions in sport undertaken by his government (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013). Major praised the contribution sport could make to the social and moral development of children and young people (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013). Major also disregarded the Sport for All

approach and ignored the role of local government authorities in the promotion of mass participation (Coalter, 2007). Some of the most important developments that were instigated during Major's premiership included the creation of the Department for National Heritage which represented, for the first time, that sport policy was a government responsibility, the start of the National Lottery which provided funds additional to core Government funding, the rebranding of the Great Britain Sports Council into Sport England who were responsible for distributing funding, and the publication of *Sport: Raising the Game* in 1995, the first significant government policy statement on sport for 20 years (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013; Wilson and Platts, 2018). This policy placed a significant focus on school sport, prioritising traditional team sports over individual sports and other forms of PE echoing Major's personal passions and values, and also elite sport, highlighting the potential positive contribution international sporting success could make to national identity, cohesion and international relations, while largely ignoring community sport and the role of local authorities (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013; Wilson and Platts, 2018). Linking this to veteran support provisions that employ sport and physical activity (Table 7), it could be suggested that, with a lack of government focus on the Sport for All approach and the community sport agenda, this prompted a growth in third sector SfD initiatives, including those that use sport and physical activities to support military and veteran communities. Across Major's time as prime minister, sport continued to be in tune with the neo-liberal ideology implemented by Thatcher, but this period also highlights the impact powerful individual actors with their own passions, values, and beliefs, such as Major, can have on shaping sport policy (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013).

Following Major, a New Labour government came to power with a modernising reform agenda, which Hall (2007:119) described as ‘a hybrid formation combining neo-liberalism with a commitment to ‘active government’’. Tony Blair’s government placed sport in a central position on the broader social policy agenda, due to the benefits associated with participation, and this was with a specific commitment to greater social inclusion and the promotion of a modern government built on principles of partnership and decentralisation (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013; Wilson and Platts, 2018). Sport policy and programmes assumed increasing significance as it was identified as a way to solve policy problems in the four indicator areas of health, crime, employment and education, described by Houlihan and Green (2006) as spillover effects (Coalter, 2007). Drawing on military specific examples (Table 7), despite a focus on PTSD, physical injury or disability, spillover effects were still evident, supporting the broader social policy agenda. For example, in the study undertaken by Otter and Currie (2004), despite a central focus on PTSD, participants also reported positive impacts on work and lifestyle habits, motivation, and social support, contributing to the indicator areas of health and employment. The Vet Fit programme at the heart of this thesis continues to make these wider contributions, supporting the overall transition process considering not only physical and mental health, but also employment, education, social support, and citizenship. Consequently, community sport did benefit from receiving more funding designated for these areas, however elite sport remained the priority (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013; Wilson and Platts, 2018). Winning the 2005 bid for the Olympic Games legitimated further prioritisation of elite sport development and triggered the release of more sporting policies and strategies (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013). This resulted in a move towards the modernisation of sport, characterised by new approaches to

management pushing the worlds of sport development and management closer together, and the shifting of relationships with voluntary sector sporting bodies from ones based on trust to those based on contract and audit (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013; Wilson and Platts, 2018). As part of this modernisation of sport and Sport England, CSPs were created to lead on the delivery of government strategy at a local level (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013; Wilson and Platts, 2018). These were designed to promote collaboration between local agencies, but it was also perceived by some local authorities that CSPs undermined their sport development activities. Across subsequent governments, CSPs have had an evolving role in line with the changing national and local priorities, and in 2019 were rebranded as Aps to better reflect their purpose (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013; Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership, 2019). As introduced in section 1.1.2, both Sport England and an AP in the North West of England have central roles in the delivery of the Vet Fit Programme, Sport England as the key funder and the AP as the delivery agent, delivering on the government strategy at a local level and working towards their overall commitment to grow grassroot sports and physical activity.

Since being awarded the 2012 Olympics, the continued focus has been on elite sport and hosting elite sport events, adopting a trickle-down approach to grow and sustain community sport participation (Wilson and Platts. 2018). After the 2012 Olympic Games in London the principal shift in policy was *Sporting Futures*, the 2015 publication outlining the strategy for sport and physical activity in the UK. The focus of this strategy was on five delivery outcomes, economic development, individual development, social and community development, and physical and mental wellbeing, which sport development needed to be centred upon if it was to have a role (Mackintosh, 2021). This is the first time that a genuine cross-government

approach had been taken to develop and implement a sporting strategy covering departments such as, education, the environment, economic and business (Mackintosh, 2021). Following this, Sport England also published their own strategy, as well as new approaches to sports coaching and volunteering, and many sporting organisations have operated under these new strategies and systems since 2016 (Mackintosh, 2021). With a focus on community sport development, these recent advances have demonstrated a return to emphasising the social outcomes in sport and physical activity, however, as Mackintosh (2021) argues it is not to say that several professionals and agencies have not been thriving in this space since New Labour's presence in 1997.

During this extended period, since the award of the Olympics, key developments have also occurred within military policy, but with very few links to the outlined sport policy developments. In 2011, the Armed Forces Covenant and Covenant Fund were established encapsulating the moral obligation to those who serve, have served, their families and the bereaved (MOD, 2016). Then, in 2015, the Veterans APPG was registered providing a platform in Parliament to promote veterans, secure support, understand veteran needs, and hold the government and other organisations accountable to ensure the UK is the best place in the world to be a veteran (Parallel Parliament, 2021). Most recently, the Office for Veterans' Affairs, launched in 2019, led on these efforts and supported the nation to fulfil its duty to those who have served (MOD, no date). This office works closely with Minister for Veterans, previously known as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence, who is responsible for the Covenant, veteran's policy (including resettlement, transition, and charities), mental health, welfare and service families (MOD, no date). Whilst these substantial developments have occurred in military

policy alongside changes in sport policy, no clear links have been established between the two. The potential for sport and physical activity to contribute to the military and veteran policy agendas has thus far been overlooked.

Since the 1960's sport policy has held a consistent trajectory in which there has been very little change in overall policy objectives and goals, with new administrations tinkering with or amending that which already exists (Bloyce and Smith, 2010; Collins 2010b; Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013; Jefferys, 2017; Mackintosh, 2021). Sports policy and strategy continues to have a strong belief in competitive sport, supporting the steady expansion in the role of school sport and contributing to the stagnation of community sport (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013). The pattern of sport policy development in the UK has shifted however from an emphasis on direct government intervention to a focus based on a neoliberal ideology with more competition for service delivery, a focus on increased delivery, and the need to do more with less without sacrificing service quality (Hylton, 2013). These historical patterns and developments directly influence the shaping, developing and implementation of sport and physical activity in the UK today, under a Conservative government. Yet, a single history of sport policy in the UK does not exist and it is likely that the history presented here will conflict with others that are depicted (Mackintosh, 2021). This is based on my own interpretations and much like the policy documents produced by governments these too are subject to many different interpretations from the organisations and agencies who read and are then required to implement them. Instead, presented here is one view of multiple contesting histories (Mackintosh, 2021). Policy documents are read by many actors, such as local authorities, APs/CSPs, National Governing Bodies and voluntary sport organisations, and each will have their own interpretation influenced by the local

community and its needs, the requirement to meet certain targets, and their own personal experiences (Thompson, Bloyce and Mackintosh, 2020). These varied interpretations will impact on how policy is translated into practice and, in reality, policy formation and implementation are complex processes which are not standardised (Hill and Hupe, 2009; Thompson, Bloyce and Mackintosh, 2020). It has already been established that Government is a key actor in the policy process and powerful individual actors can have a significant influence on shaping policy, using the example of John Major (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013). However, the intentions of Government outlined within policy may not be the same as that which is interpreted by the actors responsible for implementing it. Their own interpretations, influenced by local context and needs, personal lived experiences, local history, and the need to meet targets, could shift the outcomes and themes of a policy document, how it is implemented and subsequently contribute to a different contested history (Thompson, Bloyce and Mackintosh, 2020; Mackintosh, 2021). This appreciation of multiple contested histories, different actors and their varied interpretations of policy allows for a more enriched understanding on how policy is translated into practice and the reasons behind this, including why it is different between individuals, organisations, and communities. How this is achieved in a military context, considering both military and sporting policies, is a theme evident throughout this thesis, in which the policy enactment process is outlined in section 3.9 and then discussed in relation to the research data throughout chapter 5.

A search of the MOD policy papers and consultations database found no documents referring to sport or physical activity regarding both serving or ex-service personnel. However, in 2018, *The Strategy for our Veterans* (MOD, 2018b) was produced with a

10-year scope, encompassing the whole of the UK, and applicable across all sectors of life (public, corporate, charitable, and individual) to achieve the following vision,

> Those who have served in the UK Armed Forces, and their families, transition smoothly back into civilian life and contribute fully to a society that understands and values what they have done and what they have to offer (MOD, 2018b:4).

This document highlighted six key themes that emerged as affecting veterans' lives; Community and Relationships; Employment, Education and Skills, Finance and Debt, Health and Wellbeing, Making a Home in Civilian Society, and Veterans and the Law (MOD, 2018b). While some of these areas are specific to a military population, there are also themes that crossover with other populations, including those that have been a focus of historical sport policy developments in which sport and physical activity has been used to contribute to wider political objectives. For example, in the New Labour government under Tony Blair, sport was placed more centrally regarding broader social policy agendas, identified as a way to tackle policy problems in the areas of health, crime, employment and education (Coalter, 2007), areas that clearly overlap with the key themes identified in the veteran's strategy document. Similarly, the *Sporting Futures* policy document, published in 2015, outlines a strategy for sport and physical activity in the UK adopting a cross-government approach covering departments such as education, the environment, economic and business, and outlined delivery outcomes covering economic, individual, community and social development and physical, mental, and social wellbeing (Mackintosh, 2021). Again, these are areas which clearly overlap with the themes identified as affecting veterans' lives, which *The Strategy for our Veterans* (MOD, 2018b) is endeavoring to address. Accompanying this strategy, a

consultation document was also published which sought to gather information to inform how the strategy would be implemented by posing questions to the public (MOD, 2018d). This received 2,177 responses, 2,007 from individuals and 170 on the behalf of an organisation, a response from Government was then published in 2020. This outlined the progress that had been made since 2018 including the launch of the Office for Veteran Affairs, a summary analysis of the responses, and an initial action plan outlining tasks to be achieved by the end of 2021 (MOD, 2020a). There was no reference to sport or physical activity as an approach that could be used to achieve the policy objectives outlined, including those linked to the themes of health and wellbeing. Where sport and physical activity has previously been used to contribute to broader social policy objectives, this does not appear to be the case regarding the military community and the objectives and actions outlined in these policy documents.

While sport and physical activity is yet to be used as an approach within military communities to address wider policy aims relating to education, employment and community development, prisons and young offender institutions are examples of where this has and continues to be applied. This is an area that has significant crossover with the key theme of Veterans and the Law outlined in the veterans' strategy (MOD, 2018b). Meek and Lewis (2012) explain that, in response to the multiple health needs of prisoners, an increasing emphasis has been placed on holistic approaches and the promotion of partnership working and, subsequent government policy has identified the physical, mental and substance misuse needs of prisoners as the key domains that need addressing to facilitate a reduction in reoffending. This has been implemented through Prison Service Orders and Instructions, which guide the operation of prison establishments, specifically

addressing the primary areas of mental health promotion and well-being, smoking, healthy eating and nutrition, and healthy lifestyles, including sex and relationships, active living, and substance misuse (HM Prison Service, 2013; Meek and Lewis, 2012). Prison gym departments have a key role to play, evident in the PE instruction (Ministry of Justice, 2011) which states that programmes must include access to remedial PE and should encourage healthy living and diet opportunities as well as activities that boost self-esteem to improve psychological wellbeing, this is in addition to physical activity being advocated as an accompaniment to detoxification programmes for substance misuse (Meek and Lewis, 2012). The PE instruction (Ministry of Justice, 2011) also outlines that prison PE provisions can and should incorporate the promotion of education, training, employment, and resettlement, however the degree to which this is achieved depends on need and the resources available (Meek and Lewis, 2014b). Meek (2018) reiterates this message in her review of sport in youth and adult prisons outlining that sport and physical activity is far-reaching, not just within prisons but other communities also, and participation can improve health and wellbeing as well as providing routes into education and employment. Again, comparisons can be drawn between these areas and the themes highlighted within *The Strategy for our Veterans* (MOD, 2018b), particularly linking to resettlement in which the movement of an offender from incarceration back into society, can mirror aspects of service personnel leaving the military and reintegrating into civilian life. Meek (2018) calls for collaboration across Government departments to develop coordinated efforts to promote sport and physical activity in prisons, and it could be argued that the same is necessary in relation to military communities, considering the number of shared themes and policy objectives across these populations. Sport has and continues to be used to address wider social

policy objectives within prisons and society more broadly, and this has been demonstrated across the historical developments of sport policy in the UK. Yet, it appears that this has not been considered in regard to those that have or are serving in the Armed Forces, with discussions around the most recent veterans' policy (*The Strategy for our Veterans, 2018*) ignoring the potential contributions of sport and physical activity in achieving the objectives that have been set. Reviewing the literature investigating sport in prison, identifying areas of overlap, and tracking the history of sport policy in the UK, this thesis will explore if and how sport can play a role in addressing some of the social issues related to veteran and military communities, and how this can inform policy and improve provision.

2.7 Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to critically examine the literature relevant to military lifestyle, the military to civilian transition, and the use of sport as a vehicle for support and to achieve wider social objectives. This review has cut across many different but relevant themes of literature, first underpinning key terms and language pertinent to this thesis, specifically understanding the meanings attributed to being a veteran and undertaking a transition. This review has explored the different areas of literature that focus on the military to civilian transition, including those that take a psychological approach, a sociological approach with a focus on identity and culture, and those that look at the impact of the transition on the veterans' family and employment opportunities. This review identifies a body of literature which focuses on the support available to veterans who have left or are leaving the military, and within this a smaller pocket of research that uses sport and physical activity as the vehicle for this support. Next, a sidestep was taken into the domain of SfD, in which

research was identified that used sport and physical activity as a vehicle for support in other contexts and communities, as well as broader challenges, opportunities and considerations associated with projects of this kind. Finally, this review considered sport policy and the use of sport and physical activity to contribute to wider social objectives and outcomes. Using the example of sport in prisons, areas of commonality were identified between the wider policy objectives sport contributes to in prisons and those identified in *The Strategy for our Veterans* (MOD, 2018b) that needed addressing within the veteran community.

Undertaking this substantial review across multiple areas of literature has highlighted several key critiques and gaps that this thesis will address. The assumption evident in the literature that veterans experience a *good* or *bad* transition from the military (McDermott, 2007), in addition to the apparent high prevalence of PTSD (Iverson et al., 2005b: Mobbs and Bonanno, 2018) will be challenged. This thesis appreciates varied veteran transition experiences and the wider challenges faced, moving away from a focus on PTSD and reconceptualising the military to civilian transition based on the diversity of veteran experiences. This review highlights clear gaps in the literature regarding veteran support provisions. The first gap relates to veterans' families and their exclusion from support provisions, despite facing similar challenges to their veteran family member (Bauer et al., 2017; Sherman and Larsen, 2018). The second gap was highlighted by the scope of research carried out in America which demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of barriers (True, Rigg and Butler, 2015; Derefinko et al., 2018), aspects of good support (Shields, Kuhl and Westwood, 2017; Albertson, Irving and Best, 2015) and development recommendations (Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier, 2014; Pease, Billera and Gerard, 2015; True, Rigg and Butler, 2015). However, this level of understanding was not

evident for veteran support and care delivered within the UK. Addressing both gaps highlighted, this research considers the role of family within the transition process as well as aiming to contribute to the understanding of UK-based veteran support provisions with a focus on critical factors central to programme success and failure.

This review highlighted that studies focusing on sport-based support (Table 7) all focused on addressing a specific *issue*, seven concentrating on PTSD, six on physical injury or disability and two addressing a combination of both. Eleven of these studies occurred over period of days, with only four delivered longer-term over weeks or months. Appreciating the characteristics of these published studies situates this thesis and the Vet Fit programme as unique, with the potential to extend the existing knowledge. This is because the programme takes a broader focus on the multiple challenges faced across the military to civilian transition and supports this for a longer period, over three years. Similarly, drawing on the field of SfD, ten of the studies included in Table 7 adopted a *traditional sport* approach with the assumption that sport alone can cause the desired impacts (Coalter, 2010a). It was only the five most recent publications that adapted sports and activities, aligning with *sport plus*. Again, this advocates that the Vet Fit programme takes an approach yet to be featured in the published literature, adopting a combination of *sport plus* and *plus sport*, stepping away from the previous reliance *on traditional sport*. It could also be argued that these features echo some policy changes taking place regarding sport and the military at the time, a link that has not yet been considered in the existing literature. The first of the sport and physical activity-based support programmes for veterans featured in this review was published in 1996, a year after the publication of *Sport: Raising the Game.* This was the first significant Government policy statement on sport for 20 years and commenced an influential

period for sport policy, which also saw subsequent publications on the use of sport to support military veterans (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013; Wilson and Platts, 2018). During this period, there was a continued role for sport and physical activity to have spillover effects and contribute to wider policy areas through the new cross-government (Coalter, 2007; Mackintosh, 2021). There were also significant developments occurring in military policy at this time, including the introduction of the Covenant, the Veterans APPG and the Office for Veteran Affairs. Yet, no links have been made between these developing policy areas. Having identified this weakness in the existing literature, the Vet Fit programme will have spillover effects and contribute towards wider policy objectives, including employment, education, and community integration, as identified and prioritised in the MOD's (2018a) strategy for veterans. Delivered through Sport England and an AP modernised during the reign of Tony Blairs' New Labour government, this research will be the first to connect these policy areas and outline the explicit contributions a sport and physical activity-based veteran support programme can make to wider policy objectives. This will be discussed throughout chapters 4 and 5, outlining key contributions to knowledge.

Next, this review has highlighted some of the criticisms evident within the SfD literature, namely the mythopoeic status of sport and physical activity, its power to make social change (Coalter, 2010a, 2012), and the lack of efficient and robust monitoring and evaluation of SfD initiatives (Levermore, 2008; Hayhurst, 2009; Coalter 2010b). Whilst long standing, these concerns remain in the latest research in this field (Whitley et al., 2019; Bailey and Harris, 2020; Oatley and Harris, 2020; Spaaij and Schaille, 2021), including those specific to military and veteran communities (Caddick and Smith, 2014; McGill et al., 2020). Acknowledging these critiques, this thesis aims to decentre sport and focus on the mechanisms, processes

and experiences that surround it, facilitating a robust evaluation of the Vet Fit programme. This will be undertaken through a symbolic interactionist (SI) lens, drawing on a theoretical framework shaped by concepts of identity, presentation of self, neoliberalism, and policy enactment, attending to the behaviours, actions and decisions occurring around the sports and physical activities. These central concepts are discussed at length in section 3.9 and applied to data across chapters 4 and 5.

In summary, this extensive review of the literature has highlighted four significant gaps or critiques that this thesis has the potential to address and make key contributions to. Sport and physical activity continues to be a cross-departmental issue in Government, making contributions to wider policy objectives and important target communities. This is evident in the recent Sport England publication, *Uniting the Movement* (2021), which outlines the following five big issues which have the greatest potential to prevent and tackle inequalities; Recover and Reinvent, Connecting Communities, Connecting with Health and Wellbeing, Active Environments, Positive Experiences for Children and Young People. With no single point of reference for serving and ex-service personnel, responsibility for their health and wellbeing also sits within sport and physical activity, identifying them as a key population group that can benefit from this Sport England strategy. Connecting this to the focus of this thesis, the Vet Fit programme can contribute to these five big issues specific to military and veteran communities. Overall, this thesis recognises the lack of policy connections between sport and the military as a significant gap and demonstrates how the effective use of sport and physical activity can support not only the military to civilian transition, but also produce numerous spillover effects that contribute to wider policy objectives, including Sport England's five big issues.

Ultimately, this thesis encourages sport and physical activity to be adopted more regularly as a tool to support military and veteran communities, in military and civilian life and across the transition.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter the methodological, paradigmatic, and theoretical aspects of this research are outlined, justified, and discussed. First, the rationale for this thesis is summarised followed by the overall research question and subsequent research aims. Following this, the methodological and paradigmatic positions underpinning the research are discussed, as well as the specific methods used for data collection. Then, the data collection process is explained, including the sampling strategy, an outline of who the participants of this research are, and the four phases of data collection. Next, the approaches and techniques employed to analyse the data are presented, including the theoretical framework. This is followed by a discussion on the criteria which should be used by readers to judge the quality of this research. This chapter concludes with a focus on ethical considerations, reflecting on the importance of reflexivity and online ethics.

3.1 Research Rationale

The AP delivering the Vet Fit programme was also the gatekeeper to the research and participants. This organisation has a wealth of experience applying for grants, delivering programmes, connecting organisations, and developing insight, all contributing towards their aim of changing lives through physical activity and sport (Active Partnerships, no date). After receiving funding to train and qualify veterans as sport coaches, it became apparent to the AP that veterans were not participating in sport or physical activity, and therefore not in a position to become qualified sport coaches. The AP endeavored to address this, collaborating with key partners

already working with Armed Forces organisations and military veterans, to obtain funding from Sport England. This funding was to deliver a sport and physical activity-based programme aimed at supporting veterans in their transition from the military into civilian life.

This need for the Vet Fit programme, identified through the AP's experiences, has also been reinforced in the academic literature. As discussed in chapter 2, veteran welfare and the support of veterans transitioning from the military are growing themes within the area of military research (Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier, 2014; Caddick and Smith, 2014; McGill et al., 2020). This thesis responds to calls for more contributions to this area, extending and adding to the existing knowledge. As outlined in chapter 2, the gaps in literature this thesis addresses include,

A) The concern with categorising veteran transition experiences as *good* or *bad*, the lack of English based publications, and the exclusion of family from transition support provisions.
B) The short-term delivery of sport and physical activity-based veteran support provisions, which concentrate on attending to a specific *issue*, largely dependent on a traditional sport approach.
C) The absence of links, in the published literature, between sport and military policy, and the lack of consideration of how sport and physical activity can address wider policy objectives regarding veteran and military communities.
D) The long-term criticism of SfD literature on the mythopoeic status of sport and the lack of robust and efficient monitoring and evaluation.

This thesis is novel in its approach, attending to the gaps outlined, as it is the first study to evaluate a UK-based programme that adopts a broader, more inclusive

focus, over a longer delivery period, appreciating varied transition experiences. This is also the first study to make links between sporting and military policy, putting forward a case for greater use of sport and physical activity to contribute to wider policy objectives within veteran and military communities in the future. This is presented and discussed in chapter 6, alongside other recommendations and lesson learnings from this thesis, covering the four areas of empirical, theoretical, methodological, and practical implications. Having identified a need for this research and the areas it will contribute to, attention now turns to the aims and objectives of this thesis.

3.2 Research Question and Aims

This thesis addresses the following research question;

How does the delivery of a three-year sport and physical activity-based programme impact upon the transition of veterans from the military to civilian life in the North West of England?

To answer this central research question, the following research aims will be addressed,

- To understand the realities and challenges of organising, developing, and delivering a sport and physical activity-based support programme for military veterans.
- To understand the individual experiences of veterans transitioning from the military into civilian life and the influence engaging in the Vet Fit programme has on this.

- To consider how the knowledge generated can be used to inform future policy and practice.

These research aims address a central research question and do so through informing and shaping the research design. They guide the research towards presenting intricate and detailed accounts of the veterans and stakeholders engaged in the Vet Fit programme, considering the interplay between the two. It is important to have clear links to the original programme brief (Appendix A) to support veterans in their transition from the military, considering social isolation, mental health and wellbeing, and drug and alcohol addiction, using sport and physical activity as the tool to do so. Thus, being an evaluative PhD, the research question and aims evolved alongside the programme with a clear focus on lesson learning.

3.3 Qualitative Research: What and Why?

There is a considerable amount of literature dedicated to qualitative enquiry, and subsequently many definitions for qualitative research have been provided. After examining several definitions offered in the academic literature, Hammersley (2013) concludes that the defining criteria can vary considerably, and qualitative research is not a simple phenomenon to characterise. Summarising these definitions and placing it in contrast to quantitative research, Hammersley (2013:12) defines qualitative research as,

> a form of social inquiry that tends to adopt a flexible and data-driven research design, to use relatively unstructured data, to emphasize the essential role of subjectivity in the research process, to study a small number of naturally

occurring cases in detail, and to use verbal rather than statistical forms of analysis.

Qualitative research places significant importance on research context and adopts a flexible approach to research design. Taking the point of view of the people that are being studied, qualitative research seeks to find out how participants see the world, define situations and learn what specific events, behaviours and activities mean to them (Neuman, 2011). Linking this to the research aims, attention is placed on understanding the meaning of the programme from the point of view of veterans and delivery stakeholders. Likewise, this research focuses on the specific context of military veterans in the North West of England and, employing qualitative methods, places an importance on this, recognising that the outcomes will be specific to this context. While context specific, findings and discussions can also make wider contributions, modifying old and developing new knowledge and theory and having implications beyond that of the immediate study (Morse, 2016). Smith (2018) states that qualitative research is generalisable, but not in the same way as quantitative research, outlining several types of generalisability. This thesis has the potential to be generalisable in the following ways, drawing on naturalistic generalisability, transferability and analytical generalisability (Smith, 2018). Naturalistic generalisability is achieved when the research resembles and resonates with readers' experiences, settings, and social encounters (Smith, 2018). This thesis enables this by providing readers with data evidence and contextual detail of the participants lives, interwoven with theoretical concepts, which encourage readers to reflect and make connections with their own lives. This also links to the notion of transferability in which readers believe the research overlaps with their own situation and can transfer findings to their own actions (Smith, 2018). The final way this

research has the potential to be generalisable, is through analytical generalisation, in which established theoretical concepts and theories are reexamined using a different methodology, context or participant group (Smith, 2018). This thesis applies established theoretical concepts from Erving Goffman and Neoliberal Ideology, outlined in section 3.9, to the context of a sport and physical activity programme for veterans in the North West of England, one that is different and unique compared to previous research that has taken place. Across these types of generalisability applicable to this thesis, the reader has an active role to play, alongside the researcher, in assessing the value of findings beyond the context and specifics of this study. Thus, this thesis does not offer the final word on generalisation.

Qualitative approaches to research are open to a flexible research design, which is key for this study, providing scope for the researcher to react to unintended events and allowing this to influence the data (Robson, 2011; Hammersley, 2013). Furthermore, employing a flexible research design is essential for this study as it is taking place in a real-world situation, and with this lack of control there needs to be the scope to react and adapt as the data collection takes place. This research was not a straightforward or linear process and adopting a qualitative research approach embraced this, reacting to unanticipated events while still gaining valuable insight (Table 8).

Table 8 - Events Occurring During the Research

Scale	Significant Events
Global	Covid-19 Pandemic
National	New Policies and Strategies from Sport England and the MOD.
Regional	Changes to Partnerships and Key Stakeholders. Changes in Funding Priorities.

Adopting a qualitative methodology also allows for the use of abductive reasoning. This is ‘a form of reasoning … that grounds social scientific accounts of social worlds in the perspectives and meanings of participants in those social worlds’ (Bryman, 2012:709). Using this form of reasoning, ideas and observations are examined using different frameworks or theories. This is a process of using repeated evaluations applying alternative frameworks and learning from each, as such no single definitive truth is provided (Neuman, 2011). Used mainly in interpretivism and research approaches that include interpretivist or constructivist ontological and epistemological elements, an abductive research strategy involves constructing theory which is derived from social actors’ language, meanings and theories grounded in everyday activities (Blaikie, 1993). The scientific accounts of social life draw on the concepts and meanings used by social actors and the activities they engage in. Abductive reasoning is a process of moving between many layers (Figure 2) starting with the taken for granted, unreflective descriptions of social life and ultimately developing technical descriptions of that social life either through generating social theories or apply existing social theories to this context (Blaikie, 1993), thus moving back and forth in between repeated evaluations, alternative frameworks and proposing multiple possible truths. Ultimately, the expert accounts of social life are derived from the everyday accounts social actors provide.

Abductive reasoning is concerned with explanation and prediction rather than description, and many strategies with shared features have been adopted, prompting Blaikie (1993) to suggest that it is impossible to produce a synthesis. The flexible approach to abductive reasoning allows for multiple possible truths to be presented, based on the application of different theoretical concepts or the generation of new social theories (Blaikie, 1993). Connecting this to the adaptable research design of

this study (Robson, 2011; Hammersley, 2013), abductive reasoning contributes to the generation of data, not only addressing the research aims, but also exploring the potential implications of the enquiry beyond its specific research context, proposing explanations as well as possible predictions. In summary, considering the key qualities of qualitative research and their relevance to this thesis, this has demonstrated its suitability, generating valuable and insightful data relevant to the research question and aims.

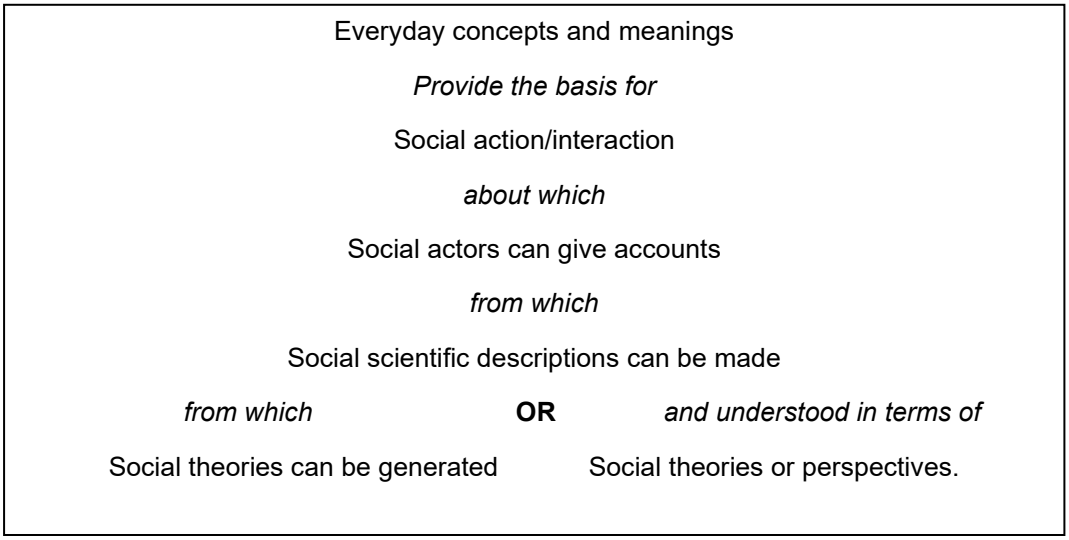

Figure 2 - Layers of Abductive Reasoning (Adapted from Blaikie, 1993)

3.4 Research Philosophy

A social constructivist paradigm has been selected for this thesis because it considers how social situations are constructed and maintained, and interprets the actions of individuals, considering how this contributes to maintaining and constructing the relevant social reality (Blaikie, 1993; Smith and Sparkes, 2008; Wagenaar, 2012; Hay, 2015; Maguire, Braun and Ball, 2015). These social constructivist assumptions directly challenge the positivist assumption that a tangible external reality exists (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012). These features are appropriate

to this thesis to understand how military culture is constructed, how this differs from civilian life, and how this socially constructed reality influences the transition process for veterans. The social constructivist paradigm is anti-realist, assuming a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The social constructivist paradigm is aligned closely to interpretivism and can be traced back to having roots in Phenomenology and Hermeneutics (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012; Andrews, 2012; Humphrey, 2011). With influences from philosophy, sociology, linguistics and psychology, social constructionism is multi-disciplinary in nature (Burr, 2015). This is reflective of the research field this thesis is situated in, with military research influenced by psychology, political science, historical studies, and sociology (Higate and Cameron, 2006).

A major influence on this paradigm was the work of Berger and Luckmann (1967) who acknowledge the influence of Mead, Marx, and Durkheim on their thinking, and draw on the sub-discipline of SI (Burr, 2015). Berger and Luckmann (1967) argue that humans create social phenomena and then sustain it through social practices. While constructing reality via these social practices, humans also experience them as if the nature of their world is prefixed (Burr, 2015). These principles of social constructionism can also be observed on micro and macro scales, both of which are not mutually exclusive and can be used in combination. Micro-social constructionism focuses on the everyday discourses taking place between people and their interactions, whereas macro acknowledges the constructive power of language but does so with the understanding that it is bound up within social structures, relations and practices (Burr, 2015). This thesis will address both macro and micro, considering everyday discourses as well as the influence of larger social structures and practices in this context.

3.4.1 Ontology

Social constructivism assumes the stance of ontological relativism. Sparkes and Smith (2014:11) explain that a relativist ontology 'conceives of social reality as humanly constructed and shaped in ways that make it fluid and multifaceted.' This is the belief that reality is socially constructed, and limited by context, space, time and an individuals' or groups' given situation (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012). Therefore, it is not something that can be generalised into one common reality and remains specific to that group or individual. Burr (2015:105) highlights the significance of language within this, explaining that 'our perceptions and experiences, are brought into existence and take the particular form that they do because of the language that we share.' This concept links to micro-social constructionism in which the focus is on language and the everyday discourses that take place between people, a concept critical to this study. The notion of being a military veteran is a social construct, developed through specific experiences, processes, and discourses, and in the context of others, it is through having these where others have not. This thesis is interested in the transition of veterans from the military into civilian life and the impact sport and physical activity has on this. Considering this ontological position, this research is concerned with the social processes, relations and experiences of veterans who have experienced this transition and the subsequent sport and physical activity-based support programme. The application of ontological relativism will provide a contribution to knowledge regarding several different social realities around the military to civilian transition and potentially a group reality around this given situation.

However, this suggested contribution raises a critique that has been made of social constructivism and the associated ontological stance. Social constructivism has

been criticised for being anti-realist and not recognising an objective reality or that anything exists beyond discourse (Bury, 1986; Sismondo, 1993; Craib, 1997; Burr 2015). This creates tension between the relativist and realist stances. Research adopting a relativist stance generates a multiplicity of accounts, and questions are raised as to which accounts are legitimate. There is no reason for one account to be favored over another as they are simply different experiences or perceptions, raising the question; is this contributing to knowledge in a meaningful way? As such, with these multiple accounts, relativism is ultimately criticised as nothing can ever be known for definite.

As a counter to these criticisms, Hammersley (1992:5) proposes the solution of adopting a midway between relativism and realism, termed 'subtle realism'. This acknowledges that there is an independent reality, but there is no direct access to it. Acknowledging the critiques of ontological relativism, this thesis will adopt the ontological stance of subtle realism, appreciating the different representations of this independent reality. Subtle realism draws on aspects of both naïve realism and relativism. Retaining from naive realism the idea that research investigates independent and knowable phenomena but denies that we have direct access to it, sharing with relativism a recognition that knowledge is a human construction based on assumptions (Hammersley, 1992). There are several key features specific to this ontological stance, including 'the definition of knowledge as beliefs about whose validity we are reasonably confident' (Hammersley, 1992:50). It is impossible to be absolutely certain about the validity of any knowledge claim, therefore the assessment of these claims must be done based on a judgement of plausibility and credibility. Another key element of this ontological stance is understanding that reality is independent of the claims that social researchers make about it. It is not a

determinant relationship and the claims made are not self-fulfilling nor self-refuting, therefore it does not change the relevant aspects of reality in such a way to make them true or false (Hammersley, 1992). A final feature of subtle realism is the acknowledgement that the aim of social research is to represent reality, not reproduce it, and it is from this point of view that makes some features of the phenomena pertinent and others irrelevant. As such, there is the potential for multiple valid descriptions and explanations of the same phenomena (Hammersley, 1992). It is these features that will underpin this research, alongside an epistemic stance.

3.4.2 Epistemology

The epistemic sense of social constructionism views knowledge as being constructed rather than created. It is the belief that knowledge is subjective because it is socially constructed, and what is true or false is culturally bound and context dependent (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012; Andrews, 2012). As soon as individuals begin to think or talk about the world or society, they begin to represent it, and this use of language and discourse constructs accounts outlining what the world is like (Burr, 2015). Therefore, rather than proclaim one external truth and consider the social world as an external reality which can be objectively investigated, an interpretivist epistemological stance attempts to understand social reality through subjective interaction, making sense of the world from a variety of different perspectives (Sparkes, 1992). The variety of voices and views within any given social setting provide a holistic truth about a specific social reality, thus disputing the existence of any ultimate truth or reality (Humphrey, 2011). It is evident that what is being studied is not *out there* independent of the researcher, Sparkes and Smith

(2014) highlight that there can be no separation as the researchers' values constantly mediate and influence what is being understood. Thus, research underpinned by an interpretivist epistemology is interactive, subjective and co-constructed by the researcher and the researched, seeking to gain 'culturally derived and historically situated interpretations' of the social world (Crotty, 1998:67; Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Linking to the research strategy of abduction, two stages of interpretation occur, the first of the participants and their social world and the second of the conceptual and theoretical framework underpinning the study (Bryman, 2012). Mirroring the layers of an abductive research strategy (Figure 2), social actions and interactions are interpreted from the accounts provided by social actors which are then understood using new or existing concepts and frameworks, in an iterative sense-making process (Blaikie, 1993). By interpreting the social world of the participants through a SI lens (section 3.9) insight can be gained on the subjective experiences of the veterans, Vet Fit programme deliverers, and the social world they are immersed in. This approach places a focus on human behaviour and how it is influenced by social and cultural norms, co-constructed with those who are experiencing it and within the social world it is embedded.

3.4.3 Influence of Philosophy on Methodology

Sparkes and Smith (2014:13) explain that the way in which a researcher shapes their ontology, epistemology, and subsequent paradigm 'actively influence[s] how they develop their methodologies.' Therefore, it is essential to ensure that the methodology selected is appropriate to the research paradigm and achieving the research aims. Social constructionism focuses on understanding people's experiences in the natural setting in which they carry out their day-to-day lives

(Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012). This often requires the researcher to be embedded and the nature of the research is subjective, requiring a degree of reflexivity. Considering the focus on subjectivity, co-construction and multiple truths or realities that underpin the social constructionist paradigm, this thesis is concerned with the experiences of military veterans undergoing the transition back to civilian life and engaging with the Vet Fit programme. An approach was selected in which the researcher was immersed within the research context, interpreting the actions of participants, acknowledging the multiple truths and voices in this social world, and uncovering that which is normally hidden or not visible (Humphrey, 2011; Zilber, 2014). It is also recognised that this knowledge is socially constructed, context dependent and culturally bound (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012; Andrews, 2012). In the context of this thesis, this will provide access not only to veterans in their own setting, but also the cultures and norms that are influential and impactful within this space, offering insight into the different social processes, structures, and discourses evident in this environment.

Situating this in the broader field of military research, which is a growing area with multidisciplinary influences. This thesis could be considered a response to the call for more military research to consider methodological and epistemological developments broader than that of positivism. Focusing on literature presented in Table 7, there is a balance of quantitative and qualitative approaches, drawing on questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, and observations. However, only one paper explicitly adopts an ethnographic approach (Carless et al., 2014) taking place over the short period of 5 days. This demonstrates how unique this thesis is, as ethnographic research spanning years, rather than days, has not yet been completed or published in this research area. Higate and Cameron (2006) comment

on the assumption that researcher bias can be nullified by adhering to a positivist model and suggest that a more reflexive approach to military research is needed. Despite this, positivist approaches are a dominant feature in military research, which remains largely averse to reflexive, post-positivist approaches. Higate and Cameron (2006) explain that psychology, and the associated approaches, have been privileged in this area and identified as the most credible strategy for solving military needs, ignoring the social content that can be derived from interaction. The literature summarised in Table 7 demonstrates that psychology, and the associated approaches, continue to dominate. However, there is a small but growing body of literature attending to social interaction, and adopting related sociological approaches, to study short-term sport and physical activity-based support programmes. This sociological approach is yet to be applied to research concentrating on medium or long-term delivery, and this is where this thesis makes a significant contribution to knowledge, undertaking a three-year ethnography of a sport and physical activity-based veteran support programme.

3.5 Ethnographic Approach

Understanding the literature in which veteran's transition experiences are considered dichotomously, as either *good* or *bad* (McDermott, 2007), this thesis develops an understanding around the varied experiences of veterans transitioning from the military and the broader meaning of them. Also, appreciating the potential of sport and physical activity as tools for social change (Spaaij, 2009; Coalter, 2010a, 2012), this approach will provide insight into the experiences, challenges, and successes faced by the AP and delivery stakeholders regarding the organisation and delivery of the Vet Fit programme. It is important to highlight that ethnography is not a specific

method, but a distinctive research approach (Watson, 2012). With a complex history, influenced by a range of theoretical approaches, there does not appear to be a standard definition for ethnography in the academic literature (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Despite this, Adler and Adler (1987:17) summarise ethnography via what it offers us, explaining that it offers a,

> "thick description" of numerous social arenas, of the impact of grand social forces on the everyday level, of the processual unfolding of events over time, and of the way social actors impute meanings and negotiate social structure within the situated complexity of their natural settings… Ethnography's great power lies in its depth penetration of a topic or area: it yields explanatory insights into the reasons why people, groups and organizations act as they do…

Here a thick description refers to the concept introduced by Ryle (1949), and extended by Geertz (1973), that concerns itself with human behaviours and the contexts in which these behaviours acquire meaning. This can be understood as a complex web of symbols where meaning is thickly layered through social practices where ethnographers play an important role in deciphering, untangling, and understanding this (Mazza, 2021). An ethnographic approach shares common themes and qualities no matter the groups, organisations or individuals that are being studied. The academic literature focusing on research methodology, does not appear to agree on a definition for ethnography, however it can be described as,

> a social practice concerned with the study and representation of culture …It is an interpretive craft, focused more on 'how' and 'why' (Van Maanen, 2011:219).

This description focuses on the culture of a particular context, a feature that is directly relevant to this thesis. The aims of this research concentrate on military culture, how this differs from civilian culture, and the impact different cultures have on a veterans' presentation of self, and their overall transition from the military. Another area of interest central to this study is the culture developed within the Vet Fit programme, and how this can support the military to civilian transition.

It is also important to acknowledge that ethnography rarely occurs in a chronological manner. It is a flexible and messy methodological approach (Kitchin, 2017). This flexibility means that it can improvise and adapt to the research setting as well as embracing any unforeseen or unexpected events (Yanow, 2009, 2012; Green, Swailes and Handley, 2017). This can be considered a strength of the approach, because often the most valuable and insightful data comes from events or occurrences that were unplanned or unconsidered at the outset. In the context of this research, there were many unexpected and unanticipated events that took place, and the flexibility of the ethnographic approach was key to being able to react to these changes. A clear example of this was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and being able to adapt the research to suit the new conditions imposed. Building on this notion of unplanned events, ethnography also focuses on that which is hidden, not visible or explicit features of life, including emotions, power dynamics and relationships (Zilber, 2014). The researcher, fully embedded in the Vet Fit programme and the working environment of the AP over an extended period, allowed for the power dynamics, relationships, and emotions to be uncovered and observed.

Ethnography has been described as 'telling a credible, rigorous and authentic story' (Fetterman, 2010:1) in which there are no illegitimate voices, with participants given

a voice in their own local context (Yanow, 2009, 2012). This is essential to this thesis, as it focuses wholly on veterans and their experiences and narratives within their own contexts, which in this instance is the Vet Fit programme. The scope and flexibility of ethnography ensures that all voices are heard, and multiple experiences are understood. Moreover, Adler and Adler (1987) explain that the power of ethnography lies in its deep penetration of a subject, yielding insights into the reasons why people, groups and organisations do as they do. This was directly relevant to the aims of this thesis as it began to highlight and explain why veterans attending Vet Fit sessions and the organisations delivering it did as they did, while also allowing for multiple voices and experiences to be heard and understood.

As with all research methodologies, an ethnographic approach has been criticised in the academic literature, and it is essential to acknowledge this. Golden-Biddle and Locke (1993) observed that standards for convincingness are difficult to apply to ethnography, therefore researchers using this approach need to work harder to convince their readers. Yet, Adler and Adler (2008) suggest that the researchers' closeness to the phenomena within ethnography and their depth of insight can demonstrate methodological authority, therefore being used as a tool to convince readers. Embedding the researcher in the Vet Fit programme and the AP working environment for an extended period, was done with the intention to facilitate a closeness to the research and greater depth of insight. This demonstrates methodological authority and enhances the convincingness of the research, but also raises other criticisms. Myers (1999) highlights that ethnography is time-consuming, taking longer than other methodologies. Acknowledging this and seeking to maximise the time invested in the ethnography, I made use of valuable digital technologies. For example, using the voice notes feature on my mobile phone I

recorded verbal reminders and descriptions of key observations which were then written up in my diary once leaving the field. This supported the fact that I was unable to record written notes in the field without drawing attention to myself or being treated with suspicion. Mainsah and Prøitz (2019) encourage the use of digital devices as research tools, recognising that these technologies are now an integral part of a researchers' daily life. Ethnography has also been criticised for lacking breadth, providing in-depth knowledge of only a specific context or situation (Myers, 1999). This is a criticism that is difficult to overcome, as the in-depth focus on a topic or area is a key feature of an ethnographic approach. The current literature around the military to civilian transition categorises veteran experiences into either *good* or *bad* (McDermott, 2007), and borrowing a term from Derrida (1974, 1978, 1981) this can be understood as a binary opposition or dualism. Derrida (1974, 1978, 1981) believed that all Western thinking was made up of a system of these binary dualisms, however in this thesis, using an ethnographic approach, I am seeking to deconstruct and challenge these, exploring veterans' multiple paths, journeys, and experiences. While this might not address the criticism and provide a greater breadth of understanding, it will provide data on the transition process with more scope and penetration than has previously been undertaken.

Linking to the research paradigm underpinning this thesis, adopting a subtle realist ontological stance also impacts on how ethnography is undertaken. Hammersley (1992, 2013, 2017) outlines that this stance encourages greater concern for ethnographers checking their conclusions, as well as being more vigilant around the reliance on cultural assumptions and how this can lead researchers astray as well as in the right direction. It was essential to be aware of these influences throughout the research process, recognising when the research was being led off course or in the

right direction. This ontological stance, coupled with an interpretivist epistemology, emphasises a researchers' involvement in the data collection process, a key feature of an ethnographic approach, and the multiple voices and possible truths in a social setting. This is also supported using an abductive research strategy which interprets the actions and interactions of social actors and seeks to develop an understanding of these through the application of theoretical concepts and frameworks. Section 3.9 outlines the framework used to form discussions and draw conclusions, however other frameworks and conclusions were also possible.

Despite identifying ethnography as a suitable methodological approach for this thesis, reviewing the literature demonstrates that it has not been widely applied. Across the literature covering areas of military and veteran research only one paper adopted an ethnographic approach (Carless et al., 2014). Similarly, focusing on SfD literature, the review undertaken as part of this thesis did not locate any research with an ethnographic methodology. This is supported by an integrated literature review undertaken by Schulenkorf, Sherry and Rowe (2016) who highlight that SfD research was mostly undertaken using a qualitative approach. However, this data was collected using largely mixed methods, including questionnaires, surveys, or interviews, opposed to prioritising participant observation, a key feature of ethnography. This establishes that there is a methodological gap within these research domains, which this thesis exploits. Military research relies heavily on positivistic approaches and the methods of surveys, questionnaires and interviews (Higate and Cameron, 2006), which are potentially problematic as it has been suggested that veterans are reluctant to engage when faced with significant documentation, and responding to questions in the absence of a trusting relationship with the person asking them (Verey and Smith, 2012; True, Rigg and Butler, 2015;

Bowes, Ferreira and Henderson, 2018; Derefinko et al., 2018). Similarly, in SfD literature there have been criticisms around weak evidence bases and the lack of efficient evaluations (Coalter, 2010b; Whitley et al., 2019; Bailey and Harris, 2020; Oatley and Harris, 2020; Spaaij and Schaille, 2021). While discussing the suitability of micro-sociology for SfD research, Spaaij and Schaille (2021) highlight that there is a need for continued innovation to contribute to a holistic and integrated methodological understanding of how SfD operates and in what conditions the desired or unanticipated outcomes are achieved. Summarising the points discussed, an ethnographic approach to this thesis can construct insightful data relevant to the research question and aims, exploit a methodological gap in current military and SfD literatures, and extend the existing learnings, theory, and knowledge.

3.5.1 Organisational Ethnography

A research aim within this thesis focuses on understanding the reality and challenges of developing and delivering a sport and physical activity-based veteran support programme. Focusing on programme delivery and the experiences of programme deliverers, aspects of this research draw on the subdiscipline of organisational ethnography. Kitchin (2017) explains that ethnographic practice which takes place in an organisational setting, is organisational ethnography. In this thesis this refers to me being embedded in the AP working environment, carrying out observations relevant to the design, organisation, and delivery of the Vet Fit programme. Organisational ethnography involves using the researcher as the primary instrument of analysis, examining change as it occurs in real time and over an extended period within or between organisations, and creating opportunities to reach more diverse staff and stakeholders (Kitchin, 2017). This approach also

recognises that societal organisation and culture are both inside organisations and around them, with social and formal organisations playing a fundamental role in forming each other (Watson, 2012). Watson (2012) comments that the exciting dimension of organisational ethnography is the attention to the ambiguities and obscurities in the everyday lives of organisations. It is these ambiguities and obscurities that, in the context of this research, provide the greatest insight into the realities and challenges faced by the AP and other stakeholder organisations during their involvement in the Vet Fit programme. Ultimately, organisational ethnography enables a researcher to produce 'a fuller, more grounded, practice-based understanding of organisational life' (Ybema et al., 2009:2). An understanding that is necessary in this research to understand the factors involved in the programmes' organisation and delivery. In the field of organisational ethnography, specific domains have been outlined which make it its own distinctive discipline, these include organisational processes, organisational identity and identity change, organisational environments, and organisational morality and conflict (Yanow, 1996, 2006). Situating this research in the discipline of organisational ethnography, this thesis draws on aspects of organisational environment, identity, and processes to contribute towards evaluating the Vet Fit programme and understanding the realities and challenges of the programme deliverers.

3.5.2 Virtual Ethnography

There are a variety of different terms for the process of carrying out ethnographic research in an online setting, these include online ethnography, virtual ethnography, netnography and cyber ethnography (Hine, 2017). The development of the internet was accompanied with the growth in approaches orientated around ethnography in

and of online spaces, resulting in no single form of online ethnography (Hine, 2017). The growth in online networks and interactive features allows researchers to be immersed in local and global cultures with the scope to engage in a range of diverging perspectives (Toffoletti et al., 2021). Some online ethnographies look at text-based exchanges or the structures and processes embedded within online interactions, focusing on online chat or discussion forums that can be logged or taking place in real time (Hewson, 2017). Another approach is the researcher embedded and immersed into online communities or social environments (Ackland, 2013; Hewson, 2017). Mirroring a more traditional face-to-face ethnographic approach, being embedded in an online community the researcher can observe and engage in the community understanding their culture, social structures and the unfolding of events on an everyday level over time (Adler and Adler, 1987). From their own experiences working across local, national, and global digital contexts, Toffoletti et al. (2021) advocate for a method that encompass both these approaches. However, it is also important to note that undertaking a virtual ethnography is not any easier on the basis that it grants unlimited access and a virtual space where the dimensions of identity can be transcended (Toffoletti et al., 2021). Virtual ethnography offers the ability to reach certain communities but does not necessarily grant access to them and their context, this is still a task for the ethnographer to undertake.

At the outset of this thesis, it was not anticipated that the research would move into an online setting, however due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was a necessary step. Halfway through the data collection process, the Vet Fit sessions that were taking place in person moved onto the online conferencing platform, Zoom, and a greater focus was placed on the Vet Fit Facebook page and private Facebook group set up

for programme members. As highlighted previously, adopting a qualitative methodology allows for a flexible approach to research design, therefore a shift could take place to account for these changes. The research moved from a face-to-face ethnographic approach, drawing on the subdiscipline of organisational ethnography, to an online ethnography in which I was immersed into an online community engaging in the Vet Fit programme via Zoom. There was also a focus on text-based exchanges and engagements taking place via the Facebook platforms during this period. This necessary shift also required ethics to be revisited and reconsidered, the steps and decisions made in this process are discussed in section 3.11.1. Having the flexibility to shift the research design, in response to wider conditions, added value and another dimension to the research, moving it into an area that was not considered at the outset, as well as allowing the data collection to continue in circumstances that would have been impossible if online platforms were not available.

3.5.3 Observations

Ethnography predominantly draws on observations as the primary method for data collection. This is the act of noting phenomenon in the field through the five senses of the observer, and these observations are made based on the research aims and objectives (Creswell and Poth, 2008). Using observations enables a researcher to examine the lives of their participants in situ as it happens in real time and, doing so provides data not only on what is being said but also what the participants do, as well as offering contextual understanding to participants actions, interactions and emotions (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). In the context of this thesis, observations can offer a broader understanding of the veterans within their own environment, relating

specifically to the research aim to understand the individual experiences of veterans transitioning from the military and the influence of the Vet Fit programme on this.

Observations need to be documented by the researcher and this is usually achieved through a series of field notes. While it is impossible to record everything, researchers must make critical decisions about what is worth noting and what is not, and included within these notes should be the researchers own thoughts, feelings, and reactions (Olive and Thorpe, 2016). Within the observation process it is also important to consider how and when these field notes will be made. Olive and Thorpe (2016) explain that, for academics working in sport, making field notes can be difficult, especially when participating in the activity. Drawing on their own experiences, while they recognised it was important to write notes as soon as possible after leaving the field, Olive and Thorpe (2016) chose to wait until they got back home or to a hotel or café to do their writing as these were environments where this would not look strange. Regarding this thesis, I found it difficult to write up field notes while I was at the Vet Fit sessions because I was taking part in the activities. Therefore, echoing that outlined by Olive and Thorpe (2016), I wrote the observation notes straight after each session as soon as I returned home.

Researchers can make observations from different positions and these are influenced by how much the researcher participates in the field. These roles are fluid, with researchers moving along a continuum dependent on the varying degrees of researcher involvement, moving from outside the phenomenon of interest to more or less inside (Adler and Adler, 1987; Westmarland, 2001). What a researcher can see, hear, touch, feel or smell is all influenced by their role involvement (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Adler and Adler (1987) explain that a researcher can observe from an external position as an outsider or become increasingly more involved through

holding observer-as-participant, participant-as-observer, or complete participant roles. Drawing on criminology literature, Brown (1996) argues that there are advantages and disadvantages associated with both being an insider, partaking fully in the participants lives, or an outsider, observing from an external position. Using the example of police officers, Brown (1996) suggests that those who turn to research either during or after their career, will have difficulties adjusting to a new frame of meaning and way of life. Alternatively, those external, holding an outsider status, have never experienced the way of those being studied, and therefore may lack understanding and be unreflective (Brown, 1996). Placing these positional frameworks in the context of this thesis, as I was not a veteran, I was positioned as an outsider at the start of the research, with early observations taking place from an external position. However, I do have some military experience and understanding, outlined in section 1.2.5. This background combined with the experience of undertaking the research, moved me towards an increasingly insider status, becoming more involved in the activities.

I could not hold a complete insider role as I have never served in the military. Yet, there was scope for progression to being more of an insider, through getting involved in the activities, getting to know the participants, and gaining their trust. It has been highlighted in the literature that trust is a significant factor for veterans, often with them only trusting each other (Shirazipour et al., 2017). Therefore, building trust with the veterans and moving towards an increasingly insider status is essential for this research and the ability to gain rich in-depth insight into the veterans' experiences. Bucerius (2013) also argues that the position of a trusted outsider, with a degree of insider knowledge, could be a greater research asset than holding a full insider role. This is because being an insider is accompanied with several liabilities to overcome,

such as assumptions going unquestioned (Bucerius, 2013). In the context of this study, I recognised that I was not able to move to a full insider role, but instead looked to hold the position of a trusted outsider, using the inside knowledge that I had to develop relationships with the veterans and programme stakeholders, and more importantly gain their trust.

3.5.4 Interviews

Even though ethnography relies heavily on the method of observation, Thorpe (2012) states that interviews are an integral part of ethnographic fieldwork, and Morse (2016) adds that a good ethnography should include multiple data sets employing different research methods. These various methods provide a different perspective on the problem, from a different level of analysis and with a slightly different focus (Morse, 2016). Therefore, interviews will also be employed in the ethnographic approach of this thesis, offering an alternative perspective. Interviews are a dominant method in qualitative research and have been used extensively in research on sport, exercise, and physical culture (Thorpe, 2012). Individual, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews are the most common interview style, however other forms, including unstructured, group, electronic and over the phone interviews, have also been used to understand the experiences and interpretations of individuals in a sporting context (Flick, 2007; Thorpe, 2012). Brinkmann and Kvale (2015:3) describe interviews as an attempt ‘to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience, to uncover their lived world’. This demonstrates how, in the context of this research, interviews will provide another viewpoint on the veterans’ experiences of the programme as well as those who have been involved with the organisation and delivery from their own perspectives.

Therefore, the combination of interviews and observations will provide a fuller picture, contributing to a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973; Adler and Adler, 1987:17).

The interviews with the veterans were semi-structured but also drew on features of life history interviews. While not scoping out a full life history, the interview questions asked veterans to discuss their military life and memories and what they want to share with others, drawing on a facet of life history interviews (Appendix D) (Tracy, 2013). Atkinson (1998) explains that the use of life history interviews has now gained respect and acceptance in many academic circles, including psychology, anthropology, education, history, and sociology. Also suggesting that, within anthropology, life history can act as a measure for cultural similarities and variations, and within sociology this form of interview can define and begin to understand relationships, group interactions and memberships (Atkinson, 1998). It is these principles of a life history interview that were considered within the veteran interviews as they offered insight into veteran and civilian cultures, the culture created within the Vet Fit programme, and how these different groups interacted and formed relationships. All of which contribute to the aim of understanding the individual experiences of veterans transitioning from the military and engaging in the Vet Fit programme.

Atkinson (1998) explains that narratives generated through life history interviews can have different functions and, focusing on the social function, this was relevant to the interviews undertaken with the veterans. Atkinson (1998) explains that these narratives,

> enforce the norms of a moral order and shape the individual to the requirements of the society. Stories help us understand our commonalities

> with others, as well as our differences. Stories help create bonds, while fostering a sense of community, by helping us understand the established order around us. Stories clarify and maintain our place in the social order of things (Atkinson, 1998:10).

This principle was used to shape the interviews with the veterans with a focus on developing narratives that included military service, the transition to civilian life, and engagement in the Vet Fit programme. This insight also shed light on the moral and social order within military society as well as the commonalities and differences across different veterans' experiences.

Utilising aspects of life history interviews in the veteran interviews aided the building of narratives which provided context and recognised meaning. They also enabled the voices of the participants to be heard and recognised by others supporting the features of ethnography that make 'the implicit explicit, the hidden seen, the unformed formed and the confusing clear' (Atkinson, 1998:7). It was these qualities of life history interviews that were featured in the semi-structured interviews, supplementing the overall ethnographic approach, and offering a different perspective with a different focus, as recommended by Morse (2016).

This research features both formal and informal interviews, overlapping with the ethnographic observations. Formal interviews were undertaken with veterans as well as key programme stakeholders and deliverers. These were pre-arranged, semi-structured in nature and steered by an interview guide (Appendix D). Separate interview guides were created for the interviews carried out with programme deliverers and veterans, and these were informed by the overall research question and aims. Having separate guides ensured that all interviews remained relevant and

specific to each of the research aims. The guide developed for the interviews with veterans was much less structured compared to the guide used in the stakeholder interviews. As recommended by Riessman (1993), and drawing on principles of life history interviews, this was in the interest of giving greater control to the veterans, approaching the interview as a conversation so that almost any question could generate a narrative. As part of the observations, informal interviews and conversations also took place, occurring in liminal spaces such as the corridors of the AP office, within formal meetings but outside of the meeting focus, and after the formal interviews when the Dictaphone was switched off. In this instance a liminal space refers to the area that is at the boundary of two dominant spaces but not fully part of either, they are neither here nor there but between positions assigned by social norms, routines, and practices (Turner, 1969; Van Gennep, 1988; Dale and Burrell, 2008). Other examples include the many conversations that took place during Vet Fit sessions when stood on the sidelines, at the bottom of the climbing wall, or walking to and from our cars before and after the sessions. Throughout this research both formal and informal interviews, including those that occurred in liminal spaces, are considered equally, with the overall aim to develop rich insights into the experiences and narratives of both veterans and programme stakeholders (Table 9).

Table 9 - Types of Spaces and Places Ethnography Occurred

Virtual	Sport	Non-Sport
Facebook	Climbing Wall	Car Park
Zoom	Football Pitch	Entrance Hall
Email	Yoga Studio	Toilets
Phone	Sports Field	Café
	Racetrack	Office
	Sports Hall	Meeting Rooms
		Corridors
		Pitch side (Sidelines)
		During Travel (Coach/Car Journeys)

3.6 Sampling and Participants

Participants for this study were selected using purposive sampling. This is often used within field research and employs the judgement of an expert in the research area to select the participants, or participants are selected with a specific purpose in mind (Neuman, 2011). For this study, purposive sampling was used in which I selected participants with the specific research question and aims in mind, ensuring that data collection remained relevant to these.

The AP who led on the organisation, design, and delivery of the Vet Fit programme, also acted as the gatekeeper. They provided open access to all Vet Fit sessions, as well as facilitating relationships between myself, the veterans, and stakeholder organisations they were working with. The AP allowed the me to attend sessions on a weekly basis and work out of their office one day a week, attending any relevant meetings. This meant that I was fully embedded within all aspects of the programme, ranging from organisation through to delivery. Having full access to the programme also equipped me with the knowledge and expertise to select participants that could offer the insight relevant to the research aims. For example, the veterans that were interviewed were selected as they had all engaged in the Vet Fit programme for either a prolonged period or across a variety of sessions and had also built up a rapport with me that facilitated more open and honest interviews. Regarding the programme stakeholders, these were selected based on their involvement with the organisation, design, and delivery of the programme. Being embedded in the programme, working from the AP's office, and attending relevant meetings afforded me the expertise to select stakeholders that had been involved in the organisation and delivery processes, therefore they were chosen with a specific purpose in mind.

Any veterans or deliverers selected for interview that were unwilling or unable to provide written consent were excluded from the study. Overall, eleven individuals either from the AP or stakeholder organisation were interviewed, with follow up interviews taking place with those who had ongoing involvement with programme organisation and delivery (Table 10). A further ten interviews took place with veterans from across the Vet Fit programme (Table 11). To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, each participant taking part in this research has been provided with a pseudonym. A further two veterans agreed to be interviewed, however they subsequently dropped out due to changes in circumstances in which the interviews were taking place, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. On agreeing to be interviewed, it was planned for these to be completed in person, however restrictions on face-to-face communications dictated that this could no longer happen, with the interviews instead taking place via phone or Zoom. One of the veterans was not comfortable with using these platforms and the other was facing personal difficulties during this time, and therefore both removed themselves from the research.

Of the weekly sessions delivered on the Vet Fit programme, it was decided that only selected sessions would be attended as this would enable me to invest more time and build a stronger rapport with the veterans who attend and the session deliverers. These were chosen using purposive sampling, encompassing a variety of activities, aimed at different demographics and with varied attendance, ensuring that the focus did not solely remain on the sessions that were deemed to be doing well. Of the sessions taking place face-to-face, I attended both climbing and football on a regular basis, and of the sessions delivered via Zoom I attended weekly tai chi, yoga, high intensity interval training (HIIT) and accessible sessions. There were also one-off day activities that were delivered as part of the Vet Fit programme ranging from

family fun days to motorsport taster days. These often took place on the weekend and I attended whenever possible. Overall a total of 440 hours of observation were completed inclusive of the sport and physical activity sessions, working at the AP office, and attending other relevant meetings and events, both face-to-face and online (Table 12).

Table 10 - Key Stakeholder Roles Selected for Interview

Participant	Employment Sector	Job Title	Role in the Vet Fit Programme	Interview Format
Deliverer Alex	Active Partnership	Senior Development Office (Programme Lead)	Key figure leading on the programme throughout.	3 interviews; 2 face-to-face and 1 via Zoom.
Deliverer Ben	Active Partnership	Development Manager	Involved in initial funding bid and early programme development, with organisational changes reducing involvement.	Face-to-face
Deliverer Callum	Sport Development	Engagement Coach	Programme stakeholder responsible for delivering football sessions and other associated activities.	Face-to-face
Deliverer Daniel	Veteran Support	Operations Manager	Programme stakeholder responsible for promoting the programme to veterans and other veteran organisations.	Face-to-face
Deliverer Emily	Veteran Support	Partnerships Manager	Programme stakeholder involved in the initial funding bid and organisation of the programme in the first year.	Face-to-face
Deliverer Fred	Sport Development	Community Development Manager	Programme stakeholder responsible for the organisation of multiple activity sessions during the first year of delivery.	Via telephone
Deliverer Gareth	Sport Development	Project Leader & Coach	Programme stakeholder responsible for delivering rugby sessions. This involvement in the programme ceased after a couple of months.	Face-to-face, joint with Participant I
Deliverer Hannah	Sport Development	Community Development Manager	Programme stakeholder involved in the organisation of rugby sessions. These ceased after a couple of months and further involvement was minimal.	Face-to-face, joint with Participant H
Deliverer Ian	Active Partnership	Senior Officer	Due to organisational change became involved in the second year of the programme, managing the Senior Development Officer (Participant A).	Face-to-face
Deliverer Jessica	Active Partnership	Development Officer	Recruited in the second year of delivery and responsible for overseeing the day to day delivery of the programme.	2 interviews, both via Zoom.
Deliverer Kate	Active Partnership	Development Officer	Recruited in the third year of delivery and responsible for developing and delivering a mental wellbeing strand.	Via Zoom

Table 11 - Veteran Demographics

Participant	Gender	Military Branch	Length of Military Service	Year Left the Military	Vet Fit Sessions Attended	Interview Format
Veteran Lucy	Female	Army	7 years	1989	Climbing &Tai Chi	Via Zoom
Veteran Michael	Male	Army	5 years	1992	Climbing, Archery & Online Sessions	Via Zoom
Veteran Nathan	Male	Army	4 years	2007	Football	Via Zoom & Telephone
Veteran Oliver	Male	RAF	28 years	2018	Football & Rugby	Via Zoom
Veteran Patrick	Male	Army	4 years	2011	Football	Via Zoom
Veteran Quinn	Male	Army	7 years	2013	Climbing	Via Zoom
Veteran Robert	Male	Navy	4 years	2004	Football & Kayaking	Via Zoom
Veteran Scott	Male	Army	14 years	2011	Climbing & Kayaking	Via Zoom
Veteran Tom	Male	Army	6 years	1979	Online Sessions, Climbing, Outdoor Climbing & Archery	Via Zoom
Veteran William	Male	Navy	9 years	1980	Online Sessions, Outdoor Climbing & Archery	Via Zoom

Table 12 - Completed Observation Hours

Face-to-Face Activity Sessions		**Online Activity Sessions**		**Organisational Observations**	
Activity	*Hours*	*Activity*	*Hours*	*Activity*	*Hours*
Football Training	18 hours	Online Yoga	4 hours	Working at AP & Attending Meetings	231 hours
Football Matches & Tournaments	16 hours	Online Quiz	22 hours	Interview Observations	28 hours
Kayaking	2 hours	Online Tai Chi	14 hours	**Total**	**259 hours**
Indoor Climbing	26 hours	Online Circuits	5 hours		
Motorsports Taster Day	6 hours	Online HIIT	13 hours		
Family Fun Day	4 hours	Online Sports Yoga	24 hours		
Outdoor Climbing	2 hours	Online Accessible Session	19 hours		
Archery	5 hours	**Total**	**101 hours**		
Sports Yoga	1 hour				
Total	**80 hours**			**Final Total**	**440 hours**

3.7 Data Collection

Ethical approval was granted on 2nd May 2019 from the Manchester Metropolitan University Research Ethics Board. Following this, data collection spanned a period of 18 months from June 2019 to November 2020 and was carried out over four phases (Figure 3). The first part of data collection was the Organisation Phase which lasted five months. During this time, I was embedded in the AP work environment and completed semi-structured interviews with eight of the programme stakeholders (Appendix E). These included AP members of staff, individuals working for partner veteran support organisations in the North West and staff from sporting organisations. All these individuals

were involved in the programme in its infancy, from the initial creation of the Vet Fit programme to the early stages of organisation and delivery. During this period, I also started a field diary, noting down observations, thoughts, feelings, and reactions, and this continued throughout all phases of data collection (Appendix F). Similarly, with this phase and all the following phases, initial findings, observations, and reflections were fed back to the AP as part of an ongoing feedback loop. This was intended to facilitate programme developments and amendments, adapting, and adjusting constantly to meet the veterans' needs and support the programme to fulfil its developmental aims. Once the feedback was given to the AP it was their role to amend, adjust, and develop as they saw fit.

The Delivery Phase spanned eight months in which focus shifted to concentrate on the delivery of Vet Fit sessions. Continuing from the previous phase I remained embedded in the AP work environment while also offering feedback to the AP and completing the ongoing field diary. During this phase further interviews took place with programme stakeholders, this included a follow up interview with the Programme Lead (Deliverer Alex). Throughout this phase of data collection, I also became embedded in the Vet Fit programme, carrying out participant observations at some of the weekly sessions, namely football and climbing, as well as one-off events such as a family fun day and a kayaking taster session.

The third phase of data collection was not planned at the outset of the research but was enforced due to the global COVID-19 pandemic which restricted face-to-face interaction. Programme delivery shifted to online and as a result the research had to do the same, resulting in the Virtual Phase. This phase spanned seven months and took place online due to face-to-face options not being possible. During this period, I continued to keep a field diary and feedback was still offered to the AP using online platforms such as email and Zoom. Sessions on the Vet Fit programme were delivered solely online using Zoom and a greater emphasis was placed on the online community created through the

Facebook group and page. I embedded myself in both aspects of this, attending, participating in, and observing the online sessions as well as monitoring and engaging with the text-based exchanges on Facebook. In addition, eight semi-structured interviews were carried out with veterans during this period, either via Zoom or over the phone. These individuals were identified for interview in the previous data collection stage.

The final phase of data collection was the Adapt Phase and covered a period of uncertainty in which there was some movement of Vet Fit sessions from online back to face-to-face delivery. This was dependent on the wider circumstances the programme was situated in. Reacting to this, I also returned to attending and carrying out participant observations at the face-to-face sessions on an ad hoc basis, namely outdoor climbing, and archery. Like the three previous stages of data collection, I continued to keep a field diary as well as the ongoing feedback loop with the AP. In this stage further semi-structured interviews were conducted with two more veterans who I developed a rapport with during the online phase of delivery. These took place via Zoom as restrictions remained in place that limited face-to-face interaction. Follow up interviews were also conducted with the three members of AP staff most involved in the Vet Fit programme. During this stage I also gradually phased myself out of the research environment, including reducing my attendance to sessions, minimising engagement in the online community, completing all planned interviews and informing veterans and stakeholders I will no longer be present. This was achieved using a visual infographic (Appendix G) and video which outlined my progress so far and the next steps of the research. This was shared among the veterans and deliverers via email and social media. Beyond this phase and throughout data analysis, communication continued with the AP to offer feedback and discuss the findings of this research.

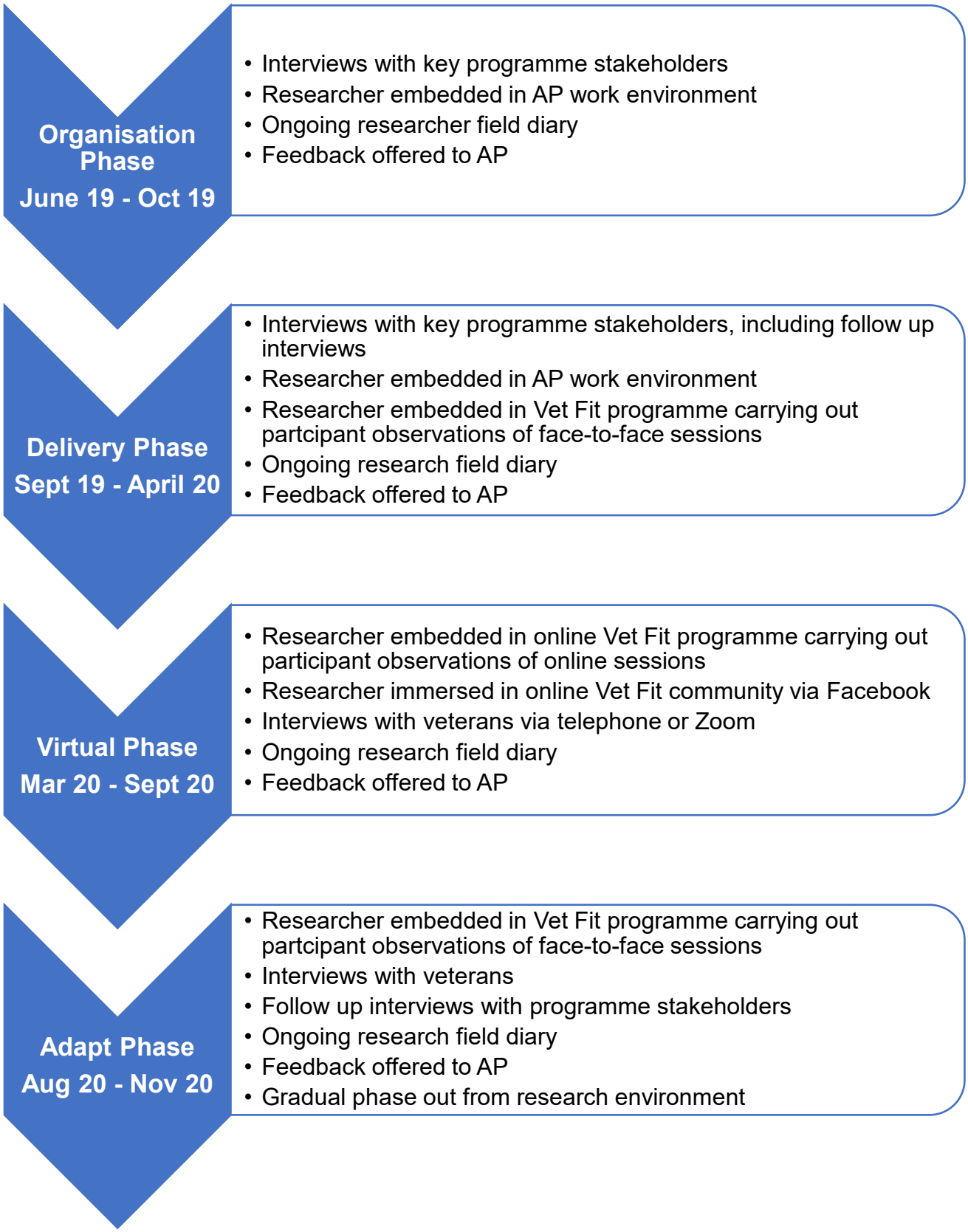

Figure 3 – Four Phases of the Data Collection Process

3.8 Data Analysis

After the interview transcripts had been transcribed verbatim and observation notes typed up, dialogical narrative analysis (DNA) (Frank, 2010) was the analytical approach used to make sense of the data. This was an ongoing approach which took place alongside the data collection phases outlined. Reviewing the wider literature, this approach to analysis has been used previously within military research focusing on the support of veterans. As a leader in this, Caddick, in his own PhD thesis (2014), and then in papers with Phoenix and Smith (2015a; 2015b; 2015) has used DNA to explore combat veterans' narratives around PTSD, in relation to the nature-based activity of surfing.

'To practice DNA is to sustain a tension between dialogue and analysis' (Frank, 2012:34). Building on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), Frank (2010:71-72) explains that DNA,

> studies the mirroring between what is told in the story – the story's content – and what happens as a result of telling the story – it's effects, as well as how the story has been put together in terms of the narrative resources available to the teller.

Therefore, DNA does not only focus on what is said or the resources used to structure the narrative, but also extends analysis further to examine the work that narratives do on, in, for and to people (Frank, 2010; Smith and Monforte, 2020). Frank (2010) also believes that there should not be any method of DNA, meaning that there is no prescribed set of steps the analysis should follow. Instead, DNA should be understood as a 'practice of criticism', which encourages and allows for 'movement of thought' (Frank, 2010:73). DNA's function is to pose questions, giving the researcher carrying out the analysis freedom to decide which of these are the most valuable to emphasise and this aids the movement of thought, spurring imagination and inspiration, leading to greater insight and understanding (Frank, 2010; Smith and Monforte, 2020). Employing DNA enables researchers to use their own imagination and inspiration to consider how participants

construct their narratives, as well as understanding why they choose to present their narratives in this way and the effects of the narrative on, in, for and to people through it being told.

Using DNA in this thesis was an iterative and cyclical process, taking place alongside the data collection phases and continuing beyond. This was a process of moving through each strategy within DNA but also shifting back and forth and jumping between strategies when suitable and necessary. The DNA analysis started with a period of indwelling (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) in which I familiarised themselves with the data. This involved reading and re-reading transcripts, observation notes and field diary entries stored within NVivo (a qualitative analysis software), as well as listening to the interview recordings, where I was living within the data and understanding the participants point of view from an empathetic position (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). During this indwelling period, and using the functions within NVivo, I began loosely theming the data (Smith and Monforte, 2020). This involved identifying themes and relationships between the themes, noting any early conceptual comments, and identifying narratives. This included individual narratives that occurred within transcripts or observation notes in addition to larger narratives developing across the data. It is important to acknowledge that my use of NVivo in this initial stage was primarily for data storage and management, rather than being central to the analysis process and use of theory. It is within the following stages, using Microsoft Excel, in which the core analytical practice of DNA and application of theory occurs. Next, to open up the analysis further, Sullivan's (2012) approach using key moments was employed. Key moments are 'a significant unit of meaning … defined by its readiness for a reply/reaction' and these can be variable in length (Sullivan, 2012:72). They consist of a reasonably bounded narrative which is recognisable as a complete narrative of an experience (Sullivan and Madill, 2010). Key moments were identified during the indwelling process within NVivo and then recorded in an Excel document,

making the data more manageable and allowing me to focus on the pertinent key moments and narratives. The selected key moments were chosen as they were relevant to the research question and aims, but also because they were of interest to me, an approach to selection that Sullivan (2010) encourages. Having identified key moments from the data, these were then organised into a table within a second Excel document where further analytical questioning could take place, as well as carrying out more detailed and targeted analysis drawing on theoretical concepts (Appendix H). This analysis was guided by a set of questions proposed by Frank (2010; 2012) and extended by Smith and Monforte (2020), with some being more relevant at different times than others. These questions can be summarised as follows:

- *Resource Questions* – What resources shape how the narrative is told? What resources do veterans and programme stakeholders use to shape their experiences of the Vet Fit programme? Are these resources different between veterans and programme stakeholders? Under what constraints are resources being used? What might prevent alternative resources being used?

- *Circulation Questions* – Who is the narrative told to? Who is the narrative intended for? Who understands the narrative and who does not? Who would the narrative not be told to?

- *Identity Questions*– What narrative gives the veterans a sense of who they are, and how does the narrative do this? How does the narrative explore who the veterans or the Vet Fit programme might become?

- *Body Questions* – How does the narrative enable or constrain the ways we understand the veterans or programme stakeholders' experiences? How does the listeners' body respond to the narrative and what does that say about the narrative that is being told?

- *Function Questions* – What does the narrative do for and on the veteran or stakeholder telling it? How might sharing the narrative be useful for the individual sharing it? What does the narrative do for and on other people listening to it? How does the narrative shape the tellers' actions, affecting what they do and do not do?

Engaging in these questions as an analytical practice also acts as a marker to demonstrate the quality of this research. Tracy (2010) conceptualises a framework consisting of eight common markers of high-quality qualitative research, offering a common language in which scholars can demonstrate this in their work (section 3.10). Relating to this framework, using these questions to guide the analysis process establishes rigor with clear transparency in the process of organising, sorting, and selecting the data, credibility through the concept of multivocality and considering the multiple and varied voices in the narratives, and meaningful coherence in ensuring the analysis remains focused on the purpose and aims of this thesis working towards what it ultimately set out to achieve (Tracy, 2010). Using these questions alongside the key moments table, outlined within the second Excel document, also facilitated the writing strategy of DNA. The process of writing and re-writing developed the analysis of the identified narratives, key moments, and themes, allowing for multiple readings, different interpretations, and the opportunity to examine different notions. Theoretical concepts and insights were also weaved into this writing process which enhanced understanding as well as offering explanations, recommendations, and learnings. Approaching DNA using these strategies led to the narrowing down and connection of key moments and ultimately the identification of two overarching narratives, one which told the story of the veterans' experiences both in the programme and the military, and another which gave the narrative of the programme and programme deliverers. It is these overarching narratives that will shape the discussion in this thesis.

The analysis was an evolving and gradual process, in which interpretations were developed over multiple revisions. This continued until an account was produced that suitably represented the stories of those involved and the overall Vet Fit programme. However, with the practical need for closure and a deadline to produce this thesis, the discussions presented are necessarily provisional. This relates to Bakhtin's (1981) understanding of dialogue and the commitment of DNA that storytellers should remain unfinalised. Whilst this written thesis addresses the need for an end product, the participants within this research are still alive and therefore able to tell new stories in which they are able to become someone different (Frank, 2010). As such, this thesis does not finalise the participants lives or offer the last word on who they may become.

3.9 Theoretical Framework

Aligning to the abductive approach to reasoning employed in this research, different theories and frameworks were considered to understand and make sense of the data. Due to the nature of the research being to understand the veterans and deliverers experiences, this was always going to be underpinned by a SI lens, however it was an iterative process to decide on the specific theoretical concepts to be used. Reviewing the literature, it was evident that sociological theory and concepts has been applied to this area of research previously, as outlined in section 2.2.3. This included dialogical self-theory (Grimell, 2015, 2017), capital and cultural competence (Cooper et al., 2018), as well as networks (Albertson, Irving and Best, 2015) and culturally meaningful networks (Edelmann, 2018). Acknowledging this, and applying abductive reasoning, it was decided that the concepts outlined below were the most appropriate to understand and make sense of the data collected.

Social theory should not be understood as a definitive explanation, but rather a tool, investigative device or framework for interpretation that needs ongoing testing, refining and

critical reflection (Thorpe, 2011; Pringle and Thorpe, 2017). This thesis broadly adopts a SI lens, a theoretical perspective which focuses on the self and the interpretive work of the self in social interactions (Dillon, 2019). This theoretical lens assumes that the self, social worlds, and societies are constructed through interaction, offering a perspective to look at ourselves, everyday life, and the world, rather than an explanatory theory (Charmaz, Harris and Irvine, 2019). It is this approach that will be employed to examine and understand the experiences of those involved in the Vet Fit programme, including both veterans and stakeholders, and how the shaping of their own identities has been influenced by their past, present, and future experiences, considering their engagement in the programme and beyond. With a focus on small-scale encounters between social actors and the meaning they attach to their behaviour, SI understands identity as a process of negotiation which is relational, communicative, and symbolically meaningful (Scott, 2015). Scott (2015:2) defines identity as 'a set of integrated ideas about the self, the roles we play and the qualities that make us unique'. This highlights the performative, contextual, and changing nature of identity, with expressions varying between setting and meaning shifting in line with situational demands, normative expectations, and group values (Scott, 2015). Adopting a SI lens facilitates the analysis of social processes through which identities are created, shaped, maintained, performed, and challenged (Scott, 2015).

In the social world, individuals hold and enact certain social roles and it is the definitions of self in relation to these that can be defined as role identities (Thoits, 2013). Attached to each role identity are a set of normative behavioral expectations which guide individuals conduct as well as providing purpose and meaning in life (Thoits, 2013). Examples of these role identities include being a veteran, a father/mother or husband/wife, or a footballer. However, across the life course individuals would typically occupy multiple roles, thus possessing multiple role identities that can be activated within different contexts

(Thoits, 2013). These do not always operate in isolation, instead interacting with each other in certain situations (Burke and Stets, 2009). Burke and Stets (2009:140) suggest that there are three ways in which role identities can relate to each other regarding the social structure they are connected to,

> (1) persons may have multiple role identities within a single group, (2) persons may have the same role identities but in different groups, and (3) persons may have different role identities within intersecting groups.

It has been argued that these identities are organised by their salience, the subjective importance attached to the identity by the individual holding it, or prominence, the individual's propensity to draw on this identity in certain situations (McCall and Simmons, 1978; Thoits, 2013). If more than one role identity is activated in a situation, the one which has the higher level of prominence will guide behaviour more than the role identities with lower levels of prominence (Burke and Stets, 2009). Yet, in different contexts there are multiple ways in which role identities can function together. In situations where the identity requirements are in opposition, it is then impossible to enact both role identities, instead a shift must occur with individuals re-identifying themselves and changing the self-meanings held to avoid this conflict (Burke and Stets, 2009). In instances where role identities are unrelated to each other, the activation of one will leave the other unaffected (Burke and Stets, 2009). Finally, where role identities share common meanings, the situation benefits both. Fulfilling and verifying one role identity will fulfil and verify another, with the potential to coordinate outputs that fulfil and verify both (Burke and Stets, 2009). For example, Ives et al. (2021) suggest the use of the salary earnt through work to obtain materialistic goods and services necessary to legitimate the non-work identities of community sport coaches.

To understand how these role identities are performed, this thesis will draw on Erving Goffman's concept of dramaturgy. Roderick and Hickey (2017) explain that performances

and the roles played by individuals are influenced by a combination of the many possible future selves an individual desires to achieve (Markus and Nurius, 1986), the presence of an audience, how such an audience engages with the on-going performance, and how such a performance becomes dramatically realised. Dramaturgy is centred on the idea that life is like a theatre with social actors compared to actors on stage who are constantly performing or playing a role and presenting different characters to the different audiences they encounter (Scott, 2015). How individuals perform their role identities and manage their self-presentation is through using techniques of impression management, which also serve as clear conceptual frames or theoretical tools to explore the research data (Goffman, 1959; Scott, 2015). Schulman (2017) summarises these techniques into six principles, the first that people are performers using impression management to present a sense of who they are. This is the understanding that when an individual is before an audience there will be some reason for them to mobilise their activity, so it presents an impression to others which is in their best interest to convey (Goffman, 1959). This performance can occur in different social spaces called regions, namely a frontstage region in which they are in front of an audience, and a backstage region where actors can take a break from the identity they have been performing (Goffman, 1959; Schulman, 2017). As theoretical tools used to explore data and understand the outcomes of the Vet Fit programme, these are more than just physical locations as they are fluid and variable within social life, a region could also refer to social situations or the composition of the audience. In these spaces' individuals can also work collectively or in performance teams (Goffman, 1959; Schulman, 2017). Performance teams are individuals working together to create or sustain performances for one another or an audience, and individuals within these teams share a common interpretation of what the situation requires from them to be able to produce a team performance (Schulman, 2017), examples include families, co-workers, and sports teams. The aim of impression management is to provide a credible

performance of role identity, and it is this credibility that is essential (Schulman, 2017). To achieve this, performers avoid communicating or acting in ways that oppose the requirements of the performance and spoil it, however, if the performance is spoilt Goffman (1959) outlines several techniques to rectify this (Schulman, 2017). These include defensive measures taken by actors to save their own performance and protective measures used by the audience or other actors to help individuals in sustaining their performance (Goffman, 1959). Understanding these techniques, it is possible to examine how actors present themselves, and their multiple role identities in relation to individual acts and team performances. However, it is also essential to understand how these micro-level acts are influenced and informed by wider, macro-level social conditions and patterns of behaviour.

Mills (1959) encourages individuals to cultivate a sociological imagination, considering how larger social forces, structures and institutions shape, influence, and guide people to perform in the way that they do. Therefore, to connect the examination of individuals identity management and performance to larger social structures, this research will draw on neoliberalism, specifically neoliberal meritocracy (Verhaeghe, 2014) and policy enactment (Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2014). Neoliberalism persists globally and often inspires the diversity of institutional, structural, and expansive changes that take place around the world (Kashwan, Maclean and Garcia-Lopez, 2019). Springer, Birch and MacLeavy (2016:2) explain that neoliberalism generally refers to,

> the new political, economic, and social arrangements within society that emphasise market relations, re-tasking the role of the state, and individual responsibility…the extension of competitive markets into all areas of life, including the economy, politics and society.

Connecting this to presentation of self and fulfilling role identities, Verhaeghe (2014) asks the question, *how does neoliberalism affect identity?,* drawing on the concept of meritocracy to explain this. Meritocracy is the notion that people will get what they deserve based on their own efforts and successes, and this has been fully embedded in the fast paced, globalised free market shaping almost every aspect of life and our identity (Verhaeghe, 2014). This meritocracy has developed into neoliberal evaluation systems focusing entirely on quantitative production, in which quality is determined by measurability. These direct and rigid systems measure production and individual contributions to it, but do not account for local or contextual factors (Verhaeghe, 2014). Applying this to a variety of contexts, Verhaeghe (2014) explains that meritocracy and neoliberal evaluation systems can create an atmosphere of frustration, fear, paranoia, and competition. This is because the environment does not foster team building or a sense of belonging, instead employment is determined on a project-to-project basis, there is worry around job stability, and individuals are working with a focus to extend their own contracts in competition with their colleagues (Verhaeghe, 2014). Favoring certain personality traits, meritocracy and neoliberal evaluation systems are larger scale concepts to consider when examining identity role performance.

Alongside this neoliberal agenda, the concept of policy enactment will also be applied to understand the connections between role identity performance and the fulfilment of wider policy goals. Policies are not prescriptive, instead they create circumstances in which a wide range of options are possible relevant to a particular goal or outcome, and putting these policies into practice is a creative and complex process (Braun et al., 2011). Policy enactment is a concept that understands the multifaceted ways in which policies are recontextualised through reading, writing, and talking, and then contextualised into practice alongside or against situational factors and by different sets of policy actors (Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2014). While policies are often produced by

legislators or Government, the numerous subjectivities of the policy actors will influence how policy is understood, with differences in policy enactments occurring over time and within various contextual dimensions (Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2014). Braun et al. (2011) conceptualises these contextual dimensions into situated, professional, material, and external contexts (Table 13). This framework was developed from the understanding that policies are 'enacted in material conditions, with varying resources, in relation to particular 'problems'. They are set against and alongside existing commitments, values and forms of experience' (Braun et al., 2011:588), therefore it is necessary for these conditions to be considered to gain a richer understanding of policy enactment in relation to the Vet Fit programme. Policy enactments are multi-layered, messy, and fragile social constructions, depending on the perspectives, values, and roles of policy actors, in addition to the different dimensions of context (Maguire, Braun and Ball, 2014). Ball et al. (2011:625) presents seven types of policy actor 'involved in making meaning of and constructing responses to policy through the processes of interpretation and translation' (Table 14). Ball et al. (2011) applies this typology to teachers in secondary schools, the setting in which this framework was developed (Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2014). Likewise, it has also been applied to PE in schools (Wilkinson and Penney, 2016, 2020; Stylianou, Hogan and Enright, 2017; Lambert and Penney, 2020; Janemalm, Barker and Quennerstedt, 2020; Bowles and O'Sullivan, 2020; Wilkinson et al., 2021), but overall there is a lack of research that considers policy enactment in broader contexts, such as community settings. A handful of sport sociologists have led on this, considering policy enactment in professional youth football (O'Gorman et al., 2021), disability and inclusion (Hammond et al., 2021), and swimming (Hammond, Penney, and Jeanes, 2020). This thesis contributes to this work, as the fourth to use policy enactment in SfD and the first to consider military and veteran populations.

Table 13 - Contextual Dimensions of Policy Enactment Derived from Braun et al. (2011).

Contextual Dimensions	Definition	Example
Situated Context	Aspects of context that are historically and locationally linked to the organisation.	Locale, organisations' history, and setting.
Professional Context	Less tangible than the variables within the situated context, focusing on values commitments and experiences, and how they feed into policy enactment.	Values, employees' commitments and experiences, and policy management in the organisation.
Material Context	The physical aspects of the organisation.	Staffing, budget, resources, technology, and infrastructure.
External Contexts	Aspects outside of the organisation on a local or national scale.	Degree and quality of support, pressures, and expectation from broader policy context.

Table 14- Policy Actors and Policy Work, Derived from Ball et al. (2011).

Policy Actors	Policy Work
Narrators	Interpretation, selection and enforcement of meanings.
Entrepreneurs	Advocacy, creativity, and integration.
Outsiders	Entrepreneurship, partnership, and monitoring.
Transactors	Accounting, reporting, and monitoring.
Enthusiasts	Investment, creativity, satisfaction, and career.
Translators	Production of text, artifacts, and events.
Critics	Monitoring of management and maintain counter-discourses.
Receivers	Coping, defending and dependency.

3.10 Evaluation Criteria

In military and SfD research, adopting a narrative approach is still considered to be an alternative and unorthodox way to analyse and represent findings. Smith and McGannon (2018) explain that, with growing developments in qualitative methods and methodologies, it is important for researchers to stay engaged with contemporary methodological thinking on matters like rigor, otherwise, there is the risk of producing flawed, restricted, and dated research. Traditional approaches of demonstrating rigor linked to reliability, validity and replicability are considered not suitable for these expanding and developing qualitative methods and methodologies (Riessman, 1993; Sparkes, 2002). In the domain of sport and exercise, a universal criteria is often used as an indicator of quality and rigorous work (Smith and McGannon, 2018). Sparkes and Smith (2009) explain that a criteria with

specified hallmarks and markers can act as a starting point for judging the quality and rigor of certain kinds of inquiry that are not suited to more traditional approaches. These markers are not specific to certain paradigms, theories, or approaches, therefore, while they provide common markers of quality, some will be more salient in some research than others (Tracy, 2010). It is the responsibility of the researcher, and the reader, to apply this criteria and the specific markers of quality and rigor depending on the paradigm, theory and approach underpinning the research presented. Sparkes and Douglas (2007) demonstrate this, explaining that the list of criteria they provide are intended to act as the starting point for judgement on their poetic representations rather than a standardised template to be used across all research. Other academics with different aims might choose to use different criteria.

In different areas of literature, different judgement criteria have been proposed. For example, with a focus specifically on narrative analysis, Riessman (1993) outlines a criterion of:

- *Persuasiveness and Plausibility*: Supporting theoretical claims with evidence from the informants account and considering alternative interpretations.
- *Correspondence*: Recognising the researchers' reconstructions as credible and returning the work back to the participants in the study to ensure this.
- *Coherence:* Showing that representations are more than ad hoc, and coherence is as thick as possible.
- *Pragmatic Use:* The extent to which the study becomes the basis for others work.

Alternatively, drawing on an array of research in sport, exercise and health, Peacock, Carless and McKenna (2018) propose the following criteria:

- *Meaningful Coherence*: Interpreting the data to create a complete and meaningful picture.
- *Substantive Contribution and Worthiness*: Ensuring the research is relevant, timely, significant, interesting, and contributing theoretically, practically and methodologically.
- *Aesthetic Merit:* Capturing and maintaining the readers' attention, inviting dialogue and questions.
- *Impact:* Affecting the reader on an emotional and intellectual level.
- *Expression of Reality*: Presenting a credible account that embodies a sense of lived experience.

Similarly, sharing concepts included in both criteria presented, Tracy (2010) conceptualises a model containing eight markers of quality in qualitative research. This includes (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence. Recognising the scope covered in this framework, this will be used throughout this thesis, embedding the eight markers in all aspects of the research process to demonstrate and maintain quality and rigor.

Some of these markers have already been discussed, for example the literature reviewed in chapter 2 demonstrates why this is a worthy, interesting, and significant study, addressing the critiques and challenging the assumptions that exist in military and SfD literature. In chapter 3, the procedures for both data collection and analysis are presented with clarity and transparency, demonstrating rigor, another marker of high-quality qualitative research. Furthermore, sections 3.4 and 3.5 outline the underpinning philosophy and methodological approach of this thesis, used to develop a 'thick

description' (Geertz, 1973; Adler and Adler, 1987:17), drawing on data sourced from observations and interviews, considering multiple voices, and understanding the context from the participants point of view. According to the model conceptualised by Tracy (2010) these contribute towards credibility, another marker of quality qualitative research. Finally, section 3.3 presents the possible transferability and generalisability of this study, which is another marker of quality and rigor, specifically relating to the resonance of this thesis and its ability to meaningfully affect the audience as well as wider populations and contexts.

From Tracy's (2010) framework, the markers that have not yet been discussed will feature in later sections of this thesis. This is significant as Smith and McGannon (2018) highlight, if a researcher commits to the use of this criteria, they must do so fully, adopting all eight markers as they share equal importance as indicators of quality. In section 3.11, the markers of sincerity and ethics will be discussed in relation to self-reflexivity and procedural, situational, relational, and exiting ethics. Finally, the discussion and conclusion chapters of this thesis will demonstrate markers of this research making a significant contribution and being meaningfully coherent. However, this has already been set up and informed by the research question and aims outlined in sections 1.1 and 3.2, setting out the aims of this study as well as contributions to knowledge, considering both theory and practice.

3.11 Ethical Considerations and Reflexivity

Before any data collection could take place, ethical clearance had to be sought, this was granted in May 2019. Yet, this was still an ongoing process throughout the data collection with ethical considerations at the forefront of everything that was undertaken. Ferdinand et al. (2007:520) describes ethics in research as 'processual', explaining that,

> It requires ‘self-regulation’, mediated through ‘self-reflexivity’ about the possible effects or implications of the researcher’s presence within, and representation of, the communities they research on the one hand, and the potential implications and consequences of reporting certain findings on the other.

This demonstrates that ethics is something that needs to be considered constantly and this is negotiated through a researchers’ reflexivity and awareness of implications and consequences. Likewise, Sampson, Bloor and Fincham (2008:923) suggest that ethnographers should anticipate risks when entering the field, because, as they describe, it is ‘all part of the job’. Therefore, a lot of responsibility is placed on researchers to be aware of the risks for not only themselves but their participants. There is guidance available to support this, which was considered throughout this research. However, it has been suggested in the wider literature that it is difficult to produce a universal set of guidelines for researchers to follow when it comes to ethics in ethnographic research (Ferdinand et al., 2007). Despite the support available, there is still an individual responsibility to be ethical researchers, finding solutions for dilemmas that are not covered in the provided guidance.

A key aspect to being an ethical researcher is exercising reflexivity. Pringle and Thorpe (2017) explain that it is not the research question which drives a study, but the researchers’ assumptions and theoretical orientations, therefore it is necessary for researchers to critically reflect on the links between their biographies, assumptions, and research approaches. This includes researchers being aware of their own position in the field and how this can influence the setting they are in. In its simplicity, reflexivity refers to ‘turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference’, and understanding that ‘products of research are affected by the personnel and process of doing research’ (Davies, 1999:4; Pringle and Thorpe, 2017). This is increasingly significant in ethnographic study because the researcher is inevitably present in the research process, fully immersed, at the heart of

data collection, and central to the creation of the ethnographic narrative (Olive et al., 2016). Often this is negotiated as a lone act, however Olive et al. (2016) present the value of collaboration to enhance reflexivity, improve awareness of positions and power relations, and be productive in developing new knowledge. Focusing on a feminist perspective, Sampson, Bloor and Fincham (2008:928) explain how some researchers,

> spoke of a desire not to exploit the people they researched; they expressed an acute awareness of the power relationships pervading research settings; they sought to limit harm to participants and often to offer something in 'return' for research participation in the form of emotional support, or the conduct of a personal service.

This is an example of a reflexive and ethical researcher where there is an awareness of impact and an endeavor to limit it, inclusive of potential harm or discomfort that could come to participants. This reflexive approach to research, and strive to be an ethical researcher, was adopted throughout this thesis. Undertaking an ethnographic approach, it was necessary for me to build relationships with the veterans and deliverers, and the familiarity of these relationships had the potential to influence my ability to critique and evaluate the Vet Fit programme. This was something I was aware of and reflected upon throughout the research process and, in doing so, this raised some complex issues surrounding the politics of partnership and evaluation. At times I was kept at a distance by the AP and, as part of the ongoing feedback loop, they were not always receptive to some of the learnings fed back to them. Reflecting on this and my research position, these instances helped me to maintain my evaluator role, as I stayed true to the research, despite the AP not wanting to appreciate or action the learnings provided to them. Maintaining my research position was also supported by the relationships I had developed with the veterans, sharing their personal stories armed me with a sense of duty and wanting to do them justice through this research. This reinforced my position as an ethical

evaluator, engaging in reflexivity, working towards the research aims, and wanting to produce research that positively impacts on these veterans' lives, 'in 'return' for [their] research participation' (Sampson, Bloor and Fincham, 2008:928).

It has also been argued that engaging in self-reflexivity can be used to legitimise, validate, and query research practices, as well as being a marker of high-quality qualitative research (Pillow, 2003; Tracy, 2010; Thorpe and Olive, 2011). As highlighted previously, there is a specific need for this in ethnographic research as usual indicators of validity, reliability and representativeness are not deemed suitable. Instead, researchers need to illustrate how the ethnography was generated, highlighting their methodological and reflexive understanding, to demonstrate sincerity (Tracy, 2010), authority, and authenticity (Souhami, 2020). Researchers cannot be divorced from their autobiographies and it is their feelings, values and beliefs that are central to ethnographic research, with their position influencing their experiences in the field (Lumsden, 2009).

Engaging in reflexivity throughout this research, I also drew upon the concept of intersectionality to develop my understanding on how different dimensions of my social identity impacted on the research. Romero (2017:16) uses the metaphor of a Rubik's cube to 'conceptualise the rotating mix of identities and shifting systems of domination which result in certain social identities being more salient than others at a given time and place.' Appreciating this, it is then possible to analyse the intersection of these dimensions, and how this can increase privilege, disadvantage, or access to opportunities, as well as influence a individuals' position in different social settings (Romero, 2017). It is also possible to recognise how the role of the researcher is flexible and open to change (Adler and Adler, 1987; Westmarland, 2001). During this research there were certain situations where I was positioned as an outsider due to various aspects of my social identity, which included being female, in my mid-twenties, and a civilian. However, there were also dimensions which did not separate me, namely through my ethnicity and sexuality. Both

myself and the veterans were white, with no veterans from ethnically diverse communities engaging in the Vet Fit programme, and conformed to the heteronormative systems, structures, and institutions rooted in society (Herz and Johnasson, 2015). Having these identity features in common, I believe supported my role as a researcher and an ethnographer to integrate with the veteran group and establish relationships. Furthermore, despite the initial observation of sexuality being a common identity dimension between myself and the veterans, this will later be disputed in section 4.4 where discussion focuses on Veteran Lucy's presentation and management of her sexual identity in the military. This was an insight I was provided later in the research, during an interview, and after establishing a trusting relationship with this veteran, which it could be suggested was facilitated by us both being females in the male-dominated environment of the military and the Vet Fit programme

Exploring the aspects of my identity which situated me as an outsider in this research, I was often the youngest person at the Vet Fit sessions, with many of the veterans stating that they would have been in the military at my age and did not have the opportunity to go to university. This difference in age, intersecting with my gender, somewhat influenced my position in the research, with some veterans positioning me as a daughter or granddaughter, and others treating me as naive and unthreatening, thus influencing the relationships I was able to form. Similarly, it was often the case the I was the only female present at the sporting sessions. It is important to consider that this research is situated in a male-dominated environment (Gottdiener and Budd, 2005), and as a female ethnographer I was faced with challenges and complexities which were understood through a reflexive approach. Gender plays an important role not just for me but also the social actors at the focus of the research, who perform gender in social contexts, exhibiting behaviours that are linked to ways of being male or female (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Much like the overall researcher role, the gender roles demonstrated throughout this

research were fluid and changeable (Bucerius, 2013). As such, I was able to use this to negotiate my position in the research with some gender markers granting increased access and others restricting this (Poulton, 2012). This is largely determined by the research context as to what attributes are advantageous (Mazzei and O'Brien, 2009), and in this thesis, this changed between Vet Fit sessions and the AP working environment. In these male-dominated contexts, female ethnographers have also faced pressures to fulfil, often stereotyped, gender roles, including that of a mother (Baum-Talmor, 2019), sister (Pandeli, 2015), being naïve, unthreatening, and trustworthy (Lumsden, 2009; Jewkes, 2011; Souhami, 2020), as well as vulnerable and open to sexual advances (Cassidy, 2014; Pandeli, 2015; Richards, 2015; Souhami, 2020). In this thesis, I had to negotiate my gender, in some situations fulfilling the stereotypes outlined, but this was undertaken with the intention to open productive spaces for exploring and understanding, as well as recognising the impact my actions and social identities had on the research, the participants, and their practices (O'Hanlon et al., 2021a; forthcoming).

3.11.1 Online Ethics

A necessary shift in ethics took place during the third stage of data collection when the research moved onto online platforms. This was due to the COVID-19 pandemic which meant meeting face-to-face was no longer possible, and consequently all Vet Fit programme delivery moved online. This had a direct impact on the research and face-to-face ethnography that had been taking place, as it was then moved into online spaces such as Facebook and Zoom. There is an argument in the academic literature as to why online ethics should have separate or additional treatment when they can be derived from the ethics for offline settings (Ess, 2002; Eynon, Fry, and Schroeder, 2017). In fact, Tuncalp and Le (2014) advocate for barriers between online and offline spaces to be removed and encourage conventional ethnographers to be pulled into online spaces.

Drawing on this literature, it was decided that an amendment to the granted ethics application was not required as the approval granted for offline settings was still relevant and suitable to the new online spaces in which the research was now occurring. This was because, what was being carried out face-to-face was now occurring online, with no change in the methods, methodology or research approach. Therefore, I continued to practice ethics in context, accounting for the circumstances and status of the research participants and represented them as they were and with respect (Toffoletti et al., 2021).

Wider academic literature was examined to support and inform this decision. From this process three key considerations were highlighted that were necessary to consider. The first was receiving consent from the online moderator or admin who oversaw the Vet Fit Facebook pages and groups, in which text-based aspects of the ethnography took place (Cleland, Dixon and Kilvington, 2020). For the private Facebook group, the moderator had to either invite me or accept my invitation to be part of the group, this was deemed as gaining their consent. For the public Facebook page, it has been argued that it is impossible to gain consent from everyone in such a big group, and harm is unlikely to occur when observing normal people doing normal things (Clark, 2013; Toffoletti et al., 2021). Therefore, specific consent was not gained, however the second consideration was to ensure that all the people accessing the Facebook groups and pages, and attending the sessions on Zoom, were aware of my presence and the research I was conducting (Enyon, Fry and Schroeder, 2017). To do so the readability of the participant information sheet was improved and uploaded to all the online platforms included within the research. This information sheet made clear the right to withdraw, and participants confidentiality and anonymity. The final consideration was to ensure that observations were overt, and the researcher was not *lurking* hidden behind the computer screen (Tuncalp and Le, 2014). To ensure this, it was made clear that I was there for research purposes and actively engaged with different activities offered through the online

platforms, mirroring that which occurred when delivered face-to-face. I never remained hidden and was a constant presence on the pages and groups, which also provided opportunities for participants to ask questions about the research and its purpose. These three considerations were acknowledged and deemed to have been addressed within the face-to-face ethnography, so they were adapted to suit the new online settings. As with the face-to-face context, these also continued to be considered throughout the research, working towards being an ethical researcher.

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter has focused on the methodological, paradigmatic, and theoretical aspects of this thesis, outlining, justifying, and discussing the processes that took place. This was discussed with reference to key markers which demonstrate the rigor and quality of this research (Tracy, 2010). First, a rationale for this research was provided, followed by a clear outline of the research question and aims. These are pivotal to ensuring this research achieves what it set out to do in making a substantial contribution to knowledge and practice, a marker of high-quality qualitative research (Tracy, 2010). Next, the qualitative approach used to address the research question and aims was outlined. This included scoping out how the research approach is generalisable, relating to the readers experiences and encounters, considering transferability and how findings fit with the readers situation and actions, and generalisability through reexamining established theoretical concepts using a different methodology, context, and participant group (Smith, 2018). This section also introduced abductive reasoning (Blaikie, 1993), the research strategy of moving between layers of data and applying different theoretical concepts that was exercised across data collection and analysis processes. The chapter then continued to locate this thesis within a social constructivist paradigm (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Burr, 2015), underpinned by a subtle realist ontology (Hammersley, 1992) and an

interpretivist epistemology (Sparkes, 1992; Humphrey, 2011), and the influence this has on research methodology. Specifically, considering the focus on subjectivity, the co-construction of knowledge, and the multiple truths or realities exposed by researchers embedded in the research context. The next section outlined the ethnographic approach (Watson, 2012) used, considering both virtual (Hine, 2017) and organisational (Kitchin, 2017) ethnography, making connections with the research paradigm, strategy, and theoretical framework with the desire to attain a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973; Adler and Adler, 1987:17). This was identified as another marker of quality and rigor drawing on the concept of credibility (Tracy, 2010) illustrated using multiple data sources and considering multiple voices in the research context. In this section, the specific methods prioritised by an ethnographic approach were also outlined, namely observations and interviews. Following this, the next sections concentrated on the four stages of data collection and the application of DNA (Frank, 2010), explaining the processes undertaken for each. This includes the sampling strategy, research participants, and theoretical framework encompassing concepts of dramaturgy (Goffman,1959), neoliberal meritocracy (Verhaeghe, 2014) and policy enactment (Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2014) used to examine the data. Illustrating these processes with clarity and transparency is another marker of research quality according to Tracy's (2010) framework, as this demonstrates rigor. The application of this framework is considered in depth in section 3.10, outlining the eight markers that Tracy (2010) and Smith and McGannon (2018) recommend should be embedded throughout qualitative research to demonstrate and maintain quality and rigor. These markers have been applied throughout this chapter as a means of demonstrating the quality of this thesis. This includes section 3.11, which covers ethical considerations and researcher reflexivity, addressing markers of sincerity and ethics which are vital to quality qualitative research. In outlining the methodological, paradigmatic, and theoretical aspects of this thesis, this chapter also outlined a

methodological gap in the current military and SfD literatures this research exploits. Adopting an ethnographic approach can construct insightful data, contributing to the existing learnings, theory, and knowledge in SfD and military research, in which the application of an ethnographic methodology has been limited.

Chapter Four: Veteran Experiences

4.0 Overview

This chapter presents and discusses key themes from this research, specifically those addressing the aim to understand the experiences of veterans across the military to civilian transition and the influence of the Vet Fit programme. This chapter is split into four sections that each present and discuss key interrelated themes. The first section concentrates on the military to civilian transition considering the influence of the military as a total institution (TI), transition length, and the challenges faced. Following this, attention turns to military identity, using a SI lens to examine how veterans align themselves to this after service, how this is presented, and the influence of gender. The third section extends these themes, discussing how veterans use and manage their military identity, accounting for the management of multiple role identities. This final section considers veterans' presentation of self, regarding a wider performance team, and considering both credible and disrupted team performances. The application of theoretical concepts borrowed from Goffman, outlined in section 3.9, situates this thesis as being novel and original, extending the existing small body of research that discusses identity across the military to civilian transition. This research also disrupts and challenges the assumed binary opposition in the current literature, that veterans experience a *good* or *bad* transition, instead seeking to understand the interactions, experiences, and behaviours of the veterans, as well as gaining greater insight into the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs they attribute to these experiences.

4.1 The Immediate Transition Process

The process of transitioning from the military into civilian life has been a key theme across previous chapters in this thesis. A review of the literature has highlighted that there is a

significant amount of research dedicated to this, most of which adopts a largely negative lens, concentrating on challenges such as PTSD (Higate, 2001; Iverson et al., 2005b; McDermott, 2007; Mobbs and Bonanno, 2018). This thesis widens this focus, appreciating varied transition experiences and multiplicity of outcomes, looking beyond the dichotomy of *good* and *bad*. This research examines different factors that influence the transition process, how and why they do so, and recognises that this is not the same for all veterans who experience it. The following sections will discuss this in relation to the transition, borrowing theoretical concepts from Goffman (1959, 1961) to consider veteran identity and impression management.

4.1.1The British Armed Forces as a Total Institution

Erving Goffman (1961:11) defines a TI as

> A place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.

These are places where individuals are confined to and immersed in an all-encompassing environment, as well as being resocialised into a new batch identity, common and beneficial to the institution. Examples of TIs include hospitals, boarding schools, prisons and religious groups or communities. The military has also been considered a TI (Goffman, 1961; Pershing, 2006; Brown, 2015) and this will be demonstrated drawing on four features of a TI outlined by Scott (2015), in addition to comments from veterans' interviews regarding their own experiences of the military. From this data, it could be argued that the military as a TI is an influencing factor in veterans' transition experiences.

The first of the features outlined by Scott (2015:173) highlights batch living in a TI and 'being treated alike as one anonymous mass.' This draws on a characteristic where

individuals live together, in a confined environment, as one who are treated alike. Applying this to the military, it was evident that living together on military barracks or away on tour, working as one for prolonged periods, encouraged the development of friendships across the institution. Veteran Robert commented that,

> *'There was a lot of friendships that I made … and maybe because of the job I was doing, because I was an engineer, I knew a lot of the chefs and the other things because I was fixing their machines and stuff for them and so you get friendly with a lot of other people.'*

The nature of his position in the military encouraged close social bonds, enhanced by the fact that he and his colleagues were treated alike and encouraged to have a similar mindset, informed by the institution they belonged to. Considering this as a factor influencing transition from the military, some literature highlights instances of veterans feeling isolated and lonely in civilian life (Ahern et al., 2015; Pease, Billera and Gerard, 2015; Derefinko et al., 2018). It could be argued that the TI's feature of batch living and being treated alike is not replicated in civilian life, and thus veterans are no longer surrounded by likeminded individuals and therefore feel alone. In the military, individuals have their identity kits, possessions used to present their identity, (Charmaz, Harris and Irvine, 2019), removed allowing for its members to be treated as one anonymous mass. This could have implications in civilian life, as veterans have to forge their identities using a newfound identity kit (Charmaz, Harris and Irvine, 2019), and undertaking this process as an individual, no longer part of an anonymous mass, could trigger feelings of isolation or loneliness. This is a potential challenge for veterans re-entering civilian life, having to shape their individual identity without previously imposed institutional constraints.

The socialisation process that occurs when joining a TI, such as the military, is another factor with the potential to influence the transition to civilian life. Veteran Robert believes that military personnel are similar individuals, and this is because,

> *'You are almost forced into having the same way of life and [same way of] thinking about life …'*

This can be understood by considering Scott's (2015:173) second feature of a TI in which activities are orientated towards 'a single rational plan or institutional goal', achieved namely through a process of resocialisation. In the academic literature, this resocialisation is called militarisation (Higate, 2001). This is a procedure of being trained into a way of thinking and acting in line with the aims and goals of the military, reducing civilian socialisation skills, and adopting a masculine military identity (Higate, 2001; Brunger, Serrato and Ogden, 2013). For those that join the military, they experience this process of becoming 'one anonymous mass' (Scott, 2015:173), therefore warranting Veteran Roberts' belief that current and ex-military personnel are alike individuals with similar behaviours and ways of thinking.

From their own experiences the veterans acknowledged militarisation and the demands of a TI. Commenting on this, Deliverer Daniel explains that *'in the military you are programmed to do the job that you do…'* reinforcing the militarisation process that occurs, in which service personnel are programmed into behaviours that contribute towards the institutions overall goal, echoing the feature outlined by Scott (2015). Veteran Robert explains that militarisation is achieved through military training where *'they [the military] have broken you'*, removing civilian qualities that are not valued in the TI, *'and then they build you back up again...'*, teaching and embedding assets specific to the TIs' needs. Some veterans highlighted certain physical behaviours and mental qualities they believed

were embedded because of militarisation. For example, Veteran Oliver spoke about basic training and how,

> *'You get taught not only your skills as a soldier, you get taught your mental skills and how to deal with certain situations…'*

This is echoed by Veteran Patrick who highlights that training not only prepares you

> *'to do the physical things, you're training to deal with things mentally…'*

These quotes draw attention to the militarisation process, outlining physical skills as well as necessary mental qualities that contribute towards the achievement of the TI's goal. This also reinforces separation between the military and civilian life in which different skills and qualities are required in each. Therefore, to excel in the military, civilian qualities must be reduced (Higate, 2001).

Deliverer Alex held a unique role in the programme as he was a veteran and the Vet Fit programme lead. Reflecting on his own experiences of the military, he highlights a specific quality cultivated in individuals as part of the militarisation process. Deliverer Alex explains that those in the military are

> *'taught to be suspicious of everything because that's what saves your life, it's looking for things that might be a threat, things that look different, things that aren't your buddies, you should always be aware that there could be a potential threat ... there's still that mentality in the military that you can only trust military people…'*

This suggests that service personnel are socialised into a mentality where they trust only those within the TI and are suspicious of individuals outside of it. This has been echoed in the academic literature which highlights trust as a significant factor, with military personnel and veterans only trusting each other (Shirazipour et al., 2017; Wainwright et al., 2017). However, the literature does not consider the influence of the military as a TI in embedding

and socialising individuals into this way of behaving and thinking. Thus, there is no consideration of the possible conflict between the behaviour and mentality military personnel are socialised into through militarisation, and the behaviours and attitudes that are expected and accepted outside of it in civilian life. One of the veterans commented that militarisation made them a better person and they were able to use qualities gained from this successfully in civilian life. Other veterans acknowledged the impact of militarisation on their civilian life. For example, in an observation of a football session I noted a conversation with a veteran on the way to the toilets.

> *As we were walking, he [the veteran] asked me how I had been, I replied saying that I've been quite busy and he clarified if I was still at uni. I explained that I was, but I don't actually have to be in uni, so it is more about managing my own time. This prompted [the veteran] to share with me that he had done a masters at [a university in the North West]. He said that they just let him get on with it, and that there was not much guidance. He added that being from the military he was used to and therefore expecting to be told what to do, but there was none of that.* (Observation 32)

This demonstrates how some of the qualities and characteristics developed through militarisation, veterans then expect to be evident in civilian life. This is not necessarily the case, and in some instances these qualities do not hold the same value or importance that they did in the military, requiring veterans to learn and adapt. These examples, relating to militarisation as a key feature of a TI, have demonstrated how qualities gained through this process can impact upon the transition into civilian life. Particularly, accounting for a variation of transition experience, with veterans taking their own approach to negotiating and adapting the characteristics gained through militarisation to meet the needs of their civilian life.

The third feature of a TI focuses on 'the unfolding of the daily round in the same place and under the same authority' (Scott, 2015:173). Individuals in a TI are part of a daily regime that is cut off from the rest of society and encompasses all aspects of life. Veteran Michael illustrates this by describing the military as '*insular*', explaining that,

'you live, breathe, and eat with exactly the same people every single day.'

This demonstrates how daily activities such as working, eating, and sleeping are undertaken in the same place each day, with the same people, and in the same routine, constituting the daily round. This links to the first feature of a TI, and the treatment of individuals as one alike anonymous mass (Scott, 2015). This is especially pertinent as Veteran Michael comments that being removed from this regime, and the people who were part of it, was difficult to come to terms with when leaving the military, indicating a potential transition challenge influenced by TI features, that is yet to be considered in the literature.

Similarly, with aspects of daily life occurring in the same space and under the same authority, it was suggested that barriers between work, personal life and recreation became blurred. Veteran Quinn commented that in the military he '*didn't see it as work'* whereas Veteran Patrick explained that he felt his work was never complete, *'even though you were off the clock, you were never not working'*. This feature of a TI, where barriers between spheres of activity have been broken down, transforms the military regime from a job role into a lifestyle. For some veterans, like Veteran Quinn, being part of the military is not just work but an all-encompassing lifestyle they choose to embrace, cut off from external influences. For others, like Veteran Patrick, the military became embedded in aspects of their lifestyle, unable to escape the demands even when they wanted to in their leisure, family, and personal time. These varied involvements in the military lifestyle result in different transition experiences, depending on the degree in which the daily round is embraced. In wider academic literature, this has been considered regarding identity and

how internalising a military identity can influence the transition process, with those that fully internalise a military identity facing greater challenges in their transition to civilian life (Shields, Kuhl and Westwood, 2017; Binks and Cambridge, 2018). Yet, this notion has not been developed further to consider the role of the military, drawing on and applying the concept of TI's. Extending this area and contributing to knowledge, it could be suggested that the military as a TI is an influencing factor in the transition process, depending on how immersed service personnel are in the TI, and the four aspects that define it.

While the military has been identified to break down barriers between different spheres of daily activity, this also creates barriers between those inside and those outside the institution. This is pertinent in section 4.3 regarding the military identity and presentation of self, yet it is also relevant when addressing the features of a TI and how this may contribute towards different transition experiences. Emphasising the division between military and civilian life, Veteran Nathan explains how leaving the military is a significant event '*because it is a complete culture shock'*. This comment reinforces the separation that has been created inside and outside the military, particularly in the lifestyles and cultures that belong to each. This has been addressed in the academic literature considering a theory of culture shock and reverse culture shock to understand the transition process (Hogan, 1983; Pederson, 1994; Bergman, Burdett, and Greenburg, 2014). But, drawing on the concept of TI's, this understanding can be extended to consider the role of the military in shaping military lifestyle and its segregation from civilian life. Veteran Michael describes the military *as 'a very insular lifestyle where everything is done for you'*, reinforcing how all aspects of the daily round occur in spaces that are cut off from wider society and under one authority. This also links to the final feature of a TI, which Scott (2015:173) describes as 'the rigid timetabling and scheduling of activities, imposed by a formal system of rules and body of officials.' Veteran Michael commented

that everything was done for them in the military, and this was echoed by Veteran Quinn stating that,

> *'You don't really grow up in the Army, you kind of get everything looked after. You get mothered and fathered, you do get looked after to the nth degree, and now you're trying to come and stand on your own two feet, it's really hard.'*

Both discuss the timetable of activities that are provided for them, imposed by the system of rules and officials that form military life. Examples from the military include having healthcare and housing provided for them and their families, as well as other daily essentials which are provided to the extent that serving personnel do not have to think of this for themselves. As highlighted by Veteran Quinn, this characteristic of the military could pose a challenge for some when they leave and integrate into civilian life. This is because the timetabled routine and provision of activities, provided by the military, has been removed, and veterans now need to arrange this for themselves. This is another example of how the military as a TI can influence transition experiences, with the different features of the military impacting on veterans at different intensities and in different ways. In this instance, the removal of the rigid timetable and schedule of activities was suggested to pose a challenge in the transition but, considering the other features of a TI (Scott, 2015), these impacts were not always negative or disruptive.

In the academic literature there is a broad recognition of the British military as a TI, and much of this literature discusses this in relation to recruitment and training (Scott, 2011; Swain, 2014), military lifestyle (Scott, 2011), masculinity and resilience (McGarry, Walklate and Mythen, 2014), and hazing (Pershing, 2006). However, few connections have been made between the military as a TI and the transition to civilian life. With a focus on resilience, masculinity, and stigma, McGarry, Walklate and Mythen (2014) briefly recognise the lifestyle of the TI and its legacy, and how this can facilitate complex and

unique transition experiences. Yet, as an area of research this has not been developed further. The discussions featured in this section make connections between the four features of the military as a TI (Scott, 2015) and the veterans' transition experiences, extending Goffman's (1961) concept to consider life beyond the TI. This is a novel and unique application of this concept which contributes to existing knowledge on the military, but also, more notably, that on the military to civilian transition.

4.1.2 The Transition Period

In chapter 2, a review of the literature highlighted the ambiguity that exists around defining the term transition in relation to veterans leaving the military (Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins, 2017). Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins (2017) establish a clear unified definition of transition which encompasses the whole process, as well as outlining the terms readjustment and reintegration, to refer to specific aspects of this (Table 6). Yet, in the literature there is no consideration of how long the military to civilian transition lasts or when the process of readjustment and reintegration start or end. This ambiguity and uncertainty is mirrored in the veterans own transition experiences, and it was evident that transition length was unclear and different for each individual. For Veteran Nathan he commented that,

> *'I don't think I have just transitioned recently, I felt that I was a civvy a while ago'*.

For this veteran the transition process ended a long time ago, possibly soon after leaving the military. Similarly, Veteran Patrick had a short transition, explaining that,

> *'The day I came out, I was out of work for 2 days, and that was just a transition of moving my stuff back into my mums house and then within 2 days I was straight back into work*.'

For Veteran Patrick their transition was leaving the military, physically moving their belongings back home, and starting a new job. This articulation of transition relates to the

physical movement of the person and their belongings out of the military and into a civilian context, troubling the concepts presented by Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins (2017) (Table 6) as the process of readjustment is seemingly absent and reintegration is considered only partially through Veteran Patrick returning to a civilian occupation. In contrast, Veteran Quinn commented *'I don't think it has actually fully happened yet'* suggesting that his own transition is ongoing having left the military eight years ago, at the time of interview. Again, this disrupts the conceptualisations put forward by Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins (2017), because despite having a civilian job and engaged with civilian life for 8 years, Veteran Quinn still feels he has not readjusted or reintegrated and therefore not fully transitioned. This is in stark contrast to the experience of Veteran Patrick, who did not fully consider reintegration and readjustment as part of the transition process. Applying these definitions as conceptual tools to the veterans' transition experiences demonstrates a variability across transition, reintegration, and readjustment. Every veteran undergoes a transition of some form, but this does not necessarily encompass readjustment or reintegration, accounting for variation in how and when these events occur and how long they last. Overall, this reinforces how the military to civilian transition is unique to each veteran that undertakes it, and therefore it is impossible to conceptualise a framework of stages or features outlining how and when it should occur.

One aim of the Vet Fit programme is to support veterans in their transition from the military. However, acknowledging the ambiguity surrounding the transition, this is a complex task. Some veterans articulated a separation between the Vet Fit programme and their transition, explaining that they did not believe there was a connection between the two. Veteran Oliver commented

> '*With regards to the transition, I don't think it [the Vet Fit programme] played a huge part because I think I had a good plan, and it did come to fruition*.'

For Veteran Oliver, his transition was clearly planned and executed before he engaged in the programme. Applying the framework of key terms presented by Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins (2017), executing this plan signified the completion of his transition, marking an end to the period of moving from the military into civilian life. With this established completion of the transition, and his engagement in the Vet Fit programme coming after this, Veteran Oliver is unable to link the two, despite the potential for it to provide ongoing readjustment and reintegration support which, as defined by Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins (2017), do not have fixed start and end points. Likewise, Veteran William states,

> *'It's two different things… if I knew of [the Vet Fit Programme] years ago then I would have joined, but it's just one of them things, you've just got to grin and bear it, get on with it.'*

Like Veteran Oliver, William discussed his transition and the Vet Fit programme as two separate entities, signifying that there was a clear end to his transition. This notion contrasts with the comments made by Veteran Quinn, discussed previously, who believed their transition had not fully happened yet, despite being immersed in civilian life for 8 years. This reinforces a variation across transition experiences, with some veterans having a clear understanding of when their transition ended, and others who recognise it as ongoing. These diverse examples have challenged the framework presented by Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins (2017), as readjustment and reintegration have been considered inconsistently. For those veterans that were able to recognise an end point to their transition, either through time or process, their understanding of transition did not consider the influence of reintegration or readjustment. I argue that this is reflective of the emergent nature of this field, with an increasing trend in this terminology being used over the past decade, and for understanding to be enhanced these terms need to be encompassed into policy and provision delivery to recognise the different facets of transition and how, in practice, they are applied and negotiated by veterans.

4.1.3 Transition Challenges

Applying Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins (2017) conceptualisation of transition terminology, the previous section illustrated the unique nature of veterans' transition experiences, considering different aspects and how these have or have not featured in veterans' appraisals of their own transition. These different aspects include readjustment, particularly the change in lifestyle, and reintegration, considering broader facets of life such as employment, social roles, health, and community involvement (Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins, 2017). In the existing literature, these wider factors have largely been neglected with focus dedicated on military-based challenges including themes of poor mental and physical health as a result of military service (Thompson et al., 2013; Senecal et al., 2019), military characteristics being incompatible with civilian and family life (Sayer, Carlson and Frazier, 2014; Thomas, 2018), and leaving the military with the prospect of unemployment, low income, and unstable housing (Higate, 2000; MacManus and Wessely, 2011). As this has already been discussed at depth, this will be given minimal attention to avoid repetition. However, what remains undiscussed in the literature, and was evident in this research, was the influence of civilian-based challenges. These are the broader facets of life, considered within the processes of readjustment and reintegration (Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins, 2017), which are not military specific and can be faced by anyone, including events such as divorce, bereavement, and relationship breakdowns. While these challenges are commonplace in civilian society, they have not been considered in the literature, focused on readjustment and reintegration, as part of the military to civilian transition.

Veteran Lucy spoke about her choice to leave work and remain unemployed for nearly four years after losing both her parents, she explained,

'There was a very big grief element to all of that, so I've been putting my head together really.'

This bereavement was unconnected to her military service but impacted upon and complicated her reintegration into civilian life, adding another layer of complexity to manage. This was also the case for Veteran Robert who, after leaving the military, was faced with divorce, and relocating to another part of the country. He explains that,

'I was splitting from my wife … so when I moved up here in June it was quite, shall we say, a lonely experience because I was on my own and I didn't really know anyone apart from one person who was a work colleague.'

These challenges present a further level of isolation and need to adapt, to undertake the reintegration process. Having left the military and no longer connected to those he served with, this veteran was without a network of family or friends to support him. This contributes towards his transition experience, as he must manage these personal challenges as part of his reintegration into civilian life. In another example, Veteran Nathan spoke about having to *'deal with everything else that life throws at you'*, this includes,

'work and all the pressures that come with that, and then there is family life, so we've had children, unfortunately we lost a baby as well, we've had deaths within the family, other things as well, we've had relationships with friends that break down, we've had family relationships break down.'

This list of events demonstrates more of the wider incidents that can present challenges to a veterans' reintegration, impacting on their transition to civilian life. Schlossberg (2008) states that these incidents, good or bad, expected or unexpected, can and do happen to everyone and are changes that unsettle us. They can alter our lives, roles, relationships,

routines, and assumptions, explaining why even desired transitions can be disruptive or challenging (Schlossberg, 2011).

While these challenges, both civilian and military based, were evident and discussed in the formal semi-structured interviews, this was not the case in the Vet Fit sessions that were observed. In one-to-one interview settings, between myself and the veterans, these challenges were openly discussed but in the session environment with larger numbers of people, these discussions were notably absent. This was acknowledged briefly by some veterans, particularly in the football session. Veteran Nathan explained that,

> *'none of us talk about any of the experiences that we had … we never talk about the bad things that happened or certain things*.'

Likewise, Veteran Patrick stated,

> *'I don't know where most of the people were at in the military because we don't really talk about our service time … there is some of the lads who I don't know about their military service at all'*.

While these quotes do not shed light on whether veterans liked or disliked talking about their military narratives, they do suggest that there was a shared understanding that service and transition experiences, especially the *bad things*, did not need to be discussed in the session environment. These comments support some of the behaviours observed in the football sessions in which mutual respect was demonstrated between the veteran group, namely through the handshake greeting which occurred at the start and end of each session (Observation 32). This action signified individual's membership to the veteran community and was a performative act which illustrated a shared respect and understanding of experience, having all been part of the military and transitioned from it. They recognised that they all had this experience and, while it might not be the same for everyone, it did not need to be discussed, the unspoken understanding they shared was

enough. It could also be suggested that peer support in this environment is not necessarily about sharing and knowing the lived experience, but just being around peers who have similar shared experiences provided an unspoken comfort. It is unclear whether this silence positively or negatively impacted on the veterans' transition and programme experiences. However, within the transition literature, Harrison et al. (2021) suggests that depending on the type of transition experience, how positive or negative it is and how much social readjustment it requires, people are likely to exhibit different sharing behaviours. This could explain the silence around the military transition in the Vet Fit sessions, due to the nature of the experience and what these veterans, saw, heard, and lived during their military service.

4.2 Alignment with Military Identity

The ambiguity in transition length, which has been discussed in section 4.1.2, is mirrored in the shift between military and civilian identities. This is an area of focus in the literature, with the acknowledgement that military and civilian identities are in opposition and it is not as simple as moving from one to the other (Grimell, 2015, 2017). Adopting a SI lens, Scott (2015:2) defines identity as 'a set of integrated ideas about the self, the roles we play and the qualities that make us unique'. This definition highlights the performative, contextual and changing nature of identity, in which expressions of self vary between settings, and meaning alters in accordance with situational demands, normative expectations, and group values (Scott, 2015). Applying this concept, this thesis extends the knowledge that currently exists around military and civilian identities across the transition, considering situations, expectations and group values that influence this.

For some, their transition to civilian life is accompanied with a shift in identity, distancing themselves from their military ties and aligning more closely to a civilian identity. Building on the work of Grimell (2015, 2017) this was not a shift from one to the other that occurred

overnight, instead this involved a greater level of complexity over a prolonged period. Veteran Nathan explains,

> *'It took me ages to get there and I don't know what it was but I just sort of went 'I am a civvy now', the way I do things. I don't know what it is, but once it happened, a lot of my other hang ups and anxieties and worries and feelings towards some of the things that had happened in the past, they seemed to like start to wash away or they didn't feel as a heavy load if you know what I mean.'*

This describes a process of becoming aligned with a civilian identity over time, influenced by situational demands and expectations of civilian life. Veteran Nathan highlights how stepping away from his previous military identity relieved him of anxieties, worries, and pressures he felt because of it. These anxieties could be caused by normative expectations of the military identity and the burden of meeting these in the civilian society he now belongs to. Whereas, distancing himself from his military identity and developing a closer association to his civilian identity minimises these pressures and worries. Veteran Robert also discussed his alignment to his civilian identity, but in comparison, he acknowledges that there are situations and settings where, drawing on Goffman's (1959) concept of dramaturgy, he does still perform his military self.

> *'I would say I am pretty much a civilian. I would say there are a few people in my work, including my service director, who are ex-military so when we talk it's a bit more military speak … but yeah I would say I am definitely a civilian now.'*

Overall, Veteran Robert identifies as a civilian but, acknowledging the contextual and changing nature of identity, when he is among work colleagues that have also previously served in the Armed Forces, he is able to perform his military identity through engaging in a process of impression management (Goffman, 1959). Therefore, it is not a case of moving from one identity and dismissing the other, but the notion that some identities are

more salient or prominent in certain situations or settings, or within certain groups (Burke and Stets, 2009; Thoits, 2013).

For some service personnel, leaving the military also meant distancing themselves from the military identity they had been socialised into. This was evident for Deliverer Alex, who previously served in the RAF. He explained,

> *'When I left the forces, I didn't feel like I needed that. I left and didn't really keep in touch with anyone, I just got on with things with my family and other friends.'*

Deliverer Alex distances himself from his military identity as a result of the new situational demands of his civilian life, including the expectations of family life which is an aspect that has become more salient as he '*just got on with things'*. However, as outlined by Scott (2015), identity is changing in nature and with further shifts in situations, roles, and expectations there was scope for Deliverer Alex to reengage with his military identity. In his work role as a videographer, he explains *'through making a film, and that getting used to train people about veterans, I then started to reengage with that arena'*, with arena referring to military and veteran communities. Furthermore, his current role, as Vet Fit programme lead, encourages him to reengage with his veteran identity. Tracking a small narrative within Deliverer Alex's wider life story demonstrates the changing situations and demands which have influenced how he aligns to his military and civilian identities. First, being socialised into a military identity in the Armed Forces, then distancing himself from it as he leaves, and later reengaging with it at different points of his civilian life due to work role demands and situations.

Thus far, discussions have concentrated on veterans undergoing the military to civilian transition who have predominantly distanced themselves from their military identity as part of this process. However, for other veterans there was a recognition that the military identity will never leave them, always being part of who they are. This is evident in the

examples provided above in which Deliverer Alex and Veteran Robert reengaged with their military identities when in environments that were suitable to do so, despite identifying as a civilian. In contrast, Veteran Quinn felt closely aligned to his military identity and distanced himself from what he understood to be a civilian, explaining,

> '*I still say civvies ... I still think of myself as Army ... I don't think I'll ever think of myself as a civvy*.'

Being a civilian and fulfilling the demands of a civilian identity was not something Veteran Quinn could do without the influence of his military identity. Other veterans were also this explicit in their belief that the military would never leave them and always be a part of who they are. Deliverer Daniel, a veteran and manager of a veteran support provision, comments that,

> *'The one thing that you can say, and I've heard it lots and lots of times, is you can leave the military, but the military never leaves you.'*

Similarly, Veteran Scott explained,

> *'It [the military] is one of those things that you just can't erase, like I say, it's instilled in you and that's it*.'

These comments highlight that, for some veterans, the identity, skills, and qualities they are socialised into, through militarisation, stay with them even after they leave the military and integrate into civilian life. Alongside other examples presented here, it is evident that a veterans' identity is changeable across the transition process, influenced by their own individual experiences, beliefs, and values. But, with the belief that a military identity cannot be erased or forgotten, it is then something that should be managed alongside other identity roles. This will be discussed in sections 4.3 and 4.4, considering how

identity is presented and managed drawing on Goffman's (1959) concept of dramaturgy and Thoits (2013) notion of multiple role identities.

4.3 Presentation of the Military Identity

Goffman's (1959) concept of dramaturgy, outlined in section 3.9, draws on the analogy of a theatre to consider how social actors perform or play a role. This considers the audience the performance is presented to, the social spaces these presentations occur, and the techniques used to present a credible performance (Scott, 2015). This concept will be applied to the experiences of veterans undertaking the transition from the military into civilian life, to understand how they present their military identities and in what regions this takes place to maintain a credible presentation of self and not disrupt the civilian performance that is now expected. The previous section outlined that there was a belief among some veterans that the military would always be a part of their identity, no matter how long ago they left and rejoined civilian life. As such, using the concept of dramaturgy (Goffman, 1959), how military and civilian identities are presented in civilian life can be investigated.

For some veterans, they expressed their military identity in backstage spaces only. Backstage spaces can be determined by a specific social situation or the composition of the audience (Schulman, 2017; Goffman, 1959). In this instance, backstage spaces are informed largely by the audience and the exclusion of close family members and friends, as well as wider members of civilian society. The veteran experiences that demonstrate these backstage regions focus specifically on workplaces. Veteran Lucy explains,

> *'…often they [work colleagues] would only discover that I had any sort of time in the military when I had been working for them maybe 4 or 5 months and you can see*

people; "when were you in the Army? You never said anything about that!" You know, but it wasn't something I really wanted to talk about.'

Veteran Lucy chose to withhold presenting her military identity in frontstage regions, characterised by civilian audiences which in this example were work colleagues. These individuals were completely unaware of this aspect of her identity until she was prepared to reveal it to them. This would suggest that she effectively managed her presentation of self, as she was able to keep the performance of her military identity confined to backstage regions. It is also evident that the motivations for doing so were informed by her military experiences which she did not want to discuss or share with a civilian audience. Similarly, Veteran Michael discussed his motivations for getting a job as a caretaker in a school, explaining he did so because

'nobody that I work with really knows my background, and I quite like that because then they can't prejudge me.'

This links to some existing literature which highlights how veterans do experience stigmatization and discrimination when seeking civilian employment (Iverson et al., 2005b; Walker, 2010; Boulos and Zamorski, 2016; Keeling, Kintzle and Castro, 2018). The experiences of Veteran Lucy and Veteran Michael demonstrate the application of dramaturgical circumspection, a defensive attribute and practice outlined by Goffman (1959) in the art of impression management. Dramaturgical circumspection refers to the exercise of 'prudence, care and honesty' in an individual's presentation of self' (Goffman, 1959:212). Circumspection is exercised in these instances as both veterans are selective in their audiences and who they choose to present their military identity to. Both believed that their civilian work colleagues would not support their military identity claims and thus decided to keep this aspect of themselves hidden in backstage regions. This created a

frontstage presentation of self in the work environment that their military identity and connections were not part of.

This decision to keep the expression of the military self-confined to backstage regions was also echoed by other veterans, who provided analogies to explain how they managed this. As outlined in sections 4.1.3 and 4.2, being silent about their military and transition experiences, or '*just [getting] on with things'* (Deliverer Alex) were approaches taken by some veterans. Yet, acknowledging that there where spaces and places they could and could not express their military identity, others adopted specific approaches to manage this. Veteran Oliver uses the example of putting his military identity into a box, keeping it in a cupboard and accessing it when in the right environment with a suitable audience.

> *'...having spent 28 years in the military it is a huge part of me and, as much as I'm quite happy to kind of put it away in a box, I still like the opportunity to engage with things and with people that you know can appreciate what I've done. So, it's kind of holding on to something that was a big part of my life … it's just those conversations that brings a smile to you. So, I think for me now it's more like an unwillingness to put the box fully in the cupboard, it's like a guilty pleasure almost…'*

Veteran Oliver described expressing his military identity as a guilty pleasure, choosing to do so when in the presence of an audience that can appreciate this, thus it is the audience which dictates the regions it is expressed. He acknowledges that the military is a significant aspect of his identity but uses dramaturgical discipline and circumspection (Goffman 1959) to manage this. First, circumspection is employed, echoing its use in previous examples, to select an audience that will support the identity being presented. Here Veteran Oliver chooses to engage in his military identity when around people that understand this and the experiences he has had because of it. It is likely that this audience will be other veterans or those who have an appreciation of the military. Next, he

engages in dramaturgical discipline, carefully managing the impression he creates, to appear casual while concealing the work that is being undertaken to do so. Despite recognising that his military identity is a significant part of who he is, Veteran Oliver remembers the overall part he is required to play in civilian society, keeping his focus on the impression he is creating and that it continues to be credible. To achieve this, his military identity is kept in the box backstage and, he is only able to engage in this guilty pleasure with an audience that will appreciate it and not disrupt the overall presentation of the civilian self that is now required of him.

For those veterans who shared analogies to explain how they managed their military identity, they also outlined how this helped to handle some of the negative and challenging memories that were associated with it. Using the analogy of a box, Veteran Quinn spoke about how he managed his military identity and the challenging memories that were attached to it.

> *'I've done the typical male thing of put it in a box and you just crack on, and a lot of my time after the Army has been trying to deal with that. So everything in the Army was about aggression…However, you can't really do that when you are out in Civvy Street[2] you have to be more in touch with your feelings, you have to communicate better and all the rest of it, so I've put all the stuff that for me brings up bad memories in a box and sealed them away with the anger and those type of stuff and I've been okay, I've been pretty decent.'*

Veteran Quinn highlights how aspects of his military identity are incompatible with civilian life and, to deal with this, he puts it in a box and seals it away. This suggests that the expression of his boxed away military identity is confined to backstage regions, which then

[2] Reviewing the literature, the term 'Civvy Street' does not appear to be defined or conceptualised, especially in the research regarding the military to civilian transition. In this thesis, 'Civvy Street' refers to life and work that is not connected to the military or Armed Forces.

allows him to maintain a credible frontstage performance in civilian life. Linking back to the discussions in section 4.1.2, this choice to box away his military identity and the accompanying bad memories, rather than deal with them, could account for Veteran Quinn's feeling that his transition is still ongoing, despite having a civilian job and engaging with civilian life for 8 years. It could be argued that putting aside this aspect of his identity, while allowing him to present a credible frontstage civilian performance, prevents him from readjusting, reintegrating and therefore fully transitioning into civilian life. This is also a further example of dramaturgical discipline (Goffman, 1959) when managing emotions, actions and memories linked to his military identity, to ensure they do not impact his civilian performance. This also links to face, another of Goffman's (1967) concepts which can be understood as Veteran Quinn maintaining a respectable presentation of self in civilian life, aligned with the norms and values of the setting, but also having implications for his own image and esteem. This is reflected in his comment that he has been '*okay'* and '*pretty decent'*, suggesting that he believes he has been effective in boxing away his military identity into backstage regions and maintaining a frontstage face in keeping with civilian values and norms. To support this, Veteran Quinn added that he *'went to see a therapist, trying to figure out how I need to put this back in its box'*, referring to previous instances where he has not been able to successfully maintain his civilian face. As an example of dramaturgical discipline (Goffman, 1959), Veteran Quinn is undertaking extensive work in backstage regions to manage and maintain his frontstage civilian performance. The backstage work in this example is undertaken with the support of a therapist to restrict his military self to backstage regions and sustain his credible frontstage performance.

Another analogy employed by a veteran to manage their military identity was the use of rooms and doors. Like that which has been discussed previously, Veteran Patrick believes that his military identity and experiences will always be present and part of who

he is, however he feels this is something he is able to switch on or off when he needs to. Veteran Patrick explains,

> *'...what I do or what I tend to do with things is I put them in doors. So, in my mind, I've got doors, the doors can be reopened, they are not locked. I have this thing where I'll open a door and I'll let myself out, but I get to a point where I come out of that door and I close it again. So, I've got rooms with doors and that's the way that my mind works ... that was the best way for me to deal with things. So, coming into the [football] team and hearing experiences of other people I was able to open my door and speak to more people about it. My girlfriend didn't know any of my military experiences and I've been able to open up to her and her family and talk about my military experiences, before I have never done that.'*

In this analogy, the rooms and doors demonstrate how Veteran Patrick shifts between frontstage and backstage regions amending his presentation of self accordingly. Using the example of the football team as a frontstage region, again influenced by the composition of the audience, this is where he can express his military identity, signified by the opening of doors, and draws on the three defensive practices and attributes outlined by Goffman (1959). Veteran Patrick engages in dramaturgical loyalty by excluding those from backstage regions who cannot be trusted, which have previously included his girlfriend and her family. There is also the obligation that his teammates, in this instance his football teammates, will not betray their shared secrets held in these backstage regions, such as how they manage their military identities to upkeep a credible frontstage performance. This analogy also demonstrates dramaturgical discipline, in the way that Veteran Patrick carefully manages his performance in front and backstage regions to deal with social situations in a manner that does not disrupt the overall impression he is trying to create. Finally, echoing previous examples, dramaturgical circumspection is exercised through the careful selection of the frontstage audience, ensuring the selected individual's support his

identity claims. It is evident he chose to hide the performance of his military identity from his girlfriend and her family as he was unsure if they would support these claims. However, linking this back to the conceptualisations of transition terminology presented by Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins (2017), now being able to open up to his girlfriend and her family could be recognised as an aspect of his reintegration into civilian life, as he is able to fulfil his social roles as a partner and family member, facilitating more effective social engagement and functioning. This is despite his earlier suggestion, discussed in section 4.1.2, that his overall transition only took 2 days, moving his belongings home and starting a new job. Recognising that he is still in the process of returning to some social roles and forms of engagement, it could be argued that he is still reintegrating into civilian life, and therefore, as an aspect of transition, this is still ongoing.

Across all these examples and analogies, there is a clear management process which takes place to ensure the enactment of the military identity is confined to backstage regions, and these regions are informed by the composition of the audience in that they are areas from which wider civilian society is excluded. Supporting this with wider literature, parallels can be drawn to the process undertaken by Muslim women who find and create safe sporting spaces that allow them to negotiate their ethnic and religious identities while engaging in sport and active recreation (Thorpe et al., 2020). While this example from the literature focuses on a different community of people, the process of navigating identity and culture within different spaces or regions is the same.

In most instances, the veterans were able to effectively manage their military identity. However, there were also some occasions where this was not successful resulting in the civilian performance to be disrupted. Veteran Michael described the following example,

> *'So, I spent a couple of days at home, couldn't settle so we went to Blackpool for the weekend. I spent the whole weekend patrolling wherever I walked, so I would*

turn, I was watching people, I wasn't concentrating on who was with me, I was looking at the people walking past, and the funniest part about that was walking through the big car park near the tower, somebody's car alarm went off, she turned round and I was underneath the car because it sounded like a mortar alarm. Of course, what she doesn't know is, 3 weeks prior to that we'd had a mortar attack where I'd opened the door to the accommodation and I had gone outside for some fresh air and the mortar landed about 3 feet away from me but didn't go off. So, I closed the door, went back in, and just thought wow, okay. So, when that alarm went off again you know it's just one of those things, it's just a reaction thing.'

Drawing on language used by Goffman (1959), this occurrence would be described as an incident, or more specifically an unmeant gesture. This is an unexpected event that disrupted the version of reality fostered by the participant, causing the performance to grind to a halt, and give off a contradictory impression (Scott, 2015). The actions of Veteran Michael, laying underneath the car in response to the alarm, contradicts the civilian impression he wants to create as well as the behaviours expected in civilian life. Yet, when this action is situated in a military context, it can be recognised as one that would be expected and aligned to the demands of his military identity. This demonstrates a blurring of front and backstage regions in which Veteran Michael has been unable to successfully manage his presentation of self in each. Front stage, this response to an alarm causes a scene, challenging the polite behaviours presented by civilian others. However, if situated in a backstage region, accessible to those who share a military identity, they would echo this response.

Attending and observing the sport and physical activity sessions on the Vet Fit programme, the researcher observed instances of veterans managing their presentations of self. Humour was a technique used by veterans in the sessions as a defensive practice to maintain, defend or save their presentation of self and the role identity claims they

presented (Goffman, 1967; Scott, 2015; Schulman, 2017). There is a growing body of literature focusing on the use of humour as a powerful tool in impression management (Bitterly and Schweitzer, 2018, 2019) considering contexts such as media interviews (Chovanec, 2021), healthcare settings (Cain, 2012; McCreaddie and Payne, 2014), and workplaces (Roberts, Cha and Kim, 2014; Esholt, 2019). Instances of accidental humour arise when there is a clash between social norms and the expectations governing the front and backstage contexts, and this can manifest as unguarded honesty, non-standard language, or impoliteness (Goffman, 1981; Chovanec, 2021). It was the use of accidental humour in the form of unguarded honesty that was observed in the football session. While waiting to get access to the venue,

> *One of the guys asked why we were all stood waiting down here and the other explained that we had to wait for the kids to finish and leave before we were allowed in for safeguarding reasons. [A veteran] then commented "oh, no grooming tonight then!" After saying that he turned and pointed at me saying "I was only joking", as if he almost forgot I was there, realising his comment might be a bit near the knuckle.* (Observation 30)

In this encounter the veteran appeared to forget about the presence of a civilian audience and therefore continued to manage his actions and presentations as if in a backstage region. This humour and unguarded honesty is likely to have been uncontested and unchallenged within a backstage region, surrounded by individuals who share a common military identity. However, he recognises, for the civilian audience witnessing this frontstage performance, this humour may challenge social norms and expectations, as he refers to behaviours considered deviant in society. This demonstrates how he has misjudged his participation in this social interaction. As a defensive practice, the veteran continues to engage with this humour to defend his presentation of self, clarifying and explaining his joke to the civilian audience. This is to make sure it is fully understood by

the audience as a joke which was not intended seriously and does not damaged the impression he seeks to maintain.

In another example, observed by the researcher at the football sessions, humour was used once again as a defensive practice.

> *It was one of the lads birthdays so [the coach] encouraged everyone to give him a round of applause, but one of the lads piped up and asked 'can't we get him naked and shoot balls at him in the goal?' Everyone laughed but then he looked at me and said, 'don't put that in your report; dear diary, the ugly one got naked', everyone laughed and looked at me.* (Observation 4)

The veteran uses humour to defend not only his own performance, but the performance of his team members. Everyone in the group acknowledged the joke and shared in the humour, however my presence prompted further clarification, recognising the potential for this unguarded honesty to be misjudged and conflict with civilian social norms. The veteran does this by engaging in further comicality to defend the performance presented by himself, the other veterans, and their collective as a performance team. This action brings the other veterans into the social exchange who support and reinforce his identity claims and performance. This further humour also situates me as a civilian audience member, highlighting the potential jarring between the social norms and expectations governing civilian society, the Vet Fit sessions, and the military. In addition to being positioned as a civilian audience member, references to my *'report'* and *'diary'* also draw on my identity as a researcher, illustrating the multiple role identities I was managing and presenting within this social encounter. While both identities are highlighted within this incidence of humour, it is predominantly through my researcher identity in which I become the subject of the joke.

These examples demonstrate some of the techniques and strategies used by veterans to manage their military identities in civilian life to maintain a credible performance. This is continually managed in both front and backstage regions and, as the last example reveals, not doing so can severely disrupt the civilian presentation of self. Continuing to focus on managing the military identity, attention will now turn to the influence of gender, concentrating on the function of masculinity in the military identity.

4.3.1 Military Identity and Gender

Section 4.1.1 discusses militarisation, the process which occurs when individuals join the military, becoming socialised into a military environment and adopting a military identity (Higate, 2001). There is a significant body of literature focused on underpinning the military identity and exploring its connections with gender. Across this, there is a consensus that the military is male-dominated, privileging that which is male, emphasising traditional expressions of hegemonic masculinity, and encouraging 'manly' characteristics such as aggression, competition, dominance and being physically strong (Higate, 2003; Connell, 2005; Hale, 2008; Brunger, Serrato and Ogden, 2013; McAllister, Callaghan and Fellin, 2019). Some scholars have conceptualised a *hegemonic military masculinity* that encourages heteronormative masculinity, centred on physical and mental strength, emotional control, and competition (Higate, 2003, 2016; Hockey, 2003; Hinojosa, 2010). Recognising this connection between military identity and gender, there were examples of this being performed in the Vet Fit programme.

The first example occurred during a football session while the veterans were engaging in the activity.

> *… during this match [a veteran] went down after a tackle. During the break he came to the sideline sat down and grabbed a drink quickly and you could see that*

his knee was grazed and swollen. He then got up again and limped back onto the pitch to continue playing but you could see he was struggling. At the end of the match, he walked back over to the sideline and you could see that it was even more swollen, I said to him that it looks sore and to definitely get some ice on it. He kind of brushed this off saying he would and that he was sure it would be fine.
(Observation 26)

While much of the previous discussions have presented the Vet Fit sessions as a backstage region where the military identity is performed, for the veterans this is also a frontstage region as they are required to maintain their military identity in the presence of their peers. The football session is a frontstage region where the masculine military identity is expressed and understood, but also bound in norms and expectations of this identity role. These norms and expectations are informed by and embedded throughout the militarisation process, undertaken by all individuals joining the military. Despite no longer being part of the TI, the veterans continue to adhere to the expectations of the masculine military identity. This can have implications for the Vet Fit programme, in which different environments can place various demands on veterans and their identity performance, and it would be essential to ensure that these programme environments do not present additional transition challenges or identity issues. This is evident in this veterans' decision to play on despite having a visible injury to his knee which was impeding his physical abilities. This demonstrates attributes of the masculine military identity, which have been identified in the literature, including the need to be physically strong, showing no signs of weakness or needing help (Hinojosa, 2010; Brunger, Serrato and Ogden, 2013; McAllister, Callaghan and Fellin, 2019). Linking back to the veteran support literature, in which different types of activity were used to address different *issues* such as PTSD or injury (Caddick and Smith, 2014), it could be suggested that these varied activities can lend to different identity performances. In this example using football,

attributes of the masculine military identity are performed, aligned with the expectations of the environment, whereas activities such as yoga or swimming may require an alternative identity performance, perhaps more distanced to that of the masculine military identity.

This presentation of the masculine military identity can also be understood as dramatic realisation (Goffman, 1959) in which veterans exaggerate their role performance. The purpose of this is to ensure the audience observe this performance and make the intended role attribution, which in this case is being 'manly', strong, and not needing help, leading to the designation of a masculine military identity. There is also scope here to link this to the work of Judith Butler (1990) who sees gender as provisional, shifting, and performed. In her work, Butler (1990:191-192) describes gender as,

> an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts* … a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audiences, including the actor themselves, come to believe and perform in the mode of belief.

Thus, gender is a social identity enacted by individuals, validated by society, and dependent on the cultural framework in which it is performed. Therefore, to give a convincing performance the veterans could not act superficially, instead embracing the military role identity and shifting their gender performance dependent on social and cultural settings, during and after their military service, and in the presence of other ex-service personnel (Butler, 1990; Scott, 2015; O'Hanlon et al., 2021a).

In the football sessions, the veterans' masculine military identity was also enacted, specifically in how they greeted and said goodbye to each other. At most sessions I observed that *the players greeted each other and the coach with handshakes* (Observation 4) and this was the pattern of behaviour that took place in nearly all football sessions. Tie signs are non-verbal symbolic gestures (Goffman, 1971), and handshakes

are an example of these as they signal a pre-existing bond and demonstrate legitimacy. In this session, the handshake greeting appeared to be a sign of not only their masculinity but also the veterans belonging to the group and their mutual respect towards each other. This symbolic action demonstrates a collective identity which all the veterans have access to, and their own place within this collective. It has been identified in the literature that gender is the most important factor influencing non-verbal behaviours, with significant differences between men and women (Butler, 1990; Bowman and Compton, 2014). For example, men were identified to be less comfortable with intimate greetings and less likely to display physical intimacy with other men, with handshakes the recognised greeting between male friends. It has been suggested that these greetings between men are enactments of their masculine performance (Bowman and Compton, 2014). Applying this literature to an observed example at the end of a football session, I noted,

> *As I was walking round the corner into the car park, I spotted [one veteran] hugging [another veteran]. I am not sure why as I couldn't hear the conversation, but I thought it was interesting considering the news about the lad taking his own life earlier in the session and the contrast of hugging in the car park, to the more formal handshakes in the session*[3]*.* (Observation 32)

The observation of two veterans hugging in the carpark outside is in stark contrast to the behaviours observed in the session. The carpark could be identified as a liminal space (Turner, 1969; Van Gennep, 1988; Dale and Burrell, 2008), as discussed in section 3.4.5, but also a backstage region where the masculine military identity no longer needs to be upheld. This is demonstrated by hugging, instead of the usual handshake used as the

[3] The football sessions on the Vet Fit programme were part of a wider community scheme which provided footballing opportunities for amputees, the deaf and disadvantaged youth. It was that evening, all those in attendance found out that one of the members of the disadvantaged youth team had taken their own life earlier in the week. One of his close friends was present at the session that evening and asked to hold a minute silence in memory of his friend. Everyone in attendance, including the veterans, appeared to be shocked by the news and all respected the silence that was held, shaking the young man's hand and paying their respects before leaving.

accepted tie sign in the session. With hugging considered more intimate and a feminine action (Hewitt and Feltham, 1982; Felmlee, Sweet and Sinclair, 2012; Bowman and Compton, 2014), it could be suggested that this occurred in the backstage region of the carpark as they were excluded from the veteran group and, felt it would not be seen or damage the masculine military performance they have upheld in the frontstage region of the session. Yet, as myself and some of the other veterans walked round the corner and witnessed this social encounter, an inopportune intrusion (Goffman, 1959) occurred. This has the potential to damage and discredit the veterans' presentations of their masculine military identity that they have upheld within the frontstage region of the session. Recognising and addressing this, the audience members witnessing this social encounter engaged in tactful inattention (Goffman, 1959), pretending not to see the veterans hugging and avoiding confronting the issue as it would cause a scene. This saves not only their own face but also the face of the veterans seen hugging and acting out of character.

The examples presented demonstrate the influence of gender on the presentation of the military identity, in which veterans continue to adhere to the expectations embedded through militarisation (Higate, 2001). This is considered in relation to continued engagement despite physical injury with the intention to not be seen as weak (Hinojosa, 2010; Brunger, Serrato and Ogden, 2013; McAllister, Callaghan and Fellin, 2019), as well as the enactment of the masculine military identity through accepted tie signs in the frontstage regions and how this contrasts with backstage behaviours (Goffman, 1959, 1971). This focus will now continue in the following section, concentrating on how the military identity is used and managed by veterans across different regions, in conjunction with other multiple role identities.

4.4 Using and Managing the Military Identity

As discussed in section 2.3.3, there is a small body of sociology literature that focuses on identity across the military to civilian transition, considering both military and civilian identities. However, consideration of other identities, broader than these, is absent and a key gap in this literature. This thesis expands on these existing ideas, considering the other multiple role identities held by veterans, which become activated in different contexts (Thoits, 2013). These role identities each have a set of normative expectations attached to them which guide and conduct an individuals' behaviour, examples include being a father/mother, husband/wife, athlete, as well as work roles (Thoits, 2013). They do not always operate in isolation and can interact with each other depending on the situations they are activated in (Burke and Stets, 2009). They are organised depending on salience, the importance attached to the identity by the person holding it, and prominence, an individuals' propensity to use the identity in certain situations (McCall and Simmons, 1978; Thoits, 2013). The following section explores the multiple role identities held by veterans, how they are activated in the process of leaving the military and engaging in the Vet Fit programme, and how this impacts on learning around programme delivery.

Many of the veterans engaging in the Vet Fit programme had their own family commitments and therefore held family role identities. These included being a mother/father or husband/wife. Focusing on fatherhood, the cultural definitions of being a father have shifted over time, as have men's identities within their families (Day and Lamb, 2004; Fletcher 2020). It has been suggested that, compared to mothers, fathers interact less frequently, engage in different types of interaction and are more involved in play, with sport and activities within leisure settings playing a crucial role in fathering practices (Minton and Pasley, 1996: Fletcher, 2020). Men who place an importance on their family role identity, view their father status as central to their overall identity, and are more actively involved with their children, compared to those who place less importance on this

(Pasley, Petran and Fish, 2014; Fox et al., 2015). It has also been suggested that the father role identity is influenced by others' perceptions, in particular a wife's opinion of her husbands' fathering abilities (McBride et al., 2005; Fox et al., 2015). However, wider circumstances or constraints, such as work, can prevent men from enacting their identity as a father, and therefore it can be misleading to rely on time-based measures of father behaviours as indicators of the salience and prominence of the father role identity. (Roy, 2004; Fox et al., 2015; Fletcher, 2020). It is evident in this study that certain family role identities were largely incompatible with the military identity, meaning that they were unable to enact both. As Burke and Stets (2009) outline, a shift must occur to avoid this conflict with individuals re-identifying themselves and changing their self meanings. For example, concentrating on his father role identity, Veteran Oliver explains,

> *'I think it was time to call it a day, but it wasn't because I was bored or disillusioned or unhappy or it wasn't challenging, it was just that it came to that point where I had to look after my family because if you speak to my wife, even my kids, for 50% of the key events in their lives so birthdays, Christmases, all those sorts of things, you know the growing up, walking, I was never there.'*

This evidences Veteran Oliver's inability to fulfil the expectations of his role identity as a father alongside his military identity. This is because his military identity was removing him from contexts in which he would enact his role as a father and took away the opportunities in which he would typically perform this, naming events such as birthdays and children taking their first steps. A subsequent shift then occurred, to re-identify himself and change his self-meaning, in his decision to leave the military, stepping away and reducing the importance of his military identity. This is reinforced in Veteran Oliver's comment that,

> *'One of the big things for me was to be able to come home and sit and have tea with my kids and my wife, and I get to do that every single night*.'

This demonstrates some of the decision making behind his choice to leave the military, suggesting that his family role identity holds more salience and was therefore activated and prioritised ahead of his military identity. Thus, he chose to leave the military, align himself to his family role identity and remove the conflict that occurred. In another example, Veteran Scott faced a similar dilemma, he outlines,

> *'I wanted to start a family, so did she [my wife], but she didn't want me to be going away anymore, which at the time I thought fair enough … I knew deep down I didn't want to leave but I was toying between her and the regiment, her and the regiment constantly all the time.'*

This example continues to highlight the incompatibility of military and family role identities, especially during military service. This comment suggests that Veteran Scott was unable to fulfil both roles, having to '*toy'* or choose between the two. It could be argued that his family role identity is most salient, holding a greater level of importance, however his military identity is more prominent, drawing on this more often, hence why this is such a difficult situation for him to manage. Ultimately, Veteran Scott made the decision to leave the military, with the importance of his identity as a father outweighing the prominence of his military identity, especially in contexts outside of the military and in civilian society.

Continuing this focus on family role identities, a possible conflict was also faced by some service personnel who held the role of a husband/wife. It was apparent that being a husband and fulfilling the expectations of this identity was incompatible and conflicted with the demands of a military identity. Veteran Tom explains,

> *'They always say the military is for a single man's life, not a married man's life because when you think about it, we are always on exercise … Can you imagine a married man with a wife and kids, he was never there, he was always away, and that puts pressure on a marriage doesn't it?'*

This highlights how meeting the demands of the military identity reduces the capacity to fulfil the role of a husband/wife. This is not possible because, in meeting the demands of the military identity, individuals are then not present in the appropriate circumstances to enact their role identities of a husband/wife, spending significant time away for their military service. Once more, this provides military personnel with a decision to make, influenced by the salience and prominence (McCall and Simmons, 1978; Thoits, 2013) of the multiple role identities they hold. A SI perspective, and the concepts of prominence and salience, have been widely applied to understand family role identities, including the level of involvement, the importance attached to them, and how they are fulfilled alongside work roles (Olmstread, Futris and Pasley, 2009; DeGarmo, 2010; McLaughlin and Muldoon, 2014). McLaughlin and Muldoon (2014) identify the clear interplay between work and family role identities, with reported advantages to combining both, as well as conflicts. For some, the work identity took central importance because of threats such as insecure employment or competition, and in this instance, the significance of maintaining income for the family was prioritised over engaging with family members (McLaughlin and Muldoon, 2014). For other husbands and fathers in particular, the perceived costs of being a working father, such as being in the military, prompted negative emotional spillover where the impact of work had a detrimental impact on family relationships (McLaughlin and Muldoon, 2014). Adopting the same theoretical lens, this thesis supports the wider literature in highlighting the tensions evident when navigating family, parent, and work role identities, and extends this by considering the military identity in particular. Speaking about this management of family and work role identities, Veteran Robert describes

> *'I was originally going to be a submariner, that was where I was going. So, that was what I always wanted to do and then, obviously I met who is now my ex-wife, and decided that perhaps it's a single person's career if you like.'*

His decision to leave was directly informed by his family role identity and that meeting the identity standards of being a husband, limited his commitment to his military identity. Unable to enact both, Veteran Robert chose to re-identify himself as a husband, changing his self-meanings to reflect this, and consequently his military identity became less prominent in his self-conception. It is evident from these discussions that family role identities of husband or father have acted as motivators for some veterans in their decision to leave the military. This is because there are few shared or common values across military and family role identities, thus veterans must re-align themselves to one over the other to avoid this conflict. Often, it is family role identities that are prioritised as they appear to be the most salient and prominent, especially within civilian contexts. Considering how this impacts the transition experience, having a family role identity to step into and fulfil, immediately taking over from the military identity, appears to encourage a swift and straightforward transition, that is relatively brief. This could be a possible factor contributing to the ambiguity of transition length, as discussed in section 4.1.2, and a reason why some veterans' transition is longer or shorter than others.

Moving away from family role identities, the only female veteran interviewed as part of this research highlighted how her sexual identity opposed the expectations of the military role identity. For Veteran Lucy, as well as many others, she believed that her sexual and military identities were unrelated to each other, therefore the activation of one would not affect the other. However, at the time of her service, and up until 2000, gay, lesbian, and bisexual people were banned from serving in the British Armed Forces (MOD 1996, Bulmer, 2013). It was believed the behaviours associated with homosexuality could 'polarise relationships, induce ill-discipline, and as a consequence, damage morale and unit effectiveness' (MOD, 1996:7). The British military deemed these identities incompatible, impossible to enact both in a military environment. This informed the frontstage and backstage regions that Veteran Lucy presented her identities, maintaining

her military identity in frontstage regions in the presence of a military audience, and confining her sexual identity to backstage regions, inaccessible to military audiences who would not support this identity claim. This presentation of self was managed for a sustained period throughout Veteran Lucy's military service, but an incident then occurred in which her sexual identity was presented in a frontstage region. Goffman (1959) explains how unexpected events or incidents can disrupt the version of reality adopted by an individual and interrupt their presentation of self. A specific example of this is a faux pas, an event which happens when the individual unthinkingly does something that jeopardises the image they have presented (Goffman, 1959). It is this type of incident which explains how Veteran Lucy's multiple role identities were enacted in the same context and deemed incompatible.

> *'…but in that last year, I suppose I got a little incautious and I was actually arrested by the SIB for my sexuality, which at that stage was still against military law and the phrase is "not conducive to good military discipline" and my life just became hell for a number of months.'*

By her own admission, Veteran Lucy became incautious in her presentation of self, accidentally presenting aspects of her sexual identity frontstage in the presence of a military audience. This endangered the performance of her military identity, as her military audience were now able to impose the incompatibility of these identities on her. Like the examples of family role identities presented previously, this incident resulted in Veteran Lucy being punished and ultimately leaving the military. This could be explained by two reasons, an enforced decision imposed by the military as a result of breaking their laws informed by the belief that these identities are discordant, or Veteran Lucy's sexual identity was the more salient and prominent, therefore she realigned her self-meanings to this resulting in her own decision to leave, removing the conflict between the two identities she held. Whatever the reason may be, this negatively impacted upon Veteran Lucy's

transition experience as it disclosed her sexual identity to her family before she was prepared to do so, and she also found it difficult to find a new civilian job or home. She described this as a '*damaging time'*, in which she received no support, and subsequently felt unable to reengage with the military or any colleagues from her military service for at least 20 years.

Discussions thus far, focusing on the management of multiple role identities, have centred around the decision and process of leaving the military, particularly considering how this has been informed and influenced by role identities more salient and prominent than the military identity. It is also apparent these wider role identities influenced some veterans' engagement or disengagement in the Vet Fit programme, depending on the presence of common meanings and expectations, or differences in salience and prominence. Considering how these multiple role identities can encourage engagement, it was evident for some veterans that servicing and verifying their veteran identity, by attending the programme, also verified and serviced other multiple role identities they held. At the climbing sessions it was observed that one of the veterans '*stayed with his daughter and spent most of the session focused on her'* (Observation 11). In validating his military identity through attending to programme and socialising with other veterans, the veteran was also able to fulfil his role identity as a parent in supporting and encouraging his daughter in her climbing and doing the activity together. As there were shared meanings and expectations across both identities in the context of this session, the veterans' military identity acted in service of his family role identity as a parent.

Across the Vet Fit programme, there were further situations in which salient role identities acted in service of other role identities held by the veterans. For example, the football sessions provided an environment which benefitted multiple identities held by the veterans, including fan, player and military identities, where outputs could be coordinated

to fulfil and verify them all. While observing a session one of the veterans spoke to me about his involvement in football,

> *He said he continued to be involved in football by coaching his two sons, but he wanted to get back to playing. He is a massive fan of [a Premier League football club] so he also can't wait to wear the proper kit*. (Observation 12)

This veterans' primary motivator for engaging in the session was because they were an avid football fan, particularly a fan of the club the sessions were held at. The individuals' military identity is seemingly secondary to this. However, in presenting his military identity and being able to access and engage in this session and wider programme, as it is only open to military veterans and their families, this also services his identity as a football player and supporter. Ultimately, the veteran is using this footballing opportunity, accessible through his military identity to legitimate his sporting identities as a football player and supporter of the club. As this session was held at a significant club in the North West of England, this motivation was echoed by other veterans engaging in the football. In another example, Veteran Patrick explains,

> *'…the pride is ridiculous. People see it as 'oh we are just playing football' but for me pulling that shirt on and playing in the [Premier League teams facilities] or playing under the [Premier League football teams] badge, it is massive.'*

The veterans are provided access to these opportunities due to their military identities but engaging in this specific session also services their less prominent identity of being a football player and supporter. Linking this to practical considerations, this can be identified as a motivator for engagement and an approach that programme deliverers can use to encourage participants into the programme and facilitate accessibility. There is also a connection to be made between this and Coalter's (2010a) classifications of SfD presented in section 2.5. *Sport plus* and *plus sport* classifications of SfD, in which sport is adapted or

tied to another programme, can be used as an approach to delivery that services both sporting and military identities. Here one identity is the facilitator for engagement and the other is the focus when seeking to address wider developmental objectives.

There are instances across the Vet Fit programme in which deliverers have considered veterans' other multiple identities to facilitate session delivery and encourage engagement. Deliverer Callum, deliverer of the football session, recognises the multiple identities held by the individuals attending, describing them as,

> *'fantastic human beings as well as military veterans and footballers.'*

This demonstrates his understanding of other aspects of the veterans' identities, considering their multiple role identities and how this influences their motivations for engagement and experiences in the Vet Fit programme. A review of the literature, presented in chapter 2, demonstrated that understanding the needs, motivations, and experiences of veterans can improve the quality of support provided to them, the levels of engagement, and the subsequent impact of the provisions (Verey and Smith, 2012; Bowes, Ferreira, and Henderson, 2018). Thus, appreciating the multiple role identities held by veterans across the different aspects of their life, can aid deliverers to understand the veterans' motivations, experiences and needs. Focusing on footballing identities, as a supporter and player, it was suggested in some of the stakeholder interviews that delivering sessions which considered these aspects of the veterans' wider identity encouraged a greater level of engagement. Porat (2010) explains that individuals involved in football have diversified, including the involvement of more women, influenced by the inflow of middle-class fans and the commercialisation of the game. Guilianotti (2002), presents four types of football spectator identity: supporters, followers, fans and flâneurs. Applying these to the veterans engaging in the football sessions on the Vet Fit programme, they would be identified as supporters, who are culturally contracted to the club through a

long-term and personal investment. Deliverer Ian explains his outlook on how appealing to the veterans' supporter identity can enhance engagement, stating that,

> *'I think it helps when you've got someone like [a Premier League football club], I've always said this that you know if you're a [Premier League football club] fan in particular and you can go to [a Premier League teams] training complex and play in a [Premier League teams] kit I just think that's a really important part of it.'*

Although the Vet Fit programme is focused on veterans and supporting them in their transition from the military, Deliverer Ian suggests that having a backstage region to perform their military identity may not be the main motivator for veterans' engagement. Instead, it is the alliance to the Premier League club, expressed through clothing, equipment, and locations, and how this legitimates their footballing identities either as a player or fan. Football fandom can be understood as a strong affiliation to a football club which is a permanent component of a individuals' identity (Porat, 2010). Porat (2010) outlines how this will compete with other components of the individuals' identity and in circumstances, such as the football sessions, it will dominate. It is the alliance to the football club and the verification of their footballing identity that acts as a greater motivation for engagement ahead of their military identities, the primary identity which has provided them with access to the opportunity. Similarly, Deliverer Alex, echoed this belief,

> '*I think there's a lot of veterans that have come to that because they are [a Premier League football club] fans and it's exciting to wear the badge there's a pride in that.*'

This highlights a focus on fan and player identities as motivators for engagement, ahead of the military identity. Drawing on concepts of salience and prominence (McCall and Simmons, 1978; Thoits, 2013), it could be suggested that, in civilian environments such as a social sporting environment, these footballing identities are the most salient or prominent and would therefore be prioritised ahead of the military identity. Laverie and Arnett (2000)

explain that for individuals attached to a sports team, they are more likely to rate their fan identity as important compared to others and, as they become more attached to the club or team, their fan identity becomes a more important aspect of their self-concept. Understanding this, it is clear how programme engagement can be encouraged by deliverers, appealing to other aspects of veterans lives and the role identities present.

As well as recognising veterans' multiple role identities as a motivator for engagement, they also prompted disengagement especially when identity demands were in opposition. This was particularly evident considering, family, work, and military identities. Deliverer Kate explained that while organising the sessions on the programme,

> '*A few veterans have come back to me already … [asking] could we record them and they then do them in their own time, around working in shifts and childcare'*.

This implies that for some, peer support and group interaction is not important to their engagement. Similarly, Deliverer Callum, commented on how difficult it was to get good attendance at his sessions,

> '… *with them [the veterans] being family men as well, and their working, they're here, there and everywhere'*.

This considers the different role identities held by veterans that need to be managed across the various contexts and circumstances they encounter. In these examples it is suggested that managing their multiple role identities can prevent some veterans' engaging in the programme. There were further, more specific examples that demonstrate this clearly. Following a climbing session and walking back to the carpark, I was in conversation with a veteran and,

> *he mentioned that he won't be able to go the football session on Tuesday, or for the next couple of weeks, because that would mean that he doesn't get to see his little girl, so he chooses to spend that time with her instead.* (Observation 31)

In this circumstance, it is the veterans' family role identity of being a father that is preventing his engagement. His father role holds greater salience and is therefore prioritised ahead of his military identity, thus it is the expectations and requirements attached to his role as a father that guides his behaviours. This draws on some of the literature presented earlier in this section focusing on fatherhood and family role identities. It has been argued that a fathers' investment in his parenting identity is an important and powerful determinant of elements of a fathers' involvement in his family (Parke, 2002; McBride et al., 2005). Less scripted by societal norms compared to the identity of a mother, a fathers role investment informs and guides his behaviours, and men who position their role as a father central to their overall identity, are identified as being more actively involved with their family (Fox and Bruce, 2001, Maurer, Pleck and Rane, 2001; McBride et al., 2005; Pasley, Petran and Fish, 2014; Fox et al., 2015). Likewise, in another climbing session, I had just arrived and greeted the veterans when one,

> …*said that he is giving himself a break from climbing for a bit as work is very busy, he is struggling for time, and his hands are split and cut, and climbing would only make them worse.* (Observation 17)

This veterans' work role identity is stopping his engagement in the session as it is being prioritised ahead of his military identity, thus influencing his actions. The issue here is not the inability to enact both identities, but the possibility that verifying his military identity through engaging in the session would then jeopardise his ability to meet the demands of his work identity. The work identity is more prominent to this veteran, and this can be explained by the need for the money earnt through this identity to service other role

identities. For example, the income gained through his work role identity can then be used to service other identities such as being a father or husband in supporting his family, or even his identity as a climber, paying for necessary equipment. Ultimately, it is his work role identity guiding his behaviours, resulting in his disengagement.

Appreciating the multiple role identities held by military veterans, it is then possible to understand their behaviours and the specific role identity driving them. This has been considered in relation to the decision to leave the military and veteran engagement in the Vet Fit programme, accounting for variation in experiences and how differing multiple role identities contribute to this. Understanding the influence of identity, and the prominence and salience of certain role identities, can be beneficial to programme deliverers, recognising motivations for engagement or disengagement, the specific identities that inform these actions, and how they could be embedded into the programme. For example, considering more sessions in which parents can bring their children removes potential conflict between family role and military identities, or setting up sessions with recognised sport brands to encourage engagement through sporting identities as a player or fan.

4.5 Military Team Performance

This section will draw on Goffman's (1959) concept of performance teams to understand how service and ex-service personnel work together to create suitable performances for each other in addition to a wider audience, sharing common interpretations of what the situation requires from them. Goffman (1959:85) defines a performance team as 'any set of individuals who co-operate in staging a single routine' and seek to create an 'emergent team impression'. As with impression management and presentation of self, the practice of dramaturgical loyalty, circumspection and discipline are key to the creation of credible team performances and impressions (Goffman, 1959; Scott, 2015). These will be applied and demonstrated across the following examples which outline how military team

performances were created in Vet Fit sessions, followed by instances where the team performance was successful but also disrupted.

There was a belief that the military ethos, developed and embedded in the military, was recreated in the Vet Fit programme through the military team performance that was established. Veteran Oliver explains how this team performance, engrained in military life, is recreated in the football sessions, drawing comparisons to expectations of a civilian environment.

> *'No, especially when you have got people that come from that background, when that background is there it's very easy to create it again, sometimes in a civilian environment if somebody hasn't experienced somebody asking about their wellbeing, they almost feel like they're having their own personal space encroached upon. But in the military, if somebody comes up and gives you a big hug or calls you a few names under the sun, it's just like 'oh yeah that's cool'. You use that sort of approach sometimes in your own civilian environment it might not necessarily go down that way so, what they say when you join the military they break you down and build you back up through your training and that puts that team mentality, the looking left and looking right and all that sort of stuff and you all wear the same uniform which obviously plays a big part in it so I think that's engrained in you so when you come out and all of a sudden you're all kind of doing the same sort of thing and you are doing something you enjoy then it is very easy for it to be recreated.'*

The military as a TI plays a key role in embedding a team ethos into service personnel, through the process of militarisation. It is this process which embeds the qualities that veterans then have in common in civilian life, and what the military team performance is based upon both inside and outside of a military environment. This is demonstrated

through Veteran Oliver's example of checking someone's wellbeing, in which certain actions are understood and accepted within the military team performance but would be challenged or cause embarrassment in wider civilian circles. This shows that there are common interpretations and understandings, specific to a military team performance, which team members use to comprehend a situation and inform their actions, with the example here relating to conversations around wellbeing and showing care towards others. This example also suggests that, from Veteran Oliver's point of view, there are clear differences between military and civilian team performances. A second example of this difference was observed at a climbing session,

> *[The climbing instructor] asked us what our climbing experience was, [a veteran] said that it was mainly outdoors through what he did in the military. [A second veteran] agreed and said that it was before the times of health and safety. [The first veteran] agreed saying "yeah, we were basically told to get the fuck up that rock!" [Other veterans] laughed in agreement but confirmed that they had been coming here for a while now, so had a bit more experience. [The climbing instructor] also asked about people's experiences of the military and I clarified that I wasn't a veteran but was here for my research, and [a veteran] jumped in saying that I was still a BRAT. [The climbing instructor] looked a bit shocked and clearly didn't know what this meant other than the spiteful use of the word. [The veteran] explained it stood for British Regiment Attached Traveler and [the climbing instructor] said "oh" slightly relieved and [another veteran] commented saying that there is all sorts of military lingo, there is so much to get your head round … Later in the session [the climbing instructor] explained that she sandbagged [a veteran] up the last wall, which means she shouted advice and guidance that sounded harder than what it was so once you attempt it, it is easier than it sounds. [The veteran] replied saying I am glad you explained that, because that means something different to me,*

continuing to say that in the military that means getting a sandbag put over your head and tied round your neck with a necktie and dragged into a room.

(Observation 16)

In this situation, there is a military team performance being upheld by the veterans in the session, in which the instructor and myself are a civilian audience. There are clear differences between the military and civilian performance teams illustrated through the different interpretations of language. The veterans present, and involved in this encounter, are engaging in dramaturgical loyalty (Goffman, 1959) by cooperating and supporting their teammates to create the emergent team impression. This involves two sources of connection, first the bond of reciprocal dependency (Goffman, 1959) in trusting each other to not give away the secrets of their performance to outsiders, and secondly the bond of reciprocal familiarity which Goffman (1959:88) describes as 'being in the know' and the need for co-operation from teammates to create the given definition of the situation. In this social encounter, the members of the military team performance are careful to cooperate and maintain the team impression, without giving away too much of their backstage secrets. This centres around the use of language, with the veterans agreeing on and explaining the use of military specific terms which the civilian audience have a different understanding of. But they are also careful to not give too much detail away, offering only an introduction to the 'military lingo' while maintaining the boundary between front and backstage regions, which the civilian audience do not have access to. Some veterans also recognised these differences between military and civilian performance teams, with one specifically concentrating on the role of humour. In a climbing session on the Vet Fit Programme, Veteran Quinn discussed the military team performance he is part of and the interpretations of humour that occur within this group.

'I speak to [other veterans] and it's good to have that banter that is of old, like it's a different type of banter, there is no real misconceptions of where you think the joke is going, that kind of stuff.'

Military humour has received limited attention in the academic literature, but two papers have focused on this considering the connection between humour and violence (Tidy, 2020), and humour as a disciplinary tool (Godfrey, 2016). Godfrey (2016) outlines how humour contributes to social cohesion through communicating and maintaining the organisational norm. While this process was identified to occur in the context of the military, this comment from Veteran Quinn suggests that this also occurs to some degree in military team performances in civilian life. There are common interpretations of humour in this military performance team which reassures Veteran Quinn that his humorous comments or jokes will not be misconstrued. This also links to Goffman's (1959) concept of dramaturgical circumspection in which an individual's actions or comments are presented to an audience who will support this presentation of self. In this instance the audience consists of other veterans who are members of the military performance team. This comment from Veteran Quinn also positions the Vet Fit sessions, particularly the climbing session, as a backstage region in which the impressions being created are not for an external audience but rather fellow veterans and individuals with military experience, with the only exception being session coaches or deliverers. For example, one of the AP staff supported the logistics of a Vet Fit event and met several veterans for the first time, gaining an insight into session delivery and veteran engagement. In the days following the event, in the AP office, he spoke about his experience,

He felt like he was in their space and was surprised by some of their behaviours … he said that there were some behaviours he was shocked by, but it was the usual in their world and engrained into them. He gave the example of [one veteran] putting on a racist and offensive accent when he saw two Asian men nearby. He said this

> *shocked him, but he didn't say anything and could kind of understand why they have this opinion and think it is okay. [The programme lead] reinforced this saying that in the military those people are dehumanized so it feels okay to kill them, there is no guilt, and they are referred to Iraqi's and Ragheads. [The AP member of staff] said that it is understandable if that is engrained in them.* (Observation 153)

This is an example where the military team performance did have an external audience and therefore the performance should have been shaped appropriately to deliver a particular impression, however this was not the case. This has the potential to undermine the team's integrity and disrupt the interaction order, as it is evident there are different interpretations and understandings between military and civilian performance teams as to what a suitable performance is in this situation. Despite this, the AP staff member and programme lead engaged in protective facework techniques (Goffman, 1967) to save the military team performance. The AP staff member engages in tact to protect the performance, specifically audience tact and tactful inattention (Goffman, 1959). This is because he ignores these inappropriate comments and behaviours choosing not to challenge them at the time, but to discuss them within his own organisational performance team in the backstage space of a work environment. This allows the military team performance to continue successfully and undisrupted saving both the face of the team members and the audience. When recounting this experience later in a backstage region surrounded by his colleagues who are his performance team members, the programme lead also engaged in corrective processes to repair the damage to the military team impression as a result of this event. This could be informed by the veteran identity held by the programme lead and shared with the veterans who are part of the programme, making him part of this military team performance, dependent on the social context. Through this corrective process, the programme lead justifies and explains the comments that were made by situating them in a military context with the aim of protecting the impression the

military performance team were seeking to create. Having considered how the military performance team have been presented within the Vet Fit programme, the following sections will now discuss examples where this team performance has been delivered successfully, but where it has also been disrupted.

4.5.1 The Successful Team Performance

> *'I think it is nice to have that perspective of someone who has been there, has dealt with similar situations, or has been in the situation but has seen a different side of it, and to listen to someone else processing it. I suppose it makes you realise that you're not alone and that you've got these people to talk to and that it's okay, it's okay to have that bad day, it's just a case of picking yourself up after the fact and apologising because with [a veteran] it was like, I just said to him look however your feeling just remember as well that you are going to make other people feel bad when you lash out so just tell them that you're feeling bad for whatever reason, whether you are just not sleeping well or whatever is going on through your head, you don't have to go into depth but just tell them. They will maybe appreciate that you're not just being awkward you're actually being you and have got a little bit of an issue at the minute and it's that communication that just is so helpful.*'

This quote from Veteran Quinn offers valuable insight into the backstage conversations that have taken place between two members of the military performance team, supporting each other to maintain the team performance in civilian environments. Applying Goffman's (1959) defensive attributes and practices, all three are evident in this encounter with the desire to maintain a successful frontstage military team performance. This is a conversation that took place in a backstage region, away from a civilian audience who cannot be trusted, between two of the performance team members who have a moral obligation between themselves not to betray their secrets. These secrets include the

backstage realities and offstage identities of the veterans involved, therefore, in maintaining this moral obligation, both veterans are exercising dramaturgical loyalty. Next, with Veteran Quinn reminding his fellow performance team member of the part he must play, dramaturgical discipline is also exercised. As a supportive peer, Veteran Quinn recognises the challenges his friend is facing but encourages him to maintain his frontstage performance by acknowledging and communicating to his audience that he is facing difficulties while continuing to work in backstage regions to address this. This maintains the frontstage team performance while not betraying any of the teams' secrets and concealing the hard work that is being undertaken to maintain this impression. Finally, in case this frontstage performance is disrupted, Veteran Quinn encourages his friend to put in place measures and contingencies to avoid significant disruption, this takes the form of telling the audience, making them aware in advance that the team performance could be threatened. This allows the audience to engage in protective practices (Goffman, 1959), if necessary, to protect the performance on their behalf. This encounter offers insight into backstage regions where this work is undertaken to maintain the military team performance, a space that civilians including myself would be excluded from. In this example, Veteran Quinn is exercising directive dominance (Goffman, 1959) as he is coordinating the roles within the military performance team, specifically controlling, managing, and supporting his friends' presentation of self to ultimately maintain a successful team performance.

4.5.2 The Disrupted Team Performance

As a civilian and an outsider, I was treated as a member of the military performance teams' audience and largely observed the effective and successful management of impressions. However, there were some instances where I was briefly let into backstage regions which uncovered some examples of a disrupted military team performance.

> *The following day [the programme lead] said the WhatsApp group was full of photos and good memories from the day. However, on Monday this took a bit of a turn. [Veteran A] was targeted for acting the hero and taking everything too seriously and he reacted to this, which encouraged them all to do it even more. [Veteran B], who considers himself a more experienced player started making more tactical, personal comments referring to last weekend at St George's Park. He said that the defence was better off without [Veteran A] and with a different captain. [Veteran B] thinks that [Veteran A] needs to toughen up and have a laugh because he takes it all too serious. He doesn't think [Veteran A] is the best player or worthy of being captain. [The programme lead] thinks that this went so far because [the coach] didn't step in and say something. [Veteran A] personally messaged [the programme lead] saying that he is not happy and if they don't want him to be captain then he will step down.* (Observation 12)

Scott (2015) outlines how an open disagreement between teammates has the potential to undermine the teams' integrity and disrupt the interaction order. However, the disagreement presented here took place in backstage regions accessible only to performance team members. This includes the physical space of the football session, but also the online space of a private WhatsApp group, both of which are closed off from civilian outsiders or audience members. This could have important implications for the Vet Fit programme, which focuses on challenges around mental health, social isolation and alcohol or drug dependency, as to how these online backstage spaces are managed, as this could be a key factor contributing towards the achievement of the programmes' developmental objectives. Unpicking the staging of this disrupted performance, the programme lead holds power through directive dominance (Goffman, 1959), directing the performance, coordinating roles, and soothing or sanctioning when necessary. The other source of power sits with Veteran A and B who have dramatic dominance, holding the lead

roles and the protagonists of this incident (Goffman, 1959). From my observations, the disruption to the team performance was caused by Veteran A taking everything too seriously. Borrowing a concept from Hayman (1969) and Scott (2015), this could be understood as role engulfment, in which performance takes over and changes an individuals' sense of self. Applying this to the disruption of the military team performance, Veteran A appears to have become engulfed by his performance as a sporting team member and team captain, disrupting not only the team performance but also his presentation of self. In a later football session, I observed other veterans commenting on this incident, offering further insight into how it was managed.

> *They said that the WhatsApp group was going off and one commented saying that you can see why [Veteran A] maybe feels ganged up on. Another said that it even continued after [the programme lead] said his bit. [The coach] said that he thought it was just banter but apparently [Veteran A] did take it personal, and one of the veterans said that it is difficult over text as it could be misread or misconstrued, to which they all agreed.* (Observation 12)

This demonstrates how sympathetic tact has been employed by other members of the military performance team to save face and maintain the overall team impression that has been created. Sympathetic tact (Goffman, 1959) is where team members make sympathetic adjustments to the expected standards. In this instance the sympathetic adjustment is the recognition that impressions can be misconstrued or misread through virtual messages, which can influence how presentations of self are interpreted and created. This observation also links back to the use of humour, with some comments understood as a joke by some, but taken more personally by others. It has been suggested in the wider literature that humour can be a tool to release hostilities and discontent that would ordinarily be suppressed or too dangerous for other members of the performance team to express (Coser, 1959). This is reinforced in this example which

demonstrates how humour is used in military performance teams to express possibly hostile comments in a manner that does not disrupt the team and the impression they are working together to create.

4.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I examined the experiences of veterans undertaking the military to civilian transition and how their engagement in the Vet Fit programme impacted on this. I draw on and extend existing literature to present the military as a TI, the ambiguity surrounding the transition period, and non-military specific transition challenges and how these all influence and impact on a veterans' transition experience. I suggest that a veterans' transition from the military into civilian life is also accompanied with a shift in identity, however this was not as simple as moving from one to another. Presentation of self was influenced by the environment, social situation, and audience, with some veterans choosing to withhold their military identity in backstage regions and others choosing to use boxes, doors, and rooms to manage this to ensure a credible civilian performance is maintained. I also suggest that gender has a crucial influence on the identity management process, with veterans continuing to adhere to the masculine military identity expected of them during their service. In addition to the presentation of the military identity, I discuss veterans use and management of multiple role identities, such as work, family, and sporting identities. These multiple identities are organised based on importance or how often they are used and, different ones are activated at different points across the transition, reintegration into civilian life and engagement in the Vet Fit programme. I propose that by appreciating the multiple role identities held and presented by veterans, it is then possible to understand their behaviours and the role identity that is driving them. I consider the presentation of identity within a wider veteran team performance, understanding how service and ex-service personnel work together to create suitable performances for each other as well as

a wider audience, sharing common interpretations of what situations require from them. These team performances were built from the military ethos, developed, and embedded during the veterans' military service, and therefore it was easy for this to be recreated within aspects of the Vet Fit sessions. Overall, this chapter concentrates on varied veteran transition experiences, drawing attention to the negotiation, management, and presentation of identity both individually and as a team. In the next chapter, I will shift focus to examine the experiences of Vet Fit programme deliverers, considering the realities and challenges of organising, developing, and delivering a sport and physical activity-based support programme for military veterans.

Chapter Five: The Vet Fit Programme and Deliverers Narrative

5.0 Overview

This chapter presents and discusses key themes from this research, specifically those addressing the research aim to understand the realities and challenges of organising, developing, and delivering a sport and physical activity-based support programme for military veterans. This chapter is divided into three sections that each present and discuss interrelated themes relevant to the delivery of the Vet Fit Programme. The first section concentrates on the AP and the organisation of the Vet Fit programme, including the organisational context and leadership team. Next, attention turns to programme leadership and the AP staff responsible for directing and managing the programme. The last section considers workplaces as stages[4] (Schulman, 2017) and discusses team performances the delivery staff are part of both inside and outside of the workplace. The discussions presented across this chapter will draw on data from both observations and interviews, and these will be examined using theoretical concepts, such as presentation of self (Goffman, 1959), performance teams (Goffman, 1959), policy enactment (Ball et al., 2011; Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2015; Maguire et al., 2019), and neoliberalism (Verhaeghe, 2014). Overall, this chapter examines the actions and experiences of the stakeholders involved in programme delivery, and considers the influence of larger societal structures and practices within this context.

5.1 The Contextual Influences of the Active Partnership

Section 2.6 reviewed existing and historical PE, sporting, and military policies, outlining the lack of connections made between these areas, but the potential of sport and physical

[4] Here the term *stage* refers to one of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical ideas used to conceptualise interactions and impression management inside workplaces.

activity to contribute to wider policy objectives relevant to veteran and military communities. However, this review of policy was undertaken with recognition that a single history of sport and military policy does not exist, and what has been presented is based on my own interpretation and is one view of multiple contesting histories (Mackintosh, 2021). Policy is read by many policy actors who each have their own interpretation and appreciating this, alongside existing multiple contested histories, is key to policy enactment and understanding how policy is translated into practice.

> Policy is complexly encoded in sets of texts and various documents and it is also decoded in complex ways. Policy enactment involves creative processes of interpretation and translation, that is, the recontextualisation through reading, writing, and talking of the abstractions of policy ideas into contextualised practices (Braun et al., 2011:586).

Using this explanation, the Vet Fit programme can be understood as an outcome of a policy enactment process. The implementation of the Vet Fit programme demonstrates how policy and policy ideas produced by Sport England (2016, 2021) have been decoded, interpreted, translated, and enacted into a contextualised practice specifically targeting military veterans. However, it has been highlighted that policy rarely dictates practice or outlines specifically what needs to be done, instead best possible environments for policy enactment are assumed (Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2015). In practice, enacting policy is dependent on the perspective, values and positions of the different policy actors involved, the different types of policies, and factors such as time and place (Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2015). Braun et al. (2011) encourage this disruption of the ideal environments of policy enactment by introducing a reality that considers the different dimensions of context (Table 13). The significance of context has previously been ignored in policy circles, however this section will contextualise the *policy work* taking place in the AP to shape and deliver the Vet Fit Programme (Ball et al., 2011; Maguire et al., 2019).

5.1.1 The Situated and Professional Contexts.

In section 3.9, the four contextual dimensions of situated, professional, material, and external were introduced (Table 13), highlighting the need for contexts to be considered to gain a richer understanding of policy enactment. The previous chapter highlighted how many of the Vet Fit sessions developed a culture that featured aspects of the military, with a strong military culture evident amongst the veterans (Bergman, Burdett, and Greenburg, 2014). I observed this to be in contrast to the organisational culture of the AP, particularly in various organisational and delivery environments, and this is important to consider in relation to policy enactment. Braun, Maguire, and Ball (2010) explain that policy practices are specific and contextualised, framed by situated contexts such as the ethos and history of the organisation, as well as professional contexts encompassing the positioning and personality of the policy actors involved. Therefore, the situated context of the AP, including their history, values, and overarching aims and objectives, and the professional context which considers the AP staff working to achieve this, will all influence the cultures that are created through policy enactment. It was evident at different stages across delivery that the military culture replicated in the sessions was at odds with the organisational culture of the AP. Deliverer Ian describes the AP as a,

> '… *socialist utopia where you've got to be very careful with what you say.'*

He then contrasted this with the military culture the veterans developed in the sessions saying that,

> '… *these guys didn't have any of that, there was none of that whatsoever*.'

This is an example of two dimensions of context (Braun et al., 2011), relevant to the AP impacting on the creative process of enacting policy (Table 13). The situated and professional contexts are at odds with the culture that the veterans have developed in the Vet Fit sessions, which is reflective of military culture and the situated and professional

contexts associated with the TI, as discussed in section 4.1.1. The professional context, of the '*socialist utopia'* in the AP, shapes the creative policy enactment process in a manner that is aligned with their own values, underpinned by equality and that which is morally right, but not with the needs, values, and beliefs of the veterans. This raises possible queries around the success and effectiveness of the provision that is being delivered, and its application to the population being targeted. Finally, considering the other two contextual dimensions presented by Braun et al. (2011), external and material, that have not been discussed within this section, they will be highlighted where relevant in the analysis and discussion across the remaining sections in this chapter.

5.1.2 Organisational Leadership

While embedded in the programme, I observed how leaders of the AP were somewhat removed from the organisation and delivery mechanisms of the Vet Fit programme. This responsibility sat with staff members leading on the programme and the AP leadership group observed and managed this from a distance. In my field diary, I noted that there was

> …*no check and challenge from [the AP], the [Vet Fit Programme] deliverers have been left to do what they want, and think is right. Thus, there is no direction around what to prioritise or concentrate on*. (Observation 201)

Drawing on the situated context (Braun et al., 2011) of the organisation, historically AP's have not been responsible for programme delivery. Instead, they are a strategic organisation who broker partnerships, engage community organisations, and share learning (Active Partnerships, 2021). As such, this history of delivery being beyond the remit of the AP could influence their approach to enacting policy and who is involved in this process, regarding the Vet Fit Programme.

Concentrating on the individuals that engage in policy enactment, the typology of roles (Table 14), presented by Ball et al. (2011), will be applied to the AP to analyse and understand how different staff members in the organisation contribute towards the creative policy enactment process, which has produced and shaped the Vet Fit programme. Ball et al. (2011) outlines narrators as the policy actors which explain, filter, and select policy, making decisions around what the organisation can or cannot do in relation to it. In the AP it is the senior leadership team, consisting of a Chief Executive Officer and Strategic Leads, who select and filter the policies released by Sport England, and explain what the AP as an organisation can or cannot do in relation to this. It is then the entrepreneurs, who originate, champion, and represent policies and principles of integration, who action this (Ball et al., 2011). Ball et al. (2011) describe these policy actors as forceful agents of change who are invested in and identify with the policy ideas and their enactment. In the AP, the entrepreneur of the Vet Fit programme is the programme lead. As a veteran that now works in sport development, this individual is invested in the policy idea and identifies with the audience being targeted. He is also the agent of change as he is responsible for overseeing this enactment of policy but, as Ball et al. (2011) outline, the entrepreneurs also recruit others to implement these policy enactments. These individuals are receivers, and they are shielded from policy by their senior colleagues, looking for guidance and direction rather than being involved in the creativity of policy enactment (Ball et al., 2011). In the AP, this encompasses two staff members recruited by the programme lead (Deliverer Jessica and Deliverer Kate) to support the development and delivery of the Vet Fit programme. Drawing on these types of policy actors outlined by Ball et al. (2011) and applying this to the AP and Vet Fit programme, it is evident that the policy enactment process is dependent on a series of ‘interpretations of interpretations’ (Evans and Davies, 2012:627) (Figure 4). The senior leadership team, as narrators, filter, interpret and explain the policies released by Sport England and how they will influence the work of the AP.

The programme lead, as an entrepreneur, then interprets these instructions and uses them to form the policy enactment process, shaping the Vet Fit programme. Finally, the other Vet Fit programme staff, as receivers, depend on this interpretation to complete their work, supporting the policy enactment process.

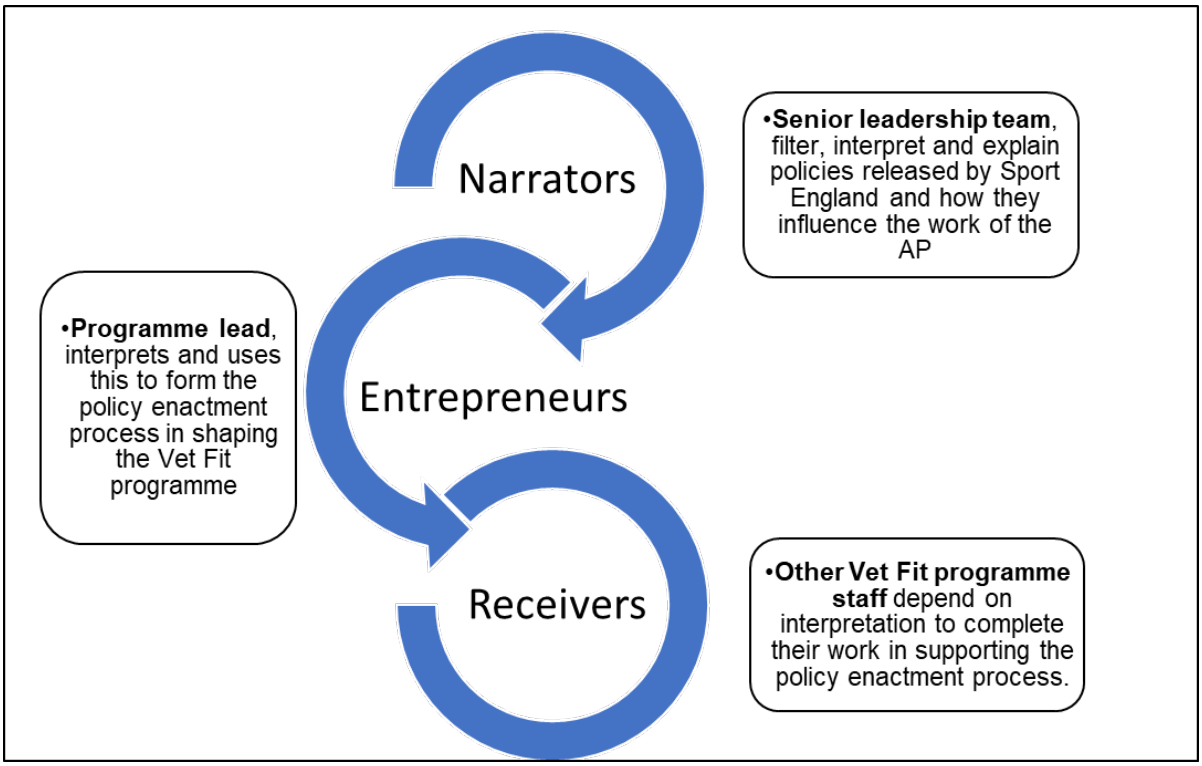

Figure 4 - Policy Actors and Policy Work in the AP and Vet Fit Programme.

Presenting the different types of policy actors and how they depend on and link to each other, also depicts a hierarchy of staff that exists in the AP work environment. Being aware of this hierarchy, I observed a degree of competition between staff at each level, and this was particularly evident regarding staff promotions. Verhaeghe (2014) explains that, in a neoliberal meritocratic society, there is the understanding that individuals get what they deserve based on their own efforts, therefore those that work hard enough will earn a promotion. Yet, this hard work needs to be seen to be done, reported as done and accounted for, especially when this work involves policy (Ball et al., 2011). Due to a low trust policy environment, accountability work and reporting performance are essential in demonstrating the hard work which can then be rewarded with a promotion, but this takes time and diverts attention away from the core purpose of the individual's role and what

they are reporting on (Ball et al., 2011). As such, in the drive to work hard and gain recognition, reward, or promotion, Verhaeghe (2014) suggests that people stop doing the work that does not count and focuses on that which is high scoring and demonstrates quality and success. Making connections back to the framework of contextual dimensions (Table 13) presented by Braun et al. (2011), this could be understood as an external context, impacting on policy enactment and the work of policy actors. In this example, pressures and expectations from outside the AP, shaped by neoliberal society and targets set by Sport England, are driving the work focus towards demonstrating impact, quality, and success. Not only does this divert attention away from the core purpose of an individuals' work role, but it can also breed an atmosphere of frustration and fear between work colleagues. There were observed examples in the AP of fear and frustration throughout the hierarchy of staff in relation to promotion and the drive for individuals to prove themselves as successful. For example, I observed one staff member discussing

> … *some of the troubles that were going on in [the AP] and how a lot of people don't feel happy but also don't feel like they are in a position to speak up as it will count against them.* (Observation 194)

This evidences an environment of both fear and frustration in the AP, frustration with the ongoing troubles but also the fear of speaking up about them. Underpinned by the notion that people get what they deserved based on their efforts (Verhaeghe, 2014), some of the staff in the AP felt that speaking up would count against them and limit their ability to demonstrate their hard work and success, possibly damaging their opportunity for promotion. Harlos and Pinder (2000) propose that employee fear is often a signal for potential threat or harm in employment relationships. Analysis suggests that neoliberal practices not only erode job quality and organisational stability, but also workplace relationships and behaviours conducive to organisational functioning (Crowley and Hodson, 2014). Crowley and Hodson (2014) highlight neoliberal mechanisms, such as

promoting aggressive individualism and interpersonal competition, that encourages the sidestepping of problems, and consumes the energy of staff who work to avoid these issues in an increasingly complex and achievement-oriented social terrain, that generates fear, uncertainty, and tenuous relationships, discouraging proactive effort and mutual support (Datta and Chakraborty, 2018; Ives et al., 2021). This neoliberal approach to work undermines perceptions of respect and morality, as organisational structures and staff relations, are determined by their consequences for wealth with the goal of maximising profits and income (Crowley and Hodson, 2014). Neoliberalism is strongly connected to rising anxieties in the workplace, particularly around job security and career progression (Hewison, 2016; Kalleberg and Vallas, 2018; Ives et al., 2021), and in another example in the AP, the following was observed,

> *It was announced that [two members of staff] had been promoted. However, this is while others are still waiting to hear back regarding their promotions and pay rises. [Another member of staff] is annoyed because she is having to take on more work … and is not getting a pay rise to reflect this. Whereas [other staff], who are taking on more work … have been given a pay rise to reflect this. There is a lot of anger in the office, so it is a bit uncomfortable to work in. [One staff member] said they felt like they couldn't be happy or pleased about their promotion*. (Observation 26)

This demonstrates the frustration that is felt by some in the work environment, as well as the competition between staff to be recognised and rewarded for the level of work they are undertaking. Many of my observation notes recorded on this day were concerned with these discussions around promotion and pay rises rather than work focusing on the Vet Fit programme. This was because many of the conversations between staff were concerned with these subjects, rather than the core priorities of their work roles. This reflects Verhaeghe's (2014) comment that, in the drive to work hard, demonstrate quality and success, and achieve a promotion or pay rise, attention is diverted away from the core

purpose of an individuals' work role and an atmosphere of frustration and fear is created. Thus, staff are required to make themselves more calculable rather than memorable (Ball, 2012). This can also be related back to professional and external dimensions of context (Braun et al., 2011), in which the commitments and values of the AP staff, and pressures and expectations from outside of the organisation contribute towards this developing atmosphere of fear and frustration.

In the AP, there were further occasions which demonstrated the levels of competition between staff members, and this was informed by an understanding that if individuals worked hard enough, they would get what they deserved. During an interview panel, in which the programme lead was seeking to recruit a staff member to support the delivery and organisation of the Vet Fit programme, it was evident he did not want to recruit someone that could threaten his own role. I noted that,

> *[The programme lead] was very much looking for a project manager who could pick up a lot of the admin within the project. He was conscious to not employ someone who basically wanted to do his role.* (Observation 172)

The programme lead recognised that employing another staff member could create competition for his role, based on the principle of meritocracy in that the individual just needed to work hard enough to achieve this (Verhaeghe, 2014). In the interview setting, recognising the potential competition for his role, also impacted on his presentation of self. The interviews to recruit an additional staff member provided a frontstage region in which the programme lead worked to present a credible performance of his work role identity, in the presence of work colleagues as performance team members, and individuals external to the organisation as the audience (Goffman, 1959). This was achieved through the programme lead demonstrating and expressing his knowledge of the programme, specifically knowing what is needed in the recruitment of another staff member. His

position as the programme lead means that he has the greatest access to and understanding of this information, and therefore presents it in this context to reaffirm his work role identity. This can be understood as a control move (Goffman, 1969) as it is a calculated attempt to manage the impression being created, thus enhancing his identity as programme lead.

This section has focused on the organisational environment of the AP as well as its leadership team. Specifically, the policy enactment process has been considered and how it impacts shaping and developing the Vet Fit programme (Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2015). Focus was also placed on the culture of the organisation and how this contrasts with the military culture developed within the Vet Fit sessions, as well as the four dimensions of context that influence policy enactment (Braun et al., 2011). With attention on policy actors involved in this process, this section has outlined the hierarchy of staff in the AP and how, influenced by neoliberal meritocracy, this can breed a feeling of competition, fear and frustration, diverting attention away from the core objectives of the Vet Fit programme (Ball et al., 2011, Verhaeghe, 2014). The final point of this section focused on the programme lead and how this work environment, underpinned by neoliberal meritocracy, influenced his presentation of self, striving to maintain a credible performance of his work role identity (Goffman, 1959; Verhaeghe, 2014). This focus will continue into the next section which discusses the role and influence of the individual responsible for leading the Vet Fit Programme.

5.2 The Programme Lead

Throughout the delivery of the Vet Fit programme, it is evident that the programme lead[5] had to manage their presentation of self (Goffman,1959) across the different environments

[5] Throughout this section, and the remainder of this discussion chapter, Deliverer Alex will be referred to by his role as the programme lead.

and social situations that were encountered. These environments included the backstage regions of the AP offices and meetings, which veterans and key programme stakeholders did not have access to unless they were invited, and frontstage regions signified by the presence of an audience consisting of individuals external to the AP. Examples of these frontstage regions include research interviews and meetings with key stakeholders, and it was in these frontstage regions that the programme leads' professional work role identity was most prominent and salient (Burke and Stets, 2009; Thoits, 2013). This was evident across several different examples within various social contexts. In total, the programme lead completed three formal interviews across 18 months of data collection. After the first interview, in my research diary, I reflected that the programme lead,

> … *seemed relaxed but was also very cautious with their answers. They were very careful not to name specific people or occasions ... and needed to be pushed and probed on some questions but remained very aware of their answers. They were also careful not to give personal thoughts.* (Observation 149)

Then, after the third interview, I undertook a similar reflection commenting,

> *… like in previous interviews [the programme lead] was very considered in their responses, carefully thinking about what they said in an attempt to maintain a positive and professional front.* (Observation 223)

These observations from the interview setting demonstrate a process of impression management taking place to maintain a credible performance of the programme leads' work role identity. When presented with an individual, in this instance me as a researcher who is external to the AP, the programme lead prioritised their work role identity and monitored their responses to the interview questions to ensure they were in keeping with the performance that was being maintained. This can be understood as a calculated impression, as the programme lead was seeking to make a certain impression as a result

of his performance, informed by preexisting and established social conventions (Goffman, 1959; Schulman 2017). In this example, he is seeking to convey the impression of a professional AP staff member who is leading a successful and impactful sport development programme for military veterans.

These examples illustrate one of the techniques used by the programme lead to manage their presentation of self, however there was also an instance where the credible frontstage performance was not upheld. Instead, that which would typically be exhibited in backstage regions was presented front stage, to an audience of programme stakeholders.

> *In a board meeting [the programme lead] faced a barrage of questions asking why the family fun day is not being held in [this borough] and felt like he was fighting fires. He reinforced that [this borough] started the programme so they should be proud. [The programme lead] said to those at the meeting that he is trying his best and is getting sick of being met with negativity and criticism. In response [one stakeholder] became his best pal and protector … [the programme lead] said that him showing his true colours and being honest actually seemed to win people round.* (Observation 169)

This event, that disrupts both the performance and version of reality being presented, would typically be understood as an incident or, more specifically, a faux pas (Goffman, 1959). This is because it has the potential to jeopardise the frontstage performance of the programme lead, as well as challenge the polite consensus presented by other individuals in attendance (Scott, 2015). But, unusually in this situation, exposing the audience to this backstage presentation of self worked to the benefit of the programme lead, enhancing the credibility of his performance rather than endangering it. In this example, the programme lead presented an upfront and honest expression of his feelings, that would have usually been restricted to backstage regions. Drawing on the concept of incidents (Goffman,

1959), it would be expected that doing so would damage the credible frontstage work role identity presented by the programme lead, as well as the partnerships with these stakeholders. Yet, in practice these where not the outcomes that occurred. Instead, bringing a backstage performance to the frontstage region of this meeting added credibility to the programme leads' presentation of his work role identity. The audience members recognised the authenticity of this performance, which subsequently improved the relationship between the stakeholders, influencing the delivery of the programme. Briefly linking this back to the literature discussed in sections 1.1.2 and 2.5, partnerships are core to the work of APs and have been identified as central to enabling sport to make a positive contribution (Lindsey and Banda, 2010). However, they have also been criticised with the suggestion that partnerships are fragile, illusive, and lack meaning, which impacts on resulting successes or outcomes of sport-based programmes (Philpotts, Grix and Quarmby, 2010; Lindsay and Banda, 2011; Mackintosh, 2011, 2021). The observation presented here suggests that disrupting the frontstage performance, deviating away from the professional work role identity usually maintained by the programme lead in frontstage regions, actually provided greater meaning and understanding to the partnerships involved in the programme and present at the meeting, impacting on outcomes and possible successes of the Vet Fit programme. This will now be developed further in the next section which will consider the programme lead as a key policy actor, discussing the links between identity and the delivery of the Vet Fit programme.

5.2.1 The Programme Lead as a Key Policy Actor

It was evident across the research observations that the programme leads' identity and presentation of self was closely tied to the image and identity of the Vet Fit programme. This establishes the programme leads' position as a key policy actor, playing a crucial role in the policy enactment process, interpreting Sport England policy, and translating this into

the delivery of the Vet Fit programme. This particularly highlights his position as an entrepreneur, and the forceful agent of change, initiating, championing, and representing policies and principles of integration, as outlined in section 5.1.2 (Ball et al., 2011). However, it is also important to consider how the situated context of the programme leads' values and interests' impact on this policy enactment process (Braun et al., 2011). Ball et al. (2011) explains that the policy process is iterative and additive, inclusive of interpretations and translations that are shaped by existing personal and organisational values and interests, as well as context and necessity. Policy actors involved in policy enactment draw on the lenses they have developed through their own experiences to filter awareness and interpret signals, with some actors interpreting policy to fit their own personal agendas (Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2015). Illustrating the programme leads' closeness to the Vet Fit programme, Deliverer Alex explains that he is

> '*responsible for the running of the programme. That's pretty much across the whole thing, it's me that does everything. I do get a bit of support with social media and some of the finance and things but I'm responsible for all the planning, the expansion, relationships with partners, getting new members on board, getting new activities going, also producing film content and social media content, so right across the board that's my responsibility*'.

This demonstrates his central role in the translation of policy into delivery through his involvement in the many aspects of the programme. He is the sole individual responsible for this process, with little support or input from AP colleagues or programme stakeholders. Thus, these interpretations, translations and enactments will be shaped by the lens he has developed through his own experiences, in addition to his and the organisations values and interests. As a result, it was observed that many features of the programme leads' own identity were evident across the translation of policy and delivery of the Vet Fit programme. For example, Deliverer Ian suggests that,

'you could rename [the programme to the name of the programme lead] because it is [Deliverer Alex's] project, you know [Deliverer Alex] has done this on his own ... But [Deliverer Alex] has completely driven this ... it's [Deliverer Alex's] gig.'

This comment exhibits the programme leads' investment in and closeness to the programme, so much so this AP colleague suggests renaming the programme after the programme lead. This illustrates the observation made at the opening of this section in which the image of the programme is closely tied to the identity of the programme lead, as well as the degree of influence the programme leads' values and interests have on the interpretation and translation of policy through the delivery of the Vet Fit programme.

Attention will now be placed on a specific example of a policy idea within the Vet Fit programme which demonstrates the influence of the programme leads' identity, ethos, values, and perspectives. At the outset of this programme, the agreed objective was to support veterans in the military to civilian transition with a focus on individuals facing one or more of the following life challenges; mental health issues, drug and/or alcohol abuse or dependency, and social isolation (Appendix A). It was the responsibility of the programme lead to translate these aims into delivery to ensure that they were addressed and, as has been discussed, this is influenced by his own experiences, values, and interests. Across the three interviews with the programme lead, the aims and objectives were regularly discussed. In the first interview Deliverer Alex explained,

'First and foremost, it's about having fun, coming having a relaxed social experience and then sort of through the back door have that fitness that we know will help, having that mental health support that we know will help, having those residual impacts and having those links to trusted partners who provide more specialist services. I think it's just a softer way in and I think gives veterans more trust that you

are there just for them to enjoy themselves rather than be examined or put their hand up as somebody who is struggling or is broken.'

This approach was then supported with the following example,

'For instance, we will get people coming to the football who we didn't know had mental health issues. They come along, they are dead keen to get involved, they're laughing and joking with everyone and then weeks into it you might get someone saying this really helped with my anxiety, this has really help with my depression, it's helped me with my sleeping, I'm losing weight, and things that we had no idea were a difficulty for that person because in a session they are just another person joining in and having fun.' (Deliverer Alex)

In follow up interviews with Deliverer Alex and subsequent observations of AP meetings, the programme continued to be described as a *social club and connector* (Observation 201) which adopted a passive approach to addressing the mental health and addiction focus of the programme. Deliverer Alex explains the reason for this being,

'…we don't go to people saying, we want you to come to this because we're worried about you being socially isolated, because as soon as you start using language like that people think that it's for people who are broken or struggling or whatever, and that that's absolutely not what it's about. We want it to feel like you just come to this as a veteran and there's no judgment, you're not waving a flag by doing that, other than I served and I want to do this session, and I'm going to enjoy it, so if you get that benefit, people don't need to know about it, you might choose to talk about it if you want, but you don't have to. So, every single aspect has been passive really.'

These examples outline a passive approach to addressing the key aims of the programme which have been embedded and championed by the programme lead. This is informed and shaped by his own experiences, including his military service and transition to civilian

life, as highlighted in the previous chapter. From these comments, it is evident that the programme lead believes a more direct or targeted approach to addressing mental health, social isolation, and addiction would impact on levels of trust and instigate judgement with veterans being identified as broken or needing help. This passive approach, initiated, championed, and represented by the programme lead, relies on the assumption that sport and physical activity alone can achieve desired developmental objectives (Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011; Coalter, 2012, 2013; Schulenkorf, Sherry and Phillips, 2016; Spaaij and Schaille, 2021). In this instance, these include addressing mental health issues, addiction, and reducing social isolation. However, drawing on SfD literature, this approach has been subject to significant criticism (Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011; Whitley et al., 2019; Bailey and Harris, 2020; Oatley and Harris, 2020; Spaaij and Schaille, 2021). This mythopoeic status of sport has been contested by academics who highlight that these claims are vague and ill-defined (Levermore, 2008; Hayhurst, 2009; Coalter, 2010a; 2012). Sport or physical activity is not the condition necessary for desired objectives to be achieved, instead sport needs to be decentred with attention placed on the mechanisms, processes and experiences that surround it (Coalter, 2017; Moreau et al., 2018; Spaaij and Schaille, 2021). Using Coalter's (2010a) continuum, introduced in section 2.5, which classifies SfD programmes based on the objectives they set out to achieve, I highlighted that the plans for the Vet Fit programme outlined a *sport plus* and *plus sport* approach. I also identified this as novel and unique, drawing comparisons between the Vet Fit programme and the programmes in the literature that use sport and physical activity to support the military to civilian transition, discussed in section 2.4.2 (Table 7). Most provisions adopted a traditional sport approach (Hyer et al., 1996; Cordova et al., 1998; Otter and Currie, 2004; Sporner et al., 2009; Mowatt and Bennett, 2011; Hawkins et al., 2011; Dustin et al., 2011; Brittain and Green, 2012; Burke and Utley, 2013; Reinhardt et al., 2018), yet a small number, principally those published more recently, (Lundberg et al., 2011; Carless et al.,

2014; Rogers, Mallinson and Peppers, 2014; Ley, Barrio and Koch, 2018; Peacock, Carless and McKenna, 2018), were classified as *sport plus*, with adaptations made to the activities relevant to the programmes objectives to maximise the potential of them being achieved. However, despite the anticipated novel approach of the Vet Fit programme, during the interpretation and translation stages of policy enactment this shifted, instead adopting a passive approach aligned with traditional forms of sport provision which maintained the assumption that sport has inherent developmental properties and mirrored many of the programmes delivered previously. Using the policy enactment literature to explain this approach shift, Maguire, Braun, and Ball (2015) explain that policy actors' interpretations account for the disruptions in practice. Therefore, it is the programme leads' interpretations, as the sole policy actor responsible for the programme, that can account for the differences in practice when it comes to delivery.

As well as making connections to SfD and policy enactment literature, there are also possible links to be made between the passive approach to delivery and the demands of neoliberal society (Verhaeghe, 2014). In the comments presented above, the programme lead mentions not wanting to put veterans off attending the programme, and believes highlighting that the programme addresses mental health, social isolation and addiction would do so. While this discussion does not seek to identify if this is the wrong or right approach, drawing on SfD literature has highlighted that this passive approach does not specifically target the desired programme objectives, as sport and physical activity are the site for change rather than the cause of it (Coakley, 1998; Coalter, 2012, 2015, 2017). Therefore, the volume of veterans attending the programme appears to have been prioritised ahead of achieving the outlined programme objectives that focus on mental health, social isolation, and addiction. This can be influenced and explained through meritocracy and neoliberal evaluation systems, which quantitatively measure productions and contributions to it (Ball, 2003; Verhaeghe, 2014; Littler, 2017; Datta and Chakraborty,

2018). The numbers of veterans attending the programme can simply be measured quantitatively, however improvements or changes in mental health, social isolation and addiction are much more difficult to measure in this way and, doing so, would ignore important contextual factors and larger dynamic processes taking place (Mellsop and Wilson, 2006). Thus, in a neoliberal society, where 'anything that can't be measured doesn't count' (Verhaeghe, 2014:137), reporting and demonstrating the quality of the Vet Fit programme through quantitative measures becomes more of a priority than achieving programme objectives. Ultimately, driven by the external dimension of context (Braun et al., 2011), the focus becomes less on the programme and the critical factors that contribute towards effectively supporting veterans in the military to civilian transition, and more on the administration, management and monitoring that demonstrates measurable impact and quality, as well as the assessment of staff (Ball, 2003, 2012; Verhaeghe, 2014).

In addition to attendance figures being used as a measure of quality, it was also evident that gaining income and funding was another quantitative measure employed to validate the quality of the Vet Fit programme. The demands of neoliberal evaluation systems have already been highlighted, including the focus on quantitative production, the need for frequent evaluations in which production and growth is quantified, and the exclusion of that which cannot be measured (Mellsop and Wilson, 2006; Ball, 2012; Verhaeghe, 2014; Datta and Chakraborty, 2018). Securing additional funding was a task prioritised by the AP staff leading on the programme organisation and delivery, to build income and expand the scope of the Vet Fit programme. This can be recognised as a material contextual dimension influencing policy enactment (Braun et al., 2011), specifically relating to the funding and resources used to facilitate Vet Fit programme delivery. While this was a quantitative measure used to demonstrate success, quality, and value, it had limited

connection to or influence on the core objectives of the programme. For example, I was called by the programme lead as he wanted,

> *… to let me know that he was successful in the £70,000 funding bid which they're going to use to add a mental health strand to the programme … He seemed really pleased and said this was more work for him, but he is excited.* (Observation 187)

Then, following a second successful acquirement of income, the programme lead outlined that,

> *… they would be paid to deliver sessions for WIS veterans [by a partner organisation], especially those with high need mental health issues. He outlined that this meant the programme could potentially gain £100k a year.* (Observation 163)

While these examples do consider mental health, they do not contribute towards the core programme and its original objectives. Instead, the additional funding, as an influential material context (Braun et al., 2011), was used to add to the existing programme, targeting specific veteran groups and their mental health. This highlights the influence of the neoliberal context the programme is situated in, impacting on the work of the programme lead and their work role priorities. Overall, meeting the demands of neoliberal evaluation systems and providing quantitative measures of growth and production are prioritised ahead of addressing the objectives of the programme and meeting the needs of its beneficiaries, demonstrating the influence of the external context on policy enactment (Braun et al., 2011). The excitement expressed illustrates the desire of the programme lead to secure additional sources of income, as doing so effectively provides a quantitative measure of the success and value of the programme. This is reinforced in Deliverer Alex's comment that it is,

> '… *really important to gain an audience for the bosses, for people who are looking to sponsor you or support you. That's really important as well when people like insight, like the numbers.'*

Here the programme lead explicitly links the focus on quantitative measures, or numbers, with getting the interests of programme bosses, sponsors, and advocates. This is a clear illustration of meritocracy, as an external context (Braun et al., 2011), influencing the work of the programme lead, in which attention is diverted away from core programme aims, as these do not count sufficiently, and focused on quantitative measures of production and quality, which are then monitored and evaluated by a 'non-productive top layer' (Verhaeghe, 2014:133). Linking these discussions to those in the existing literature on veteran support provisions and the use of sport and physical activity, limited connections are possible. While some publications considered factors around delivery that can influence the programmes' success or impact (Taff et al., 2016; Shirazipour et al., 2017), no literature discussed the context of programme delivery, and the influence of larger societal structures or practices, such as meritocracy or neoliberalism. This highlights the novel and unique nature of this thesis, adding an understanding of contextual influences to the existing literature and making a valuable contribution to knowledge.

5.2.2 The Programme Lead and Multiple Role Identities

Section 4.4 considered multiple role identities (Thoits, 2013) held by veterans engaging in the Vet Fit programme, and it is also important to consider this regarding the programme deliverers, as there is some degree of crossover which is discussed throughout this section. Thus far, focus has remained on the work role identity performed by the programme lead, however his other multiple role identities have also been presented across different environments in the Vet Fit Programme. Prior to working at the AP, the programme lead served in the military, thus sharing a military identity and connection to

the programme beneficiaries. This connection draws on a shared understanding and experience, and grants the programme lead access to the military performance team (Goffman, 1959), as outlined in section 5.0, as well as influencing his interpretations and translations within policy enactment (Ball et al., 2011). This appeared to be an important feature in the programme delivery team with Deliverer Ben commenting that,

> *'… being ex-forces was part of the essential criteria … that is very important for the role because it couldn't have been done by a traditional sport development officer coming in and delivering a programme for veterans, it needed to be someone who understands veterans.'*

Similarly, Deliverer Fred highlighted the importance of the shared military identity, explaining that the programme lead,

> '… *has always had to defend himself on a number of occasions and he probably wouldn't have had a leg to stand on had he not had the military background. I think that's wrong, you know I don't have one and I feel like I deliver very decent services to those from that background but I think in his position it would have been a bloody nightmare if he never had that*.'

These comments suggest that the programme lead, performing his military identity alongside his work role identity, is a key factor to the effective organisation and delivery of the Vet Fit programme. This is because it provides him with access to the military performance team and enhances the performance credibility of his work role identity. Ultimately, in certain situations in the programme, enacting his military identity verifies and fulfils the programme lead's work role identity, coordinating outputs that fulfil and verify both (Burke and Stets, 2009). In the existing literature, the importance of having delivery staff or care providers that are understanding of the military experience has been emphasised, with the accompanied suggestion of employing ex-service personnel to

facilitate this (Verey and Smith, 2012; Bowes, Ferreira, and Henderson, 2018). However, the influence of multiple role identities held by these individuals, and how they are fulfilled and presented across different environments, has not been acknowledged, thus this thesis is the first to do so, highlighting the interplay between multiple role identities held by these individuals. On some occasions the programme lead drew on his military identity to engage in sessions that were part of the Vet Fit programme, blurring the lines between deliverer and beneficiary. Deliverer Alex outlines that he,

> '… *was more closely linked to the [Premier League football club's] veteran session that we had started and was one of the founding players and very much led it at first.'*

This reinforces how, in certain situations, the veteran and work role identities were compatible, in that servicing one also serviced the other (Burke and Stets, 2009). Thus, the programme leads military identity verifies and fulfils his identity as a key policy actor, informing the lens used to filter awareness and interpret signals in the policy enactment process.

Beyond the Vet Fit Programme, the programme lead held additional role identities linked to his family, namely as a partner and father. Despite being more salient within contexts outside of the programme, these family role identities were evident within programme environments especially when considering his future possible self (Markus and Narius, 1986). Focusing on the future of the programme and the delivery teams' involvement in this, Deliverer Jessica explained,

> '…*we don't know exactly where we are in our lives and it kind of just goes with the opportunity. [The programme lead's] mentioned that he wants to move with [his partner and children] to a nice little farmhouse in Scotland and he's said that he doesn't particularly see himself as Mr [Vet Fit] forever, he'd be happy to give that up*

at some point, he just wants to see the project in the right place and then he might want to do more of a mental health thing.'

In this discussion about the future, for the programme lead his family role identities are critical. It is identified that fulfilling his work role identity services and verifies his family role identities, providing him with the resources to do so, for example having the finances to afford a house and relocate to Scotland (Burke and Stets, 2009). In this instance, it is the family role identities of being a partner and father that are the most prominent and salient when shaping his future self (McCall and Simmons, 1978; Markus and Narius, 1986; Thoits, 2013). Furthermore, the quote presented highlights the closeness of the programme leads' identity to the image of the programme, as discussed in section 3.1. Described as '*Mr Vet Fit',* the programme has become part of his identity through the work role he performs. However, in shaping his future self, long term, he is unable to service and verify both family and work role identities. Due to this long-term incompatibility, it is recognised that the programme lead will need to sacrifice his work role identity to be able to fulfil his family role identities, seemingly the most salient and prominent of all his multiple role identities. Considering the practical implications of the programme lead leaving, especially being closely tied to, and deeply embedded in the programme, this could influence the long-term impacts and sustainability of the Vet Fit programme. Therefore, this is a critical factor to consider in the delivery and organisation processes, developing an approach that is not dependent on the programme lead and their unique mix of qualities and multiple role identities.

In addition to family role identities, there were further multiple role identities held by the programme lead that were seemingly incompatible and could not be performed together, in the same context or social encounter (Burke and Stets, 2009). Where role identities are incompatible and it is not possible to enact both, Burke and Stets (2009) suggest that a shift must occur to avoid the conflict. This is evident in the following observation,

> *[The programme lead] shared that he is considering taking a sabbatical after the three years of this project is up, so he can focus on his videoing and directing. He also said that his partner and him would both like to move to Scotland and ideally, he would be in a role where he could work from home, in a senior/strategic role*. (Observation 121)

This reinforces the discussion presented above focusing on the long-term inability to enact both family and work role identities. However, the additional identity of being a filmmaker is considered which, like the family role identities, is discordant with his work role identity. As such, the programme lead is preparing for a shift in circumstance, in the form of a sabbatical, to avoid these conflicts. Within this shift, the programme lead reidentifies himself, aligning his self-meanings closely to his family role identities, as conceptualised by Burke and Stets (2009).

While previous discussions have highlighted the value of the programme lead maintaining their military identity, there were some instances where this appeared to conflict with his work role identity. In one example, I observed that the programme lead was

> …*scared to rock the boat, and this was demonstrated through [Deliverer Jessica's] comment that he does not want to invite the footballers to yoga, due to the fear of ridicule.* (Observation 145)

This example suggests that there is a potential concern for the programme lead in that performing his work role identity would damage the credibility of his military identity, especially in social encounters with veterans attending the football sessions. This discordance between the performance of the military and work role identities is largely influenced by the audience and the military performance team the programme lead belongs to. When part of the military performance team, for example in the football sessions, the programme lead is unable to enact both because he seemingly believes that

performing his work role identity would damage not only his military identity but his position in the team performance. Echoing this inability to enact both military and work role identities in the presence of veterans at the football sessions, Deliverer Ian commented that the programme lead,

> '…*is a bit of a chameleon really because in here he's lovely, nice, and then he goes with the lads [the veterans] and all of a sudden he becomes a different person.'*

This illustrates the technique used by the programme lead in which he is able to prioritise certain identity performances depending on the circumstances he is in, with the regions dictated by the audience present (Goffman, 1959). In the presence of work colleagues his work role identity is performed frontstage, however in the frontstage environment of the football sessions with an audience of veterans, it is his military identity that is presented. This suggests that the programme lead can successfully manage his presentation of self, but also highlights the incompatibility of certain role identities being performed in the same frontstage region.

In summary, this section has focused on the programme lead responsible for the delivery and organisation of the Vet Fit programme, specifically examining their presentation of self and the techniques used to maintain a credible frontstage performance of his work role identity (Goffman, 1959). However, an example was also presented which highlighted an incident or faux pas (Goffman,1959) which exposed the audience to a presentation of self usually confined to backstage regions, but doing so enhanced the credibility of the programme leads' work role identity performance. Attention was also placed on the programme lead as a key policy actor (Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2015) and the influence of his identity on the enactment process. In particular, the decision to adopt a passive approach, relying on the power of sport (Coalter, 2010a, 2012, 2017), was dissected considering the influence of the programme leads' lens, on filtering awareness

and interpreting signals, as well as the influential demands of neoliberal evaluation systems (Verhaeghe, 2014). The final point of this section concentrated on the multiple role identities (Thoits, 2013) held by the programme lead, considering how they are performed across different contexts in the Vet Fit programme. This included the use of the military identity to service and verify the programme leads' work role identity, the influence of family role identities on the future self (Markus and Narius, 1986) and the incompatibility of military, filmmaker, or family role identities alongside the work role identity in certain programme environments (Burke and Stets, 2009). The next section will continue to focus on impression management but will do so with attention on how this is undertaken by performance teams, both in the AP and with links to external stakeholders.

5.3 Organisation Performance Teams

Schulman (2017:86) presents workplaces and organisations as stages, consisting of purposively coordinated activities by social actors in the form of '"singles", "withs" and "teams"'. For all individuals in these work environments, impression management matters. In workplaces and organisations there are many diverse performances taking place, and Boje (1989) suggests that these settings should be considered as theatres in which there are many overlapping performances occurring at any one time. These performances can 'be pieced together in a narrative and set of stories that compose the organisation' (Boje and Rosile, 2003:24). This analogy can be applied to the AP and the small group of staff responsible for delivering the Vet Fit programme, who each manage their presentation of self within the workplace. In addition to doing this individually, this section will focus on how impressions are managed by the different performance teams present within and across the organisation. This includes the teams within the AP and programme delivery staff, but also the teams that have links to external organisations and stakeholders. The AP is an outward facing organisation, working collaboratively with local partners to serve

the needs of its community (Active Partnerships, 2021). Considering this, the office environment and internal meetings are positioned as backstage regions (Goffman, 1959), as these are inaccessible to external organisations or stakeholders unless they are invited. Alternatively, meetings and events in which external stakeholders are present, can be considered frontstage regions (Goffman, 1959), and it is these regions that influence the team performances occurring at any one time across the organisation. In the current literature focusing on veteran and military support provisions, the concepts of performance teams (Goffman, 1959) and workplaces as stages (Schulman, 2017) have not been applied. There is a recognition that veterans engaging in these programmes are united by shared experiences and qualities (Verey and Smith, 2012; Ahern et al., 2015; Shirazipour et al., 2017), but there was no consideration as to how this translated into a team performance. Likewise, in the SfD literature, the value of organisations working in partnership to enable impact and positive change was highlighted (Lindsey and Banda, 2010), but again the concept of team performances and the appreciation of these organisations as stages had not been considered. This isolates a gap in knowledge that this thesis addresses, using the concepts of performance teams (Goffman, 1959) and workplaces as stages (Schulman, 2017), to enhance our understanding of the realities and challenges of programme organisation and delivery.

5.3.1 Internal Performance Teams

In the AP, there were three members of staff responsible for Vet Fit programme delivery, and between themselves they developed and maintained a team performance. This team performance was crafted and shaped in the backstage region of the AP work environment and presented frontstage where external partners or stakeholders were present. For example, when discussing one of the sessions delivered on the programme, in partnership with a local sports club, the programme lead said that Vet Fit delivery team were going to,

show making an effort, let it fail and then do our own thing. (Observation 189)

In a further example, the delivery team explained how they recently met with an accessible climbing and activity centre, and

> *… this was in preparation for a meeting with [a key funder and stakeholder], as they were expecting to be asked what [the Vet Fit Programme] have done with the money provided to engage with more wounded, injured, and sick veterans. At the moment, all they have done is employed an extra member of staff, so they arranged this meeting to show that they are making preparations to develop their engagement with this veteran group.* (Observation 190)

In both examples the programme lead is exercising directive dominance, directing and controlling the team performance and the performance roles of his colleagues (Goffman, 1959: Scott, 2015). This is in addition to employing dramaturgical discipline, in maintaining a view of the overall team performance and making necessary preparations to maintain a credible frontstage team performance, if it is challenged (Goffman, 1959; Scott, 2015). This is clear in the second example, in which the reason behind meeting the accessible climbing and activities centre, was to protect the team performance in case it was challenged by the funder around their current lack of engagement with wounded, sick, and injured veterans. Goffman (1959) describes this as staging talk in which there are pragmatic planning discussions with team-mates to talk about how they will stage a performance, on this occasion the upcoming performance meeting with the key funder. By engaging in staging talk and anticipating the possible challenges or disruptions, the programme lead can use directive dominance to provide solutions and ensure his colleagues are prepared, reducing the likelihood of incident or embarrassment. In this example, the solution proposed by the programme lead is meeting with the accessible climbing and activities centre in preparation for the meeting with the funder and ensuring

that his team-mates are aware of the reasons for doing so. This backstage work maintains a credible frontstage team performance, anticipating and preparing for possible disruptions, discussing with team-mates how the performance is going to be staged.

Continuing to concentrate on these examples, there are implications for programme delivery that should also be considered. The examples presented, demonstrate the programme delivery team taking actions to maintain a credible team performance, and meeting the needs of programme partners, however this does not appear to contribute towards the overall objectives of the programme. As discussed in sections 5.1.2 and 5.2.1, there are features of meritocracy and neo-liberal society, such as the drive to work hard, gain recognition, reward, or promotion, and demonstrate quality and success, which distract focus away from the primary objectives of the programme (Verhaeghe, 2014). The team performance discussed here, can be presented as another example of this, in which attention is removed from the programmes' objectives, considering mental health, social isolation and addiction, and placed on the drive to demonstrate the programmes quality and success to key stakeholders to receive the recognition and reward from them, often in the form of additional funding.

This internal team performance, maintained by three members of AP staff responsible for delivering the Vet Fit Programme, was also evident through the shared language used to describe and explain the programme. Following an interview with Deliverer Jessica, I reflected in my research diary that,

> *I felt that she was very considered with her answers and at times it even felt like there were comments or answers that she and [the programme lead] had prepared as they said the same thing and used the same language.* (Observation 226)

As part of the analysis, I reflected on the language used by all three members of staff in the delivery team when discussing the Vet Fit programme. It was evident that there was a

degree of shared language, especially around the purpose of the programme, with each drawing on similar key terms and phrases to emphasise the fun and social elements and reinforce that it is '*not a treatment service*', a phrase used by both Deliverer Alex and Kate. For example, Deliverer Kate described the programme as,

> *'… having that social element of coming together, making new friends, creating those new connections and communities within the group.'*

Similarly, Deliverer Jessica explained that the purpose of the programme is,

> '… *to create sessions and provide a fun and social environment for people to … spend time with other veterans'*.

This social focus is also echoed by Deliverer Alex who describes the programme as a *social club and connector* (Observation 201) with the purpose of,

> *'… getting people together from those communities to have fun, to reengage with their friends*.'

These examples illustrate some of the shared language used by the AP staff leading on the Vet Fit Programme within their team performance. With a SI lens, language is recognised as a tool for social action with consequences for identities, situations, and organisational arrangements (Scott, 2015). Yet, these acts of speech are joint, negotiated, and dependent on the audiences' interpretation (Goffman, 1959; Blumer, 1969; Strauss, 1978) but, used according to the social actors' motives and interests, they can also be messy, imperfect, and misunderstood (Scott, 2015). The language used in this example demonstrate a shared collective identity and work that has occurred backstage to maintain a credible frontstage team performance, in this instance agreeing on and maintaining a party line for describing the purpose of the Vet Fit programme, which was then presented frontstage during an interview (Goffman, 1959; Scott, 2015). Focusing on the language

used, it is clear the agreed focus is on the social aspects of the programme, not mental health or addiction, thus considering only one of three programme objectives. There is scope for this use of language to be linked to some of the critical debates discussed in this thesis, such as the passive approach taken to delivering the programme, and other SfD provisions, relying on the power of sport (Coalter, 2010a, 2012, 2017) which does not specifically target the outlined programme objectives. This is in addition to the demands of neoliberal evaluation systems, the quantitative measures of productions and growth (Ball, 2012; Verhaeghe, 2014), and the challenge of measuring mental health and addiction in this way without ignoring important contextual factors and larger dynamic processes (Mellsop and Wilson, 2006). Thus, if it cannot be measured it does not count and becomes less of a focus or priority (Ball et al., 2011; Verhaeghe, 2014).

Considering the discussion presented here, this can have practical implications for delivery. It is evident that the three individuals, who each have responsibility for delivering the Vet Fit programme, are working together to maintain a credible team performance which is then presented in frontstage regions. However, as the responsibility for delivery sits within the performance team, who are driven by an external context of policy enactment regarding features of the neo-liberal environment they are situated in (Braun et al., 2011), there is seemingly little external check and challenge resulting in two of the programme objectives not being addressed. It could be argued that in practice the programme is not reflective of the objectives outlined in the initial funding bid, with shifts occurring during policy enactment (Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2015) and because of the neoliberal environment the programme is located in (Verhaeghe, 2014). As a recommendation arising from this analysis, it is suggested that regular reviews of programme objectives are critical to ensuring delivery remains relevant to the initial aims. This could be the responsibility of someone external to the performance team, who is not immersed or embedded in the programme, who encourages this need for ongoing review

and reflection to ensure delivery remains relevant. The next section will focus on the performance teams that encompass individuals and organisations external to the AP and Vet Fit delivery team.

5.3.2 Performance Teams Across the External Partnership Network

As part of the many overlapping performances occurring at any one time in the workplace (Boje,1989), the individuals belonging to the internal performance team, also belong to wider team performances together with external programme stakeholders. These wider performance teams require the individuals involved to engage with further impression management tools, to manage their presentation of self within these teams while not disrupting the other credible performances they are part of and working to maintain (Goffman, 1959). One performance team which extends beyond the AP workplace, is presented and maintained by AP staff linked to the Vet Fit programme and the programme funder, Sport England. It was evident the AP staff were not happy with the team performance that was being portrayed, but also felt unable to disrupt or challenge this. Deliverer Ben commented,

> *'I wouldn't like this in English, and I wouldn't write it down, but the support we get from them it is very much a funder, have done this, have you done that, whether it could be more of a partner supportive of the project…'*

He then continued to explain that,

> *'... 45 minutes, that's the only actual time we've had face-to-face with Sport England on this, other than on the phone about operational. It's not really checking on how's it going, can we come for a visit, can we come see a session, because all their seeing is from the paperwork that's coming in, whereas I think they could probably immerse themselves a bit more in the project.'*

Engaging with realigning actions (Goffman 1959), Deliverer Ben expresses dissent for the current working consensus, but does so knowing that other internal members of this team performance feel the same way and thus it does not threaten the integrity of the performance. Despite this feeling of dissent towards the current setup of the team performance, the AP staff and Deliverer Ben are not able to challenge it, and this can be understood drawing on concepts of neoliberalism and policy enactment. As has been discussed, neoliberal policy emphasises performance and product ahead of personal enrichment, as well as being linked to both freedom, choice, and regular centrally imposed measures of performance (Moore and Clarke, 2016). In this instance, it is Sport England as the programme funder who are imposing these measurements of performance and looking for the quantitative measures of programme quality, production, and impact. As part of the modernisation of Sport England, discussed in section 2.6, focus shifted from delivery to a strategic role, concerned with ensuring public funds were spent appropriately (Houlihan and Green, 2009). This reform adopted a series of neoliberal techniques, including the development of formal, contractual relationships, the creation of a performance management framework, and the development of agreed and robust reporting procedures (Houlihan and Green, 2009; Harris and Houlihan, 2016). This change was driven largely by Government, who had accepted the use of sport and physical activity as a solution to several policy problems (section 2.6), and this reform of Sport England was about increasing accountability across the sporting sector (Houlihan and Green, 2009). This new way of working clarified roles and responsibilities, provided a transparent framework in which performance could be evaluated, ranked, or rewarded, and facilitates on one hand greater responsibility, freedom, and autonomy, but also a fixed framework to scrutinise and judge performance (Houlihan and Green, 2009; Harris and Houlihan, 2016). As receivers of funding from Sport England, the AP were subject to these new features, unable to challenge the demands asked of them. Doing so risked

losing the funding they had been provided, subsequently impacting on the dynamic of the team performance, the presentations of self occurring within this, and more practically the approach taken to programme delivery. This illustrates funding as a material context crucial to policy enactment in the Vet Fit programme (Braun et al., 2011).

For most AP staff, they were part of both the internal performance team, within the AP, as well as other performance teams with multiple external stakeholders. At times, managing these multiple different team performances appeared to be a challenge, and different approaches were taken to deal with this. One example was present following a meeting with a programme stakeholder who held a significant role in the early organisation of the Vet Fit programme.

> *[The programme lead] said he was glad it [the meeting] was over and at least it was done for a little while, saying that he just has to do it to keep them [the external stakeholder] happy. [An AP colleague] sarcastically asked if we knew that [their organisation] had gold status, making reference to the multiple times it was mentioned by [the external stakeholder]. [The AP colleague] also said that they really don't need them to put the AP in touch with anyone as they have better contacts through people in the office. I got the impression neither thought that the meeting was worthwhile and mainly did it to please [the external stakeholder]. [The AP colleague] also reacted to a comment that the veteran mapping would be difficult and in 7 years [the external stakeholder] made no progress with this. [The AP colleague] said that they would be able to do this through the contacts the AP has. He said that just because [the external stakeholder] hasn't managed it, doesn't mean that they won't either. It looked like they were just using [the external stakeholder], keeping them onside*. (Observation 163)

This example clearly illustrates the front and backstage regions, and different team performances (Goffman, 1959). In the frontstage region of the meeting, in the presence of the external stakeholder, a credible frontstage team performance is maintained with no one present wanting to cause an open disagreement which could disrupt the teams' integrity and interaction order (Scott, 2015). However, backstage, in the corridors of the AP office, this frontstage performance is undermined with the internal AP team performance being prioritised. To maintain a credible performance as members of the internal AP performance team, it appears that AP staff agreed in undermining the performance that just occurred with the external stakeholder, recognising the value of each, but also the regions and contexts within the programme where they are most important and influential. This illustrates the fragility and fragmented nature of partnerships and how they often lack meaning (McDonald, 2005; Lindsey and Banda, 2010; Philpotts, Grix and Quarmby, 2010; Mackintosh, 2011). McDonald (2005) presents APs as a strategic partnership, operating within a framework of clear objectives set by central bodies such as Sport England, but with authority over other actors to adapt national directives to fit local conditions. Morgan and Baker (2021) outline the appeal of using partnerships as it enables the engagement of multiple actors to address complex social issues, minimises duplication, and combines resources, endorsing this as a default approach for many development programmes. Yet, as highlighted, partnership working has potential weaknesses and been challenged in the literature. As well as being fragmented, elusive, inconsistent, and lacking meaning (McDonald, 2005; Lindsey and Banda, 2010; Philpotts, Grix and Quarmby, 2010; Mackintosh, 2011; Woodland and Hutton, 2012; Lindsey, Chapman and Dudfield, 2020), there is also the suggestion that partnerships are developed not due to their effectiveness, but because they provide legitimacy, accountability, and are a condition of funding awards (Dickson and Glasby 2010, Grix 2010, Phillpots, Grix and Quarmby, 2010, Mansfield 2016). Morgan and Barker

(2021:3) suggest that a culture has been created whereby partnership working has become ‘an end in itself, as opposed to a means to an end’ and the example provided demonstrates this. The partnership that underpins the team performance is fragile and seemingly maintained only in frontstage regions as a process of keeping the external stakeholder involved but not influential in the programmes’ development and achievement of objectives. This can also be tied to the external contextual dimension of policy enactment (Braun et al., 2011), in which this partnership provides the AP with external support, but also pressures and expectations, which are managed through the internal and external team performances presented in the front and backstage regions of the AP work environment.

In an additional performance team with another external programme stakeholder, the focus on funding and numbers was influential. As highlighted previously, features of a neoliberal society encourage competition, Verhaeghe (2014:112-113) explains that,

> people are competitive beings focused on their own profit. This benefits society as a whole because competition entails everyone doing their best to come out on top … Everyone must continue to grow because competition is fierce.

While this competition is a benefit to society, it can become a challenge when competing individuals are required to work in partnership, influencing the performance teams they are part of, as well as policy enactment. As Viczko and Riveros (2015:480) outline ‘not all policies are adopted in the same way, as each policy carries different significance for different people. Issues of power and positionality also influence the way in which policies are performed into existence ...’. Therefore, each actor involved in the partnership and team performance may have different interpretations of policy, with power and positionality influencing this. This was evident in a partnership between the AP and a local sports club, in which different interpretations in the policy enactment process resulted in a disrupted

team performance, and ultimately ended the local clubs' involvement in the Vet Fit Programme. In the frontstage regions of the sessions, a credible team performance was maintained, however in backstage regions of meetings and interviews, this team performance was dislocated and disordered. Deliverer Hannah outlined that if the staff working on the Vet Fit programme,

> '… *had come out and said I'm going to just do sport and we're going to work together, and I'm going to work with this person, this person, and this person, then … we would have probably had a much better result*.'

Recognising this partnership was not as successful as it could have been, Deliverer Hannah suggests that communication was central to this, however it can also be explained considering policy enactment and the fact these organisations were working in similar areas and therefore in competition. As stated, policies carry different levels of significance for different people, with biography, positionality, and power influencing this (Viczko and Riveros, 2015; Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2015). In this instance, while both organisations were targeting the same audience through their policy, they both had different material, professional and situated contexts (Braun et al., 2011) which influenced and resulted in differing policy enactments. With these approaches being different, this impacted on the partnership they were able to maintain and, unable to sustain a credible team performance, this resulted in the partnership breaking down with each focusing on their own enactments of policy separately.

In another team performance with stakeholders external to the AP, it was evident that a focus on figures was becoming a site for competition and conflict. From the point of view of Deliverer Fred, he felt that,

> '… *people spend time on it [the funding application] and don't see any monetary return, then that's wrong because the time they spent on it should really have been*

with the reason of helping military veterans. [Vet Fit] have done that but if they went into it giving time up thinking we will get a couple of grand on the back of this, and they didn't, then that breeds the resentment.'

There is a suggestion that some individuals belonging to the external organisation became involved in the partnership and the Vet Fit programme to gain income and funding, which has already been discussed in section 5.2.1, as a quantitative measure of production, growth, and success (Verhaeghe, 2014). Applying the framework of contextual dimensions established by Braun et al. (2011), funding and resources are aspects of the material context which influences policy enactment, and therefore when this was not received, this bred resentment as there was competition between individuals that should have been working together, demonstrating the challenges embedded across partnerships through the features of neo-liberal society. Deliverer Fred added that,

'… in terms of working with [Vet Fit] we generated quite a significant amount of funding to deliver multi-sports programmes and, trying to put this as nicely as possible, [Vet Fit] sort of came in and put their name towards it as a partnership, to try and help me in terms of recruiting veterans onto the programme, and I work closely with [Deliverer Alex], very closely with [Deliverer Alex], to make sure that our name is still attached to some of these things as he well knows.'

This suggests that there is a competitive element to the partnership and performance team, with the two organisations competing to ensure their name remains linked to the funding provided. With such focus, it could be argued that this removes concentration from the true aims of the programme and what needs to be achieved with the funding provided, reinforcing Verhaeghe's (2014) symptom of neoliberalism in that there is less focus on the work itself and more on administration, management, and monitoring. Considering the other side of this partnership and performance team, members of the AP

echoed feelings of friction and resentment, Deliverer Ben explains that when the Vet Fit programme started,

> *'the funding was going to [the external stakeholder], they were going to be leading the project. Whenever the funding was then coming to [the AP] I think that caused a little bit of friction .... the only thing they can get is positives from it, so something that they are very much focused on is increasing their membership, so they see this programme as a catalyst to increase their membership, because they are not accountable to anyone. If they were accountable it would be much more of a priority, what they are accountable for is numbers of veterans they support and, from what I believe is that, if a veteran becomes a member that's classified as them supporting them and that's what their funded on, that's what their performance is based on, so if they get members from [Vet Fit] that's a benefit but if they refer no one on to it and it doesn't succeed it doesn't make a difference to them, which is probably a little bit where the partnership may have fallen down, it sometimes wouldn't seem that we're working towards the same goal.'*

This comment highlights a clear difference in policy enactment between the two organisations that constitute this partnership and performance team. Professional, situated, material and external dimensions of context, in addition to biography, identity, positionality, culture, and political perspectives, all influence interpretation and translation, resulting in different policy enactments across different organisations and people (Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun and Ball, 2015; Viczko and Riveros, 2015). This is evident in this example with the two organisations adopting different approaches towards supporting veterans, with the external stakeholders' attention on membership figures conflicting with the approach taken by the AP. Deliverer Ben explains that membership figures are what the external organisations' performance is measured on, a neoliberal evaluation system which measures production and their contribution to it (Ball, 2003, 2012; Verhaeghe, 2014;

Littler, 2017; Datta and Chakraborty, 2018). As a result, this generates an atmosphere of competition between these organisations as the external stakeholder is looking to increase their membership figures, as measurability demonstrates quality (Ball et al., 2011; Verhaeghe, 2014), however both organisations are targeting and competing for the same population. Consequently, this competition for engagement and the need for this to be measured overrides the drive for programme success and ensuring the programme achieves what it set out to do. Thus, a partnership that is supposedly working together towards the shared goal of supporting veterans, and presenting a credible team performance that enables this, is actually incredibly fragile and fragmented by differences in policy enactment and the influence of neoliberal evaluations systems

5.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I examined the experiences of Vet Fit programme deliverers, considering the realities and challenges of organising, developing, and delivering a sport and physical activity-based support programme for military veterans, as well as considering the influence of larger societal structures and practices. In the existing literature, reviewed in section 2.4, it was identified that there was no focus on evaluation, or consideration of wider structures and practices in society and how they impacted on organisation and delivery of veteran support provisions. Likewise, the concepts of performance teams (Goffman, 1959) and workplaces as stages (Schulman, 2017) has also not been applied, considering both military and SfD literature. These observations isolate a gap in knowledge in which the theoretical concepts applied in this thesis are absent from the areas of SfD and military literature. Therefore, this is the first piece of military and SfD research that applies concepts of performance teams (Goffman, 1959), workplaces as stages (Schulman, 2017), policy enactment (Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun and Ball, 2014) and neoliberalism (Verhaeghe, 2014) to contribute to knowledge and enhance

understanding around the realities and challenges of programme organisation and delivery.

The AP were the core organisation responsible for undertaking the policy enactment process, resulting in the delivery of the Vet Fit programme. Employing Braun et al's (2011) framework of contextual dimensions, I suggest that the situated, professional, material, and external contexts of the AP each impact and influence the enactment process. Furthermore, applying Ball et al's (2011) typology of policy roles to the AP and its leadership team, I identified a hierarchy of positions which, influenced by neoliberal meritocracy, fostered internal competition (Verhaeghe, 2014) and an atmosphere of fear and frustration between staff (Harlos and Pinder, 2000; Crawley and Hodson, 2014; Datta and Chakraborty, 2018; Ives et al., 2021). Influenced by this working environment, the drive to work hard and demonstrate success was prioritised by staff (Verhaeghe, 2014), shifting focus away from the core purpose of their work role, and the aims of the Vet Fit programme. The programme lead also had to negotiate his presentation of self in this neoliberal working environment. In frontstage regions, the programme leads' work role identity was the most salient and prominent (Burke and Stets, 2009; Thoits, 2013). Yet analysis of an incident in which typically backstage behaviours were exhibited frontstage to an audience of programme stakeholders, suggested that this added credibility to the programme leads' presentation of his work role identity. This challenges the published literature that proposes this should have instead caused damage (Goffman, 1959) and makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature on partnerships (Philpotts, Grix and Quarmby, 2010; Lindsay and Banda, 2011; Mackintosh, 2011, 2021).

I also present the programme lead as a key policy actor, in which his values and interests play a crucial role in policy enactment (Ball et al., 2011). In one example, the programme lead initiated, championed, and represented a passive approach to programme delivery. This approach relies on the assumption that sport and physical activity can achieve the

desired developmental objectives (Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011; Coalter, 2012, 2013; Schulenkorf, Sherry and Phillips, 2016; Spaaij and Schaille, 2021), and has been subject to significant criticism (Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011; Whitley et al., 2019; Bailey and Harris, 2020; Oatley and Harris, 2020; Spaaij and Schaille, 2021). This analysis highlights the programme leads influence on the delivery approach, demonstrating how a shift in enacting policy occurred, shaped by the programme leads' policy interpretations and translations (Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2015), and the wider demands of neoliberal society (Ball, 2003, 2012; Verhaeghe, 2014; Datta and Chakraborty, 2018). This results in the Vet Fit programme mirroring many of the programmes delivered previously in this field (Hyer et al., 1996; Cordova et al., 1998; Otter and Currie, 2004; Sporner et al., 2009; Mowatt and Bennett, 2011; Hawkins et al., 2011; Dustin et al., 2011; Brittain and Green, 2012; Burke and Utley, 2013; Reinhardt et al., 2018), as opposed to the unique approach discussed in section 2.4.2.

This chapter also discussed performance teams (Goffman, 1959) both in the AP and outside of it. This was underpinned by the analogy of workplaces as stages (Schulman, 2017), recognising the diverse performances taking place. The internal team performance focused on the three AP members of staff responsible for delivering the Vet Fit programme and their use of backstage regions to engage in techniques that maintained a credible frontstage performance (Goffman, 1959). It is also suggested that the actions and behaviours of this internal team performance were driven by demands of the neoliberal environment they were situated in (Ball, 2012; Verhaeghe, 2014; Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2015). Regarding team performance across the partnership network, this included performances presented and maintained between AP staff, the programme funder, Sport England, and other key programme stakeholders. It was also noted that the partnerships forming these external performance teams were impacted by neoliberal society and the encouragement of competition (Verhaeghe, 2014), and while credible frontstage

performances were maintained, the analysis highlighted them to be fragile and fragmented (McDonald, 2005; Lindsey and Banda, 2010; Philpotts, Grix and Quarmby, 2010; Mackintosh, 2011; Woodland and Hutton, 2012; Lindsey, Chapman and Dudfield, 2020) due to competition, as a feature of neoliberalism, and the policy enactment process. In the final chapter, I will draw together the conclusions from this thesis and highlight the empirical, theoretical, methodological, and practical implications that arise from this research.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.0 Overview

In this thesis, focusing on how a sport and physical activity-based programme can support veterans in their transition from the military, I have identified and addressed several knowledge gaps and areas of criticism that are evident in the subject, methodological, and theoretical literature. In the subject literature, four clear gaps in knowledge were identified, the first in the transition literature in which there was a lack of English focused publications and an overarching narrative of binary oppositions in which veteran transition experiences were categorised into *good* or *bad* (McDermott, 2007). Second, with a focus on sport and physical activity-based veteran support provisions, there was a dominant approach of short-term delivery, which concentrated on attending to a specific *issue*, largely dependent on the assumed power of sport (Caddick and Smith, 2014). The third gap in knowledge focused on policy and the dearth of connections, between sport and military policy, dismissing the potential for sport and physical activity to contribute to wider policy objectives regarding veteran and military communities. The final area of focus was the long-term criticism of SfD literature on the mythopoeic status of sport and the lack of robust and efficient monitoring and evaluation (Levermore, 2008; Hayhurst, 2009; Coalter 2010b; Whitley et al., 2019; Bailey and Harris, 2020; Oatley and Harris, 2020; Spaaij and Schaille, 2021). Identifying these gaps and criticisms in the published literature scoped out areas of new knowledge that this thesis could contribute to. By occupying a space that bridges the gap between the fields of military research and SfD, this thesis examined how a sport and physical activity-based support programme, with a focus on mental health, social isolation, and addiction, can support veterans in their transition from the military. The programme was delivered long term, over a three year period, in the North West of England, and supportive of all transition experiences and challenges, thus addressing the

first and second literature gaps outlined. Then, with a focus on mechanisms, experiences and processes surrounding the programmes' sporting activities, this thesis moves beyond the existing binary opposition and identifies the varied veteran transition experiences, continuing to address the first identified literature gap, as well as the fourth, as this enables a more robust approach to evaluation moving beyond the assumed power of sport. Finally, in making connections between military and sporting policies, publications and literatures, this thesis demonstrates the potential of sport and physical activity to contribute to military policy objectives as well as wider policy goals that encompass veteran and military communities, addressing the third literature gap presented in this thesis. Overall, in attending to these knowledge gaps and areas of criticism in the subject literature, this thesis not only endorses the use of sport and physical activity as an approach to support military and veteran communities and achieve wider policy goals, but also extends and contributes to existing knowledge.

This thesis is also novel and original in its approach, having identified further gaps regarding methodology and theory. Regarding the field of military research only one paper adopted an ethnographic approach (Carless et al., 2014), and likewise, in the SfD literature there was no evident research drawing on an ethnographic methodology (Schulenkorf, Sherry and Rowe, 2016). This establishes a methodological gap in each of these research domains, which this thesis exploits by using an ethnographic approach to examine and evaluate the Vet Fit programme, adding to and enhancing the existing learnings and knowledge. Turning to focus on theory, the concepts of identity (Scott, 2015), presentation of self (Goffman, 1959), policy enactment (Ball et al., 2011; Braun et al., 2011; Maguire Braun and Ball, 2014) and neoliberalism (Verhaeghe, 2014) shaped the theoretical frame underpinning this thesis. A review of the literature identified a small body of military research considering identity (Higate, 2001; Brunger, Serrato and Ogden, 2013; Grimell, 2015, 2017; Herman and Yarwood, 2014) and a handful of SfD papers

considering policy enactment (Hammond, Penney and Jeanes, 2020; O'Gorman et al., 2021; Hammond et al., 2021), but beyond this the application of the theoretical framework used in this thesis, and an overarching SI lens, were not identified. This positions this theoretical approach as unique in which this thesis is the first to apply these concepts to the areas of SfD and military research, contributing not only new theoretical insight, but extending knowledge through the application of existing theoretical concepts to new participant groups and research areas. Building on the current military research considering identity, the application of this unique theoretical frame identified how the programme became a site for veterans to negotiate their military and civilian identities across the transition process and in civilian life. This encompassed the ongoing alignment to the military identity, the performance of the military identity as both individuals and performance teams, and how the military identity can and cannot be presented alongside other multiple role identities across civilian, sporting, and military environments. Regarding programme deliverers, their identity, alongside the neoliberal context they were situated in, impacted on the policy enactment process. This included the influence of the AP working environment and staff, the identity of the programme lead, as a key policy actor, and the diverse team performances taking place across the AP and Vet Fit Programme. In this final chapter, I will outline the central implications of this research considering the four areas of, empirical, theoretical, methodological, and practical implications.

6.1 Empirical Implications

The aim of this thesis was not to identify between *good* and *bad* transition experiences, or evidence how the Vet Fit Programme did or did not support veterans who were in need. Instead, my original contribution to knowledge is the recognition and discussion of the varied military to civilian transition experiences, moving beyond the existing dichotomy of

good and *bad* transitions evident in the literature. The current military to civilian transition literature is dominated by its negative impacts in which there are largely stereotypical understandings, and a lack of appreciation for the diversity of transition experiences (Iverson et al., 2005b). McDermott (2007) outlines that there is a clear dichotomy around the transition with veterans judged as either doing well or being left *broken*. This thesis responds to calls for a more nuanced understanding of the changes involved with the transition process, taking a more person centred approach and disrupting the assumed binary opposition that is currently evident (Herman and Yarwood, 2014; Brunger, Serrato and Ogden, 2013). With a focus on each of the veterans' narratives and experiences in their own contexts and adopting a methodology which recognises that there are no illegitimate voices (Fetterman, 2010), this research takes a person-centred approach that considers and embraces the variety of transition experiences. Applying and disrupting conceptualisations of transition terminology (Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins, 2017) (Table 6), this thesis demonstrates variation across transition experiences, with some veterans able to clearly demarcate their transition and others who recognise it as ongoing. Whilst every veteran undergoes a transition of some form, this does not necessarily encompass readjustment or reintegration, as presented by Elnitsky, Fisher and Blevins (2017). For those veterans that were able to recognise an end point to their transition, either through time or process, their understanding did not consider the influence of reintegration or readjustment. I argue that this reflects the emergent nature of the field, which over the last decade has identified an increase in this transition terminology being used. I recommend that, in addition to transition, readjustment and reintegration need to be encompassed into policy and practice to recognise the different facets of the transition process and how they are applied and negotiated by veterans during the military to civilian transition.

This research has provided empirical evidence regarding the negotiation of identity across the military to civilian transition. I have highlighted and discussed the approaches taken

and decisions made by veterans to manage their military identity, alongside other role identities, to perform behaviors in line with the interaction order. This research places a spotlight on identity as a key factor in the transition process, expanding the current military to civilian transition literature which is dominated by the psychology of the transition. Military sociology sits on the margins of this field in which there is a small pocket of research concentrating on themes of identity (Higate, 2001; Brunger, Serrato and Ogden, 2013; Herman and Yarwood, 2014; Grimell, 2015, 2017), culture (True, Rigg and Butler, 2015; Cooper et al., 2018) and networks (Albertson, Irving and Best, 2015; Edelmann, 2018). This research puts forward the importance of identity and presents it as a concept core to joining and leaving the military, as well as reintegrating into civilian life. Drawing upon Goffman's understandings of identity within this research, has allowed me to gain a greater appreciation of the military to civilian transition experience. This encompasses a deeper understanding of the actions and behaviours of veterans during this transition period, and the reasons or thought processes behind these which are often not visible, unplanned, and undiscussed. This also enables an understanding, in practice, of how veterans present themselves within social encounters and manage this self-presentation, and this is the real value of utilising Goffman's concepts within this research. Drawing on Goffman's understandings of identity, places a spotlight on these behaviours and has emphasized that identity should be considered as a key transition factor alongside those that are seemingly more obvious and have been widely discussed, such as mental health, family, and employment.

This thesis has also made three empirical contributions to the area of SfD. First, considering the use of the sport and physical activity as a tool to support military veterans, this research has identified the benefits felt by some veterans through their long-term engagement in the Vet Fit programme. In previous literature focusing on the use of sport and/or physical activities as the vehicle to support military veterans, much of this domain

focused on provisions delivered on a short-term basis (Carless et al., 2014; Rogers, Mallinson and Peppers, 2014; Reinhardt et al., 2018; Peacock, Carless and McKenna, 2018; Ley, Barrio and Koch, 2018), using certain competitive sports (Sporner et al., 2009; Brittain and Green, 2012) or physical activities (Otter and Currie, 2004; Rogers, Mallinson and Peppers, 2014; Reinhardt et al., 2018; Peacock, Carless and McKenna, 2018; Ley, Barrio and Koch, 2018) to address a specific *issue*, largely PTSD (Hyer et al., 1996; Otter and Currie, 2004; Mowatt and Bennett, 2011; Dustin et al., 2011; Rogers, Mallinson and Peppers, 2014; Ley, Barrio and Koch, 2018; Reinhardt et al., 2018) or a physical injury or disability (Cordova et al., 1998; Sporner et al., 2009; Hawkins at al., 2011; Brittain and Green, 2012; Burke and Utley, 2013). This focus has been extended by the research conducted in this thesis, which considers the delivery of a long-term programme, encompassing both weekly competitive sport and physical activities embedded in the local community. This research also contributes to and extends knowledge around the delivery of SfD provisions, through the inclusion of policy enactment, and accounting for the influence of the neoliberal society the programme is situated in. In the existing literature there is a significant body of research applying the concept of policy enactment to schools with a focus on PE (Wilkinson and Penney, 2016, 2020; Stylianou, Hogan and Enright, 2017; Lambert and Penney, 2020; Janemalm, Barker and Quennerstedt, 2020; Bowles and O'Sullivan, 2020; Wilkinson et al., 2021), the setting in which this theoretical frame was developed (Ball et al., 2011; Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun, and Ball, 2014). Yet, there continues to be a paucity of research that adapts and recontextualises policy enactment to consider other contexts, such as community settings. Where this has been undertaken by a small group of sport sociologists, it has considered professional youth football (O'Gorman et al., 2021), and disability and inclusion (Hammond et al., 2021), with a particular focus on swimming (Hammond, Penney, and Jeanes, 2020). This thesis

contributes to this body of work, being the fourth to look at policy enactment in SfD and the first to consider military and veteran populations.

The existing literature on veterans' engagement in sport-based support programmes largely focuses on impacts and benefits, not the delivery mechanisms or processes, including improvements to wellbeing as well as physical and social benefits (Otter and Currie, 2004; Caddick and Smith, 2014; Ley, Barrio and Koch, 2018; Peacock, Carless and McKenna, 2018). In the literature review only two papers were identified to consider programme impacts, barriers, and what constitutes a quality experience in sport and physical activity for veterans (Taff et al., 2016; Shirazipour et al., 2018), and within these papers no connections were made to consider implications for delivery. This research develops this small body of literature as it places a focus on the mechanisms utilised to deliver the Vet Fit programme, and the environment it was delivered in, drawing on theoretical concepts of policy enactment and neoliberalism to do so. Finally, this thesis makes an empirical contribution to the field of SfD, regarding partnerships. Lindsey and Banda (2010) explain that effective partnerships are central to enabling sport to make a positive social and developmental contributions, however they have highly complex dynamics and little research has focused on this in a SfD context. This thesis has focused on the partnerships formed across the Vet Fit programme, considering them as performance teams, and how they have worked together in different environments on the programme to present and maintain credible performances. This thesis has developed a novel understanding, drawing attention to the influences of policy enactment and neoliberal meritocracy on team performances, proposing possible explanations for the fragmented and complex nature of partnership working in SfD.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

Considering the literature on the military to civilian transition, military sociology has remained on the margins of this area (Higate, 2001). While Culturally Meaningful Networks theory (Edelmann, 2018), Dialogical Self theory (Grimell, 2017), Identity Process theory (Brunger, Serrato and Ogden, 2013) and theoretical concepts from Bourdieu (Cooper et al., 2018) have all been applied, the work of Goffman has not. This research extends the concept of TIs (Goffman, 1961) and its application to the military, to consider the features of a TI and how this can influence the transition process. This approach extends the existing work which identifies the military as a TI, considering the four features outline by Scott (2015) and how for some veterans these have influenced and affected their transition experience. Furthermore, the work of Goffman has also been applied in this thesis to provide an original contribution which builds on the research of Grimell (2015; 2017). Grimell (2017) highlights that military and civilian identities are opposing narratives and it is not as simple as moving from one to the other, as different aspects of each identity are at play at different times. Applying concepts of dramaturgy (Goffman, 1951), role identities (Thoits, 2013), and multiple role identities (McCall and Simmons, 1978; Burke and Stets, 2009), this thesis develops Grimell's (2017) observation, examining how military and civilian identities are performed and managed across the transition, with consideration as to how they impact on each other. As discussed within section 6.1, in relation to the empirical implications of this research, the value of applying Goffman's understandings of identity, in addition to wider supporting theoretical concepts, is that it has enabled a more profound insight into the experiences of veterans undertaking the military to civilian transition. In particular, a focus on the behaviours and actions performed by the veterans, in relation to how they manage their own transition experience and within that their identity and multiple role identities. The theoretical framework used has also facilitated an insight, most valuably, into the thoughts, motivations and reasons

behind these behaviours, actions, and performances, and it is this understanding, through the application of different theoretical concepts, which provides an original contribution that builds on existing knowledge and literature. Ultimately, the theoretical framework employed within this thesis draws attention to the negotiation of identity and multiple role identities across the military to civilian transition and within civilian life.

This thesis also has theoretical implications for the field of SfD. This domain has been criticised in the literature for the mythopoeic status given to sport and the assumption that developmental and social change can be achieve through sport alone (Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011; Coalter, 2017). Sport and physical activity are not conditions or factors necessary for these changes to occur and should be appreciated as the site for change rather than the cause of it (Coalter, 2017). This is compounded by a further criticism that many SfD provisions lack efficient and robust monitoring and evaluation, resulting in a deficiency of evidence to support claims of developmental change or social impact (Levermore, 2008; Hayhurst, 2009; Coalter, 2010b). As identified by these criticisms, a subsequent weakness of this area is the limited attention paid to the mechanisms, processes and experiences that occur around the sport or physical activity to understand what works, in what conditions, and why (Coalter, 2017). In this thesis, the concepts of identity, policy enactment and neoliberalism (Goffman, 1959; Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Braun and Ball, 2014; Verhaeghe, 2014) are borrowed from sociology and applied to SfD to address these criticisms and make an original contribution. As a consequence, this develops an understanding of the decisions, mechanisms and processes around the delivery of the Vet Fit programme and their subsequent impacts. As highlighted by Schulenkorf, Sherry and Rowe (2016) frameworks drawing on identity have not been widely used in this area, and in combination with policy enactment and neoliberalism, this research shapes and applies a framework new to the field of SfD.

6.3 Methodological Implications

This thesis contains two key methodological implications for the field of qualitative research. Overall, this thesis provides insight into the complexities of doing research with vulnerable groups, such as military veterans, and in challenging wider environments, in this instance caused by a global pandemic. This research touched upon several sensitive topics around mental health, with the potential to act as a trigger and raise problematic or troubling previous experiences. These delicate discussion themes combined with the ongoing pandemic caused some veterans to drop out from the study. As the Vet Fit programme and research moved into virtual and online spaces, in response to the ongoing pandemic, some veterans did not feel comfortable using this technology and/or disclosing their personal, and sometimes upsetting, experiences via this medium. This was an unanticipated challenge within the research, as there was no intent to utilise virtual or online spaces at the outset. Finally, as an aside, my experience as a female ethnographer undertaking this research within male-dominated spaces has contributed to the existing published work of female ethnographers who have reflected on their own experiences, as well as supporting future researchers doing ethnography. This included themes of managing unforeseen events, negotiating my gender and role as a researcher, and dealing with sexualised behaviours and comments, while acknowledging my emotions and the messiness of ethnographic accounts (O'Hanlon et al., 2021a).

The first methodological implication of this research is the value of adopting an ethnographic approach especially when working with groups, like veterans and the military community, that can be insular, at times distrusting, and not willing to share or disclose their stories and experiences (Bucerius, 2013; Shirazipour et al., 2017; O'Hanlon et al., forthcoming). Undertaking participant observations and embedding myself in the veteran group at the activity sessions and within the AP workplace, enabled me to build strong rapport and relationships with the participants. Having this connection and degree of

understanding, built up during the observations, resulted in semi-structured interviews with both veterans and deliverers that were open, honest, and free flowing, ultimately providing me with greater access to insightful data. On reflection, this was key to me accessing the in-depth data necessary for my research. Across the literature focusing on support provisions for military and veteran communities, only one paper clearly adopted an ethnographic approach (Carless et al., 2014). Likewise, reviewing the SfD literature, Schulenkorf, Sherry and Rowe (2016) were unable to identify any research in this area that employed an ethnographic methodology. This has been recognised more recently by Lucas and Jeanes (2020) who state that there are few studies that draw on an ethnographic approach to provide first-hand accounts of long-term engagement in the field of SfD. McSweeney and van Luijk (2019) acknowledge this and encourage the use of ethnography, more specifically institutional ethnography, to add to the growing field of SfD. This thesis supports this promotion and encouragement of employing ethnography as a methodological approach in SfD research, especially when working with groups that may be untrusting or reserved within interviews, and to prevent the feeling of researchers dropping in and out of their research setting. This is also the first piece of research to use an ethnographic methodology to evaluate the organisation and delivery of a SfD programme, including those specific to military veterans.

The second methodological implication of this thesis is related to the move into online and virtual spaces, in response to the global pandemic. As stated, only one previous piece of research with military and veteran communities has utilised an ethnographic approach (Carless et al., 2014), and none have considered online or virtual ethnography. In this thesis, stepping into virtual spaces such as Facebook, Zoom and WhatsApp, provided insight into how the veterans, communicated, interacted, and performed their identities beyond face-to-face programme delivery. While this created additional challenges, considering both virtual and in person ethnography enhanced the depth of the research

and my understanding of the veterans and deliverers interactions. Accordingly, this thesis contributes to the growing literature on virtual ethnographies as a methodological approach within qualitative research (Ackland, 2013; Hine, 2017; Hewson, 2017) by highlighting how it can facilitate greater access and an increased depth of understanding. especially in circumstances where face-to-face interaction is limited, and participant groups may be untrusting or insular.

6.4 Practical Implications

There are multiple practical implications of this research, relevant for veterans, sport clubs and organisations, and military organisations or charities, including those with a focus on supporting ex-service personnel. These implications include practical recommendations for the Vet Fit programme and other initiatives or provisions that seek to use sport and physical activity as a tool to support veterans in their transition from the military (O'Hanlon et al., 2021b; forthcoming). First, engagement in sport and physical activity has been illustrated to impact positively on veterans lives and can be considered as a valuable approach to support the military to civilian transition. Wider research, that considers more focused short-term programmes, has highlighted the specific physical and psychological (Sporner et al., 2009; Brittain and Green, 2012; Caddick and Smith, 2014; Carless et al., 2014; Ley, Barrio and Koch, 2018; Peacock, Carless and McKenna, 2018) benefits, concluding that this approach should be taken seriously as a way of supporting military veterans (Caddick and Smith, 2014; Carless, 2014; Ley Barrio and Koch, 2018). This thesis particularly exposes the social benefits of regular, organised group sporting activities, identifying this as a space in which the military identity can be managed and performed to an audience that are accepting and understanding of these identity claims. In addition to the physical and wellbeing benefits of engaging in activity, this use of sport as a tool to support the transition process also provides an important network of

likeminded individuals who can recreate and share social experiences from their military service. Thus, the findings of this research contribute to the growing literature (Caddick and Smith, 2014; Carless, 2014; Ley, Barrio and Koch, 2018) that calls for sport and physical activity to be more seriously considered as a tool to support veterans and their transition from the military. This is discussed and presented, alongside several strategic recommendations for practice, in the Vet Fit Evaluation report (O'Hanlon et al., 2021b) (Appendix I).

Second, this research displays the value of programmes, focused on supporting veterans in their military to civilian transition, being embedded within the local community. Having local sports clubs, community organisations and veteran support services involved in the programmes' organisation and delivery gave them ownership and accountability, as well as acting as a steppingstone for the veterans. This steppingstone encompassed the safe and familiar environment of the programme and being surrounded by accepting and likeminded people, but also the scope to build trusting relationships and access wider sporting sessions in the local sports club or more specialist support services. The existing literature highlights the importance of trust in which military personnel tend to only trust each other (Shirazipour et al., 2017), as well as multiple barriers for veterans accessing forms of support. These include practical and logistical issues, but also the veterans own self-management strategies and the performance of the masculine military identity (True, Rigg and Butler, 2015; Shields, Kuhl and Westwood, 2017). In this thesis, the embedded nature of the Vet Fit programme appeared to negotiate some accessibility barriers, having local organisations engaged in the programme from the outset enabled veterans to develop relationships and build substantial levels of trust with session deliverers. As such, the veterans felt more comfortable discussing their experiences, reaching out for support if it was needed or even embedding themselves further into a sports club or activity, becoming members beyond the scope of the Vet Fit Programme. This is an important

implication to consider as it builds sustainability into the programme, setting up avenues for engagement that are not dependent on the Vet Fit programme being delivered.

Third, this thesis has revealed the value of appreciating veterans different transition narratives and role identities, and using this to understand their motivations for engaging in the Vet Fit programme. For most, the motivation behind accessing the programme was not to receive help or support for their transition into civilian life but was driven by other role identities such as being a husband or father, football player or supporter. While family was identified as a significant factor that should be considered within transition support provisions (Bauer et al., 2017; Sherman and Larsen, 2018), no previous research has considered the other multiple role identities held by veterans and how they influence reintegration into civilian life, as well as engagement in services targeted towards supporting serving and ex-service personnel. For individuals and organisations responsible for delivering these services, this research has shown a value in considering the veterans' multiple role identities, beyond their military identity, and drawing on these to encourage engagement and interaction. This thesis has specifically highlighted examples of family role identities and the inclusion of family in the programme, and how working with specific sporting clubs draws on certain player and fan identities. This enhanced understanding of the veterans' identity can not only improve engagement, but also the impact of provisions seeking to support veterans reintegrating into civilian life.

With a continued focus on programme organisation and delivery, a further practical implication of this thesis focuses on the achievement of programme aims. Drawing on concepts of policy enactment and neoliberalism, this research identified distractions that caused programme delivery to drift, with less attention being given to achieving the programme aims stated at the outset. Aspects of this have already been highlighted in the SfD literature, outlining an ongoing failure in which programme objectives are not clearly specified or defined, they are then not robustly monitored or evaluated, ultimately resulting

in a weak evidence base (Kay, 2009; Coalter, 2010b; Oatley and Harris, 2021). This research has demonstrated a practical need for regular reviews, ongoing monitoring, and robust evaluation to ensure programme aims and objectives remain relevant, and are placed at the forefront of every decision made or action taken. This ensures that the objectives established at the outset of the programme will be met, with every aspect of organisation and delivery working towards this, minimising the distractions caused by the neoliberal environment and policy enactment process.

Finally, this thesis has drawn attention to the impact of context on identity performance and how veterans negotiate their transition from the military, including environments within the Vet Fit programme. The existing literature recommends the creation of safe cultural and social spaces as a critical factor for veteran support provisions to have a positive impact (Shields, Kuhl and Westwood, 2017). This research extends this notion further, focusing on how these different spaces and contexts should be managed, accounting for the impacts this has on identity performance in relation to what the support provision wants to achieve. This includes public and private spaces as well as online and offline environments, regarding the different interaction orders and behavioural expectations of each. Therefore, as an implication of this research, deliverers and stakeholders should consider the environments created within their provisions, thinking about how this influences their beneficiaries' presentations of self and how this aligns to the developmental objectives they are working to meet.

6.5 Concluding Thoughts

This thesis has addressed questions regarding how the delivery of a long-term sport and physical activity programme can impact on the experiences of veterans transitioning from the military into civilian life. This research has specifically considered the reality and challenges of organising, developing, and delivering the programme as well as the

individual experiences of veterans undertaking the transition and engaging in the Vet Fit programme. I have summarised the implications of this research considering four key areas: empirical, theoretical, methodological and practical implications. It is evident across each of these areas that sport and physical activity, in the programme, is largely immaterial with greater impacts arising because of the mechanisms and processes that are surrounding it. Drawing on concepts of identity, policy enactment and neoliberalism, has highlighted some of the key processes taking place during the transition and within the Vet Fit programme, that have a greater influence on the actions, experiences and narratives of the veterans and deliverers. Acting on the recommendations of Coalter (2017), this research has provided attention to the mechanisms, processes and experiences surrounding sport that have more notable impacts, on both veterans' transition experiences and stakeholders' delivery experiences, than physically engaging in the activities. Having addressed the research question, aims and implications, I will now conclude by outlining the limitations of this thesis, in addition to making suggestions for future research.

The Vet Fit programme and this research was significantly impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic that commenced in March 2020. With restrictions in place impacting on travel, communication, and daily activities, the method of delivery for the Vet Fit programme had to be adapted, as did the research. This shift, and the broad impact of the pandemic, could be considered as a limitation of this thesis, as the Vet Fit programme was never fully scaled up as intended. Consequently, it was not possible to fully understand the impact of the Vet Fit programme across all ten boroughs of the city, in the given three-year timescale. This could be significant because the boroughs in which the programme was delivered were already open to supporting veterans and aware of their needs. It is likely during the upscale process, some boroughs would have limited provision and knowledge around the military to civilian transition and therefore would have benefitted

significantly from the introduction of the Vet Fit programme. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic restricted access to this knowledge.

A further limitation in this research centres around the restrictions on communication enforced by the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the data collection process, it was planned for interviews to take place in person, however with constraints in place that limited face-to-face interactions, it was necessary to use virtual platforms. As a result, some veterans chose to withdraw from the research because they were either facing their own challenges caused by the pandemic, or they did not feel comfortable using these online platforms to share and discuss their personal experiences. Overall, this created an additional barrier for some veterans to take part in the research that would not have been present if the interviews were conducted in person. Similarly, the restriction on face-to-face interaction also limited my capacity to be embedded in the work environment of the AP. While the organisation continued to work throughout the pandemic, all staff members did so from home, therefore there was no longer a working or office environment for me to be embedded within. As a consequence, I then became distanced from meetings, events and decisions centring around the organisation and delivery of the programme, especially during the Virtual and Adapt phases of data collection. It is possible that this limited the depth of insight I could gain around the realities and challenges of organising, developing, and delivering the programme, especially considering the use of online spaces, and adapting delivery to suit the changing context.

While the pandemic, and subsequent restrictions on interaction, did limit some aspects of this thesis, as an unintended outcome, the shifts that took place did overcome certain constraints and provided opportunities for new learnings and innovations. This is particularly evident in relation to the use of online platforms with military and veteran communities, and using online ethnography as a research approach. During the Virtual and Adapt phases of data collection, substantial learnings were obtained regarding the

delivery of sport, physical activity, and support provisions in online spaces, and how this can both enhance and inhibit engagement. This also expanded the scope of the programme from focusing on ten boroughs in the North West of England to accessing veterans across the country. This shift to online delivery also provided alternative contexts and regions in which the veterans' presentation of self occurred, offering a unique insight into the presentation of military and civilian identities within online regions.

An important omission from this research that should also be noted, is the experiences and narratives of veterans' family members. At the outset of the Vet Fit programme family were not included, with delivery focused on veterans. However, it was identified by the programme lead that the family members of veterans had an important role to play, and the decision was then made for them to be included in the Vet Fit Programme. Regarding this thesis, and the limitations of space and time, interview data was not collected from veteran family members. However, it is evident from the data collected that family role identities had an important and influential role within both the military to civilian transition and veterans' engagement in the programme. Gathering and analysing further data on this area, encompassing the narratives and experiences of veterans' family members, is an important future research project, and one that I would be keen to consider after my PhD to enhance and extend the research I have undertaken for this thesis.

In addition to the expansion of this research to consider family members, there are other topics highlighted by this thesis for future research to consider. The first is the recognition that the participants of this research and within the Vet Fit programme were overwhelmingly male. The only female participant included in the interview data drew attention to sexual identity and placed a significant focus on this across her transition experience. Building from this, it would be valuable for future research to consider the transition experiences of female veterans in particular, to understand the role identities that are activated in these contexts, how female veterans negotiate their identity across the

transition, and if this is notably different compared to their male counterparts. This builds on the work of Greer (2017) who focuses on an all-female sample, highlighting how female veterans experience greater civilian unemployment and have a unique set of needs. Future research should extend this thesis to understand if the unique needs of female veterans are also evident in the transition process and their negotiation of identity.

With a focus on Vet Fit programme delivery, this highlighted another area of knowledge that future research can extend and develop. This research identified that mental health and addiction were key elements of the Vet Fit programme objectives, however the decision was made to address these using a passive approach in which sport and physical activity was used as the vehicle. This was largely due to a fear of putting veterans off and limiting engagement to those who identified themselves as *needing help*. To understand if this would truly be the case, and if tackling these objectives using a direct approach would be off putting to veterans, a further evaluation should be undertaken of a programme that does explicitly address mental health and addiction. This would contribute further learnings on best practice for delivery, being able to identify positive and negative consequences of both passive and direct delivery approaches. It would also offer insight into the mechanisms and processes surrounding sport and physical activity that are necessary to have the desired developmental impact and the factors critical to this impact being maximised.

Finally, this research has demonstrated the value of adopting an ethnographic methodology. Future research with veteran or military communities, as well as other groups which may be distrusting, insular, and difficult to access, should be open to adopting an ethnographic approach. This thesis has illustrated the significance of being able to build relationships, rapport, and trust through participant observations, which then enhances the quality, honesty, and richness of interviews. This approach negates the criticism of researchers dropping in and out of the field and allows them to get an insight

into the everyday activities of their participants, which is typically overlooked (O'Hanlon et al., forthcoming). Ultimately, this increased commitment to the research allows the development of relationships and a greater level of access, insight, and quality of data, which is essential when working with groups and communities that may be suspicious or distrusting of outsiders (O'Hanlon et al., forthcoming).

In this concluding chapter I have discussed the main implications of this thesis considering the four areas of empirical, theoretical, methodological, and practical implications. I have demonstrated how this research has made an original contribution to knowledge through recognising the varied experiences of veterans' transitioning from the military, with specific consideration of how identity is negotiated across this process, and illustrating the complex nature of SfD, accounting for nuances in the policy enactment process, and the influence of the neoliberal context the provision is delivered in. Finally, to develop and extend the work in this area I have identified limitations of this research and outlined topics of future investigation for scholars to embrace. These include the use of an ethnographic approach in on and offline spaces and with communities that maybe suspicious of a researcher and difficult to access, and to consider a focus on specific populations impacted by the military to civilian transition, that were not fully represented in this thesis, namely female veterans, and the family members of serving and ex-service personnel.

Reference List

Ackland, R. (2013) *Web Social Science: Concepts, Data and Tools for Social Scientists in the Digital Age.* London: SAGE Publications.

Active Partnerships. (2020) *Home.* [Online] [Accessed on 14th August 2020] https://www.activepartnerships.org

Active Partnerships. (2021) *About Active Partnerships.* [Online] [Accessed on 1st June 2021] https://www.activepartnerships.org/about-us

Activity Alliance. (2021) *The impact of COVID-19 on disabled people.* Publisher details not available. [Online] [Accessed on 20th July 2021] https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/research/5854-covid19-and-disabled-people-snapshot-september-2020

Adler, A., and Adler, A. (2008) 'Of rhetoric and representation: The four faces of ethnography.' *The Sociology Quarterly,* 49(1) pp. 1-30.

Adler, A.B., Beliese, P.B. and Castro, C.A. (eds.) (2011) *Deployment Psychology: Evidence-Based Strategies to Promote Mental Health in the Military.* Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

Adler, P. A., and Adler, P. (1987) 'The past and the future of ethnography.' *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography,* 16(1) pp. 4-24.

Ahern, J., Worthen. M., Masters, J., Lippman, S.A., Ozer, E.J., and Moos, R. (2015) 'The challenges of Afghanistan and Iraq veterans' transition from military to civilian life and approaches to reconnection.' *PLoS ONE,* 10(7) pp.1-13.

Ahmad, N. (2021) 'Feminist approaches to monitoring, evaluations and learning.' *In* Hayhurst, L.M., Thorpe, H., and Chawansky, M. (eds.). *Sport, Gender and Development.* Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited, pp. 191-2019.

Albertson, K., Best, D., Pinkey, A., Murphy, T., Irving, J., and Stevenson, J. (2017) '"*It's not just about recovery": The right turn veterans-specific recovery service evaluation.'* 68., Sheffield Hallam University: Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice. [Online] [Accessed on 12th December 2018] https://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Albertson-et-al-Right-Turn-evaluation-final-report-June-2017-p.pdf

Albertson, K., Irving, J., and Best, D. (2015) 'A social capital approach to assisting veterans through recovery and desistance transitions in civilian life.' *The Howard Journal,* 54(4) pp.384-396.

Anderson, M.L., Goodman, J., and Schlossberg, N.K. (2014) *Counselling Adults in Transition: Linking Schlossberg's Theory with practice in a diverse world.* New York: Springer.

Andrews, T. (2012) 'What is Social Constructionism?' *Grounded Theory Review,* 11(1) pp. 39-46.

Armour, K.M., and Kirk, D. (2007) 'Physical education and school sport' *In* Houlihan, B. (ed.). *Sport and Society: A Student Introduction.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 255-284.

Atkinson, R. (1998) *The Life Story Interview*. London: SAGE.

Bailey, A., and Harris, K. (2020). 'An autoethnographic study of realist knowledge translation within sport development.' *Managing Sport and Leisure,* 26(1) pp. 41-59.

Bakhtin, M.M. (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination.* Texas: The University of Texas Press.

Balfour, M., Westwood, M., and Buchanan, M.J. (2014) 'Protecting into emotion: therapeutic enactments with military veterans transitioning back into civilian life.' *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance,* 19(2) pp.165-181.

Ball, S.J. (2003) 'The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity.' *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(2) pp. 215–228.

Ball, S.J. (2012) 'Performativity, commodification and commitment: an i-spy guide to the neoliberal university.' *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 60(1) pp.17–28.

Ball., S.J., Maguire, M., Braun, A., and Hoskins, K. (2011) 'Policy actors: doing policy work in schools.' *Discourses: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education,* 32(4) pp. 625-639.

Bauer, A., Newbury-Birch, D., Robalino, S., Ferguson, J., and Wigham, S. (2017) 'Is prevention better than a cure? A systematic review of the effectiveness of well-being interventions or military personnel adjusting to civilian life.' *PLoS ONE,* 13(5) pp.1-21.

Baum-Talmor, P. (2019) '"It's okay even if you are a spy": issues in research position within a precarious workplace.' *Journal of Organizational Ethnography,* 9(1) pp. 94-100.

Berger, P.L., and Luckmann, T. (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge.* London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Bergman, B.P., Burdett, H.J., and Greenburg, N. (2014) 'Service life and beyond – institution or culture?' *The RUSI Journal,* 159(5) pp. 60-68.

Binks, E., and Cambridge, S. (2018) 'The transition experience of British military veterans.' *Political Psychology,* 39(1) pp.125-142.

Bitterly, T.B., and Schweitzer, M.E. (2018) ‘You’re getting warmer: The impression management benefits of humor.’ *Academy of Management Proceedings,* 2018(1) pp.11127-11133.

Bitterly, T.B., and Schweitzer, M.E. (2019) ‘The impression management benefits of humorous self-disclosure: How humour influences perceptions of veracity.’ *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes,* 15(1) pp. 73-89.

Blaikie, N. (1993) *Approaches to Social Enquiry.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bloyce, D., and Smith, A. (2010). *Sport Policy and Development: An Introduction.* Oxon: Routledge.

Bloyce, D., Smith, A., Mead, R., and Morris, J. (2008) ‘‘Playing the Game (Plan)’: A Figurational Analysis of Organizational change in Sports Development in England.’ *European Sport Management Quarterly,* 8(4) pp. 359-378.

Blumer, H. (1969) *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Methods.* Berkley: University of California Press.

Boje, D., and Rosile, G.A. (2003) ‘Theatrics of SEAM.’ *Journal of Organizational Change Management,* 16(1) pp. 21-32.

Boje, D.M. (1989) ‘Postlog: Bringing performance back in.’ *Journal of Organizational Change Management,* 2(2) pp. 80-93.

Boulos, D., and Zamorski, M.A. (2016) ‘Military occupational outcomes in Canadian armed forces personnel with and without deployment-related mental disorders.’ *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry,* 61(6) pp. 348-357.

Bowes, M. A. (2017) *Veteran adjustment to civilian life: A research portfolio.* Ph.D. University of Edinburgh.

Bowes, M.A., Ferreira, N., and Henderson, M. (2018) 'The influence of psychosocial factors in veteran adjustment to civilian life.' *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy,* 25(4) pp. 583-600.

Bowles, R., and O'Sullivan, M. (2020) 'Opportunity knocks: the intersection between schools, their teachers and external providers of physical education and school sport.*' Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 41(2) pp. 251-267.

Bowman, J.M., and Compton, B.L. (2014) 'Self-presentation, individuals differences, and gendered evaluations of nonverbal greeting behaviors among close male friends.' *The Journal of Men's Studies,* 22(3) pp. 207-221.

Braun, A., Ball, S.J., Maguire, M., and Hoskins, K. (2011) 'Taking context seriously: Towards explaining policy enactments in the secondary school.' *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education,* 32(4) pp. 585-596.

Braun, A., Maguire, M., and Ball., S.J. (2010) 'Policy enactments in the UK secondary school: examining policy, practice and school positioning.' *Journal of Education Policy,* 25(4) pp. 547-560.

Brinkmann, S., and Kvale, S. (2015) *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing.* 3rd ed., Los Angeles: SAGE.

Brittain, I., and Green, S. (2012) 'Disability sport is going back to its roots: rehabilitation of military personnel receiving sudden traumatic disabilities in the twenty-first century.' *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health,* 4(2) pp. 244-264.

Brown, J. (1996) 'Police research: Some critical issues', *In* Leishman, F., Loveday, B., and Savage, S.P. (eds.) *Core Issues in Policing.* London: Longman, pp. 249-259.

Brown, W. (2006) ‘Veteran coming-home obstacles: Short- and long-term consequences of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.’ *In* Walklate, W. and McGarry, R. (eds.) *Criminology and War: Transgressing Borders.* Oxon: Routledge, pp. 120-136.

Brunger, H., Serrato, J., and Odgen, J. (2013) ‘”No man’s land”: The transition to civilian.’ *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research,* 5(2) pp. 86-100.

Bryman, A (2012) *Social Research Methods.* 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bucerius, S. M. (2013) ‘Becoming a “trusted outside”: Gender, ethnicity, and inequality in ethnographic research.’ *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography,* 42(6) pp. 690-721.

Bulmer, S. (2013) ‘Patriarchal confusion?’ *International Feminist Journal of Politics,* 15(2) pp.137-156.

Burdett, H., Woodhead, C., Iverson, A.C., Wessely, S., Dandeker, C., and Fear, N.T. (2012) ‘“Are you a Veteran?” Understanding of the term “Veteran” among UK ex-service personnel: A research note.’ *Armed Forces & Society,* 39(4) pp. 751-759.

Burke, P.J., and Stets, J.E. (2009) *Identity Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burnett, C. (2009) ‘Engaging sport-for-development in social impact in the South African context.’ *Sport in Society,* 12(9) pp. 1192-1205.

Burr, V. (2015) *Social Constructionism.* East Sussex: Routledge.

Bury, M. (1986) ‘Social constructionism and the development of medical sociology.’ *Sociology of Health and Illness,* 8(2) pp. 137-169.

Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble.* Oxon: Routledge.

Caddick, N. (2014) *A narrative study of the lives of "combat surfers": Suffering and surfing in the aftermath of war.* Ph.D. Loughborough University.

Caddick, N., and Smith, B. (2014) ‘The impact of sport and physical activity on the well-being of combat veterans: A systematic review.’ *Psychology of Sport & Exercise,* 15(1) pp. 9-18.

Caddick, N., Phoenix, C., and Smith, B. (2015) 'Collective stories and well-being: Using a dialogical narrative approach to understand peer relationships among combat veteran experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder.*' Journal of Health Psychology*, 20(3) pp. 286-299.

Caddick, N., Smith, B., and Phoenix, C. (2015a) 'Male combat veterans; narratives of PTSD, masculinity, and health.' *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 37(1) pp. 97-111.

Caddick, N., Smith, B., and Phoenix, C. (2015b) 'The effects of surfing and the natural environment on the well-being of combat veterans.' *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(1) pp. 76-86.

Cain, C.L. (2012) ‘Integrating dark humor and compassion: Identities and presentations of self in the front and back stage regions of hospice.’ *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography,* 41(6) pp. 668-694.

Carless, D. (2014) ‘Narrative transformation among military personnel on an adventurous training and sport course.’ *Qualitative Health Research,* 24(10) pp. 1440-1450.

Carless, D., Sparkes, A.C., Douglas, K., and Cooke, C. (2014) ‘Disability, inclusive adventurous training and adapted sport: Two soldiers’ stories of involvement.’ *Psychology of Sport and Exercise,* 15(1) pp. 124-131.

Cassidy, R. (2014) ‘A place for men to come and do their thing: Constructing masculinities in betting shops in London.’ *The British Journal of Sociology,* 65(1) pp. 170-191.

Castro, A., and Kintzle, S. (2016) ‘Military matters: The military transition theory: rejoining civilian life.’ *International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies.* 30(3).

Castro, C. A., and Kintzle, S. (2014) ‘Suicides in the Military: The Post-Modern Combat Veteran and the Hemingway Effect.’ *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 16(8) pp. 460-468.

Castro, C. A., Kintzle, S., Schuyler, A. C., Lucas, C. L., and Warner, C. H. (2015) ‘Sexual Assault in the Military.’ *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 17(7) pp. 54-66

Charmaz, K., Harris, S.R., and Irvine, L. (2019) *The Social Self in Everyday Life; Understanding the World through Symbolic Interactionism.* Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.

Chilisa, B., and Kawulich, B. (2012) ‘Selecting a research approach: paradigm, methodology and methods.’ *In* Wagner, C., Kawulich, B., and Garner, M. (eds.) *Doing Social Research: A Global Context.* London: McGraw-Hill, pp. 1-21.

Chovanec, J. (2021) ‘Saving one’s face from unintended humour: Impression management in follow-up sports interviews.’ *Journal of Pragmatics,* 176, pp.198-212.

Clark, A. (2013) ‘Visual Ethics in a Contemporary Landscape.’ *In* Pink, S. (ed.) *Advances in Visual Methodology.* London: SAGE, pp. 17-35.

Clarkson, B. G., Culvin, A., Pope, S., and Parry, K. D. (2020) ‘Covid-19: Reflections on threat and uncertainty for the future of elite women’s football in England.’ *Managing Sport and Leisure*. [Online] ‘First online’ published 14th May 2020 [Accessed on 15th March 2021] DOI:10. 1080/23750472.2020.1766377

Cleland, J., Dixon, K., and Kilvington, D. (2020) *Online Research Methods in Sports Studies.* London: Routledge.

Coakley, J. (1998) *Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Coalter, F. (2007) *A Wider Social Role for Sport: Who’s Keeping the Score?* London: Routledge.

Coalter, F. (2009) ‘Sport-in-development: Accountability or development?’ *In* Levermore, R., and Beacom, A. (eds.) *Sport and international development.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 55-75.

Coalter, F. (2010a) ‘The politics of sport-for-development: Limited focus programmes and broad gauge problems?’ *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 45(3) pp. 295-314.

Coalter, F. (2010b) ‘Sport-for-development: Going beyond the boundary?’ *Sport in Society,* 13(9) pp. 1374-1391.

Coalter, F. (2012) ‘There is loads of relationships here: Developing a programme theory for sport-for-change programmes.’ *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 48(5) pp. 594-612.

Coalter, F. (2013) S*port for development: What game are we playing?* Oxon: Routledge.

Coalter, F. (2017) ‘Sport and social inclusion: Evidence-based policy and practice.’ *Social Inclusion,* 5(2) pp. 141-149.

Collie, K., Backos, A., Malchiodi, C., and Spiegel, D. (2006) ‘Art therapy for combat-related PTSD: Recommendations for research and practice.’ *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association,* 23(4) pp. 157-164.

Collins, M. (2010a) ‘From ‘sport for good’ to ‘sport for sport’s sake’ – not a good move for sports development in England?’ *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics,* 2(3) pp. 367-379.

Collins, M.F. (2010b). *Examining Sports Development.* Oxon: Routledge.

Connell, R.W. (2005) *Masculinities.* Cambridge: Polity.

Conti, C.L., and Ramos, P.A., (2018) ‘Depression and the benefits of physical activity.’ *Science & Sports,* 33(1) pp. 56-57.

Cooper, L., Caddick, N., Godier, L., Cooper, A., and Fossey, M. (2018) ‘Transition from the military into civilian life: An exploration of cultural competence.’ *Armed Forces & Society,* 44(1) pp. 156-177.

Coser, R.L. (1959) ‘Some social functions of laughter: A study of humor in a hospital setting.’ *Human Relations,* 12(2) pp. 171-182.

Craib, I. (1997) ‘Social constructionism as a social psychosis.’ *Sociology,* 31(1) pp. 1-15.

Creswell, J.W., and Poth, C.N. (2017) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. 4th ed., Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Crotty, M. (1998) *The Foundation of Social Research Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process.* London: Sage.

Crowley, M., and Hodson, R. (2014) ‘Neoliberalism at Work*.’ Social Currents,* 1(1) pp. 91-108.

Dale, K., and Burrell, G. (2008) *The Spaces of Organisation and the Organisation of Space: Power, Identity and Materiality at Work*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dandeker, C., Wessely, S., Iverson, A., and Ross, J. (2006) ‘What’s in a name? Defining and caring for “veterans.”’ *Armed Forces & Society,* 32(2) pp. 161-177.

Darnell, S.C. (2007) ‘Playing with race’. *Sport in Society*, 10(4) pp. 560–579.

Darnell, S.C., and Hayhurst, L.M.C. (2011) ‘Sport for decolonization: exploring a new praxis of sport for development.’ *Progress in Development Studies,* 11(3) pp. 183-196.

Datta, A., and Chakraborty, I. (2018) ‘Are you a neoliberal fit? The politics of consumption under neoliberalism.’ *In* Kravets, O., Maclaran, P., Miles, S., and Venkatesh, A. (eds.). *The SAGE Handbook of Consumer Culture*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 453–477.

Davies, C. (1999). *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others.* New York: Routledge.

Day, R.D., and Lamb, M.E. (2004) ‘Conceptualizing and measuring father involvement: pathways, problems and progress.’ *In* Day, R.D., and Lamb, M.E. (eds.). *Conceptualizing and Measuring Father Involvement.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc, pp. 1-14.

DeGarmo, D.S. (2010) ‘A Time Varying Evaluation of Identity Theory and Father Involvement for Full Custody, Shared Custody, and No Custody Divorced Fathers.’ *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers*, 8(2) pp. 181-202.

DeLucia, J.M. (2016) ‘Art therapy services to support to veterans’ transition to civilian life: The studio and the gallery.’ *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association,* 33(1) pp.4-12.

Denzin, N.K., and Lincoln, Y.S. (2005) ‘Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research.’ *In* Denzin, N.K., and Lincoln, Y, S. (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research.* 3rd ed., Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Derefinko, K.J., Hallsell, T.A., Isaacs, M.B., Colvin, L.W., Salgado Garcia, F.I., and Bursac, Z. (2018) ‘Perceived needs of veterans transitioning from the military to civilian life.’ *The Journal of Behavioural Health Services & Research,* pp. 1-15.

Derrida, J. (1974) *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Derrida, J. (1978) *Writing and Difference.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Derrida, J. (1981) *Dissemination.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Dickson, H., and Glasby, J. (2010) 'Why partnership working doesn't work: pitfalls, problems and possibilities in English health and social care.' *Public Management Review*, 12(6) pp. 811–828.

Dillon, M. (2019) *Introduction to Sociological Theory: Theorists, Concepts and their Applicability to the Twenty-First Century*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Directory of Social Change (2020) Sector Insight Armed Forces Charities: An Overview and Analysis. London: Directory of Social Change. [Online] [Accessed on 30th November 2020] https://armedforcescharities.org.uk/Public/Research_Tab/Sector%20Insight%202020.aspx

Directory of Social Change. (2018) *UK Overview Sector Insight: UK Armed Forces Charities.* [Online] [Accessed on 7th August 2020] https://armedforcescharities.org.uk/Public/Research_Tab/UK_Overview.aspx

Doherty, A., Millar, P., and Misener, K. (2020) 'Return to community sport: Leaning on evidence in turbulent times.' *Managing Sport and Leisure.* [Online] 'First online' published 16th July 2020. [Accessed on 15th March 2021] DOI:10.1080/23750472.2020.1794940

Drebing, C, E., Reilly, E., Henze, K.T., Kelly, M., Russo, A., Smolinsky, J., Gorman, J., and Penk, W.E. (2018) 'Using peer support groups to enhance community integration of veterans in transition.' *Psychological Services,* 15(2) pp. 135-145.

Edelmann, A. (2018) 'Culturally meaningful networks: On the transition from military to civilian life in the United Kingdom.' *Theory and Society,* 47(3) pp. 327-380.

Eime, R.M., Young, J.A., Harvey, J.T., Charity, M.J., and Payne, W.R., (2013) 'A systematic review of the psychological and social benefits of participation in sport for children and adolescents: informing development of a conceptual model of health through sport.' *The International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity,* 10(1) pp. 1-21.

Elnitsky, C.A., Fisher, M.P., and Blevins, C.L. (2017) 'Military service member and veteran reintegration: A conceptual analysis, unified definition, and key domains.' *Frontiers in Psychology,* 369(8) pp.1-14. [Online] [Accessed on 23rd November 2020] DOI:10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00369

Esholdt, H.F. (2019) 'Virgins, terrorists, and ten children: Immigrants' humorous play with ethnic stereotypes in bonding with Danes in the workplace'. *Symbolic Interaction,* 42(4) pp. 691-716.

Ess, C. (2002) 'Introduction to Special Issue on Internet research ethics.' *Ethics and Information Technology*, 4(3) pp. 177–88.

Evans, J., and Davies, B. (2012) 'Embodying policy concepts.' *Discourses: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education.* 33(5) pp. 617-633.

Eynon, R., Fry, J., and Schroeder, R. (2017) 'The Ethics of Online Research.' *In* Fielding, N.G., Lee, R.G., and Blank, G. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Online Research Methods.* 2nd ed., London: SAGE, pp. 19-36.

Felmlee, D., Sweet, E., and Sinclair, H.C. (2012) 'Gender rules: Same- and cross-gender friendship norms.' *Sex Roles,* 66(8) pp. 518-529.

Ferdinand, J., Pearson, G., Rowe, M., and Worthington, F. (2007) 'A different kind of ethics.' *Ethnography*, 8(4) pp. 519-543.

Fetterman, D.M. (2010) *Ethnography: Step-by-Step.* 3rd ed., Los Angeles: SAGE.

Findlay-King, L., Reid, F., and Nichols, G. (2020) *Community Sports Clubs' Response to Covid-19.* Publisher details not available. [Online] [Accessed on 19th July 2021] https://sway.office.com/7vwbaHlJwaF3OTIE

Fitzgerald, H., Stride, A., and Drury, S. (2020). 'COVID-19, lockdown and (disability) sport.' *Managing Sport and Leisure*. [Online] 'First online' published 5th June 2020 [Accessed on 15th March 2021] DOI: 10.1080/23750472. 2020.1776950

Fletcher, T. (2020) *Negotiating Fatherhood: Sport and Family Practices.* Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan

Flick, U. (2007) *Managing Quality in Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE.

Flowers, R.D., Luzynski, C., and Zamani-Gallaher, E.M. (2014) 'Male transfer student athletes and Schlossberg's transition theory.' *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education,* 8(2) pp. 99-120.

Fox, G.L., and Bruce, C. (2001) 'Conditional fatherhood: Identity theory and parental investment theory as alternative sources of explanation of fathering.' *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63(2) pp. 394-403.

Fox, G.L., Nordquist, V.M., Billen, R.M., and Savoca, E.F. (2015) 'Father involvement and early intervention: Effects of empowerment and father role identity.' *Family Relations,* 64(4) pp. 461-475.

Frank, A. W. (2010) *Letting Stories Breathe: A Socio-Narratology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Frank, A.W. (2012) 'Practicing Dialogical Narrative Analysis.' *In* Holstein, J.A., and Gubrium, J.F. (eds.). *Varieties of Narrative Analysis.* London: SAGE, pp. 33-52.

Gamache, G., Rosenheck, R.A., and Tessler, R. (2000) ‘Factors predicting choice of provider among homeless veterans with mental illness.’ *Psychiatric Services*, 51(8) pp. 1024–1028.

Gbogbo, S. (2020) ‘Early motherhood: voices from female adolescents in the Hohoe Municipality, Ghana – a qualitative study utilizing Schlossberg’s transition theory.’ *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being,* 15(1), DOI:10.1080/17482631.2020.1716620.

Geertz, C. (1973) ‘Thick description: Toward an interpretative theory of culture’ *In* Geertz, C. (ed.). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays.* New York: Basic Books, pp. 3-30.

Giulianotti, R. (2002) ‘Supporters, followers, fans, and flaneurs: A taxonomy of spectator identities in football.’ *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 26(1) pp. 25-46.

Godfrey, R. (2016) ‘Soldiering on: Exploring the role of humour as a disciplinary technology.’ *Organization,* 23(2) pp. 164-183.

Goffman, E. (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin Group.

Goffman, E. (1961) *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates.* New York: Anchor Books.

Goffman, E. (1967) *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face-to-Face Behavior.* New York: Pantheon.

Goffman, E. (1969) *Strategic Interaction.* Philadelphia: University Pennsylvania Press.

Goffman, E. (1981) *Forms of Talk.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Golden-Biddle, K., and Locke, K. (1993) ‘Appealing work: An investigation of how ethnographic texts convince.’ *Organization Science,* 4(4) pp. 595-616.

Gottdiener, M. (2005) Masculine Spaces. *In*: Gottdiener, M., and Budd, L. (eds) *Key Concepts in Urban Studies.* London: SAGE, pp.81-83.

Graf, N.M., Miller, E., Feist, A. and Freeman, S. (2011) 'Returning veterans' adjustment concerns: Family views.' *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counselling,* 42(2) pp. 13-23.

Green, M. (2006) 'From "Sport for All" to not about sport at all? Interrogating sport policy interventions in the United Kingdom.' *European Sport Management Quarterly,* 6(3) pp. 217-238.

Green, T., Swailes, S., and Handley, J. (2017) 'The significance of unforeseen events in organisational ethnographic inquiry.' *Journal of Organisational Ethnography*, 6(3) pp. 190-203.

Greer, T.W. (2017) 'Career development for women veterans: Facilitating successful transitions from military service to civilian employment.' *Advances in Developing Human Resources,* 19(1) pp. 54-65.

Griggs G. (2015) *Understanding Primary Physical Education.* Oxon: Routledge.

Grimell, J. (2015) 'A transitional narrative of military identity: Eric's Story.' *International Journal for Dialogical Science,* 9(1) pp. 135-157.

Grimell, J. (2017) 'Making dialogue with an existential voice in transition from military to civilian life.' *Theory & Psychology,* 27(6) pp. 832-850.

Grix, J. (2010) 'The 'governance debate' and the study of sport policy'. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 2(2), pp. 159–171.

Grix, J., Brannagan, P.M., Grimes, H., and Neville, R. (2021) 'The impact of Covid-19 on sport.' *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics,* 13(1) pp. 1-12.

Guilianotti, R. (2011) ‘Sport, peacemaking and conflict resolution: a contextual analysis and modelling of the sport, development and peace sector.’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 34(2) pp. 207-228.

Hale, H. (2008) ‘The development of British military masculinities through symbolic resources.’ *Culture and Psychology*, 14(3) pp. 305–332.

Hall, S. (2007) ‘Will life after Blair be different?’ *British Politics,* 2(1) pp. 118-122.

Hammersley, M. (1992) *What’s Wrong with Ethnography? Methodological Explorations.* London: Routledge.

Hammersley, M. (2013) *What is Qualitative Research Methods?* London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Hammersley, M. (2017) ‘What is ethnography? Can I survive it? Should I?’ *Ethnography and Education,* 13(1) pp. 1-17.

Hammersley, M., and Atkinson, P. (2007) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice.* 3rd ed., London: Routledge.

Hammond, A.M., Bundon, A., Gadd, C.P., and Konoval, T. (2020) ‘Enactments of Integrated, Disability-Inclusive Sport Policy by Sporting Organizations.’ *Sociology of Sport Journal,* 1, pp. 1-12.

Hammond, A.M., Penney, D., and Jeanes, R. (2020) ‘Sport coaches as policy actors: an investigation of the interpretation and enactment of disability and inclusion policy in swimming in Victoria Australia.’ *Sport, Education and Society,* 25(5), pp. 570-585.

Harlos, K.P., and Pinder, C.C. (2000) ‘Emotion and injustice in the workplace.’ *In* S. Fineman (ed.). *Emotion in Organizations.* London: SAGE Publications, pp. 255-277.

Harris, J., and Adams, A. (2014) ‘Making sense of the lack of evidence discourse, power and knowledge in the field of sport for development.’ *International Journal of Public Sector Management,* 27(2) pp 140-151.

Harris, K. (2018) ‘Building sport for development practitioners’ capacity for undertaking monitoring and evaluation – reflections on a training programme building capacity in realist evaluation.’ *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 10(4) pp. 795-814.

Harris, K., and Adams, A. (2016) ‘Power and discourse in the politics of evidence in sport for development.’ *Sport Management Review,* 19(2) pp. 97-106.

Harris, S., and Houlihan, B. (2016) ‘Implementing the community sport legacy: the limited of partnerships, contracts and performance management.’ *European Sport Management Quarterly,* 16(4) pp. 433-458.

Harrison, O.L., Carter, A.J., Corvite, S., Wheeler, B., Wang, L., Liu, T., and Lige, A. (2021) ‘The major life events taxonomy: Social readjustment, social media information sharing, and online network separation during times of life transition.’ *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology,* 72(2) pp. 933-947.

Hartmann, D., and Depro, B. (2006) ‘Rethinking sports-based community crime prevention: A preliminary analysis of the relationship between midnight basketball and urban crime rates.’ *Journal of Sport and Social Issues,* 30(2) pp. 180-196.

Hartmann, D., and Kwauk, C. (2011) ‘Sport and development: An overview, critique and reconstruction.’ *Journal of Sport and Social Issues,* 35(3) pp. 284-305.

Harvey, S.B., Hatch, A.L., Jones, M., Hull, L., Jones, N., Greenberg, N., Dandeker, C., Fear, N.T., and Wessely, S. (2011) ‘Coming home: Social functioning and the

mental health of UK reservists on return from deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan.' *Annals of Epidemiology,* 21(9) pp .666-672.

Hay, C. (2013) 'Good in a crisis: the ontological institutionalism of social constructivism.' *New Political Economy,* 21(6) pp. 520-535.

Hayhurst, L.M.C. (2009) 'The power to shape policy: charting sport for development and peace policy discourses.' *International Journal of Sport Policy,* 1(2) pp. 203-227.

Henry, I., and Ko, L.M. (2014) *Routledge Handbook of Sport Policy.* London: Routledge.

Herman, A., and Yarwood, R. (2014) 'From services to civilian: The geographies of veterans' post-military lives.' *Geoforum,* 53, pp.41-50.

Hernandez, F.A. (2020) 'Pandemic mitigation and communications strategies during local sports tournaments in Japan'. *In* Pedersen, P.M., Brody, J.R., and Li, B. (eds.) *Sport and the Pandemic: Perspectives on COVID-19's Impact of the Sport Industry.* Oxon: Routledge, pp. 184-196.

Herz, M., and Johansson, T. (2015) 'The normativity of the concept of heteronormativity.' *Journal of Homosexuality*, 62(8) pp. 1009-1020.

Hewison, K. (2016) P 'Precarious work'. *In* Edgell, S., Gottfried, H., and Granter, E. (eds.). *The Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Work and Employment*'. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, pp. 428–443.

Hewitt, J., and Feltham, D. (1982) 'Differential reaction to touch by men and women.' *Perceptual and Motor Skills,* 55, pp. 1291-1294.

Hewson, C. (2017) 'Research design and tools for online research.' *In* Fielding, N.G., Lee, R.M., and Blank, G. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Online Research Methods*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 57-75.

Hickey, C., and Roderick, M. (2017) 'The presentation of possible selves in everyday life: The management of identity among transitioning professional athletes.' *Sociology of Sport Journal,* 34, pp. 270-280.

Higate, P. (2000) 'Ex-servicemen on the road: Travel and homelessness.' *The Sociological Review,* 48(3) pp. 331-348.

Higate, P. (2016) 'Peacekeepers, Masculinities, and Sexual Exploitation.' *Men and Masculinities,* 10(1) pp. 99–119.

Higate, P. and Cameron, A. (2006) 'Reflexivity and researching the military.' *Armed Forces & Society,* 32(2) pp. 219-233.

Higate, P.R. (2001) 'Theorizing continuity: From military to civilian life.' *Armed Forces & Society,* 27(3) pp.443-460.

Higate, P.R. (2003) *Military masculinities: Identity and the state*. Westport: Praeger.

Hill, M.J., and Hupe, P.L. (2009) *Implementing Public Policy: An Introduction to the Study of Operational Governance.* 2nd ed., Los Angeles: SAGE.

Hine, C. (2017) 'Ethnographies of online communities and social media: Modes, varieties and affordances.' *In* Fielding, N.G., Lee, R.M., and Blank, G. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Online Research Methods*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 401-415.

Hinojosa, R. (2010) 'Doing hegemony: Military, men and constructing a hegemonic masculinity.' *The Journal of Mens Studies*, 18(2) pp. 179–194.

HM Prison Service. (2013) *Health Promotion,* 3200. [Online] [Accessed on 7th January 2021] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prison-service-orders-psos

Hockey, J. (1986) *Squaddies: Portrait of a Subculture.* Exeter: University of Exeter.

Hockey, J. (2003) 'No more heroes: Masculinity in the infantry.' *In* Higate, P.R. (ed.), *Military masculinities: Identity and the state*. Westport: Praeger, pp. 401-411.

Hogan, J.T. (1983) 'Culture-shock and reverse-culture shock: Implications for juniors and seniors at home.' Paper presented at: *The Annual Convention of the American College Personnel Association.* Houston, Texas, 13-16th March 1983.

Houlihan, B. (2014) *The Government and Politics of Sport.* Oxon: Routledge.

Houlihan, B., and Green, M. (2006) 'The changing status of school sport and physical education: Explaining policy change.' *Sport, Education and Society,* 11(1) pp.73-92.

Houlihan, B., and Green, M. (2009) 'Modernization and sport: The reform of Sport England and UK Sport.' *Public Administration,* 87(3) pp. 678-698.

Houlihan, B., and Lindsey, I. (2013) *Sport Policy in Britain.* Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Houlihan, B., and White, A. (2003) *The Politics of Sport Development: Development of Sport or Development Through Sport?* London: Routledge.

Hourani, L., Bender, R.N., Weimer, B., Peeler, R., Bradshaw, M., Lane, M., and Larson, G. (2012) 'Longitudinal study of resilience and mental health in marines leaving military service.' *Journal of Affective Disorders,* 139(2) pp. 154-165.

Humphrey, C. (2011) 'A paradigmatic map of professional education research.' *Social Work Education,* 32(1) pp. 3-16.

Hylton, K. (2013) *Sports Development: Policy, Process and Practice.* 3rd ed., London: Routledge.

Hylton, K. and Totten, M. (2013) 'Developing 'sport for all'', *In* Hylton, K. (ed.) *Sport Development: Policy, Process and Practice.* London: Routledge, pp. 37–79

Hyman, R. (1969) *Techniques of Acting.* London: Methuen

Iverson, A., Dyson, C., Smith, N., Greenberg, N., Walwyn, R., Unwin, C., Hull, L., Hotopf, M., Dandeker, C., Ross, J., and Wessely, S. (2005a) 'Goodbye and good luck: the mental health needs and treatment experiences of British ex-service personnel.' *British Journal of Psychiatry,* 186(6) pp. 480-486.

Iverson, A., Nikalaou, V., Greenburg, N., Unwin, C., Hull, L., Hotopf, M., Dandeker, C., Ross, J., and Wessely, S. (2005b) 'What happens to British veterans when they leave the armed forces?' *European Journal of Public Health,* 15(2) pp. 175-184.

Ives, B.A., Gale, L.A., Potrac, P.A., and Nelson, L.J. (2021) 'Uncertainty, shame and consumption: negotiating occupational and non-work identities in community sports coaching.' *Sport, Education and Society*, 26(1) pp. 87–103.

Janemalm, L., Barker, D., and Quennerstedt, M. (2020) 'Transformation of complex movements from policy to practice – a discourse analysis of Swedish physical education teachers' concepts of moving.' *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy,* 25(4) pp. 410-422.

Jeanes, R. (2013) 'Educating through sport? Examining HIV/AIDS education and sport-for-development through the perspectives of Zambian young people.' *Sport, Education and Society,* 18(3) pp. 388-406.

Jefferys, K. (2017). 'Sport and politics in Great Britain.' *In* Bairner, A., Kelly, J., and Lee, J.S. (eds.). *Routledge Handbook of Sport and Politics.* London: Routledge, p. 259-271.

Jewkes, Y. (2011) 'Autoethnography and emotion as intellectual resources: Doing prison research differently.' *Qualitative Inquiry,* 18(1) pp. 63-75.

Johns, A., Grossman, M., and McDonald, K. (2014) '"More than a game": The impact of sport-based youth mentoring schemes on developing resilience toward violent extremism.' *Social Inclusion,* 2(2) pp.57-70.

Kalleberg, A.L., and Vallas, S.P. (2018) 'Probing precarious work: Theory, research, and politics.' *In* Kalleberg, A.L., and Vallas, S.P. (eds.). *Precarious Work: Research in the Sociology of Work Volume 31*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing, pp. 1-29.

Kashwan, P., Maclean, L.M., and Garcia-Lopez, G.A. (2019) 'Rethinking power and institutions in the shadows of neoliberalism: (An introduction to a special issue of World Development).' *World Development,* 120, pp. 133-146.

Kaufman, Z.A., Spencer, T.S., and Ross, D.A. (2013) 'Effectiveness of sport-based HIV prevention interventions: A systematic review of the evidence.' *AIDS and Behavior,* 17(3) pp. 987-1001.

Kay, T. (2009) 'Developing through sport: evidencing sport impacts on young people.' *Sport in Society,* 12(9) pp. 1177-1191.

Keeling, M., Kintzle, S., and Castro, C.A. (2018) 'Exploring U.S. veterans' post-service employment experiences.' *Military Psychology,* 30(1) pp. 63-69.

Kidd, B. (2008) 'A new social movement: Sport for Development and peace', *Sport in Society*, 11(4) pp. 370-380.

Kitchin, P.J. (2017) 'Using dual-sited organizational ethnography to examine change within and between community sport organizations.' *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 22(3) pp. 181-196.

Lambert, K., and Penney, D. (2020) 'Curriculum interpretation and policy enactment in health and physical education: Researching teacher educators as policy actors.' *Sport, Education and Society*, 25(4) pp. 378–394.

Laverie, D.A., and Arnett, D.B. (2000) ‘Factors affecting fan attendance: The influence of identity salience and satisfaction.’ *Journal of Leisure Research*, 32(2) pp. 225-246.

Levermore, R. (2008) ‘Sport: A new engine of development?’ *Progress in Development Studies,* 8(2) pp. 183-190.

Lewis, S.F., and Hennekens, C.H. (2016) ‘Regular physical activity: forgotten benefits.’ *The American Journal of Medicine,* 129(2) pp. 137-138.

Ley, C., Barrio, M.R., and Koch, A. (2018) ‘“In the sport I am here”: Therapeutic processes and health effects of sport and exercise on PTSD.’ *Qualitative Health Research,* 28(3) pp. 491-507.

Lindsey, I., and Banda, D. (2010) ‘Sport and the fight against HIV/AIDS in Zambia: A ‘partnership approach’?’ *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 46(1) pp. 90-107.

Lindsey, I., Chapman, T., and Dudfield, O. (2020) ‘Configuring relationships between state and non-state actors: a new conceptual approach for sport and development.’ *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics,* 12(1) pp. 127–146.

Littler, J. (2017) *Against Meritocracy: Culture, Power and Myths of Mobility.* London: Routledge.

Lobban, J. (2014) ‘The invisible wound: Veterans’ art therapy.’ *International Journal of Art Therapy,* 19(1) pp. 3-18.

Lucas, R., and Jeanes, R. (2020) ‘Ethnographic reflections of the role of global north volunteers in sport-for-development.’ *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 55(7) pp. 953-974.

Lumsden, K. (2009) ‘‘Don’t ask a woman to do another woman’s job’: Gendered interaction and the emotional ethnographer.’ *Sociology,* 43(3) pp. 497-513.

Lusk, J., Brenner, L.A., Betthauser, L.M., Terrio, H., Scher, A. I., Schwab, K., and Poczwardowski, A. (2015) 'A qualitative study of potential suicide risk factors among operation Iraqi freedom/operation enduring freedom soldiers returning to Continental United States.' *Journal of Clinical Psychology,* 71(9) pp. 843-855.

Lyras, A., and Welty Peachey, J. (2011) 'Integrating sport-for-development theory and praxis.' *Sport Management Review*, 14(4) pp. 311–326.

Mackintosh, C. (2011) 'An analysis of County Sports Partnerships in England: the fragility, challenges and complexity of partnership working in sports development.' *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics.* 3(1) pp. 45-64.

Mackintosh, C. (2021) *Foundation of Sport Development.* Oxon: Routledge.

Mackintosh, C., Ives, B., Stanniford, L., Gale, L., Thompson, A., Sims, D., Daniels, J., Oldfield, S., and Kolic, P. (2020) *COVID-19 RESEARCH REPORT: The impact of the Pandemic on Community Sport provision and participation.* Unknown Place of Publication: Manchester Metropolitan University. [Online] [Accessed on 19th July 2021] https://www.mmu.ac.uk/media/mmuacuk/content/documents/research/COVID-19-RESEARCH-REPORT-The-impact-of-the-Pandemic-on-Community-Sport-provision-and-participation.pdf

MacManus, D., and Wessely, S. (2011) 'Why do some ex-armed forces personnel end up in prison?' *BMJ,* 342, pp. 1-2.

MacManus, D., and Wessely, S. (2013) 'Veteran mental health services in the UK: Are we headed in the right direction?' *Journal of Mental Health,* 22(4) pp. 301-305.

Madill, A., and Sullivan, P. (2010) ‘Medical training as adventure-wonder and adventure-ordeal: A dialogical analysis of affect laden pedagogy.’ *Social Science & Medicine,* 71(12) pp. 2195-2203.

Maguire, M., Braun, A., and Ball, S. (2014) ‘Where you stand depends on where you sit’: The social construction of policy enactment on the (English) secondary school.’ *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education,* 36(4) pp. 485-499.

Maguire, M., Gewirtz, S., Towers, E., and Neumann, E. (2019) ‘Contextualising policy work: policy enactment and the specificities of English secondary schools.’ *Research Papers in Education,* 35(4) pp. 488-509.

Mainsah, H., and Prøitz, L. (2019) ‘Notes on technology devices in research: Negotiating field boundaries and relationships.’ *Qualitative Inquiry,* 25(3) pp. 271-277.

Malnati, A.H., Spellings, C.R., Al-Aseer, J.A., Huffman, A.H., Korsakas, P., and Hillyer, S.J. (2016) ‘Contextual and individual factors influencing implementation effectiveness of sport for development and peace programmes: a comparative case study of conflict relief in Lebanon and Ukraine.’ *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health,* 8(5) pp. 535-553.

Mansfield, A.J., Bender, R.H., Hourani, L.L., and Larson, G.E. (2011) ‘Suicidal or self-harming ideation in military personnel transitioning to civilian life.’ *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior,* 41(4) pp. 392-405.

Mansfield, L. (2016) ‘Resourcefulness, reciprocity and reflexivity: the three Rs of partnership in sport for public health research.’ *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 8(4) pp. 713–729

Markus, H., and Nurius P. (1986) ‘Possible Selves.’ *The American Psychologist,* 41(9) pp. 954-969.

Maurer, T.W., Pleck, J.H., and Rane, T.R. (2001) ‘Parental identity and reflected-appraisals: Measurement and gender dynamics.’ *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63(2) pp. 309-321.

Maykut, P., and Morehouse, R. (1994) *Beginning Qualitative Research: A Philosophic and Practical Guide.* London: Falmer Press.

Mazza, R. (2021) ‘Descriptions and the materiality of texts.’ *Qualitative Research.* 21(3) pp. 376-393.

Mazzei, J., and O'Brien, E.E. (2009) ‘You got it, so when do you flaunt it? Building rapport, intersectionality, and the strategic deployment of gender in the field.’ *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography,* 38(3) pp. 358-383.

McAllister, L., Callaghan, J.E.M., and Fellin, L.C. (2019) ‘Masculintiies and emotional expression in UK servicemen: ‘Big boys don’t cry’?’ *Journal of Gender Studies,* 28(3) pp. 257-270.

McBride, B.A., Brown, G.L., Bost, K.K., Shin, N., Vaugh, B., and Korth, B. (2005) ‘Paternal identity, maternal gatekeeping, and father involvement.’ *Family Relations,* 54(3) pp. 360–372.

McCall, G.J., and Simmons, J.L. (1978) *Identities and Interactions: An Examination of Human Association in Everyday Life*. New York: Free Press.

McCreaddie, M., and Payne, S. (2014) ‘Humour in health-care interactions: a risk worth taking’. *Health Expectations: An International Journal of Public Participation in Health and Care Policy,* 17(3) pp.332-344.

McDermott, J. (2007) *Old soldiers never die: They adapt their military skills and become successful civilians. What factors contribute to the successful transition of army veterans to civilian life and work?’* Ph.D. University of Leicester.

McDonald, I. (2005) ‘Theorising partnerships: governance, communicative action and sport policy.’ *Journal of Social Policy*, 34(4) pp. 579–600.

McGarry, R., Walklate, S., and Mythen, G. (2014) ‘A sociological analysis of military resilience: Opening up the debate.’ *Armed Forces & Society,* 41(2) pp. 352-378.

McGill, G., Wilson, G., Caddick, N., Forster, N., and Kiernan, M.D. (2020). ‘Rehabilitation and transition in military veterans after limb-loss.’ *Disability and Rehabilitation,* pp.1-8.

McLaughlin, K., and Muldoon, O. (2014) ‘Father identity, involvement and work-family balance: An in-depth interview study.’ *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 24(5) pp. 439-452.

McSweeney, M., and van Luijk, N. (2019) ‘Leaving the comfort zone: utilizing institutional ethnography in sport for development and peace research.’ *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health,* 11(4) pp. 559-572

Meek, R. (2018) *A Sporting Chance; An Independent Review of Sport in Youth and Adult Prisons.* Unknown Place of Publication: Ministry of Justice. [Online] [Accessed on 7th January 2021]. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-sporting-chance-an-independent-review-of-sport-in-justice

Meek, R., and Lewis, G. (2012) ‘The role of sport in promoting prisoner health.’ *International Journal of Prisoner Health,* 8(3) pp. 117-130.

Meek, R., and Lewis, G. (2014a) ‘The impact of a sports initiative for young men in prison: Staff and participant perspectives.’ *Journal of Sport and Social Issues,* 38(2) pp. 95-123.

Meek, R., and Lewis, G. (2014b) 'Promoting well-being and desistance through sport and physical activity: The opportunities and barriers experienced by women in English prisons.' *Women & Criminal Justice,* 24(2) pp. 151-172.

Mellsop, G., and Wilson, J. (2006) 'Outcome Measures in Mental Health Services: Humpty Dumpty is Alive and Well.' *Australasian Psychiatry,* 14(2) pp. 137-140.

Mills, C.W. (1959) *The Sociological Imagination*. London: Oxford University Press.

Mills, K., Dudley, D., and Collins, N.C. (2019) 'Do the benefits of participation in sport and exercise outweigh the negatives? An academic review.' *Best Practice & Research Clinical Rheumatology,* 33(1) pp.172-187.

Mind. (2021) *Coronavirus: the consequences for mental health.* London: Mind. [Online] [Accessed on 20th July 2021] https://www.mind.org.uk/media/8962/the-consequences-of-coronavirus-for-mental-health-final-report.pdf

Ministry of Justice. (2011) *Physical Education (PE) for Prisoners.* 58/2011. [Online] [Accessed on 7th January 2021] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912891/psi-58-2011-physical-education.pdf

Minton, C., and Pasley, K. (1996) 'Fathers' parenting role identity and father involvement: A comparison of nondivorced and divorced, nonresident fathers.' *Journal of Family Issues,* 17(1) pp.26 - 45.

Mobbs, M.C., and Bonanno, G.A. (2018) 'Beyond war and PTSD: The crucial role of transition stress in the lives of military veterans.' *Clinical Psychology Review,* 59, pp. 137-144.

MOD. (1996). *Report of the Homosexuality Policy Assessment Team*. Ministry of Defence [Online] [Accessed on 20th April 2021]

https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121109142557/http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/C801AAED-2EFE-4D33-A845-EFD103438BF2/0/HPAT_report_Feb_1996.pdf

MOD. (2010) *Estimating the Proportion of Prisoners in England and Wales who are Ex-Armed Forces – Further Analysis.* [Online] [Accessed on 26th November 2020] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/280048/15-september-2010.pdf

MOD. (2011) *Estimating the proportion of offenders supervised by Probation Trusts in England and Wales who are ex-Armed Forces.* Ministry of Defence. [Online] [Accessed on 15th March 2019] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/veterans-on-probation-statistics

MOD. (2013) *The Armed Forces Covenant.* Publisher details not available. [Online] [Accessed on 21st July 2021] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-armed-forces-covenant#history

MOD. (2016) *Armed Forces Covenant.* 13th June. [Online] [Accessed on 21st July 2021] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-covenant-2015-to-2020/armed-forces-covenant

MOD. (2018a) *Biannual UK Armed Forces and UK Entitled Civilians Operational Casualty and Fatality Statistics.* Unknown place of publication: Ministry of Defence. [Online] [Accessed on 15th March 2019] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-and-uk-civilian-operational-casualty-and-fatality-statistics

MOD. (2018b) *The Strategy for our Veterans.* Unknown Place of Publication: Ministry of Defence. [Online] [Accessed on 7th January 2021]. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-for-our-veterans

MOD. (2018c) *Census 2011: Working Age UK Armed Forces Veterans Residing in England and Wales.* Ministry of Defence. [Online] [Accessed on 15th March 2019] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/census-2011-working-age-uk-armed-forces-veterans-residing-in-england-and-wales-index

MOD. (2018d) *The Strategy for our Veterans: UK Government Consultation Paper.* Unknown Place of Publication: Ministry of Defence. [Online] [Accessed on 7th January 2021]. https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strategy-for-our-veterans-uk-government-consultation-paper

MOD. (2018e) *Career Transition Partnership Annual Statistics: UK Regular Personnel Employment.* Ministry of Defence. [Online] [Accessed on 15th March 2019] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/career-transition-partnership-ex-service-personnel-employment-outcomes-statistics-index

MOD. (2019a) *Annual Population Survey: UK Armed Forces Veterans Residing in Great Britain.* Ministry of Defence. [Online] [Accessed on 15th March 2019] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/774937/20190128_-_APS_2017_Statistical_Bulletin_-_OS.pdf

MOD. (2019b) *Population Projections: UK Armed Forces Veterans Residing in Great Britain.* Ministry of Defence. [Online] [Accessed on 15th March 2019] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/population-projections-uk-armed-forces-veterans-residing-in-great-britain-2016-to-2028

MOD. (2020a) *Strategy for our Veterans: UK Government Consultation Response.* Unknown Place of Publication: Ministry of Defence. [Online] [Accessed on 7th January 2021]. https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strategy-for-our-veterans-uk-government-consultation-paper

MOD. (2020b) *Annual Location Statistics (ALS).* Ministry of Defence [Online] [Accessed on 10th February 2021] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/location-of-uk-regular-service-and-civilian-personnel-annual-statistics-2020

MOD. (2020c) *UK Armed Forces Biannual Diversity Statistics.* Ministry of Defence [Online] [Accessed on 10th February 2021] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-2020

MOD. (2020d) *UK Armed Forces Quarterly Service Personnel Statistics.* Ministry of Defence [Online] [Accessed on 10th February 2021] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2020

MOD. (2021) *Career Transition Partnership Annual Statistics: UK Regular Service Personnel Employment*. Ministry of Defence [Online] [Accessed on 10th February 2021] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/career-transition-partnership-ex-service-personnel-employment-outcomes-statistics-index#history

MOD. (no date) *About Us.* [Online] [Accessed on 15th March 2019] https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-defence/about

MOD. (no date) *Office for Veteran Affairs: About Us.* [Online] [Accessed on 2nd August 2021] https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-veterans-affairs/about

MOD. (no date) *Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Minister for Defence People and Veterans.* [Online] [Accessed on 2nd August 2021] https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers/parliamentary-under-secretary-of-state--85

Moore, A., and Clarke, M. (2016) 'Cruel optimism: teacher attachment to professionalism in an era of performativity.' *Journal of Education Policy,* 31(5) pp. 666-677.

Moreau, N., Thibault, L.J., Molgat, M., Jaimes, A., Parlavecchio, L., Chanteau, O., and Plante, C. (20180 'Opening the black box of a sports-based programme for vulnerable youth: the crucial role of social bonds.' *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 10(3) pp. 291–305.

Morgan, H., and Baker, C. (2021) 'Strategic or communicative partnerships? Insights from sports programmes in the criminal justice sector.' *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics,* pp. 1-18.

Morin, R. (2011) *The difficult transition from military to civilian life*. [Online] 8th December 2011 [5th November 2018] http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/12/08/the-difficult-transition-from-military-to-civilian-life/

Morse, J.M. (2016) 'Underlying ethnography.' *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(7) pp. 875-876.

Myers, M.D. (1999) 'Investigating information systems with ethnographic research.' *Communications of the Association for Information Systems,* 23(2) pp. 1-20.

Neuman, W.L. (2014) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches.* 7th ed., Essex: Pearson.

Nicholls, S., Giles, A.R., and Sethna, C. (2011) 'Privileged voices, unheard stories and subjugated knowledge: Perpetuating the "lack of evidence" discourse in sport for development.' *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 46(3) pp. 249–264.

Nichols, G. (2004) 'Crime and punishment and sports development.' *Leisure Studies,* 23(2) pp.177-194.

O'Gorman, J., Partington, M., Potrac, P., and Nelson, L. (2021) 'Translation, intensification and fabrication: Professional football academy coaches enactment

of the Elite Player Performance Plan.' *Sport, Education and Society,* 26(3) pp. 309-325.

O'Hanlon, R., Mackintosh, C., Holmes, H., and Meek, R. (2021a) 'Conducting Ethnographic Research in Male Dominated Environments; The Complexities, Challenges and Reflections of a(n) (Emotional) Female Researcher.' *Qualitative Research.*

O'Hanlon, R., Mackintosh, C., Holmes, H., and Meek, R. (2021b) *Using Sport and Physical Activity to Support Veterans through Military to Civilian Transition: An Evaluation Report on [the Vet Fit Programme].* Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University.

O'Hanlon, R., Mackintosh, C., Holmes, H., and Meek, R. (Forthcoming) '[Vet Fit]: Using a Sport for Development approach to support men and women in the military to civilian transition*.' Journal of Sport for Development.*

Oatley, C., and Harris, K. (2020) 'How, and why, does participatory evaluation work for actors involved in the delivery of a sport-for-development initiative?' *Managing Sport and Leisure,* 26(3) pp. 206-225.

Oatley, C., and Harris, K. (2021) 'How, and why, does participatory evalution work for actors involved in the delivery of a sport-for-development initiative?' *Managing Sport and Leisure,* 26(3) pp. 206-225.

Olive, R., Thorpe, H., Roy, G., Nemani, M., Hunter, L., Wheaton, B., and Humberstone, B. (2016). 'Surfing together: Exploring the potential of a collaborative ethnographic moment.' *In* Thorpe, H., and Olive, R. (eds.) *Women in Action Sport Cultures: Identity, Politics and Experience.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 45-69.

Olmstread, S.B., Futris, T.G., and Pasley, K. (2009) 'An exploration of married and divorced, nonresident men's perceptions and organization of their father role identity.' *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers*, 7(3) pp. 249–268.

Otter, L., and Currie, J. (2004) 'A long time getting home: Vietnam Veterans' experiences in community exercise rehabilitation programme.' *Disability and Rehabilitation,* 26(1) pp. 27-34.

Palmer, E., Hill, K., Lobban, J., and Murphy, D. (2017) 'Veterans' perspectives on the acceptability of art therapy: a mixed methods study.' *International Journal of Art Therapy,* 22(3) pp. 132-137.

Pandeli, J. (2015) *Orange-collar workers: An ethnographic study of modern prison labour and the involvement of private firms.* Ph.D. Cardiff University.

Parallel Parliament (2021) *Veterans APPG.* Parallel Parliament. [Online] [Accessed on 2nd August 2021] https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/APPG/Veterans

Park, K., and Ok, G. (2017) 'Social integration of North Korean Refugees through sport in South Korea.' *The International Journal of the History of Sport,* 34(12) pp. 1294-1305.

Parke, R.D. (2002) 'Fathers and families.' *In* Borstein, M. (ed.) *Handbook of Parenting: Vol 3. Being and Becoming a Parent.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 27-73.

Parker, A., Meek, R., and Lewis, G. (2014) 'Sport in a youth prison: Male young offenders' experiences of a sporting intervention.' *Journal of Youth Studies,* 17(3) pp. 381-396.

Parks, N. (2021) *Population estimates for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-2020.* Unknown Place of Publication: Office for National

Statistics. [Online] [Accessed on 16th July 2021] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2020

Parnell, D., Widdop, P., Bond, A., and Wilson, R. (2020). 'COVID-19, networks and sport.' *Managing Sport and Leisure*. [Online] 'First online' published 31st March 2020 [Accessed on 31st March 2020] DOI: 10.1080/23750472. 2020.175010

Pasley, K., Petren, R.E., and Fish, J.N. (2014) 'Use of identity theory to inform fathering scholarship.' *Journal of Family Theory & Review,* 6(4) pp. 298–318.

Peacock, S., Carless, D., and McKenna, J. (2018) 'Inclusive adapted sport and adventure training programme in the PTSD recovery of military personnel: A creative non-fiction.' *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*, 35(2018) pp. 151-159.

Pease, J.L., Billera, M., and Gerard, G. (2015) 'Military culture and the transition to civilian life: Suicide risk and other considerations.' *Social Work,* 61(1) pp.83-86.

Pedersen, P.M., Brody, J.R., and Li, B. (2020) 'Overview of perspectives on a global pandemic's impact on the sport industry.' *In* Pedersen, P.M., Brody, J.R. and Li, B. (eds.) *Sport and the Pandemic: Perspectives on COVID-19's Impact of the Sport Industry.* Oxon: Routledge, pp. 1-4.

Pederson, P. (1994) *The Five Stages of Culture Shock: Critical Incidents Around the World.* New York: Greenwood Press.

Pershing, J.L. (2006) 'Men and women's experiences with hazing in a male-dominated elite military institution.' *Men and Masculinities,* 8(4) pp. 470-492.

Phillips, M.G., and Roper, A.P. (2006) 'History of physical education.' *In* Kirk, D., Macdonald, D., and O'Sullivan, M. (eds.) *Handbook of Physical Education*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 123-140.

Philpotts, L., Grix, J., and Quarmby, T. (2010) 'Centralised grass roots policy and 'new governance': A case study of County Sport Partnerships in the UK – unpacking the paradox.' *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 46(3) pp. 265–281.

Pillow, W.S. (2003) 'Confession, catharsis or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflectivity as a methodological power in qualitative research.' *Qualitative Studies in Education,* 16(2) pp. 175-196.

Porat, A.B. (2010) 'Football fandom: a bounded identification.' *Soccer & Society,* 11(3) pp. 277-290.

Poulton, E. (2012) ''If you had balls, you'd be one of us!' Doing gendered research: Methodological reflections on being a female academic researcher in the hyper-masculine subculture of Football Hooliganism.' *Sociological Research Online,* 17(4) pp. 1-13.

Pozo, A., and Walker, C. (2014) *Sector Insight: UK Armed Forces Charities: An Overview and Analysis*. London: Directory of Social Change. [Online] [Accessed on 8th August 2020] https://armedforcescharities.org.uk/Public/Research_Tab/UK_Overview.aspx

Pringle, R., and Thorpe, H. (2017) 'Theory and Reflexivity' *In* Silk, M.L., Andrews D.L., and Thorpe, H. (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Physical Cultural Studies.* Oxon: Routledge, pp. 68-78.

Reinhardt, K.M., Noggle Taylor, J.J., Johnston, J., Zameer, A., Cheema, S., and Khalsa, S.B.S. (2018) 'Kripalu yoga for military veterans with PTSD: A randomized trial.' *Journal of Clinical Psychology,* 74(1) pp. 93-108.

Richards, J. (2015) 'Which player do you fancy then? Locating the female ethnographer in the field of the sociology of sport.' *Soccer & Society,* 16(2-3) pp. 393-404.

Richards, J. (2018) ‘Passing and Moving: Negotiating fieldwork roles in football fandom research.’ *Journal of Organizational Ethnography,* 8(2) pp. 146-158.

Riessman, K.C. (2008) *Narrative Methods for Human Sciences*. London: SAGE

Roberts, L.M., Cha, S.E., and Kim, S.S. (2014) ‘Strategies for managing impressions of racial identity in the workplace.’ *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology,* 20(4) pp. 529-540.

Robson, C. (2011) *Real World Research: A Resource for Users of Social Research Methods in Applied Settings.* 3rd ed., Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Rogers, C.M., Mallinson, T., and Peppers, D. (2014) ‘High intensity sports for posttraumatic stress disorder and depressions: Feasibility study of ocean therapy with veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.’ *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy,* 68(4) pp. 395-404.

Romero, M. (2017) *Introducing Intersectionality.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Roy, K.M. (2004) ‘You can't eat love: Constructing provider role expectations for low-income and working class fathers.’ *Fathering,* 2(3) pp. 253–276.

Ryle, G (1949) *The Concept of Mind.* London: Hutchinson.

Sampson, H., Bloor, M., and Fincham, B. (2008) 'A price worth paying? Considering the "cost" of reflexive research methods and the influence of Feminist ways of "doing."' *Sociology*, 42(5) pp. 919-933.

Sayer, N.A., Carlson, K.F., and Frazier, P.A. (2014) ‘Reintegration challenge in U.S. service members and veterans following combat deployment.’ *Social Issues and Policy Review,* 8(1) pp. 33-73.

Schlossberg, N.K. (1981) ‘A model for analyzing human adaptation to transition.’ *The Counseling Psychologist,* 9(2) pp.2-18.

Schlossberg, N.K. (2008) *Overwhelmed: Coping with Life’s Ups and Downs.* Maryland: M. Evans.

Schlossberg, N.K. (2011) ‘The challenge of change: the transition model and its applications.’ *Journal of Employment Counseling,* 48(4) pp. 159-162.

Schlossberg, N.K. (2011) ‘The challenges of change: The transition model and its applications.’ *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 48(4) pp. 159-162.

Schlossberg, N.K., Waters, E.B., and Goodman, J. (1995) *Counselling Adults in Transition: Linking Practice with Theory.* New York: Springer.

Schulenkorf, N., Sherry, E., and Phillips, P. (2016) ‘What is sport development?’ *In* Sherry, E., Schulenkorf, N., and Phillips, P. (eds.) *Managing Sport Development: An International Approach.* Oxon: Routledge, pp. 18-42.

Schulenkorf, N., Sherry, E., and Rowe, K. (2016) ‘Sport for development: An integrated literature review.’ *Journal of Sport Management*, 30(1) pp. 22-39.

Schulman, D. (2017) *The Presentation of Self in Contemporary Social Life*. London: SAGE Publications.

Scott, S. (2011) *Total Institutions and Reinvented Identities.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Scott, S. (2015) *Negotiating Identity: Symbolic Interaction Approaches to Social Identity.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Seal, E., and Sherry, E. (2018) ‘Exploring empowerment and gender relations in a sport for development program in Papua New Guinea.’ *Sociology of Sport Journal,* 35(3) pp. 247-257.

Senecal, G., McDonald, M., LaFleur, R., and Coey, C. (2019) ‘Examining the effect of combat excitement & diminished civilian solidarity on life satisfaction for American veterans.’ *New Ideas in Psychology,* 52, pp.12-17.

Sherman, M.D., and Larsen, L.J. (2018) ‘Family-focused interventions and resources for veterans and their families.’ *Psychological Services,* 15(2) pp. 146-153.

Shields, D.M., Kuhl, D., and Westwood, M.J. (2017) ‘Abject masculinity and the military: Articulating a fulcrum of struggle and change.’ *Psychology of Men & Masculinity,* 18(3) pp. 215-225.

Shirazipour, C.H., Evans, M.B., Caddick, N., Smith, B., Aiken, A.B., Martin Ginis, K.A., and Latimer-Cheung, A.E. (2017) ‘Quality participation experiences in the physical activity domain: Perspectives of veterans with a physical disability.’ *Psychology of Sport and Exercise,* 29, pp. 40-50.

Sismondo, S. (1993) ‘Some social constructions.’ *Social Studies of Science,* 23(3) pp. 151-553.

Smith, B. (2018) ‘Generalizability in qualitative research: misunderstanding, opportunities and recommendations for the sport and exercise sciences.’ *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health,* 10(1) pp. 137-149.

Smith, B. and McGannon, K.R. (2018) ‘Developing rigor in qualitative research: problems and opportunities within sport and exercise psychology.’ *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology,* 11(1) pp. 101-121.

Smith, B., and Monforte, J. (2020) 'Stories, new materialism and pluralism: Understanding, practising and pushing the boundaries of narrative analysis.' *Methods in Psychology,* 2.

Smith, B., and Sparkes, A. (2008) 'Contrasting perspectives on narrating selves and identities: an invitation to dialogue.' *Qualitative Research,* 8(1) pp. 5-35.

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership. (2019) *Introducing Active Partnerships; the new name for CSPs.* 11th March. [Online] [Accessed on 6th January 2021] https://www.sasp.co.uk/news/2019/03/introducing-active-partnerships-the-new-name-for-csps

Souhami, A, (2020) 'Constructing tales of the field: uncovering the culture of fieldwork in police ethnography.' *Policing and Society,* 30(2) pp. 206-223.

Spaaij, R. (2009) 'The social impact of sport: diversities, complexities and contexts.' *Sport in Society,* 12(9) pp. 1109-1117.

Spaaij, R., and Schaillee, H. (2021). 'Inside the black box: A micro-sociological analysis of sport for development'. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 56(2) pp. 151-169.

Spaaij, R., Schulenkorf, N., Jeanes, R., and Oxford, S. (2018) 'Participatory research in sport-for-development: Complexities, experiences and (missed) opportunities.' *Sport Management Review*, 21(1) pp. 25–37.

Sparkes, A.C. (1992) 'The paradigm debate.' *In* Sparkes, A.C. (ed.) *Research in Physical Education and Sport: Exploring Alternative Visions.* London: Falmer Press, pp. 9-60.

Sparkes, A.C. (2002) *Telling Tales in Sport and Physical Activity: A Qualitative Journey*. Champaign: Human Kinetics.

Sparkes, A.C., and Douglas, K., (2007) 'Making the case for poetic representations: An example in action.' *The Sport Psychologist*, 21(2) pp. 170-190.

Sparkes, A.C., and Smith, B. (2014) *Qualitative Research Methods in Sport, Exercise and Health: From Process to Product.* Oxon: Routledge.

Sporner, M.L., Fitzgerald, S.G., Dicianno, B.E., Collins, D., Teodorski, E., Pasquina, P.F., and Cooper, R.A. (2009) 'Psychosocial impact of participation in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games and Winter Sports Clinic.' *Disability and Rehabilitation,* 31(5) pp. 410-418.

Sport England. (2016) *Towards an Active Nation.* Unknown Place of Publication: Sport England. [Online] [Accessed on 18th May 2021] https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/sport-england-towards-an-active-nation.pdf

Sport England. (2020) *Active Lives Adult Survey Coronavirus (Covid-19) Report.* Unknown Place of Publication: Sport England. [Online] [Accessed on 15th March 2021] https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-10/Active%20Lives%20Adult%20May%2019-20%20Coronavirus%20Report.pdf?2L6TBVV5UvCGXb_VxZcWHcfFX0_wRal7

Sport England. (2021) *Uniting the Movement.* Unknown Place of Publication: Sport England. [Online] [Accessed on 18th May 2021] https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-02/Sport%20England%20-%20Uniting%20the%20Movement%27.pdf?VersionId=7JxbS7dw40CN0g21_dL4VM3F4P1YJ5RW

Sport England. (no date) *The Short Active Lives Survey: what it is and how to use it*. Publisher details not available. [Online] [Accessed on 15th March 2021]

https://evaluationframework.sportengland.org/media/1357/short-active-lives-survey-what-it-is-and-how-to-use-it-1.pdf

Springer, S., Birch, K., and MacLeavy, J. (2016) *The Handbook of Neoliberalism*. Oxon: Routledge.

Stokes, M., Schultz, P., and Alpaslan, A. (2018) 'Narrating the journey of sustained recovery from substance use disorder.' *Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention and Policy,* 35(13) pp. 1-12.

Strauss, A.L. (1978) *Negotiations: Varieties, Contexts, Processes and Social Order.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Stylianou, M., Hogan, A., and Enright, E. (2019) 'Youth sport policy: the enactment and possibilities of 'soft policy' in schools.' *Sport, Education and Society*, 24(2) pp. 182-194.

Sugden, J. (2008) 'Anyone for football for peace? The challenges of using sport in the service of co-existence in Israel.' *Soccer & Society,* 9(3) pp. 405-415.

Sugden, J. (2010) 'Critical left-realism and sport interventions in divided societies.' *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 45(3) pp. 258-272.

Sullivan, P. (2012) *Qualitative Data Analysis Using a Dialogical Approach*. London: SAGE.

Swain, J. (2014) 'The effect of Phase One training on young recruits' personal and professional development in the British Army.' *Journal of Youth Studies,* 19(1) pp. 117-132.

Taff, B.D., Dattilo, J., Davis, K.D., and Moeller, J.D. (2016) 'Leisure perceptions of combat veterans of operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.' *Journal of Leisure Research,* 48(4) pp. 265-284.

Thoits, P.A. (2013) ‘Volunteer identity salience, role enactment, and well-being: Comparisons of the salience constructs.’ *Social Psychology Quarterly,* 76(4) pp. 373-398.

Thomas, G. (2018) ‘The stress effects of military families’ transition to civilian life.’ *Mental Health Practice,* 21(9) pp. 25-29.

Thompson, A., Bloyce, D., and Mackintosh, C. (2020) ‘‘It is always going to change’ – managing top-down policy changes by sport development officers working in national governing bodies of sport in England.’ *Managing Sport and Leisure: An International Journal*, iFirst, pp. 1–20.

Thompson, J., Hopman, W., Sweet, J., Van Til, L., MacLean, M.B., Van Den Kerkhof, E., Sudom, K., Poirier, A., and Pedlar, D. (2013) ‘Health-related quality of life of Canadian forces veterans after transition to civilian life.’ *Canadian Journal of Public Health,* 104(1) pp. 15-21.

Thorpe, H. (2011) *Snowboarding Bodies in Theory and Practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Thorpe, H. (2012) ‘The ethnographic (I)nterview in the sports field: Towards a postmodern sensibility.’ *In* Young, K., and Atkinson, M. (eds.) *Qualitative Research on Sport and Physical Culture.* Bingley: Emerald Group, pp. 51-79.

Thorpe, H., Ahmad, N., Marfell, A., and Richards, J. (2020) ‘Muslim women's sporting spatialities: navigating culture, religion and moving bodies in Aotearoa New Zealand.’ *Gender, Place & Culture*, iFirst, pp. 1-39.

Thorpe, H., and Olive, R. (2016) ‘Conducting observations in sport and exercise settings.’ *In* Smith, B., and Sparkes, A.C. (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise.* Oxon: Routledge, pp. 124-139.

Tidy, J. (2020) ‘The part humour plays in the production if military violence.’ *Global Society,* 35(1) pp. 134-148.

Toffoletti, K., Olive, R., Thorpe, H., and Pavlidis, A. (2021) ‘Doing feminist physical cultural research in digital spaces: reflections, learnings, and ways forward.’ *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 13(1) pp. 11-25.

Tracy S.J. (2013) *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evident, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Tracy, S.J. (2010) ‘Qualitative quality: Eight “big tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research.’ *Qualitative Inquiry,* 16(10) pp. 837-851.

True, G., Rigg, K.K. and Butler, A. (2015) ‘Understanding barriers to mental health care for recent war veterans through photovoice.’ *Qualitative Health Research,* 25(10) pp. 1443-1455.

Tuncalp, D., and Le, P.L. (2013) ‘Questioning the practice of online organizational ethnography: A systematic review.’ *Academy of Management Proceedings,* 2013(1) pp. 105-148.

Turner, V. (1969) *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure.* Oxon: Routledge.

Van Gennep, A. (1988) *The Rites of Passage.* Chicago: The University Chicago Press.

Van Maanen, J. (2011) ‘Ethnography as work: Some rules of engagement.’ *Journal of Management Studies,* 48(1) pp. 218-234.

Verey, A., and Smith, P.K. (2012) ‘Post-combat adjustment: Understanding transition.’ *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research,* 4(4) pp. 226-236.

Verhaeghe, P. (2014) *What About Me? The Struggle for Identity in a Market-Based Society*. London: Scribe Publications.

Viczko, M., and Riveros, A. (2015) ‘Assemblage, enactment and agency: educational policy perspectives.’ *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education,* 36(4) pp. 479-484.

Vogel, T., Brechat, P.H., Lepretre, P.M., Kaltenbach, G., Berthel, M., and Lonsdorfer, J. (2009) ‘Health benefits of physical activity in older patients: a review.’ *International Journal of Clinical Practice,* 63(2) pp. 303-320.

Wagneaar, H. (2012) ‘Dwellers on the threshold of practice: the interpretivism of Bevir and Rhodes.’ *Critical Policy Studies,* 6(1) pp. 85-99.

Wainwright, V., McDonnell, S., Lennox, C., Shaw, J., and Senior, J. (2017) ‘Treatment barriers and support for male ex-armed forces personnel in prison: Professional and service user perspectives.’ *Qualitative Health Research,* 27(5) pp. 759-769.

Walker, S. (2010) ‘Assessing the menta health consequences of military combat in Iraq and Afghanistan: a literature review.’ *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing,* 17(9) pp. 790-796.

Wall, P., Fetherston, C., and Browne, C. (2018) ‘Understanding the enrolled nurse to registered nurse through a model adapted from Schlossberg’s transition theory.’ *Nurse Education Today,* 67, pp.6-14.

Warburton, D.E.R., Nicol, C.W., and Bredin, S.S.D. (2006) ‘Health benefits of physical activity: the evidence.’ *CMAJ,* 174(6) pp. 801-809.

Watson, T.J. (2012) ‘Making Organisational Ethnography.’ *Journal of Organisational Ethnography,* 1(1) pp. 15-22.

West, C., and Zimmerman, D. (1987) ‘Doing gender.’ *Gender and Society,* 1(2) pp. 125-151.

Westmarland, L. (2001) 'Blowing the whistle on police violence; Gender, ethnography and ethics.' *British Journal of Criminology*, 41(3) pp. 523-535.

Whitley, M.A., Massey, W.V., Camire, M., Blom, L.C., Chawansky, M., Forde, S., Boutet, M., Borbee, A., and Darnell, S.C. (2019). 'A systematic review of sport for development interventions across six global cities.' *Sport Management Review* 22(2) pp.181-193.

Wilkinson, S.D., and Penney, D. (2016) 'The involvement of external agencies in extra-curricular physical education: Reinforcing or challenging gender and ability inequities?' *Sport, Education and Society*, 21(5) pp. 741–758.

Wilkinson, S.D., and Penney, D. (2020) 'Setting policy and student agency in physical education: Students as policy actors.' *Sport, Education and Society,* 26(3) pp. 267-280.

Wilkinson, S.D., Penney, D., Allin, L., and Potrac, P. (2021) 'The enactment of setting policy in secondary school physical education.' *Sport, Education and Society,* 26(6) pp. 619-633.

Wilson, R., and Platts C. (2018) *Managing and Developing Community Sport.* London: Routledge.

Woodland, R.H., and Hutton, M.S. (2012) 'Evaluating organizational collaborations: suggested entry points and strategies.' *American Journal of Evaluation*, 33(3) pp. 366–383.

World Health Organisation. (2020) *Listings of WHO's response to COVID-19*. 28th December. [Online] [Accessed on 15th March 2021] https://www.who.int/news/item/29-06-2020-covidtimeline

Wright, B., Forbes, A., Kelsall, H., Clarke, D., Ikin, J. and Sim, M. (2015) ‘Post deployment appraisal and the relationship with stress and psychological health in Australian veterans.’ *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology,* 50(12) pp. 1885-1892.

Yanow, D. (1996) *How Does a Policy Mean? Interpreting Policy and Organizational Actions.* Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press.

Yanow, D. (2009) 'Organizational ethnography and methodological angst: myths and challenges in the field.' *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal,* 4(2) pp. 186-199.

Yanow, D. (2012) ‘Organizational ethnography between toolbox and world-making.’ *Journal of Organizational Ethnography,* 1(1) pp. 31-42.

Ybema, S., Yanow, D., Wels, H., and Kamsteg, F. (2009) *Organizational Ethnography: Studying the Complexities of Everyday* Life. London: SAGE

Zipp, S. (2017) ‘Sport for development with ‘at risk’ girls in St. Lucia.’ *Sport in Society,* 20(12) pp. 1917-1931.

Appendices

Appendix A – Excerpt from Sport England Funding Bid

1. Audience

This section is for you to demonstrate a detailed understanding of your target audience:

Please consider the following in your answer:

- Who are your target audience?
- Who do they tend to be? i.e. age, gender, income status etc.
- Where do you tend to find them? i.e. environment, geography, setting etc.
- How would you describe the sporting and physical activity habits of your target audience?
- What else do you know about your target audience that will help shape your project? i.e. how do they spend their time? Social interactions?
- How will you reach these individuals?
- What is the size of your target audience?
- What else do you need to learn about your target audience for your project to be effective?

Target audience for the programme are ex-service personnel with one or more of the following life challenges:

- Those with mental health problems or those at risk of developing them.
- Those at risk of/affected by drug and/or alcohol abuse or dependency.
- Those at risk of isolation or already isolated.

As an organisation, [a partner organisation] deals with ex-service personnel and offers support to ex-service personnel who face these difficulties each day. We also offer a programme of activities and events.

[The organisation] is open to all ex-service personnel and currently supports ex-service individuals aged 24 up to 100. The focus of the programme is to support ex-service personnel who have recently transitioned from serving to civilian life. Almost half of all individuals who leave military service are under 25 years of age with many of the remainder aged less than 35 years old.

89.5% of ex-service personnel are male, the Royal British Legion statistics state “Working age veterans in the UK are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed as their civilian contemporaries Deployment to Employment, RBL 2016).

There are currently up to 16,000 ex-service personnel living in [in a town in the North West]. Since [the organisation] was established just over a year ago it has engaged with over 600 ex-service personnel directly. [The organisation] has worked in partnership developing this application with many organisations who also deal directly with ex-service personnel in the area. They include:

- Veterans Breakfast Clubs (throughout [a city in the North West])
- Local Authorities.
- Regimental Associations
- Military Charities
- Public Health and specifically Drug and Alcohol services
- Ministry of Defence
- Organisations providing physical activities
- Wider third sector organisations.

All these organisations will ensure the target audience is engaged in the programme. Over the past 12 months [the organisation] has seen the most growth in its engagement with ex-service personnel through word of mouth. [The organisation] operates with its wide range of partners in a spoke and hub model with referrals being made from organisations across [a town in the North West] and beyond. There is an extensive marketing campaign in place to attract new membership.

The ex-service community in [a town in the North West] are fairly equally spread geographically, however [a town in the North West] is a local authority with multiple deprivation areas. According to the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation, taking in factors including income, employment, crime and education, large parts of [the town in the North West] are extremely deprived. 80,000 residents live in the 20 per

cent most deprived places in England. Health-related factors are particularly striking.

In a recent [city in the North West] wide survey completed by ex-service personal, it showed that ex-service personnel were extremely active whilst they served with 91.2% stating they completed over 30 minutes of moderate exercise at least 5 days a week. 82.4% of those ex-service personnel stated they attended sports clubs whilst serving. The alarming statistic is that 80% of these ex-service personnel have said they had become less physically active since they left the services. Of those 80% who were less active, 89.7% said they would take up the opportunity to get more active if the right opportunity was available.

Through focus groups held with ex-service personnel it was clear they will attend activities for a sense of comradeship. A great example of this is the Veterans Breakfast Clubs that run throughout Greater Manchester, where ex-service personnel will attend in the different local authorities. In some areas up to 100 ex-service personnel attend on a Saturday morning to be with other ex-service personnel. In each local authority within [a city in the North West] the breakfast clubs are growing in size – this is due to comradery. Advertising is kept to the minimum but they have increased in size as ex-service personnel engage with the unengaged ex-service personnel in their community.

This is very much a partnership bid which will ensure we will reach the ex-service community throughout [a city in the North West] over a 3 year period. Initially we will work in [one borough] and receive referrals from:

[A local borough] Veterans Breakfast Club, CGL (drugs and alcohol intervention), Defence Medical Welfare Service, RBL, SSAFA, Walking With The Wounded, Help for Hero's, Integrated Neighbourhood Services (Place based), Third Sector Housing Organisations, [a local borough] Council, [a local borough] Hospital and GP's.

Re-adjustment to civilian life can have a negative impact on a range of factors within a service leavers transition from a structured and disciplined life within the military, which is centred on physical health within a peer support network, to a society where this may be limited or non-existent, lack of a regular routine and/or knowledge of the services they can access to support them re-adjust. This is the

point that mental health issues can present themselves, dependency on alcohol can develop as many of their routines disappear, and this includes the motivation to maintain an active physical health routine.

Over the 3 years the programme will engage with 1500 ex-service personnel to increase their physical activity levels.

2. Life Change

This section is for you to demonstrate a detailed understanding of the life change(s) and the key moment(s) of influence related to your target audience.

Please consider the following in your answer:

- Define the life change(s) your project will address.
- Explain how this life change affects your target audience, with a particular reference to its impact on their sport and physical activity habits.
- Define the key moment(s) of influence related to this life change and what evidence you have to support this.
- What else do you need to understand about this life change for your project to be effective?

The change that this project aims to effect, is to encourage and sustain physical activity in ex-service personnel facing the following challenges:

- Those with mental health problems or those at risk of developing them.
- Those at risk of/affected by drug and/or alcohol abuse or dependency.
- Those at risk of isolation or already isolated.

Introducing a support network through sport and physical activity, providing participants with a structured transition to civilian life. By providing this support network, the likelihood of further support is greater reduced.

A network of like-minded people providing peer to peer support is key to the successful delivery of this project. Ex-service personnel supporting other service leavers, ensures a thorough understanding of the challenges faced during the transition period and beyond.

Transition provides the service leaver with a period of uncertainty and major life changes in a relatively short period of time. The structured and disciplined life

within military service environment alongside a statutory and enforced physical exercise regime with major levels of peer support is a significant change upon transition. The lack of a regular routine, change of location and knowledge to access local provision can be a significant problem during this re-adjustment period.

Mental health issues can present themselves, isolation, dependency on alcohol can develop as many of their regular routines disappear which is then likely to include the motivation to maintain an active physical health routine.

The long-term average outflow of military personnel leaving the Armed Forces annually is around 20,000, although this figure has reduced over the last 2 years to 17,500 and 15,000 respectively with the Army making up approximately 60% of these outflows. Based on national and regional recruitment figures, it is likely that around 15% of this 15,000 (2,250) will return to the North West with many settling in [a local borough].

In the three years to April 2017, 55,956 people left the Forces. Of these 13.4% (7,502) were medically discharged. The number of discharges due to mental health conditions has risen slightly over the period, this is mainly due to the effort that has been put in to reduce stigma, and thus encourage the reporting of such problems.

The Veteran's Transition Review Third Follow Up Report - Lord Ashcroft, October 2017.

91.2% of ex-service personnel stated that they completed over 30 minutes of moderate exercise at least 5 days a week, while they served. 80% of these veterans have said they had become less physically active since they left the services and no longer reach the recommended physical activity levels recommended by the Chief Medical Officer. During a focus group a reason stated for not being physically active is that while they severed, they were made aware about opportunities within the forces but whilst they transitioned to civilian life they were not aware of opportunities thus falling down their list of priorities. Nearly 90% of veterans stated they would be more physically active if they were aware of the opportunities.

Often seeking support after it is required, at point of trauma such as relationship breakdown, alcohol dependency or an issue with the law. [An organisation] offers an alternative to the more traditional military charities and their welfare services. Ex-service personnel provide a network of peer support through a wide range of activities and events.

The profile and reputation of [an organisation] has raised over the past year, leading to greatly increased referrals in. Our model working closely with the Council and the breakfast clubs is now being replicated in other local authority areas due to its success.

Our ex-service personnel rely on black humour, Chris Ward from his publication EndEx encompasses the feelings felt by our ex-service personnel when facing transition:

“It’s over. Your clearance chit is all signed off. You’ve received your last train warrant, they’ve taken your ID card off you at the guard room, and you walk out through the gate for the last time, it’s Endex.
It doesn’t matter how many years you served in the military, it will always have a lasting effect on the way you live the rest of your life. Marine, soldier, sailor or airman, whichever you may be, there are some qualities and experiences that most, if not all veteran...”.

The Armed Forces Covenant focus is the full integration to civilian life for ex-service personnel and although this is critical to long term wellbeing it is clear from the observation above and our focus groups that transition is a period during which our ex-service personnel see themselves as a third distinct group away from civilians and military.

Building on the foundations of our learning over the past twelve months, peer support coupled with a structured offer where consultation with ex-service personnel is fully integrated is the key to success. We continue to learn together and explore new opportunities for engagement of our target audience.

3. Project Design

Building on the understanding of your audience and the life change(s) above, this section is for you to describe your project and how it specifically addresses the challenges and meet the needs of your audience.

Please consider the following in your answer:

- A clear and concise description of your project.
- How will the project meet the needs of the target audience?
- How will the project address the challenges presented by the life change?
- Define the key moment(s) you will target to influence your audience.
- What gap in the market does the project fill?

The project will take place over 3 years.

Year 1 Delivery in [a local borough]

Area has been chosen due to the already well established ex-service network within the Local Authority that [an organisation] supports. This year will be used to build reputation and awareness of the project.

Year 2 Delivery in [two local boroughs].

We will continue to deliver in [a local borough] and expand into a neighbouring borough. This area has been selected due to partnerships created with the MOD, army Reservists at [a local venue] and wider inspirational facilities available such as the Velodrome. [Local borough] Armed Forces Covenant Teams already have a solid working relationship, via the local authority networks, breakfast clubs and third sector providers such as Walking with the Wounded and the Royal British Legion.

Year 3 Delivery throughout [a city in the North West].

[A city in the North West] Armed Forces Covenant officers in each local authority are aware of the project and give their full support. Once the learnings have been made from Year 1 and Year 2 we will expand into the other 8 local authorities to ensure the biggest reach. This fits directly with the development of the Armed Forces Offer for [a city in the North West] combined authority, with the MOD recently funding a portal, co-ordination post and smart social media to raise awareness and to build an effective offer across all areas of [a city in the North West].

The project will be managed by [an organisation] and they will recruit a Physical Activity Coordinator to build on the relationships formed and create a weekly programme of physical activity sessions to be delivered by partners, community clubs or freelance coaches. These will range from walking/running groups, ex-service bespoke sessions at Active [a local borough] which will be a range of different hall sports, water activities on the Canal or even playing golf.

It was established in the focus groups that the sport, much like the breakfast at breakfast clubs, won't be the main driver to engage ex-service personnel in the sessions, but based around the social comradery that will be created. All sessions will either start or finish with a social element such as starting or finishing at a café. From time to time we will enhance the offer with social outings working with our partners to offer tickets to sporting events. As this was a strong theme from the focus groups with ex-service personnel stating they were very keen to get involved in such events that it would inspire them to be more active themselves.

The initial activities suggested have come directly from ex-service personnel however consultation will take place on an ongoing bases to ensure the correct activities are chosen and meet the needs of the participants.

Currently throughout the transition process there is very little support. Each ex-service individual is supported in finding suitable accommodation and told who their local Armed Forces Officer is – it is up to them if they wish to make contact. The Armed Forces Officer is not given the details of transitioning personnel, often resulting in initial contact being made at point of crisis or need. [An organisation] is supporting to bridge this gap and we have started to see a substantial change in this pattern within [a local borough]. Relationships are being formed and we are now engaging with ex-service personnel much earlier in their transition period.

[An organisation] signposting is tailored to the individual but this project will increase our contact time with participants and the ability to develop relationships with more ex-service personnel which will provide peer to peer support and will give participants who are currently struggling the opportunity to open up and often speak about issues so help can be provided.

The key moment that will influence our target audience is at the point of transition, at point of transfer, at point of need or engagement or occasionally, 8 – 10 years

post service as this is when PTSD can be most prevalent and we find a lot of ex-service personnel coming to us around this time. This is becoming more and more common after recent events in Afghanistan and Iraq.

We also engage with ex-service personnel from recommendation from partner organisations. As our reputation grows we receive referrals from professional organisations who do not have bespoke expertise so we can signpost them to the most appropriate support.

[An organisation] is one of the first organisations of its type based in a local authority and has seen significant growth in the past 12 months. At present there is no similar project like this running in [a city in the North West] but we are well positioned to deliver this as a leading support organisation for ex-service personnel throughout [a city in the North West]. The recent Invictus Games have shown how sport can have a real benefit to ex-service personnel and we need to be able to offer the opportunities to our ex-service community to support them is a real-life change.

4. Project Delivery

This section is for you to provide more detail on how your project will be delivered. Please feel free to append a Delivery Plan as part of your supporting documents if you feel this will add value to the narrative below.

Timeline:

- Please provide a project timeline including any particular phases or milestones. Please note that projects should commence within 6 months of receipt of award.

Year 1 (1st April 2018 - March 2019)

In April 2017 we will recruit for the Physical Activity Coordinator, this is will be open recruitment with the role advertised to both ex-service personal and throughout the sport and physical activity sector. May and June will be used to develop and promote the programme. Taster events will be held which partners have agreed to offer in-kind. It will also be important to build on the relationships with the many referral organisations within the area. June 30th will be the official launch of the programme. This date has been chosen as it is Armed Forces Day (nationally)

which is the day [an organisation] has its largest face to face engagement with ex-service personnel.

From June there will be a weekly timetable of activity sessions that the ex-service personnel can take part in. There is no commitment and we do not expect the participants to attend all the sessions. On-going feedback will take place to ensure the right sessions are being put on at the right times. During Year 1 the project team will meet quarterly to ensure project is on track and all KPI's are on target to being met. This will also include an update from the PHD student to update on learnings to date.

In Year 1 the project will engage 400 ex-service personnel

Year 2 (April 2019 - March 2020)

In early April 2019 a development day will take place for the project team. This is to review the previous year and see what learnings have been taken for year 2. From April 2019 we will continue develop on our ongoing partnerships that we hold with the ex-service personal community in [a city in the North West] as we will deliver physical activity sessions within their local authority as well as [a local borough]. We will further engage with the Army Reservists and will deliver sessions from their centre in [a local town]. A weekly timetable of events will continue to take place with monitoring and evaluation taking place throughout. The project team will still meet quarterly to ensure programme is on track.

In year 2 the project will engage with an additional 400 ex-service personnel with physical activity.

Year 3 (April 2020 - 31st March 2021)

Through the {city in the North West] Combined Authority armed forces officers the project will be rolled out throughout [a city in the North West]. By this time we will have a will have a well-established project and know exactly what does and doesn't work and how to embed it into the communities. It is essential that we build upon our links with community clubs within this year to ensure ex-service personnel have appropriate exit routes once funding ends. In year 3 the PHD student will complete their thesis which will be presented across the country to

organisations that work directly with ex-service personnel to ensure learnings are not lost and can be used to replicate the programme in other areas of the country.

In year 3 the project will engage with a further 750 ex-service personnel.

Appendix B – Demographics of Vet Fit Programme Participants.

Table 1 Programme Participants' Gender Retrieved from Internal Project Data Survey

Gender	**Male**	**Female**	**Blank**
	340	70	1

Table 2 - Programme Participants' Military Membership Retrieved from Project Data Survey

Military Branch	**Army**	**RAF**	**Navy**	**Marines**	**Partner or Family Member**
	292	63	31	5	20

Table 3- Programme Participants' Physical/Mental Health Condition Retrieved from Project Data Survey

Presence of a Physical or Mental Health Condition	**Yes**	**No**	**Prefer Not to Say**
	147	219	45

Appendix C – COVID-19 Timeline

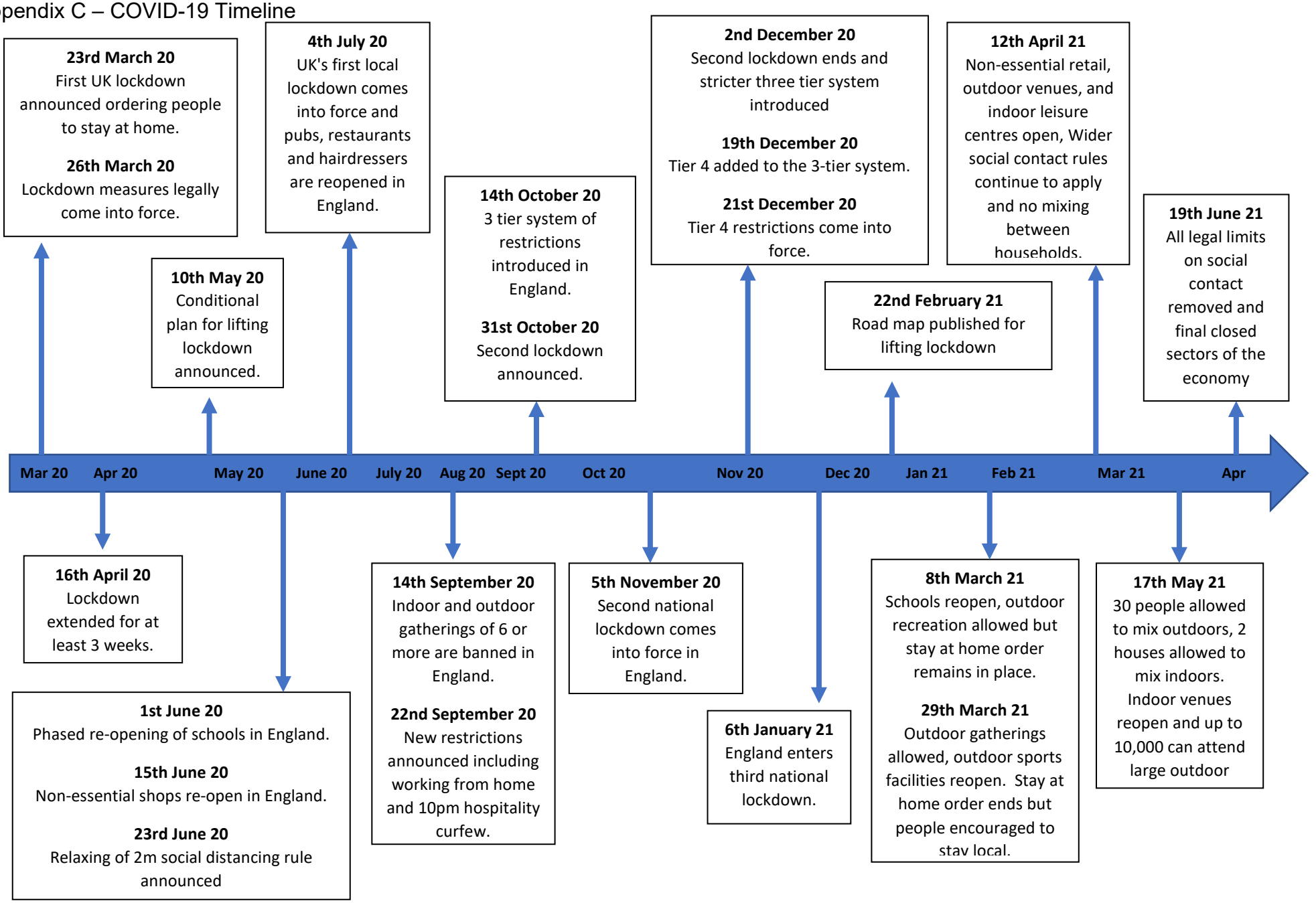

Figure 1- Timeline of COVID-19 Lockdowns (Adapted from Institute for Government Analysis)

Appendix D – Example Interview Guide

Veteran Interview Guide - AIM - CREATE A NARRATIVE

This interview aims to understand your story, particularly your experiences of being in the military, life after the military and your engagement with the Vet Fit programme. I am looking for your honesty but if there are any areas of this interview you do not feel comfortable discussing, that is fine, you do not need to answer every question. However, I can assure you that is completely confidential, and you will not be recognizable in write up or any outputs using this data. This interview is also being recorded, if you are happy with this then we can get started.

Military Life

- Tell me about your time in the military (Why did you join? How long did you serve? What was your highest rank? What were your duties? Did you undertake any training? Did you serve in any theaters of war? When did you leave the military?)
- How would you describe your lifestyle in the military? (Can you tell me a bit about your work/social life in the military?) (Probes: social life, sport, tours, work, culture, identity)
- Did you take part in any sport/physical activity while you were serving in the military?
- Tell me about some of your good memories from the military.
- Can you tell me about any negative memories or experiences you have when looking back on your service, if any? (probes: family, lifestyle, tours)

Post-Military Life

- How has life been since you left the military? (Why did you leave?) (Probes: employment, lifestyle, family, support)
- How have your experiences in the military affected your life as a whole? (Probes: identity, lifestyle, training)
- What is your experience of civilian life? Is it what you expected? (Probes: mental health, social isolation, addiction, employment/social)
- How does civilian life compare to the military life you had? (Key similarities/differences? (Probes: culture, power, travel, family, structure, employment).
- What have been your biggest challenges in civilian life?
- How would you summarise your transition from the military to civilian life?

Vet Fit Programme– Sport for Development

- Why did you take part in Vet Fit? (How was contact made? Was anyone else involved? Probes: mental health, isolation, addiction)
- What do/did you hope to gain from engaging with Vet Fit? (Probes: mental health, social isolation, addiction)
- What do you think is the purpose of Vet Fit? (Probes: Social, Support, Treatment, Signpost, Connector)
- Has engaging in Vet Fit had any impact on you (or your transition from the military)? (How does it make you feel?) (Probes: mental health, wellbeing, family, social isolation).

- What impact does being in this environment, with likeminded veterans, have on you?
- Has engaging in the Vet Fit Programme influenced the way you think or feel about your transition from the military to civilian life? (if yes, how? What has caused this?).
- What part of Vet Fit has helped/benefitted you the most? (Why?) (Probes: social, physical, mental)
- What was the key aspect or person within Vet Fit that has made the biggest impact on you? (How and Why?) (Probes: instructors, other vets, deliverers)
- Do you think there are any parts of Vet Fit that don't work well or could be improved? (If yes, what and why?)
- Have there been any factors in Vet Fit that have limited you/your personal development? (What development opportunities would you like to have?)
- Have you noticed any changes in yourself since engaging with Vet Fit? (What has caused these?) (Have you made any changes?)
- Do you think your civilian life would have been different if you hadn't engaged with Vet Fit? (If yes, how)

Future/Sustainability

- Do you plan to continue being involved with Vet Fit regularly, or is this something you will eventually move away from in the future? (Why?)
- How has engaging in Vet Fit influenced your future plans/ambitions? (Probes: employment, family, mental health)
- Beyond Vet Fit do you have any desire to transition into a leadership or mentoring role e.g. coach/instructor/peer ambassador?

- Would you recommend Vet Fit to other veterans in the future? And, what key factor/aspect would you use as the main selling point?

Closing

- Who would understand your story? Why? (Probe: veteran, civilian, gender, age, etc)
- Who might not understand you story? Why?
- Do you think that other veterans have similar stories/experiences to yourself? (Why? What are the key differences/similarities?)
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences?

Additional Probing Questions

- How did you feel about this?
- Tell me more about….?
- What was that experience like for you?
- What happened then?
- Who was involved with this?
- What happened after you done this?
- How did others feel about this?

- Was this what you expected?
- What would you have liked to have happened?
- It sounds like you are saying … Is that a fair summary?
- Can you give me an example?
- How did you do that?
- What was significant about this to you?
- Why do you think that?

Appendix E – Excerpt from Veteran Interview Transcript

Interview with [Veteran Quinn] – 8th May 2020

Interviewer (I)– Okay, so basically in this interview I am looking to understand your story, in particular around your experiences of being in the military, life after the military and then your engagement in [the Vet Fit programme]. I'm looking for your complete honesty but obviously I completely understand there are areas of this interview you might not feel comfortable discussing and that's fine, you don't need to answer every question. But this is obviously completely confidential, you won't be recognisable in the write up or any of the other outputs, it will be completely anonymous, and obviously it is being recorded as I have said already. So, if you are happy with that, we will get going?

Veteran Quinn (VQ)– Yeah that's fine, thank you.

I – Fab, so the first question, hopefully nice and easy, just tell me about your time in the military. Why did you join? Where did you serve? What did you get up to? Just the background really.

VQ – Yeah, okay so, I think I was looking for a purpose, like I wanted to make a difference in some way shape or form and work elsewhere wasn't really doing that. I went to join the army and when I went to the fitness centre they basically told me I was overweight and I wasn't going to get in. So, that kind of, you know for me I thought the army is supposed to train us and you know get us fit, so they just, you know, basically gave me a challenge and when I had that challenge I went away and 6 months later came back and I think I managed to lose 5 stone to get into the army. So yeah, I went back and the same person at the [local] career centre interviewed me but didn't recognise me and so like he started putting my details in and went

hang on a minute haven't we like knocked you back before and I was like yeah but I am here now because you said I wasn't fit enough and well I am now so. So yeah, that was, that was me getting in, I wanted to do something and then it was basically the whole army fitness test and challenges, So I kept trying to push myself, lost like when we went to it is Glencoe for me when we went to, you know select what you want to go into, I was trying to get into the Paras, didn't get into the Paras, got spun a story that the infantry is just the same and all the rest of it which you know, it's not. Got into the infantry and then that was like straight out into Iraq, so I didn't have time to kind of join my battalion normally, I was straight on tour. So it kind of gave me, a really quick process of bonding with all the lads which was good but then at the same time it also let me see what like different parts of the battalion were doing as well and Recce was always on the ops and always doing stuff with the commander, so the special forces or even like the tiger forces over there for the Afghan, and it was that kind of stuff I was like I want to get there, how do I get there, and we came back and obviously I just basically tried my best to get over there. I was like speaking to people and doing fitness tests, so something called the Cambrian Patrol where I did that and it was basically a 3 day recce and obviously the Recce platoon were doing it so we jumped on to that and our team, we got sober out of it but apparently the Cambrian Patrol like a lot of other special forces do it like in Australia and all around the world. So it was good, and after that I got into Recce but then I, like I didn't really follow like a normal career path, I just got into Recce was happy where I was kept trying and kept getting up there fitness wise and there was a few of the lads that were going for SAS selection and I was training with them think yeah I'm going to go for this and see what it is all about and that's essentially when I got my leg injury. So that's when I thought we what else can I do because I like the

army, I like the ethos, I like the you know everyone has got a purpose kind of thing and I joined the infantry corps inside our regiment, it was just like the intel really and we kind of did bits and pieces, went to Afghan again and it was, so when I was in Recce and we went to Afghan once we kind of went out collected material, you know you kind of speak to people and see people coming in, you'd be videoing people and this that and the other, and you'd be watching certain targets and you'd be reporting that back. But now I kind of joined the team that was actually getting that information from them and working with it, how do we plan it, you know we was planning ops in Nad-e-Ali and this that and the other and it was really cool. So it was really good, and I was like this would be mint I could stay in this bit forever but then I basically got told that you're here you are doing well but your career isn't going to progress, you are literally going to sit at this rank for at least 5 years and by this point I'd already served 6 and a half years because I was, I was chasing a fitness dream you know a challenge in that respect. Now I'm trying to do something that is a bit more mental, I say I haven't wasted those 6 years but I hadn't done everything as well if that makes sense, and when I got told I was going to be sat her for 5 years I was like you know thinking pension, thinking long term and that's not really what I wanted. I wanted to progress, and then that's basically when I served my notice, I just turned round and was like if that's the case here's on years notice and we kind of we to the resettlement phase as they call it, which they basically just fob you off, they don't really do anything. They are better now than what they were but for me, like my last 6 months, I was basically a civvy in army barracks for 6 months. I could go and do what I wanted, they didn't really both if I turned up for stuff and I kind of, I did have a good sergeant who was pretty much looking after me in that respect as well, who was saying I got this sorted and I suppose at the same time as well I wasn't asking

for anything so I know I was going to go back into the railway. So I worked in the railway previously and I knew that, and I said to them I have already got my job lined up I just need to know when I can actually leave the barracks to start working on weekend shifts or you know full time and they was like oh alright we will just kind of speed that process along, and then when they get you to the final medical I was doing that and I had some problems with my hearing and I just said to the guy, I said if this is going to keep me in its not happening so we just kind of agreed that we would do thumbs up, he would go outside and I would do this (thumbs up). So yeah, I am a little but deaf in one ear but I'm out of the army and I'm not really bothered, I got out and that's all it is (laughter).

I – So how long did you in total? Was that about 7 years?

VQ – 7 and a half years, yeah yeah.

I – And when did you leave? How long have you been out now?

VQ - Actually longer now, I think I'm on 8, 8 and a half years now. Yeah, because I think 2015 November, I started this job so I have had this job for 5 years, and it was like the April when I left so it would have been, I'd say 2013 is when I left yeah.

I – So quite a while, so how would you describe your lifestyle in the military? Was it all work, because you talked then about your career progressed quite quickly, did you have to work hard for that or was there quite a social aspect to it as well?

VQ – So for me because I was in the infantry work, for want of a better term, is either on tour or on guard duty, and then the rest of the time it's just all training as in fitness, exercise, you know weapon drills that kind of stuff, you know tactics. So, for me I didn't see it as work. When we was doing guard duty, which was boring don't get me wrong, no one likes to stand there and just watch a gate kind of thing and all

that and stuff. But, other than that it was, yeah it was just basically boys keeping fit and I say boys in the very very you know strong term, it's like no matter what age you are you still an adolescent, you know you don't really grow up in the army you kind of get everything looked after, you do, you know you become aware of things and I think one of the good things of the army for me is like I always knew what other people's jobs were and that like the recce ethos, that if someone wasn't there I could do it for them or vice versa if I weren't there they could do it for me. But, yeah no my time in the army was just fitness and you know I would go to the gym 2 or 3 times a day either with the battalion, and doing fitness outside or just we me and my mate and we would just go lift and weights and all that stuff, so yeah.

I – Super active then! My next question was going to be did you play sport or do physical activity and I guess the answer's yes.

VQ – Yeah I did, but it was mainly like just personal sports or like fitness in that respect. The only time I got involved in say social or like group activities was when I was going the bobsleigh team. So the army bobsleigh team, it was basically one of the captains was looking for guys and he had like these set requirements of what people needed to be and he just came into the gym once time and was like you guys are all squatting and lifting and this that and the other, you're all strong aren't you and we were like yeah, and he said well how fast can you run, and I was like I don't know I just run. When we go outside I don't really speed myself, time myself, so he just said right okay well do you fancy going on the bobsleigh tryouts, there is this going on you have got to lift a certain weight, you have got to be able to front squats as well and you've got to sprint 50 metres in a certain time and you will have to put some money towards it but you will go to like Germany and Canada and this that and the other. I was like yeah go on then, lets try it out. I managed to get into what he

wanted for his like, you know his benchmark for his team, it was about 8 of us that went and then we went over and we ended up competing with the army, navy and RAF bobsleigh competition in Germany and then there was a few Olympians there because I didn't realise this but because like there is a lot of money that needs to be spent on bobsleighs and getting it all of the ground and this that and the other, its not a sport that a lot of people can just get into so the army actually fund and are part of a lot of the Olympic side of life as well. So, there was a few like Olympians who were like training for their, I can't remember which year it was, but for their Olympics and I went down with one of them and I swear to got right, we started off I thought I was doing okay and she was like I need a breakman you know to get in and I was like yeah I can do it and I started off running and I'm supposed to be as the back as the breakman and I'm supposed to be the last one in the bob. I had to jump on the bob because she was running way too fast, she was just pulling the bob away from me, I was like oh my god, so she then jumped in then I got in behind her and because, so previously I had been down and I had only ever been down with my captain like on our teams and all the rest of it. He was a bit of cautious driver and what he used to do was basically hit the side walls to slow us down, so she didn't do that because she wanted to just like beat her time or whatever and oh my word I never went so fast ever and the G force the you feel as well, so yeah it was a good run but I was so happy that I kind of like met someone who was like an athlete in that respect, in the bob, but yeah it was good. That was probably the only sport thing I've done, that and boxing.

Appendix F – Example Field Diary Observation Note

Observation 4 – 17th September 2019

[Football] Training Session

I arrived early again to make sure I was there for the social bit at the start. I went to go in the usual door but it was shut. Behind me was one of the vets, so he showed me a different way in. On the way in we were chatting about football and walked over to meet [the coach]. The pitch wasn't ready yet so we stood to one side kicking the ball between ourselves. [The coach] introduced me to the veteran, who was a prison officer and has organised the upcoming match with a prison team. I started chatting to him about his job and mentioned that my dad was also a prison officer. We spoke about the prisons they were both based in. He explained that he left the army and went into estate agency as that is what he did before and then went into the prion service. As we were discussing this more people started to arrive and the pitch became free.

As all the players arrived, they greeted each other and the coach with handshakes. The captain came up and gave me a handshake. Once the players got their boots on, they grabbed the balls and started having a kick about. The coach decided he wanted to use the 11 a side goals, so some of the players moved them. I helped move the people bags and equipment out of the way so the goal could fit on the sideline and some of the guys came up and said thank you.

While they were having a kick about, I had a chat with the coach he told me that one of the goalies has just come back from holiday so all the lads were keen to catch up. He also mentioned a new player started last week who was also here tonight. He turned up in jeans and a jumper just to watch and within 10mins he'd gone back to

his car to get his kit so he could join in. He said he has just moved up her for his wife, so he doesn't know anyone and therefore is mainly at the session for the social.

The coach then got the session started with some races. They were all really competitive, try to get the edge over each other. They then went straight into matches in preparation for their match on Thursday. The coach set them to come up with their own formations and to try and work what the oppositions formation is too. While playing the matches they were all again very competitive and clear communicators. They take it very seriously, some clearly emerge as leaders and others are happy to be led. There is a clear desire to do well but also frustrations when they think they aren't.

At half time [one veteran] (communicator, quiet leader) approached [another veteran], the goalkeeper, who has suffered from depression and other mental health difficulties and gave him a little pep talk telling him to be confident and stand his ground. This was a clear example of team support and the encouragement they give each other.

In another chat with [the coach], he mentioned that for the RAF match he is going to have to pick the squad based on ability and feels a bit guilty about it. He also has a dilemma about training kits as he only has 15 and doesn't know who to give them to, he asked me for advice.

At the end of the session, they all came back over to change their boots and have another chat/debrief on the session. It was one of the lads birthdays so [the coach] encouraged everyone to give him a round of applause, but one of the lads piped up and asked 'can't we get him naked and shoot balls at him in the goal?' Everyone

laughed but then he looked at me and said ‘don’t put that in your report; dear diary, the ugly one got naked’, everyone laughed and looked at me.

As I was walking out, I was with [a veteran] and he asked ‘when are you going to start playing with us?’ I said that I don’t think I would be good enough and mentioned that netball is my preferred sport, to which he suggested going in net. It was nice for me to have them encouraging me to get involved. I know it is only my second training session but I feel like they are starting to welcome me in already.

At the end of the session I has a quick chat with [the programme lead] in the carpark and he mentioned that some of the guys were asking more about what I was doing and if I was only here for a couple of sessions. Once [the programme lead] explained what I was doing and that it was long term he said they were interested and impressed.

*****Another conversation with [the coach], he highlighted that a couple of the players had come across from [another local football team] without his involvement. I said that I am going to try and get across to some of their sessions so I can see what they are like. He said that was a good idea but to be careful as [one of the veterans] is not a nice guy and he has upset [the programme lead] and given him grief a few times. He also mentioned that their sessions are a bit more lively/wild/social than here. I think this was alluding to the drinking culture linked to the club that I’ve heard [the programme lead] mention before.

Appendix G – Leaving the Field Infographic

* Programme Name and Logo blanked out for anonymity and confidentiality.

Research Update

As I am reaching the end of my data collection with , I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for being involved and update you on the learnings I have gained so far, as well as my next steps.

Since joining in October 2018, I have now completed 24 interviews and carried out over 400 hours of observations. Thank you for giving up your time, welcoming me into your sessions and giving me the chance to understand your experiences.
I am now stepping away from data collection and focus on analysing it, identifying learnings and sharing your experiences which can then inform other programmes and support other veterans. Below are some learnings that have come from my research so far.

5 Key Learnings

Family

Veterans don't want to have to choose between family and sport. Offering activities families can engage in together increases participation, bonding and encourages veterans to act as a role model for their family members.

Trust

To encourage engagement, trust is essential, building trust with the veterans and gaining trust in the programme.

Peer Support

There is a desire for veterans to support other veterans and this has the greatest impact. Creating a peer support 'Buddy Buddy' can facilitate this.

Key Figure

A key figure with an understanding of the military life is essential to building trust and developing a programme specific to veterans needs.

Partnerships

Having a shared goal or aim, putting veterans first, understanding their needs and taking on shared accountability are all key to a successful partnership.

Appendix H – Excerpt from Analysis Table

Participants	Key Moment	Resource (Total Institutions)	Circulation (Impression Management)	Identity (Impression Management)	Body (Impression Management)	Function (Impression Management & Rituals)	Observation Number	Wider Narrative (Observations & Interviews)
Researcher & Veteran Nathan	27	This narrative is biographical, with Veteran Nathan reflecting on his time during the military and the events around him leaving. This narrative is directly shaped by his own experiences and emotions and based upon the broadly understood structure of a biography. It is his own experiences and resource that restrict this narrative as he is only being influenced by what he saw, felt, heard, experienced. There is no other point of view to support or challenge this. This narrative is also influenced by time, over time this may have changed, developed, been altered depending on his own thoughts towards what has happened and whether these have changed over time. It is the attitudes of Veteran Nathan towards his own experiences that will influence how this narrative is told and shaped, but will ultimately centre around his biography.	This narrative was shared with the researcher within an interview setting. Veteran Nathan said that previously he wouldn't have shared with this anyone, but having come to terms with it and identified himself as a civvy he now feels happy to talk about it. This narrative was intended for the researcher and with the purpose to help and support other veterans. It is unlikely that this narrative was intended for anyone else or would be shared with anyone else as Veteran Nathan commented that between the veterans' experiences such as these are not discussed. Other veterans would understand this narrative as some may have had a similar experience. In contrast it is likely that civilians would not understand this, therefore Veteran Nathan would not share this with a civilian (lack of trust, knows they won't understand). (Us & Them - hide veteran experiences within a civvy environment).	This narrative identifies Veteran Nathan transitioning from a squaddie to a veteran. He talks about feeling isolated and heartbroken at missing out on a tour that his colleagues were heading out on while he was stuck in camp serving his last 6 months. Here his is still identified as being part of the military, but very much on the outside, external to those serving and fulfilling their duties. This narrative highlights some of the challenges faced by veterans in the process of this shifting identity and the emotions that were felt but with no one to express them to. Here Veteran Nathan is an outsider to the behaviours that would have confirmed his identity as a squaddie (i.e., going on tour, carrying a weapon, etc). He also said he must manage these emotions around this due to some of his colleagues coming home either with injuries or in a box.	This narrative enables some understanding around Veteran Nathans' experience and the emotions he felt. This is an insight that unknown to those who have not been in the military or experienced it for themselves (insider information - first-hand experience). This is opens up one experience of many around the military to civilian transition. The researcher responded to this narrative with emotion and empathy. Despite being in the "wrong" having been kicked out, the emotions and experiences Veteran Nathan shares are those that resonate with the researcher and she can appreciate why he felt what he felt and to some degree understand why he felt this at the time. This suggest that the narrative being told is shaped using common emotions that are felt by all (veteran or civvy) but within circumstance that are unique and potentially unrelatable.	For Veteran Nathan, sharing this narrative is a significant step as he has previously been unable to do so. This narrative empowers him and demonstrates his progress, coming to terms with civilian life, his openness around his challenges, and his desire to share it to help others. For Veteran Nathan, this narrative is part of his impression management in him coming to terms with his transition and losing his veteran identity. Sharing this narrative is useful offering insight into the management of frontstage behaviours as a veteran adapting to civilian life. For people listening, this narrative offers insider insight into the military and the experience of leaving the military (blurring of vet/civvy boundaries). It also triggers some emotions in the listener and an increased awareness around these experiences potentially even highlighting some that are shared by the teller and the listener. This narrative shaped Veteran Nathans' actions because at first, he was unwilling to share or reflect upon this narrative due to the emotions attached to it (shame, disappointment, lonely). However, time, and his own reflection processes have now influenced these actions so that he is now in a position to share, help others, and want to do more.	Interview with Veteran Nathan - Being kicked out of the military as a result of a positive drugs test and getting into some trouble. This also includes the events that followed; staying in camp while his colleagues complete a tour of Iraq which resulted in many injuries and casualties, not receiving any support and having to start from scratch, and how this and the loneliness was dealt with.	Vet Transition Experience - Insight into one of the many transition experiences. Themes around starting from scratch, feeling lonely and not having support. Theory - impression management - juggling military/veteran identity - becoming an outsider/ situated as an outside while still within the total institution.

Researcher & Veteran Nathan	28	This narrative is shaped by personal thoughts, emotions, and experiences. These are informed by wider military frameworks that identify Nathan as a veteran and place certain stereotypes on him, that he doesn't want or necessarily fulfil. These are developed out of him being part of a total institution and this shaping his identity. Being embedded in the military influences the resources used and how he experiences the programme as he can be considered an insider (vets drawing on shared military resources). Veteran Nathans' narrative is enabled through shared military resources; however he is also restrained by this due to the pressures, stereotypes and expectations that are placed upon him. Shedding this shifted his narrative and how he reflected upon it and expressed it. Therefore, the military resources and the expectations within this narrative prevent alternate resources being used. However, shedding this demonstrates how using alternative more civilian based narratives shifted Veteran Nathan's own narrative, how he told it and reflected on it.	This narrative is shared with the researcher within an interview setting and was intended for the researcher. The researcher understands this narrative as she has an interest in identity and an understanding around the differences between military and civilian. It is also likely that other veterans would understand this, however some may disagree, civilians on the other hand would struggle to understand this as they have no insight into the military and what being a veteran involves. It is unlikely that Veteran Nathan would share this wider than his own family or friends, he may even feel uncomfortable sharing this with other veterans as they may not agree with him stepping away from his veteran identity and identifying as a civvy. (Wants to upkeep vet frontstage among other vets - but relying more heavily on civvy frontstage- shifted away from heavy reliance on vet military front stage).	This narrative clearly identifies a shift in Veteran Nathans' identity, shedding the veteran identity that is placed upon him and aligning himself with a civilian identity. He explicitly says this and draws on his own emotions and feelings to explain this. For Veteran Nathan, the veteran identity is a burden, yet he is engaging in a veteran focused programme? Is it just a burden within civilian settings - shifted backstage in this environment? This narrative explores the potential that within the programme veterans may start to move away from their veteran identity and begin to identify themselves as a civvy as part of their transition process. Is it the programme that causes this? Or is it the veterans own personal experiences and their approach to managing and dealing with their transition?	This narrative enables the listener to understand the veterans experience of leaving the military and coming to terms with his changing identity. This has demonstrated that it isn't as easy as shifting from A to B and that it has taken time and for Veteran Nathan it was more than just an identity, it was also a burden that came with a significant amount of pressure. The researcher responded to Veteran Nathans' comment that he is now a civilian with shock. She was surprised that this was something he would admit to and this was based on her understanding of the military and previous veterans being proud of their veteran identity and understanding this as the 'norm'. This suggests that this narrative is somewhat unique or unexpected and in fact there is maybe an expectation for veterans to be proud of and display this identity, rather than shift it backstage and accept themselves as a civvy.	For Veteran Nathan, telling this narrative asserts his identity and clearly outlines his position within not only the programme but also the vet/civvy divide. This narrative removes the burdens felt as well as the anxieties he was experiencing. (Link between identity & emotion). This narrative may not be specifically useful for Veteran Nathan, but for other veterans listening to this, this narrative may be useful to them (hearing how some else has dealt with this, what can they learning from this?). For the researcher listening to this, this may shift their impression of Veteran Nathan and their understanding of the impression he creates. This could also shift their expectations around veterans and expecting them to align with the veteran identity over that of being a civvy (move away from stereotypes & expectations). This narrative doesn't directly impact on Veteran Nathans' actions, but does offer some explanation around his actions and why he does or doesn't do things in relation to his identity (e.g. - not enjoying other football sessions - barmy army, but still engaging in this one- some degree of a veteran front stage, enough to fit & thrive within that environment)	Interview with Veteran Nathan - Stating that he is a civvy now, and that in coming to this realisation a lot of the anxieties and feelings he felt began to wash away. He explains carrying the veteran identity as a burden.	Vet Identity - understanding around the shift in identity that takes place during the transition and how this influences their impression management and thus how they manage their transition and their engagement in the programme Vet/Civvy - front/backstage - shifting this to fit the environment (different environments within the programme)

Researcher & Veteran Lucy	29	This narrative is biographical with Veteran Lucy reflecting on her leaving the military, what caused this and the traumatic process around her leaving. It draws on her own experiences, offering her point of view, and draws on military language and discourses (situated with a military framework). This narrative in constraint by the military framework in which it is set as well as that is it based on a personal point of view. Veteran Lucy is unable to remove herself from this narrative and this may prevent alternative resources being used. Being embedded within a military framework, this also constraints and prevents other narrative resources being used. This narrative is situated within a certain time period in which sexuality was not as open and widely discussed, this influences this narrative but is not a framework that is still enforced now - different understandings, different telling?	This narrative is shared with the researcher within an interview setting and was intended for the researcher. Other veterans, specifically female veterans may understand this narrative and the challenges and events it highlights. Outside of the military, people exploring and understanding their sexuality may also understand aspects of this narrative, outside of this, civilians may struggle understanding Veteran Lucy's' story and finding aspects of it believable. This is a narrative not widely shared by Veteran Lucy as it is something that is traumatic for her and deeply personal, demonstrated in the fact that she got emotional and distressed sharing this with the researcher.	This narrative clearly identifies Veteran Lucy as a female within a male dominated military environment that is governed by a heteronormative frame. Veteran Lucy challenges this as she is a homosexual woman within male dominated heteronormative environment - doesn't fit with the military values. Her identity as a homosexual woman she has kept hidden during her service and come to light, without her choosing (forcibly been brought to the front stage). (Juggling multiple aspects of her identity throughout her transition). This narrative also tracks Veteran Lucy's' movement away from the military and distancing herself from her military identity as a result of the traumatic experience around her leaving.	This narrative enables insight into Veteran Lucy's' experiences not only as a homosexual woman in the military, but also how this impacted on her transition from the military into civilian life. Hearing this first-hand enables a greater understanding and really highlights the emotions and experiences she went through. The researcher responds to this narrative with shock, and sadness. This is very much informed by the shift in attitudes towards sexuality which has taken place since these events occurred. Therefore, this narrative is very specific to time in which it occurred (at the time homosexuality was forbidden in the military).	For Veteran Lucy, sharing this narrative evokes emotions mirroring that which she felt when these events took place, suggesting that this narrative is still something that is very personal and impactful for her. Sharing this narrative is useful for her as she feels like she is helping other veterans and supporting those who may have undergone a similar process, as well as those dealing with their sexuality outside of the military. For others listening to this narrative, this could cause certain emotions, especially if some of these experiences are shared or resonate with the listeners. This narrative has shaped Veteran Lucy's' subsequent actions as she is more reserved and has avoided the military for a number of years. She was also careful around the military connections she trusted, which also left her felling isolated and without support.	Interview with Veteran Lucy- Leaving the military due the inability to progress and in the process getting arrested for her sexuality. This led to several traumatic events and further accusations. No support was offered, and she found it difficult to find herself a job, a network of friends and to reach out to get help. This also resulted in her distancing herself from the military	Vet Transition Experience - insight into one of many transition experiences. Themes of sexuality, loneliness/isolation, lacking support and distancing from the military. Managing sexual identity with military, veteran, civilian identity - no feeling of shared identity/experience

Researcher & Veteran Lucy	30	This narrative is shaped by Veteran Lucy's' own personal experiences. She draws on both military and support based frameworks to shape this "recovery" narrative (but not in a physical health sense but more in regard to personal development and becoming more comfortable in civvy life). This narrative is constrained by her own experiences and that she is unable to remove herself from the narrative (she is central to it), this also may restrict the other resources she uses to shape the narrative. The military civilian dynamic is also important to this narrative.	This narrative was shared with the researcher in an interview setting and was intended for the researcher. It is likely that other veterans would understand this narrative especially those engaged with the programme, or themselves faced a traumatic transition from the military. The researcher understood this narrative as she has a wider understanding of Veteran Lucy's' story and her involvement in MF. She has been pretty open in discussing the support she has received and the impact this has had (evident within the observations) therefore it is likely that she would share this narrative with other veterans on the programme, as well as veterans more broadly. However, she still may be more reserved when it comes to discussing this with civilians.	This narrative doesn't really give a sense of Veteran Lucys' individual identity, but it does highlight a shared identity she feels between herself and the other veterans who have overcome traumatic experiences. If anything, this reinforces her veteran identity, but it still very much remains behind the scenes and it isn't something she puts at the forefront of her narrative/experiences (blurring of front back - becoming more engaged with civvy street?) This narrative explores how the shared experience of overcoming trauma through support programmes can help veterans to manage their veteran identity within civilian life. This suggests, that through the programme a veteran may become more aligned to a civvy identity (more to the frontstage or managing veteran frontstage better).	This narrative enables some understanding around veteran transition experiences, and how sharing these actually appears to help other veterans also. This is places into context the role a support programme can play in supporting vets with their transition and becoming more accustomed to life in civvy street. Having engaged in various support programmes, Veteran Lucy's' experiences offer a broad view on this. The researcher responds to this by listening and allowing her to speak and share her experience. Thus, demonstrates that the narrative is not something the researcher can contribute to and that she is learnings from Veteran Lucy (personal narrative - unique to each veteran and their own experiences?)	For Veteran Lucy, this is a positive narrative to share demonstrating how she has overcome the challenges she has faced. Her narrative portrays a sense of pride with this, and she is keen to name and promote the different programmes that have helped her. This could be useful as she may recruit other veterans into these programmes and help them to overcome their challenges. This would reinforce her affiliation to these groups and the shared veteran identity. For those listening this narrative informs and educates those listening around Veteran Lucy's' experiences and the support/help she has received. This narrative has influenced Veteran Lucy's' actions as she is keen to promote the programmes that have supported her and other veterans that have also had traumatic experiences (this appears to be an active decision she has made - keen to help others- shared vet identity)	Interview with Veteran Lucy- Engaging in the programme has allowed her to face fears, reengage with the military, be more social, engage with civvy street and open herself up to change. She said that seeing how other people dealt with their traumatic experiences also helped her. She did not attribute this to the programme alone, mentioning other vet support organisations that she has engaged with.	Impact of the programme - numerous support programmes that have helped. Outlined what they have achieved but not how. Wider that engaging in sport - social aspect, open to the military & to change, seeing other who have gone through it (peer ot peer) (blurring of vet/civ boundaries? - need to be around other vets to be able to engage in a civvy environment?)

Researcher & Veteran Quinn	31	This a reflective narrative shaped by Veteran Quinn's memories and experiences, this means that the narrative is told from his point of view and draws on aspects of his friends' experiences that he has understood through conversations with him. Therefore, he is also retelling this story from another perspective. This narrative also draws on military (retelling the experience) and recovery (outlining his support to his friend and the support he has received) frameworks. It is likely that this this narrative has been influenced or shaped as a result of the narrative that Veteran Quinn has shared with his therapist and with his friend. This emotion attached to this narrative and the fact that Veteran Quinn is central to it may influence how it is told. Especially with him acknowledging that he is struggling to come to terms with the content of it.	This narrative is shared with the researcher in an interview setting and this was intended for the researcher. The researcher understood this narrative to some degree but could not fully appreciate what they witnessed and subsequently have to deal with. Other veterans may also understand this narrative, with the potential for a shared experience. It is unlikely that civilians (like the researcher) can fully understand and appreciate this narrative. This narrative has been shared with a therapist and other veterans who were present at the event as part of a support/recovery process, however it is unlikely that the narrative would be shared wider than this, due to the content and the emotions attached to it.	This narrative certainly gives a sense of Veteran Quinn as a serviceman, this is through recounting what he experienced. This narrative also offers insight into how this event has influenced his current civilian identity, in the sense that he is still dealing with the repercussions from events such as this (but this is often done backstage in front of a select group of people - insiders). This narrative also suggested some kind of shared bond/identity between him and his friend having served alongside each other in Afghanistan and experiencing the same events. This is evident through them sharing their narratives with each other and Veteran Quinn retelling this to the researcher (shared ownership over the narrative). This narrative offers some insight into the identity of the veterans entering the programme and how their service influences this. (Before engagement - starting point)	This narrative enables understanding around Veteran Quinn's' experiences in the military. This achieved through the emotive nature of the narrative and use of a recovery framework to discuss the impacts the events have had and how they have managed this. The physical responses to this narrative that Veteran Quinn experiences also enables a greater understanding of this (makes it more real?). The researcher responds to this mirroring Veteran Quinn's emotions, allowing him the space to share this openly. The researcher recognises the personal and emotive nature of the event and that this has been shared because there is an element of trust within the setting. The researcher recognises that this unlikely to be discussed in other (more public environments) - not to probe too far. (A narrative and aspect of his identity that is only brought to the frontstage in front of a select audience - therapist/vet)	For Veteran Quinn, sharing and retelling this narrative evokes certain emotions and physical reactions such as not being able to sleep. For him it brings back, experiences that he says he has tried to section off in his mind and not deal with (almost bringing to the frontstage parts of him that he has tried to box away). Veteran Quinn said that it is useful for him as he can support his friend and other veterans around him, however he doesn't feel like it is useful for him as it is not something he wants to deal with. (willing to express as part of a team, but not individually). For the researcher listening this narrative also evokes emotions, but ones that cannot be fully shared with veteran Quinn. It also informs and shines a stark and real light on what servicemen and women experience while on tour (insight into that which is hidden from them - military front at backstage?) This narrative impacts on Veteran Quinn's' actions, in retelling it and reexperiencing it he is unable to sleep, feels angry and is unable to fully go about his civvy life. It then takes time for him to then section this off again (waves of being okay - physical impact)	Interview with Veteran Quinn- An incident in Afghanistan that he experienced alongside one of his friends in which he witnessed a colleague get accidentally shot on camp. Subsequently, he has spoken with his friend about this to try and help support him, whereas Veteran Quinn does not see this as support, instead boxing it off in his mind and not dealing with it and at times suffering with not being able to sleep and others feeling okay.	Vet Experience - Impact on transition & adapting to civvy life. Physical impact of reliving this narrative which impacts upon mood and activities. (Bringing this to the frontstage and it affects his civvy front stage)

Strategic Recommendations

This report has presented a range of recommendations across each of the three themes discussed [Programme Delivery, Forms of Engagement and Giving Back]. It is recognised that it may not be possible for all of these to be actioned and implemented, therefore three high impact recommendations are suggested below that can encourage engagement, maximise impact and facilitate Vet Fit achieving the intended programme outcomes.

Strategic Recommendation 1

Understand the needs of the participants and the delivery environment of the programme within the first phase of delivery (0-3 months).

If not undertaken at the outset of the programme, a period of time should be dedicated to mapping and planning. This should consider the needs of the group targeted by the programme and understanding the environment/area the programme will be delivered in. Reach out to other organisations in this area or those who work with this target group, to develop this understanding and share best practice. This should be used to shape programme delivery.

Strategic Recommendation 2

Encourage community involvement and the facilitation of trusting relationships across the full duration of the programme.

Vet Fit provided a good steppingstone for veterans to integrate themselves within their local civilian communities, a mechanism key to the programmes aim of addressing social isolation. Trusting relationships should be established with individuals and organisations in the local community and embedded in the delivery of the programme. Utilise those that are passionate, engaged and want to be involved on a consistent basis. Include those that have little connections to or experience of the military as this will develop the programmes' civilian networks. Encourage relationship building and empower the veterans to make their own connections and extend their engagement beyond the boundaries of the programme.

Strategic Recommendation 3

Design a volunteer led delivery component focused on successful military transition, and this should be implemented within the first 6 months of programme delivery.

Within the programme design, embed avenues for peer support and voluntary opportunities, beyond playing roles, that enable individuals to become leaders, support their peers and contribute back to the programme they are part of. Empower veterans to embrace these roles and take ownership of the programme as this has the potential to enhance both engagement and programme impact.

Strategic Recommendation 4

In future initiatives, employing sport and physical activity to support military veteran communities utilise an evidence led approach in the early phases of programme design.

When scoping shaping and designing an intervention around outcomes such as mental health isolation and drug or alcohol dependency it is vital to horizon scan the existing evidence base to drive early programme philosophy. For example, it is well established that sport alone does not deliver such goals. However, specific processes mechanisms and intervention features must be explicitly built to be able to address needs, behaviours and overcome participant engagement challenges.