

**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

***Militarism in the Everyday:  
Responses to Domestic Abuse in the British Armed Forces***

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Political Science for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis is an empirical study of responses to domestic abuse in marriages between civilian women, and men serving in the British Armed Forces. It draws on 45 in-depth interviews with victim-survivors and perpetrators of abuse and with support workers in both military and civilian roles. The thesis is informed by feminist theorisations of domestic abuse which identify the gender inequalities at its roots. I explore the ways in which aspects of everyday militarism shape responses to domestic abuse in this context, including the impact both of hegemonic forms of military gendered identity, and of the structural violences which shape the lives of civilian women married to servicemen in the British military. In addition, I draw attention to some of the depoliticising ways in which the causes of domestic abuse have been understood within the British military community, and point to the impact that these depoliticising notions have on broader attempts to engage politically with domestic abuse and with militarism. The thesis highlights the linkages which exist between multiple forms of gendered violence which occur on different 'scales' from the intimate to the global. I draw connections between the gendered project of militarism and the everyday gendered relations of inequality which shape the social contexts in which the individuals who participated in the study responded to abuse. I argue that the common failure to recognise and to respond to domestic abuse as a gendered social and political problem in this context serves to both depoliticise and to reproduce everyday forms of militarism and thus, that it plays a role in the enabling of the use of armed violence on the geopolitical stage.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

### Responses to Domestic Abuse in the British Armed Forces

This thesis is a feminist-informed study of domestic abuse in the British military. I focus in particular on responses to the domestic abuse perpetrated by men serving as regulars across the three services of the British Armed Forces against their civilian wives. The thesis approaches domestic abuse as a political and a social issue as well as an individual and interpersonal one, and draws upon feminist perspectives to argue that it is underpinned by gendered social inequalities. Moreover, I draw connections between the multiple forms of gendered violence and inequality which occur on different 'scales' from the intimate to the global, and understand these forms of violence to be mutually constitutive - that is, the violences of the intimate are both productive of, and formulated through, the violences of the geopolitical, and vice versa. As such, I present an analysis of domestic abuse in the British military which situates it in the social and political context of *militarism* - defined as the normalised, everyday, gendered social relations of the preparation for, and conduct of, political domination and control for which the use of organised violence is a viable option (see Stavrianakis and Selby 2013: 3).

The primary site for analysis in this thesis is *responses* to domestic abuse in the British military - as opposed to, for example, the prevalence of abuse, the factors which cause its perpetration, the physical or psychological acts which constitute it, or the long-term impact it can have upon those who are subjected to it. Within this, the responses of victim-survivors - the ways in which they make sense of their experiences of abuse and seek to make themselves safe - is of particular importance because of the implications that this has for women's safety and wellbeing. As I explore in Chapter Two and throughout this thesis, however, individual victim-survivors' responses to abuse cannot be understood in the abstract. Rather, making sense of such responses requires an understanding of the ways in which they are shaped by the structures and discourses which characterise the complex social contexts in which they are enacted. I therefore approach responses to abuse in the British military community in two primary ways; the first focused on the ways in which victim-survivors themselves negotiate their abusive relationships and their interactions with support services, and the second more broadly upon the ways in which domestic abuse is made sense of within the military space and therefore in which broader work to prevent and deal with it can be imagined. These two levels, of course, are deeply interconnected; as the ways in which abuse is perceived by policy-makers, support workers, and



victim-survivors shapes the services that they make available, recommend, and access. The thesis explores the “barriers” to help-seeking experienced by victim-survivor participants in the British military community; that is, the social factors which make it difficult for victim-survivors to make particular choices or to access particular support services in their attempts to end the abuse and to make themselves safe. I identify ways in which these barriers are shaped in particular ways by the gendered, everyday social relations which constitute militarism. In addition, I draw attention to the dominant ways in which domestic abuse is perceived in the military context; arguing in particular that dominant narratives depoliticise abuse by obscuring the social inequalities through which it is underpinned and relying instead upon individualised, a-political explanations. I argue that this depoliticisation undermines the potential for a broader political engagement with the inequalities through which militarism is constituted and, as such, is one of the many sites at which militarism is naturalised and reproduced on an everyday basis. This study therefore contends that military domestic abuse - in particular, the ways in which it is made sense of and responded to - should be approached as part of the gendered practices through which militarism is reproduced and, thus, through which wars are fought.

The thesis sets out to engage with the following research questions:

- How are responses to domestic abuse in the British military shaped by discourses of gender identity? How, if at all, is militarism implicated in this?
- How are responses to domestic abuse in the British military shaped by the material structures of life in this context? How, if at all, is militarism implicated in this?
- How is the causality of domestic abuse perpetrated by servicemen in the British military perceived by participants in this study? How, if at all, is militarism implicated in these perceptions?

This study responds to a pronounced lack of research knowledge on domestic abuse in the British military, about which this is the first piece of in-depth, qualitative research. That domestic abuse is a serious and widespread social problem around the world and in British society is well recognised. Globally, an estimated 30% of women who have been in a relationship have experienced physical or sexual abuse from a partner<sup>1</sup> and, according to World Bank data, women between the ages of 15 and 44 are more at risk from rape and domestic abuse than from cancer,

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<sup>1</sup> [www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en), last accessed 10 April 2015.

car accidents, war, and malaria<sup>2</sup>. In contemporary Britain, it is estimated that one woman in four will experience domestic abuse at some point in her lifetime (Walby and Allen 2004: 12), and an average of two women are murdered every week by a partner or former partner in England and Wales<sup>3</sup>. Women in Britain are five times as likely as men to be murdered by an intimate partner or former partner (Harne and Radford 2008: 40), and 53% of female homicide victims, as opposed to 4% of their male counterparts, are killed by a partner or former partner (Westmarland 2015: 10). While not all of the behaviour which constitutes domestic abuse is criminal, and while less than 24% of criminal incidents of abuse are reported to the police (Walby and Allen 2004: x), the British police receive a call about domestic abuse every minute (Stanko 2001: 219) and domestic abuse accounts for 16% of all recorded violent crime in Britain (Richards *et al.* 2008: 16). In 2014, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women completed a mission to the United Kingdom and expressed alarm at the ongoing high rates of such violence, the growing governmental tendency to frame violence against women in gender-neutral terms, the disproportionate impact of austerity measures on support for women who have experienced gender-based violence, and the lack of access to justice with which many victim-survivors are faced<sup>4</sup>.

Research from overseas - in particular the US - has suggested that domestic abuse may be a quantitatively more prevalent, and qualitatively differently inflected, issue within military institutions. Estimates of the prevalence of domestic abuse in the US military vary widely due to definitional and methodological differences between studies (Jones 2012: 150); in their review of the literature, for example, Marshal *et al.* report studies finding perpetration rates ranging from 13.5% to 58% of the military and veteran population (2005; see also Campbell *et al.* 2003). However, studies which compare prevalence rates across US military and civilian populations consistently suggest that domestic abuse is significantly more prevalent in military families - in many studies, between one and three times higher (Cronin 1995; Griffin and Morgan 1988; Heyman and Neidig 1999; Marshall *et al.* 2005; Pan *et al.* 1994; Rentz *et al.* 2006; Rosen *et al.* 2002) - and that military abusers are more likely than their civilian counterparts to use severe forms of physical violence against their spouses<sup>5</sup> (Rentz *et al.* 2006: 103). In addition, as I explore in Chapter Two, studies in the US and Canada suggest that there may be a range of factors which qualitatively alter domestic abuse in military institutional contexts - both in terms of the motives

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<sup>2</sup> [www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/endviol/index.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/endviol/index.shtml), last accessed 10 April 2015.

<sup>3</sup> [www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-violence-articles.asp?section=00010001002200410001&itemid=1280](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-violence-articles.asp?section=00010001002200410001&itemid=1280), last accessed 10 April 2015.

<sup>4</sup> [www.ohchr.org/en/newsevents/pages/displaynews.aspx?newsid=14514&](http://www.ohchr.org/en/newsevents/pages/displaynews.aspx?newsid=14514&), last accessed 21 July 2015.

<sup>5</sup> [http://nsrc.sfsu.edu/article/domestic\\_violence\\_troops\\_military](http://nsrc.sfsu.edu/article/domestic_violence_troops_military), last accessed 19 November 2011.

for its perpetration<sup>6</sup> (e.g. Bell *et al.* 2004; Brewster *et al.* 2002; Byrne and Riggs 1996; Caliber Associates 1994; Carroll *et al.* 1985; Chemtob *et al.* 1997; Finley *et al.* 2010; Glenn *et al.* 2002; Graves and Moriarty 2000; Harrison and Laliberté 1994; Harrison 2002, 2006; Hoge *et al.* 2007; Hurlbert *et al.* 1991; Jones 2012; Jordan *et al.* 1992; Klostermann *et al.* 2012; Marshall and McShane 2000; Martin *et al.* 2010; Mercier 2000; Monson *et al.* 2009; Orcutt *et al.* 2003; Savarese *et al.* 2001; Sharps *et al.* 2000; Sherman *et al.* 2006; Taft *et al.* 2011; Taft *et al.* 2013; Verbosky and Ryan 1988), and, although this is less well researched, in terms of the ways in which it is experienced by victim-survivors (e.g. Erez and Bach 2003; Harrison and Laliberté 1994, 2008; Harrison 2002, 2006; Savitsky *et al.* 2009)<sup>7</sup>. As I discuss in Chapter Two, with a few notable exceptions much of this scholarship is limited in the depth of analysis which it is able to offer, because it has failed to take into account insights generated by feminist scholarship on domestic abuse more broadly, and by critical military scholarship on forms of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings.

In comparison to the fairly substantial body of scholarship on domestic abuse in the US (and, to a lesser extent, also the Canadian) context, there is a distinct lack of research on domestic abuse in the British Armed Forces. There are no studies which specifically set out to estimate the prevalence of domestic abuse in the British military; however, two studies focused more broadly on the criminality of and violence perpetrated by British military personnel suggest that domestic abuse is likely to be a prevalent issue in this context. MacManus *et al.* (2012) surveyed post-deployment violence perpetrated by 4,609 personnel, of whom 581 (12.6%) reported perpetrating physical violence in the weeks after their return from Iraq - 493 towards someone outside of their families, 186 towards someone in their families, and 98 towards both. In addition, a 2009 National Association of Probation Officers report stated that among the relatively high proportion of ex-service personnel in the criminal justice system, the most common convictions related to crimes in the domestic setting. According to the report: “many staff believe that military service enhances the risk of domestic violence” (NAPO 2009: 2). While it is not known, therefore, whether domestic abuse in the British military presents a statistically more prevalent issue than abuse in civilian families, the limited information which is available does suggest that abuse is likely to be a significant issue in this context which warrants scholarly attention. Despite this, there is only one piece of research prior to this study which sets out specifically to engage with experiences of domestic abuse in the British military - a pilot project by Williamson and Price (2009; see also Williamson 2011). This pilot project uses a survey methodology to collect mainly

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<sup>6</sup> [http://nsrc.sfsu.edu/article/domestic\\_violence\\_troops\\_military](http://nsrc.sfsu.edu/article/domestic_violence_troops_military), last accessed 19 November 2011.

<sup>7</sup> [www.civicresearchinstitute.com/dvr\\_military.pdf](http://www.civicresearchinstitute.com/dvr_military.pdf), last accessed 19 November 2011.

quantitative data, along with some brief, written qualitative information, intended to ascertain the impact of deployment upon domestic abuse. The study provides some useful information, in particular around the ways in which elements of military life might lead to difficulties and disagreements between service personnel and their spouses. However, as I discuss in Chapter Two, it is limited in its capacity to provide in-depth information on the experiences which are of interest to this study both by its methodology and by its largely “problem-solving” (see below), gender-blind approach, which does not take a critical approach to the military as an institution or to militarism more broadly. As such, my study is the first to collect in-depth, qualitative data on domestic abuse in the British military from a range of perspectives, as well as to make sense of this data through a feminist-informed, critical approach to militarism.

This thesis draws on 45 in-depth, qualitative interviews which I conducted with victim-survivors and perpetrators of military domestic abuse as well as with support workers who have experience of working with either or both of these groups in civilian, quasi-military, and military roles. Interviews focused upon responses to abuse. As I note above, the responses of victim-survivors - the ways in which they negotiated their relationships and tried to make themselves safe - is of particular importance, and as a result a significant portion of the interview discussions centred around the ways in which victim-survivors seek support in order to end the relationship, to end the abuse while remaining in the relationship, or to better cope with the abuse experienced. When I began the research, I imagined that a focus on the ways in which victim-survivors respond to abuse would be a fairly narrow one, which would provide me with an angle through which I would be able to map the help-seeking pathways and behaviours of victim-survivors and to gather accounts of women’s resistance and agency in relation to domestic abuse. As I had hoped, my focus on victim-survivors’ responses to abuse, and in particular on the ways in which they sought help, has shed light on how individual victim-survivors perceive abuse, which things they classed as sufficiently abusive to seek help, which they did not, and what triggered certain help-seeking actions. In addition, it has helped me to understand what kind of help is available, in what ways it is accessible, and why certain avenues were disregarded. It has also enabled me to discuss the particular barriers and opportunities for help-seeking which arise from the military context. Moreover, as the research has progressed, I have come to understand responses to abuse as a particularly effective window through which to make sense of the social context in which abuse is experienced in the British military which, I argue, can tell us important things more broadly about abuse and about militarism in contemporary Britain. That is, narratives of responses to abuse can act as a tangible ‘hook,’ a lens through which to make statements about gendered social relations

and inequalities in the British military more broadly. As I argue in Chapter Two, understanding how and why victim-survivors respond in particular ways to abuse requires a wide lens: it requires paying attention to the gendered structural inequalities as well as the ideas about gender, romance, relationships, and domestic abuse which characterise a particular social context. As a result, as I illustrate throughout this thesis, an empirical focus on responses to abuse in the British military context, and in particular on the ways in which victim-survivors of abuse seek help, does not only tell us narrowly about how victim-survivors decide to respond to abuse - it tells us about how these decisions are limited by, and how they negotiate, the gendered structures and discourses at work in this space. This allows me to think about gender relations in the British military, and about how these are implicated in the political project of militarism more broadly. As such, this thesis does not map victim-survivors' responses to abuse in the sense of charting the individual decisions which particular women make; instead, it explores the general trends which emerged from discussions of responses and in order to explore the key social factors which shape experiences of domestic abuse in the British military setting.

It should be noted that this study does not seek to provide a comparison between responses to abuse in the military context and those in the civilian community, and nor does it offer an evaluation of military welfare services themselves. Rather, this study is self-consciously "critical" rather than "problem-solving" in its approach to the study of domestic abuse in the British military. For Cox, problem-solving work "takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organised, as the given framework for action. The general aim of problem-solving research is to make these relationships and institutions work smoothly by dealing effectively with particular sources of trouble." In comparison, critical scholarship "stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about. Critical theory [...] does not take institutions and social power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing. It is directed toward an appraisal of the very framework for action, or problematic, which problem-solving theory accepts as its parameters" (Cox 1981: 88-89, cited in Whitworth 2007: 25-26). Critical scholarship recognises the political nature of research and of theory making itself, while problem-solving approaches are often positivist in approach (Whitworth 2007: 26). In taking a critical approach to my study of domestic abuse in the British military, I am setting my work up against much of the existing literature on domestic abuse in the US military in particular which, as I demonstrate in Chapter Two, tends to focus on specific issues and difficulties which are thought to produce, enable and/or shape

military abuse in particular ways - such as the mental ill-health effects of combat - and to try to remedy those issues *in order to enable the more efficient operation of military institutions*. In contrast, the critical approach which I take seeks instead to take a step back; to draw attention to and to question the inequalities which are woven into the bases of those institutions themselves. Because this is a feminist-informed study, this generally means drawing out the gendered meanings and inequalities which underpin militarism in the contemporary British context. As such, this thesis is less likely to be able to offer concrete suggestions for changes in policy or in practice directed at remedying the problem of domestic abuse in the military context than it perhaps would have been if I had taken a comparison, evaluation, or otherwise “problem-solving” approach. This is not to suggest that no policy-relevant discussions or explorations of support practice will emerge from this research. Indeed, as I explore in Chapter Three, the relationship I have established with the Army Welfare Service requires that I produce a report tailored towards exploring the ways in which the research can contribute to policy discussions and to the improvement of support practice, and moreover I consider it part of my ethical duty to my interview participants to try to use this study to improve the help-seeking options available to victim-survivors if I am able to do so. These discussions, however, are largely beyond the scope of the thesis itself. Rather, as I argue in the concluding chapter, the issues raised by the critical approach of this thesis are rooted in gendered inequalities which are deeply woven into the foundations of militarism itself, and as such, policy recommendations which tinker around the edges with minor changes in support practice are unlikely to get to the heart of the problems I identify. This, therefore, is a more broadly *political* than policy-orientated piece of scholarship, one which seeks to trouble some of the taken-for-granted assumptions about militarism in contemporary Britain.

### **Context: The British military, its families, and its welfare provision**

The social setting with which this thesis is concerned is that of the British Armed Forces. The British military is made up of the three services of the Army, the Royal Navy, and the Royal Air Force (RAF), all of which fall under the civilian control of the elected government and the Ministry of Defence (MOD). The three services have a broadly similar structure: each is divided into sections of varying sizes - called Regiments in the Army, Squadrons/Stations in the RAF, and Ships/Stations in the Navy - which each have their own subdivisions and command structures as

well as histories and traditions<sup>8</sup>. All three services have both a regular and a reserve force - the regulars serving full time and reservists part-time, usually around other employment. The three services are structured by rank, and while the ranks themselves are labelled differently in the Army, Navy and RAF, each is characterised by a binary division between 'officer ranks' and 'other ranks.' The 'other ranks' comprise the majority of soldiers, sailors, and airmen/airwomen, who enter the military after a period of initial training and who can move up within the 'other ranks' as they gain more experience and seniority. Those who enter as officers must first complete officer training at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, the Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth, or the Royal Air Force College Cranwell, after which they begin at the lowest officer rank and, similarly, work their way up throughout their career. In some cases, those who serve in the 'other ranks' may enter the officer ranks later in their career, although this is not usual<sup>9</sup>. All three forces have begun restructuring in recent years under the Future Force 2020 plan, a process which developed from the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). This has entailed, among other things, a reorganisation of the locations of military bases across the country and a closure of British Army bases in Germany, as well as significant cuts in the numbers of regular personnel across the three services<sup>10</sup> and an increasing reliance on reservists<sup>11</sup>.

While deployment is not the focus of this thesis, it is important to note that the British military is one which has fought in recent years in difficult and costly wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The war in Afghanistan began in October 2001 and the last of the British fighting troops withdrew in October 2014, although some training elements remain in Kabul<sup>12</sup>. The Iraq War began in 2003 and British troops left the country in 2011 - although again, smaller numbers are now being redeployed to train local forces in the fight against the so-called Islamic State<sup>13</sup>. Between 1 January 2001 and 31 March 2014, 220,550 individuals were deployed as British military personnel across the three services to Iraq, Afghanistan, or both<sup>14</sup>. In addition to countless Afghanis, Iraqis,

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<sup>8</sup> [www.army.mod.uk/structure/structure.aspx](http://www.army.mod.uk/structure/structure.aspx); [www.raf.mod.uk/organisation/index.cfm](http://www.raf.mod.uk/organisation/index.cfm); [www.royalnavy.mod.uk/our-organisation/where-we-are/navy-command-hq](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/our-organisation/where-we-are/navy-command-hq), last accessed 2 May 2015.

<sup>9</sup> [www.army.mod.uk/structure/32321.aspx](http://www.army.mod.uk/structure/32321.aspx); [www.raf.mod.uk/recruitment/about-the-raf/structure/](http://www.raf.mod.uk/recruitment/about-the-raf/structure/); [www.royalnavy.mod.uk/brochures/royal-navy/ranks-and-roles](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/brochures/royal-navy/ranks-and-roles), last accessed 2 May 2015.

<sup>10</sup> [www.army.mod.uk/structure/33834.aspx](http://www.army.mod.uk/structure/33834.aspx), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>11</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-30033506](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-30033506), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>12</sup> [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/10399386/Afghanistans-Sandhurst-in-the-Sand-opens-its-doors.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/10399386/Afghanistans-Sandhurst-in-the-Sand-opens-its-doors.html), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>13</sup> [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/iraq-britain-to-send-an-extra-125-troops-to-provide-training-to-security-forces-david-cameron-announces-10303527.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/iraq-britain-to-send-an-extra-125-troops-to-provide-training-to-security-forces-david-cameron-announces-10303527.html), last accessed 22 July 2015

<sup>14</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/360627/PUBLIC\\_1411731267.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/360627/PUBLIC_1411731267.pdf), last accessed 22 July 2015.

and significant numbers of allied troops, 453 British forces and MOD employed civilian personnel died while serving in Afghanistan<sup>15</sup>, and 179 in Iraq<sup>16</sup>.

### ***Military personnel and their families***

While the British military has traditionally been populated by white, (presumed) heterosexual men, this profile has begun to gradually change in recent years, and I offer here a brief exploration of these changes in order to provide some demographic context on the institutional space which is my focus in this thesis. After the institution faced serious criticism for its racism in the late 1990s, changes in policy led to a marked increase in the representation of ethnic minorities among military personnel. At present, ethnic minority personnel make up 2.4% of officers and 8.1% of other ranks across the three services - a total of 7.1% of all regular personnel (10.3% of the Army, 3.5% of the Navy, and 2.1% of the RAF) (Rutherford and Berman 2014: 8-9). A significant portion of ethnic minority personnel in the British military are not British citizens, but citizens of the 54 Commonwealth nations<sup>17</sup> who, between 1998 and 2013, were eligible to enlist directly from their countries of origin (Dandeker and Mason 2001: 221-24; Ware 2012: 39-41, 85-86; Woodward and Winter 2006: 49, 53). In 2002/2003, around 60% of black and minority ethnic recruits were 'Foreign and Commonwealth' (F&C) personnel (Mason and Dandeker 2009: 398). At present, Commonwealth citizens have to have lived in the UK for five years before they are eligible to join the British military, and while serving they are exempt from UK immigration control under Section 8(4)(a) of the Immigration Act 1971. They can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain - a permanent immigration status which allows an individual to access employment and benefits without restriction - after they have been serving for four years, and can apply for British citizenship after they have served for five years (there are some exceptions to this rule, for example if they leave the forces as a result of injury in the line of duty)<sup>18</sup>. In the Army, the service with the highest representation of F&C personnel, Commonwealth soldiers made up around 7% of regular personnel in 2014, the majority of whom were citizens of the Republic of Fiji<sup>19</sup>.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals have been allowed to serve openly in the British military since 2000, after the European Court of Human Rights ruled against the MOD's policy of discrimination. Since then, the military has won praise for becoming a supportive

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<sup>15</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/fields-of-operation/afghanistan](http://www.gov.uk/government/fields-of-operation/afghanistan), last accessed 2 May 2015.

<sup>16</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10637526](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10637526), last accessed 2 May 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Recruits from Nepal into the Brigade of Gurkhas, and from the Republic of Ireland, enter under the military under separate rules, and can still join directly from their country of origin.

<sup>18</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-arf/armed-forces-arf--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-arf/armed-forces-arf--2), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>19</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/295803/british\\_colonies\\_table.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/295803/british_colonies_table.pdf), last accessed 21 April 2015.



employer of LGBT personnel, and at the beginning of 2015 all three services were recognised by campaign group Stonewall in its list of Britain's top 100 LGBT-friendly workplaces<sup>20</sup>. Since the Civil Partnership Act 2004, LGBT couples have been able to access the institutional services and facilities discussed below on the same basis as their heterosexual counterparts (Ball 2010: 22-24). The military began asking recruits about their sexual orientation and gender identity at the end of 2014 in an attempt to support greater diversity in the Armed Forces<sup>21</sup>; at present, however, there are no available statistics on the numbers of LGBT personnel in the British military. Despite evident progress, scholars have suggested that the British military remains a presumptively heterosexual space in which homophobia is a significant problem. Basham suggests that LGBT identity has since 2000 been cast as a *private* matter, irrelevant to military service, in a move which protects and sustains the heteronormativity of military culture (Basham 2009; see also Dandeker and Freedman 2002: 473), and others have argued that heteronormativity remains a central tenet of "fraternal" unit-bonding practices (Higate 2012; see also Basham 2008: 158-159). In 2009, Atherton's soldier-participants suggested that the Army remains as homophobic as it was twenty years previously (Atherton 2009: 826).

The proportion of women in the British military has been gradually increasing over recent years. In 1980, women made up 4.8% of officers and 5.0% of other ranks in the regular military forces; by 1990 that number had risen to 5.9% of officers and 5.6% of other ranks. By 2014, women accounted for 12.7% of officers and 9.4% of other ranks - a total of 10% across the regular forces for the first time (Rutherford and Berman 2014: 9). At the time of writing, women remain officially excluded from certain roles within the Armed Forces, including those in the infantry battalions and armoured regiments in the Army, as well as some in the Royal Marines and in the RAF Regiment. In the Army - which has a greater proportion of male-only roles than the RAF or the Navy - women remain excluded from "ground close combat" roles - that is, "Roles that are primarily intended and designed with the purpose of requiring individuals on the ground to close with and kill the enemy."<sup>22</sup> In recent years, the rationale for continuing to exclude women from these roles has focused less on whether women would be able to do the job than on the disruptive effect on unit bonding that their presence might have<sup>23</sup>; that is, less on women's

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<sup>20</sup> ([www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jun/10/rainbow-revolution-military-lgbt-personnel](http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jun/10/rainbow-revolution-military-lgbt-personnel)); [www.army.mod.uk/news/26865.aspx](http://www.army.mod.uk/news/26865.aspx) last accessed 2 May 2015.

<sup>21</sup> [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jan/11/uk-armed-forces-recruits-asked-if-gay](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jan/11/uk-armed-forces-recruits-asked-if-gay), last accessed 2 May 2015.

<sup>22</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/27403/Report\\_review\\_excl\\_woman\\_combat\\_pr.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27403/Report_review_excl_woman_combat_pr.pdf), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>23</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/27403/Report\\_review\\_excl\\_woman\\_combat\\_pr.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27403/Report_review_excl_woman_combat_pr.pdf), last accessed 2 May 2015

physical or psychological abilities - on what women can *do* - than on an essentialised notion of their presence as women - on what they *are* (Woodward and Winter 2007: 54-56). At present, this exclusion is undergoing a further review<sup>24</sup> in the wake of the US military lifting its similar ban in 2013<sup>25</sup> <sup>26</sup>, and it seems to be largely felt, in large parts of the British media at least, that the ban is likely to be lifted<sup>27</sup>.

While the profile of the British military is changing, then, this is a slow process and the institution remains, in Basham's words, one which "continues to privilege white, heterosexual male ways of being over those of 'others'" (Basham 2009: 412). Basham contends that military policies frame "diversity" as an external force which must be properly managed in order to ensure that those from non-traditional recruitment pools can be absorbed into the forces *without challenging their traditional practices and values* (Basham 2008: 729). As a result, while change is happening, Basham argues that the normative British serviceperson remains white, male, and (presumed) heterosexual, and those who do not fit this mould continue to be cast as 'other;' to be hypervisible; and to have their motivations for service questioned more than their white, male, (presumed) heterosexual counterparts (*ibid.*: 151-52). As such, "[w]hen the military defends its right to maintain a distinctive identity, it is guarding a white, masculine heterosexual one" (*ibid.*: 152).

In December 2014, 43.7% of British regular forces personnel were married or in a civil partnership<sup>28</sup>. While statistics on the gender of the non-serving spouses of personnel are not available, it is not controversial to state that the overwhelming majority of these non-serving spouses are (presumed heterosexual) women; indeed the 'military wife' - whether singing in a choir<sup>29</sup>, or mourning a husband killed in action<sup>30</sup> - has become an easily recognisable cultural

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<sup>24</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/news/women-in-combat-roles](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/women-in-combat-roles);  
[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/389575/20141218\\_WGCC\\_Findings\\_Paper\\_Final.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389575/20141218_WGCC_Findings_Paper_Final.pdf); [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-30539111](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-30539111), last accessed 2 May 2015.

<sup>25</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-21172033](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-21172033), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Other national forces which already allow women in all military roles include Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Eritrea, Israel, and North Korea.

<sup>27</sup> [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/may/08/women-set-for-combat-roles-in-british-army](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/may/08/women-set-for-combat-roles-in-british-army);  
[www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-2880191/Women-set-serve-line.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-2880191/Women-set-serve-line.html);  
[www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/11302533/Women-in-front-line-combat-roles-by-2016.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/11302533/Women-in-front-line-combat-roles-by-2016.html);  
[www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-30539111](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-30539111), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>28</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/390025/PUBLIC\\_14188269421.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/390025/PUBLIC_14188269421.pdf), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>29</sup> [www.militarywiveschoirs.org](http://www.militarywiveschoirs.org), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>30</sup> [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2322181/Afghanistan-war-A-red-rose-kiss-soldiers-pregnant-widow-Mourning-wife-says-goodbye-husband-killed-Afghanistan.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2322181/Afghanistan-war-A-red-rose-kiss-soldiers-pregnant-widow-Mourning-wife-says-goodbye-husband-killed-Afghanistan.html), last accessed 22 July 2015.

figure. Civilian women married to servicemen are not themselves members of the Armed Forces; however, they are recognised by both civilian and military authorities as part of the military community. The Armed Forces Covenant, for example, defines the “Armed Forces Community” as “Serving Personnel, Families, Veterans, and Bereaved” (Ministry of Defence 2011a: 3). Moreover, the Covenant notes that “Service families give up certain freedoms and choices in order to support the Service” (*ibid.*: 8) and additionally that “the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army, and the Royal Air Force, *together with their families*” (*ibid.*: 1, emphasis mine).

Reflecting the recognition, perhaps, that families form an important part of the military community, the institution offers a range of services and facilities to the immediate families of its personnel - defined as married or registered civil partners, along with dependent children (Higate and Cameron 2004: 212). One of the most important of these is the provision of family housing known as Service Family Accommodation (SFA). SFA is provided either ‘behind the wire’ on the serving person’s duty station (the military base to which they are posted) or in a ‘patch’ - an area of military housing within 10 miles of the duty station. The type of house, sometimes referred to as a ‘quarter’ or a ‘pad,’ to which a service member is entitled depends on multiple factors including both family size and rank<sup>31</sup>. Personnel who are eligible for SFA are those who are registered on the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system as Personal Status Categories (PStat Cat) 1 or 2<sup>32</sup> - those who are legally married or in a civil partnership and who are not separated, and those who are the primary carers for dependent children. Those who fall into PStat Cats 3, 4 or 5 - who are not in a legally recognised marriage or civil partnership - are not entitled to SFA, but instead are eligible for Single Living Accommodation (SLA); a single room with an en suite bathroom and access to a shared dining facility usually provided in a Mess or an accommodation block ‘behind the wire’ of the duty station itself (Ministry of Defence 2015 b). While not all personnel who are entitled to SFA take it up, a significant proportion do: in August 2014, 70% of Army families, 55% of RAF families, and 35% Naval families lived in SFA at least during the week (Ministry of Defence 2014: 3). The difference in levels of take-up across the services is largely explained by the differential career and service patterns across the three Forces, as Army and RAF careers tend to require more regular geographical relocations - in some cases, every two or three years - than their Navy equivalents (*ibid.*: 3).

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<sup>31</sup> [www.aff.org.uk/army\\_family\\_life/housing/applying\\_sfa\\_ssfa.htm](http://www.aff.org.uk/army_family_life/housing/applying_sfa_ssfa.htm), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>32</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/49016/20071008Personal\\_Status\\_Categories\\_LandHIVE\\_IMU.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/49016/20071008Personal_Status_Categories_LandHIVE_IMU.pdf), last accessed 22 July 2015.

In addition, the British military also offers various services to its personnel and their families, including policing services and a broad range of welfare provision, which victim-survivors of domestic abuse in this context may draw upon in seeking help. Indeed, when families are posted abroad, for example to Germany or to Cyprus, it is likely that the services provided by the military will be the only ones available to victim-survivors of abuse. When they are stationed in the UK, however, civilian women married to servicemen are able to access a broader range of military, civilian, and quasi-military sources of support. For context, therefore, these three groups of services are briefly mapped below.

### ***Military support services***

The three services of the Army, Navy, and RAF all operate what the institution refers to as a 'two line' system of welfare - the first line dealing with straightforward matters, and the second with those that are more complex. Domestic abuse may come to the attention of either or both of these lines of welfare provision - although, when it comes to the attention of first-line providers it should usually be referred on to second-line services. First-line welfare provision - which handles simple matters such as problems with SFA - is primarily provided by Divisional Officers in the Navy, Personnel Staffs in the RAF, and Unit Welfare Officers (UWOs) in the Army. These are all serving personnel, who are part of the unit of which the serving spouse is a member and who remain part of the Chain of Command. Divisional Officers and Personnel Staffs function like line managers, and their taking care of the basic welfare of those who serve below them is seen as part of this line management role<sup>33</sup>. Similarly, Unit Welfare Officers in the Army are not welfare specialists, but take on the welfare role for one posting as part of their path to promotion, and in most cases will have other, more minor roles in addition to the welfare one (personal communication, quasi-military support worker). Unit Welfare Officers receive a two-week training course run by the Army Welfare Service before they take up their post, providing knowledge on how welfare issues should be dealt with (Hyde and Gray 2015). Other first-line welfare providers include chaplains<sup>34</sup> and the HIVE information centres<sup>35</sup>. The broader Chain of Command is also considered to be a first-line welfare service, as "The Commanding Officer's duty to maintain the operational capability of his/her unit requires them to be responsible for the discipline and

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<sup>33</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/408308/Practitioners\\_Handbook\\_final.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/408308/Practitioners_Handbook_final.pdf);  
[www.royalnavy.mod.uk/~media/royal%20navy%20responsive/documents/reference%20library/br%203/Br3book/ch21.pdf](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/~media/royal%20navy%20responsive/documents/reference%20library/br%203/Br3book/ch21.pdf) - page 6, last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>34</sup> [www.raf.mod.uk/chaplains](http://www.raf.mod.uk/chaplains); [www.army.mod.uk/chaplains/chaplains.aspx](http://www.army.mod.uk/chaplains/chaplains.aspx); [www.royalnavy.mod.uk/our-organisation/where-we-are/navy-command-hq/chaplaincy-service](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/our-organisation/where-we-are/navy-command-hq/chaplaincy-service), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>35</sup> [www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/23438.aspx](http://www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/23438.aspx); [www.raf.mod.uk/community/support/raf-hive-information-service](http://www.raf.mod.uk/community/support/raf-hive-information-service), last accessed 22 July 2015.

welfare of his or her personnel” (Ministry of Defence 2011b: 11). In addition, Commanding Officers also have a disciplinary role in relation to the personnel in their command. In cases where servicemen have been found to have perpetrated domestic abuse, Commanding Officers exercise considerable discretion - depending on whether a criminal conviction has been obtained and on the severity of the offence - about whether to enforce an administrative punishment in addition to any criminal punishment which may be imposed<sup>36</sup> (Ministry of Defence 2011b: 19).

The second line of military welfare support is primarily provided by the specialist welfare providers of the Army Welfare Service (AWS), Royal Naval and Royal Marines (RNRM) Welfare (previously known as the Naval Personnel and Families Service), and the SSAFA (previously called the Soldiers, Sailors, Airman and Families Association) Personal Support and Social Work Service (RAF). These services deal with more complex and/or ongoing welfare issues such as relationship problems, mental health concerns, and substance abuse. Personnel in these three services operate alongside and in support of, but importantly *outside*, the Chain of Command. This gives these services a greater degree of independence from the military institution and from the Commanding Officers in the unit of the personnel in question, and a greater ability, therefore, to prioritise the focus on the individual over those of the military. It is important to note, however, that the reason d’être of these organisations remains the support of the military institution itself. The Army Welfare Service mission statement, for example, is:

To provide a comprehensive, professional and confidential welfare support service responsive to the needs of individuals, families, and the Chain of Command in order to maximise the operational effectiveness of servicemen and women.

(Research interview with military support worker)

Organisationally, the AWS and RNRM Welfare are fairly similar, so much so that those who join them train together on a seven-month intensive course. The course consists of a supervised placement sandwiched between two shorter periods of residential, classroom based learning. 75% of the AWS, and 50% of the RNRM Welfare, are military personnel who have chosen to train as welfare workers, and who will progress in rank within the welfare team from that point on and remain in a welfare role for the remainder of their military careers. The remaining 25% of the AWS and 50% of RNRM Welfare are civilians. Both organisations offer support similar to a generic

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<sup>36</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/408308/Practitioners\\_Handbook\\_final.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/408308/Practitioners_Handbook_final.pdf), last accessed 22 July 2015.

social work service, with the exception that they do not have a statutory responsibility, which means, for example, that while they do work with some forms of child protection, there are some cases such as those concerning serious child protection issues in which they would have to liaise with the local authority (research interview with military welfare worker). Personnel and their families may be referred to these organisations by any of the first-line welfare providers or by other organisations, or alternatively they may refer themselves. Unlike the Army and the Navy, the RAF does not run its own specialist welfare provision but instead outsources its second-line welfare to SSAFA, a military charity which provides a range of support to military families more broadly. This service is called the SSAFA Personal Support and Social Work Service (RAF), and it provides a UK based, confidential personal support and social work service to RAF personnel and their families. The support is provided on a regional basis, and all RAF stations above a certain size have a SSAFA worker. Military personnel and their families may be referred to this service by a range of agencies, or they may self-refer by accessing their local support team directly<sup>37</sup>.

### ***Quasi-military support services***

Military personnel and their families may also be able to access second-line welfare support from organisations which I refer to as 'quasi-military' - that is, those which are outside the military institution and are staffed by civilians rather than by serving personnel, but which work exclusively with military personnel and their families. These include military charities such as SSAFA, the Royal British Legion (RBL), the Army Benevolent Fund, and Combat Stress. Some of these organisations, including SSAFA and the RBL, may be able to offer support to victim-survivors of abuse in the form of small grants which help them to move away from the abusive situation and rebuild their lives elsewhere<sup>38</sup>. Military families can also turn for support to the Army, Navy, and RAF Families Federations - independent organisations who can offer information and advice and who also lobby the institutional hierarchies for change<sup>39</sup>. One of the most relevant quasi-military organisations in relation to domestic abuse is SSAFA; a large military charity which runs a wide range of services including family support groups, mentoring programmes, bereavement support, and a confidential telephone and email helpline service called Forcesline<sup>40</sup>. SSAFA runs two Stepping Stones Homes in secret locations within the UK which can function for victim-survivors in a similar way to refuges (see below). Stepping Stones Homes offer temporary housing

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<sup>37</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/408308/Practitioners\\_Handbook\\_final.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/408308/Practitioners_Handbook_final.pdf); [www.ssafa.org.uk/help-you/currently-serving/personal-support-and-social-work-service-raf](http://www.ssafa.org.uk/help-you/currently-serving/personal-support-and-social-work-service-raf), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>38</sup> [www.aff.org.uk/army\\_family\\_life/foreign\\_commonwealth/divorce\\_domestic.htm](http://www.aff.org.uk/army_family_life/foreign_commonwealth/divorce_domestic.htm), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>39</sup> [www.aff.org.uk](http://www.aff.org.uk); [www.nff.org.uk](http://www.nff.org.uk); [www.raf-ff.org.uk](http://www.raf-ff.org.uk), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>40</sup> [www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk), last accessed 22 July 2015.

to women (and their children) with a military connection who find themselves temporarily homeless. This includes former servicewomen and others who have come upon hard times, but residents mostly consist of civilian women whose relationship with a service person has broken down, often as a result of domestic abuse, leaving them with nowhere to go upon leaving their SFA quarter<sup>41</sup> (personal communication with quasi-military support worker). Importantly, unlike mainstream refuges, the SSAFA Stepping Stones homes are able to support women with no recourse to public funds - those who, because of their immigration status, are unable to access benefits (see Chapter Two). Referrals to SSAFA Stepping Stones homes can only be made by a welfare agency of some kind; victim-survivors cannot self-refer<sup>42</sup>.

### ***Civilian support services***

Military personnel and their families may also seek second-line welfare support through civilian agencies, of which there are a multiplicity. As noted above, it is not the purpose of this thesis to provide a comparison between military and civilian services in response to domestic abuse, and moreover, as I discuss in Chapter Six, the overwhelming majority of victim-survivors in this study chose to access military or quasi-military rather than civilian support services when seeking help for the abuse they experienced - as a result, the scope for thorough exploration of civilian services here is limited. It is, however, worth offering a very brief outline of some of these support services for the purposes of context, and because military welfare services do at times operate in connection with these organisations.

Many victim-survivors of abuse seek support through what Coy *et al.* refer to as “specialist” services - those “whose primary work is supporting women who have experienced violence” (2011: 406). Specialist violence against women services emerged from the Women’s Movement in the 1960s and 1970s and are orientated not only towards offering support to an individual victim-survivor of abuse but also towards the broader goals of widespread social change and the prevention of gendered violence (Coy *et al.* 2011; Dobash and Dobash 1992: 16, 29). In 2009, Coy *et al.* identified a total of 835 specialist services concerned with violence against women in England, Scotland, and Wales, of which 73.3% were domestic abuse services. The study found that, largely because of insufficient sustainable funding, service provision was lacking - in particular in relatively under populated rural areas. 26.5% of local authorities did not provide any specialist support services at all, 31.3% had no domestic abuse services, and 89% had no specialised domestic abuse services for black and minority ethnic women (Coy *et al.* 2011: 407-

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<sup>41</sup> [www.ssafa.org.uk/help-you/currently-serving/housing-women-and-children](http://www.ssafa.org.uk/help-you/currently-serving/housing-women-and-children), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>42</sup> [www.ssafa.org.uk/help-you/currently-serving/housing-women-and-children](http://www.ssafa.org.uk/help-you/currently-serving/housing-women-and-children), last accessed 22 July 2015.

409). Where they do exist, specialist services include refuges, outreach support, and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs). Refuges are safe houses for women and children<sup>43</sup> fleeing abuse. Their locations are secret in order to protect the safety of their residents, and in addition to this physical safety they offer emotional support and formal counselling, safety planning, help with accessing benefits, healthcare services, and support in finding permanent housing<sup>44</sup>. Refuge services are largely funded through state benefits claimed on behalf of the women staying in them<sup>45</sup>. Outreach (also known as Floating Support) services offer support to women who are not staying in refuge accommodation, whether they remain in the abusive relationship or not. Outreach workers meet with women either in their homes or in another convenient and discrete location to help them to plan for their safety, to give them information about their rights and the options available to them, to support them in going to court if they choose to do so, and to offer emotional support<sup>46</sup>. Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) support women at the highest risk of serious assault to navigate the legal system and to stay safe<sup>47</sup>. Finally, the National Domestic Violence Helpline is a free-phone, 24 hour telephone service which is run in partnership by national charities Women's Aid and Refuge, and which offers emotional support, practical information, and referrals to any of the services listed above<sup>48</sup>. While specialist service provision has focused mainly on offering support to victim-survivors of abuse, there also exist specialist domestic abuse perpetrator programmes which aim to help male perpetrators of abuse to change their behaviour. Some perpetrator programmes - known as Integrated Domestic Abuse Programmes (IDAPs) - can be court-mandated as an alternative to other forms of punishment or as part of probation (Bullock *et al.* 2010); while others are undertaken on a voluntary basis. These are not anger management programmes, but instead are based on feminist principals and aim to change the attitudes and behaviours of abusive men, helping them to build healthy and respectful relationships in order promote the safety and wellbeing of women and children (Phillips *et al.* 2013; Westmarland *et al.* 2010). In addition to these specialist services, victim-survivors of abuse may also come into contact with more generic, statutory services which may support them through abuse. Examples of these may include the police - discussed below - Victim Support, and local authority children's services.

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<sup>43</sup> There are also smaller scale organisations which offer support to male victim-survivors of abuse, including the Mankind Initiative and the Men's Advice Line, and there is some refuge provision for men. Because this thesis focuses on abuse perpetrated by servicemen against their civilian wives, these services are beyond the scope of its consideration.

<sup>44</sup> [www.refuge.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/refuges](http://www.refuge.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/refuges), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>45</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-19114813](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-19114813), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>46</sup> [www.refuge.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/outreach-services/](http://www.refuge.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/outreach-services/), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>47</sup> [www.refuge.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/independent-domestic-violence-advocacy/](http://www.refuge.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/independent-domestic-violence-advocacy/), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>48</sup> [www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk/](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk/), last accessed 22 July 2015.



## ***Policing***

Victim-survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse may also come into contact with policing services at some point - and depending on where they are stationed, military personnel and their families may have access to multiple police services. All of these police forces have a duty to take domestic abuse seriously, and are expected to take “positive action” in response to incidents of domestic abuse - that is, to make an arrest when there is grounds to do so (National Policing Improvement Agency 2008: 26; Ministry of Defence 2011b: 18). Personnel and their families who are stationed in the UK can access their local Home Office police force in the same way as any civilian would be able to. It should be noted that while Home Office forces have improved their practice in recent years and many now have specialist Domestic Violence Units or Community Safety Units made up of officers specially trained to respond to domestic abuse, there remain serious inadequacies in many forces, as was reflected in the highly critical 2014 report of Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) (HMIC 2014).

In addition to the Home Office police, military personnel and their families may also come into contact with the Ministry of Defence Police (MDP), and the Service police - the Royal Military Police (RMPs) in the Army, the Royal Navy Police (RNP), and the Royal Air Force Police (RAF Police). The MDP are civilians who have the same powers and training as Home Office police officers. In addition, many have specialist training and duties related to their specific role as MDP - the majority, for example, are firearms trained. This police force operates across the country and in some military missions overseas to protect military people, assets, information, and estates. Their jurisdiction covers any land and property in the UK which is owned by the MOD or being used for defence purposes, and any individuals who are employed by the MOD or subject to Service law. Primarily, the MDP provides specialist policing at MOD sites around the UK, including military bases, atomic weapons sites, and the MOD headquarters in Whitehall<sup>49</sup>. Members of the RMP, RNP and RAF Police, by comparison, are all military personnel who are members of the policing corps within their chosen service. They are part of the rank system, and can expect to climb the ranks of the military police as their career progresses. The Service Police take on many of the same functions as civilian Home Office police, doing day to day policing work in base and patch communities. However, technically the Service police only have jurisdiction over serving personnel themselves and not over their civilian families. That is, while the RMP, RNP or RAF Police would have the jurisdiction to act if abuse was being perpetrated by one military

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<sup>49</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/collections/ministry-of-defence-police](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ministry-of-defence-police);  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-police-jurisdiction/mod-police-jurisdiction](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-police-jurisdiction/mod-police-jurisdiction), last accessed 22 July 2015.

service person against another, they would not have jurisdiction over the civilian wife of a serving person who committed a crime - and the perpetration of abuse by serving personnel against their non-serving spouses seems to be somewhat of a grey area (research interview with military support worker). In practice, the most readily available of the police forces should respond when a criminal offence is reported in order to take immediate action, and responsibility for taking the case forward should be decided after discussions between whichever forces operate in the particular area in question (Ministry of Defence 2011b: 18). Work to standardise the working relationships between military and civilian police forces is currently underway, following the model of a joint working protocol signed in 2012 between civilian and military police forces in Hampshire (research interview, civilian support worker). Overseas, however, there is no access to Home Office police, and the service police must therefore take jurisdiction over the civilian families of service personnel (Ministry of Defence 2011c: 5).

### ***Institutional responses to domestic abuse***

The British military is not ignorant of domestic abuse, and has taken steps to respond to abuse within its ranks. The official policy on domestic abuse - the *Tri-Service Policy on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence*, known as JSP913 (Ministry of Defence 2011c) - was written under the 2010 wider governmental approach to End Violence against Women and Girls<sup>50</sup>. JSP913 provides the policy framework within which the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence, and the welfare institutions working within the military community both in the UK and overseas operate in relation to domestic abuse. It applies to anyone subject to Service Law, as well as to civilians subject to Service Discipline overseas. The policy takes a strong rhetorical stance, stating that the military takes a “zero tolerance” approach to domestic abuse and that “Domestic abuse by Service personnel is not to be tolerated” (*ibid.*: 9). The policy echoes broader governmental approaches to and definitions of domestic abuse, although in comparison to the terminology used in the governmental programme *End Violence against Women and Girls* (British Government 2014) under which it was written, it takes a somewhat more gender-neutral approach. While JSP913 recognises the statistically higher victimisation of women and girls and indicates that male-dominated culture may play a role (Ministry of Defence 2011c: 4), it is gender neutral in tone and is careful to point to the potential for men and boys also to become victims of domestic abuse, stating that “Domestic violence occurs irrespective of actual or perceived ethnicity, class, sexuality/sexual orientation, age, rank, religion, gender, gender identity and mental or physical ability” (*ibid.*: 5). In many ways, the document reflects broader governmental approaches to

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<sup>50</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/118150/vawg-paper.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118150/vawg-paper.pdf), last accessed 22 April 2015.

domestic abuse - it echoes, for example, broader policies on child safeguarding<sup>51</sup> and calls for the participation of military welfare personnel in local domestic abuse forums (*ibid.*: 10-12, 17-18). In addition, JSP913 also recognises some of the ways in which individuals within the service community may experience abuse differently to their civilian counterparts; noting for example, that commanders may need to be especially vigilant around the time of major deployments (Ministry of Defence 2011c: 9-10) (for discussion, see Chapter Seven). Finally, the document outlines the various agencies which might play a role in supporting service personnel and their families who experience domestic abuse - such as those outlined above - including those within the institution as well as mainstream civilian services and quasi-military organisations.

Efforts have been made within this policy framework at both a single service and a tri-service level to increase awareness of abuse and to support victim-survivors and perpetrators in seeking help. In 2012, the British Defence Film Library produced a short film aimed at service personnel, their families, the Chain of Command, line managers and welfare specialists, which outlines what domestic abuse is, emphasises that it is not to be tolerated within the Armed Forces, and maps out some of the services which are available to victim-survivors and to perpetrators - including civilian and quasi-military services, but with an emphasis on military sources of support (British Defence Film Library 2012). Following this, in March 2015 the Ministry of Defence launched a new website developed with funding from the Armed Forces Covenant (LIBOR) fund to provide information on support and guidance to those in the Armed Forces community who experience domestic abuse<sup>52</sup>. The website provides information on what domestic abuse is, the effects it can have, and the kinds of support available, and once again emphasises that “Domestic abuse is not tolerated within the Armed Forces.” It also provides a useful handbook for civilian services working with military perpetrators and victim-survivors of domestic abuse, which notes some of the barriers to seeking support which may be particularly relevant to this group as well as introducing the key military support services and offering tips on how best to work with the military community<sup>53</sup>. Other positive initiatives at the tri-service level include the creation in September 2014 of a new post of Domestic Abuse Champion at the Headquarters of British Forces Germany. The aim of introducing the post was to create a multi-agency response to

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<sup>51</sup> Under Safeguarding legislation, all support agencies must refer children who are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm - likely to include those living in households where domestic abuse is taking place - to Local Authority Children’s Social Care Services to be assessed. This obligation falls on military, quasi-military and civilian services alike (British Government 2009).

<sup>52</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/collections/domestic-abuse-guidance-and-support-for-the-armed-forces-community](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/domestic-abuse-guidance-and-support-for-the-armed-forces-community), last accessed 22 July 2015.

<sup>53</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/408308/Practitioners\\_Handbook\\_final.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/408308/Practitioners_Handbook_final.pdf), last accessed 22 July 2015.

domestic abuse, improving training and mirroring best practice in the UK (personal communication, quasi-military support worker). Finally, at the single-service level, the Army in particular has shown an interest in and a willingness to speak out about domestic abuse in recent years. In August 2014, for example, an Army Briefing Note was sent to all Army personnel to reinforce its position on abuse, reminding personnel of their duties under child safeguarding legislation and noting once again that “domestic abuse is NOT to be treated as a purely private matter” (British Army 2014, emphasis in original).

## **Sequence of Chapters**

This thesis explores domestic abuse in the British Armed Forces over a total of eight chapters. Chapter Two reviews the main bodies of literature which are of interest to this thesis - feminist-informed literature on domestic abuse and, in particular, on help-seeking in response to abuse; literature on sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings; and literature specifically concerned with domestic abuse in military institutions. I identify two main gaps in the literature which this study begins to redress. The first, an empirical gap, consists of a lack of literature which focuses specifically on responses to abuse in the British military context. In particular, I illustrate the lack of empirical knowledge about the barriers to help-seeking which limit victim-survivors’ ability to respond to abuse in ways which make themselves safe - something which civilian scholarship on domestic abuse has highlighted as particularly important. In addition, I also illustrate a conceptual gap in the literature in that, with a few exceptions, there is a lack of scholarship on domestic abuse in military institutions which takes seriously the role of gender and of gendered militarism in shaping responses to domestic abuse in military contexts. I draw on the insights of feminist scholarship on domestic abuse, and on scholarship on sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings, to argue that the application of these lenses to studies of domestic abuse in military institutions would be beneficial. This chapter also lays out the research questions which the study seeks to answer.

Chapter Three offers an exploration of the methodological approach of this study. The chapter outlines the feminist-informed, qualitative, post-positivist approach which I take to the research. It explores my personal investment in the study and the impact this has had upon the questions I have sought to ask and the types of knowledge I have sought to produce; noting in particular that the research begins from a political start-point, one which encourages me to centre the experiences of victim-survivors and to approach the study in a critical as opposed to a problem-

solving manner. I discuss the processes through which I gained access, sampled participants, and conducted and analysed in-depth, qualitative interviews with victim-survivors and perpetrators of abuse and with support workers in military, quasi-military, and civilian roles, and reflect upon how the decisions I made throughout the process of the study have shaped the findings and the analysis presented. One of the main focuses of this chapter is the ethical balancing processes which I have undertaken throughout the course of the research, in particular the steps taken with the aim of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of participants.

Chapter Four moves to a discussion of the theoretical framework through which I make sense of the interview narratives collected for this study, focusing in particular on a theoretical engagement with gender, power, domestic abuse, and militarism. The chapter lays out the dual approach to power and to gender - combining structural and post-structural approaches - which helps me to build a nuanced understanding of the complex experiences of participants in this study. I explore the interest of this thesis in forms of violence and abuse on both the intimate and the geopolitical stage, and argue for a model for understanding the two as innately intertwined together. The chapter takes care to emphasise the political nature of domestic abuse and of militarism, suggesting that both are socially constructed phenomena which work through and function to reproduce social inequalities. I argue that the use of violence in both domestic abuse and militarism is motivated towards the acquisition and maintenance of dominance and control over an 'other.' Domestic abuse is therefore theorised not in terms of *incidents* of violent or abusive behaviours, but as the gendered *patterns* of abusive behaviour which perpetrators build up in order to establish control over their intimate partners. Similarly, I conceive of militarism as the normalised, everyday, gendered social relations of the preparation for, and conduct of, political domination and control for which the use of organised violence is a viable option (see Stavrianakis and Selby 2013: 3). The chapter finishes with an exploration of the British military institution as a heteronormative space in which there exists particular idealised models of masculinity and femininity which are, in important ways, formulated through and in support of the norms of gendered militarism.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven offer analyses of the empirical materials collected for this thesis; with Chapters Five and Six focused on the barriers to help-seeking faced by victim-survivors in this context, and Chapter Seven zooming out somewhat to explore the depoliticised ways in which abuse is understood - and therefore responded to - within the military community more broadly. Chapter Five draws upon post-structural approaches to explore how victim-survivor participants

in this study make sense of their experiences through their understandings of their gendered identities and those of their abusers. Paying attention to the affective attachment which many of the victim-survivor participants in this study expressed towards their identities as 'military wives,' I investigate how their responses to abuse were shaped by the ways in which they are held accountable through the workings of disciplinary power to military ideals of gender identity. In particular I focus on the norms of stoicism and strength and on the expectation that civilian women married to servicemen will offer support to the military career, and show how these ideals act as a barrier to help-seeking by discouraging victim-survivors from reaching out for help. Similarly, I explore the dominant ways in which the gender identities of military servicemen are understood. I draw upon the interview narratives collected for this thesis to demonstrate that these understandings, too, produce barriers to help-seeking by making it difficult to recognise abuse *as abuse* and, in some cases, by producing particular levels of fear about the possible repercussions of seeking help. I emphasise the rootedness of the norms of gendered identity in the British military context in the political project of militarism writ large, noting that these norms are not merely coincidental but play important roles in enabling and legitimating militarism itself.

Chapter Six employs a structural approach. It seeks to understand the impact upon victim-survivors' responses to abuse of the structural inequalities between servicemen and the civilian women who are married to them. The chapter argues that civilian women married to servicemen are positioned by the structures of military life in a precarious situation in liminal space on the borders of the military community. Through a discussion of the provision of housing and of welfare support, I illustrate that the structures by which these services are provided simultaneously bring civilian women married to servicemen into the military community *and* prevent them from occupying a full and equal status within it. As such, these women occupy a disempowered, precarious space on the borders of the community, which produces particular barriers to seeking help in response to domestic abuse. Specifically, I suggest that the threat of homelessness, and the difficulty of finding welfare support which prioritises the needs of victim-survivors themselves, prevents many from seeking help. Again, I emphasise that the structures through which civilian women married to servicemen find themselves thus disempowered are not random or coincidental, but are rooted in important ways within, and are constitutive of, the social relations of inequality which constitute militarism.

Chapter Seven steps back somewhat from the empirical focus on specific barriers to help-seeking which is offered in the preceding two chapters, and instead draws attention to some of the ways

in which domestic abuse is understood within the British military community more broadly. This does, of course, have an important impact upon responses to abuse, because the ways in which abuse is perceived shapes the ways it is responded to, both by individual victim-survivors and on a wider scale. However, my analysis in this chapter is primarily concerned with the *depoliticisation* of domestic abuse in the British military - that is, the ways in which it is understood not as a political issue rooted in gendered social inequalities which is requiring of political solutions, but as an individual, pathological, 'cultural' or otherwise *non-political* concern. The chapter explores three clusters of depoliticising narratives which emerged from my interviews: 'cultural' narratives which 'other' domestic abuse from the mainstream culture of the British military by identifying it as overwhelmingly perpetrated by Fijian personnel; pathologising narratives which treat abuse as extraordinary by attributing it to the mental health effects of combat; and gender-neutral narratives which strip the gendered politics from understandings of abuse. These three clusters of narratives, I argue, make it difficult to engage politically with domestic abuse in this context. Moreover, I suggest that while a political analysis of military domestic abuse could threaten the naturalisation of the social relations of militarism by exposing the everyday inequalities through which they are constituted, depoliticising approaches which abstract this abuse from the everyday gendered relations of militarism serve to naturalise these very social relations. As a result, I identify depoliticised responses to military domestic abuse as one of the many sites through which militarism is *reproduced* on an everyday basis.

The final chapter in this thesis returns to the gaps in the literature identified in Chapter Two to reflect upon the three main arguments and clusters of findings produced by the thesis and their wider implications, and to highlight the empirical and conceptual contributions which this study makes to the literature. I begin by reflecting on the empirical contribution that the study makes to the literature by providing in-depth, qualitative data on the lived experiences of domestic abuse in the British military context; in particular, on the barriers to help-seeking with which victim-survivors in this context are faced. Next, I discuss the conceptual interventions which my study makes in taking seriously the role of gender and of gendered militarism in shaping experiences of domestic abuse in the British military. I draw together the arguments presented in the preceding chapters to argue that the particular ways in which domestic abuse is experienced in the British military context are neither coincidental nor apolitical, but rather, are shaped and produced by the gendered social relations of militarism. Moreover, I argue that experiences of domestic abuse in this context are not only *shaped* by militarism in a unidirectional fashion, but rather that the ways in which domestic abuse is understood and responded to in this context

function to *reproduce* militarism. Therefore, I suggest that domestic abuse is something which is implicated in the production of militarism - and therefore of war - itself. Finally, the chapter reflects on some of the weaknesses of the research, pointing towards the gaps it leaves and the questions it poses for further study.



## Chapter Two: Literature Review:

### The gap in knowledge

This chapter reviews the main bodies of literature to which my thesis contributes and which provide the grounds from which my research questions emerge. By identifying gaps in the existing literature, it illustrates the process through which the questions which drive this research have been developed, and thus lays the ground from which the rest of the thesis will grow. The chapter engages with three bodies of literature. The first two - feminist-informed literature on domestic abuse, and literature concerned with sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings - are important to this thesis because the insights they provide inform my approach to the study. Moreover, they also point to weaknesses and gaps in the third body of literature with which I engage in this chapter: that specifically concerned with domestic abuse in military institutions. Very little research has been conducted on domestic abuse in the British Armed Forces. There is, however, a small amount of work in the Canadian context, and a large body of scholarship on the United States military<sup>54</sup>. By way of an introduction, I begin to map below the existing research on domestic abuse in these three military institutions. I pay particular attention to British scholarship, and limit myself to a sketch of the parameters of work on the US and Canadian Forces.

There exists very little research into domestic abuse in the British military. Aside from the two broader studies on criminality and violence perpetrated by military personnel mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, which suggest that domestic abuse occurs at significant levels within British military families (MacManus *et al.* 2012; NAPO 2009), this literature review has identified only one empirical study focused on domestic abuse in the British Armed Forces. This is a pilot project, by Williamson and Price, from which two publications have emerged (Williamson and Price 2009; Williamson 2011). Williamson and Price's study was commissioned by the North East Hampshire Domestic Abuse Forum, a group of civilian and military support providers which meets in Aldershot. The research was tasked with investigating "(i) the nature and extent of abuse

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<sup>54</sup> While this thesis, and the vast majority of the published literature, is concerned with domestic abuse perpetrated by serving men against their female partners, it is worth briefly noting that there is some research which deals with abuse perpetrated by female service personnel in the US military (e.g. Campbell *et al.*, 2003; Fogey & Badger, 2006; Coyle & Wolan, 1996). This literature suggests that female service personnel are significantly more likely to be the victims than the perpetrators of abuse (Campbell *et al.*, 2003; Forgey and Badger, 2006), and it points to particular barriers which may discourage servicewomen from seeking support (Campbell *et al.*, 2003, 1081). I have not been able to find any research which focuses specifically on domestic abuse perpetrated by/against LGBT personnel in the military.

experienced by military families, (ii) service use and (iii) service needs of both perpetrators and victims of abuse in this context” (Williamson 2011: 5). Aspects of the study’s findings are discussed later in this chapter. The principle research method used was an online survey, designed with the help of focus groups, but unfortunately the researchers struggled to recruit the hoped for numbers of participants. The survey collected 5 responses from servicemen and women, and 179 from female partners of military personnel (Williamson and Price 2009: 3-4, 7). It did not specifically sample participants who had experienced domestic abuse, and eight participants self-identified as having experienced physical abuse, 43 verbal abuse, and 22 bullying behaviour from their partner (*ibid.*: 12). Although mainly interested in quantitative data, the study did collect brief, written qualitative information in specific sections of the survey (*ibid.*: 13-17), however the depth of this data is of course limited as Williamson herself recognises (2011: 6). Moreover, the study is largely problem-solving in approach and offers little critical analysis of the role of either gender or militarism in shaping domestic abuse. While Williamson’s 2011 article does point very briefly to the importance of gender (*ibid.*: 2-3, 15-16), this discussion is very limited and the original report does not offer any gender analysis. In addition, the research does not take a critical approach to the military as an institution or to militarism more broadly. While combat deployment is thought to impact upon abuse, for example, deployment itself is taken as an unfortunate but unquestionable inevitability. That is, the research aims to mitigate the negative effects of military action upon intimate relationships without problematising that military action itself (Williamson and Price 2009: 3). There is, therefore, a lack of in-depth, qualitative research on domestic abuse in the British military which approaches it with a critical approach to militarism and a gender lens.

In comparison to the British example, there exists a large amount of research which deals with domestic abuse in the US Armed Forces - this study cites 38 relevant articles and book chapters. I also identified six published works which discuss domestic abuse in the Canadian military. There are a number of reasons why domestic abuse in the US military in particular has received high levels of research, public, and policy interest in comparison with the British example, and, while I do not explore this in any depth here, also the Canadian example. Firstly, such interest is no doubt underpinned by the size of the US military, which is one of the largest employers in the country (Klostermann *et al.* 2012: 54). In 2010, there were 1,431,000 active duty personnel serving in the US military<sup>55</sup> and an additional 1,102,863 reservists<sup>56</sup>. In 2007, almost 13% of the U.S. population over the age of 18 were military veterans (Bradley 2007: 197). In comparison, in

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<sup>55</sup> [www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0511.pdf](http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0511.pdf), last accessed 4 May 2015.

<sup>56</sup> [www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0513.pdf](http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0513.pdf), last accessed 4 May 2015.

2014 the entire strength of the British military was 163,670 personnel, of which 157,490 were regulars and 3350 were reserves<sup>57</sup> (Rutherford and Berman 2014: 5). While clearly the US population is much larger than that of the UK - around 319 million people in comparison to 64 million - the US military represents a larger (although still small overall) percentage of the population. In addition, the US Forces occupy a higher profile in US public life than can be said of their British counterparts, with politicians frequently citing militarised identity as a way to gain legitimacy (Belkin 2012: 2) and a more visible everyday appreciation for the work of military personnel among ordinary citizens<sup>58</sup>. Moreover, high profile incidents of military domestic abuse - such as the murders of four women by their servicemen-husbands within six weeks at Fort Bragg in North Carolina in 2002<sup>59</sup>, as well as media reporting of the high levels of abuse (Mercier 2000: 4) - have encouraged widespread public, media, and political interest. Furthermore, Enloe suggests that the hardships of multiple overseas postings during the Cold War have meant that US military officials have had to work harder than their British counterparts to retain the support of servicemen's families (Enloe 2000: 160-61). Reflecting this, Mercier (2000: 6) argues that the US military authorities pay particular attention to family problems because they recognise that such issues compromise "preparedness by reducing the readiness and performance of individual military members." That is, the US military has been the site for so much research into domestic abuse at least partially because such research supports the needs of military effectiveness, and as a result the majority of this research is expressly problem-solving rather than critical in its approach.

The overwhelming majority of published studies into domestic abuse in the US military are primarily concerned with causality. As I explore below, there are a small number of feminist-informed studies which take a critical approach (e.g. Enloe 2000; Jones 2012: 154); however most of this body of scholarship focuses on somewhat reductionist explanations - such as mental illness and alcohol abuse - and ignores the broader, gendered social factors within which domestic abuse is rooted. A much smaller body of scholarship pays attention to the types of support available to US military personnel and their families, and to the barriers which they may experience to accessing it. While there is some variety within this large body of work, most of the US research is quantitative and broadly positivist in approach. In the Canadian context, the work which is of

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<sup>57</sup> The Gurkha regiment is counted separately from both regulars and reservists, which accounts for the numerical discrepancy here.

<sup>58</sup> [www.lordashcroftpolls.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/THE-ARMED-FORCES-SOCIETY.pdf](http://www.lordashcroftpolls.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/THE-ARMED-FORCES-SOCIETY.pdf), last accessed 4 August 2015.

<sup>59</sup> [www.cbsnews.com/news/4-wives-slain-in-6-weeks-at-fort-bragg/](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/4-wives-slain-in-6-weeks-at-fort-bragg/); [www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/2155051.stm](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/2155051.stm), last accessed 14 July 2015.

most interest to this thesis is that by Harrison, alone (2002, 2006) and together with Laliberté (1994, 2008) into the lives of civilian women married to Canadian servicemen, and into such women's experiences of domestic abuse more specifically. This work focuses on the experiences of victim-survivors of abuse, pays attention to military support services and barriers to help-seeking, and discusses causal factors which may be relevant to military populations. It is of particular interest to my study because, unlike much of the US scholarship, it is qualitative, broadly critical in its approach to the military, and informed by feminist understandings of abuse.

While US and Canadian literature has informed my research in important ways, its overseas location means that it cannot be easily transposed to the British context. There are of course many similarities between the British, Canadian, and United States militaries; however, important differences also remain. For Zamorski and Weins-Kinhead, "Data from other military organizations may not apply, due to differences in the military population, the particular stresses and strains faced by military families, the supports and services available, and the overall preventive strategy used by each military organization" (2013: 2). Similarly, in Williamson's words, "[i]n terms of culture, we know very little about the differences that might exist between different military forces and how this might impact on military families" (2011: 3). Even a cursory glance at the contextual differences in which the military institutions and their associated families operate gives some indication that US and Canadian scholarship cannot be unproblematically applied to the British case. As I note above, the US military is significantly larger and occupies a more visible cultural position within its nation than can be said of the British Armed Forces. Moreover, the lack of a comprehensive welfare state in the US is another significant factor, as it means that victim-survivors in the British and United States contexts are likely to have access to significantly different levels of civilian support provision. In addition, the Canadian case illustrates effectively the importance of geographical differences between contexts. Harrison and Laliberté (1994: 131-32) highlight particular difficulties which apply to spouses posted to isolated bases - while some UK bases are more isolated than others, none can compare to the isolation of some of the northerly rural Canadian postings. Considerable care must therefore be taken when applying scholarship from overseas to the British case, and studies specifically focused on Britain are necessary.

As I demonstrate throughout this chapter, this thesis contributes to the literature in some important ways. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, it provides data on a significantly under-researched topic: domestic abuse in the British military. Specifically, it provides in-depth

qualitative data - which is missing from Williamson and Price's study - and which is likely to be more appropriate than quantitative information for understanding the ways in which abuse is perceived and responded to. It brings a gendered lens to the study of military domestic abuse, one which is frustratingly missing in much of the literature from the US. Moreover, learning from general feminist literature on domestic abuse and help-seeking, the study takes seriously the normal, everyday social structures, ideologies, and understandings of masculinities and femininities, intimate relationships, domestic abuse and help-seeking which circulate in the military context - something which is often difficult to find in the existing literature on military domestic abuse. Learning from the literature on military sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) more broadly, the thesis also pays attention to the gendered underpinnings of militarism, militarised identity, and militarised violence which have been identified in that literature as centrally important in understanding violence in military settings. I take learning from these two bodies of literature to insist on the political nature of military domestic abuse - something which is again notably absent from much of the work which has emerged from the US, as well as from Williamson and Price's British study. This thesis thus contributes towards understanding responses to domestic abuse in the British military context in important and original ways.

This chapter proceeds in two main sections, the first of which explores literature which seeks to explain the causality of domestic abuse and the second, in two smaller sub-sections, which moves to literature focused on the ways in which victim-survivors seek help in response to domestic abuse. It should be noted that this organisation is reversed in the arrangement of my empirical chapters, which begin with an individualised consideration of victim-survivors' responses to abuse before widening the lens to discuss more broadly the perceptions of, and the potential for political engagement with, domestic abuse and gendered militarism writ large. This decision has been taken for ease of reading, as the literature on help-seeking which I present here is best approached by readers with knowledge of broader feminist understandings of the gendered social underpinnings of abuse. In each of the sections of this chapter which follow, I begin with a discussion of the bodies of literature which have provided the ground within which my approach to the research has arisen. I then follow each of these discussions with an exploration of the existing literatures on domestic abuse in military institutions in order to draw attention to the gaps in the literature which my study contributes towards filling. This allows me to illustrate the process by which my research questions have been developed.

## **The literature on causality: patriarchy and the continuum of violence**

This thesis focuses on responses to abuse, and as such it does not attempt to come to any kind of conclusions about the *causality* of abuse within the military. Despite this, throughout the course of conducting interviews it became clear that it is not possible to neatly cleave responses from causality - or perhaps more accurately, from the broad *perceptions* of the causality of abuse which circulate in a given context. Participants interviewed for this project made multiple references to their understandings of the causes of abuse in explaining their responses to it, and such perceptions have been more broadly recognised as informing policy, the work of professional support agencies, and the views of both perpetrators and victim-survivors in relation to abuse (Hearn 1996: 33; see also Ferraro 2005: 191). Divergent perceptions of causality are the kernel of divergent approaches to abuse more broadly - including in the way that abuse is responded to by victim-survivors, their communities, support workers, and law enforcement authorities.

There is a point, here, of potential slippage and confusion, because while my empirical interest in this thesis is in *perceptions* of causality, the literatures I describe below aim to describe the *actual* causality of domestic abuse. This is an important distinction; however, in the absence of an existent literature on the ways in which the causality abuse is perceived in various military settings, the literatures outlined below provide important groundwork for the discussions of perception which follow throughout the thesis. Scholarship is neither neutral nor apolitical (see Chapter Three), and the ways in which scholars choose to study the causality of abuse - the causal associations for which they search through their research - are based upon their theoretical assumptions and, indeed, on their own perceptions of that causality. This general statement, of course, also applies to my own work - although this study does not attempt to establish causality, my approach to studying responses to abuse is underpinned and shaped in important ways by my own theoretical understandings of what domestic abuse is and how it is caused. The explorations of the literatures on causality which follow, then, have two functions. First, they serve to situate my study within the broader literature on forms of violence against women in both civilian and military/conflict settings, allying my work with feminist-informed and critical military scholarship, and positioning it against more reductionist, "problem-solving," and positivist pieces of research. Second, they sketch out the dominant ways in which the broad causality of abuse has been understood within the literature, thus laying the groundwork for my subsequent discussions of the perceptions of causality.

### ***Literature on domestic abuse***

There exist a range of explanations for domestic abuse, many of which are not underpinned by feminist approaches. These include biological explanations focused on the hormonal production of aggression; socio-biological explanations which emphasise the defence of “territory;” psychological explanations focused on “personality types” and “disorders;” and psychoanalytical approaches centred on “projection” and “displacement” (Hearn 1998: 17; see also Gondolf 1985; Hearn 1996: 29). Much of this scholarship has been criticised for being reductionist and overly focused on the individual, for failing to offer an account of power, and for ignorance of the gendered nature of abuse (Hearn 1996: 29; Sev’er 2002: 45). As I explore further in Chapter Four, this thesis draws upon feminist-informed theorisations as it is these which best enables me to make sense of abuse as a gendered social issue and to pay attention to the power relations by which it is underpinned.

The large and well-developed body of feminist scholarship on domestic abuse which began to emerge during the ‘second wave’ feminist movement of the 1960s-1980s has understood abuse as a *gendered social issue*: one which is rooted in the patriarchal organisation of society (e.g. chapters in Hanmer and Itzin 2000; Hoff 1990; Kelly 1988; Loseke and Cahill 2005; Pizzey 1974; Renzetti and Bergen 2005; Westmarland 2015; Yllö 1993). This is an intrinsically political approach to domestic abuse, one which highlights the social and political inequalities which underpin men’s violence towards women. In 1979, Dobash and Dobash argued that while “[t]he legal right of a man to beat his wife is no longer explicitly recognised in most western countries [...] the legacy of the patriarchy continues to generate the conditions and relationships that lead to a husband’s use of force against his wife” (1979: ix). More recent scholarship has echoed these arguments. For Harne and Radford (2008: 17), domestic abuse is a “problem with roots in women’s subordinate gender status in all cultures, and is reflected in the beliefs, norms, morals, laws and social institutions that legitimise and normalise it, and, in so doing, perpetuate this violence.” Similarly, Pain argues that within heteronormative societies, “[c]ultural expectations around the roles of women and men, financial inequalities between them, and the predominant forms of masculinity and femininity [...] both create and sustain [domestic] abuse” (2012: 18). Moreover as this scholarship has developed, a greater recognition of the multiplicity and intersectional formulation of women’s experiences of domestic abuse and of help-seeking has emerged. Intersectionalities are now widely understood to “colour the meaning and nature of domestic violence, how it is experienced by self and responded to by others, how personal and social consequences are represented, and how and whether escape and safety can be obtained” (Bograd 1999: 276; see

also Crenshaw 1991; Kanuha 1996; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005). By locating the roots of domestic abuse in social inequalities, this body of scholarship locates its causal factors not in the individual space of a single couple but in the broader society in which such couples are embedded. That is, while individual perpetrators exercise agency in making a choice to abuse their partners, these choices are, in diverse and intersectionally mediated ways, produced within and enabled by women's disempowered structural position in society relative to men. Importantly, this means that the roots of domestic abuse are firmly identified in the *normal* gendered arrangements of social life, and not in out of the ordinary, the disordered, or the pathologised. As such, neither victim-survivors nor perpetrators of abuse are understood as aberrant or inexplicable; rather, such violence is woven deeply into the arrangement of contemporary societies (Hearn 1996: 34).

Feminist work has pointed to the connections which exist between domestic abuse and other types of violence against women, such as sexual harassment, rape and sexual assault, stalking, trafficking for the purposes of the sex trade, and female genital mutilation. In 1988, Kelly identified a "continuum" of diverse forms of violence against women, all of which are underpinned by "the *abuse, intimidation, coercion, intrusion, threat and force men use to control women*" (Kelly 1998: 76, emphasis in original). For Kelly, the concept of a continuum does not imply a hierarchical ranking of severity in forms of gendered violence against women; rather, it identifies both the connections between various forms of violence and "how 'typical' and 'aberrant' male behaviour shade into one another" (*ibid.* : 75). Several scholars have either explicitly taken up the concept of a continuum of violence against women (see, for example, chapters in Brown and Walklate 2012) or have otherwise recognised the connections between various forms of violence against women, for example, through the production of academic volumes which deal with its multiple forms (e.g. Fawcett *et al.* 1996; Lombard and McMillan 2013; Radford *et al.* 2000; Renzetti and Bergen 2005; Westmarland 2015). This approach is very useful in enabling scholars to make sense of domestic abuse as part of wider arrangements of gendered social power and inequality.

### ***Literature on sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings***

Scholarship on SGBV in conflict and post-conflict settings has a more recent history than that on domestic abuse more broadly, and much of it - although not all - is informed by the insights of earlier feminist work. It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter to offer anything but a brief and targeted discussion of this literature. Indeed, for the purposes establishing the ground from which my thesis develops, there are just two major observations that I want to make here.



First, feminist-informed literature on the various forms of SGBV which occur in conflict settings has changed the way in which much of this violence is understood. Previously, SGBV in conflict and post-conflict settings was largely considered to be irrelevant to the conduct and to the understanding of war and militarism<sup>60</sup> - a side effect, perhaps, or a form of “collateral damage,” but of no consequence in making sense of war and of international relations more broadly (UNDP 2008). Feminist scholarship and campaigning, however, has challenged this, and some forms of SGBV - in particular rapes which occur in conflict zones - are now widely understood as an integral and significant part of war itself, relevant to the study of foreign policy, of conflict, and of international relations (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013; Kirby 2012; UNDP 2008). Scholars interested in wartime SGBV have drawn attention to the ways in which the perpetration, experience, and meaning of SGBV is shaped in particular ways in war and post-war settings. Scholars working on wartime rape have argued that this form of violence may be motivated and shaped through the militarised forms of masculinity which characterise times of war. In this understanding, soldiers rape because the institutional culture of militaries, and the norms of masculinity which they promote, are conducive to rape; and moreover, rape itself is a site at which perpetrators performatively construct themselves as soldierly subjects (Boesten 2014: 53-63; Enloe 2000: 108-52; Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2009; Goldstein 2001; Kirby 2012: 811-13; Morris 1996). Morris, for example, argues that military masculinity revolves around “attitudes of hypermasculinity, adversarial sexual beliefs, sexual promiscuity, rape myth acceptance, acceptance of violence against women, hostility toward women, and sex-role stereotyping” - and this is “correlated with rape and rape proclivity” (1996: 700-701). Similar arguments have been made about servicemen’s use of prostitutes as a site at which militarised forms of masculinity are both expressed and performatively constructed (Enloe 1989: 81; 1992; 2000: 51-62; Sturdevant and Stoltzfus 1992; Yuh 2002). Moreover, scholars who identify rape as a “weapon of war” have discussed soldiers’ rape of enemy women in particular as a part of warfare specifically aimed at the humiliation and demoralisation of a whole ethnic or national collective through the use of sexual violence against the bodies of its women - that is, these scholars have argued that rape can take on different meanings in conflict zones (Benshoof 2014; Buss 2009; Cain 1999: 284; Card 1996; Diken and Lausten 2005; Goldstein 2001; Kirby 2012; Maedl 2011; Meger 2010; Rehn and Sirleaf 2002; Salzman 1998; Trenholm *et al.* 2011). Similarly, scholars have uncovered an increased prevalence of domestic abuse in conflict and post-conflict settings (e.g. Rehn and Sirleaf 2002: 14-15), and some have argued that this can be attributed to the militarisation of

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<sup>60</sup> ‘War’ and ‘militarism’ are not the same, although they are closely related. The relationship between the two will be explored in Chapter Four.

masculinity and the exaggeration in inequalities between women and men which occurs during conflict (e.g. Adelman 2003; Albanese 2001; Copic 2004; Horn *et al.* 2014; Korac 1998; Zannettino 2012). For Albanese, for example, conflict functions to “repatriarchalize” social and gender relations more broadly, and thus leads to an increasing risk of domestic abuse in affected societies (2001). The first point I want to make about this diverse body of literature on forms of conflict-related SGBV which is relevant to my own study, then, is that draws attention to the ways in which war and militarism reshape gender norms and thus, reshape the perpetration, experience, and meaning of forms of SGBV in particular ways. This scholarship demonstrates the importance of paying attention to the interconnections between war, militarism, and SGBV: an insight which is important for my study because it suggests that the gendered, military context in which it occurs is likely to be of relevance to understanding domestic abuse in the British military.

Second, while a significant amount of work recognises the connections - the “continuum of violence” - between various forms of militarised and peacetime SGBV (Boesten 2014: 152; Cockburn 2004; Kelly 2010; Leatherman 2011: 63-64; Pankhurst 2007: 3-8, 32-35), without painting too neat or homogenised a picture of this body of literature, I want to argue that there remains, to a certain extent, a broad divide within it. On the one hand, forms of violence which are perpetrated against women of ‘enemy’ ethnic or national collectives, such as rape in war, have been understood as part of the gendered practices of war fighting; often, as an *act of war*. For example, while there are diverse literatures on rape in war which explain it in a range of ways - from “war booty,” or the lawlessness of war, to the result of psychological trauma, or the militarisation of masculinity (for an overview, see Pankhurst 2007: 44-53; 2010: 152-56) - the dominant narrative in contemporary scholarship and activist work understands rape in war as a *strategic* tool which aims to achieve instrumental purposes in the pursuit of military objectives (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013: 2; Kirby 2012). Much of the literature which describes rape as a strategic weapon of war draws upon feminist theorisations of nationalism (e.g. Elshtain 1987: 67; McClintock 1995; Yuval-Davis 1997) to argue that the “ultimate targets” of such rapes are not the individual victim-survivors themselves but “entire peoples” (Card 1996: 7; see also Albanese 2001; Benshoof 2014, 146; Buss 2009: 148-49; Cain 1999: 284; Diken and Lausten 2005, 111; Goldstein 2001; Kirby 2012: 807-08; Maedl 2011; Meger 2010; Rehn and Sirleaf 2002, 2; Salzman 1998; Trenholm *et al.* 2011). That is, rape in war is not only an attack on a woman’s body, but an attack on the group to which she belongs - “a message passed between men” (Brownmiller 1975: 13) which intends to “destroy the morale of [the victim’s] family and ethnic community” (Sharlach 2000: 89). In this understanding, rape is not only a side-effect of or a co-occurrence with war, it is

part of the gendered practices through which wars are fought. On the other hand, forms of violence which are perpetrated against women of the same ethnic or national collective as the perpetrator are *not* generally understood as an act of war or as part of the gendered practices of war fighting, even when they occur within periods of armed conflict, and even when the acts of violence perpetrated are similar. In what is perhaps the most dominant narrative, the increasing prevalence of domestic abuse in conflict and post-conflict settings is understood as a side effect of the impact of the war itself - which has militarised masculinities, normalised violence, traumatised perpetrators, or broken down systems of accountability (Adelman 2003: 1132; Al-Krenawi *et al.* 2007; Albanese 2001; Annan and Brier 2010; Catani *et al.* 2008; Copic 2004; Enarson 1999; Haj-Yahia and Clark 2013; Horn *et al.* 2014; Korac 1998; Rehn and Sirleaf 2002: 11-16; Rydstrøm 2003; Saile *et al.* 2013; Usta *et al.* 2008; Zannettino 2012). Rehn and Sirleaf, for example, identify a number of factors which contribute to an increase in domestic abuse in the post-conflict period, including “the availability of weapons, the violence male family members have experienced or meted out, [and] the lack of jobs, shelter, and basic services” (2002: 14). In these arguments, domestic abuse is understood as a ‘knock-on effect’ of war, a form of ‘collateral damage,’ which is *caused* by war, but which does not itself play a role in the gendered practices of war fighting. The second point I want to make about the literature on SGBV in conflict and post-conflict settings, then, is that while forms of SGBV perpetrated against women of an ‘enemy’ ethnic or national collective may well be understood both as shaped by war and as a part of the gendered practices of war fighting, forms of SGBV perpetrated against women of the *same* ethnic or national collective are more likely to be understood as shaped by war but *not* as part of the gendered practices of war fighting. That is, the notion that domestic abuse *itself* might play a role in the gendered practices of war fighting has not received serious attention in the literature or in activist work focused on conflict and post-conflict SGBV. This point is important because I go on to argue in this thesis that viewing domestic abuse in military settings as an enactment of gendered militarism *is* a very useful lens for making sense of how such abuse is experienced.

### ***Literature on the causality of abuse in military institutions***

As I show above, there exist significant and dynamic bodies of feminist-informed work on domestic abuse and on SGBV in conflict/post-conflict settings. It is, however, fairly striking that only a very small amount of the published literature on the causality of domestic abuse in military institutions shows recognition of these broad and influential bodies of literature. As I explore below, the literature on domestic abuse in militaries tends to attribute it to gender-neutral, individual factors - those which feminist scholarship has long argued against. Some of this

literature - which does not, generally speaking, draw on a gender analysis - attributes the higher rates of perpetration of domestic abuse among military personnel to non-military specific factors such as the over-representation of young men of relatively low-economic status in military populations (e.g. Caliber Associates 1994; Graves and Moriarty 2000: 31; Jones 2012; Marshall and McShane 2000; Mercier 2000: 4-5; Sharps *et al.* 2000: 76) or the use of alcohol or drugs by military personnel (Bell *et al.* 2004; Brewster *et al.* 2002; Hurlbert *et al.* 1991; Martin *et al.* 2010). However, the larger body of work, and that which is of most interest to this thesis, is that which identifies military-specific causal factors. Most-often, these factors are related to the out-of-the-ordinary impacts of deployment, and in general, this scholarship does not draw upon a critical approach to militarism.

Williamson and Price's study of domestic abuse in the British military began from the premise that abuse is likely to increase when personnel return from deployment, and that this is caused by the traumas of the deployment itself and/or the difficult process of servicemen's reintegration back into family life (Williamson and Price 2009: 3). The authors suggest that "Sometimes the stresses of [reintegration], potentially coupled with PTSD and flashbacks (which can affect sleep patterns) can exacerbate issues of domestic abuse, coercion and control" (*ibid.*: 3). The work points to two types of tension which may occur in the post-deployment period and cause or worsen abuse - tensions which arise because returning personnel find it difficult to negotiate a significant role in a family which has been coping without them, and the exacerbation of controlling behaviour by combat-related mental health problems such as PTSD (*ibid.*: 3). Williamson's later article based on the study provides somewhat more of an emphasis on domestic abuse as control (see Chapter Four), and also points very briefly to the impact of gendered roles and expectations on the process by which power and control within a relationship is renegotiated following a period of deployment separation, although a focused and in-depth consideration of these issues is absent from the published work (Williamson 2011: 14-16). Moreover, while it recognises the potential impact of military service upon domestic abuse, Williamson and Price's article does not discuss the impact of *militarism* or take a critical approach to the military. Military service and the realities of life in the military community are taken in the research report as a given, something which happens and which should be coped with, but which is not itself open to question or to political analysis. For example, there is some discussion of the difficulties which civilian women married to servicemen experience in coping with their roles in the family as their serving partners come and go on deployments, but no critical discussions of the position of these women in the military family and the military institution more broadly

(Williamson and Price 2009: 14-16). This limits the depth of understanding which the study can provide. Williamson and Price's first key focus - on immediate deployment-related factors - is mirrored in some of the research into domestic abuse in the US military. Hoge *et al.* (2007) found that couples report decreased marital satisfaction, increased intention to divorce, and domestic abuse in the periods before, during and up to a year after deployment to Iraq. Similarly, military domestic abuse support organisation the Miles Foundation reported an increase in calls from bases at which units were deploying or returning<sup>61</sup>. However, other studies, including survey-based research conducted by McCarroll *et al.* (2003) and Newby *et al.* (2005), found no significant increase in incidents of domestic abuse in the months following deployment.

Williamson and Price's second key focus, on the causal relationship between combat-related mental health problems and domestic abuse, has received much greater attention in US research. Indeed, studies which focus on combat-related mental health problems - most commonly post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)<sup>62</sup> - make up probably the largest body of literature on domestic abuse in the US military, to the detriment of other potentially significant deployment-related factors such as number and length of deployments, military occupational status, and exposure to combat (Rodrigues *et al.* 2015: 236). A considerable number of studies note an association between PTSD diagnosis and increased perpetration of abuse (e.g. Byrne and Riggs 1996; Carroll *et al.* 1985; Finley *et al.* 2010; Glenn *et al.* 2002; Jordan *et al.* 1992; Klostermann *et al.* 2012; Monson *et al.* 2009; Sherman *et al.* 2006; Verbosky and Ryan 1988), or increased levels of physical violence in abuse (e.g. Chemtob *et al.* 1997; Finley *et al.* 2010: 738; Monson *et al.* 2009: 708; Orcutt *et al.* 2003). Authors generally note that what these studies are identifying is a *correlation* and that this does not, of course, prove a causal relationship. However, while there are exceptions - Monson *et al.* (2009: 711), for example, suggest that poor quality intimate relationships can worsen negative reactions to traumatic experiences - most studies posit that a causal relationship does exist and that it is unidirectional: that PTSD *causes* domestic abuse. Although the nature of this causality is not always clearly explained, when it is explored it is often the hyperarousal symptoms of PTSD, such as aggression and disinhibition, which are identified as causal. These symptoms are thought to inhibit sufferers' ability to process information and cause to them to act impulsively, lose control, and lash out (Savarese *et al.* 2001; Taft *et al.* 2011: 23; Taft *et al.* 2013: 226). Finley *et al.* additionally suggest that the re-experiencing symptoms of PTSD

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<sup>61</sup> [http://nsrc.sfsu.edu/article/domestic\\_violence\\_troops\\_military](http://nsrc.sfsu.edu/article/domestic_violence_troops_military), last accessed 19 November 2011.

<sup>62</sup> There are some exceptions to this trend - Pan *et al.* (1994), for example, note an association between depressive symptoms and domestic abuse among US Army soldiers. The overwhelming majority of such studies, however, focus on PTSD.

may also play a role in causing personnel to use abuse against their intimate partners, in particular “amplified anger, disassociation or flashbacks, and sleep disturbance” (2010: 740). While much of the literature only looks at male servicemen, that which draws on broader samples suggests that the correlation between PTSD and domestic abuse is mediated by factors such as gender and military service itself. Studies cited in the literature review by Taft *et al.* (2011: 23) suggest that PTSD is more strongly associated with anger, hostility, and intimate relationship problems in military as opposed to civilian samples (see Chemtob *et al.* 1997; Orth and Wieland 2006), and that this is rooted in the particularly violent experiences likely to be at the root of military, but not civilian, PTSD (Chemtob *et al.* 1997). Additionally, studies such as that by Kirz *et al.* (2001) and Miller and Resick (2007) suggest that men and women respond differently to trauma, with men more likely to become violent and aggressive and women more likely to ‘internalise’ their problems.

Scholarship which attributes military domestic abuse to military-specific factors makes useful contributions in drawing connections - albeit sometimes implicitly - between intimate and geopolitical forms of violence. This opens up a useful space for how thinking about the connections between domestic abuse, militarism, and war - something which I think is productive ground for analysis. However, there remain significant problems with this body of literature. Firstly, the studies cited above largely conceptualise domestic abuse in terms of *incidents* of violent or abusive behaviour, which both obscures the patterns of controlling behaviour which constitute abuse (see Chapter Four), and which also largely ignores its gendered nature. Even those studies which recognise a difference in outcome by gender or by military experience do not, in general, provide an analysis of how military and gender ideologies and cultures, or the structures of military life, might help to explain these differential outcomes. Secondly, despite approaching military experience as a potential causal factor in abuse, these studies do not take a critical approach to militarism: rather, military deployments, military culture, and the military itself are assumed to be unchangeable political constants; something which has to be worked around and learned to cope with rather than questioned or challenged. ‘Militarism’ is not a concept which this literature employs, as the military itself is not understood to be a political and social construct in the ways that this term would imply (see Chapter Four). As such, in the terms introduced in the previous chapter, these are “problem-solving” rather than “critical” pieces of work (Cox 1981: 88-89). Connected to this, because of its focus on out-of-the-ordinary experiences - and, significantly, on out-of-the-ordinary, pathologised perpetrators - this literature abstracts abuse from the normal and the everyday, and thus obscures the ways in which it is

shaped by the everyday gendered inequalities which shape life in the British military institution (see Chapter Four). This literature thus disregards the compelling insights of feminist scholarship both on domestic abuse and on forms of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings.

There are a small number of important exceptions to this dominant gender-blind approach in the literature on the causality of domestic abuse in military institutions - studies which have more in common with my own approach and which inform the present study. Jones (2012: 154) points very briefly to feminist scholarship in her review of the literature in US and Canadian militaries. She describes the military as “a male dominated field, in which individuals are socialised in an environment that condones a hypermasculinity or macho persona,” and draws on classic feminist work such as that by Dobash and Dobash (1979) to suggest that “Within this gender role belief system, use of force is one way in which male dominance can be supported.” However, Jones does not cite any empirical research to back up her suggestions. In the Canadian military context, Harrison and Laliberté’s work specifically points to the gendered underpinnings of both domestic abuse and the military. For Harrison and Laliberté, “To say that the military community is gendered would be to state the very obvious” (1994: 11). These scholars argue that domestic abuse in the military must be understood in relation to the gendered culture of militarism, and that the patriarchal nature of military communities is a causal factor in such abuse (*ibid.*: 13, 52). More explicitly, Harrison talks specifically about elements of life in the Canadian military which may *cause* domestic abuse, and places particular focus on the violence and control endemic in military life and in military training (2002: 14-22), as well as the gendered inequalities inherent in military culture. She draws on Dobash and Dobash (1979) to argue that in the hyper masculine military community in particular, men who abuse their wives are merely living up to masculine social roles (Harrison 2002: 2), and that while the Canadian military does not approve of using physical violence against one’s spouse, “control of female partners appears to be at least informally fostered” (*ibid.*: 19). While Harrison and Laliberté’s work in particular clearly underpins my approach in this thesis, as I argue above, its location in the Canadian context limits its applicability to the British military community.

This section has explored some of the literature which deals with broad questions of causality in relation to domestic abuse, and sexual and gender-based violence, in civilian, conflict/post-conflict, and military-institutional settings. As I note above, there is a potential for confusion and slippage here because the literatures above deal directly with the causality of abuse, whereas my

empirical interest is in the *responses* to abuse, including the dominant *perceptions* of causality which circulate in the British military setting. However, the literature explored above constitutes a crucial part of that from which the approach of this thesis, and its research questions, emerges, and thus is necessarily included here. This discussion has both situated my study within the various approaches to domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence in civilian, military, and conflict/post-conflict settings, and introduced some of the ways in which the causality of abuse has been understood by scholars in these various settings, thus laying the groundwork for my discussions of the perceptions of causality which are to come.

I have identified the main insight which I take from feminist-informed literature on domestic abuse - that such abuse is part of a continuum of violence against women which is rooted in gendered social inequalities of power - and I have demonstrated that, for the most part, this insight is missing from scholarship which deals specifically with domestic abuse in military institutions. In addition, I have drawn upon feminist-informed literature on SGBV in conflict and post-conflict settings to argue that war and militarism reshape gender norms and thus, that militarism needs to be taken into account in making sense of gendered forms of violence such as domestic abuse. With the exception of the work by Harrison and Laliberté, there is a lack of scholarship on the causality of domestic abuse in military institutions which approaches such abuse both as a social issue rooted in gender inequalities and as enmeshed in the gendered social relations of militarism. My study is, of course, limited in its capacity to fill this gap, because my discussions focus not on causality itself but on the ways in which *perceptions* of causality shapes responses to abuse. Whilst recognising its limits in this area, my research will begin to provide a greater understanding of some of the issues at stake in discussions of the causality of domestic abuse in the military and begin some productive conversations in this area. My research questions relating to the issues raised above, which will be tackled in Chapter Seven of this thesis, are as follows:

- How is the causality of domestic abuse perpetrated by servicemen in the British military perceived by participants in this study? How, if at all, does militarism impact upon these understandings?



## **The literature on victim-survivors' responses: "victims," "survivors," and "barriers"**

In what remains of this chapter, I move to a discussion of scholarship which has focused more specifically on victim-survivors' responses to abuse - in particular, on the ways in which they seek help. Feminist work in this area is generally well-developed and insightful, and my discussions here aim less to critique this literature itself than to show, once again, that its insights are largely absent from research which looks specifically at military domestic abuse. In the sections which follow, I begin by exploring the 'victim' versus 'survivor' debates which have shaped feminist discussions of victim-survivors' responses to abuse. I then move onto two sections which explore some of the "barriers" to help-seeking which scholars and activists have identified. I delve into the literature on military domestic abuse to illustrate that there is a lack of knowledge about the barriers to help-seeking which shape victim-survivors' experiences in the British military context.

### ***'Victims' or 'survivors'?***

Feminist literature on victim-survivors' responses to domestic abuse is shaped by an important debate about how the identities of women who experience abuse should best be understood - are these women 'victims', or 'survivors'? This debate is important because it shapes how women's responses to abuse and their decisions about whether and how to seek help are understood by the women themselves, by those tasked with supporting them, and by the general public.

Those who construct women who experience abuse purely as 'victims' do so in an attempt to undermine tendencies towards victim-blaming and to elicit sympathy and support (Creech and Dunn 2011: 312). Perhaps the most significant strand of the 'victim' side of the debate comes from scholars who draw on psychological approaches to suggest that women become so broken by abuse that they are unable to seek help. Walker's influential work on "battered women's syndrome" in the 1970s suggested that women who experience repeated abuse suffer from a kind of "learned helplessness" whereby they become passive and psychologically incapable of seeking appropriate help for their situation (Walker 1988; 1979; 1984). Walker - who identified as a feminist and acknowledged the importance of gender inequalities in allowing abuse to occur - argued that the continuous, life threatening experience of violence within a relationship produces a situation where women become passive, unable to seek help, and bound to their abusive partners "just as strongly as 'miracle glue' binds inanimate substances" (Walker 1979: xvi). While Walker's work was perhaps the most influential (Stark 2007: 119), other psychological theories

have similarly sought to explain women's inability to resist violent relationships in ways which identify them as helpless victims (see, for example, Clements and Sawhney 2000; Fleming 1979). These approaches cast victims of abuse as innocent of any wrong-doing because of their weakness: they are not to blame for the ongoing abuse because they are psychologically incapable of doing anything to stop it (Dunn 2005: 3-4).

'Victim' approaches have political utility, as they have allowed for women who experience abuse to be understood as legitimate victims who are worthy of sympathy and support (Creek and Dunn 2011: 312). For example, "battered women's syndrome" has been used as a psychological defence against criminal charges in cases where women have killed their abusive partners (Chiu 2001: 1243-44). However, approaches which emphasise 'helpless' victimhood have been criticised as disempowering in that they essentialise women's victimhood, obscure (and thus fail to support) their active resistance and survival, and deny their agency and ability to make decisions (Dunn 2005: 13; Kelly 1988: 159-164; Madriz 1997). In some cases, this has led to policies which disempower women further by taking decisions out of their hands (Chiu 2001: 1245-49). Moreover, the psychological approaches outlined above identify not society but the *psychology of individual women* as the appropriate target of change, as it is women's failure to respond appropriately to the situation, rather than the situation itself, which is the site of intervention. By placing emphasis on individual coping, this approach obscures, and therefore reduces the possibility for action to change, the social inequalities which both underpin domestic abuse *and* which shape responses to it in particular ways, as I explore below.

Those on the 'survivor' side of the debate emphasise women's agency. Lempert (1996: 281), for example, reinterprets the apparent passivity often associated with victim-survivors of abuse as an active survival strategy which women use to protect themselves and to maintain their sense of self in the face of abuse. Similarly, Sev'er explores a range of everyday ways in which women try to negotiate their safety and ability to cope on a day-to-day basis: from using employment as a form of respite, to taking alcohol or drugs to numb their pain (Sev'er 2002: 119-34). While some of these strategies can be understood as self-destructive, they are also evidence of women's agency. These are not helpless victims, but women who "made choices, came up with plans and strategies and sheltered their children the best way they knew" (Sev'er 2002: 135: see also Anitha 2010: 469; Baly 2010: 2298-300; Chantler 2006: 31; Hage 2006: 83-87; Samelius *et al.* 2014). As Kelly notes, a focus on agency helps to avoid the pitfalls of assuming that women are inherently passive and vulnerable to victimisation (Kelly 1988: 163; see also Renzetti and Bergen 2005: 9).

Paying attention to the everyday strategies that women pursue to manage, minimise, cope with, and escape abuse is important in order to recognise the whole range of women's responses to abuse.

An over-emphasis on women's agency, however, is also problematic, as it leaves victim-survivors open to criticism and even to sanctions for making the 'wrong' choices. While feminist researchers and support agencies tend to assume that ending the relationship is the only appropriate choice an abused woman can make, victim-survivors do not always agree (Chiu 2001: 1251-53; Lewis *et al.* 2001: 109). Some support workers struggle to live up to their own ideals of honouring women's decisions, and find themselves frustrated and limited in their capacity to fully support those who make what they consider to be the 'wrong' choices of remaining in or returning to the relationship (Dunn 2005: 4; Dunn and Powell-Williams 2007: 991-98; Thapar-Björkert and Morgan 2010: 45). For example, Westmarland has observed support workers who insist on reporting victim-survivors with children to social services if they do not end relationships with men who they find out have been violent in previous relationships, which may leave women feeling that they are being punished for their choices (2015: 27; see also Hartley 2004; Terrance *et al.* 2008: 879-80; Weisz and Wiersma 2011). An exclusive focus on women as survivors without a full recognition of their victimisation can also obscure the real dangers involved in resistance (Chantler 2006: 31), and belittle the devastating impact that domestic abuse can have (Thapar-Björkert and Morgan 2010: 49). Indeed, it can also erase the fact that not all women *do* survive their partner's violence (Sev'er 2002: 17). Further - and of particular importance for the purposes of this thesis - by again focusing on the resilience of the *individual*, 'survivor' approaches divert attention from the social structures of inequality which allow domestic abuse to occur and which shape help-seeking decisions in particular ways (Dunn 2005: 23). That is, an emphasis on the ability of the individual to cope with abuse marginalises broader questions about the social structures and ideologies which produce particular subjects as vulnerable. The critique of victim-focused approaches outlined above - that a focus on the psychology of individual women diverts attention from social inequalities - is thus reflected here. I therefore want to suggest that whether victimhood or agency are centred, an approach which emphasises the (lack of) capacities of the individual to resist without a concurrent consideration of the social factors which produce both abuse itself *and those very capacities for resistance* is necessarily limited and partial and, moreover, runs the risk of individualising and depoliticising the problem of domestic abuse itself.

More nuanced literature combines these two approaches and understands women who experience domestic abuse as both victims and agents (e.g. Ritchie, in Bograd 1999: 825; Chantler 2006: 30; Chiu 2001: 1257-60). This literature both recognises the active decisions which women make on a daily basis to keep themselves safe *and* situates these decisions within the limited conditions of possibility which are imposed upon them by the abuse they experience and by gendered society more broadly. That is, victimisation and agency are understood not as binary opposites but as co-existing conditions. As Jenkins puts it, “these women are victims, but they are also active participants in their own lives. They have lived in fear, but they have also worked consistently to save their own lives” (Jenkins 1996: 110). In the hope of reflecting the co-existence of victimisation and agency, I use the term ‘victim-survivor’ throughout this thesis to describe women who experience domestic abuse.

Thapar-Björkert and Morgan suggest that this coexistence of victimhood and agency “draws attention to the importance of understanding the social contexts and social worlds in which violence and victimisation are understood and conceptualised” (2010: 32). That is, in Baly’s words, “[d]ealing with the abusive situation requires women to address a complex and fluid set of circumstantial factors, including the abusive and manipulative behaviours expressed by their partners, their own economic and family circumstances, and the availability and perceived effectiveness of external support” (2010: 2298). While victim-survivors continually resist the abuse to which they are subjected, their ability to be successful - however ‘success’ is defined - will depend on their access to particular resources and forms of social support (Gondolf and Fisher 1988). Furthermore, responding to abuse in particular ways has costs and often involves “trade-offs” in which victim-survivors have to give up certain desired things in order to obtain safety from abuse (Thomas *et al.* 2015). Feminist work has discussed the conditions of possibility in which victim-survivors respond to abuse in terms of “barriers” to help-seeking (e.g. Burman and Chantler 2005; Fugate *et al.* 2005; Wolf *et al.* 2003) - the social factors which make it difficult, or even impossible, for certain victim-survivors to make particular choices or to access particular services. Dunn and Powell-Williams (2007: 987-989) suggest that such barriers can be both “internal” and “external.” For the purposes of this discussion, “internal” barriers include women’s understandings of the abuse and, more broadly, of themselves as gendered subjects. “External” barriers are often closely related to structural inequalities and/or to a lack of the material resources necessary to cope independently outside of the relationship.

### ***“Internal” barriers to help-seeking***

Romantic partnership, and intimacy itself, are social constructions which are specific to a given temporal and cultural location (Evans 1998: 273; Langan and Davidson 2004) and are embedded in social structures such as marriage as well as in a broad range of cultural productions including fairy tales, pop music, television, and religion (Jackson 2001: 573; Sueffert 1999: 220; Towns and Adams 2000). Dominant discourses of intimacy in the contemporary West are largely heteronormative, assuming not only that the need for intimacy is innate but that its most natural home is in a monogamous, gendered, heterosexual relationship (Langan and Davidson 2004: 53, 67). Such discourses occupy a central place in our cultural consciousness, where “falling in love” is understood as an essential human experience, an inherently positive process, and the natural basis for the monogamous relationships which we expect to provide fulfilment of our emotional needs, knowledge of “who we really are” (Langford 1999: xi), and a refuge from the difficulties of everyday life (Fraser 2003: 279; Santore 2009: 1203). Heterosexual romance has been presented to women in particular as “the great female adventure, duty, and fulfilment” (Rich 1980: 654), one in which women are expected to invest considerable “intimacy work” (Langan and Davidson 2004: 62-66; see also Pearce and Stacey 1995).

Domestic abuse is experienced and made sense of within these culturally constructed, gendered ideas about romance. Walker and Goldner argue that women experiencing domestic abuse rationalise their experiences and their relationships with reference to cultural narratives of romance and of gender - “Each of us makes meaning out of our lives by situating our own particular family drama into these available story-lines” (1995: 45; see also Boonzaier and De La Rey 2003). For Towns and Adams, “perfect love discourses” play a role in trapping women into abusive relationships by shaping the ways in which they respond to early signs of abuse. They suggest that culturally produced ideals of romantic love encourage female victim-survivors in particular to understand their partner’s abusive behaviour as separate from their true character - as a temporary affliction which can be overcome with love and support (Towns and Adams 2000: 573). In what they call a “gender twist,” they suggest that women come to feel that must “rescue [the perpetrator] from his atrocious behaviour by providing the perfect-love,” and that if they fail in this task, “they cannot be loving them enough and [...] they should try harder” (*ibid.*: 573-75). Similarly, Hoff suggests that “having internalised the cultural norm that women are largely responsible for the success or failure of human relationships,” victim-survivors are likely to interpret the abuse as their own fault and to try to improve the relationship through loving behaviour - and that not to do so feels, to many women, like a failure (Hoff 1990: 43). Several

other studies have made similar arguments (see, for example, Boonzaier and De La Rey 2003: 1011-14; 2004; Borochowitz and Eisikovits 2002; Browne 1991; Jackson 2001: 307; Kearney 2001: 275; Sueffert 1999). Multiple studies have identified a sense of shame and a fear of being judged on the part of victim-survivors as one of the most significant barriers to seeking help (e.g. Fugate *et al.* 2005: 299-301; Harne and Radford 2008: 47; Wolf *et al.* 2003: 121), and close connections can be drawn here. Women who feel ashamed and think that abuse is caused by their own failures are less likely to name the abuse *as abuse* or to reach out for help from others. As Towns and Adams suggest, “perfect love discourses may silence women’s talk about male partner violence, prevent change in the relationship, and in so doing, prevent change in patriarchal practices” (2000: 560). Dominant gendered discourses about romance therefore produce significant barriers to help-seeking in response to domestic abuse.

It should be clear from the discussions above that while I and others have referred to these barriers as “internal” they are not entirely specific to or produced within the individual, but rooted in dominant gendered *social* norms about intimacy which exist prior to, and which shape the formation of, the individual (see Chapters Four and Five). As such, feminist literature on “internal” barriers to help-seeking is useful because it enables us to contextualise victim-survivors’ help-seeking decisions within the discursive contexts in which they take place. This helps us to consider help-seeking decisions in context and thus to approach women who experience domestic abuse as both victims and agents whose decisions make sense within the social settings in which they are made.

Turning to the research on domestic abuse in military institutions, only a small amount of the available scholarship recognises the role of cultural ideas about gender and romantic relationships in shaping victim-survivors’ responses to abuse, and as a result scholars know little about how the militarisation of these ideas shapes experiences of domestic abuse and of help-seeking. Work in the Canadian military context by Harrison and Laliberté (1994) and Harrison (2002) has offered the most convincing intervention here. These scholars argue that civilian women married to Canadian servicemen experience considerable pressure to embody a particular kind of militarised femininity centred on stoicism, self-reliance, and deference to their husbands (Harrison and Laliberté 1994: 83, 172-73). In Harrison’s terms, being a ‘military wife’ requires “significant self-effacement” (Harrison 2002: 96). Civilian women married to servicemen who fail to behave ‘appropriately’ risk both damaging their husband’s military career and being ostracised within their own communities (Harrison 2002: 110-11). This risk of damaging their

husband's military career is, for Harrison and Laliberté, at the root of a reticence which they identify among victim-survivors in the Canadian military context to disclose abuse and to seek help from agencies (Harrison and Laliberté 1994: 197, 209). Harrison and Laliberté's work develops the insights of the literature explored above in important ways, drawing attention to the specific ways in which women married to servicemen may make sense of their experiences of abuse through the normative constructions of gender identities and roles, and romance and marriage, which circulate within the military context.

However, as I note in the introduction to this chapter, it is not necessarily possible to unproblematically apply research conducted overseas to the British context, and as a result there is a need for scholarship based in this country. In Williamson and Price's survey research with the partners of British servicemen, the most significant reported barrier to accessing military support services was a concern about the impact this would have upon their partner's career (Williamson and Price 2009: 18). While this suggests that the help-seeking decisions of civilian women married to servicemen may be shaped by their desire to provide support for their serving husbands in similar ways to those suggested by Harrison and Laliberté in the Canadian case, Williamson and Price's survey methodology and resultant lack of in-depth, qualitative data limits the depth of understanding which can be drawn from this study. This is an area in which my own study will provide further knowledge. The research questions through which I begin to make sense of these issues, which will be discussed in Chapter Five, are:

- How are responses to domestic abuse in the British military shaped by discourses of gender identity? How, if at all, is militarism implicated in this?

#### ***"External" barriers to help-seeking***

Feminist scholarship on victim-survivors responses to domestic abuse has also drawn attention to external, structural barriers which make it difficult - or even impossible - for certain victim-survivors to take particular help-seeking decisions. This is a larger body of literature than that focused on internal barriers, and in order to keep the focus of this chapter within the scope of the thesis I limit my discussions here to literature concerned with two illustrative examples which emerge as particularly relevant in Chapter Six of this thesis: economic barriers, and those constituted through a victim-survivors' insecure immigration status.

A significant proportion of scholarship on structural barriers to help-seeking has focused on the economic factors which raise the costs for victim-survivors of seeking help and, in particular, of leaving abusive relationships. Scholars have drawn attention to the economic dependency of many victim-survivors upon their abusive partners, and have suggested that this is both a feature of gendered society in which men continue to have, on average, more economic power than women, and the result of economic forms of domestic abuse through which perpetrators attempt to control their victims by increasing that victim's financial dependence upon them (Harne and Radford 2008: 7; Sharp 2008: 12-15). As such, while economic factors are likely to shape the experiences of women from low-income backgrounds and from higher-income backgrounds in significantly different ways, the greater relative economic power of men in comparison to women across class divides means that economic barriers to help-seeking are experienced by a diverse spectrum of women.

A number of scholars have shown that many women who leave abusive relationships risk losing their main source of income, their home, and, if they have to move in order to find safety, their job (Fugate *et al.* 2005: 299; Harne and Radford 2008: 46; Kirkwood 1993; Resko 2010; Rusbult and Martz 1995; Wolf *et al.* 2003: 124-26). Because of the economic dependency of many women upon their husbands, while men are likely to enjoy an improvement in their economic circumstances in the year immediately following family breakdown, women are more likely to face degradation in theirs during this time period (Westaway and McKay 2007). In the US, Baker *et al.* found that 25-50% of abused women who had ended their abusive relationships experience housing problems after separation, and 38% had become homeless (2003: 775). Similarly, domestic abuse is one of the leading causes of women's homelessness in the UK (Malos and Hague 1997: 400). For many victim-survivors, then, "the escape from violence opens up further insecurity and uncertainty" (*ibid.*: 398). As a result, victim-survivors may find themselves balancing the potential harms of remaining in the abusive relationship with the economic costs of leaving, and some may avoid responding to abuse in ways which might impact their economic wellbeing (Sharp 2008: 7; see also Correia 2000; Davis 1999; Fender *et al.* 2002). Worries about access to money, and in particular to housing, often emerge from studies as one of the most significant structural barriers to leaving abusive relationships (e.g. Jaffee *et al.* 2002), and these issues are likely to be particularly pertinent for women in poorer households (Walby and Allen 2004: 74-77; see also Bell 2003; Kaukinen *et al.* 2013: 594; Moe and Bell 2004). Scholars have thus identified economic dependency upon one's abuser as an important factor which "suppresses



women's ability to get out of relationships" which are characterised by domestic abuse (Anderson 2007: 191-93).

Insecure immigration status - which intersects closely with financial insecurity - has also been identified by scholars as a significant structural barrier to help-seeking for the victim-survivors who it affects. Recent migrants into the UK may, as Anitha points out, be subject to a range of barriers to help-seeking which are not experienced by those with a longer history of living here: they are more likely to lack English language proficiency, for example, and also experience greater social isolation and a greater degree of financial dependence upon their partners (Anitha 2011: 5, 13). Moreover, those whose immigration status is insecure or dependent upon their partner may experience additional hardships. In the context of domestic abuse, British scholarship and activism has focused on the experiences of non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals<sup>63</sup> who enter the UK as the spouse of a British citizen<sup>64</sup> (Burman and Chantler 2005; No Recourse to Public Funds Network 2009). Foreign nationals who enter the UK on a spouse visa must remain in the relationship for five years before they are able to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR); a more secure immigration status which is independent of their relationship with their spouse. If the relationship breaks down before this, the non-British spouse loses their right to be in the UK and may be deported. In addition, during this five year period, those on a spouse visa have 'no recourse to public funds': they are not able to access the provisions of the welfare state such as housing benefit and income support<sup>65</sup> (Anitha 2010: 464). Without recourse to public funds, women can access neither refuge accommodation provided by specialist domestic violence services nor emergency accommodation provided by local authorities (Burman and Chantler 2005: 67-68), and as a result, for many, the "independent housing and income that would enable them to escape ongoing abuse are unobtainable options" (Coy *et al.* 2008: 43). Largely as a result of the campaigning by women's organisations, the system as it relates specifically to victim-survivors of domestic abuse has been reformed and significantly improved in recent years. As of 2002, the Domestic Violence Rule has allowed those who could prove that their marriage had broken down as a result of domestic abuse to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) before the mandated probationary period (which at the time was two years, and is now five years) has

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<sup>63</sup> As EEA nationals are not subject to immigration control in the UK, the structural barriers discussed here do not apply to them (Kennedy, 2011).

<sup>64</sup> [www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/campaigns/abolish-no-recourse-to-public-funds](http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/campaigns/abolish-no-recourse-to-public-funds);  
<http://rightsofwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Domestic-violence-immigration-law-and-no-recourse-to-public-funds-.pdf>, last accessed 25 June 2015.

<sup>65</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-funds--2/public-funds](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-funds--2/public-funds), last accessed 22 July 2015.

elapsed<sup>66</sup>. In addition, in 2012 the Destitution Domestic Violence (DDV) Concession was introduced, which allows those on a spouse visa access to public funds for up to three months while they apply for ILR under the Domestic Violence Rule<sup>67</sup>.

While there have been significant improvements in recent years, some barriers do remain. Firstly, the Domestic Violence Rule and the DDV Concession apply only to those who enter the UK on a spouse visa; victim-survivors of abuse who are here under different immigration rules, for example those who come to study on a student visa and then enter an abusive relationship, are still unable to access public funds. In addition, in order to access the DDV, victim-survivors must obtain specific, recognised forms of proof of the abuse<sup>68</sup>. Acceptable forms of evidence include the criminal conviction of the perpetrator, a civil injunction such as a non-molestation order, a medical report from a doctor, a police report which confirms attendance at a domestic abuse incident, a letter from social services, or a letter from a domestic abuse support agency<sup>69</sup>. Scholars have suggested that given the hidden nature of domestic abuse, victim-survivors - and in particular minoritised women - may find it difficult to access these forms of evidence, as all require the victim-survivor to have made previous contact with an external authority figure in relation to the abuse (Burman and Chantler 2005: 66). This may be a particular issue for victim-survivors who have avoided reporting to official agencies for fear that their own future immigration status may be undermined by doing so (Gill 2004: 478). Moreover, perpetrators whose victims have insecure immigration status often use this to control them - for example by giving them false information, preventing them from complying with immigration rules, and threatening to have them deported - and such victim-survivors are likely to be unaware of the legal concessions available (Harne and Radford 2008: 49-50). Insecure immigration status is thus likely to remain a barrier to help-seeking for significant numbers of women.

The above discussions of the economic and immigration-status related barriers to help-seeking which victim-survivors may experience demonstrates the importance of paying attention to structures of inequality in making sense of victim-survivors' responses to abuse. Without understanding the economic costs of particular responses, or the rules which make it difficult for

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<sup>66</sup> [www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-violence-survivors-handbook.asp?section=0001000100080001](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-violence-survivors-handbook.asp?section=0001000100080001), last accessed 15 July 2015.

<sup>67</sup> [www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/guidance/Documents/DDV%20Concession%20Factsheet.pdf](http://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/guidance/Documents/DDV%20Concession%20Factsheet.pdf), last accessed 10 July 2015.

<sup>68</sup> [www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/guidance/Documents/DDV%20Concession%20Factsheet.pdf](http://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/guidance/Documents/DDV%20Concession%20Factsheet.pdf), last accessed 10 July 2015.

<sup>69</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/430975/Victims\\_of\\_domestic\\_violence\\_v13\\_0.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/430975/Victims_of_domestic_violence_v13_0.pdf), last accessed 10 July 2015.

women with insecure immigration status to access alternative accommodation, the decisions which some women make *not* to draw on particular services and resources would not make sense. Despite this insight, scholarship on domestic abuse in military institutions has paid only limited attention to the particular structural factors which delimit victim-survivors' responses to abuse in this context. In the US, military domestic abuse support organisation the Miles Foundation highlighted gendered structural elements of life as a 'military wife,' such as financial dependence and social isolation, which they argued must be taken into account in studies of abuse<sup>70</sup>. However, my review of the literature has not been able to unearth in-depth, qualitative data which indicates how this is experienced in the US military context. Other barriers to help-seeking identified in the literature include the economic, social, and visa-status dependency which is experienced specifically by women who enter the US from abroad as the wives of US servicemen. Erez and Bach provide qualitative interview data which explores the barriers such women face, highlighting their fears about losing their visa rights, social isolation, language difficulties, lack of knowledge about available support systems, and racially discriminatory responses from military welfare staff (Erez and Bach 2003: 1106, 10-11). In addition, Savitsky *et al.* (2009) explore difficulties which US military personnel and their families may have in accessing civilian social work services, which may not always understand their particular needs and experiences. Similarly, in the Canadian case, Harrison and Laliberté also highlight structural barriers which are specific to military life. They identify the social isolation and financial dependency upon the serving spouse which is engendered by the mobility of military life as factors which shape and delimit victim-survivors' responses to domestic abuse (Harrison and Laliberté 1994: 24-25, 133-38; Harrison 2002: 32, 37-38). While this scholarship once again provides important insights which guide my research, as I argue above, care must be taken in applying research findings from overseas to the British case. Turning to the British military, Williamson and Price's study implicitly points towards factors which may produce particular barriers to help-seeking in this context. Most significantly, the demographic information they provide on their survey participants states that 83% of them live in accommodation provided by the military. However, despite the wealth of feminist work which has pointed to the significance of housing in shaping victim-survivors' responses to abuse, the analysis provided by the study does not make any mention of this. My study will begin to fill the gap in the literature which this leaves by drawing on in-depth qualitative data to discuss some of the ways in which structural inequalities shape victim-survivors' responses to abuse in the British military context. As such, the research questions with which I engage in Chapter Six are:

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<sup>70</sup> [http://nsrc.sfsu.edu/article/domestic\\_violence\\_troops\\_military;www.civicrosearchinstitute.com/dvr\\_military.pdf](http://nsrc.sfsu.edu/article/domestic_violence_troops_military;www.civicrosearchinstitute.com/dvr_military.pdf), last accessed 19 November 2011.

- How are responses to domestic abuse in the British military shaped by the material structures of life in this context? How, if at all, is militarism implicated in this?

### **Concluding remarks**

This chapter has demonstrated the gaps in the literature on victim-survivors' responses to domestic abuse in the British Armed Forces, which this thesis begins to fill. My review of the literature revealed a significant lack of studies which take domestic abuse in the British military as their empirical focus. Only one study - a small scale, survey-based pilot project - has collected empirical data specifically on domestic abuse in this context. My discussions in this chapter have pointed to useful insights which have emerged from this study; such as its indication that victim-survivors' concern for their husbands' careers is likely to constitute as significant barrier to help-seeking. However, I have also illustrated some of its conceptual and methodological limitations: in particular, the small number of participants who self-identified as victim-survivors of domestic abuse; the limited depth of its mostly quantitative data; and the ways in which its focus on the extra-ordinary impacts of combat deployment obscures the everyday gendered inequalities which shape experiences of abuse. My review of the literature also identified a relatively large body of literature on domestic abuse in the US military, and a smaller amount which focuses on the Canadian Armed Forces. While this scholarship has informed my study in various ways, I have argued that its overseas location precludes easy transposition into the British context. Moreover, while Harrison and Laliberté's research in the Canadian Armed Forces in particular has presented invaluable qualitative data which explores several of the issues of interest to this study, I have shown that the overwhelming majority of the research conducted in the US context, along with Williamson and Price's British study, is largely quantitative, problem-solving, and positivist in its approach, and as a result does not provide qualitative or interpretive data which would allow for in-depth reflection on the lived experiences of military domestic abuse. Moreover, the majority of the existing literature on domestic abuse in both the US and British militaries fails to take account of the insights which emerge from the feminist-informed literatures on domestic abuse and on sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings. Given the compelling nature and empirical basis of these bodies of work, this is frustrating, and represents a significant weakness.

As such, as I stated in the introduction to this chapter, the study contributes to knowledge in important ways. Firstly, the research provides in-depth, qualitative empirical data which enables better understanding of responses to abuse - in particular, the responses of victim-survivors themselves - in the British military context. This is the first study to produce this kind of data, and it has potential uses to policy-makers and practitioners who provide support services in this context as well as to scholars. Secondly, by drawing on the insights of feminist-informed scholarship on domestic abuse and on conflict and post-conflict forms of gender-based violence, my study explores the ways in which perceptions and responses to abuse are shaped by the structures and ideologies of a specifically *military* gender culture. My study thus contributes towards understanding responses to domestic abuse in the British military context, and in particular the help-seeking decisions of victim-survivors, in important and original ways.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### Reflections on epistemology, politics, process, and ethics

The methods that we use to investigate questions in social science, like the questions themselves, are not innocent. Our theoretical underpinnings and decisions shape who and what we study, how we do it, and how we use the knowledge we construct. An exploration of methodology, therefore, should not consist simply of the ways one collects data, but should include consideration of one's epistemology and of the ethical and political implications of the work (Wickramasinghe 2010: 8). This chapter explores the feminist-informed, post-positivist, qualitative approach which underpins this study; an approach which has been selected because it allows me to gather in-depth, experiential data with which to make sense of the ways in which responses to domestic abuse are shaped by the arrangements of gender and of power at work in the British military context. In particular, this chapter focuses on the issues where significant decisions have had to be made about how best to approach the research: such as whether or not to build a relationship with the military institution; what kind of sample to pursue; and what kind of data collection method to use. Following feminist insights about the importance of reflexivity, paying close attention to my methodological decisions enables informed evaluations to be made of the study as a whole. Accordingly, I begin this chapter with some broader reflections on the epistemological approach which informs my work, my personal investment in the study, and the relationship of the study as a whole to the military institution. I follow this with a more detailed and focused discussion of the processes through which the research was conducted. This is organised chronologically, from sampling and recruiting interview participants, to conducting the interviews and analysing the transcripts.

Ethical considerations are a centrally important element of any research with human subjects. However, as I discuss in this chapter, a number of scholars have suggested that an ethical approach is particularly important, and that ethics warrant particular attention, when studying 'vulnerable' populations and sensitive issues such as domestic abuse (e.g. Abrahams *et al.* 2004; Clark and Walker 2011; Fontes 2004; Lee and Renzetti 1990; Lee 1993). While others have argued against this blanket assumption of vulnerability - suggesting that this itself constitutes a problematic and ethically questionable approach (e.g. Downes *et al.* 2014) - I take the view that *all* research must be centred upon a consideration of ethics, and thus ethical reflection is a key concern of this chapter. The final section of the chapter focuses in particular on the important ethical issue of the safety and wellbeing of participants; in addition, however, broader discussions

of ethics are woven throughout the chapter. Research ethics are always complex and rarely straight-forward, and like much research this study generates ethical questions which are not clear-cut and which cannot be resolved with a totally satisfactory solution (Fontes 2004: 171). As such, this chapter does not pretend to be able to offer final or conclusive statements on the ethics of the research, but rather to lay out the balancing processes I have used and the decisions I have made.

### **Epistemology: reflexivity, a qualitative paradigm, and post-positivism**

Epistemology, defined as “a framework or theory for specifying the constitution and generation of knowledge about the social world” (Stanley and Wise 1993: 188), has a structuring impact on the process of research. Like many feminists, I resist the epistemological tenets of the positivist paradigm of social science, which rests on the assumption that knowledge (as in objective ‘facts’) can exist independently of the knower and abstracted from its context. Within this paradigm, the context of knowing is deemed unimportant (Code 1995: 13-18), and opinion, values and emotional involvement are considered both separate from and dangerous to objective facts (Acker *et al.* 1983: 427; Reinharz and Davidman 1992: 233). Positivists thus aim for what Haraway (1988: 584) labelled “the god-trick” - the ability to transcend social location and lived experience and to occupy a detached location as neutral observer. Feminists such as Haraway (1988), Harding (1991) and Hawkesworth (1989: 458-59) have challenged this paradigm, arguing that *all* knowledges are partial in that they are produced and known in specific circumstances by a socially located knower. A researcher’s theoretical frameworks, and therefore the questions they ask and the knowledge they create, are shaped by their embeddedness in the social world (Hawkesworth 1989: 549-50; Maynard 1994: 16). Moreover, feminist epistemologists have argued that “knowledge is not only partial, it is also not innocent” (Wickramasinghe 2010: 42). That is, no research is apolitical, and the assumption that certain knowledge *is* objective allows those with the power to define their knowledge as such to distort the research agenda, and relegates the knowledge of ‘others’ to the status of partial, biased, applicable only to a given ‘special interest group,’ or mere ‘values’ (Acker *et al.* 1983: 424; Code 1995: 16-17; Mies 1983: 118).

Rather than aiming to research from a position of value-free abstraction in which the object of study is positioned as “the ‘other’ who cannot reflect back on and affect the knower” (Acker *et al.* 1983: 427), feminist epistemologists contend that those producing knowledge should accept their

embeddedness in the social world of the research and aim instead for “conscious partiality” (Mies 1983: 122). That is, we aim for explicit recognition of the social and cultural assumptions and experiences which construct our subjectivity as researchers and thus the research we choose to do, analysing the social context in which knowledge is created and the impact of this upon the knowledge itself (McCorkel and Myers 2003: 202-03). The findings of any given research endeavour are therefore claimed not as a universal and enduring truth, but as a product of this particular social process of research (Reinharz and Davidman 1992: 212). It is worth mentioning here that this does not indicate a slide into relativism: that no ‘truth’ can be described as universal does not mean that no knowledge claim can be prioritised over others. It remains imperative to retain the ability to critique misogyny and to produce knowledge which can claim the authority to lead to social change (Hawkesworth 1989: 537; Scheper-Hughes 1995).

Given the importance of one’s social location on the research that one chooses to do and the findings one generates, feminist researchers have argued for the importance of reflective practice in order to “reflect on, examine critically, and explore analytically the nature of the research process” (Fonow and Cook 2005: 2218). In reflexive work, researchers “subject themselves to the same level of scrutiny they direct toward the subjects of their research” (McCorkel and Myers 2003: 203), analysing the roles that “thoughts, emotions, experiences, assumptions, intentions, imaginations and consciousness of the self play in researching” (Wickramasinghe 2010: 56; see also Corcoran 2005: 139). For some scholars (e.g. Davies 2012; Leatherby 2000; Wickramasinghe 2010: 58-61), this process begins by explicitly writing oneself into the text, outlining one’s social positioning or the personal experiences which led one to be involved in the particular piece of research. In my case, this might consist of a sketch of my social and political location as a white, middle-class British woman without direct links to the military, with a broadly anti-militarist viewpoint and an involvement in feminism as an academic, activist and support practitioner. I could discuss how my employment in the fundraising department at a domestic violence charity, combined with an increasing interest in anti-war politics, led to my being asked by the charity to contribute to a response to a BBC Radio Four documentary programme which proposed to describe domestic abuse in the military as a “symptom” of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), along with insomnia, panic attacks, and flashbacks. I could go on to explain how it was the frustration that I felt at this ignorance of everything I had come to know and to believe about domestic abuse that led me to research the issue further and to decide to pursue the subject through PhD research at the Gender Institute at the London School of Economics and Political Science, accompanied by part-time employment on a domestic abuse telephone helpline.



However, listing characteristics and experiences in this way runs the risk of fixing them into static entities, and in the process erasing their fluidity and context specificity as well as the ways in which they are, in turn, shaped by the research process itself (Reinharz and Davidman 1992: 194-96; Wickramasinghe 2010: 71). Moreover, simply sketching my social location and the evolution of my research interests is insufficient: as Alcoff (1995: 112) contends, doing so without critically engaging with the way in which this shapes one's research agendas leaves the work of analysing its impact to the reader, in some cases acting as a disclaimer against ignorance and absolving the researcher from being fully accountable for her work. My critical engagements with these issues, then, begin below.

The story I tell above about my coming to this research topic from a place of frustration with the depoliticisation of domestic abuse has had an important shaping effect on the way I have approached the work. Specifically, I approach the research from a feminist-informed, expressly *political* start point which centres the experiences of victim-survivors and aims to draw connections between individual experiences and the wider social milieu in which they are situated. Feminist scholars have drawn attention to the importance of research which does not aim to be neutral but which is instead "politically and morally engaged" (Scheper-Hughes 1995; Sev'er 2002: 10-11). My politically informed and politically targeted approach lies at the root of my decision to use qualitative methods, as feminists have identified a qualitative approach as effective for getting the issue of gender violence onto public and political agendas, in particular on topics - such as domestic abuse in the British military - about which there is little existing knowledge (Griffiths and Hanmer 2005: 23). Moreover, my qualitative approach most effectively allows for a troubling of many of the assumptions embedded in much of the "problem-solving" approach to abuse embedded in the literature that I critique in Chapter Two, as it enables me to centre the multifaceted lived experiences of the victim-survivors who participated in this study. In addition, while my sample does consist of support workers and perpetrators as well as victim-survivors of abuse, my political start-point is at the root of my decision to centre the experience of victim-survivors in my analysis - to treat victim-survivors themselves as the "experts" on their own experiences (Hage 2006: 85). Centring the voices of victim-survivors is politically important in order to challenge both victim-blaming discourses (Thapar-Björkert and Morgan 2010: 33-37) and the "culture of disbelief" (Hawkins and Laxton 2014: 17) which have been identified in relation to understandings of domestic abuse in the UK. That a culture of disbelief in relation to domestic abuse may exist in the military space was highlighted to me throughout the course of developing this thesis when, on presenting preliminary findings, I immediately faced the question from

military and quasi-military support staff: “But how do you know she is telling the truth?” Countering this culture of disbelief around women’s experiences of abuse is an important part of the political work of this thesis.

### **Research relationship with the military institution**

Scholars have raised specific concerns about researchers working with the military institution because of the possibility that such research may itself become militarised as a result. Jenkins *et al.* express concern that collaboration with the military institution requires researchers to accept institutional conceptualisations of the world and institutionally accepted research methodologies - factors which are particularly important in the design and operation of research. This requirement leaves Jenkins *et al.* to conclude that while close relationships between researchers and the institution facilitate research, they also shape the type of research which can be produced; that is, “[r]esearch based on high levels of access within military forces is more likely to accord with the conceptual world-views of those forces and their governing institutions” (2011: 44-45). Similarly, scholars including Enloe (2010: 1107) and Cohn (1987: 704-07) have warned that while becoming fluent in the language of military institutions is likely to build rapport and facilitate research relationships, it is also likely to delimit the questions that researchers are able to ask and to diminish the criticality of their approach - in Enloe’s words, “If one is eager to be held in high regard - to be “taken seriously” - by the institution’s senior players, one could begin to adopt not only their language, but their priorities, even their outlook on the world” (2010: 1107). Finally, for Basham, there is a "significant risk that engaging with militaries legitimates their practices, or that in offering relevant policy findings, scholars may enhance military effectiveness, intentionally or otherwise" (2013: 3; see also Ben-Ari and Levy 2014; Ouellet 2005; Stavrianakis 2006).

The working relationship I have developed with the military institution plays only a minor role in my research - the work was not commissioned or funded by the MOD or the military, and no part of the MOD or the military was involved with the research from its inception. When I began the research, the military was unaware that it was taking place, and 37 of my total 45 interviews were carried out before I sought a relationship with the institution. Indeed, having read the work of the scholars cited above, when I began the project I did not intend to seek any official relationship with the military institution. This changed during the course of conducting the initial research interviews, when I began to feel that *not* engaging with the military institution would cause there

to be a significant gap in the contribution that my research makes - both to academic knowledge and to support practice. This is because, as I explore in Chapter Two, responses to abuse must be approached within their social context in order to be understood; and this means paying critical attention to the gendered culture of the military institution itself - including, for example, the culture of disbelief pointed to above. Moreover, it also means paying focused attention to how military support workers understand abuse in general, and victim-survivors and their help-seeking more specifically. It was therefore necessary to build a relationship with the institution in order to gain access to interview people within it, as this helped me to understand how support workers interpret and enact their roles in relation to abuse in the British military context.

My relationship with the military has been limited to their role as gatekeepers for the eight interviews I carried out with participants I refer to as 'military support workers.' My working relationship with the military has thus been only partial and, as a result, I have managed to avoid some of the problems which the scholars cited above warn about. The institution has not, for example, been involved in the design of the research, and they will not own or make any contribution to any of its outputs - although I have agreed to share documents with them before they are published, to allow them to prepare a response if necessary. As a result, I will be able to centre arguments and to publish work which expressly engages with the military from a critical perspective in addition to focusing on issues which the institution itself might find more 'useful.'

Despite its limited scope, however, this relationship has required that I make certain compromises and adjustments. For example, the military gatekeepers with whom I negotiated access were concerned about the potential for negative press to emerge from the research, particularly around the relationship between PTSD and the perpetration of domestic abuse. This is not surprising, given the levels of media interest in combat-related PTSD in recent years which has positioned PTSD as a causal factor in the violence perpetrated by servicemen<sup>71</sup> and in their suicides<sup>72</sup>, and the criticism that the MOD has faced for failing to adequately prepare and support its personnel<sup>73</sup> (McGeorge *et al.* 2006). Perhaps as a result, military gatekeepers removed specific references to PTSD as a possible cause of domestic abuse from the interview topic guides used with military support worker participants at a fairly early stage. This was not a particular problem

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<sup>71</sup> [www.theguardian.com/uk/2009/sep/24/jailed-veteran-servicemen-outnumber-troops](http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2009/sep/24/jailed-veteran-servicemen-outnumber-troops), last accessed 12 July 2015.

<sup>72</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-23259865](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-23259865), last accessed 4 August 2015.

<sup>73</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1852964.stm>; [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/9105823/Army-failed-my-soldier-son-over-breakdown-claims-father.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/9105823/Army-failed-my-soldier-son-over-breakdown-claims-father.html), last accessed 4 August 2015.

for the research - the kind of access and the study itself are not geared towards establishing causality in the kind of way that the gatekeepers seemed to be concerned about, and as I make clear in Chapter Seven, I too have significant (albeit perhaps different) reservations about the political impact of scholarship which identifies PTSD as causal of domestic abuse. Moreover, given the loosely structured, participant-led approach I took to interviewing (discussed below), while I did not ask military support worker participants about the causal relationship between PTSD and domestic abuse, almost all brought this issue up of their own accord (see Chapter Seven). This demonstrates the difficulty - if not the impossibility - of artificially excluding issues which have come to feature in dominant narratives around a given topic from research interviews of this type.

In the process of negotiating access through the military it was required that I provide “Clear identification of the benefits of the research to the MOD” (personal communication with military gatekeeper). As a result, I have committed to producing a report, tailored for military welfare services, using my research to provide a window into the ways in which current military welfare practices are actually functioning on the ground. This report will aim to help military welfare services to better understand the kind of impacts that their policies are having and to think through how best to improve them. In this way, my research contributes to policy discussions within the MOD around the appropriate response of the military to domestic abuse. Given the importance that the military places on managing the lives and wellbeing of its families in the name of operational effectiveness (Bourg and Segal 1999; Gray 2015; Wood *et al.* 1995; see also Chapters Four and Six), it may be the case that, in some small way, the research does accord with military aims, and thus may be understood to be ‘for’ the institution itself - something which the scholars cited at the beginning of this section caution against.

However, I want to argue against the binary assumption that research can only be ‘for’ or ‘against’ the military. Indeed, while I do recognise the potential difficulties of working with the institution, I also think that doing the research *without* involving military personnel would itself be problematic. What would it be to assume that I know how ‘the military’ - whatever that is - approaches and conceptualises domestic abuse without listening to what it is that the people within the institution say and do? Institutions are made up of *people*, and thus, without paying critical attention to the complexities of the experiences and views of the people who live in and constitute the military institution, we are in danger of making disembodied, over-generalised, and over-simplified critiques - critiques which will, in the end, not possess the same potential for

producing increased understanding and positive change. Engaging in fieldwork with military personnel has the potential to make more complex the critiques which we originally thought we might make, as encounters with the embodied object of research brings the messiness and complexity of social life to the fore (Basham 2013: 3-4). As Bulmer suggests,

isn't this what feminist research is about? Engaging the military community in a genuine dialogue that deepens our understandings of militarisation and war, and actively intervening in those processes and subjecting them to critique - for me this is at the heart of feminist praxis.

(Baker *et al.* forthcoming: 7)

Moreover, given that engagement with the institution is how policies which relate to military families are made, I could not have expected to have any form of positive impact on the experiences of victim-survivors in this context if I did not engage with the institution - and this, I suggest, would be an ethical failing. Even accepting that the policy impact of this research is likely to be small, to foreclose any possibility for contributing - as I may have done by failing to engage with the institution - would not have been ethically sound. While it may prove difficult, in particular as more of the research is disseminated in various ways, I have endeavoured throughout the project to strike a balance between practical interventions which the military might find useful, and broader, systemic critique of the operations of the military institution and of militarism itself.

### **Sampling and access**

Having laid out some of the underlying themes which underpin all of the methodological considerations of this chapter, I now move on to a more specific discussion of the ways in which the research has been conducted. I explore this chronologically - beginning with an exploration of sampling and access. I have conducted interviews with 45 participants, who can be divided into three main groups: victim-survivors, perpetrators, and support workers. Participants were accessed using a convenience sampling technique - a non-representative, non-random sampling technique which involves recruiting participants who are most easily available to take part (Robson 1993: 141). As Lee points out, it is often particularly difficult to recruit participants for research on sensitive topics (Lee 1993: 60), and given the difficulties of identifying and recruiting

people to take part in this study, I felt that a convenience approach to sampling offered the most realistic prospect for accessing participants.

### ***The sample***

I interviewed 18 victim-survivors of abuse - women who had experienced domestic abuse in previous heterosexual relationships with personnel serving in the British military. Thirteen of these participants had been abused by men serving in the Army, four by men serving in the RAF, and one by a serviceman in the Navy. All of these participants had experienced abuse in relationships with servicemen in what the military refers to as 'other ranks' - that is, ranks below the officer ranks. The issue of rank is an important one, and my lack of participants who experienced abuse in relationships with higher ranked personnel is a significant limitation of my sample. While scholars and activists have argued that domestic abuse occurs across socio-economic class groups<sup>74</sup> (Walby and Allen 2004: 78), military support worker participants in this study assured me that, reflecting my sample, the overwhelming majority (although not all) of those who come to them for support in relation to domestic abuse are from 'other rank' backgrounds. In civilian contexts, scholars have suggested that women from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely than others to seek help for abuse through official channels because they are likely to lack the financial resources to end the relationship without such support (Dobash and Dobash 1992: 56; Sullivan and Cain 2004: 610), and others have suggested that women from high-income backgrounds may be particularly discouraged from speaking out about abuse due to social stigma (Kaukinen et al. 2013: 594; Walby and Allen 2004: 98). It is likely that similar issues are shaping the class profile of those seeking help within military institutions, and - as my sample was accessed through support organisations (see below) - these factors are also likely to have influenced the social characteristics of my participants. This represents a weakness in my sample, and further research which looks across the rank spectrum would be valuable. The majority of victim-survivor participants (11) identified as white British, one as black British, one as mixed-race British, and one as white European. The remaining four participants had come to Britain from Commonwealth countries as the wives of Foreign and Commonwealth (F&C) personnel - two from Fiji, and two whose precise national origin I have chosen not to reveal in order to protect their anonymity because of the very small communities within the military from which they are drawn. All of the participants had chosen to access military welfare as opposed to civilian or quasi-military services in the first instance when seeking help for the abuse they experienced. I also conducted interviews with three perpetrators of

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<sup>74</sup> [www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-violence-articles.asp?section=00010001002200410001&itemid=1273](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-violence-articles.asp?section=00010001002200410001&itemid=1273), last accessed 15 July 2015.

abuse, all of whom were serving in the British Army at the time of the interview. All perpetrator participants were below officer rank, and all were white British.

Because professionals are likely to have privileged knowledge about the general structure and experiences of stigmatised and hidden populations such as victim-survivors and perpetrators of abuse (Lee 1993: 73-74), I also interviewed 24 participants who had experience of supporting either or both of these groups in a military and/or a civilian capacity. With the exception of one of the support workers who was Fijian, all participants identified as white British. Of these I refer to eight as 'military' support workers. These are serving military personnel in a support role - including but not limited to the Army Welfare Service, the Royal Naval and Royal Marines Welfare Service, and the various branches of the military police. Of these, six were in the Army, one in the RAF, and one in the Navy. While attempts were made to recruit Unit Welfare Officers as participants, these were unsuccessful. Another eight of the support workers worked in what I refer to as 'quasi-military' roles - that is, they themselves were not military personnel, but they worked in roles where their clients were exclusively military personnel and their families. This includes military-specific charities and support/advocacy organisations. Six of these participants worked across the three services of Army, Navy, and RAF, one worked exclusively with the Army, and one exclusively with the RAF. Finally, I spoke to eight 'civilian' support workers - those who work in mainstream civilian organisations including refuge workers, social workers, and the police, whose geographical location meant that they regularly came into contact with military personnel and their families. It is worth noting that while this represents the organisations that support worker participants were involved with at the time of the interview, there was considerable cross-over in their past experience and several of the quasi-military and civilian support workers had previous experience of working in a military welfare role.

Clearly, representation of the three services of Army, Navy, and RAF is unequal across my sample. The dominance of the Army in military research is not restricted to my study, but characterises much research into the British Armed Forces. While there are of course some exceptions (e.g. Bulmer 2013; de Bere 2003), much important work in the British context looks only at the Army experience (e.g. Atherton 2009; Green *et al.* 2010; Hockey 1986; Ware 2012; Woodward and Winter 2007), and other texts which look across the services do not always disaggregate their participants by service (Higate and Cameron 2004; 2006). In some cases, the focus on the Army is deliberate: Woodward and Winter, for example, chose an Army focus for their study of military gender because it is the Army which has the highest proportion of men, the lowest proportion of

women, and the highest proportion of posts that are open only to men of the three British services (Woodward and Winter 2007: 6). Although it is not explicitly stated, in other cases it is likely that the emphasis on the Army in the literature reflects the relative sizes of the three forces: in July 2014 the Army had 94,370 personnel, the RAF 35,690, and the Navy 33,610 (Rutherford and Berman 2014: 5). In my case, the different representation is rooted in my pragmatic choice of a convenience sampling technique. There are many important similarities which exist across the services, but there is no doubt that there are also significant differences between the experiences of abuse across the three, rooted in their different welfare structures, housing situations, and patterns of deployment. My generalisation of participants' experiences under the label of 'military' is motivated by the exploratory approach which this study takes to a previously under-researched topic; and future research which pays more attention to the specifics of each service would be valuable.

For ethical reasons, victim-survivor participants were no longer in the abusive relationship at the time of the interview. Domestic abuse can pose a serious risk to women's safety and, in some cases, to their lives. As a result, research into domestic abuse is described by scholars as "sensitive," and victim-survivor participants in particular are often described as a "vulnerable" group (Abrahams *et al.* 2004; Clark and Walker 2011; Fontes 2004; Lee and Renzetti 1990; Lee 1993). Studies which include victim-survivor participants who remain in abusive relationships often require complex protocols to protect the safety of participants (Langford 2000; Sullivan and Cain 2004). Discussing abuse for research purposes may expose participants to retaliation from abusers (Bacchus *et al.* 2002: 206; Ellsberg *et al.* 2001: 3), and the risk of abusers finding out is far more significant if they remain the participant's current partner. Although many victim-survivors possess the agency and capacity to decide to take part in "informed risk taking" (Abrahams *et al.* 2004: 199-200), as Fontes (2004: 145) points out, because of the controlling and often unpredictable behaviour of abusers, it may be that some cannot reliably predict how participating in research may impact on their safety across time. She states:

Interviewing a victim of severe marital violence in her home one night might be perfectly safe, for instance, whereas the next night it could be potentially fatal to the interviewer and the interviewed. The consequences of a given research procedure might also be dire but not immediate, for instance, when information reported one



day could potentially result in tangles with the legal or child protective systems far down the road.

(Fontes 2004: 145)

However, my decision to interview only participants who were no longer in the abusive relationship also has negative ethical implications, as the silencing of women can be understood as paternalistic (Abrahams *et al.* 2004: 199-200). Excluding entire groups of participants (as opposed to specific individuals) is overly simplistic, denies the agency of individuals (Perry 2009: 14-15), and risks sending the message that the whole group is total vulnerable and thus not able to give meaningful consent (McDonald and Keys 2008: 79-80). As Becker-Blease and Freyd put it, “[t]reating survivors as overly vulnerable risks repeating abuse dynamics that cause further harm” (2006: 223-24). While the aim of research is, of course, to produce knowledge and not to provide therapeutic benefits, scholars have shown that taking part in research into violence and abuse can have benefits for victim-survivor participants - including being made to feel valued, being treated with respect, having their stories validated, and finding the experience meaningful - and excluding entire groups of participants means excluding them from these benefits (Abrahams *et al.* 2004: 205; Cromer *et al.* 2006; Cromer and Newman 2011; DePrince and Chu 2008; Downes *et al.* 2014; Newman *et al.* 1999). As with many ethical issues, it may be that there is no complete or satisfactory solution to this question (Fontes 2004: 171), and researchers can only seek to strike the right balance and to minimise the potential for harm (Griffin *et al.* 2003: 221). Whether or not victim-survivor participants are seen as vulnerable, scholars have pointed out that the rights, welfare, and dignity of *all* research participants should be treated with care and attention - and that to single out particular groups of participants obscures the possibility that in any social research situation violence and abuse may be disclosed, or particular questions may unexpectedly resonate with participants in ways which might cause harm (Downes *et al.* 2014). This point was illustrated powerfully to me in an interview in which a support worker participant unexpectedly disclosed that she was herself a victim-survivor of domestic abuse. Particular ethical care must therefore be taken to protect the welfare of all research participants (Cromer and Newman 2011; Downes *et al.* 2014).

In addition to the above, the fact that all victim-survivor participants had left the relationship in which they were abused also has implications for the quality of my data. This is because women who have left abusive relationships are a specific, self-selecting sub-group of victim-survivors more broadly. While a small sample such as that used in this study could not be representative of

the experiences of the wider population, this group represents a specific section of the population whose characteristics may in fact be systematically different from those of others. In terms of victim-survivors, although researchers, practitioners and the wider public often assume that leaving the relationship is the only sensible choice, not all victim-survivors will choose this option (Thapar-Björkert and Morgan 2010: 45-46), and by speaking only to those who do, I inevitably only have access to a particular subset of experiences. Indeed, while I approach responses to abuse fairly broadly, and while I did try to speak with participants about a range of experiences, most of the narratives which emerged from the interviews conceptualised responses to abuse somewhat narrowly in terms of accessing official agencies and of ending the relationship. As noted above, it may be that those who come into contact with official support agencies are more likely than others to belong to particular socio-economic class groups. Moreover, the experience of leaving the relationship, and of discussing experiences with support agencies, is likely to have had an impact on the ways in which women make sense of their experiences. My data would likely have been different if my sample had also included women who remained in the abusive relationship.

### ***Gaining access through gatekeepers***

Participants were recruited through agencies from which they had received support or, in the case of support worker participants, at which they were employed. As such, it was necessary to earn the trust of, and to negotiate access through, gatekeepers (Lee 1993: 123-24). Gatekeepers are defined as “those individuals in an organisation that have the power to withhold access to people or situations for the purposes of research” (Miniechello *et al.* 1997: 171) - and in this study, gatekeepers were the military authorities and the support workers (whether military, quasi-military, or civilian) who facilitated my access to participants. In terms of the women’s support services and some of the quasi-military services, I found that my employment on a domestic violence support helpline helped to facilitate access. I think that this encouraged gatekeepers to read me as a responsible researcher, with an acceptable level of knowledge of the topic and of the importance of protecting the safety of research participants. Gaining trust from the military institution itself was more difficult because I lacked pre-constituted relationships with the military and because, as Enloe notes, the British military has generally been fairly reticent to allow access to civilian researchers (2000, 160-161). In order to interview serving military welfare workers, I had to get both non-financial ‘sponsorship’ for the research from the Army Welfare Service and ethical approval through the MOD’s Research Ethics Committee (MODREC). This process was lengthy - although I initially began trying to get access to interview MOD welfare

personnel in March 2013, I did not receive final permission to begin these interviews until June 2014. The MODREC process itself involved the completion of a form outlining the aims, methods, and ethical implications of the work, and a meeting with members of the MODREC Committee at which I answered questions about the practical and ethical issues surrounding the research.

For Lee (1993: 9), gaining trust from gatekeepers is more difficult when the organisations involved have a strong idea of the division between insiders and outsiders. While scholars have suggested that these binary categories are too rigid, do not capture the complex, shifting nature of identity and research relationships, and mask the power involved in the social constructions 'insider' and 'outsider' in any given circumstance (Mullings 1999: 337-50; Naples 1996: 85; Thapar-Björkert and Henry 2004: 369), this divide has been thought to have particular relevance in military contexts (Ben-Ari and Levy 2014). For Higate and Cameron:

Military culture is characterised by the creation of insider and outsider categories between military personnel and civilians [...] the military continues to present particular challenges to social researchers in this way, the "them" and "us" dichotomy may impact on [...] the nature of the interaction civilian researchers might have with their military participants.

(Higate and Cameron 2006: 224)

The process of gaining access (as well as the process of interviewing, as I discuss below) brought to the fore some of the subtleties involved in the distinction between insider and outsider, as well as some of the ways in which my own social positioning and modes of embodiment played a role. That is, while I am a complete outsider in terms of the formal boundaries of the institution, I think that I was read in some ways as both knowable and unthreatening by those with whom I was interacting within the military and the MOD - and thus *not* as a hostile kind of 'other' who is not to be trusted.

The military institution has been described as a "masculinised organisation" (Higate and Cameron 2006: 222), and, as such, my presence as a woman, and the way in which my femaleness was interpreted and given meaning during the process of obtaining access and of conducting the interviews themselves, is particularly worthy of consideration. While some scholars have emphasised the limitations experienced by female researchers in masculinised environments, who may feel disempowered or curtailed by expectations that they behave in an appropriately

feminine manner (Huggins and Glebbeek 2003: 375; Reinharz and Davidman 1992: 60-61), others have highlighted the opportunities which can be afforded - and this reflects more closely my own experiences (e.g. Lomsky-Feder 1996). Glebbeek, for example, argues that her femaleness encouraged participants to read her as unthreatening, which gave her access to participants which she might not otherwise have had:

I could just show up at officials' offices without an appointment - something that presumably a naïve young foreign woman 'would do' - take them by surprise, use a little charm - something that they expected a young woman to do - and get an interview on the spot. Somewhat later, after I had gained access [...] I was allowed to navigate relatively freely, perhaps because, as a young woman [...] I was considered unthreatening.

(Huggins and Glebbeek 2003: 370)

Similarly, I think that as a young, white, cis woman, with a middle-class accent, fairly small stature, and fairly normative gender presentation, who is often thought to be younger than I am, I too was read as relatively unthreatening by gatekeepers and participants. It is important to note that I am not suggesting that as a young, middle-class, white, cis woman I somehow *am* unthreatening, but that social structures of privilege and discrimination make it more likely that I would be read in such a way than may be the case for differently located social subjects. In some ways I did deliberately invoke these assumptions - for example, I was particularly conscious about performing a certain kind of normative femininity when I attended the MODREC meeting at MOD headquarters. The committee members who attended my MODREC meeting included both military members and civilians, were mostly drawn from the medical sciences, and were overwhelmingly white and male. I had received advice in the run up to the meeting to try to come across to the board as deferential, demure, and willing, or even eager, to accept and to incorporate the superior expertise of the committee members into my plans – attributes which might be associated with Connell's (1987) model of "emphasised femininity" (see Chapter Four). Following this, I dressed in a smart but traditionally feminine way, I held my body straight but used deferential body language, and I spoke in a demure and accommodating manner. This is not to suggest that I was deceptive, but simply that I was more aware than might otherwise have been the case of my gendered performance. In other instances, I felt that elements of my social location over which I have little control were shaping my interactions with MOD and military gatekeepers in helpful ways. This was most obvious around my class and ethnic background. For

example, I remember separate initial meetings with three individual (white, male) military and MOD personnel at which they each told me that they have daughters called Harriet - always stated in a way which I felt invited me inside, letting me know that I was being read as unthreatening, familiar, in some way 'one of us.' As I discuss in Chapter Seven, I was surprised to find that many of the military gatekeepers and participants who I encountered did not understand domestic abuse as a feminist issue. Instead, most viewed it as a welfare issue, one which was often approached from a therapeutic, paternalistic, or social work orientated viewpoint. Although I of course have no evidence for this, I suspect that, had my gender presentation been less normative or less middle-class - had I been read as somehow more *radical*, or even, in a stereotypical imaging, as more *feminist* - more questions may have been raised about the political underpinnings of my research.

This raises two ethical quandaries. First, by taking advantage of my ability to be read in certain ways which reproduce particular ideas of a knowable, *partial* 'outsider' identity, it is possible that I am legitimating and reifying problematic assumptions about what is respectable, trustworthy, and valid. The ethical status of taking advantage of my social position of white, cis, heterosexual, and class privilege in this way is questionable. Moreover, although I have not been deceptive about the approach of the research, I may have allowed gatekeepers and participants to make certain assumptions which mean that they are surprised when they find that my interpretation of their words does not closely accord with their own. Reflecting this, in his research into the role of the military in everyday life in the US, Wall made an instrumental decision not to openly disclose his anti-militarist politics to participants, feeling that doing so would discourage them from consenting to be interviewed. As a result, he was similarly concerned that the story that the research told would not be that which his participants would either expect or be happy with (2011: 135-136). However, as Wall points out, it is not only gatekeepers and participants to whom the researcher is ethically bound - our responsibilities must also extend to those "distant others" on whom the topic of the research impacts (*ibid.*: 128-29). That is, in addition to the ethical responsibility I have to participants, I have an ethical responsibility to the broader community of victim-survivors of domestic abuse in the military context to make sure that their voices, and the wider political critiques which their experiences can help to inform, are heard.

### ***Participant consent***

Although the involvement of gatekeepers is common practice in research on sensitive topics, it does complicate the power relationships of the research. Gatekeepers can have a considerable

amount of power, and may attempt to control the research in a range of ways (Sanghera and Thapar-Bjorkert 2008: 549). While gatekeepers who refuse permission to researchers prevent individuals from making their own decisions on participation, their support for a study can make it difficult for potential participants to refuse to take part (Fontes 2004: 147; Lal 1996: 196; Sanghera and Thapar-Bjorkert 2008; Tisdall 2002: 139-41). As a result, particular care was taken in ensuring that participants did not feel pressurised into taking part in the research against their will, and that informed consent was obtained.

Gatekeepers were given information about the research, including an outline of the project and my contact information, and asked to share this with potential participants through a number of means, including flyers given directly to those who might be interested, emails sent to current and former clients, posters displayed in safe-spaces such as refuges, and on social media feeds. In most cases, individuals who received this information and were interested in participating then got in touch with me directly, usually by email. After being sent additional information including the confidentiality and anonymity policies of the research, we arranged a mutually convenient time and place for the interview to occur. This process was instated in order to try to minimise the involvement of gatekeepers, to reduce the possibility that potential participants felt pressured by gatekeepers into taking part. Interviews were conducted in a number of locations including participants' homes and offices, support services, and alternative spaces that I organised including a private room at a local Citizens Advice Bureau and at a university. As I travelled to participants' locales, they did not incur significant travel costs and I did not pay them expenses or other financial compensations. On a few occasions, gatekeepers were more directly involved in the recruitment of participants, for example when I visited a refuge and interviewed a number of those currently residing there. In some other situations, I interviewed those who had themselves acted as gatekeepers to help me to access other interview participants, and in these cases I asked gatekeepers directly if they would consent to an interview. I ensured that the voluntary nature of their involvement was stressed to all participants both in pre-interview communications and at the beginning of the interview itself.

All participants read and signed a consent form at the beginning of the interview which gave information about the study and its confidentiality and anonymity policies. In addition, consent was seen as an ongoing process as opposed to an initial, one-off event, as the participant's willingness to continue with the research can change as they go through the process (Abrahams *et al.* 2004: 198; Fontes 2004: 147; Lee 1993: 103; McCarry 2005: 94-95). I emphasised to

participants that they had the right to avoid topics they did not wish to discuss, to ask for the voice recorder to be turned off, and to end the interview at any time.

### **The interview itself**

My data collection method was in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The vast majority of the interviews were carried out in person, although two had to be conducted on the phone for practical reasons, and one, at the request of the participant, was conducted via an ongoing email conversation. With the permission of participants, interviews were recorded and transcribed by me. Two participants declined permission to record the interviews, and instead I took extensive notes throughout the interview. I kept a research diary around each interview encounter which recorded other impressions gathered from the interview such as participants' body language and other non-verbal communications (Reinharz and Davidman 1992: 20, 40), as well as my own emotional reaction to what was said and in what manner (Conway 2008: 350).

Qualitative interviewing is a method which has been used extensively to study women's experiences of violence (Lewis *et al.* 2002: 50-51), and which has enabled me to gain a good understanding of participants' constructions of their own experiences and realities. While I did enter the interviews with pre-prepared topic guides and I did prompt participants with the questions on it when there was a lull in discussion, as far as possible I encouraged participants to guide the conversation around the issues which they felt were important, move at their own pace, lead and focus the discussion, and explore their experiences in their own words (Acker *et al.* 1983: 426; Campbell 2002: 68; Reinhartz and Davidman 1992; Skinner 2005: 49; Thapar-Björkert and Henry 2004). If participants raised issues which were not on my topic guide but which they felt were particularly relevant to their experiences, I allowed the interview to continue in the direction they had identified. This interviewing method allowed me both to gain greater understanding of the issues which I had expected to emerge and to remain open to the emergence of unforeseen themes - to think beyond my preconceived notions of what was important and to encourage participants to name and to define their own experiences and realities (Hage 2006: 85). This approach has helped me to expose some of the gaps and misconceptions which underpin much of the more positivist, quantitative research into domestic abuse in military contexts which I outlined in the previous chapter.

## **Rapport**

In order to encourage participants to feel comfortable sharing their stories and leading the conversation, it was important to put them at ease as far as possible. Like many interviewers, I invested considerable effort into building rapport. Of particular relevance to military research, as I discuss above, is the notion of the ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ status of the researcher and the participant. While I question the notion of a strict binary between these positions, insider/outsider debates remain relevant to the conduct of my interviews as a participant’s *perception* of a researcher’s positionality is likely to have an impact upon their assessment of that researcher’s capabilities and trustworthiness, and thus on the narratives they choose to share (Sanghera and Thapar-Bjorkert 2008: 553-54; Thapar-Bjorkert and Henry 2004: 374-75). Some scholars have suggested that shared social characteristics create easy rapport through an assumption of shared understandings (Conway 2008: 349-50), and have as a result advocated ‘matching’ the social characteristics of interviewer and participant (Conway 2008: 349-350; Imam and Akhtar 2005: 70-72). Others have drawn attention to the ways in which a researcher’s status as either an insider or an outsider in relation to participants is fluid and shifting (Duneier and Carter 1999: 12), and moreover, that its meaning and influence upon the process of the interview cannot necessarily be foreseen (Dwyer and Buckle 2009; Sherif 2001), and have therefore contended that researcher who occupy the “spaces between” (Dwyer and Buckle 2009; Mullings 1999: 340-41) or who position themselves as a “trusted outsider” (Bucerius 2013) are often able to create more effective research relationships.

Reflecting this scholarship, in conducting interviews for this study I experienced my positionality as an insider/outsider as fluid. In some cases, this fluidity was highlighted by the ways in which participants, too, experienced their own location in relation to the military institution in dynamic ways. Victim-survivor participants, as civilian women who have been married to servicemen and, in many cases, whose lives have been shaped in multiple ways by the institution itself, both blur and embody the fluidity of the civilian-military divide. While these participants have never been military personnel, they understand its community and speak its language in ways that I simply do not. In terms of building rapport, I felt that my official outsider status was generally beneficial in these interviews. This is because while it was not the case for all, many participants felt mistrustful of the military welfare services, and in some cases the military community more broadly, in particular around the capacity of both to keep information confidential (see Chapter Six). My status as an outsider seemed to inspire confidence in participants that they could share



their experiences and voice their concerns without worrying that others in the community would find out about what they had said (Bucerius 2013).

In interviews with both quasi-military and military support worker participants, it is likely that my status as an outsider may have prevented participants from sharing some narratives with me - for example, narratives which may have encouraged negative press about the institution (Ben-Ari and Levy 2014). In other ways, I think my status as an outsider may have been beneficial in these interviews, because it encouraged participants to position themselves as 'experts' on the military. These participants often assumed that I knew little about the military world and made particular efforts to explain its intricacies to me. It may be the case that this assumption allowed participants to feel that they were in control of the situation, making them more at ease and more willing to share their thoughts. This reflects the experiences of Lomsky-Feder (1996: 235-36), who reports that - as a woman researching in the masculine world of the Israeli Armed Forces - participants assumed that she knew very little about the military, and thus set themselves up in the role of "teaching" her about the institution (see also Bucerius 2013: 702). Moreover, because insider/outsider positionalities are multiple, while I remain an outsider in terms of my relationship with the military institution, participants may have read my position as more fluid in other ways. Baker suggests that her status as a linguist gave her a partial insider relationship with military translators who she interviewed, despite her lack of specific military status (Baker *et al.* forthcoming), and similarly, in some of my interviews with support workers (military, quasi-military, and civilian), I think that my experience of working on a domestic abuse telephone helpline encouraged participants to read me, in some ways, as an insider in relation to their professional experiences. For example, although military support worker participants mostly explained military acronyms to me, or apologised if they forgot to do so, most did not explain specialist domestic abuse terminology. This experience highlights the fluidity and multiplicity of insider/outsider relationships and also draws attention to the difficulty of predicting in advance the ways in which these relationships will impact rapport.

While perpetrator participants were also military insiders, the dynamics of these interviews was different again. These were the interviews in which it was perhaps more difficult to build rapport. A number of female scholars have noted the difficulty of which female interviews may have in interviewing men, who may use the opportunity to harass or flirt with the interviewer (Arendell 1997; Bucerius 2013; Harne 2005: 171-72; Willott 1998: 179-81). Harne has suggested that this challenges the idea that the researcher is always in a position of power over the participant in an

interview setting (2005; 171-172). However, this does not reflect my experience - indeed, it was in these interviews that I felt the unequal power of interviewer over participant was particularly obvious. The topic of the interview was the socially sanctioned behaviour of the participant, and the fact that he was an abuser was a pre-condition to the interview (Gadd 2004). Although there were only three of these interviews, I was particularly conscious of the importance of creating a mutually respectful space in which participants did not feel judged, but also did not feel that I was supporting their abusive behaviour or accepting any rationalisations or justifications they may have offered (Downes *et al.* 2014; Harne 2005; Hearn *et al.* 2007).

Ethical issues surrounding rapport have been discussed by a number of scholars, from those who suggest that going beyond rapport to friendship may be the most ethical practice (Oakley 1981) to those who consider excessively strong rapport manipulative in that it encourages participants to reveal information that they did not intend to and that they come to regret sharing (Cotterill 1992: 595; Fontes 2004: 159; Huggins and Glebbeek 2003: 364; Maynard 1994: 15-16). This is, of course, a discussion of power, in that it asks how far the manipulation of participants and the objectification of their experiences is avoidable. On balance, I did not feel it was ethical to build a 'friendship' with participants in this research, as such a relationship will always be instrumental and to some extent manipulative. Instead, in resonance with Cotterill's (1992: 596) concept of a "friendly stranger," I aimed to create a space where participants felt safe, supported, and believed by a friendly and professional interviewer seeking information for research. While I ensured that all victim-survivor and perpetrator participants were provided with information on support services (discussed below), I did not encourage them to believe that I would be able to provide ongoing support.

### **Interpreting the interview**

I carried out a thematic analysis of my interview transcripts using NVivo 10 software. As defined by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006: 82), thematic analysis is "a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon [...]. It is a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis." The process of conducting thematic analysis involves a careful and repeated reading of the data - in this case, interview transcripts - in order to identify and to map the emerging themes (Rice and Ezzy 1999: 258). Some themes were very common, and others less so - in thematic analysis, it is not only its frequency which marks out matters of interest (Joffe 2012). I chose a thematic analysis because it

allowed me to make sense of my qualitative data, pulling out both the themes I had expected to find in advance of conducting the interviews, and those which emerged unexpectedly throughout the course of the interviews. As I read and reread my interview transcripts I assigned pre-existing codes to quotes, and when unexpected but interesting material appeared I created new codes accordingly. This enabled me to pay careful attention to what participants had to say by both using categories which reflected things that I had expected would be important before the interviews had taken place - for example concerns about the confidentiality of military welfare services and about access to housing which emerged from Williamson and Price's pilot study (2009) - and also allowed unexpected categories to emerge through the interview transcripts themselves - for example the importance of (de)politicisation in understanding domestic abuse in this setting (see Chapter Seven). It is worth noting that in line with my post-positivist rejection of the notion of 'objectivity' in favour of a "conscious partiality" (Mies 1983: 122), I understand this approach to the study of qualitative data as a *subjective* process, as it is inevitable that it is informed by my own theoretical understandings and interpretations.

Analysis of data is an area of research in which the researcher wields very significant power, because:

ultimately the researcher must objectify the experience of the researched, must translate that experience into more abstract and general terms if an analysis that links the individual to processes outside her immediate social world is to be achieved.

(Acker *et al.* 1983: 425)

That is, individual experiences must be abstracted and analysed within their wider social context, and the connections between these explored, if feminist research is to effectively critique social structures (Code 1995: 36; Maynard 1994: 23-24). The researcher must therefore exercise power by breaking down her data, categorising it according to her own perspectives, and selecting and interpreting it to build her argument (Leatherby 2002: 3.7-3.8). Analysis of data is a theory-driven process with political motivations and political ends, and this is no less the case in this study. Chapters Five, Six and Seven of this thesis focus primarily on analysis of my empirical data, and while my analysis does sometimes reflect that of participants, there are also numerous occasions where my analysis directly contradicts that of my participants. Some of the ethical issues surrounding this process are discussed above with reference to Wall (2011), who suggests that

while researchers owe respect and understanding to the narratives constructed by their participants, they have a further responsibility to the broader community upon whom the research may impact. My aim in this study is to produce politically informed knowledge about domestic abuse in the British military community which takes seriously the role of gender and of power - and as I argue in Chapters Two and Four, this calls for an analysis of my data through a feminist lens.

### ***The interview as a process of narrative construction***

Interview data is not something from which an objective or simplistic 'truth' can be read; rather, it emerges from the collaborative social processes of the interview and is constructed within the interaction between participant and researcher (Enosh and Buchbinder 2005; Hardy *et al.* 2001: 544-45; Harne 2005: 178; Naples 2003: 90; Presser 2005: 2087). That is, interviews are not a simplistic window onto experience, but are necessarily a process in which researcher and participant collaboratively construct a *representation* of particular experiences. Interview data does not offer a simplistic reflection of the reality of participants' lives outside of the interview, but rather, reflects the process of meaning making which has occurred collaboratively within the space of the interview itself (Rapley 2001: 304).

This is not, however, to argue that the narratives which participants share in interviews are somehow false or that they can tell us nothing about the social world; rather, it means that what interview narratives can tell us is not simply 'what happened,' but how participants make sense of what happened through the social discourses and resources which are available to them - both within the interview and more broadly. For Chase,

When we listen carefully to the stories people tell, we learn how people as individuals and groups make sense of their experiences and construct meanings and selves. We also learn about the complexities and subtleties of the social worlds they inhabit. We gain deeper understandings of the social resources (cultural, ideological, historical, and so forth) that they draw on, resist, and transform as they tell their stories.

(Chase 1996: 45)

Listening carefully to interview narratives concerned with violence and abuse can tell us about the ways in which various forms of violence are made sense of within a given community (Watts

2006), the ways in which gendered discourses provide a resource for abusive men to draw upon in justifying their behaviour (Anderson and Umberson 2001; Stamp and Sabourin 1995), and the discursive strategies through which both perpetrators and victim-survivors of abuse explain their intimate relationships to others (Enosh and Buchbinder 2005) - that is, it can tell us about the ways in which violence and abuse are understood and categorised within the social world of the participants. Through participants' stories, we can identify the narrative resources which participants draw upon in, for example, attributing blame and causality for the abuse, explaining sequences of events, and explaining the help-seeking decisions that we were taken and the motives behind them. As such, interview narratives do not relate only to the individual participant to whom one speaks, but can tell us something of the ideas about, for example, gender, intimate relationships, violence, race, and loyalty - among many others - which circulate in a particular social setting. As Rapley puts it, "[i]nterviewees' talk speaks to and emerges from the wider strategies and repertoires available to, and used by, all people" (2001: 318-319). Paying close attention to the stories of victim-survivors, as well as perpetrators, and support workers, who have experience of domestic abuse within the military community, therefore, can tell us something about the narratives which circulate in this particular social space. It is within this understanding of interview data that I approach the empirical materials collected for this study.

### **Protecting participants: confidentiality, safety and wellbeing**

As explored above, my victim-survivor participants were no longer living with their abusive partner at the time of the interview. Despite the dissolution of the relationship, I was not able to assume that there was no future risk of abuse: studies suggest that at least a third of women continue to experience abuse after leaving an abusive relationship (Harne and Radford 2008, 52). In order to protect participants' safety, interviews took place in a safe space in which our conversations would not be overheard. Confidentiality and anonymity protects the rights, feelings, and safety of participants. All participants were assigned a pseudonym at the point of data collection, and all data has been stripped of identifying features before presentation. Data has been stored on my own password protected computer as well as on a personal hard drive, both of which are kept in private, locked spaces (Fontes 2004: 155; Lee 1993: 170). Despite the central importance of confidentiality and anonymity, there was a possibility that there may be circumstances in which upholding confidentiality would not be the most ethical practice - namely, if I had become aware of a threat of future violence. It was made very clear to participants that if they shared information with me during the interview which gave me reason to believe that a

specific individual was at risk of future harm, it would have been my ethical duty to pass that information on - to support workers, to social services, or to the police, depending on the circumstances. Participants signed an informed consent form which made this clear (Tisdall 2002: 145). Fortunately, I did not encounter this situation during the research.

Violence and abuse can be painful to discuss, and interviewers have a responsibility to respond appropriately to participants' emotional engagements with the topic (Campbell 2002: 6). I was aware that some participants, in particular victim-survivors and perpetrators, may find the interview experience upsetting or even traumatic. In order to try to mitigate the potential trauma of the interview situation in interviews with children (although raising issues which remain relevant here), Barter and Renold (2002: 101-02) advocate attempting to ensure that participants remain in charge of the topics discussed and the manner in which they are approached - as I note above, my interviews proceeded in this way. Victim-survivor and perpetrator participants' reactions to the interviews were varied, and they displayed different emotional responses. Some seemed relaxed and detached from the stories they were telling, some expressed anger at the way that they had been treated, and others expressed sadness, with a few crying a little. As noted above, I work part-time on a domestic abuse telephone helpline, and I feel that the training undertaken for this role and the experience of fulfilling it has helped me to deal with participants' emotional responses in an appropriately supportive way. A number of my victim-survivor participants suggested that they experienced some emotional benefit from taking part. Several stated that it felt good to try to have a positive impact on the experiences of other women who are subjected to abuse. Whatever their visible reactions, I ensured that as a matter of routine all victim-survivor and perpetrator participants were given information on relevant national and local support services, as has been suggested is appropriate by a number of scholars (McCarry 2005: 95; O'Beirne *et al.* 2002: 190; Reinharz and Davidman 1992: 212).

While my foremost concern was for the safety and wellbeing of my participants, it was also important to protect myself against emotional distress and physical danger throughout the process of the research. Scholars such as Campbell (2002), Harne (2005: 185), Reinharz and Davidman (1992: 35), and Skinner *et al.* (2005: 16-17) have discussed the stress, the sense of powerlessness, and the feelings of anxiety, depression, and exhaustion that can come from conducting and transcribing interviews around gender violence. Although I did find some of the interviews emotionally difficult - as indeed is the ongoing process of thinking about domestic abuse - I think the fact that my victim-survivor participants had all left the abusive relationships

went some way to alleviating the distress. For example, I did not feel as powerless as researchers in the case described by Ellsberg *et al.* (2001: 11), who felt unable to help participants to leave their dangerous situations. Indeed, I have more commonly felt powerless and anxious as a result of the calls to the domestic abuse helpline on which I work than as a result of these interviews, as callers to the helpline are more likely to be experiencing anxiety and powerless in the present moment themselves. Having dealt with emotionally difficult calls while working on the helpline, I was prepared in some ways for the strain that can be engendered by listening to narratives of violence and abuse. In addition, as Campbell also notes, I did not experience only negative emotions as a result of the research, but also positive feelings such as hope and admiration for the strength of the victim-survivors with whom I spoke, which helped me to feel positive about the process of the research as a whole (Campbell 2002: 65-93).

There was also a possibility that my work could have exposed me to physical risks. As I note above, scholars have suggested that interviewing men could potentially be unsafe for lone female researchers, as interviews can be used as a space to sexually intimidate or harass women, to express misogynistic views, or to otherwise exercise dominance (Harne 2005: 171-72). This risk may be exacerbated with men who have committed gender violence. As recommended by The Social Research Association in *A Code of Practice for the Safety of Social Researchers*<sup>75</sup>, I ensured that the manager of my academic department was always aware of the time and place at which interviews were to take place, and that I was in touch with her both before and immediately after each interview to let her know that I was safe. In addition, I always carried a charged mobile phone and enough money for unexpected transport needs. In particular, the three interviews with perpetrators of abuse were carried out in the safe space of the offices where they were attending the perpetrator programme, and the workers on the programme were aware of the interviews and waited in the next room while they took place.

### **Concluding remarks**

This chapter outlines the ways in which I went about collecting the original empirical data that forms the backbone of this thesis. Far from assuming data collection strategies and analysis to be neutral tools designed to help me discover the truth about military domestic abuse, I have suggested that every step of the research process has to be reflexively analysed; its partial and political nature laid bare. I have explored the central assumptions which shape my

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<sup>75</sup> [http://the-sra.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/safety\\_code\\_of\\_practice.pdf](http://the-sra.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/safety_code_of_practice.pdf), last accessed 2 January 2013.

epistemological and ontological approach as well as my thinking around ethics and power in the process of research, and have sketched out how these ideas were applied throughout my work, in particular in relation to issues such as the recruitment of participants, the process of the interview itself, and the analysis and reporting of data. The feminist-informed, qualitative approach described above has allowed me to construct in-depth knowledge about the inequalities which shape the responses of women who experience abuse in the military community. This knowledge is not representative or generalisable, and does not allow me to state that certain conditions are accurate for all such women, all of the time. It does, however, help me to explore and to describe a range of issues and conditions which shape responses to domestic abuse within the military community.



## Chapter Four: Theoretical Framework

### Theorising power, gender, domestic abuse and militarism

This chapter discusses the main theoretical concepts with which this thesis engages. Drawing on scholars in the fields of feminist research on domestic abuse and of critical military studies, as well as on critical social theorists more broadly, it sketches out the theoretical approach which frames my engagement with domestic abuse in the contemporary British military. I begin the chapter with a theorisation of power and of gender. I explore the dual approaches to theorising power and gender - both structural and post-structural - which underpin the analysis in this thesis: approaches which some scholars have taken to be incompatible (see Risman 2004: 430) but which I argue are necessarily brought together in this study. 'Power' and 'gender' are not the same thing, and neither structural nor post-structural forms of power, of course, function only through gender. However, gender, as it is of interest to this study, is produced through power in its various forms - and it functions within society in both structural and discursive ways. Moreover, as gender is a key organising concept of this thesis, it is the ways in which various operations of power produce and function through gender which are primarily relevant here. The remainder of the chapter is divided into two sections, which theorise first domestic abuse, and then militarism, with reference to the dual lenses of power and gender established in the first part of the chapter. It is worth noting that while gender is explicitly theorised in the initial section of this thesis, because it is a lynchpin of this study and functions both as a topic of study and as a conceptual lens, it appears throughout the chapter in multiple ways, both as a topic for focused discussions and as a cross-cutting theme and theoretical tool. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the gender order of the contemporary British military, with a focus on the idealised, hegemonic models of masculinity and femininity which circulate within this context.

For the purposes of clarity, it is useful in this introductory section to draw attention to the multiple uses of the terms 'violence', 'abuse', 'control', and 'dominance' which appear in this chapter and throughout the thesis, as this is a potential source of slippage and confusion. In general, when I talk about 'violence' and about 'abuse' I am talking about *acts*, perpetrated by specific subjects of violence and abuse against its objects. 'Violence' here is mainly physical. This includes the whole range of the violences of militaries on the global stage, from those perpetrated by personnel deployed as 'boots on the ground,' to drone strikes. Physical violence is also part of many of the intimate relationships which are of interest to this thesis: the victim-survivor participants in this study had suffered violence including slaps, kicks, punches, and

strangulation from their partners. However, while ‘domestic violence’ is a commonly used term among both academics and activists - and as a result, appears numerous times in quoted materials - I have chosen to use the (equally widespread) term ‘domestic abuse’ instead. This is because the *physical* violence to which victim-survivors are subjected does not exist in isolation, but is embedded within a gamut of abusive behaviours - often including sexual, psychological, emotional, and financial abuse. These forms of abuse are not always experienced as separate: physical violence may be interwoven with psychologically abusive taunts; sexual abuse is both physical and not only physical; and financial abuse often has psychological qualities and is underpinned by a threat of physical violence. Because these acts are part of the same pattern of behaviour, as I suggest below, I do not find it helpful to separate them in my discussions, and refer to them all as ‘domestic abuse.’ The terms ‘violence’ and ‘abuse’ are thus mostly used in this thesis to denote the behaviour of a subject towards its object. There is one important exception to this: ‘structural violence’ refers to the harms done to people by social structures of inequality. That is, in structural forms of violence, there is an *object* in the form of the person harmed, however there is no identifiable *subject* of violence. Scholars have used the term ‘violence’ here, rather than merely discussing structural ‘inequalities,’ in order to draw attention to the embodied harms these structures engender. Structural violence is therefore distinct from the direct forms of violence and abuse which are present when a soldier fires his gun or a husband assaults his wife, as there is no direct subject perpetrating the violence. In both its structural and direct forms, however, violence and abuse occurs in the harm done to its object.

Control and dominance, another two key terms which emerge in this chapter and go on to shape my analytical engagements throughout the thesis, refer to the motivations which underpin acts and structures of violence and abuse - the social relationships towards which violent and abusive behaviours and structures drive. For Pain, there are important similarities between warfare and domestic abuse, one of which is that both use violence in order to “retain control of the people and places they are targeting” (2015: 68). Moreover, both forms of violence, for Pain, arise from the same logics and cultures: “Military tactics are not only military, but arise from more widespread cultures of masculinise aggression, protection and control” (*ibid.*: 71). That is, the violences perpetrated by militaries are not perpetrated for their own sake, but in order to establish or maintain a relationship of domination between collectives such as nation-states. Similarly, an abusive husband abuses his wife in order to establish and to maintain an intimate relationship in which he dominates and controls her. I argue in this chapter that acts of violence

and abuse must be understood in the context of the relationships of dominance and control towards which they drive if they are to be understood.

### **Structural and post-structural approaches**

While social theorists have understood 'power' in multiple ways - from Weber (1978: 53) to Giddens (1979: 91; 1984) and Lukes (1974) - I draw in this thesis upon a dual conceptualisation of power which is based upon both structural and post-structural approaches. These approaches to power were selected on the basis of their usefulness for making sense of the experiences of participants in this study. As I discuss in Chapters Five and Six, I was particularly struck when analysing the interviews collected for this study by the emergence of two broad clusters of themes. The first relates to structural inequalities experienced by participants such as access to community facilities and resources - this data lends itself to an analysis which relies upon a structural approach to power. The second centres on the ways in which participants made sense of their experiences of abuse, and came to decisions about the most appropriate ways to respond to it, in relation to their ideas about identity. I made the decision that the most useful way to make sense of this data was through post-structural approaches. Moreover, interview narratives in which participants spoke about structural inequalities and about their identities were, as a rule, talking about *gendered* structures of inequality, and about *gendered* identities. As a result, the ways in which gender has been theorised within structural and post-structural approaches is of particular interest to this study. Below, I therefore discuss both structural and post-structural approaches to power and to gender, and the relationships between them.

My engagement with a structural model of power, which I use to make sense of my data in Chapter Six, allows me to consider the ways in which social subjects are differently positioned and differently empowered in relation to one another. Structural analyses of society are interested in systems of social relationships, and draw attention to the inequalities rooted in the arrangement of society. These social structures are larger than and external to the subject<sup>76</sup>, and function to constrain that subject in particular ways. In Connell's words, "structure" refers to "the experience of being up against something, of limits on freedom [...] The concept of social structure expresses the constraints that lie in a given form of social organisation" (1987: 92).

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<sup>76</sup> While scholars have treated structures as something external to the subject, they have also shown that these structures are brought into being and constantly reproduced by subjects themselves (e.g. Giddens, 1984; 1986, 4) - however, this discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter.

While theoretical engagements with structural power are diverse and multi-faceted, my discussions focus in particular on “structural violence,” a concept first developed by Johan Galtung. Structural inequalities and structural violence are closely related but not precisely the same: structural violence is a concept used to describe the embodied harms experienced by subjects who are disempowered through structural inequalities. For Galtung, structural violence exists when subjects are unable to reach their physical and mental potentials; it is “the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is” (Galtung 1969: 168). For example, if a person dies because they are excluded from access to existent medical care, structural violence is present (*ibid.*: 168). Because of violent structures of inequality certain social groups - often including women and minority groups - find themselves “as a community, subjected to violence, exposed to its possibility, if not its realisation” (Butler 2004: 20). For Uvin, structural violence therefore amounts to “unequal life chances, usually caused by great inequality, injustice, discrimination, and exclusion and needlessly limiting people’s physical, social, and psychological well-being” (Uvin 1998: 105). Structural violence refers not to identifiable acts of violence perpetrated by identifiable actors but to “the social machinery of oppression” (Farmer 2004: 307). As Farmer argues, theories of structural violence allow scholars to understand the suffering that they witness as evidence of how “social forces [...] become *embodied* as individual experience” (1996: 261-262). This is where work on structural violence provides useful insights for the analysis presented in this thesis, as it allows me to begin with the harms experienced by individual victim-survivors and to trace this harm back to the specific structures of inequality which shape the British military community.

Systems of structural violence do not just happen naturally or accidentally. They are constructed over time by human practices; “*the product of an incessant (and therefore historical) labour of reproduction, to which singular agents (including men, with weapons such as physical violence and symbolic violence) and institutions - families, the church, the educational system, the state - contribute*” (Bourdieu 2001: 34, emphasis in original; see also Anglin 1998: 147). Despite this, structural violence is often not recognised *as violence* by those who are subjected to it, as the structures of inequality which underpin it are often normalised and taken for granted. In Bourdieu’s words, “The dominated apply categories constructed from the point of view of the dominant to the relations of domination, thus making them appear as natural” (Bourdieu 2001: 35; see also Klinenberg 2004; Price 2012: 6). This insight is useful for the analysis presented in this thesis because it enables me to approach the gendered structural inequalities which characterise the British military community - and the structural violences which emerge from them - not as

timeless inevitabilities, but as political structures which are produced over time and naturalised by human practices, and which could be otherwise.

Structural approaches provide one of the ways in which gender is conceptualised in this thesis. Structural accounts theorise gender as “an overarching framework that organises social institutions and social relationships” (Anderson 2007: 175-76). From a structural perspective, gender is a system of inequality and stratification which positions men and women in unequal categories, roles and material circumstances. Feminists have labelled social structures of male power over women as “patriarchy” - defined as by Walby as “a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (Walby 1989: 214; see also Fraser 1987; Oakley 2014: xii; Pateman 1988; 1989a; 2006; Rubin 1975). While some understandings of patriarchy have been critiqued as ahistorical and universalising (see Walby 1989), scholars continue to draw attention to social structures which place women in a disempowered position in relation to men. For Scott *et al.*, the gendered division of responsibility in relation to unpaid domestic labour and the related prevalence of British women in part-time employment constitute economic structures which disadvantage women (2010:1). Similarly, Farmer shows how the intersecting structures of poverty and of gender can drive individuals to make unsafe choices, with possibly devastating consequences (1996: 271). In various ways in various locations, then, structures of gendered inequality continue to limit the social power, choices, and life-chances of gendered subjects in various ways. This understanding of gender is important to the analysis in my thesis because, as I illustrate in Chapter Six, it is the *gendered* structures of inequality, and the structural violences they produce, which are of most interest in making sense of making sense of victim-survivors’ experiences of domestic abuse in the British military.

The post-structural theoretical approach on which this thesis draws allows me to pay attention to the ways in which individuals construct and live their identities on a daily basis. This theory of power most clearly informs my discussions in Chapter Five. For Foucault, disciplinary power is a form of power which *produces* rather than represses. That is, in contrast to the structural forms of power discussed above, disciplinary power is not something which acts upon and limits the life chances of pre-formed subjects; rather, it is the social force through which such subjects are produced:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact,

power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.

(Foucault 1991: 194)

Disciplinary power circulates throughout the social body, and functions in large part through the surveillance, or at least the visibility, of those subjected to it. For Foucault, disciplinary power produces subjects who, conscious of their own permanent visibility, shape *themselves* to conform to the norms of their societies - as such, the subject becomes "the principle of his [sic] own subjugation" (Foucault 1991: 202-203). The "docile bodies" (ibid.: 138) of subjects thus formed are constructed through the detailed control and surveillance of everyday activity, which "moulds the mind and soul" (Pemberton 2013: 154).

While Foucault himself did not provide in-depth theorisations of gender, others have drawn on his insights to explore the ways in which "docile bodies" are fundamentally gendered, as the bodies of men and of women are shaped in divergent (although far from simplistic or uncontested) ways (Bartky 1988). The post-structural approach to gender used in this thesis is markedly different from that contained within the structural approach outlined above. In structural approaches, gendered subjects are limited and *repressed* based on their position in gender hierarchy; in post-structural approaches, those very subjects are formulated, are *produced*, through gendered discourse. That is, following the Foucauldian notion that subjects are produced through the workings of power and that there is, therefore, no essential subject which can pre-exist power, gender is not an essentialised internal truth, something that a subject *is*, but rather, gender amounts to "configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 836), a "routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment"; something one *does* (West and Zimmerman 1987: 126). As Sasson-Levy puts it, masculinities and femininities "do not 'exist' in reality but dwell in people's consciousness, as is constantly expressed through everyday embodied practices, symbols, and metaphors" (2003: 325). For Butler, the notion of an essential, inner *substance* of gender identity is a fallacy. No fixed subject can be said to pre-exist the doing of gender, rather, the intelligible subject is an *effect* of gender, which comes into being through the performance of gender in the form of a "*stylized repetition of acts*" (1999: 191 emphasis in original). That is, gender identity is "constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler 1999: 34). This approach is useful for my thesis

as it enables me to pay attention to the ways in which responses to abuse can form part of the performance of gendered identity in particular ways within the British military context.

As these discussions make clear, my two approaches to power and to gender contain within them some fundamental differences which are difficult to allay. The first approach sees power in social structures which constrain the life chances of individuals; the second sees those very same individuals as produced rather than as repressed by a form of power which is diffused throughout social life. The first approach understands gender as a point of difference through which male and female subjects are unequally positioned within social structures; the second focuses on how those male and female subjects come into being through gendered discourses. However, despite the tensions and difficulties which it entails, this multiple approach to power and to gender is particularly helpful in understanding the multifaceted issue of domestic abuse; indeed, the complex narratives which emerged from the interviews I conducted for this thesis cannot be sufficiently understood through recourse to a singular approach.

While Risman (2004: 430) cites a number of studies which have argued (erroneously, she suggests) that structural and post-structural approaches are incompatible (Epstein 1988; Ferree 1990; Risman 1987; Risman and Schwartz 1989), there are a number of key scholars who, explicitly or otherwise, *have* noted the coexistence of multiple forms of power, and, similarly, of multiple ways in which gender functions in society. Foucault, for example, while generally describing disciplinary power as a modality which replaced sovereign power at a particular moment in history, does recognise in his later works that the two forms of power can co-exist, citing examples of disciplinary power in existence “like islands” in “the midst of sovereignty” (2006: 63). Similarly, Butler refers to the “ghostly and forceful resurgence of sovereignty in the midst of governmentality” in the contemporary context of Guantanamo Bay (2004: 59).

Of more direct interest to this thesis is scholarship which theorises gender from both structural and post-structural approaches. Connell’s work on gender and power offers a particularly clear example of the ways in which power as structure and power as productive of individual subjectivities can be understood as mutually existent, or even as co-dependent, in relation to gender. Connell describes a gendered structure of inequality centred on the “global dominance of men over women,” (1987: 183). Her theory notes multiple, fluid forms of masculinities and femininities which are constructed in relation to one another as well as in relation to the ‘opposite’ sex, and which exist in hierarchical power relationships with one another. Connell

introduced the concept of a “hegemonic” model of masculinity, which is not imagined as normal in the sense that a majority of men embody it, but is understood to be *normative* in that it denotes the most respected contemporary way of being a man and legitimates the structures of male dominance over women (Connell 1987: 183-88; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Connell’s work understands gender as relational, arguing that masculinities and femininities cannot exist without one another (Connell 1995: 72), but also that, because of the dominance of men over women, “[t]here is no femininity that is hegemonic in the sense that the dominant form of masculinity is hegemonic among men” (ibid., 187). Instead, she points to “emphasised femininity,” the form of femininity which is most clearly “defined around compliance with this subordination and is orientated to accommodating the interests and desires of men,” as the closest equivalent (ibid., 183, 187-188). The dominance of hegemonic forms of masculinity is achieved not through force (although it is not incompatible with the use of force) but through a Gramscian concept of hegemony; social ascendancy achieved through the forces which organise social and cultural life such as religious doctrine and practice, mass media, wage structures, welfare and tax policies (ibid., 184). Importantly for my present purposes, while Connell’s work is centred chiefly around social structures of inequality, it also allows space for recognising the importance of individual performances of gender. The reliance of this theory on hegemony as opposed to force as the means by which unequal gendered structures are maintained points to a self-regulating subject; one who constructs their gendered identity through integration of (or resistance to) culturally defined notions of appropriate gender practice. Indeed, Connell and Messerschmidt argue that the theory points to a multi-dimensional understanding of gender, and emphasise the role of patterns of practice, embodiment, and the ways in which subjects discursively construct their identities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832, 37, 41-42). This has been highlighted by scholars who have followed Connell’s theory: Wetherell and Edley (1999), for example, used the notion of hegemonic norms to discuss the discursive strategies on which men draw to position themselves in society through practice (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 841). While there remain inherent tensions and contradictions between structural and post-structural approaches, then, following the insights provided by Connell’s work I conceptualise gender in this thesis through a multiple approach which draws upon both structural and post-structural understandings of power. This dual approach allows me to take account of multiple experiences of gender and therefore to present a more nuanced picture of participants’ experiences of domestic abuse.



## Theorising domestic abuse

In Chapter Two, I reviewed the large and well-developed body of feminist literature on domestic abuse which has its roots in the 'second wave' feminist movement. In that chapter, I stated that while domestic abuse has been explained in various ways by scholars drawing on biological, socio-biological, psychological, and psychoanalytical approaches (see Gondolf 1985: 287; Hearn 1996: 29; 1998: 17), this thesis draws upon feminist-informed theories which emphasise the social inequalities in which abuse is rooted. This is because it is these theories which best enable me to make sense of the ways in which the social context of the British military, with its particular arrangements of gender and of power, shape the ways in which abuse is experienced and responded to. In particular, I draw on feminist work which conceptualises domestic abuse not in terms of *incidents* of abusive behaviour, but of *patterns* of behaviours through which perpetrators aim to build a relationship in which they control and dominate their victims. This approach has been chosen because, in addition to being the increasingly dominant approach within feminist work on domestic abuse - and indeed, one which has recently been incorporated into the British government's definition<sup>77</sup> - it was also reflected in the narratives which emerged from interviews conducted for this thesis. While some participants did refer to discrete incidents of abusive behaviour, in particular those for whom a particularly violent physical incident had been a turning point in their responses to abuse, when asked to describe their relationships most spoke first of patterns of behaviour, of their partners' attempts to control them, and of their feelings of entrapment. A focus on the patterns of behaviour which constitute abuse, and the control and dominance towards which they drive, enables me to best make sense of victim-survivors' responses to abuse.

The theorisation of domestic abuse which underpins this thesis, then, draws closely on Stark's (2007) work on "coercive control," which understands abuse as a form of gendered violence in which a perpetrator uses various abusive behaviours as tactics in order to gain control over his intimate partner. In this understanding, abuse is not primarily a crime of assault, but a liberty crime in which perpetrators deprive their victims of their rights to autonomy, self-definition, privacy, and self-respect and entrap them in a state of everyday "unfreedom" (Stark 2007: 205). That is, incidents of abuse are understood as part of a pattern of behaviour through which a perpetrator attempts to *take control*; to build a pattern of power and control over his partner. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to dwell in any depth on the causality of abuse as it applies to individuals, it is important to note that contrary to popular 'myths' which explain

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<sup>77</sup> [www.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse](http://www.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse), last accessed 11 July 2015.

domestic abuse in terms of a perpetrator's lashing out in anger, within this theoretical approach it is understood that this *taking of control* is *not the same as a loss of control*, and it is *not the same as anger*. That is, perpetrators of domestic abuse do not lose control over themselves and lash out at their partners; rather, they use a variety of abusive behaviours to *take* control over their intimate partners (Price 2012: 30; see also Bancroft 2002; Stark 2007).

Feminist scholars (e.g. Harne and Radford 2008: 1-7; Westmarland 2015: 20-46) have drawn attention to the wide range of abusive acts - including physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, and financial forms of abuse - which perpetrators may use in order to gain control over their intimate partners. Physical abuse may include acts such as throwing things, kicking, biting, punching, choking, and using a weapon. Sexual violence may be experienced as rape, sexual assault, forms of sexual humiliation, or deliberate infection with a sexually transmitted disease. Psychological and emotional abuse can take the form of insults and put-downs which continually chip away at a victim-survivor's self-esteem, severe neglect, false accusations, or trying to make a woman feel that she is going mad. Finally, financial abuse may involve controlling the victim-survivor's access to money or limiting her ability to earn it. Moreover, scholars have also drawn attention to behaviours which may not appear to be obviously abusive or as violent but which, within the context of an abusive relationship, are part of the pattern of behaviour through which a perpetrator achieves control over his partner. For example, Stark details ways in which perpetrators "micro-regulate" the basic, everyday functions of their partners' lives, including controlling what they wear, how they spend money, what they eat, where they go, and when they are allowed to sleep (Stark 2007: 15; see also Williamson 2010: 1414-16).

The theoretical approach to domestic abuse which focuses on "coercive control" views such abuse as intrinsically gendered<sup>78</sup>. Although anyone - of any gender or sexuality - can be a victim or a perpetrator of domestic abuse, most statistical work suggests that the overwhelming majority of domestic abuse, and in particular those cases characterised by the most systematic and repeated abuse and by the most serious types of physical violence, is perpetrated by a man against his female partner (e.g. Harne and Radford 2008: 40; Walby and Allen 2004; Westmarland 2015: 10). This disparity is rooted in gendered social inequalities; domestic abuse both maps onto gendered power inequalities and "furthers the politics of oppression" (Pain 2015: 65). Moreover, a gendered approach to domestic abuse recognises not only statistical imbalances, but also that abusive behaviours *mean* different things and have different effects when they are perpetrated

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<sup>78</sup> [www.troubleandstrife.org/2014/04/time-for-a-rethink-why-the-current-government-definition-of-domestic-violence-is-a-problem/](http://www.troubleandstrife.org/2014/04/time-for-a-rethink-why-the-current-government-definition-of-domestic-violence-is-a-problem/), last accessed 12 June 2015.

by women and by men; that is, “women and men are positioned differently as both victims and perpetrators of violence” because that behaviour takes place “in a context of [...] gender inequality” (Anderson 2009: 1455). In order to understand domestic abuse, therefore, gender must be taken into account. This study draws on both structural and post-structural approaches to power and to gender, and my gendered theorisation of domestic abuse also learns from both approaches. This dual approach is particularly useful for making sense of victim-survivors’ complex and multi-faceted experiences - indeed, scholars including Anderson (2009: 1450) and Hearn (2012: 592-97) have argued that overly simplistic approaches to gender have produced inadequate scholarship on domestic abuse, and have called for research which draws upon both materialist and discursive approaches. The empirical analysis presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven of this thesis demonstrate the value of the type of research which Anderson and Hearn are calling for by revealing the complex and nuanced understandings of abuse which can be engendered by this dual approach. In order to demonstrate what this means theoretically before I explore it empirically in later chapters, I sketch out below some of the ways in which structural and post-structural approaches inform my theorisation of domestic abuse.

Structural approaches emphasise the material structures of inequality between men and women upon which abusers draw in building a pattern of controlling behaviour. As I show in Chapter Two, scholars have argued that patriarchal social structures “generate the conditions and relationships that lead to a husband’s use of force against his wife” (Dobash and Dobash 1979: ix), and have pointed to the intersectionally mediated ways in which the greater social and economic power of men enables them to perpetrate abuse against their female partners (Bograd 1999; Crenshaw 1991; Harne and Radford 2008: 17; Pain 2012; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005). As Chapter Two demonstrates, economic inequality is an important example, and Michalski cites studies from Ghana, Botswana, India, and Belize which show that where women are economically dependent upon their spouses, they are more likely to experience abuse and less likely to be able to leave abusive relationships (2004: 665-666). Similarly, Harne and Radford argue that the greater average economic power of British men in comparison with British women means that men are more likely to be in a position to use economic strategies of control to abuse their partners and to prevent them from escaping the abuse (2008: 7, 46).

The geographical imaginary whereby intimate relationships are understood to belong to the private as opposed to the public sphere is another important gendered structure which enables domestic abuse (see Gray 2015). While the boundaries between public and private are neither

constant nor apolitical but fluid, contingent, and produced through social relations and public workings of power (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 27; Brickell 2000: 165; Caluya 2011: 204), this socially produced divide continues to shape the ways in which domestic abuse is understood and responded to in contemporary Britain. Feminists have argued that the public/private divide is both gendered and gendering, and have pointed to the frequent association of men with the public and women with the private (e.g. Elshtain 1981; Kelly 2003, 32-58; Landes 1998b, 143; Mackinnon 1983; Massey 1994, 180; Pateman 1989b). Scholars have highlighted the role of this divide in making invisible women's experiences of abuse by concealing behaviour which occurs within the feminised psycho-social and physical spaces of privacy (e.g. Benhabib 1998, 85-88; Duncan 1996; Kelly 2003; Landes 1998c; McDowell 1999, 88; Warrington 2001). This has had numerous implications for public responses to abuse, including most obviously the long history of police reluctance to intervene (McDowell 1999, 88). As a result, in Kelly's words, "the privacy of men [has been protected] at the expense of the safety of women" (Kelly 2003: 34). A structural approach to theorising domestic abuse as coercive control is useful for the analysis presented in my thesis because it allows me to make sense of the ways in which my participants' experiences of abuse were shaped in particular ways by the specific gendered structural inequalities which are present within the British military community.

This thesis also draws on post-structural approaches in theorising domestic abuse, in order to draw attention to the ways in which such abuse is "both gendered and gendering" (Shepherd 2008: 51). Scholars informed by post-structural approaches have suggested that using coercive control against their partners is one of the practices whereby perpetrators performatively construct themselves as masculine subjects. For example, for Anderson, controlling one's intimate partner can be part of the performance of normative masculinity, but is less likely to be part of the performance of femininity, because

the performance of masculinity involves controlling others (opening the door, by driving the car), whereas the performance of femininity involves deference to men's control (walking through the door held open). The doing of gender involves rituals that position men as dominant and women as subservient, and this facilitates men's ability to control women.

(Anderson 2009: 1448)

For Anderson, men are enabled in building controlling relationships over women because the models of masculinity and femininity in conversation with which individuals performatively construct their gendered identities legitimate the control of women by men. Of more direct relevance to this thesis, other scholars have pointed to the ways in which responses to abuse, including help-seeking decisions, may form part of the process through which victim-survivors construct themselves as feminine subjects. Scholars including Dunn (2001; 2002), Anderson (2009: 1448) and Stark (2007: 210-11) have argued that normative scripts of masculinity, femininity, and heterosexual courtship may make it difficult to recognise certain abusive behaviours as abusive, because they may mirror “behaviors that are normative gender performances in contemporary culture” (Anderson 2009: 1448). For Stark, for example, women in heteronormative societies are often expected to defer to their male partners in certain types of decisions, and to leave or reduce their participation in paid employment to make a home, and that controlling behaviours which mirror these expectations may therefore be difficult to identify as abusive (2007: 210-11). Furthermore, Dunn’s (2001) work suggests that victim-survivors have to perform an acceptable type of femininity in order to be taken seriously as victims of abuse and therefore to obtain support and protection - in West and Zimmerman’s terms, they are “held accountable” to gender in particular ways through their responses to abuse (1987). Moreover, as I explored in Chapter Two, Towns and Adams have drawn attention to the ways in which “perfect love discourses” encourage victim-survivors to try to end the abuse through providing love to their partners rather than seeking help to make themselves safe (2000). That is, the performances of femininity to which victim-survivors are held accountable may shape their responses to abuse in important ways. For the purposes of clarity, this does not mean that masculinities *cause* abuse, or that femininities *cause* victim-survivors to respond in particular ways - neither masculinity nor femininity is an “autonomous ‘thing-in-itself’” which can play such a causal role (McCarry 2007; see also Hearn 2012). Rather, the perpetration of and response to domestic abuse can be part of the way in which individuals continually construct themselves as gendered subjects. This theoretical insight is useful for this thesis because it allows me to pay attention to the ways in which subjects are held accountable to gender in particular ways within the military community as they respond to domestic abuse.

It is worth flagging here that this is a deeply *political* approach to domestic abuse; one which understands it as a political and social issue as well as an individual and interpersonal one, which is rooted the gendered social inequalities which characterise society. For Pain, “Domestic abuse is always political, although it is not always considered that way” (2015: 65). This - that domestic

abuse is both innately political and not always recognised as such - is an important point for my thesis, and worth discussing very briefly here. In this thesis, and in particular in Chapter Seven, I draw attention to the ways in which domestic abuse is *depoliticised* within the dominant narratives which circulate in the British military community. By 'depoliticisation,' I refer to a process whereby the systemic, political nature of a given issue is obscured through its attributions to individualised or otherwise externalised causes; in Razack's words, "a determined look away from anything systemic" (2004: 152). For Edkins, depoliticisation works through the encircling of difficult and traumatic events and experiences as separate from the constitution and the normal functioning of the body politic itself - that is, through a process in which the systemic nature of inequalities and violences, and their position as woven into the roots of how modern societies are formulated, is denied (2003). In relation to domestic abuse, depoliticisation refers to processes through which the rootedness of such abuse in both structural gender inequalities and idealised gendered and sexual identities - as sketched out above - is obscured. This discussion will be taken up further in Chapter Seven.

To summarise, I theorise domestic abuse as a deeply political, gendered pattern of abusive and violent behaviour which a perpetrator uses to establish dominance and control over his intimate partner. Domestic abuse is shaped in important ways by the organisations of gender and of power in the contexts in which it take place, as it operates both through structures and through discourse and social norms. My multiple approach to power and to gender allows me to make sense of my interview participants' complex individual narratives through a recognition of both the structural and the discursive forces through which they are shaped and enabled - to locate the experience of abuse not just within the physical bodies of one couple, but within the wider gendered social and political context in which it occurs. This conceptualisation is particularly helpful for understanding responses to abuse, including victim-survivors' help-seeking decisions, as it allows me to consider how the gendered minutia of everyday life, structured by wider social forces, either facilitate or discourage particular responses to abuse.

### **Militarism and the British military institution**

The terms 'militarism' and 'militarisation' have been subject to a range of definitions among scholars. Stavrianakis and Selby outline five main ways in which militarism has been conceptualised within the academy: as an ideology which glorifies war and martial values; as state behaviour and policy-making which tends towards the use of military force; as a

quantitative build up of military technologies and personnel; as a tilt in the balance of power relations between a state's military and civilian institutions in favour of the former; and, from a sociological perspective, as a set of relations embedded within society (2013: 12-14). Many previous feminist interventions have defined militarism as an ideology. Bernazzoli and Flint, for example, point to "a worldview that privileges military culture, values, and interests over those of civil society" (2010: 158). Similarly, Enloe lists core beliefs which constitute militarism, including the assumptions that human nature is prone to conflict, that armed force is the ultimate way to resolve tensions, and that in times of crisis there are those who require protection (the feminine) and those who have the duty to provide that protection (the masculine) (2004: 119). For Stavrianakis and Selby, these "ideology-centred conceptions" have lost influence in recent years, "both because wars and militaries are no longer subjects of straightforward glorification, and because it is reductionist and limiting to essentialise militarism as ideology." They note that while beliefs and ideas remain relevant, they are now usually contextualised within broader interpretations of militarism which also encompass the material (2013: 12). A sociological approach to militarism, however, highlights the everyday social relations which allow geopolitical violence to take place, and emphasises how ideologies, policy-making, military build-up, and state power relations are all embedded within broader social relations (*ibid.*: 13-14). Stavrianakis and Selby define militarism as "the social and international relations of the preparation for, and conduct of, organised political violence" (*ibid.*: 3). In a slight re-working of this definition, I understand militarism as: *the normalised, everyday, gendered social relations of the preparation for, and conduct of, political domination and control for which the use of organised violence is a viable option*. I explore this approach below. For the purposes of clarity, it is worth noting that I use the term 'militarism' in this thesis to refer to this set of social relations, and the term 'militarisation' to refer to the process by which this set of social relations comes to exist within a particular social space.

My definition of militarism as the normalised, everyday, gendered social relations of the preparation for, and conduct of, political domination and control for which the use of organised violence is a viable option purposefully draws attention away from dramatic, headline-grabbing acts of military violence and towards the everydayness of militarism; to ordinary social relations whose relationship to war might not be immediately apparent. This is not to suggest that war is not important to discussions of militarism - it is - but that militarism is much broader than war itself. If we imagine war as the tip of an iceberg which is visible above the surface of the water, then militarism is the part below the waves - made up of unremarkable structures, routines, and

interactions - which is mostly unseen, but without which the uppermost tip could not float. As Sjoberg and Via argue,

[t]hough war is an essential condition of militarism - the apex, the climax, the peak experience, the point of all the investments, training, and preparation - militarism is much, much broader than war, comprising an underlying system of institutions, practices, values, and cultures.

(Sjoberg and Via 2010: 7)

My discussions of militarism thus focus not on the drama of international violence but on the “banal processes of daily life” which are “so common as to be taken for granted and accepted as “normal”, or, even, “natural”” and in which - very importantly - militarism ‘takes root’” (Dowler 2012: 497). It is through the everyday actions and interactions of individuals that the ‘nation’ and the ‘international’ are produced, and that armed conflict between nation-states becomes possible (Basham 2013: 20; Dowler and Sharp 2010: 171). It is the very normality of the social relations which constitute militarism which helps to normalise violence on the international stage, framing the limited terms of debate over the use of the Armed Forces before it begins so that discussions focus on *how* military force should be used and not on whether it should be used at all, which Lutz refers to as “the military normal” (2009).

If militarism is to be understood as a particular set of social relations, then, scholars of geopolitical violence need to rethink ideas of “what counts” in geopolitics, shifting their focus from the decisions of elites and the security of states to the everyday actions of ordinary individuals and the security of persons - both within and outside military institutions (Hyndman 2001: 214). This calls into question the notion, which often emerges from the academic literature, of a neat, binary ‘divide’ or a ‘gap’ between the civilian and military spheres. While the nature of this divide has been conceptualised in a number of ways - as rooted in culture, demographics, policy preference, or institutional organisation (Rahbek-Clemmensen *et al.* 2012) - it has been widely considered important for ensuring that the military can function effectively (Forster 2012: 275-76; Herspring 2009: 668, 72) and for protecting the civilian sphere from military encroachment (Feaver 1999: 214-15). Feminist scholarship on everyday experiences has drawn attention to the militarism inherent in civilian life (Enloe 2007: 4) and to the continuities across ‘war’ and ‘peace’ (Sjoberg and Via 2010: 7), and has thus undermined the idea of a neat binary division. Following this, while Sylvester (2012, 2013) has convincingly called for scholars to put



experience and bodies back into the study of war - to bring to centre stage the *people* who “dwell” “in the shadows of IR” (Sylvester 2012: 490; see also chapters in McSorley 2013; Sylvester 2013) - this study demonstrates the importance of expanding this in order to centre individual, embodied experiences in the study not only of war, but of the normalised social relations which make war thinkable.

In drawing the focus of discussions of militarism away from the enactment of geopolitical violence and towards everyday social relations, I argue that at its core, militarism is *not primarily about violence per se*, but about the exercise of dominance and control - about having mastery over the other. To reach a situation where the use of organised political violence is thinkable, acceptance of the relations of dominance and control are first required. My understanding of militarism therefore highlights its underlying assumption that, on some level, a political body such as a nation-state has the right, or even the responsibility, to exercise dominance and control over nation-states or social/political groups who are in some way understood as ‘other’. At an even more basic level, it depends on ideas about the nation-state (or alternative form of collective) as a legitimate social entity with particular characteristics and, importantly, particular boundaries. The use of controlled, *legitimate* violence can then become a tool through which mastery is achieved. Whilst it is central to militarism that the use of violence is an *option*, it remains a last resort, to be utilised only when the ability to exercise control over political affairs in other ways are exhausted. If we focus only on militarism in relation to war, as Stavrianakis and Selby’s definition might be taken to suggest, we are in danger of abstracting the violence of war from its wider context of domination and control as well as from its everyday enactment in mundane social relations which can, on an experiential level, feel a very long way from the drama of violence and war.

It is important to note that I am not advocating a focus on the ‘small scale’ of everyday experiences of the relations of militarism *at the expense* of the ‘large scale’ of war; rather, I want to undermine, to some extent, the idea that the two can be so neatly divided. That is, I argue that the assumption of a radical division between the intimate and the geopolitical is misleading because the intimate and the geopolitical are intrinsically co-constructed and intertwined with one another (Pain 2015: 66). As I note in Chapter Two, feminists have identified a “continuum of violence” which connects violence and domination across scales and contexts, which reaches “from the home and urban backstreet to the manoeuvres of the tank column and the sortie of the stealth bomber” (Cockburn 1999: 5; see also Kelly 1988). The notion of ‘scale’ - that everyday life, including that of intimate relationships, is a ‘small scale’ issue in comparison to the ‘large

scale' problem of war -serves to obscure the connections and mutual reproductions of social issues which occur between and across contexts. Militarism's everyday relations and enactments are fundamentally relevant to the functioning of its more remarkable manifestations such as armed conflict; it is through the mundane social interactions and everyday economic, social and political structures that the use of violence on a geopolitical stage becomes thinkable; becomes "an inevitability, something good, or even a source of moral satisfaction" (Butler 2010: xi). This is not a one-way process in which one 'level' shapes the other - in which the intimate is "dripped down upon" by geopolitical processes (Pain 2015: 64) - rather, to quote Basham, such processes "should be regarded as working in, with and through one another, as overlapping at multiple junctures and in various combinations, as intra-active" (2013: 14-15). While the intimate and the geopolitical are not the *same*, their diverse workings of power are thus mutually constitutive and co-dependent.

Moreover, judgements of the scale and of the 'everydayness' of a given issue are not simply reflections of how widespread or how 'ordinary' it is. For some people in some parts of the world, the violence of war *is* 'everyday' in that they live in its shadow on a day-to-day basis. In another sense, while domestic abuse is experienced by individual women, it is a 'large-scale' issue in that it affects the lives of huge numbers of women worldwide<sup>79</sup>. Understandings of scale are rooted in understandings of borders. When borders are erected between families, for example, domestic abuse becomes a 'small scale' issue experienced within that family unit rather than a broad social problem rooted in the structures and ideologies which produce 'family life'. Moreover, the designation of particular social issues as 'small scale' functions as a silencing tool whereby socially constructed structures of inequality are cast as natural, inevitable, or unimportant - especially in relation to 'large scale' problems. To rethink scale, then, requires a rethinking of borders - between nations, between families, and between the public and the private sphere - in order to denaturalise the divisions which have obscured commonalities and undermined political alliances (Hyndman 2004: 310).

Finally, in further contrast to Stavrianakis and Selby, I suggest that militarism cannot be understood as gender-neutral because it functions through "a certain logic of gendered meanings and images [which] helps organise the way people interpret events and circumstances, along with the positions and possibilities for action within them, and sometimes provides some rationale for action" (Young 2003: 2). While militarism is not only gendered but works through intersecting

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<sup>79</sup> [www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/), last accessed 28 March 2014.

axes of dominance including race, class, and sexuality (Lutz 2002: 723), I focus in this thesis on gender because, as I argued above, it is gender which best enables me to make sense of experiences of domestic abuse. For Young, militarism relies upon a gendered logic of masculine protection in which there are those who require protection - the feminine - and those who have the duty to provide that protection - the masculine - and the protected are necessarily placed in a subordinate position in relation to their protectors (Young 2003: 2). Other scholars have made similar arguments. Peterson suggests that a gendered logic of protection “justifies both the necessity of rule and who should rule” - that is, in one discursive move, the notion of feminine weakness and masculine strength both establishes the need for relations of protection, control, and dominance, and decides the positions of gendered actors within them (2010: 20). Similarly, Das argues that because of this gendered logic of protection, men and women are called upon to “[give] life to the nation” in gender differentiated ways: men, to fight and die; and women, to contribute their reproductive labour (2008: 185).

It is important to note, of course, that these logics are not timeless and that change does occur. Hyndman, for example, draws attention to the ways in which the public/private binary in relation to the appropriate subjects and objects of protection have shifted over time, in particular through the growing influence of the notion of “human security” (2001: 215-16). Moreover, the growing presence of women in military institutions, while still small scale and managed in ways which limit its impact, is “fundamentally challenging at a cultural/symbolic level” (Woodward and Winter 2006: 60). The dichotomous view of men and women may sometimes appear over-simplistic, and it is contested by the gender practices of some individuals. Despite this, as Basham suggests, “the re-inscription of this binary is highly significant to the production of identity and difference that is central to who fights and dies in modern conflicts and to the ongoing prioritisation of military force in liberal politics” (2013: 50). That is, while this gendered binary of the protective masculine and protected feminine is shifting and far from inevitable, it does continue to be influential in the ways in which wars are understood and are fought. This binary is not simply reflective of reality but is itself biopolitical; it produces the bodies of men and women in particular ways, reinforcing the suitability of male bodies, and the unsuitability female bodies, for fighting (Pin-Fat and Stern 2005: 44).

Militarism, I suggest, requires and works through patriarchal social relations, but it cannot be reduced to patriarchy alone; it relies also upon the notion of the threat an external other, against whom the use of violence is likely to be necessary in the name of protecting the feminised within

the collective. For Cockburn, gender relations cannot be considered the immediate 'causes' of war in the sense that they are what wars are understood to be 'for', as oil resources or national autonomy may be (2010: 149), but rather, they "predispose our societies to war. They are a driving force perpetuating war" (*ibid.*: 140). That is, gender relations "foster militarism and militarization. They make war thinkable. They make peace difficult to sustain" (*ibid.*: 149). Further, for Lutz, patriarchal gender relations are centrally important (although not unique) to what she calls "modern imperialism" but, again, are not the whole story - capitalist expansion and extraction, she argues, remain central (2006: 595). Militarism in contemporary Britain, then, is not *just* patriarchy, but it does rely upon patriarchal relations. Militarism is a particular form of patriarchal social relations which are formulated around the notion of crisis, risk, and the legitimate mastery of external others.

### ***The contemporary British military institution***

Having discussed militarism in the abstract, I move in this section to a consideration of the British military institution itself as a space in which the social relations that constitute militarism are deeply embedded. I do not want to suggest that militarism - understood as the normalised, everyday, gendered social relations of the preparation for, and conduct of, political domination and control for which the use of organised violence is a viable option - does not exist outside of the boundary of the institution. Indeed, I argue above against the notion of a clear, binary division between civilian and military and suggest that my focus on the everyday social relations of militarism draws attention to the commonalities which exist across the civil-military divide. However, while the social relations which constitute militarism breach institutional boundaries and are produced in various ways across military and civilian spheres, the military institution does constitute a space in which they are crystallised and intensified. Within the military, the patriarchal and masculinist ideologies which exist in wider society are concentrated in a heightened and institutionalised form. While it is not radically divided from civilian society, then, the British military does have a specific gender culture, one which is produced, in part, through the *idea* of difference from civilian life - against the 'other' of particular ideas of civilian life (Hale 2012: 711).

Importantly, the gender order of the British military is produced within a specific institutional space. The military institution assumes a greater level of involvement in what might normally be considered the 'private' lives of its members than might be accepted in most other forms of employment, which has led scholars to label it a "total" or a "greedy" institution. Hockey,

focusing particularly on the basic training period, compared the British Army to Goffman's (1961) concept of a "total institution," pointing to the lack of an "offstage" area where recruits can find privacy as well as to the identity stripping techniques which underpin training methods (Hockey 1986: 24-26). Similarly, writing about the US example, Segal (1986) likened the military to Coser's (1974) "greedy institution," one which makes great demands on individuals "in terms of commitments, loyalty, time, and energy" (Segal 1986: 9). Like all social institutions, of course, the military is not static, and some elements of military life have no doubt changed since Hockey and Segal were writing (and indeed, Segal was writing about the USA). Moreover, I want to note here the limitations of the institution's totalising potential: while it does make significant claims on the lives of its personnel, the military is not, and does not entirely replace, the state. The military is a sub-state institution - an employer - and thus the relationship it has with its personnel is one of employer-employee and not of state-citizen. Moreover, as I argue elsewhere, the boundaries of the institutional absorption of the lives of its personnel and their families is constantly negotiated and incomplete, framed by the fluid needs of the institution as it understands them and not by a drive for totalising, blanket control. While the institution does have an interest in, and the ability to involve itself in, the 'private' lives of its personnel - wherein this interest serves institutional needs, such as, for example, if personnel are having personal problems which may impact their abilities to do their jobs - it does not swallow whole the 'private' lives of its personnel, and, issues which are not considered 'relevant' to institutional needs may well be side-lined (see Gray 2015). However, contemporary British military life remains one which is shaped by the institution in numerous ways - in particular for those who live in SFA 'inside the wire' of the base or in patch communities. Indeed, militaries continue to make deliberate efforts to bring personnel and their families inside the institutional space in order to promote the recruitment, retention, and morale of personnel (Bourg and Segal 1999: 636; Wood *et al.* 1995: 230). While the military is *not* the state, the institution does replace many of the services and resources for which one might normally turn to the state with its own institutional equivalents - such as policing and welfare services. Moreover, the British military also makes explicit efforts to shape the identities and behaviours of its personnel in all areas of their lives, both on- and off-duty; for example, the Army requires all personnel to sign up to its 'values and standards' - loyalty, Integrity, courage, discipline, respect for others, and selfless commitment - and states that it expects personnel to uphold these at all times<sup>80</sup>. Strong social bonds are also fostered within this institutional space; both within serving units (Higate 2012; Woodward 2008), and more broadly (Enloe 2000: 154-97; Gray 2015: 6). As a result, while it may not be a "total institution" in any kind of blanket sense,

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<sup>80</sup> [www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/v\\_s\\_of\\_the\\_british\\_army.pdf](http://www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/v_s_of_the_british_army.pdf), last accessed 4 August 2015.

the British military *is* a specific institutional space, and it is this space within which its gender order comes into being.

### ***Heteronormative gender in the institutional space***

If we accept, then, that the lives of British military personnel and their non-serving spouses are shaped to a significant extent by the institutional context in which they live, we must next ask how this is experienced in relation to my above explorations of militarism as a set of social relations. How is gendered militarism crystallised within the institution? The contemporary British military is a heteronormative space, by which I do not mean only that it remains presumptively heterosexual (Basham 2008), but also that it relies upon the idea of male and female *difference* as an important organiser of social life (Nielsen *et al.* 2000). Below, I draw upon both structural and post-structural approaches to power and to gender to sketch out the heteronormative gender order of the institution, as this is the setting in which the abusive relationships of interest to this study are embedded.

The idea of distinct categories of people known as ‘men’ and ‘women’ is central in the structural organisation of the military, and it shapes the spaces institutional life. As Woodward and Winter note, gender “informs the understanding of the planners of military bases and barracks about who can and cannot live together, how they can live together, what facilities it is appropriate to share or not share, and how these spaces should visibly reflect their military function” (2007: 5). The roles which men and women perform within this institutional space are largely differentiated, the most obvious example of which being the ongoing exclusion of women from ‘combat’ roles in the British military (see Chapter One). While it is likely that this exclusion will soon be removed<sup>81</sup>, in terms of drawing attention to the heteronormativity of the military what is particularly interesting is that the arguments which have underpinned this exclusion have for some time centred largely not around women’s psychological or physiological *abilities*, but about notions of their essentialised difference: their very presence *as women*, the arguments have suggested, would be disruptive to unit cohesion (Woodward and Winter 2007: 53-56). Furthermore, as I explore in Chapter Six, the structures of military families continue to position non-serving spouses, who are overwhelmingly women, as the *dependents* of their serving spouses in ways which reinforce a ‘traditional,’ heteronormative sharing of labour and of power within the relationship. While civilian women married to servicemen do increasingly participate in the labour market, for example, for many the geographical mobility which structures their military lives, as

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<sup>81</sup> [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/11302533/Women-in-front-line-combat-roles-by-2016.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/11302533/Women-in-front-line-combat-roles-by-2016.html), last accessed 4 August 2015.

well as the requirement that those with children function as a “single parent” while their partners are deployed, makes it difficult to develop a career or a reliable and long-term independent source of income (Enloe 2000: 153-97; Harrison and Laliberté 1994: 130-31, 55, 75, 217-18).

Post-structural approaches can also offer insights into the gender culture of the British military. In many ways, military gender norms could be described as conservative - clinging to ideas of male-female polarity despite these being largely eroded from most civilian discourse (Harrison and Laliberté 1994: 14), characterised by a “cultural lag” (Higate and Cameron 2004: 210) and ‘traditional’ attitudes (Kurpius and Lucart 2000: 256-63). It would, however, be deeply flawed to describe military gender culture as simply behind the times, as a less evolved version of host society. Military gender relations are in important ways *qualitatively* removed from civilian society because they are formulated for and through the political project of militarism. The British military both functions practically and legitimates itself through gendered ideologies; in Hale’s words, “[t]he military rebuilds or reframes masculinities [and femininities] as a means of meeting the aims of the process of militarisation” (2012: 705). As Belkin argues, militarised gender ideals play an important role in legitimating militarism: the portrayal of servicemen as tough, masculine, dominant, and stoic, for example, “can conjure up images of military strength, state legitimacy and imperial righteousness, while depictions of the soldier’s flaws can implicate notions of military weakness and state and imperial illegitimacy” (2012: 58). That is, while the lived experiences of military masculinity have always been more complex, fluid and multiple than has been reflected in dominant stories that have been told about it - by scholars, the media, soldiers, and the wider public - these simplified stories themselves play an important political role in enabling and legitimating militarism. A significant and multifaceted exercise of power therefore continues to go into naturalising the gender norms of militarism (Kovitz 2003: 2).

In light of the political functioning of military gender ideals, it is important to emphasise that the models I describe below are not reflections of the essentialised reality of the lived gender identities of people within the British military community - to suggest that they are, as Belkin points out, would be to risk reinforcing the very gendered constructions upon which militarism relies (2012: 5) The performance of military gender identities is far from a simplistic or unitary process, rather, as Higate argues “the making of what might be called military gender is a practical, continuous, social accomplishment” (2003a: xiii). That is, drawing on a post-structural understanding of subjectivity as an *effect* of everyday, routine gendered practice, the models explored below should be read as the “ideologies or fantasises of what men [or women] *should*

be like” (MacInnes 1998: 2) in conversation with which individuals performatively construct their gendered identities.

As political constructions, dominant ideas about the relationship between combat, the heroic, and masculinity are neither homogenous nor static but are continuously reformulated in the face of changing social and political contexts (Morgan 1990: 26-27). While scholars have pointed to the plurality of military masculinities, noting that administrative clerks do not construct their gender practice in the same way as front-line soldiers (Higate 2003b), it has been widely argued that the hegemonic model in relation to which military performances of masculinity are constructed is the “warrior masculinity” of the idealised combat soldier (Atherton 2009: 824). This idealised model is centred on physical and mental toughness, the ability to endure physical hardships without complaint (Woodward 2003: 44), and the ability to use aggression and violence (Hockey 1986: 34). Respect for authority, willingness to obey commands and to conform to hierarchy, and ability to exhibit discipline are also central features of hegemonic military masculinity (Atherton 2009: 824-25; Cockburn 2007: 249-50). In addition, scholars have identified ‘traditional’ ideas about appropriate gendered behaviour (Hockey 1986: 115), and even outright misogyny (Higate 2003b: 27), as characterising features of this model. Idealised warrior masculinity is associated with “aggressive heterosexuality and homophobia” (Woodward 2003: 44), the enthusiastic pursuit of heterosex (Hockey 1986: 114-15), and the ability to overcome trauma and hardship (Woodward and Jenkins 2013: 163; see also Gray forthcoming).

Moreover, while militaries are masculine spaces, because gender is relational (Connell 1995: 72) military masculinity is “utterly dependent [...] on this other, on the institution of the family, of the feminine”; as without something to protect, the military loses its purpose and legitimacy (Woodward and Winter 2007: 83). Soldierly identities are formulated through ideas about the protection of “hearth and home” (Atherton 2009: 827), and civilian women married to servicemen - as the most immediate embodiment of this - play an important role in their construction. For example, Basham quotes an officer in the British Army who reflects on the gender dichotomy whereby women - in particular civilian women married to servicemen - embody that which is to be protected by military force.

It’s just the way that history is, you know - man goes off to war, leaves his wife and children behind and expects them there when he comes back. And you know, she’s



there to cook and clean and bring up [the children] [...] that's to me the bottom line  
[...] men have a natural inclination to protect the women.

(Basham 2013: 82-83)

In this officer's narrative, the role of the military wife is to care for the house and home and, in so doing, to embody the constitutive other against whom the soldier constructs his identity as military protector.

Military femininities are plural, encompassing a broad range from the sexy/tomboy dichotomy of female soldiers (Woodward and Winter 2007: 84-88) to vulnerable "womenandchildren" (Enloe, cited in Wilford 1998: 29-30) in need of protection. For the purposes of this thesis, the most relevant construction is that of the military wife. As discussed below and throughout this thesis, many civilian women married to servicemen must accept significant and unusual hardships if their marriages are to endure and to provide the kinds of unpaid domestic labour and the symbolic functions which the military institution requires. Like the use of violence for men, this self-sacrifice does not come easily for women, and discursive strategies must therefore be employed to persuade them to embrace it.

For Enloe, the idealised model of the military wife revolves around her support for her husband's military role. The idealised military wife feels that she is part of the military community, is proud of the patriotic duty she does within it, and feels that her own status grows as her husband's rank increases. She is flexible to the changing demands of the institution and accepts certain difficulties in the name of duty to her country and her marriage, including the possibility of supporting her husband through mental/emotional or physical injuries (2000: 162-64). In addition, she accepts as natural the binary division of labour which positions men as breadwinners and women as housewives and mothers (de Bere 2003: 98), and embodies the virtues of stoicism, self-reliance and toughness (Harrison and Laliberté 1994: 83-84). As Ware argues, while many civilian women married to servicemen find themselves unable to live up to this ideal or choose to reject it, the point of this model is that it highlights the "parameters of acceptable behaviour associated with being married to a soldier" (2012: 207). The military institution asks a lot of its families, requiring many spouses to regularly uproot their lives and in some cases, to sacrifice the chance to have their own career. In August 2014, just over a third of service families had moved house within the previous twelve months (Ministry of Defence 2014, 1). Western military institutions rely upon the willingness of military spouses to make these

sacrifices, and upon their unpaid domestic labour. In the US case, (Wool 2014: 5-7) draws on Povinelli (2006) to argue that conjugal couplehood - conceived in liberal imaginaries as the key form of sociality through which appropriate personhood can most properly emerge - is understood by military authorities as the preferred form through which personnel should be supported and reintegrated into civilian communities after deployment. For Horn (2010: 64), therefore, to act “appropriately” as a military wife “means accepting particular gender roles, such as caring for the children, keeping house, and supporting husbands in their roles as military men.” This matters to militaries: as Ware suggests, “[w]ithout the unpaid labour and emotional support of thousands of military spouses standing behind their individual soldier, the whole system would grind to a halt” (Ware 2012: 207).

Militarism, then, is a political project which is underpinned by a gendered logic in important ways. The notion of protection by which militarism is legitimated is inherently gendered, and relies upon the idea that there are those who require protection - the feminised - and those who have the duty to provide that protection - the masculinised. Rooted in this are the normative masculinities and femininities which circulate within the institutional space of the contemporary British military. As I note above, it is not the case that all individuals within this context conform to such idealised gender roles - there is, of course, resistance, negotiation and agency at work. The ideals, however, remain, and continue to play important roles both in shaping the context in which individuals negotiate and perform their gender identities, and in the ongoing political legitimisation of the project of militarism itself.

### **Concluding remarks**

This chapter has explored the theoretical approach which frames this thesis. Drawing on both structural and post-structural approaches to power and to gender, I have explored the conceptualisations of domestic abuse and of militarism upon which this thesis builds its arguments. The theoretical tools introduced in this chapter - both structural and post-structural approaches to power and to gender; a political view of domestic abuse as a gendered pattern of behaviour through which a perpetrator attempts to gain control over his intimate partner; and an understanding of militarism as a gendered set of mundane, everyday social relations which are crystallised within the institution of the British military - enable me to make sense of responses to domestic abuse in this context. By paying attention to both structural and post-structural approaches in making sense of domestic abuse, I am able to build a nuanced understanding of

how responses are shaped both by structurally mediated conditions of possibility and by the ways in which victim-survivors are held accountable to femininity. Moreover, paying attention to the British military as a gendered institution allows me to make sense of how these factors are reshaped in this particular context, and thus, to construct a nuanced and multi-faceted understanding of the narratives which emerged from the interviews conducted for this thesis.

In addition, while I have built this theoretical approach in order to enable me to make sense of the experiences of my participants, my study also allows me to contribute towards the advancement of these theoretical approaches. This thesis contributes to the theorisation of the social relations which constitute militarism by providing a case study of how these relations are lived in this particular example, providing a study of what it *means* to say that militarism is gendered on an everyday, experiential level. Secondly, my study contributes to theoretical understandings of domestic abuse by providing information on how coercive control is experienced and negotiated in a particular context. This contributes towards the complication of this theoretical approach by pointing towards the context-specificity of the ways in which patterns of controlling behaviour are established.

## **Chapter Five:**

### **Responses to abuse and the performance of gendered identity in the military**

This is the first of three chapters which offer analyses of the themes which emerged from the empirical data collected for this study. In this chapter, I draw upon post-structural approaches to engage with these central questions:

- How are responses to domestic abuse in the British military shaped by discourses of gender identity? How, if at all, is militarism implicated in this?

I approach the writing of this chapter with some caution, as any discussion of the subjectivities of victim-survivors and of perpetrators of domestic abuse is, politically, a difficult and risky proposition. All too often, discussions of abuse which focus on the identity or behaviour of victim-survivors in particular have been framed in a manner which blames a woman for her victimisation, identifying some trait in her individual identity or aspect of her behaviour which explains why she doesn't 'just leave' (as, it is implied, any sensible person would do), or even which explains why she suffered abuse in the first place (Thapar-Björkert and Morgan 2010). As discussed in Chapter Two, even theoretical interventions which aim to promote empathy towards victim-survivors by casting them as blameless 'victims,' for example Lenore Walker's influential work on "battered women's syndrome" (Walker 1977, 1979, 1984), can unintentionally disempower victim-survivors through obscuring their capacity for agency. Similarly, as I discuss further in Chapter Seven, theoretical interventions which focus on the identities of perpetrators can individualise and depoliticise discussions of abuse by portraying the abuser as deviant, sociopathic, or mentally unwell, thus obscuring the wider, gendered social factors which shape domestic abuse.

Moreover, it is important to note that gender identity - as an ongoing relational and interactional achievement - should not be understood as a causal force for social behaviour. To suggest, for example, that forms of masculinity *cause* violence may be to assume the existence of an essential masculinity, prior to and external to social relations - an "autonomous 'thing-in-itself'" (McCarry 2007: 409) - which pre-exists a given act of violence in a stable way. For McCarry,

if we attribute causal power onto 'masculinity' we can locate the blame for male violence onto 'masculinity' and away from men who perpetrate it. This has a profound effect on the way in which both men as individual perpetrators are then conceptualised and how men as a social group are understood to receive their 'patriarchal dividend' from the violence of some men (in terms that this violence contributes to maintaining the gender order).

(McCarry 2007: 409)

Despite these reservations, several of the narratives which emerged from my interviews strongly suggest that there is something about military life other than just its material structures (discussed in Chapter Six) which play an important role in shaping responses to domestic abuse. For several participants, this was articulated as related to their sense of self, their understanding of the character and identity of their partners, and the ways in which these were implicated in their making sense of their experiences. Paying serious attention to narratives of identity allows for a centring of participants' own sense-making practices in my analysis, as well as for an understanding of the everyday ways in which abuse is negotiated and responded to. I am careful to draw connections here from participants' narratives of identity to theories of power and to the political project of militarism, and in doing so I aim to mitigate as far as possible the individualisation which has been so politically damaging in other scholarship that discusses domestic abuse in relation to the identity of its victim-survivors and perpetrators.

In this chapter I suggest that the ways in which domestic abuse is responded to in the British military context is shaped by disciplinary power. I begin by expanding on some of the theoretical discussions of disciplinary power which I began in the previous chapter, and by exploring how this theoretical approach can help us to understand how victim-survivors are held accountable to, and how many develop strong affective attachments to, the norms of idealised military wifehood. I go on to discuss how this disciplinary power shapes responses to abuse - specifically, through the disciplining of victim-survivors around the ideals of stoicism and of support for the military career - two of the traits of the idealised military wife which emerge from both the academic literature (Enloe 2000: 162-64; Harrison and Laliberté 1994: 83-84; Horn 2010: 64; Wool 2014: 5-7) and from the interviews collected for this study. Recognising that femininities and masculinities cannot exist in isolation but are produced through one another on an ongoing basis (Connell 1995: 72), I then draw attention to ways in which responses to abuse are shaped through dominant understandings of hegemonic "warrior masculinity" (Atherton 2009: 824). In concluding

the chapter, I return to a discussion of how these idealised norms of militarised gender play a role in the making possible and the legitimation of militarism writ large.

### **Military gender identity: Disciplinary power and affective attachment**

In the preceding chapter I sketched out the post-structural approach to power and to gender which informs this thesis. I noted that gendered identities are neither static nor innate, but rather that gendered “docile bodies” (Foucault 1991: 138) are produced through the “*stylized repetition of acts*” (Butler 1999: 191, emphasis in original), which produce the “effect of an internal core or substance” (*ibid.*: 185). Conscious of their own visibility within a field of what Foucault termed “disciplinary power,” subjects come to shape themselves to conform to the norms of their societies, and as such a subject becomes “the principle of his [sic] own subjugation” (Foucault 1991: 202-203). Gendered identities - as in masculinities and femininities - are constructed and enacted in relational terms. Neither can exist without the other, as they are co-produced “in the process that constitutes a gender order” (Connell 1995: 72). This process cannot be finished; rather, gender identity is an ongoing social accomplishment which is never finally complete (West and Zimmerman 1987: 126).

For West and Zimmerman, individuals are “held accountable” to the expectations applied to their gender within social relationships. That is, individual actions are judged and responded to in relation to the gendered expectations to which a person is subject - *as a woman*, or *as a man*. The (presumed) membership of individuals to one or other of the categories ‘woman’ and ‘man’ works to legitimate or to discredit their actions across the whole of social life - although it functions differently in different social settings - and, with it, the actor’s competency as a social being is also assessed (West and Zimmerman 1987: 136-37). The terms by which we are held to account, of course, are not of our own making, but precede and exceed us in various ways (Butler 2005: 20). Such accountability is both interactional and institutional - “it is a feature of social relationships, and its idiom derives from the institutional arena in which those relationships come to life” (West and Fenstermaker 1995: 21). While it is possible for individuals to do gender in various ways, not all choices are equally easy to make for all embodied subjects, and the cost of making certain choices can be very high (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 842-43). Deviance from the accepted norms of gendered practice calls subjects “into question as competent members of society” (West and Fenstermaker 1995: 20) because, in Butler’s words, “‘persons’”

only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility” (Butler 1999: 22).

Civilian women married to servicemen are held accountable to what Ware calls the “parameters of acceptable behaviour associated with being married to a soldier” (Ware 2012: 207). It is important to note once again that I am not attempting to describe who civilian women married to servicemen *are* in any essentialised sense. Instead, as I explore in the previous chapter, military gender ideals are *political* constructions, propped up by a considerable exercise of power, which serve to enable and to legitimate militarism itself (Belkin 2012: 58; Hale 2012: 705; Kovitz 2003: 2). Participants in this study did not claim to embody in any complete sense the idealised identity of the military wife. Following Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity, however, it is not necessary that a statistical majority of women actually conform to the model in order that it be considered normative (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832) - and indeed, the vast majority of participants *did* agree that the ‘ideal military wife’ was a concept which they recognised, which they could identify, which was held in high esteem, and which, in many cases, they felt pressured and/or endeavoured of their own accord to perform.

For military support worker Lily, for example, “Army wives do have a particular identity [...] I would say that Army wives do have a very specific identity.” Similarly, military support worker Veronica suggested that

**Veronica:** I think, even if she wasn’t an ideal military wife when she married him, she either gets to be one or the relationship won’t last [...] Her job always comes second to his. Her family always comes second to his job. Even the kids that they have come second to his job, which, yes, you get in the civilian world but not to the same extent [...] [If the] wife isn’t willing to become the military wife image [the relationship won’t last] [...] I don’t think many of them start off being the ideal Army wife but they don’t last long if they’re not.

In addition to providing a clear illustration of the ways in which military gendered identity is an ongoing *achievement*, Veronica’s narrative suggests that the pressures upon civilian women married to servicemen to perform the identity of the ‘military wife’ are such that the relationships of those who fail to conform to it at least to some extent will not last. Her narrative thus highlights the efficacy of disciplinary power in this space - civilian women married to servicemen,

she suggests, are aware of the “field of visibility” to which they are subjected - and those who succeed as military wives are those who allow this form of power to “play spontaneously” upon themselves (Foucault 1991: 202-203).

I want to note that not all participants fully embraced this identity category: for some, ‘military wife’ was a limited term which did not encompass their self-image. Victim-survivor participants Elenoa and Mereoni, for example, stated that:

**Elenoa:** I still had my own ambitions [...] I still had my dreams and things I wanted to pursue.

**Mereoni:** I didn’t like to be regarded as an Army wife, just an Army wife, I wanted to be somebody.

Elenoa and Mereoni did not wish to be entirely defined by the term ‘military wife,’ as they did not feel that it fully encompassed their identities; indeed, some level of criticism of those who are “just an Army wife” - and by implication are therefore are not “somebody” - can be identified in their narratives. This is not, however, the same as an outright rejection of the term, but is rather a reluctance on the parts of Elenoa and Mereoni to subsume their identities wholly within it.

Other participants, however, expressed deep affective attachments to the military wife identity, and spoke of the positive feelings which they associated with it. Victim-survivor participant Tanya, for example, told me:

**Tanya:** I was proud to be a soldier’s wife [...] Walking down the street in the town [...] [People would ask] “Oh are you in [the base], is your husband in the [regiment]?” And, “Yeah, yeah my husband’s in the [regiment]” [...] And just saying, “Yeah, my husband’s in the Army,” you think, do you know what, I’m damn proud to be a soldier’s wife because they do a good job. You know, they’re fighting for the country.

Tanya’s narrative points to feelings of pride and of self-worth attached to her experience of being a ‘military wife.’ That is, while it was her husband, and not herself, who actually served in the military, her connection to the institution was something she wanted; it was a source of a positive identity of which she was proud. Similarly, when discussing her pride in her abusive former



husband's military role, victim-survivor participant Rachel referred to the self-esteem she found in identifying as a military wife:

**Rachel:** I'm still quite proud of the fact that they're still going out there, they're still fighting out there [...] I was only 19 when I got married [...] With having my son young as well there was that, I don't know how to put it. This is my life. I'm not a typical young mum, you know, in my family life and in, you know, he had the perfect job and he was perfect. So it was nice to have that family. 'Cause that's all I've ever wanted.

For Rachel, her identity as a military wife gave her an escape from being looked upon as "a typical young mum" - an identity she associated with being looked down upon - and offered instead the opportunity to be respectable<sup>82</sup>. This suggests that Rachel understood military wifeness in particular as a desirable identity - one with a respectable arrangement of family and a husband with "the perfect job" - and that this was an identity to which she felt attached. Finally, victim-survivor participant Kimberly told me that:

**Kimberly:** Whatever they're going through, going to Afghanistan or whatever, you support them because you're the wife, that's what you want to do.

Kimberly describes the sacrifices she made in her own life in order to support her serving husband, difficult though they may be, as something that she, and other military wives, *want* to do. That is, for Kimberly, supporting her husband was not something which was enforced upon her by a source of repressive authoritarian power, but rather something that she chose to do because of her own desires.

These narratives point to the disciplinary power at work here - subjects self-police, performing the behaviours which are expected of them and, through this performance, producing their identities as 'military wives' in particular ways. In addition, these narratives can also be usefully understood through a consideration of the strong affective attachment which many participants displayed to this identity. This is, I think, an important point to emphasise in particular given the negative and unhappy experiences upon which this thesis focuses - living the social relations which constitute militarism can be, and in many cases is, *a source of pleasure* for some actors.

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<sup>82</sup> For a discussion of class, gender, and respectability which is beyond the scope of this thesis, see Skeggs (1997).

The pleasures of militarism have been explored by scholars discussing the deep connections produced during military bonding rituals (Higate 2012: 456-58; Wadham 2013: 226-27); by those who refer to the “pull of adventure” in encouraging recruits to sign up to military service (O'Connor 2015: 70) in particular in the context of contemporary saturation of Hollywood and of videogames with “militainment” (e.g. Stahl 2010); and by others who have identified the “masculine pleasures of armament culture” as a gendered fantasy which works towards the easing of masculine anxieties in a time of globalisation and job insecurity (Salter 2014: 166-68). There remains, however, a dearth of critical scholarly work which takes seriously the pleasures to be found in the performances of diverse militarised identities - perhaps because of a taboo against the subject among critical scholars of the military - and this is something that scholars should take seriously in order to make better sense of military experience (Dyvik forthcoming).

Affective attachment does not equal pleasure: indeed, as Berlant points out, it can be experienced as “dread, anxiety, hunger, curiosity, the whole gamut from the sly neutrality of browsing the aisles to excitement at the prospect of “the change that’s gonna come”” (Berlant 2011: 2). This is a particularly useful point, because it helps to make sense of some of the apparent contradictions which characterise participants’ engagements with military identity. Victim-survivor participant Jessica, for example, said of her abusive husband that “even though he was horrible, I was still proud of him” because of his role in the RAF. Similarly, Tanya’s interview transcript contains both scathing critique of the Army and of its personnel and of the way they treated her (“they close ranks [...] there’s cover-up, everyone knows it”) and deep admiration for both (“you’re a soldier: I take my frigging hat off to you [...] I will always take my hat off to any of the Armed Forces”). Working in the U.S. military context, Scott reflects on affective attachment to make sense of a similar contradiction: that many servicewomen in the US military who have experienced sexual harassment and sexual assault, and who have been seriously let down by the institution in the process of reporting the assault and of trying to seek redress, still believe in the military’s “innate goodness” and ability to act as a source of positive identification and pride (Scott 2015). Scott explores this apparently contradictory attachment through the lens of Berlant’s concept of “cruel optimism.” For Berlant, “all attachments are optimistic” in that they constitute “a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and make possible for us” (2011: 23). Optimistic attachment, she suggests, is an affective structure which “involves a sustaining inclination to return to the scene of fantasy that enables you to expect that *this* time, nearness to *this* thing will help you or a world to become different in just the right way” (*Ibid.*: 2, emphasis in original). For affective attachments to be described as

“cruel,” they must constitute “a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility” (*ibid.*: 24); an affective attachment to something which “is actually an obstacle to your flourishing” (*ibid.*: 1). Importantly, Berlant makes it clear that even cruelly optimistic attachments are not “a symptom of error, a perversion, damage, or a dark truth” (*ibid.*: 14). That is, servicewomen who remain attached to the military institution as a source of the “good life” even as it systematically prevents their attainment of that very same ideal are not to be derided, blamed, or pitied, they are not ‘wrong,’ and they are not suffering from a form of “false consciousness” (Scott 2015; 1, 19). Rather, for Berlant, optimism is “a scene of negotiated sustenance that makes life bearable as it presents itself ambivalently, unevenly, incoherently” (Berlant 2011: 14) - the conditions of possibility in which lives are lived mean that even cruelly optimistic attachments are sometimes the only ways in which life can be endured. The notion of cruelly optimistic affective attachments is useful for my analysis because it can help us to make sense of the apparent contradictions which shape individuals’ relationships with the military institution and with militarised identity without judging them as somehow ‘wrong.’

Civilian women married to servicemen formulate their identities on an ongoing basis within a field of disciplinary power in which they are held accountable to the “parameters of acceptable behaviour associated with being married to a soldier” (Ware 2012: 207). Moreover, many participants in this study experienced deeply held attachments to the norms to which they were held accountable - attachments which do not easily dissipate despite the hardships they may experience (Scott 2015: 1) - as they were a source of pride and of identity. This chapter explores the implications which this has for the ways in which victim-survivors of abuse in this context respond to abuse.

### **Responses to abuse and ‘military wifeness’**

In the previous chapter I outlined the idealised model of military wifeness which scholars have described, and argued that this model plays an important political role in enabling militarism by encouraging civilian women married to servicemen to accept the hardships of military life. This is part of a broader gendered logic which, I argued, contributes to the legitimisation of the social relations of militarism. In what follows, I focus on two traits of idealised military wifeness which emerge both from the literature and from my interviews as being particularly significant, in order to draw attention to the ways in which these idealised traits shape the responses to abuse of victim-survivors in this context. I first discuss the impact of the norms of stoicism and strength,

before moving on to focus on the expectation that civilian women married to servicemen will provide support to their husband's career and to the institution more broadly.

***“You have to be quite a strong woman to be a military wife”***

For several participants in this study, the unique demands of military life mean that stoicism and strength of character are required characteristics of a military wife: as perpetrator participant Dean put it, “you need a [...] special type of woman to put with the crap that the Army brings.” For victim-survivor participant Jessica,

**Jessica:** You have to be quite a strong woman to be a military wife, I think. Because as I say, you know, you can tell by some of the women, they put on this front of, you know, “oh la di daa, you know, life's great, I love it,” when really, you know that they're lonely [...] I think a wife has to take on a lot of stuff.

Jessica's narrative highlights the ongoing accomplishment involved in performing the identity of military wifehood. Stoicism, she suggests, is not something which comes naturally to civilian women married to servicemen, but rather it is something that they try hard to attain and to present to the world. Civilian women married to servicemen, subject to disciplinary power, work to attain the ideals to which they are held accountable.

Moreover, while the pressure to perform stoicism is a source of anxiety for some civilian women married to servicemen, many also experience an affective attachment to their own identity as stoic - and this can become a source of pride. Describing how she coped on her own with the children when her husband deployed to Afghanistan, for example, victim-survivor participant Isabella stated:

**Isabella:** It was amazing. It was the best 6 months of my life [...] When I moved [to the patch] I had nothing. I had these Army wives who I didn't trust, all my family 150 miles away, no church, nothing. And I had to learn to do it by myself. And so those seven months when he was in Afghan, I just had to survive doing it by myself. And that was the best thing for me because that is what has enabled me to, kind of, cope since leaving him.

Isabella's narrative points to an affective attachment to the notion of herself as a strong woman, one who can cope. This may be particularly important in the context of domestic abuse - as I discussed in Chapter Two, the label 'victim' may itself be disempowering and may obscure the agency exercised by women who experience abuse; and some may therefore resist this label. This does not mean that Isabella did not also feel anxious and pressured into remaining strong - indeed, in another extract from her interview, cited below, Isabella laments feeling pressured not to admit that she was struggling. As discussed above, it is not unusual for affective attachments to be experienced in contradictory, but none the less significant, ways.

Several victim-survivor participants interviewed for this study recounted the ways in which the expectation that they perform a form of 'military wife' femininity centred around stoicism, and their own affective attachment to this performance, shaped the ways in which they responded to abuse. For many, the pressure to stay strong at all times led to a reticence to admit that they were going through a hard time and that they needed help. Victim-survivor participants Jessica and Isabella, for example, told me that:

**Jessica:** You feel like you can't go and ask for help. Because you're supposed to be that strong person, and you're meant to be, like, this good little wife [...] [I]t makes you not want to get the help because you're not, I think it makes you feel like you're weak. Because you know, you're not meant to be that person. You're meant to be this strong woman. And going for help means that you're a weak person, and basically saying that you can't cope with everything. And you're not supposed to be that person, so you shouldn't do it.

**Isabella:** You don't want to admit that you're struggling. You don't ask for help. Because then that makes you look like you're not as good as people are making, like, people think you are. Although I didn't have that kind of image, but because everybody else did, I didn't know who to ask. Because I didn't know who would help me.

Jessica's and Isabella's narratives show how the disciplining of 'military wife' subjects around the ideal of stoicism can limit their ability to seek help, because doing so is read as an admission of failure to embody the proper identity of a military wife. Indeed, several interview participants painted a clear picture of the *failed* military wife as one who is

insufficiently stoic and, as a result, unable to cope with the demands of military life - a figure who was widely seen as an object of scorn. Civilian support worker Andy, reflecting on his previous experience as a military support worker, emphasised the difference between 'proper' military wives and those who were found wanting:

**Andy:** As soon as the unit went away you knew Mrs Jones, Mrs Smith, Mrs Roberts would be charging down your door saying "I need him back I can't cope" [...] Then you had the other ones, I remember one lady in particular, she broke her arm, she fell over and broke her arm, quite badly, she had a 6 week old baby and an 18 month old baby, she couldn't cope. She didn't want to ring the unit to get him back because she thought it would affect his career. I phoned the Welfare Officer [...] "This has happened", "Ooh, that's not right, we'll get him back" [...] [The welfare office and I] went out and said to this lady, you know, it's not gonna impact on his career. You are not one of the ones known to the Unit Welfare Officer, oh every time your husband goes away you're shouting that you can't cope.... there is an understanding of genuine need versus oh, as soon as they go, she'll be in, she'll be in, she'll be in.

This narrative of failure functions as a cautionary tale which describes the fate of those who are insufficiently stoic, and which forms part of the process through which subjects self-police. The circulation of shame embedded in ideas about who is a worthy and who is an unworthy object of sympathy and of support functions to discipline subjects, further producing the desire to be one of those who are worthy. Furthermore, it also works to legitimate power inequalities within the community, by attributing blame to those who are insufficiently supported by the welfare system itself (this issue will be further taken up in Chapter Six).

The discussion above illustrates how civilian women married to men who serve in the British military are held accountable to the idealised image of the military wife as a strong and stoic figure who is able to deal with the hardships of military life without complaint. This emphasis on stoicism is not mere coincidence but, as I argue in the previous chapter, is part of the social relations of militarism, which rely upon the performance of symbolic and practical roles by civilian women married to servicemen. Several participants in this study had conflicted and yet deeply held affective attachments to stoicism, which functions as a source of both pride and of intense anxiety. A number of victim-survivors in this study reported that the ideal of stoicism had an important shaping influence on their responses to domestic abuse; specifically, that it

discouraged them from seeking the help that they needed. This is because the expectation that they perform stoicism added a potential cost to reaching out for help: the risk of being judged as a 'failed' military wife.

***“You do have to really look after him, for the things that they go through”***

Another element of the idealised 'military wife' model which has formed a central part of scholarship on the figure (Enloe 2000: 162-64; Horn 2010: 64; Wool 2014: 5-7) - as well as one which emerged strongly from my own interviews - is the emphasis on the multiple and overlapping forms of support which civilian women married to servicemen owe to their husband's careers. The British military institution continues to rely heavily on the unpaid domestic, reproductive, and emotional labour of the civilian women married to its personnel. This gendered division of labour - with so called productive labour understood as the primary duty of men and reproductive labour that of women - is hardly a phenomenon unique to the military institution; as Fraser puts it, “[t]he construction of breadwinning and caregiving as separate roles, coded masculine and feminine respectively, is a principle undergirding of the current gender order” (1996: 61). Although women's labour market participation has increased dramatically in recent decades, they continue to bear the majority of responsibility for reproductive and domestic labour (Baxter 2000; Schober 2013), and participation in unpaid household labour - or not - remains one of the key ways in which subjects 'do' gender (Bittman *et al.* 2003; Brines 1994; Evertsson and Neramo 2004; Greenstein 2000).

While the feminisation of reproductive labour is by no means unique to the military context, then, women's unpaid labour has played a crucial role in the maintenance of military institutions in various ways across time and space. Civilian women married to servicemen often take responsibility for regular house moves, and in particular in the context of the recent invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, many are expected to cope with the periodic absences of their husbands when they go away on deployment or on training exercises. If they have children, many act as single parents during this time, running the household and caring for their children and, when their husbands are deployed on combat duty, managing their own fear and that of their children for the wellbeing of their serving spouse. They have to deal with the sometimes difficult period of readjustment and reintegration when their husbands return from training or deployment, as well as with any longer term impacts of war such as physical and mental injuries (Bowling and Shermian 2008).

That wives' reproductive labour remains key to the functioning of the British military - and that it is largely *expected* within military communities - was supported by the interviews conducted for this research. Victim-survivor participant Rachel described the domestic labour she carried out in support of her husband:

**Rachel:** I did take care of him [...] a lot more than probably a normal wife. You do have to really look after him, for the things that they go through, the things that they see and do.

For Rachel, the unique demands that the military career puts on a serviceman require that the civilian women who marry them perform high levels of unpaid labour, in particular emotional labour, to support them. Rachel's narrative questions neither whether this labour is necessary nor whether it is the proper duty of civilian women married to servicemen - rather it takes for granted that it is so, pointing to the efficacy of the disciplinary power which operates within this space.

Official labour requirements placed on British military wives - such as the expectation that they will not take on paid employment but will instead provide unpaid 'voluntary' labour on base (Enloe 2000: 161-62; Jolly 1987: 48-51) - have largely been eroded in recent decades. Despite this, participants in this study, including perpetrator participant Dean and victim-survivor participant Mereoni, suggested that civilian women married to servicemen continue to experience pressure to fulfil their more traditional roles.

**Dean:** If you say "Oh well, I can't come to this function because my wife's working so I need to look after the kids," they'd go mad, you know, so if you went to the RSM - the Regimental Sergeant Major - and said look I can't come to this function because I need to stay at home and look after the kids it just wouldn't wash. It would be like, "Tough, you tell your wife to take that night off work."

**Mereoni:** [Welfare workers] ask you, you know, if you have time to [...] volunteer, but they don't pressure you into doing it because they now know that women, you know, we know what our rights are. But having said that [...] [they] say, "We're looking for people, can you do it? Would you be available?" Some of us go "OK yes" - you feel obliged to do it. You can't answer back because he's the Unit Welfare Officer, so you just say "OK I'll come and do it," despite the fact you don't want to.



In Dean's and Mereoni's narratives, while civilian women married to servicemen are in theory no longer expected to provide unpaid labour to the military institution, many continue to experience pressure to do so. That is, repressive forms of power by which military wives were officially required to perform certain labour have diminished; however, they have been replaced with disciplinary forms of power which may achieve, to some extent at least, the same result.

Moreover, and somewhat more difficult to pin down than the concrete and demonstrable forms of labour which civilian women married to servicemen are often expected to perform, participants spoke of feeling compelled to police their own behaviour in particular ways so as not to risk harming their husband's career. That is, participants felt that their husbands would be judged by the standards of behaviour which they, as wives, performed. In victim-survivor participant Amy's words, a wife's behaviour is considered to reflect "how a husband controls his household" - and servicemen who are thought to lack appropriate control over their wives may find their career prospects diminished. Similarly, for victim-survivor participant Natalie, "whatever the wife does, it gets back to the husband, the husband gets it in the neck, it creates problems in his career;" and for victim-survivor participant Mereoni, there remains a need for women married to servicemen to "suck up" to those with influence in the community. Emphasising this further, victim-survivor participant Amy reported that her behaviour could have negatively impacted her husband's career when she was unable to attend military social functions. She explained:

**Amy:** There is a great expectation you will support your husband and attend the functions. Many of the functions were inconvenient to me for a variety of reasons such as I had a small baby, they were mid week functions and so on [...] I can recall many years ago some OC [Officer Commanding] saying that as a family we needed to attend more functions. This was actually written down on [my husband's] CR [Confidential Report<sup>83</sup>] which has implications on promotion.

The narratives cited above suggest that there is a belief among many civilian women married to servicemen that their behaviour impacts the career prospects of their husbands in ways which would be unusual in the civilian sphere. Aware of their visibility and the importance of this to their standing within the community, civilian women married to servicemen are subject to

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<sup>83</sup> This is the annual internal report on a serviceman's performance, which has impacts on the individual's future career.

disciplinary power, held accountable by the community and the institution itself for the appropriate performance of their roles.

The expectation that a 'military wife' will support her husband's career shaped participants' responses to abuse in a number of ways. Some participants reported deciding not to pursue official channels of support because they felt, at least initially, that it was more appropriate to try to be understanding and to offer support to their husbands - including victim-survivor participants Amy and Danielle:

**Amy:** Of course, I allowed certain incidents to go unchallenged as he was either deploying or returning.

**Danielle:** I thought, 'cause he's served, I thought he had, like, PTSD, so it just let it ride over my head. I thought, OK, we'll let this off, this one time [...] I let it go because I thought that he'd been in 22 years, I thought, let it go, be nice. [After that] I think it happened like three or four more times.

While Amy and Danielle recognised that the violence their partners subjected them to was not right, their response to it was to try to support their partners through a difficult time, offering the emotional support which was commonly expected of them in the hope that this would prevent further violence. It is likely that this is not unique to the military community: in Chapters Two and Four I point to the work of scholars such as Towns and Adams who argue that the "perfect love discourses" which circulate in civilian society encourage victim-survivors not to seek help but instead to offer love and support to their abusers in an attempt to end the abuse (Towns and Adams 2000; see also Hoff 1990; Kearney 2001; Sueffert 1999). It may be, however, that this issue is exacerbated within the military institutional space because of the particular concern that seeking help through *military* support services meant reporting abuse to the perpetrator's employer (see Chapter Six). The strength of victim-survivors' reticence to risk harming their husband's career by reporting abuse was reflected in Williamson and Price's research into domestic abuse in the British military (2009: 18) and also in help-seeking support materials provided by the military itself (Ministry of Defence 2015a: 8). In my study, several participants spoke specifically of their reticence to seek official forms of help because they were worried about the impact it might have upon their husband's military careers - which they felt compelled to support. Victim-survivor participants Frances, Mereoni, and Natalie told me:

**Frances:** I didn't wanna involve [military support agencies] because I didn't, I suppose I didn't wanna get him into trouble [...] 'cause it ruins them, doesn't it, their promotion and everything, and I should have done, I should have done.

**Mereoni:** I always wanted my husband, regardless of him being the way that he was, I wanted him to do well in his career. And that would mean that I would have to support him wholeheartedly, you know. It impacted a lot on their career. If the wife is being 'difficult', yes, that's what they say. You just have to toe the line and keep quiet.

**Natalie:** I did report it to the RMPs, the RMPs did come and arrest him, I did make a report, [and] he begged me not to go through with it. They told me the consequences of, if they [took it forward], on his career and that. So you're made to feel guilty that you could obviously ruin his career. So I [...] dropped the charges.

For these three participants, the perceived importance of their husbands' career progression, and the expectations - those that they had of themselves, and those that others had of them - that they support that progression, made it difficult for them to report their experiences of abuse to the military authorities. That is, the perceived costs of responding to abuse by seeking official forms of support were, for some participants, prohibitively high.

Civilian women married to British military servicemen are held accountable to the model of the idealised military wife who supports her husband's career and is careful not to do anything which might harm his prospects. Again, this expectation is integrally connected to the gendered political project of militarism. This may be a factor which discourages those who experience domestic abuse from responding to abuse by seeking help through official channels. It should be noted, however, that this does not necessarily reflect a lack of agency on the part of the victim-survivor. As discussed in Chapter Two, victim-survivors of abuse exercise agency in multiple ways. Those who, given the conditions of possibility in which they live, choose not to report their husbands to official agencies so as to mitigate against other potential threats to their personal security - such as the economic insecurities caused by the loss of their husband's job or the end of the relationship - *are* exercising agency. However, it is an exercise of agency which shapes responses

to abuse in particular ways; one which is formulated through the field of disciplinary power in which military wives perform their identities.

### **Responses to abuse and “warrior masculinity”**

At the beginning of this chapter I noted that the ongoing social achievement of gender identity is relational - that is, that “[m]asculinities do not first exist and then come into contact with femininities. Masculinities and femininities are produced together in the process that constitutes a gender order” (Connell 1995: 72). Following this understanding, it is not surprising that discussions of idealised military *masculinities* - of who the idealised military serviceman is *as a man* - also emerged from my interviews as an important discourse in conversation with which victim-survivor participants made sense of their own identities as they were subjected to - and resisted - domestic abuse. In the section below I discuss some of the ways in which ideas about military masculinities shape responses to abuse in this context. I explore the ways in which women make sense of and perform their identities as ‘military wives’ in conversation with - and perhaps in opposition to - these dominant models of military masculinity, and how this affects their help-seeking choices. In addition, I highlight how support workers’ understandings of the identities of military servicemen can also impact the ways in which they respond to abuse. Given the relational construction of masculinities and femininities, there is some unsurprising overlap here with the above, to which I point but do not dwell upon. Despite the risk of repetition, however, it is important to show that the ‘military wife’ model which I discuss in the preceding section does not exist in isolation, but only makes sense and comes into being in relation to militarised models of masculinity. While there are a number of ways in which this could be approached, I arrange the following section around the three tropes identified by McCartney as dominant in imaginings of British military servicemen in recent years - hero, victim, and villain (McCartney 2011). I have chosen McCartney’s framework because it reflects well the dominant themes which emerged from the interview narratives collected for this project.

#### **““He’s a hero.” Is he?”**

Military servicemen are often assumed to be heroic by virtue of their status as servicemen - an “automatic heroism” (Woodward and Jenkins 2013: 162) which is not necessarily connected to the performance of particular heroic acts. A 2008 poll undertaken for the British Army, for example, found that nine out of ten people considered soldiers to be heroes, in comparison with 58% and 34% of people who thought the same of public sector workers and journalists

respectively (McCartney 2011: 44). Moreover, in 2010, McCartney identified 238 British newspaper articles which used the words “soldier” and “hero” in the headline (*ibid.*, 44). The charity Help for Heroes - one of the UK’s biggest military charities, with an income of £32.6 million in 2011/2012<sup>84</sup> - exemplifies this automatic heroism in its statement that “anyone who volunteers to join the Armed Forces, knowing that one day they may have to risk it all, is a hero. It’s that simple<sup>85</sup>.”

The notion that servicemen are made heroic by virtue of their service emerged strongly from the interviews conducted for this study, in ways which tie in closely with participants’ pride in, and affective attachments to, their identities as military wives. Tanya’s narrative cited above in which she states that she was “damn proud to be a soldier’s wife because [...] they’re fighting for the country” provides an illustrative example of this. Similarly, for victim-survivor participant Elenoa,

**Elenoa:** he was doing things that I don’t think I would do, across the world and being out in Afghanistan, ‘cause he had done Northern Ireland [...] he had done Belfast, Iraq and Afghanistan. So that wasn’t something I see myself doing, so yeah I was very proud.

Moreover, the interview narratives collected for this thesis also reveal important ways in which the understanding of servicemen as heroic shapes the ways in which victim-survivors and support workers respond to abuse. Military support worker Zoe told me:

**Zoe:** [In a recent case review, the perpetrator] was deemed, literally months before, a war hero because he’d been shot in the eye. So for his spouse to actually say actually, he’s a monster at home. He’s a monster and he does this and he does that would be particularly, you know, particularly difficult.

Zoe’s narrative suggests that victim-survivors who understand their abusers to be war heroes - and who are aware that others within the community also hold this view - may find it difficult to speak out about abuse. That is, they may find themselves disciplined against challenging the high levels of community respect for military heroes by denouncing their husbands as abusers.

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<sup>84</sup> [www.helpforheroes.org.uk/Publications/Annual-Reports/2012/files/assets/common/downloads/publication.pdf](http://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/Publications/Annual-Reports/2012/files/assets/common/downloads/publication.pdf), last accessed 25 September 2014.

<sup>85</sup> [www.helpforheroes.org.uk/how-we-help/about-us/faqs](http://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/how-we-help/about-us/faqs), last accessed 25 September 2014.

Even when they do report the abuse, victim-survivors may find that the automatic respect that others have for their 'hero' husbands makes it difficult to get their claims taken seriously. Victim-survivor participant Sophie took her husband to (civilian) court for multiple, very severe charges of violence against her; however after the Army gave him, in her words, a "glowing" report which failed to disclose her long periods of contact with the Army Welfare Service over his abuse. She said:

**Sophie:** I had to listen to judge thank my abuser for being a "hero," tell me he was a loving husband and devoted father, and say he has suffered enough because of his PTSD.

Similarly, quasi-military support worker Marcus described frustrating experiences in civilian courtrooms:

**Marcus:** [Everybody says] "Oh, he's a hero." Is he? He's knocked ten bells out of his Mrs, what kind of hero does that? You know what I mean, the courts are tied, I've [seen (civilian) court cases] [...] where they've turned around and said, this guy's a hero, he's served in the [military]. And yeah, brilliant soldier, but he was a thief as well, or, he stole money as well [...] All the evidence can stack against him. Hero - off you go. Yeah, you can lose cases in court - hero. Courts need to see past the job.

In both of these narratives, the assumption of heroism is one that prevents civilian judges from taking seriously the notion that servicemen might also be perpetrators of serious criminal acts - and thus, one which makes it difficult for victim-survivors to obtain support and justice. This is a disciplining mechanism, in which victim-survivors are forcefully reminded through their interactions with other actors of their husbands', and their own, social positions. The persistent association between military masculinity and heroism - an important political tool in the maintenance and legitimation of militarism - thus plays a role in shaping responses to domestic abuse in this context.

***"I thought, let it go, be nice"***

McCartney identifies the trope of the serviceman as victim as one which has been growing in influence in recent years, pointing to 169 national newspaper articles in the year 2010 with headlines containing the words "victim" and "soldier" (2011: 45). Injuries - both physical and

mental - sustained by service personnel through recent conflicts have increased public awareness of and concern over their fate; a concern compounded by public criticism of the standard of equipment provided to those deployed (*ibid.*: 46-47) and by claims to victimhood by personnel themselves<sup>86</sup> (McGeorge *et al.* 2006). For McCartney, “There is now an expectation that soldiers will be psychologically damaged by war” (2011: 46). Most often, this psychological damage is understood to constitute PTSD - upon which I reflect in more detail in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

Complicating somewhat McCartney’s model, I argue that narratives of the victimisation of military personnel often contains within it not just ideas of passivity but of active - even *heroic* - agency in the *overcoming* of victimising events. Narratives of overcoming - evident in the ideas surrounding the Invictus Games which took place in London in September 2014<sup>87</sup> - have also been identified by Woodward and Jenkins (2013) as characteristic in the literary genre of contemporary military memoirs. Such narratives focus not on the traumatic experiences of combat which led to injury taking place, but on the heroic stories of overcoming hardships and shaping a post-injury life in which conventional markers of happiness are achieved. As such, these narratives function to dispel public discomfort around the effects of war by focusing instead on rehabilitation and renewal, contributing to the idea that even when war is horrific, it can and should be transcended rather than resisted. As with the other elements of gendered ideologies discussed in this chapter, such narratives of redemption serve to, in Belkin’s (2012: 5) words, “clean up” militarism in contemporary Britain (Woodward and Jenkins 2013: 161-62; see also Gray forthcoming).

The idea that servicemen are likely to be psychologically damaged by their military duties but, equally, that this is a form of damage which they will, with time, be able to overcome, had important impacts on the responses to abuse of some participants in this study. Some victim-survivors attributed the abuse to their husbands’ psychological traumatisation and, therefore, did not hold them truly responsible for it. This meant that they felt they had a duty to provide care for their husbands through their difficulties and, as a result, not to report the domestic abuse or to seek specific support for it. Victim-survivor participant Danielle’s interview extract cited above bears repeating here:

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<sup>86</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1852964.stm>, last accessed 4 August 2015.

<sup>87</sup> [www.invictusgamesfoundation.org](http://www.invictusgamesfoundation.org), last accessed 10 September 2014.

**Danielle:** I thought, 'cause he's served, I thought he had, like, PTSD, so it just let it ride over my head. I thought, OK, we'll let this off, this one time [...] I let it go because I thought that he'd been in 22 years, I thought, let it go, be nice. [After that] I think it happened like three or four more times.

Danielle understood her abuser's behaviour towards her as a symptom of his victimisation through military service. As such, she did not approach it as something for which he was responsible, but as a hardship that, with *proper support*, he could be expected to overcome. As a result, her role as a military wife was to provide that support. The notion that domestic abuse is rooted in servicemen's victimisation thus functions as a disciplining mechanism which encourages victim-survivors to conform even more tightly to the norms of idealised military wifeness - as those who report abuse in such circumstances are understood as failing to provide the support they owe to their serving husbands at their time of greatest need.

Other participants who attributed their husband's abusive behaviour to the damage done to them in conflict noted that, as *masculine subjects*, their husbands would have difficulty seeking help for this damage. Victim-survivor participants Isabella and Jessica explained that:

**Isabella:** when I first left him I wrote to [Prime Minister David] Cameron and they put me in touch with the head of the Armed Forces, and I then wrote to him and he said "Well there is counselling available to them should they want it." And I'm like, but these are *men*. They're not going to come forward for counselling unless they have to.

**Jessica:** I don't think men are good at really expressing their feelings. Even if you are there willing to say you know "Look I'll, what's wrong, you know I'm always here for you," you can say that as many times as you want, but men don't usually express is out.... And I think because he couldn't express, couldn't let it out [by] talking [to] someone [...] He explodes.

Isabella and Jessica suggest that even when support is offered to counter the damages of war, servicemen are prevented from taking advantage of such help because of their identities as militarised masculine subjects. In this narrative, the inability to seek help further entrenches the damage done by war and maintains the serviceman's position as victim. In addition, if servicemen



are assumed to be both significantly damaged and unable to seek help through military sources, the responsibility to provide caring labour is further pushed away from the military institution and onto the private sphere. This further disciplines civilian women married to servicemen, whose burden of care is increased.

Assumptions of a causal connection between the victimisation of military personnel and their perpetration of abuse also shape the perceptions and responses of support workers. Victim-survivor participant Amy reported finding herself rebuffed and left without support after disclosing abuse to a health visitor:

**Amy:** I did approach the health visitor and she said "they all go through this stage [...] it will settle down."

In Amy's case, the health visitor's assumption that the abuse was an unfortunate but relatively normal, short term problem of adjustment, which would "settle down" over time, left Amy without access to support for the abuse she was experiencing.

In comparison, victim-survivor participant Sophie was offered support when she disclosed abuse to the Army Welfare Service on the base where she lived - however the particular type of support put forward was aimed not at the abuse itself but at her husband's (assumed, not diagnosed) mental health needs:

**Sophie:** [The AWS workers] went "right, that's fine, we'll get that incident dealt with." So they got him, basically they forced him into getting help. So they, he went up to go speak to somebody about, did he have post-traumatic stress or anything like that.

Because the signposting workers in Sophie's case assumed a causal connection between the combat-related victimisation of her husband and domestic abuse, their response was to provide support primarily orientated towards the mental health of the perpetrator and not towards the safety and well-being of the victim-survivor. This is not to suggest that no benefit could be engendered by this avenue of support - it may well have been beneficial to the perpetrator and perhaps even helped to reduce particular forms of the abuse in some way. However, because this approach did not recognise the underlying patterns of power and control which motivate abuse it

was not able to tackle its root causes. Even more worryingly, because it was focused on the well-being of the perpetrator rather than that of the victim-survivor, Sophie's welfare - and her safety - was not its central concern. This left her unsupported and at risk of further abuse - and indeed, in Sophie's case, she went on to survive an attempted murder by her abuser before she accessed specialist support. In Amy's and Sophie's examples, support workers further reinforced the disciplining of victim-survivors by failing to challenge the notion that the good 'military wife' is one who supports her husband through the hardships caused by his military career.

***"They're killing machines [...] that's what they're trained to do"***

The third major trope identified by McCartney as central in understandings of British military personnel is that of the serviceman as villain - a classed construction which views the serviceman (and the soldier in particular) as both violent and thuggish. While McCartney suggests that the trope has lost influence in recent years because of the growing attribution of servicemen's misdeeds not to bad character but to the difficulties and traumas of military service (2011: 48), narratives which cast serviceman as innately and problematically violent did emerge from some of my interviews. Victim-survivor participant Sophie, for example, felt that "it's just one of those things, they've got no control over their anger and anything will set them off." Similarly, civilian support worker Elizabeth reported a conversation with the Commanding Officer of the local military base who explained that the perpetration of domestic abuse by servicemen was to some extent inevitable because "they're killing machines [...] that's what they're trained to do." For victim-survivor participant Amy:

**Amy:** The training and situations [my husband] he has been in do not call for non-confrontational methods...He has used that method [force] so many times it is second nature and gets the desired results quickly [...] He has no understanding of how to conduct himself in civvy street with civilians and his answer to anything he does not understand or like is aggression [...] He knows he is "not normal" but is too rigid in his thinking. He can never change who he has become as the Army moulded him to be that person.

Similarly, civilian support worker Barbara noted that:

**Barbara:** They are soldiers aren't they, so what is expected of a soldier? [...] If you've got them being all in touch with their feelings and all this business, how are they

gonna go out and shoot somebody? (laughs) [...] if you're all touchy-feely you might not do that.

For Sophie, Amy and for Barbara, British military personnel retain some level of 'villainy' at least to the extent that they are understood to be, as a result of their military service, more violent and more controlling than civilian men. While McCartney suggests that the 'villain' trope is on the wane, then, it seems to maintain some currency among participants in this study.

Some victim-survivor participants in this study made explicit connections between the heightened physical and psychological capacity for violence which they felt that their husbands, as servicemen, had, and their experiences of domestic abuse. Jessica and Sophie, for example, recounted:

**Jessica:** He goes, "cause of my training I know how I can snap any of your bones," and all this. So the training thing [...] "Oh yeah, I know how to do that to you, so I can break this".... The physical side got much worse [when he joined the RAF]. 'Cause as I said, 'cause he was trained in things then he's like 'Oh I know how to do things, and no one would even know it was me.' And that's a frightening thing. Very frightening [...] [During one incident] 'cause he's RAF trained, he grabbed me here [gestures to her neck] to make me [...] pass out..

**Sophie:** He also told me one day, if he was gonna kill me, how he'd dispose of my body. In very, very intricate detail, you know, he'd put my body in the bath full of lime, burn the, yep, it was in major detail [...] And it would be in really heavy detail he would tell me how he would get rid of my body, and everybody would have just thought that I'd ran away.

The idea that military personnel have a greater capacity for violence in the perpetration of domestic abuse was undermined by other participants in this study - perpetrator participant Dean, for example, suggested that training for most personnel focuses on how to operate weapons systems rather than on hand-to-hand combat - the 'reality' of this is not relevant here. Jessica and Sophie both *believed* that their serving husbands had a particular capacity for violence, and this seems to have added an extra layer of fear to their abusive relationships. While participants in this study did not explicitly state that their fear of their serving husbands in

particular was a factor which shaped their responses to abuse, fear of future violence *is* a factor which has been shown to impact responses to domestic abuse more broadly. Often, fear that abusers will retaliate with more severe violence has been identified as something which discourages victim-survivors from seeking help through official channels, or from attempting to leave the relationship (Harne and Radford 2008: 130-31; Hoyle and Sanders 2000: 21; Murray *et al.* 2015: 386; Wolf *et al.* 2003: 126). Sadly, in many cases victim-survivors' fear of an escalation in violence if they reach out for help is well-founded, as the time around leaving an abusive relationship is when a female victim-survivor is most at risk of being killed by her abuser (Downes *et al.* 2014; Jones 2000; Westmarland 2015: 11-12). It therefore seems likely that victim-survivors in the military context who experience heightened fears of violence might be particularly discouraged from responding in certain ways. That is, victim-survivors of abuse may be self-policing by shaping their own behaviour in response to the violent norms of masculinity to which they understand their husbands to conform. This is worthy of further exploration in future studies.

### **Concluding remarks**

The analysis offered in this chapter has centred around the questions:

- How are responses to domestic abuse in the British military shaped by discourses of gender identity? How, if at all, is militarism implicated in this?

In exploring the answers to this question, this chapter has drawn on post-structural approaches to disciplinary power to identify the ways in which victim-survivor participants in this study were held accountable to military gender ideals - by themselves and by others - in making sense of and responding to domestic abuse. I have shown how the expectation that a 'military wife' will be stoic and will show various forms of support for her husband's career shapes the ways in which domestic abuse is responded to in the military context; often, by discouraging victim-survivors from seeking official forms of support and/or punishment for their abusers, and in some cases by encouraging them to remain in the abusive relationship. Because masculinity and femininity are relational constructs, I also reflected on the impact that hegemonic ideas about "warrior masculinity" have on help-seeking - both by functioning as a disciplining mechanism which reinforces the ideals of military wifehood, and by shaping the responses of support workers. When military servicemen are treated simplistically as heroes, victims, or villains, and when

civilian women married to servicemen are expected to be stoic in their support for their husbands, particular responses to abuse are made more or less likely. This can have the dangerous effect of discouraging those involved from naming the abuse *as abuse* and from prioritising the wellbeing of victim-survivors.

In concluding this chapter, it is important to note that the discourses of idealised military masculinity and femininity which shape responses to domestic abuse are not apolitical, random or coincidental; rather, *they are central to the political project of militarism itself*. That is, and as I argued in Chapter Four, militarised constructions of warrior masculinity and militarised wifehood are part of a political project which enables and legitimates militarism. This is not to suggest that civilian women married to servicemen are devoid of agency, merely the unconscious pawns of militarism - as I have argued in this chapter, many experience deep affective attachments to their roles as military wives and make active choices to embrace them. As Enloe reminds us, however, “recognising any women’s agency - her capacity to think and act autonomously - should not lead us to be uncurious about a larger institution’s efforts to put women’s labour and emotions to work for its own patriarchal ends” (Enloe 2000: 39).

The ideals of militarised masculinity and femininity explored in this chapter, then, enable and legitimate the political project of militarism in both practical and symbolic ways. Practically, the military needs men to choose to join and to find pride, honour, and purpose in doing so (Hockey 2003: 15-17; Kovitz 2003: 3-6). Furthermore, it also needs civilian women who are married to servicemen to accept - even to embrace - their roles as military wives. It needs these women to remain stoic and strong in order that they cope with and tolerate the hardships of military life and their own disempowered positions within the military community (discussed in Chapter Six). It also needs them to embrace their supportive roles within the military community, as without the unpaid emotional and practical labour that military wives provide “the whole system would grind to a halt” (Ware 2012: 207). On a symbolic level, public understandings of the masculine identities of military personnel are centrally important for the legitimisation of militarism itself - as Belkin puts it, “constructions of the soldier’s toughness, masculinity, dominance, heterosexuality and stoicism can conjure up images of military strength, state legitimacy and imperial righteousness, while depictions of the soldier’s flaws can implicate notions of military weakness and state and imperial illegitimacy” (Belkin 2012: 58). This is not always a simple and straightforward matter - and indeed this chapter has explored some of the complexities which characterise public imaginings of military servicemen in particular (McCartney

2011; see also Belkin 2012 for a discussion of the contradictions which underpin militarised masculinity in the US example). Despite this complexity, however, the normalisation of the association between masculinity and military service remains centrally important in the naturalisation and legitimation of the gendered relations of protection and control which constitute militarism (Young 2003); and a significant operation of power therefore goes into perpetuating this connection in the eyes of the public (Kovitz 2003: 2). Similarly, the understanding of military wives as stoic and as supportive naturalises the sacrifices which they are called upon to make and reinforces the gendered logic of militarism whereby they embody the “hearth and home” (Atherton 2009: 827) upon which servicemen are called to protect. That is, the particular ways in which disciplinary power functions to shape the identities of gendered subjects in the British military community - and through this, the ways in which they respond to abuse - is deeply woven into the gendered project of militarism itself.

The analysis presented in this chapter contributes towards filling some of the gaps in knowledge identified in Chapter Two. Most obviously, I have begun my qualitative exploration of an issue about which very little previous empirical data has been collected - experiences of domestic abuse in the British military. In particular, I have contributed to understandings of the “internal” barriers to help-seeking which may be faced by civilian women who experience domestic abuse in marriages to men serving in the British military - specifically, their accountability to a model of femininity centred on stoicism and support for the military career, and their complex understandings of their abusers as heroes, victims, and/or villains. While these are not diametrically opposed to the internal barriers faced by women who experience abuse in the broader British civilian context, they are reshaped and crystallised within the particular institutional context of the British military in important ways. Moreover, I have argued that the gendered ideals in conversation with which military subjects respond to abuse are an intrinsic element of the gendered social relations which constitute militarism itself. As such, I have begun the process, which I develop throughout this thesis, of understanding domestic abuse as both *political* and as an *enactment of gendered militarism*.

## Chapter Six

### Structural violence against civilian women married to servicemen

Like Chapters Five and Seven, the discussions in this chapter emerge from a thematic analysis of the interview data collected for this research. In this chapter, I draw on structural approaches to engage with the following questions:

- How are responses to domestic abuse in the British military shaped by the material structures of life in this context? How, if at all, is militarism implicated in this?

Throughout my interviews, victim-survivor participants repeatedly referred to material structures - in particular their access to housing and to particular types of welfare provision - as factors which shaped their responses to abuse. This led me to a consideration of the structural forms of violence and inequality which shape participants' experiences. At its most basic, this chapter argues that civilian women married to servicemen are positioned in a liminal space on the borders of the military community; neither fully within it nor fully outside of it, and that this places them in a disempowered position in relation to their husbands. That is, I show that the structural arrangement of the military institution *both* draws lines around the community in ways which bring civilian women married to servicemen inside, *and* that these women exist within the military sphere as *dependents*, as add-ons to their serving husbands, and not, therefore, as full and equal members of the communities in which they live. This produces a constant, normalised precarity within such women's lives. While this very normality disguises the violence of the structures which I identify in this chapter in such a way that they are, in most circumstances, not recognised as *violence*, I suggest that the processes of help-seeking in response to domestic abuse can provide a window through which the gendered, violent structures of everyday normality in the military community can be made visible.

I begin this chapter by offering a brief recap of and extension to the theoretical discussions of structural violence which I began in Chapter Four, with a more specific focus on what the concept of structural violence offers to understandings of domestic abuse. Following this, I explore the notion of 'operational effectiveness' as a discursive strategy which functions to naturalise and thus to legitimate the gendered social relations which constitute militarism and upon which the military institution relies. I then argue that the way in which the social relations of militarism are embedded within the institutional space of the military itself positions civilian women married to

servicemen in a liminal space on its borders, subjecting them to forms of structural violence which are normalised through recourse to the notion of operational effectiveness. I suggest that the gendered ideologies and structures of militarism both rely upon the presence of civilian women married to servicemen and simultaneously require that these women are peripheral to the institution itself, and that these coexisting requirements produce civilian women married to servicemen as precarious subjects. I then go on to illustrate this argument through discussions of two of the key structures through which civilian women married to servicemen are both brought into and marginalised within the military community - the provision of housing and of welfare services by the institution. I conclude by returning to a discussion of the significance of these everyday structures to the processes by which militarism is both enacted and legitimated.

### **Gendered structural violence**

As discussed in Chapter Four, structural violence is a concept used to describe the harms engendered by structural inequalities. It refers not to discrete acts of violence perpetrated by one identifiable subject against another, but to “the social machinery of oppression” (Farmer 2004: 307), which “shows up as unequal power and consequently as un-equal life chances” (Galtung 1969: 170-71). That is, unlike the previous chapter - which centred on an understanding of power dispersed throughout the social body which causes individuals to self-police, shaping their identities in conversation with dominant social norms - this chapter pays attention to power as it solidifies in social structures.

In this chapter I make sense of victim-survivors’ narratives of abuse and of responses to it through a focus on the gendered structural violences which underpin their experiences. The concept of gendered structural violence is particularly useful in discussions of domestic abuse because it allows for an understanding of individual suffering as embedded into the wider social matrix of power relations. As such, these discussions allow us to conceptualise abuse not simply as a relation of violence and control which occurs within a given intimate relationship, but as one which is rooted in and made possible through broader societal structures of oppression and inequality. Importantly, structural violence is not, in general, immediately visible *as violence* to most members of society, in many cases even to those who are most affected by it, because everyday structures of oppression and exploration are normalised as taken-for-granted elements of the status quo (Lloyd 2012: 148; Price 2012: 6). That is, structural violence is deeply woven into the roots of normality; as Walter Benjamin put it, for the oppressed, a ““state of emergency” [...]



is not the exception but the rule" (quoted in Taussig 2004: 207). Structural inequalities connected to gender, race, and class, for example, are often assumed to be inevitable, part of the natural order of things and not, therefore, political issues. Drawing attention to the violences of structures is thus a politicising move.

To be clear, domestic abuse is not directly *caused* by structural violence, and it is not itself a *form* of structural violence; rather, domestic abuse is perpetrated by an identifiable perpetrator against an identifiable victim-survivor. The utility of the concept for my analysis here is that it enables me to identify how it is that certain social groups find themselves "as a community, subjected to violence, exposed to its possibility, if not its realisation" (Butler 2004: 20). Again, for clarity, this does not mean that particular groups of people are *innately* vulnerable to becoming victims of violence; rather, it means that structural forms of violence *produce* vulnerability to other forms of harm among those who are its targets (Pain 2012: 18). Klinenberg's exploration of the deaths which occurred during the 1995 Chicago heat-wave provides an illustrative example here. In Klinenberg's analysis, while the heat-wave itself was a natural occurrence, the uneven distribution of its harms reveals it to be "a structurally determined catastrophe," in which certain "forms of precariousness" such as poverty and social isolation made particular subjects vulnerable and unable to protect themselves (Klinenberg 2004). In relation to the present study, it is not that women are naturally predisposed to becoming the victims of intimate violence; rather, gendered structural violence against women both makes women more likely than men to experience domestic abuse and produces particular barriers to women's ability to seek certain forms of help in response to it - it is *this* which makes women vulnerable to abuse (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005; Stark 2007). A consideration of structural violence, in other words, allows me to make sense of and to unpack the limited conditions of possibility in which subjects exercise their agency; in this case, in which victim-survivors of abuse in the military context respond to abuse. It allows me to pay attention to the structural underpinnings which limit the ability of civilian women married to servicemen to respond to the abuse perpetrated against them.

It is important to note that gendered structural violence is not unique to the military, but exists across civilian society. In the British civilian setting, scholars have identified the family as one of the key social institutions through which gender takes shape (Bielby 1999; Budig 2004), and have also identified the heteronormative nuclear family in particular as a site of gendered structural violence through which women as a group are structurally disadvantaged and disempowered in comparison with men. While significant changes have taken place in recent decades, scholars

have demonstrated the role of the dominant liberal idea of the dichotomous public/private divide - in which the feminised space of the family is associated with the private sphere - in disempowering women and obscuring many of the issues and inequalities which shape gendered lives (e.g. Duncan 1996; Elshtain 1981; Kelly 2003, 32-58; Landes 1998a; 1998b: 143; Mackinnon 1983; Massey 1994, 180; McDowell 1999; Pateman 1989b; Warrington 2001). For Kelly, for example, the heteronormative nuclear family is a structure through which “the privacy of men [has been protected] at the expense of the safety of women” (Kelly 2003: 34; see also Gray 2015). Others have pointed to the ongoing gendered division of labour which structures family relationships (Almqvist and Duvander 2014; Himmelweit 2007; Rose *et al.* 2015), and drawn attention to the importance of this to the functioning of capitalist economies (Andrew 2003; Braunstein *et al.* 2011; Luxton and Bezanson 2006; Luxton 2015: 213-14). While families are often a source of comfort and love, then, feminist work has shown that dominant forms of family are also socially formulated structures which work through and entrench structural inequalities.

#### ***Gender and operational effectiveness in the total institution***

While the gendered structural violence and inequality which is ingrained within the heteronormative nuclear family is not unique to the military, then, the military draws upon and makes use of these inequalities in ways which intensify and crystallise their effects. As I argue in Chapter Four, the British military is an institution which has its own gender culture; albeit one which is not completely detached from that of the civilian society. This gender culture revolves around the notion of masculine protection of the feminised space of home from perceived external threats. While militaries remain masculine spaces, militarism relies upon both masculinities and femininities for its enactment and legitimation. The figure of the ‘military wife’ - the particular focus of this thesis - is important to military institutions both in its symbolic role, providing the most immediate constitutive other upon which soldierly identity relies (Woodward and Winter 2007: 73), and because militaries rely upon the domestic labour of military wives to support and motivate personnel to cope with the demands of military life and to effectively perform their military roles (Bourg and Segal 1999: 636; Enloe 2000: 153-97; Wool 2014: 5-7). As a result, civilian women married to servicemen are simultaneously both brought inside and excluded from the military institution, as I go on to argue below.

First, however, it is necessary to offer a brief consideration of the discourse of ‘operational effectiveness,’ through which military gender culture is naturalised. This discourse is a very powerful one, as operational effectiveness is considered within military circles as an essential and

unquestionable national priority, one which is “beyond debate, naturalised and immutable” (Woodward 2004: 133), the firm limit beyond which issues such as environmental protection (*ibid.*: 85-87, 133) and equality and diversity policies (Basham 2009) cannot be prioritised. At its most simply defined, operational effectiveness refers to fighting power and the ability to win battles - the capacity to use lethal force, or the threat thereof, to “achieve the ends set<sup>88</sup>”. The discourse of operational effectiveness is, however, understood and deployed far more broadly than this within the British military context. It is understood to require three overlapping and mutually supporting elements: “a conceptual component (the ideas behind how to operate and fight), a moral component (the ability to get people to operate and fight) and a physical component (the means to operate and fight)<sup>89</sup>”. As a result, operational effectiveness as a discursive strategy is a nebulous concept which stretches well beyond the battlefield. It underpins, for example, the rationale for the values and standards by which personnel are expected to live<sup>90</sup>, the importance of unit cohesion (Basham 2009, 732), and policies against the use of recreational drugs<sup>91</sup>. In order to be considered operationally effective, it is not necessarily sufficient simply that a service member be well trained in the use of militarised violence; they must embody certain identities, values and standards, and they must behave in particular ways even away from the field of battle. That is, the idea of operational effectiveness is used to structure and to police the masculine identities of servicemen in order that they conform, as much as possible, to the military ideal.

It is not my intention to reproduce the idea of operational effectiveness in this thesis as an objective or value-free concept. Rather, I approach the idea of operational effectiveness as a discursive strategy which naturalises militarised ideologies by presenting as neutral a set of ideas which are in fact highly gendered and ideological. It is recourse to the unquestionable importance of operational effectiveness which legitimates the military’s claims to exceptionalism, and therefore its ability to discriminate. That is, through the discursive strategy of operational effectiveness, the structural violences through which some people are treated as more important or more valuable than others within the military are masked and justified. While operational effectiveness remains an ostensibly gender-free concept, Basham illustrates how certain bodies -

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[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/33695/ADPOperationsDec10.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/33695/ADPOperationsDec10.pdf), last accessed 4 August 2015.

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[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/33695/ADPOperationsDec10.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/33695/ADPOperationsDec10.pdf), last accessed 4 August 2015.

<sup>90</sup> [www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/v\\_s\\_of\\_the\\_british\\_army.pdf](http://www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/v_s_of_the_british_army.pdf), last accessed 4 August 2015.

<sup>91</sup> [www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/alcohol\\_and\\_drugs\\_-\\_the\\_facts.pdf](http://www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/alcohol_and_drugs_-_the_facts.pdf), last accessed 4 August 2015.

white, male, (presumed) heterosexual bodies - but not others are constructed as innately operationally effective, or at least capable of becoming so (2013: 20, 138). Similarly, Woodward and Winter point to the efficacy of this discourse in justifying the military's legal exemption from the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act and in excluding women from taking on 'combat' roles (Woodward and Winter 2006: 51; 2007: 53-54). Moreover, as this chapter goes on to argue, operational effectiveness is used to justify both the incorporation and the simultaneous disempowerment within the military community of civilian women married to servicemen. This is not to imply that the military is *not* concerned about its ability to win battles, or that it *deliberately* pursues irrelevancies under the guise of operational effectiveness; clearly, the military's ability to successfully project its power remains the central concern of the institution, around which all structures and practices are orientated. What I want to suggest, however, is that it should not be assumed that institutional assessments of the needs of operational effectiveness are inevitable or objective; rather, the decisions which are made in the pursuit of operational effectiveness are underpinned and shaped by the gendered ideologies of militarism itself. That is, ideas about what is operationally effective and what is not are shaped by gendered ideologies of militarism; and recourse to the notion of operational effectiveness acts as a discursive strategy to naturalise these gendered assumptions.

Civilian women married to servicemen do not themselves sign up to serve in the military; they do not formally commit themselves to the institution in the way that their husbands do. However, because of the important roles that 'military wives' play in the social relations of militarism, they are brought into the "greedy institution" (Segal 1986) of the military institution in the name of operational effectiveness. One of the most important ways in which they are brought into the institutional space is through the provision of resources. The logic behind this was laid out by civilian (former military) support worker Andy and military support worker Frederick in statements which were reflected in several others interviews conducted for this project:

**Andy:** [The military] needs [...] a man fit to fight. Which means the family is happy [...] they make sure the dental service is provided, medical services, certainly abroad, that the wife can get access to dentists, medics, vets if they've got pets. So if the family's happy, then the guy's gonna be happy; you got a happy soldier, you got a productive soldier.

**Frederick:** If we don't support the families when those soldiers are away, if those families then start becoming problematical with whatever challenges they're faced with, that has a direct consequence on the operational capability of the soldiers and the unit when they're away on operations, because they'll hear that their [...] families are not in good order. So the soldier themselves won't do what they need to do as effectively. So it's insuring that the families are supported, they're supported when the soldiers are away, and at the end of it, it's all about maintaining an operational effective military capability.

Andy's and Frederick's narratives highlight the institutional interest in involvement in the lives of civilian women married to servicemen: such women are important because of the influence that they have upon the productivity of their serving spouse. As these statements reflect, it is this idea which underpins and explains the provision of resources such as housing and welfare to military families - such services are provided, and families are encouraged to use them, in the interests of ensuring the wellbeing of the soldier. The provision of resources is one way in which civilian women married to servicemen are brought into the institution in the interest of maintaining the wellbeing of the soldier and, through him, of the institution itself.

However, the gendered ideology of militarism also requires that the institution remain, in Woodward and Winter's terms, a "masculinist organisation," and that the activity of soldiering continues to be "defined in terms of its masculinities and in opposition to women and the feminine" (2006: 60). As such, it is also important to the culture of the military that civilian women married to servicemen are *not* central figures who are seen as emblematic of the institution itself, but rather that they remain marginalised in order that the military can retain its character as a masculine, fighting organisation. As such, civilian women married to servicemen are brought into the community not as full and equal members of the military space, but as *dependents* whose status within the community is entirely reliant upon the serving spouse. Reflecting this, several victim-survivor participants in this study described their experiences of occupying disempowered positions within the communities in which they lived, including victim-survivor participants Frances, Amy, and Melissa:

**Frances:** You're not your own person, you're wife X. You're not Mrs Alderson or, you know, you're wife of. [...] It makes you feel like you're a second-rate citizen.

**Amy:** You feel like you are stripped of your own identity and are insignificant.

**Melissa:** I was just excess baggage. That's what [civilian women married to servicemen] are classed as, excess baggage.

Frances, Amy, and Melissa all experienced their position within the military community as 'second-rate,' and felt themselves to be disempowered subjects who lacked full and equal status within their communities. That is, their tangential right to be in the community meant that they felt themselves to be unimportant, marginalised add-ons to their serving husbands. This marginal, dependent status - and the precarity it produces - is embedded into the structures of military life, as I go on to illustrate through my discussions the institutional provision of housing and of welfare which constitute the remainder of this chapter.

### **“It’s my fucking quarter, and you do what you’re fucking told”**

As I describe in Chapter One, the military provides family homes to personnel who are registered on the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system as Personal Status Categories (PStat Cat) 1 or 2 - that is, those who live with a partner to whom they are legally married or in a civil partnership with, and/or with children for whom they are the primary carer (Ministry of Defence 2013: 1-2). This military housing is known as Service Families Accommodation (SFA) and is provided either 'behind the wire' of the serving person's duty station, or in a local 'patch' - an area of military housing within 10 miles of the serving person's current duty station<sup>92</sup>. Military personnel and their families do not *have* to live in SFA, of course, but many are encouraged to do so by the realities of military life, perhaps most importantly by the mobility of many military careers. Depending on their military branch, rank, and role, servicemen may find themselves 'posted' - that is, transferred to a new job, often in a new geographical area - regularly throughout their careers. This is particularly the case for personnel serving in the Army and in the RAF, who may find themselves being posted every two to three years. In August 2014, 39% of Army families, 34% of RAF families, and 23% of Naval families reported moving house in the previous 12 months (Ministry of Defence 2014: 3). The proportion of those who live in SFA reflects these differential patterns of mobility: in August 2014, 70% of Army families, 55% of RAF families, and 35% Naval families lived in SFA at least during the week (Ministry of Defence 2014:3). The provision of SFA makes regular moves easier - it means that families do not have to find the time, money, and energy to find new accommodation at every posting, and moreover, as discussed below, it

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<sup>92</sup> [www.aff.org.uk/Army\\_family\\_life/housing/applying\\_sfa\\_ssfa.htm#hasc](http://www.aff.org.uk/Army_family_life/housing/applying_sfa_ssfa.htm#hasc), last accessed 18 December 2013.

provides families with access to social networks in their new communities, thus mediating to some extent the social isolation engendered by a mobile lifestyle. As such, military mobility is a factor which pushes personnel and their families towards living in SFA.

The provision of housing in the segregated, military-specific spaces of the base or patch is a particularly important structural factor which draws civilian women married to servicemen into the military community. Firstly, and most obviously, it renders these women dependent on the institution for their housing - those who live in SFA are tied into the military in a very practical sense, and they are likely to be less able to simply walk away from the institution or to live their lives entirely outside it. Moreover, several participants also reflected on the friendly, close-knit nature of base and patch communities in which everyone was connected to the military and everyone knew one another. This suggests that the communal nature of SFA provision, separated to some extent from the civilian community, is a factor which draws civilian women married to servicemen further into the military community. Civilian (former military) support worker Peter said:

**Peter:** Still to this day on military quarters [...] [people have] their doors open, people are in and out of the houses all day, children all play together [...] I remember going into quarters, and we had 14 different houses, right, and I remember going into quarters and just herds of children you know naked, covered in pizza, you know, so all roaming between people's houses, and that is so unique. So in many ways that was the best thing.

Peter's narrative paints a picture of a close-knit, somewhat idyllic community, of which non-serving spouses and children are very much a part. Reflecting this, several victim-survivor participants spoke of the close-knit nature of the base and patch communities as something which drew them into the community and encouraged them to rely upon it for their social lives. For some, this was mainly through what they lost rather than through what they gained - victim-survivor participant Frances, for example, stated that due to 11 house moves during her marriage to a servicemen, she "lost contact with all my friends." For others, however, this was experienced more positively. Victim-survivor participants Ursula and Mereoni described the close-knit nature of life on the patch as a factor which encouraged the building of friendships with others in the military community:

**Ursula:** The friends the husbands have [are their] workmates. So that's who you mingle with at the weekends [...] it's constantly everybody together.

**Mereoni:** The Army is your family [...] regardless of you being just the one nuclear family, in general the Army is your family. So everything is Army.

In Frances, Ursula, Mereoni's experiences, the fact that they lived in SFA on the base/patch was an important factor in bringing them into the military community and integrating their lives within it. Important connections must, of course, be drawn with the previous chapter of this thesis, in particular because there are particular expectations about what the 'family' is which go along with the material provision of service families accommodation. SFA is only available, for example, to those in recognised legal marriages or civil partnerships; non-married partners cannot live in SFA. Moreover, several participants emphasised to me the importance of having children in integrating a non-serving spouse into the SFA community, which hints at the heteronormativity of the base or patch community. In military support worker participant Zoe's words, for example, "for somebody that gets posted in here and they have no children, it is extremely isolating." Living in the military community and socialising with other 'military wives' can therefore be understood as an important structural factor which encourages the self-policing of civilian women married to servicemen in conversation with the ideals of 'military wifehood.'

However, despite the ways in which the military's provision of SFA draws civilian women married to servicemen into the community, such women are also structurally disadvantaged in relation to their husbands in accessing this important resource. SFA is rented only in the name of the serving person, who is the only official tenant, as the non-serving spouse's right to live in that accommodation is purely as a dependent of their serving spouse. When a housing move is required, the application process can only be accessed and completed via computers which are on the MOD's secure intranet, accessible only to Armed Forces personnel themselves. While personnel can print off the details and discuss housing options with their non-serving spouse, there is no obligation for them to do so<sup>93</sup>. Non-serving spouses are therefore officially excluded from decisions regarding the application for housing in which they will live.

Further, when marriages in the military break down, the non-serving spouse's lack of entitlement to the housing in which they live becomes clear as, after a period of time, they are required to

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<sup>93</sup> [www.aff.org.uk/Army\\_family\\_life/housing/applying\\_sfa\\_ssfa.htm#hasc](http://www.aff.org.uk/Army_family_life/housing/applying_sfa_ssfa.htm#hasc), last accessed 18 December 2013.



leave their quarter. When a couple decide to formally separate, the serving spouse must change their Personnel Status Category (PStat Cat) on the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system to reflect their separated status. Once the PStat Cat has been changed, the non-serving spouse is given a formal Notice to Vacate the SFA. Non-serving spouses, along with any children who will not remain with the serving spouse, will be expected to leave the quarter within 93 days of this notice being served (in some unusual cases, special circumstances such as ongoing medical treatment may enable them to stay in the SFA for a longer period of time). This is because the non-serving spouse does not have any entitlement to stay in the SFA once the relationship has broken down (Ministry of Defence 2015a: 9).

The structures of housing provision within the British military community therefore place civilian women married to servicemen who live in SFA in a precarious position by making them dependent upon their serving husbands for their accommodation. In cases where domestic abuse occurs, this dependency may have a significant impact upon victim-survivors' responses to abuse. For some participants in this study, including perpetrator participant Dean and victim-survivor participant Melissa, the serviceman's exclusive rights to housing was something explicitly used as a method of control by abusers:

**Dean:** I'd be like, "I'm the fucking man of the house, I fucking earn the wages." Even though she worked, but, I'd be like, "It's my fucking quarter, and you do what you're fucking told."

**Melissa:** [The housing situation] empowered it [the abuse]. "This is my house." 'Cause we've got no right to it. Basically they have a roof over their heads 24/7 whether they're with somebody or if they're not.... "This is my house." And it's like, you wouldn't have this house if it weren't for me and the kids. "It's still my house."

For Dean and for Melissa, the dependency engendered by the military's structures of housing provision empowered the abusive behaviour. In these narratives, the perpetrator of abuse, as the party with exclusive rights over the housing in which the couple lived, felt entitled to abuse and control their non-serving partner without consequence. The unbalanced rights to housing raise the costs for the victim-survivor of leaving the relationship, as was reflected by victim-survivor participant Jessica:

**Jessica:** I remember thinking, God, if I do this, we're gonna leave here, what have I got? [...] And I think my big thing leaving, 'cause I did think about going back to him [...] 'cause I didn't wanna leave the house. 'Cause I'm thinking, I've got nothing [...] I didn't have a penny to my name, and you think God I've got two kids, I haven't got anyone, what am I gonna do?

As Jessica thought through her response to the abuse she had experienced, the costs of ending her abusive relationship in terms of housing were a significant factor. While she did decide to leave the relationship on this occasion, her housing dependency upon her husband raised the costs of doing this, as it was a decision which made her and her children homeless.

The difficulties of leaving SFA do not revolve solely around the practical challenges of finding a physical new home for the victim-survivor and any children she might have to live in. Leaving a marriage to a serviceman also entails exiting the whole military community. For some, this is a major life change which, as discussed in the previous chapter, means leaving the world in which they have lived for years and losing the identity they have built for themselves. As victim-survivor participants Amy and Mereoni told me:

**Amy:** Leaving was difficult.... My whole life married to him was, like, Army. Now it's not. It's strange.

**Mereoni:** [Leaving was] very difficult, Harriet. It was sad. Because I didn't want to leave my pad [...] And it was I felt really sad, because you were leaving that life and that was the life that you lived [...] that was your family. You know, and then when you leave, you leave everything else behind you to come and live somewhere else, even though I was just you know an hour away from where they are. Extremely difficult and emotional.

For Amy and Mereoni, deciding to leave their abusive marriage and their home was not simply a matter of leaving bricks and mortar; it was leaving the life they had built for themselves. To refer back to my discussions in the previous chapter, despite the disempowerments which civilian women married to servicemen experience within the military community, many retain strong affective attachments to the community and to the identities they construct within it. This raises the costs of leaving an abusive relationship.

Similarly, victim-survivor participant Tanya described the rejection and resentment she felt when she had to leave the military community following the end of her marriage:

**Tanya:** While you're married to someone in the Armed Forces [...] you are supported because you're supporting them. You're keeping the house together, you're keeping them going, you're doing your wife's, your wifely duty, you're doing what you've got to do. As soon as you mention, "that's it, it's over, I'm not doing it anymore, I'm leaving," you're not supporting the soldier any more. It's like they can't wait to get rid of you. You're no use to them anymore. Because they're now having to support their soldier, because they haven't got a wife to do it for them. So it's, you've served your time [...] "Thanks for the past ten years, sweetheart, but you're not doing it anymore so, move aside 'till he finds someone that can do the next ten years." That's exactly how it feels.

Like those provided by Amy and Mereoni, Tanya's narrative also highlights the sadness and loss of identity which can be engendered when civilian women married to servicemen leave their marriage and their SFA. More than this, the feelings of rejection by the community and the institution that Tanya experienced upon the breakdown of her marriage also emphasises the precarious status of civilian women married to servicemen within the military community. Tanya's position in the community was contingent upon her support for her serving spouse; once this was withdrawn, she was forced to "move aside."

It is important to note that the military institution does make efforts to support the civilian women married to its servicemen when they go through marriage breakdown, and some of the provisions that are made can be of real help to victim-survivors of domestic abuse. The ability to stay in SFA for 93 days after the relationship formally ends, for example, provides victim-survivors with temporary accommodation while they decide how to move on from the abusive relationship. In some cases, this may replace the need for refuge accommodation - although in many cases it would not be safe for victim-survivors to remain in such close proximity to where their abusers are living, particularly during the time of heightened danger around the ending of an abusive relationship. However, while military welfare agencies and workers have made efforts within the structures in which they operate to support civilian women married to servicemen, the

structures themselves remain - and these structures are unavoidably disempowering to civilian women married to servicemen who experience domestic abuse.

This discussion of the military's housing provision highlights the liminal space on the borders of the military community in which civilian women married to servicemen are positioned by the structures of military life, as the structures by which housing is provided to military families *both* draw these women into the community *and* refuse them a full and secure position within it. This is a form of structural violence because, as I show above, these structures place victim-survivors in a precarious position which exposes them to harms. The precarious position which civilian women who live in SFA occupy in relation to their housing, and indeed their membership of the military community, is not something which only comes into being when the relationship breaks down - it is always there, although it is often not recognised as precarity until problems arise. This precarity constitutes a form of structural violence which raises the costs of particular responses to abuse for civilian women married to servicemen.

### **“They protect their own”**

In the introductory chapter to this thesis I offered a brief outline of some of the support services which are available to civilian women married to servicemen who experience domestic abuse. I noted that, while those who are stationed abroad may have little choice but to seek support through the services provided by the military - such as the Unit Welfare Officers (UWOs), the Army/Royal Naval and Royal Marines Welfare Services (AWS/RNRM Welfare), the Personal Support and Social Work Service RAF (run by SSAFA), the British Forces Social Work Service (BFSWS), and the various military policing services - most of those in the UK have a choice: they can access military welfare services, quasi-military services, or mainstream services provided by local authorities and third sector organisations. Mainstream civilian services which may be available include specialist domestic violence services such as refuges, outreach and floating support services, and Independent Domestic Violence Advocate services (IDVAs), the Home Office police (including their specialist Domestic Violence Units and Community Safety Units), and local authority children's services and housing/homelessness support. Finally, quasi-military services include the Stepping Stones Homes run by SSAFA, as well as some sources of funding offered by organisations such as SSAFA and the Royal British Legion.

Even when based in the UK, however, many civilian women married to servicemen who experience abuse - including the overwhelming majority (17 out of 18) of those interviewed for

this study - turn to military rather than civilian or quasi-military services, at least initially. For some participants, turning to military welfare services was an active choice. Important connections must again be drawn here with the previous chapter - most civilian women married to servicemen are not *forced* into accessing military rather than civilian support services, but they do so because they identify with the community and feel that it is the most appropriate thing. That is, disciplinary forms of power as well as structural forms of power can be identified here. Victim-survivor participant Mereoni, for example, stated "I felt that it was appropriate for me to go [to military welfare], because everything about the Forces, Harriet, is all about going through your Chain of Command." In Mereoni's narrative, it was her understanding of appropriate behaviour within military culture, and not any structural factors such as lack of opportunity, which shaped her response to abuse. For other participants, however, there existed structural factors which made turning to military services the easiest choice to make, or in some cases, the only available choice.

At the most extreme end of this spectrum, women who are not British citizens and who come to the UK from abroad as the spouse of a Foreign and Commonwealth (F&C) person serving in the British Armed Forces may find it difficult, or even impossible, to seek mainstream support. These women come to the UK under unique immigration rules, and their status is dependent upon their serving spouse. Under the terms of their initial four year visa, commonly referred to as a 'dependent's visa,' they have 'limited leave to remain' in the UK, and while they can work they have 'no recourse to public funds.' These women are not able to apply for indefinite leave to remain (ILR) - an independent status which gives them recourse to public funds - until their serving spouse has been in the military for five continuous years. Without recourse to public funds, F&C spouses are unable to access the key mainstream services of refuges and local authority emergency accommodation, because these are funded through housing benefit - although exceptions may sometimes be made for those with children who can, in some cases, access funding through social services (Burman and Chantler 2005: 67-68). SSAFA Stepping Stones homes are able to take women with no recourse to public funds in their two quasi-military refuges. This is no insignificant resource - at the time of writing, there are no civilian refuge services which are able to offer accommodation to women with no recourse to public funds on a routine basis. In addition, as of December 2013, victim-survivors whose serving spouse has served for four years or more can apply for the Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDV), which allows them temporary access to public funds and a fast-tracked application for ILR - although this of course leaves those whose husbands have served for less than four years without support.

There remain, however, structural factors which prevent victim-survivors in F&C communities in particular from seeking external sources of support, and which therefore bind these women into the military community. Almost all of the victim-survivor participants in this study who were from Foreign and Commonwealth communities struggled when leaving their relationships because their insecure visa status and lack of recourse to public funds left them with few options. Victim-survivor participant Kimberly, for example, had tried to access a mainstream refuge, but found that her lack of recourse to public funds meant she had nowhere to go until a space opened up in a SSAFA Stepping Stones house. She told me that victim-survivors with no recourse to public funds such as herself often stayed with abusive partners because they felt that they had no other options; “and probably they’re right, you know.”

In addition, there are important structural factors which underpin and encourage the feeling that the military welfare provision is the most appropriate choice even for those who do, technically, have other options. Some participants in this study described the military as an institution which deliberately excludes external support providers from being able to provide services to members of the community in order to keep support provision ‘in-house’ as much as possible: in quasi-military support worker Marcus’ words, the military is an organisation which is “precious” about maintaining their its own welfare and policing provision. Civilian support worker Elizabeth outlined some of the frustrations experienced by her specialist domestic violence service, which has been trying to make in-roads to provide support to military families connected to the local base for a number of years:

**Elizabeth:** We want to run a campaign on the camp that says “You do not have to go to Army Welfare, you don’t have to go to SSAFA. If you need help you can come to us in complete confidence.” You know, so [...] their commissions won’t be compromised, their opportunities for promotion won’t be compromised, their COs [Commanding Officers] don’t [...] need to know about it. [But] Army Welfare, I’m sure you’ve come across this, you know, the shutters go up. ‘Cause you know, “we deal with our own” .... They’re always gonna be pushing to make sure that everything stays in house.... We’ve come up against a lot of, not hostile, I can’t say it’s hostile, it’s not, but it’s kind of like a passive aggressive non-cooperation kind of thing. It’s really hard to describe because they’re saying “Yes, yes, yes, we want to work with you, yes, yes, yes we want be beside you when we’re doing this,” you know, and then on the other hand you don’t get the connection [...] It’s a closed shop.

In Elizabeth's story of frustration, a preference among military authorities for the provision of welfare "in house" has prevented her organisation from promoting its services to members of the military community. As a result, civilian women married to servicemen are encouraged to seek help within the "closed shop" of the military, because they do not know how to access alternatives. Indeed, several victim-survivor participants within this study reported that they did not access civilian support services for the abuse they experienced because they did not have any information about them. Victim-survivor participants Tanya, Isabella and Amy told me:

**Tanya:** [The military welfare] never told me anything about [specialist civilian domestic abuse services] [...] There's not enough information for the wives who are wanting to get out, and for me it was, well what the hell do I do? Where do I go?

**Isabella:** I didn't know about [local civilian service], or anything like that. I didn't know about refuge centres, stuff like that, I didn't know about any of it [...] I think information like that needs to be given out more in Army settings.

**Amy:** When we were living together there was no information regarding external services.

Tanya, Isabella, and Amy felt that a lack of information prevented them from accessing alternative sources of support. That is, a lack of information drew lines around the military community, within which they were contained.

Other participants disputed this idea of a "closed shop." For military support worker Lily, this is "quite an old attitude," and the military is now "certainly very much trying to involve other agencies." Indeed, some external agencies do work closely with the military institution. Quasi-military support services such as the SSAFA Stepping Stones Homes are deeply embedded into the institution, but remain independent services. In addition, my research identified one civilian agency which has built a very successful working relationship with the institution, and which receives regular referrals directly from military welfare agencies. It is interesting, however, that this organisation is largely staffed by former military personnel and military spouses who, in the words one of its staff members, gain "kudos" from military welfare workers for their ability to "speak [the military's] lingo." In several areas of the country, representatives of military agencies

such the RNRM Welfare Service and the AWS sit on local multi-agency domestic abuse fora and do, therefore work together with civilian agencies.

While the image of the “closed shop” may be increasingly outdated, then, there does seem to be an ongoing *centring* of military welfare provision in the sources of support made available to civilian women married to servicemen. Military support workers, one the whole, assumed that military services would be the first point of call for civilian women married to servicemen who experienced domestic abuse, and set up their systems and policies accordingly. Military support worker Diane, for example, described a revised support strategy which was being written for use by all Naval personnel who may come into contact with victim-survivors of abuse, in which “all routes lead back to RNRM welfare, basically.” Similarly, while the recent resources which the MOD has published to offer support and advice to victim-survivors and perpetrators of abuse - the British Defence Film Library’s 2012 video (British Defence Film Library 2012) and the recently launched MOD website<sup>94</sup> - do refer to civilian and quasi-military avenues of support, they are mainly centred around military sources of support. Military support worker Frederick explained the pre-eminence of military-run support services in terms of their ability to best understand the experiences of civilian women married to servicemen:

**Frederick:** We have a welfare organisation that understands the military context [...] So what we do, how we go about doing it, the ethos and what builds up our fighting spirit, isn’t really understood outside the military community. So we have something that delivers what is required by and large because the deliverers understand the military [...] If you follow the logic of supporting the family with people who understand in the detail of the family, and have the credibility and the trust of those needing help, it’s probably going to be done by a military type organisation.

For Frederick, it is necessary that military welfare services are provided by people who understand the military. Frederick’s narrative prioritises understanding of the military institution over understanding of the specific problems which civilian women married to servicemen may be experiencing, such as domestic abuse. Specialist domestic abuse organisations have significant experience and expertise in supporting victim-survivors of this form of violence; far more than could be expected of military welfare workers, who offer a more general level of support. Frederick’s prioritisation of military knowledge relies upon and reifies the notion of a civilian-

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<sup>94</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/collections/domestic-abuse-guidance-and-support-for-the-armed-forces-community](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/domestic-abuse-guidance-and-support-for-the-armed-forces-community), last accessed 22 July 2015



military divide, in which only those who are within the institution can truly understand the military experiences. This re-entrenchment of the civil-military divide draws civilian women married to servicemen inside the military community.

Interviews with military welfare personnel suggest that the institution is keen to maintain its own welfare services for reasons of operational effectiveness. In military support worker Diane's words, the military needs "in house" welfare because it needs to know when its personnel are having problems: "At the end of the day, if you've got someone who loses their temper easily, flies off the handle, can't handle their alcohol, and they're on a ship or worse still on a submarine [...] it's literally an explosive situation that they can't actually tolerate within the Navy." The structures by which civilian women married to servicemen are encouraged to turn to military welfare services, then, can be justified with recourse to notions of operational effectiveness - the military needs to know if there is a problem within their relationship, as this may influence the serviceman's capacity to do his job. However, reflecting my discussion of housing provision above, many of the interviews collected for this study suggested that civilian women married to servicemen are often not treated as full and equal members of the community by the military welfare system through which they are encouraged to seek help. In the views of many of my participants, military welfare workers fail to prioritise their self-defined needs of civilian women married to servicemen because of their subordinate status as "second-rate" members of the military community.

Before I move on to explore some of these narratives in depth, I want to note that not all victim-survivors have a bad experience with military welfare workers, and indeed, many military welfare workers themselves are caring and committed individuals who do their best to support victim-survivors of abuse with whom they come into contact. A small number of victim-survivor participants in this study - in particular Rachel and Onika - reported being very well supported by military welfare structures which put their needs first and were able to connect up with other services in order to promote their safety and well-being. In both of these cases, the welfare workers listened to the women's needs, took proactive steps to ensure they felt supported, and enabled them to get to SSAFA Stepping Stones homes safely. Importantly for the discussion in this chapter, the welfare workers in these cases were able to draw on the "total institutional" elements of military life - including knowledge of the perpetrator's work schedule, connections between the various military and quasi-military welfare services, and the ability to enforce

particular conditions on a perpetrator without a court order - in order to provide the best possible support (for a longer discussion of this, see Gray 2015).

Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of participants in this study told a somewhat different story of their experiences with military welfare providers, which demonstrate the status of civilian women married to servicemen as, in victim-survivor participant Frances' words, "second-rate" members of the community. Several stated that military welfare personnel, from across the different branches of military welfare, prioritised the needs of the service person or the military - the needs of 'operational effectiveness' - above their own as victim-survivors of abuse. Victim-survivor participants Amy, Elenoa, and Mereoni, and quasi-military support worker Marcus, provide just four examples of a number of similar statements gathered for this research:

**Amy:** [The welfare providers in the Army] are only interested in the soldier and his ability to do his job.

**Elenoa:** At the end of the day, the Army is more concerned with keeping the serving personnel than the family.

**Mereoni:** The Forces, even though they say that they are for families [...] no, they're not for families. Because the serviceperson comes first. They will always support the serviceperson.

**Marcus:** [The military] look after their own. They tell you that quite clearly [...] "we're a family, we look after our own." But the head of the family happens to be [...] the serviceman. So that's who they're looking after.

For Amy, Elenoa, Mereoni, and Marcus, military welfare providers do not prioritise the needs of the victim-survivor of abuse; instead, the services which they provide are centred on the needs of the serviceman himself. In cases of domestic abuse between a serving perpetrator and a non-serving victim-survivor, this means that, in the view of these participants, military support services are effectively prioritising the needs of perpetrators over those of victim-survivors - something which is clearly not only frustrating but dangerous for victim-survivors.

In an earlier section of this chapter, I suggested that in the institutional space of the British military, services such as welfare are provided to civilian women married to servicemen in order that they are able and willing to support their husbands in their military roles and thus to contribute to 'operational effectiveness.' This is borne out in the stated aims of the various branches of military welfare provision. At the first-line welfare level, the Welfare Office of the Royal School of Signals, Signals Regiment states on its website that:

The aim of the Welfare Office is to provide a confidential welfare support service that is responsive to the needs of the soldiers, families and the Chain of Command. It must fulfil statutory requirements and *help maintain operational effectiveness of service personnel within the Regiment*<sup>95</sup> (emphasis mine).

Moreover, while second-line military welfare services are intended to provide services which are focused more on the needs of those seeking support rather than the institution itself, the mission statement of the Army Welfare Service is:

To provide a comprehensive, professional, and confidential welfare support service, responsive to the needs of individuals, families and the chain of command, *in order to maximise operational effectiveness of servicemen and women*<sup>96</sup> (emphasis mine).

Similarly, the Mission Statement of the RNRM Welfare service states that it exists to:

provide accessible support services that strengthen and enhance the resilience and resourcefulness of Naval Service personnel, their families and communities *in order to contribute to the Moral Component and optimise Operational Capability*<sup>97</sup> (emphasis mine).

Military welfare services, both first- and second-line, then, are officially oriented around the needs of the military institution and all that is subsumed under its notion of 'operational effectiveness,' and not primarily around the self-defined needs of military families who approach them for help. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that military welfare providers do not

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<sup>95</sup> [www.army.mod.uk/training\\_education/24510.aspx](http://www.army.mod.uk/training_education/24510.aspx), last accessed 11 June 2014.

<sup>96</sup> [www.slideserve.com/eilis/Army-welfare-service](http://www.slideserve.com/eilis/Army-welfare-service), last accessed 12 July 2015.

<sup>97</sup> [www.nff.org.uk/family/family-news/1024-personal-family-community-support-and-physical-development](http://www.nff.org.uk/family/family-news/1024-personal-family-community-support-and-physical-development), last accessed 12 July 2015.

want to help families themselves or that they do not care about their problems. However, the ultimate target of this welfare provision is not families themselves, but the military institution and its gendered ideas of operational effectiveness, which often centre the wellbeing of the serving member and his ability to fulfil his job. This places civilian women married to servicemen in a disempowered position in relation to their abusers when they come to access military welfare services.

This disempowerment was demonstrated in a number of ways throughout my interviews. Several participants, for example, spoke of a lack of confidentiality (either real or perceived) among military welfare workers. This lack of confidence in the protection of confidentiality applied to military welfare personnel in all agencies, including the second-line organisations which are able to give greater emphasis to confidentiality than their first-line equivalents, but which still find themselves bound to break confidentiality when the ability of an individual service person to do their job, or operational effectiveness more broadly, may be compromised.

Several participants in this study described a reticence to seek help motivated by concerns over the lack of confidentiality with which their reports would be treated. Victim-survivor participant Elenoa, for example, described the fear of repercussions which prevented her from seeking help from the military welfare services:

**Elenoa:** '[If] I reported the incident he would get called in. By the time he's finished work for the day I know what to expect from him at home. Either the silent treatment [or] he'll be gone for the whole day [...] or last and truly the worst, he'd do something to me. So there was always that, be careful what you're going to do, next time, because if you phone he's gonna get called in.'

Elenoa's her lack of confidence in the confidentiality of the military welfare services was a factor which discouraged her from seeking help, because she was afraid of the potential repercussions of her doing so. This reticence was also reflected in Williamson and Price's 2009 survey of 179 partners of British military personnel, a majority of whom stated that due to lack of confidentiality they would not tell military welfare personnel about relationship problems (Williamson and Price 2009, 20; Williamson 2011: 14).

The remainder of this chapter, however, focuses on the experiences of participants who felt that military support workers had prioritised the needs of the military institution over their own self-defined needs as victim-survivors of abuse. In some cases, participants reported the military welfare services prioritising the maintenance of the family unit despite the risks this brings to the victim-survivor, perhaps out of a concern to preserve a serviceman's support system and thus his ability to contribute to operational effectiveness. Victim-survivor participants Sophie and Tanya and perpetrator participant Dean told me:

**Sophie:** The welfare, they try and help support the family, but they're trying their hardest to keep the soldier and the family together. So they're always, like, at his corner to try and keep that unity, family unity.

**Tanya:** When I told the welfare team that I was leaving [...] I told them what had gone on, what had happened, and they said "Oh, we'll get him brought back from [a training exercise abroad] early." And I said "No [...] This is why I didn't wanna say anything." I wanted, I know it sounds really, really bad to say, but I wanted just to get my kids and leave. Because I said [...] "You bring him back [...] and I'll get the same as what I got before, which is why I never left before. The tears, "I'm so sorry it'll never happen again" [...] and I don't want that." I said "I've had enough" [The welfare office said] "Oh don't just leave, don't leave, we'll speak to [your husband], we'll get him home."

**Dean:** [The welfare are] desperate to get you back together. You know, they're like "Go for counselling, go for this, go for that," because they don't want you to split up.

The narratives cited above suggest a desire on the part of military welfare workers to maintain stability in the lives of service personnel, even in cases when this might bring harm to victim-survivors of abuse. This may reflect a centring - whether conscious or not - of gendered ideas of operational effectiveness which depend on familial support as the most appropriate form of sociality through which servicemen should be supported and reintegrated into civilian life (Wool 2014: 5-7). It may also reflect a lack of proper understanding of the harms of domestic abuse. In Tanya's case, cited above, in particular, it prolonged her abusive relationship and exposed her to additional harm.

Other participants described their access to justice as limited by their disempowered position within the military community in relation to their serving husbands. When domestic abuse cases go to military courts, as they did in victim-survivor Natalie's case as she and her husband were based abroad, the whole justice system may be experienced as geared towards military discipline and military needs. Natalie's husband pleaded guilty to multiple charges spanning a decade of abuse. He received a sentence which included attendance at a court-mandated perpetrator programme intended to put an end to his abusive behaviour. However, while he did attend some of the course, his superiors excused him from attending all of it so that he could attend a military training exercise instead. Furthermore, Natalie showed me a letter she received from the authorities outlining the penalty received by her husband after he pleaded guilty to the charges, within which it stated that in sentencing, the court martial "had to strike a balance between punishment and retaining his valuable traits and skills and appropriate levels in the Army." Understandably frustrated by this, Natalie told me:

**Natalie:** They're all together. There's no separation from any of them. They're all, boys club together, even the prosecution, [Royal Military Police], everybody is together in the mess [...] Nothing in the Army is separated [...] They're there to protect the soldier.

In Natalie's perception, all and any elements of the military institution act first and foremost in the interests of the serviceman, and as a disempowered member of the military community she was unable to get her needs and experiences prioritised.

Even when trials take place in civilian court, they are not immune from the military intervening to protect their interest in the serviceman. Civilian support worker Norah talked to me about the common practice in which higher-ranked personnel are sent the trials of their subordinates to act as character witnesses or to encourage magistrates to leave punishment in the hands of the military itself:

**Norah:** His welfare came down and spoke on his behalf, and said "This is who he is, this is what we want, this is [...] what [we] think the sentence [should be]" [...] What you've got to remember, no disrespect to any magistrate whatsoever, if somebody of rank is coming in to say "This is what we can offer him, this is what we can do when we go back to the Army, he's not gonna be coming back here, he's gonna be

taken away for 6 months [...] away from where the lady's living" and, you're thinking "Oh, yeah," but really you've got no idea. You know, and that's no disrespect to any magistrates, you know, if they're convincing enough to say they're gonna get him help in the Army then probably you're gonna [allow the Army to influence sentencing decisions].

Victim-survivor Sophie experienced the pain of this first-hand when she took her husband to court for multiple charges which included attempted murder. Although Sophie had many positive things to say about the way that the welfare had supported her previous to the court case, when it came to trial:

**Sophie:** The Army backed him all the way knowing he had abused me before his tour of duty. They gave him a glowing report even though he had several warnings [...] and failed to say he was in contact with the welfare for abuse towards me [...]. I almost died at the hands of a trained killer and the Army would rather save their reputation than do the right thing.

In Norah's and Sophie's narratives, military interests - in maintaining the labour of service personnel and in protecting their reputation - trumped victim-survivors' need for justice.

In the most extreme examples, victim-survivor participants described incidents in which military welfare staff actively sided with their husbands in disputes which arose as a result of abuse. Victim-survivor participant Ursula described being forced by an AWS worker and a BSW service worker to leave her SFA in Germany when her marriage broke down due to her husband's abuse:

**Ursula:** He called welfare [...] they said "You have to leave," and I said "But I don't know where to go, if you tell me where to go, I'll go." I was crying, I was in a bad state [...] I said "I'm telling you I've got nowhere to go [...] I'm not leaving." And they said "Well if you don't leave we'll call [...] the military police," and I said "OK, but I've not done anything".... they said they were gonna make something up. So I thought well I've got no chance here. If a social worker [and] a welfare worker says I've done something, and they're just gonna make something up, and I say I haven't, they're not gonna believe me. So I had to leave.

Similarly, victim-survivor participant Natalie, based abroad, recounted an experience when the Royal Military Police (RMPs) came to her house after an altercation had taken place between her husband and another soldier, in which the RMPs concern for the safety of the other soldier overrode their interest in the violence that Natalie herself was experiencing:

**Natalie:** The RMPs were stepping over my broken furniture when they'd come to get my husband to protect another soldier. And I was saying [...] "Are you not gonna protect me?".... And they were walking around, seeing my broken house, and just walking away from me and leaving me like that, while I'm getting attacked with drills in the middle of the night, slashed bed, being tortured, fucking strangled, and I'm telling them, going in and telling them, "can you please tell my husband to stop?"

In Natalie's and Ursula's narratives, military support agencies actively prioritised the needs of serving personnel - whether these were other soldiers or their abusers themselves - over those of the victim-survivor. In these women's experiences, military agencies did not treat reports of domestic abuse as relevant, serious, and/or important, and responded to them in a way which failed to improve the situation or even made it worse. For both, their marginalised status within the military community undermined their ability to have their self-defined needs heard and responded to appropriately.

In the section above, I have demonstrated both that victim-survivors of abuse are drawn into the military community by the structures through which welfare is provided and that, as disempowered subjects subject to structural violence within the military space, that they often find that military welfare services do not prioritise their self-defined needs. As with my discussions of housing provision above, this demonstrates that civilian women married to servicemen are positioned in a liminal space on the borders of the communities in which they live - they are *both* drawn into the community *and* find themselves unable to occupy the position of full members within it. Again, this is a system of structural violence which has hugely important implications for the ways in which abuse is responded to in this context. Angela Davis, anti-prison scholar and activist in the US, asks "Can a state that is thoroughly infused with racism, male dominance, class-bias, and homophobia and that constructs itself in and through violence act to minimise violence in the lives of women? Should we rely on the state as the answer to the problem of violence against women?" (quoted in Loyd 2012: 484). Following this, I want to highlight the limited capacity of a patriarchal, heteronormative institution, with an active



investment in the serving spouse, to support civilian victim-survivors of domestic abuse. As illustrated by the experiences of victim-survivor participants cited above, the provision of welfare in the military community is structured around the maintenance of the social relations and the ideologies of militarism, naturalised through the discourse of operational effectiveness. This leads military welfare providers to “look after their own,” and thus has very damaging impacts on the ability of victim-survivors to access help which prioritises their self-defined needs.

## Concluding remarks

My discussions in this chapter have focused on the questions:

- How are responses to domestic abuse in the British military shaped by the material structures of life in this context? How, if at all, is militarism implicated in this?

In beginning to answer this question, I have drawn attention to some of the material structures which shape responses to domestic abuse in the British military context. Clearly, I have not been able to provide an exhaustive exploration of the relevant structures here - rank, for example, is undoubtedly an important issue, as is the isolation caused by the mobility of military life and the associated economic dependence of many women upon their serving husbands - but limitations of space and of my sample of participants prohibit the full exploration of all of these factors here. However within this chapter, using the provision of housing and of welfare as examples, I have shown how the structures of military life *both* draw civilian women married to servicemen into the community *and* simultaneously exclude them from full and equal status within it. I have therefore described these women as positioned in a liminal space on the borders of the institution- they live *in* the community, but they are not fully *of* it. Civilian women married to servicemen who exist in this liminal space, I have suggested, are precarious subjects, subject to a form of structural violence which means they are disempowered within their communities. Like many examples of structural violence, the everyday precarity of civilian women married to servicemen is not always recognised as such by those who are subject to it, as it is naturalised both through its similarities to broader civilian forms of inequality and oppression and through recourse to the powerful discourse of operational effectiveness. This process of naturalisation masks and legitimates the military’s treatment of some subjects as more important than others. While this structural violence is usually taken for granted, I have suggested that an analysis of victim-survivors’ responses to domestic abuse can increase its visibility as, following Klinenberg

(2004), unusual circumstances of difficulty can lay bare the forms of everyday precarity which usually go unseen.

Gendered structural violence is not unique to the military; however, I have argued in this chapter that the military as an institution draws upon and crystallises the structural violences of civilian life. The military has a specific gender culture, albeit one which is closely related to the cultures of the society from which it emerges. The gender culture of the military, however, is particular insofar as it underpins the logic of militarism, and plays a central role in enabling the enactment and legitimation of military institutions. This gender culture relies upon the notion of masculinised protection of the feminised space of home from perceived external threats - it is this idea of protection and of threat which makes sense of and legitimates the existence of militaries and the militarisation of relations on the geopolitical stage. The gendered ideologies which produce and legitimate militarism *both* require the presence of women *and* require that they remain marginal to the institution itself. It is the embedding of these ideologies in the structures which shape the everyday lives of civilian women married to servicemen which situates them in a disempowered, precarious position in a liminal space on the borders of the military community and, therefore, which shapes their help-seeking decisions in response to domestic abuse.

My discussions in this chapter continue to contribute towards filling some of the gaps in knowledge identified in Chapter Two. Again, I have continued the qualitative exploration of responses to domestic abuse in the British military, and have contributed in particular to understandings of the “external” barriers to help-seeking faced by victim-survivors in this context. Specifically, I have shown how the positioning of civilian women married to servicemen in liminal space on the borders of the military community constitutes a form of structural violence which limits victim-survivors’ ability to take various help-seeking decisions - in some cases, limiting their ability to access external services; in others limiting their ability to seek any kind of official support or to end the relationship. Again, I have identified the structural violences which shape victim-survivors’ help-seeking decisions in this way as intrinsically embedded within the gendered project of militarism itself. As I continue into the next chapter, this will contribute towards my argument for understanding domestic abuse as a *political enactment of gendered militarism*.

## Chapter Seven

### The depoliticisation of domestic abuse in the British military community

In this third and final chapter centred on a thematic analysis of the interview narratives collected for this thesis, I engage with the following questions:

- How is the causality of domestic abuse perpetrated by servicemen in the British military perceived by participants in this study? How, if at all, is militarism implicated in these perceptions?

In answering these questions, this chapter does not engage as directly as the previous two chapters have done with the barriers to help-seeking which have shaped victim-survivors' responses to domestic abuse in the British military community. Instead, I expand my focus outwards from the ways in which individual cases of abuse are responded to, to a discussion of how domestic abuse, responses to it, and the barriers to seeking help identified in the previous chapters are understood on a broader level within the British military. In particular, the narratives I discuss in this chapter circulate around participants' perceptions of the causality of domestic abuse perpetrated by servicemen in the British military. This discussion has important implications for responses to individual cases of abuse, because the ways in which abuse and its causality are perceived by policy-makers, support workers, and victim-survivors shapes the services that they make available, recommend, and access. Indeed, participants in this study spoke repeatedly of their perceptions of the causality of abuse in explaining their responses to it. In a broader view, the ways in which abuse and its causality are conceptualised also shape the larger-scale strategies which are drawn upon in attempts to prevent abuse more generally and to reduce its occurrence.

This chapter is concerned with what Sandra Whitworth might refer to as a "struggle over meanings" - the contestations which take place around what a particular social issue *is* and what, if anything, it can tell us about society more broadly. For Whitworth, "contestations over meanings matter, and they matter not only to those who wage and sustain them, but they matter also to most of the rest of us who are left to live with the consequences" (2007: 1). While I have argued in Chapters Two and Four in particular that domestic abuse is a deeply political and social issue as well as an individual and interpersonal one - which maps onto and emerges from

gendered social inequalities and which therefore requires both political analyses and political solutions - I show in this chapter that many of the dominant understandings of abuse which circulate in the British military community are actively *depoliticising*. That is, in the dominant narratives which emerged from the interviews collected for this thesis, the causality of domestic abuse was largely understood in individualised rather than in social or political terms - as an individual, pathological, 'cultural' or otherwise *non-political* concern. This depoliticisation has important implications for the possibility of working to prevent and to effectively respond to abuse; and it also has implications, I argue, for the depoliticisation and the reproduction of militarism itself as a set of gendered everyday social relations.

I begin the chapter with a brief explication of my understandings of depoliticisation, of why it is important, and of the ways in which the ideas under consideration in this chapter contribute to the depoliticisation both of abuse within the military context and of militarism more broadly. While domestic abuse may be depoliticised in a variety of ways, I focus in this chapter on three main clusters of narratives, which I have selected because of the pervasiveness with which they emerged from my interviews. I begin with 'cultural' narratives which 'other' domestic abuse from the mainstream culture of the British military by identifying it as overwhelmingly perpetrated by Fijian personnel. Following this, I explore narratives which treat domestic abuse as extraordinary by attributing it to the mental health effects of combat. Next, I reflect on the prevalence of a gender-neutral approach to abuse within the military institution. In each of the sections, I provide illustrative examples from my fieldwork interviews to demonstrate the discourses to which I am referring, as well as problematising the assumptions inherent within them and pointing to the ways in which I see them as depoliticising. Finally, I draw the threads of my argument together to highlight not only the depoliticising impact that such discourses have on dominant understandings of abuse in the military community, but further, to argue that by naturalising the gendered inequalities inherent in the social relations which constitute militarism, these depoliticising narratives serve to naturalise and to *reproduce* the normalised, everyday, gendered social relations of the preparation for, and conduct of, political domination and control for which the use of organised violence is a viable option - that is, they serve to reproduce militarism itself. This is because depoliticised approaches to domestic abuse function to normalise the gendered power inequalities which are at its root and, therefore, to normalise the gendered power inequalities which underpin militarism.

### **Depoliticisation: “a determined looking away from anything systemic”**

As Razack suggests, depoliticisation constitutes “a determined look away from anything systemic” (2004: 152). Depoliticising processes work by the encircling of a difficult event or experience as separate and exceptional; as somehow removed from the normal processes through which the political body is constructed (Edkins 2003: 17). Depoliticisation thus refers to processes by which the structural, political nature of a given social issue is disguised, removing the rationale for political engagement with it. Klinenberg (2004) usefully highlights this in his study of the deaths which occurred during the 1995 Chicago heat-wave. For Klinenberg, particular groups of Chicagoans were exposed to serious danger when the heat-wave hit because of the underlying structural violence which made their lives precarious on an everyday basis (see Chapter Six). However, this precarity was obscured, he suggests, by the discourses of individual responsibility employed by the city’s authorities in response to the soaring temperatures. In Klinenberg’s example, the political issue of the social inequalities which produced particular Chicagoans as vulnerable to the harms of the heat-wave was masked by depoliticising discourses which cast their experiences in separated and individualised terms - as atypical rather than systemic - and which therefore undermined the basis for political analysis and intervention. Similarly, as I illustrate in this chapter, narratives which cast domestic abuse as an exceptional, individual problem serve to obscure the gendered social inequalities which underpin abuse. Moreover, they also serve to obscure the gender-based social forces - both structural and discursive - which shape responses to domestic abuse, as explored in the previous two chapters. If domestic abuse is approached on an individualised basis, its occurrence does not imply any need to analyse or to work to challenge gendered social inequalities, and the political structures which underpin it are thus left unquestioned.

Whilst the forces which depoliticise abuse within the British military community are important and worthy of analysis for their own sake, and are the focus of this chapter, I suggest that analysis of these processes can shed light on the ways in which militarism in the broader sense is subject to depoliticisation. Militaries themselves, of course, are political spaces; politics are implicated not just in the specific acts of violence that militaries undertake at a particular time, but in their very existence as institutions established to exert dominance through violence. The processes which depoliticise militarism are myriad, and include, for example, certain geographical imaginaries (Dalby 2013) as well as the assumption of a rigid civil-military divide (Basham 2013: 21-23). Militarism is also depoliticised through recourse to gendered norms; as Peterson argues, the naturalisation and widespread social acceptance of the superiority of the masculine over the

feminine within the binary system of gender plays an important role in the construction of “war stories” which normalise and legitimate acts of war. Subordinated or enemy groups are feminised and thus devalued; and the appropriate response to such feminised groups, whether for the purposes of protection or of control, subsequently requires a masculinised response. “This conveniently justifies both the necessity of rule and who should rule” (Peterson 2010: 20). Militarism writ large is also depoliticised through processes of scaling which, as discussed in Chapter Four, separate the everyday gendered processes which underpin it from its more dramatic enactments of violence on the geo-political stage. Experiences cast as individual are deemed irrelevant to understanding the large-scale events of war, and broad political structures are deemed irrelevant to understanding personal everyday experiences such as gendered performance. When connections between the ‘the normal’ and ‘the extraordinary’ are thus erased, opportunities for political analysis of the co-constitutive processes at work across these sites, for recognition of the rootedness of the extraordinary in the normal and opportunities for effective strategies to counter them are lost, and militarism is naturalised.

Domestic abuse within the military community, as a site at which gendered power and militarism clearly intersect, provides a potential avenue for political work to denaturalise militarism. This is because paying political attention to the ways in which the precarious status of civilian women married to British servicemen shapes their experiences of abuse could allow us to identify and to problematise some of the militarised gendered relations and enactments which structure the everyday lives of military families. Given the co-constitutive relationship between the logics of militarism as it operates in all contexts from the intimate everyday to the geopolitical, such an analysis would present a powerful opportunity for highlighting and undermining the often unspoken everyday assumptions through which the use of violence, both within intimate relations and on the geo-political stage, becomes possible. The analysis of military abuse presented in this thesis thus works to resist the encirculation of difficult or traumatic experiences and events as separate from the linear stories of national mythology, highlighting the socially and politically constituted pain which underpins the normal (Edkins 2003: 17). Despite the potential which is thus inherent in analyses of military abuse for identifying and challenging militarism’s political construction, when abuse within military communities is not interpreted in this way but is actively depoliticised, which, as I show in this chapter, is commonly the case, it is part of the wider processes through which the gendered basis of militarism itself is normalised and depoliticised.

## “It’s their culture”

Throughout the course of my research I have been struck by the ubiquity of assertions, both in research interviews and in more informal conversations with members of the military community, that domestic abuse in this context is largely a problem associated with the Fijian personnel serving in the British military and their spouses. As I note in Chapter One, the majority of Foreign and Commonwealth personnel serving in the British military are originally from the Republic of Fiji<sup>98</sup>. The idea that Fijian personnel in particular are associated with domestic abuse is not unique to my study, but has emerged in other scholarship on the British military. Basham, for example, cites both a white Officer in the Army who suggested that “By our standards wife-beating is not acceptable, but actually it seems to be prevalent [among Fijian families]” (Basham, 2013, 128), and a memorandum on “Fijian Culture and Tradition” prepared by the MOD in 2005 for the House of Commons Select Committee on Defence which states that “Fijian men usually beat their wives and children” (*ibid.*: 129). Similarly, Ware quotes a cultural guidance document which asserts that “Despite the general equality of opportunity for women in Fijian society, it is a traditional expectation for the husband to be head of the household and for the wife to accept the husband’s domestic authority. This can lead to a greater tolerance of controlling behaviour including, sometimes, domestic violence” (2012: 215).

For several participants in my study, the simplistic notion of a static, homogenous ‘Fijian culture’ functioned as a self-explanatory basis for domestic abuse, as exemplified in the following interview extracts from quasi-military support worker Sarah, victim-survivor participant Elenoa, and perpetrator participant Dean:

**Sarah:** It’s their [Fijian] culture.... I know [the Fiji Support Network] go around giving presentations and one of the things they talk about is domestic violence and how it’s not accepted in this country, whereas in Fiji I get the idea that it kinda is.... That’s in their culture and that’s accepted.

**Elenoa:** In our society, I’m Fijian, it’s a norm. It’s alright if a man hits a woman [...] Back home, men hit women a lot and it’s expected.

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<sup>98</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/295803/british\\_colonies\\_table.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/295803/british_colonies_table.pdf), last accessed 21 April 2015.

**Dean:** I've heard stories of all sorts of, dragging the women around by their hair and, you know, giving them a hiding and stuff like that. And you hear some, all sorts of nonsense coming out of a lot of people's mouths about how the Fijians back in Fiji, how they treat their women.

In most of the interviews which touched upon the relation between Fijian culture and abuse, participants did not expand upon exactly what it is about Fijian culture that produces abuse as acceptable. As in Ahmed *et al's* (2009: 15) study of British South Asian women's experiences of abuse, the utility of culture as an explanation was often assumed not to require further analysis, structural understanding, or explication, as most participants simply stated the acceptability of abuse for Fijians as self-evident fact. In addition, within the narratives of my participants, Fijian culture seems to travel unscathed across national borders, affecting Fijian victim-survivors in the UK in the same ways as it would do in Fiji. Victim-survivor participant Elenoa went on:

**Elenoa:** It's a norm. It's alright if a man hits a woman. And sadly enough most of these Fijian guys that have come across and joined the British Army, they still do that.

Within such narratives, it is sometimes further assumed that as this is a cultural phenomenon, it can only be understood by, and is best dealt with by, members of the community itself. Quasi-military support worker Alicia, herself from Fiji, felt quite strongly on this point. She told me:

**Alicia:** [White British military support workers] don't understand the individuals' culture, background [...] what [do they] know about Fijian culture? [...] We know how to deal with that person. We've, we know, we are brought up together.... [Perpetrators of abuse] give you all the fibs, they giving them all the lies to the white Unit Welfare Officer. When there is, a Fijian goes and talk to them they know they can't hide [...] He knows he can't tell me lies. Because I know, I'll correct him, yeah. What is the real reason. So they know now, they can't go on and start punching around because they know, there's another Fijian [who] will be, will be called.

Within the narratives provided above, 'Fijian culture' is produced as fixed, uniform, and whole, unchanging in the face of international travel, its relation to abuse clear and not necessitating further explanation, yet it is fully comprehensible only to those who can claim it for themselves.



Importantly, 'culture' is taken within these narratives to be something which only affects minoritised groups; white majority people's experiences of abuse do not seem to be equally rooted in 'culture' even when there are considerable similarities between women's experiences across ethno-national boundaries (Ahmed *et al.* 2009: 11; Narayan 1997: 84). In fact, the narratives which emerged from my interviews often paint the UK as a place where, in stark contrast to Fiji, abuse is most certainly not acceptable. Fijian victim-survivor Elenoa told me:

**Elenoa:** Mostly back home men hit women a lot and it's expected. Whereas here, which is something I'm quite glad [about], you hit a woman and that's not accepted. So it's just, it's alright, back home it's the mindset that it's OK to do that. But you can't do that when you're here.

This narrative is, of course, factually undermined by the statistical prevalence of domestic abuse in Britain, as discussed in Chapter One, and by the ways in which the gendered inequalities which underpin abuse are deeply woven into and normalised within British society. As such, this narrative chimes closely with Narayan's concept of "death by culture," a phrase she uses to describe "the ways in which "culture" is invoked in explanations of forms of violence against Third-World women, while it is not similarly invoked in explanations of forms of violence that effect mainstream Western women," even when these forms of violence appear to be similar in many ways (1997: 84).

In opposition to the narrow portrayals of culture discussed above, I argue that culture cannot be understood as fixed and homogenous, but is in fact fluid, dynamic, and contested. As Ahmed *et al.* (2009: 20) put it, "'culture' should not be treated as a reified causative category; rather, we should consider its various discursive constructions, how such constructions may or may not be resisted by women and how there could be a focus on women's agency and resistance to perceived cultural norms." That is, culture should be understood not as something which simply exists, but as something which people *do*, and therefore something which they can, and do, do differently from one another (Ahmed *et al.* 2009: 10).

While women in Fiji itself do experience high rates of domestic abuse - it was estimated in 2011 that as many as 64% of Fijian women experience physical or sexual abuse from an intimate partner within their lifetime (Singh *et al.* 2013: 4) - even a cursory glance at the literature on 'Fijian culture' and on abuse in Fiji itself reveals it to be far more complex, contested and dynamic

than the one-dimensional narratives presented above might suggest. Even in 'traditional' rural areas, a husband's ability to rely upon existent male privilege to justify abusing his wife would likely be mediated by other factors such as the inter-clan nature of marriage, and thus the potential detrimental impact of abuse upon inter-clan relations (Aucoin 1990). Fiji is not an ethnically or culturally homogenous nation but is made up of a number of ethnic groups, with the majority of people identifying as either indigenous Fijian or Indo-Fijian. Women from various ethnic groups have engaged in dynamic feminist movements from the 1920s onwards, both independently of, and in conversation with, western feminisms (Mishra 2008, 2012). Organisations such as the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, both founded in the 1980s, actively campaign against gender violence in their country. Fiji Women's Crisis Centre state:

We work on the principle of the empowerment of women. We believe that all forms of violence against women are a violation of women's human rights, and that no one has the right to inflict violence on a woman or child under any circumstance.

(FWCC 1998: 89)

While groups such as the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre continue to critique state responses to domestic abuse in Fiji<sup>99</sup>, the state is at least attempting to make changes: legislation has recently been updated and strengthened (Singh *et al.* 2013: 8-10); and Prime Minister Bainimarama personally denounced domestic abuse at the Pacific Women Parliamentary Forum in April this year<sup>100</sup>.

The notion of a static and homogenous culture upon which cultural explanations of abuse rely is thus easily undermined when one pays attention to the conflicting interpretations of the issue taking place within Fiji itself. In addition, similarly to Ahmed *et al's* (2009: 19-20) findings in their research with British South Asian women, even in those narratives in which Fijian interview participants appeared to be reinforcing the idea that abuse is accepted in their culture, they often simultaneously undermine this idea through their own stance against abuse as well as their actions in escaping their abusive situations and their expressed disappointment with other members of their community for not rejecting abuse outright. Fijian victim-survivor Mereoni, for

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<sup>99</sup> [www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/252364/domestic-violence-not-taken-seriously-fiji-women-s-crisis-centre](http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/252364/domestic-violence-not-taken-seriously-fiji-women-s-crisis-centre), last accessed 14 July 2015.

<sup>100</sup> <http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/2015/April/04-30-07.htm>, last accessed 3 April 2015.

example, expressed her frustration with other members of the Fijian community who failed to offer her appropriate support when she ended her abusive marriage:

**Mereoni:** [I] didn't have any friends [...] Because nobody wanted to, you know. I had to prove myself, Harriet, even when I left. I had to prove myself, to rise to the occasion and, you know, set them wrong. To tell them no. You know, the way that you think is wrong, I will make it. Yeah. I was very determined to do that [laughs].

So if culture is dynamic, fluid, and contested, but is seen as static and uniform, then the practice of who gets to define the apparent essence of a given culture is deeply political and rooted in power. Often, such definitions emerge from racist ideas circulating within white majority communities which produce Fijian perpetrators of abuse as 'other,' to some extent barbaric and unable to control their anger, constructing a dichotomy between 'us' and 'them' in which the majority culture claims the moral high-ground. Analysing the understandings of 'cultural' forms of gender violence in EU policy documents, for example, Montoya and Agustin describe the ways in which abuse in minoritised groups is pathologised, allowing for the construction of Western European nations as morally superior through the invisibilisation of persistent forms of violence against women within the dominant culture (Montoya and Agustin 2013: 535). In concert with this, Fijian victim-survivor participant Mereoni suggested that this notion of culture is partly defined by abusive Fijian men, who stand to gain legitimation for their behaviour from this conceptualisation:

**Mereoni:** My husband hits me today, [the military authorities] find out, he goes in front of his Commanding Officer and [he says] "Oh, well, that's how we discipline our women in our country". You know, "It's OK to hit your wife, to discipline her in that way, because it's a cultural thing." "It has always happened." I completely disagree with that [...] So that carries on because they tell their superior officers, so when [the superior officers] speak about it [...] [they say] "It's a cultural thing. That's what they do in their country, that's how they discipline their wives"...It's their excuse of having to get away with what they've done.

While views on domestic abuse among Fijian people are likely to vary, then - as Mereoni states above, she herself "completely disagree[s]" with the notion that domestic abuse is acceptable in her version of Fijian culture - the power imbalances which allow certain people but not others to

define the apparently essential elements of what is a fluid and contested culture have meant that their voices are often silenced.

The structural violences which limit Foreign and Commonwealth spouses' abilities to seek support in circumstances of domestic abuse are also masked within these depoliticising discourses which attribute domestic abuse to this distant and static thing labelled 'culture.' Quasi-military support worker Sarah suggested:

**Sarah:** The ability to go and ask for help is down to individuals very much. And, and also the ability to actually be successful [...] The more you, sort of, push for help, the more you're going to get it, when the people who just sort of sit there don't, and don't want to ask for help, and a lot of them you see don't wanna ask for help as well, and it's in their cultures.

In Sarah's narrative, the reality that there are material, structural reasons why victim-survivors from Fijian communities might be less willing to reach out for help than their British counterparts, such as the insecure visa status that makes many particularly dependent upon their serving spouse (see Chapter Six), is obscured. This focus on the individual, or on a 'culture' portrayed as static and unchanging, makes it more difficult to imagine campaigning work which targets and undermines these structural inequalities.

In addition, given that 'culture' within such narratives is something that only applies to minoritised people and which is not considered relevant to the abuse experiences of white majority victim-survivors (Ahmed *et al.* 2009: 11; Narayan 1997: 84), abuse among Fijians can be treated as 'other' from the mainstream community, something exotic and bearing little relation to the mainstream 'us'. While the choices of Fijian perpetrators and victim-survivors are explained with recourse to (often unexamined) cultural factors, those of their British counterparts are attributed to individual 'reasons': perpetrators may abuse because of jealousy, stress, or alcohol; victim-survivors may stay in the relationship because of fear or low self-esteem (Narayan 1997: 115). In addition to invisibilising the epidemic levels of abuse which occur within British society, this discourse masks the structural factors which shape the experiences of abuse in British and Fijian communities in both similar and divergent ways, and thus the possibility for comprehensive political analysis and action is lost. Within this, the potential impact that *military culture*, however defined, has on abuse (Harrison 2006) is also obscured. That is, by othering the

experience of Fijian victim-survivors, and individualising those of their British counterparts, and by separating the experiences of the two, the space for identifying the common structural and discursive factors which shape victim-survivors' experiences of abuse specifically as a civilian women married to a British serviceman are lost; and so, therefore, is an opportunity for highlighting the connections between such women's particular vulnerabilities to abuse and the gendered underpinning of militarism.

I do not want to suggest that cultural differences have no impact on the ways in which domestic abuse is perpetrated and responded to - indeed following scholars who recognise the intersectional formulation of abuse (e.g. Bograd 1999; Crenshaw 1991; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005), it is likely that it does. However, the notion of *exceptionalism* which emerged from many of my interviews in relation to Fijian personnel is deeply problematic and colonial, and functions to 'other' the violence and abuse which takes place within relationships between Fijian personnel and their spouses. It works to produce both a two-dimensional subject of violence and a form of violence which is inexplicable and therefore *does not need to be explained*. This has parallels with much contemporary analysis on sexualised violence in conflict zones; Eriksson Baaz and Stern have suggested that much analysis of such violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo in particular is informed by a "backwards glance to the classic colonial story of evolutionary development" (2013: 91) and in which calls to 'save' the Congolese woman specifically and only from rape obscure the complex and overlapping needs and hardships experienced by many Congolese women (*ibid.*, 2013: 94-95, 101). This abstracts the rape from its broader context and from the broader needs of victim-survivors, casting it as something alien which could never happen 'here' and which in one way or another requires the intervention of a western saviour figure to once again save "brown women from brown men" (Spivak 1988: 297). Similarly, the narratives of 'culture' in relation to Fijian women's experiences of domestic abuse in the British military context produces their experiences of violence as separate from the norm - something specific and 'other' - which requires the sympathy of the mainstream military, but does not signal any need for comprehensive and deep changes in the interlinked structures and power relations of everyday life and of militarised geopolitics.

### **"They all go through this stage [...] it will settle down"**

Another depoliticising discourse which emerged from my interviews frames abuse in the military community as caused by factors related to military deployment: both those associated with post-

deployment reintegration into family life and those associated with combat-induced trauma (in particular post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD], a condition which was often used as a shorthand expression for broad experiences of combat trauma). Despite the fact that PTSD in particular may emerge some time after the original traumatising event has occurred<sup>101</sup>, many participants made explicit links as well as unintentional slippages between the stresses and traumas of combat and the immediate post-deployment reintegration period, and as a result I consider the two issues together in this section.

PTSD, seen as the apex of the mental health problems caused by military service, is an anxiety disorder caused by very stressful, frightening, or distressing events such as violent personal assaults or ongoing abuse, natural disasters, serious road accidents, and military combat. Symptoms can include nightmares, flashbacks, insomnia, and difficulty concentrating, as well as feelings of guilt, isolation, and irritability, and can have a significant and debilitating impact on the sufferer's day-to-day life<sup>102</sup>. That there exist connections between trauma/PTSD, post-deployment reintegration, and abuse in military families is widely assumed and is, as I explore in Chapter Two, a central theme in much of the research into military domestic abuse in the US and British context. Similarly, web resources for military families in the US<sup>103</sup>, and media reports in both the US and the UK<sup>104</sup> also tend to assume a connection between the two issues. The assumption of a connection between reintegration and abuse is also reflected in the military's Tri-Service Policy on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Ministry of Defence 2011b: 9), which states that "Commanders need to be aware that a propensity to perpetrate domestic abuse may be exacerbated by stressful situations, notably the time immediately before and after major deployments."

This chapter sets out to reflect on the depoliticising impacts of narratives of causality rather than to debate whether or not they are 'true,' and as such it is beyond its scope to dwell on whether or not deployment-related factors *are* causal in domestic abuse. However, given the ubiquity and the power of these assumed connections it is worth noting that the empirical evidence collected

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<sup>101</sup> [www.nhs.uk/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/pages/introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/pages/introduction.aspx), last accessed 30 January 2014.

<sup>102</sup> [www.nhs.uk/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/pages/introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/pages/introduction.aspx), last accessed 30 January 2014.

<sup>103</sup> [www.familyofavet.com/What\\_is\\_Domestic\\_Violence.html](http://www.familyofavet.com/What_is_Domestic_Violence.html), last accessed 30 January 2014.

<sup>104</sup> <http://womensenews.org/story/military/090413/veteran-domestic-violence-remains-camouflaged>; [www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2010/09/25/ptsd-and-domestic-abuse-husbands-who-bring-the-war-home.html](http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2010/09/25/ptsd-and-domestic-abuse-husbands-who-bring-the-war-home.html); [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2178176/One-soldiers-attacked-coming-home-war-research-shows.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2178176/One-soldiers-attacked-coming-home-war-research-shows.html), last accessed 4 August 2015.

in this study does *not* lend support to the existence of a causal connection between the post-deployment reintegration period and/or combat-related trauma and domestic abuse. None of the victim-survivors interviewed reported a relationship which had previously been free from abuse becoming violent after their partners' deployment, either immediately or after a period of time. The majority clearly stated that deployment was not a relevant factor, either because their partner had never deployed to a war zone or because the abuse had begun long before they did. Moreover, a number of participants also felt that perpetrators of abuse deliberately used ideas about deployment as an excuse to avoid taking responsibility for their behaviour.

Despite this, the assumption of a connection between deployment-related factors and domestic abuse was reflected in the understandings of the causes of abuse in the military community which arose from many of the interviews carried out for this study. Several victim-survivor participants - even those who did not attribute their *own* experiences to the impact of deployment - did assume that a large proportion of domestic abuse in the military setting revolves around reintegration and/or combat induced mental health problems. Victim-survivor participants Jessica and Isabella both suffered physical as well as psychological abuse from their husbands throughout their marriages, which began in both cases before their husbands had joined the military. Despite this, when asked about the causes of abuse, they made the connection with deployment to a combat zone:

**Jessica:** From what I've heard, and I've done my research on it 'cause I wanted to find out [...] when the men go away, it's more, there's a lot of that [...] he's from this world of, you know, it's fighting, it's constant, you know, all the time, but he's gotta come back and readjust to being that family man. Some of those men can't, they can't take that, that fighting.

**Isabella:** I don't think he was emotionally stable enough to be out there [Afghanistan] in the first place, but the Army didn't pick up on that [...] It's no wonder these guys come back and do the things they do to the wives because they don't have an outlet for it. At all.

Even though their own experiences of abuse began long before their husbands deployed, Jessica and Isabella's both suggest that domestic abuse in the military setting is largely attributable to the effects of combat. Isabella's statement that it is "no wonder" that servicemen who experience

combat abuse their wives is particularly interesting here, as it points to a lack of agency and of responsibility on the part of the perpetrators as well as to a simplistic and unmediated causal relationship between combat and abuse.

Perpetrator participant Joe shared a narrative which did seem to connect his perpetration of abuse with his combat experience, but which also seemed somewhat confused on the issue. While he initially suggested that his experiences in Afghanistan were a cause of his violence, he also admitted that the pattern of abuse had begun before his first deployment and followed a pattern of escalation which was not related to tours of duty. He said:

**Joe:** I know from personal experience that when you first get back from tour [...] you're at a different level of [...] awareness [...] there's already some aggression inside you already, you know, that's been built up over the, over the tour [...] when you get back it's, that's how it is, that's how you see everything that's how you approach everything, it just comes natural [...] Well, to be honest, when I got back from, when I got back from tour my violence didn't actually start [...] But it did progress [...] But then again, [when] I think about it, I was slightly abusive before I joined the Army, it just got worse.

Joe seems to be attempting to draw upon dominant narratives of combat experience in explaining his perpetration of abuse, but finding that the narrative fails to fully explain his behaviour because of the timeline on which his abuse began. Joe's turning to this narrative despite its failure to fully reflect his experiences suggests that deployment-centred narratives of abuse have significant influence - and perhaps also the capacity to *excuse* abusive behaviour to some extent (a suggestion which was backed up by perpetrator participant Dean, who argued that PTSD constitutes a "convenient excuse" for military perpetrators of domestic abuse).

Connections between abuse and PTSD may be further engrained by some support workers. Although these narratives were by no means reproduced by all the support workers in the study, there was some evidence that discourses which connect abuse and trauma/reintegration may not be uncommon. Civilian support worker Jackie, for example, told me:

**Jackie:** [Y]ou've had 6 months, you've managed the home, you've been trying to cope on your own, you know, and it's quite stressful [...] and then of course you've



got somebody coming back in who might be quite traumatised by what they've been through, so they might actually, probably, need some time to calm down, and to relax, or, you know, wind down, etcetera.... It kind of needs you to leave them, you know, let the people kind of, settle back down [...] But again you've got that overwhelming urge to kind of dive in, you know. So I think it's more about that really.

Reflecting these assumptions, victim-survivor participant Amy explained to me that her attempts to approach a health visitor connected to the military for support around her experiences of abuse were ineffective:

**Amy:** I did approach the health visitor and she said "they all go through this stage [...] it will settle down."

The connection between abuse and trauma/PTSD and the reintegration period is thus deeply engrained and widely accepted in discourses which circulate both within and about the British military community.

Interestingly, or perhaps frustratingly, ideas around reintegration and around trauma seem at first glance to have significant potential to inspire overtly *political* engagements with the broader processes of militarism, by drawing attention to the connections between 'extraordinary' experiences of war and the impacts of everyday militarism experienced by 'ordinary' military families. As such, associations between trauma, reintegration, and abuse may have the potential to reveal the flaws within what Shaw (2013: 29-30) describes as the "new Western Militarism", which, in order to cultivate public support, "avoids, above all, any deep social costs for the West's own societies." We might therefore expect that public awareness (whether we accept the causality embedded in this awareness or not) of the negative impacts of the wars in which British Armed Forces are participating 'elsewhere' upon everyday life within the UK itself might encourage increased attention to and recognition of the political nature of the everyday gendered practices and relations upon which militarism relies.

Looking at the narratives which have emerged from my interviews, however, this does not seem to be the case. Rather, one of the key elements of these narratives is a medicalised approach to abuse, which serves to abstract it from the social context in which it takes place. Medicalisation is a term used to refer to the process by which "a medical frame or definition has been applied to

understand or manage a problem”(Conrad 1992: 211). In stating that narratives surrounding domestic abuse have become in some ways medicalised, I am highlighting the tendency to understand such abuse not as a social and political issue rooted in gender inequalities, but as caused by individual cases of mental illness. That is, when the perpetration of domestic abuse is understood to be caused by a mental health condition such as PTSD, we can say that discussions of domestic abuse have become medicalised.

Scholars including Edkins (2003) and Howell (2011, 2012) have suggested that a process of medicalisation can be identified in the ways in which experiences of combat deployment are understood, because the negative emotional response of servicemen to their experiences of combat violence are increasingly understood as pathological disorders rather than as a normal response to negative experiences. This has important political implications. For Edkins (2003: 9, 51-52) the medicalisation of combat trauma allows the state to reinsert its survivors back into its structures of power and thus to mask the violence which underpins the construction and maintenance of the state. Survivors of trauma, she suggests, can tell us something about the workings of political power; and it is this which necessitates their disciplining in the interests of state power. In Edkins’ (2003: 52) words, “the diagnosis and treatment of trauma survivors can serve to discipline their memories and render them politically powerless.” Trauma is individualised and subjected to medical treatment, abstracting it from the social and political context in which it was produced, and rendering it appropriately responded to by medical cure, not political action (Edkins 2003: 50; Howell 2011: 4). In this way, the trauma itself is abstracted from the political conditions that created it, and in the process the relevance of questions around geopolitics, militarism, gender and masculinity, and violence are erased.

Following Edkins and Howell, while I do not deny the very real pain and hardships which sufferers of PTSD experience, it is important to draw attention to the social, political, and historical processes by which we conceptualise, define, and respond to the diverse spectrum of human pain and suffering at a given moment in time, and to the political impacts which this might have. Foucault (1987: 64-74; 1989) famously charts the development of the Western understanding of those considered ‘mad’, from their exile along with other social pariahs, via their confinement as moral undesirables along with criminals and the poor, to the development, in the nineteenth-century, of the pathologisation of madness through ‘scientific’ psychiatry. Foucault’s analysis undermines the assumption that the medicalisation of ‘mental health’ represents a history of linear progress; of the discovery, increased understanding, and better treatment of always-

existing mental conditions. Instead, it draws attention to the social and political processes by which particular understandings of madness and mental health are constructed. Diagnoses are invented rather than discovered; they come into being at particular political moments and fade into disuse at others (Howell 2012: 214-26; Summerfield 2001: 97). As Edkins (2003: 45) suggests, “The term ‘post-traumatic stress disorder’ did not just name a pre-existing complaint; it produced a syndrome that people could then be said (and feel themselves) to suffer from. This result has specific political outcomes and in turn results from a particular political configuration.”

Following this, we need to pay attention to the political forces behind, and the political implications of, the medicalisation of domestic abuse in the British Armed Forces. When it is understood as a symptom of a medical problem, domestic abuse is largely assumed to be beyond the control of the perpetrator. As such, it is something which cannot be fully attributed to the choices which that perpetrator makes and is best responded to with understanding and perhaps with treatment, but not with blame or with punishment. Crucially, this narrative centralises the vulnerabilities and needs of the *perpetrator* of abuse and not of the victim-survivor - her needs and the hardships she faces are often largely sidelined. In this study, victim-survivors who attributed the abuse they experienced to deployment related factors often found it difficult to blame the perpetrator for the abuse, and hoped that the abuse would eventually stop on its own as their husbands recovered from their experiences of deployment. As I discuss in Chapter Five, these factors delayed the timeframe in which many sought help; and in other cases, delimited the kinds of help made available to them, making it more likely that they would pursue support services centred on the perpetrator’s mental health needs rather than on the victim-survivor’s need for safety.

Of more direct relevance to the discussions in this chapter, when domestic abuse is assumed to be an unusual and disordered response to the extraordinary experiences of war, domestic abuse is abstracted from the social context in which it takes place. For example, in the interview extract cited above, Isabella reflected on her husband’s deployment to Afghanistan and suggested that he was not “emotionally stable enough to be out there in the first place.” The focus of Isabella’s narrative on her husband’s individual lack of the personal capacity of emotional strength masks the connections between her experiences and broader social and political inequalities. Furthermore, this individual weakness did not emerge, in Isabella’s narrative, in everyday life, but was triggered by the *extraordinary* and time-bound experience of deployment to Afghanistan. As such, the understandings of abuse embedded in this narrative abstract it from everyday life in the

military community in two ways - by pointing to individual rather than social factors, and by locating it within the exceptional as opposed to within the normal and the everyday. The everydayness of abuse and its connections with the gendered inequalities which characterise life in the Armed Forces - as well as the everyday structural and discursive factors which shape responses to abuse, discussed in the previous two chapters of this thesis - are obscured from the picture. Individual victim-survivors are therefore distanced from one another, and the structural precarity which underpins their experiences goes unnoticed (Klinenberg 2004). This forecloses particular types of political analysis and political interventions by obscuring the everyday socially constructed inequalities which underpin abuse.

Moreover, despite attributing domestic abuse to deployment-related factors, the narratives cited above do not generally entail a critique of war itself. In Isabella's suggestion, for example, that her husband was not "emotionally stable enough to be out there [Afghanistan] in the first place," her critique is not aimed at the invasion of Afghanistan itself, and there is no suggestion that traumatisation might be a commonplace or even a reasonable response to the horrors of war. Rather, narratives such as these take for granted the (unfortunate) inevitability of war and the necessity of sacrifice in order to protect the national good. Furthermore, several of the narratives discussed above also frame domestic abuse as an unfortunate, but sometimes *inevitable*, consequence of these extraordinary circumstances - for Isabella, for example, "It's no wonder these guys come back and do the things they do to the wives because they don't have an outlet for it." In this way, domestic abuse is framed as a form of 'collateral damage' - the terrible, but at times inevitable, price that is paid by military wives in the name of protecting national security. As such, these assumptions are likely to re-entrench the pressures on civilian women married to servicemen to fulfil their duties as military wives by supporting their husbands even throughout domestic abuse, as discussed in Chapter Five.

The wide-spread assumption that deployment-related factors are causal of military domestic abuse has numerous implications, both for the responses of individual victim-survivors - as discussed in Chapter Five - and for broader political engagements with domestic abuse in the military context. The three main assumptions embedded in these narratives - that domestic abuse is beyond the control of the perpetrator; that it is an individual problem rooted in out of the ordinary experiences; and that domestic abuse may therefore be understood as a form of 'collateral damage' sustained in the pursuit of national security - work to obscure what domestic abuse *is*. Their focus on isolated, 'accidental' incidents obscures the patterns of controlling

behaviour which constitutes abuse. Moreover, by abstracting abuse from the social context in which it occurs, these narratives obscure the role of everyday social and political inequalities in shaping the ways in which abuse is both perpetrated and, as explored in this thesis, responded to. In these discursive processes, the idea of abuse and militarism/war as political, interconnected, gendered, everyday social processes, ones that are best countered by political means, is lost. As such, these narratives contribute to the depoliticisation not only of domestic abuse, but of the gendered social relations of militarism more broadly. That is, because these narratives abstract domestic abuse from the everyday gendered social relations which underpin it, they undermine an opportunity to draw attention to the harms engendered by these social relations and, in the process, further naturalise these relations themselves. This will be expanded upon further in the concluding section of this chapter.

### **“We’re not gender specific [...] it could be a him, it could be a her”**

The final set of depoliticising narratives to which I want to draw attention in this chapter are those underpinned by the notion of gender neutrality - those which suggest that gender is a largely irrelevant factor in making sense of and responding to domestic abuse. This emerged most strongly in interviews with military welfare providers, many of whom were keen to emphasise the inclusiveness of their domestic abuse policies and support services. Military support worker Fiona stated that:

**Fiona:** All of the same support systems are open to a male victim [the same] as a female. And actually we [...] often do yearly training for Unit Welfare Officers which is frequently about domestic abuse and we do, we’re very, very clear, we’re not gender specific there, it’s very much always, it could be a him, it could be a her.

Military support worker Diane noted that even though military policy on domestic abuse (Ministry of Defence 2011b) sits within the government’s Violence against Women and Girls Strategy, it is important that this should not prevent male victim-survivors from seeking support:

**Diane:** [Although] it’s the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy we’re very, making sure that it is gender neutral and that in theory anyone can follow the strategy and hopefully get the services that they provide.

Finally, military support worker Eddie emphasised the importance of this gender neutrality for ensuring that the policy is inclusive:

**Eddie:** [Domestic abuse policy is gender neutral] to mirror society. I think, to show that we are inclusive and we are, everyone, equality and diversity in the truest possible sense. That is the thing.

In these narratives, the gender-neutrality which underpins the military welfare approach to domestic abuse is presented as centrally important in ensuring that support practice is inclusive and that it promotes equality for all. This gender neutral stance is further reflected in the *Tri-Service Policy on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (JSP913)* (Ministry of Defence 2011b: 5), which follows the Home Office in defining domestic abuse as “Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality” and goes on to note that “Domestic violence occurs irrespective of actual or perceived ethnicity, class, sexuality/sexual orientation, age, rank, religion, gender, gender identity and mental or physical ability.”

Despite this widespread assumption that domestic abuse is a gender-neutral issue, with the exception of Fiona who argued that men and women perpetrate abuse at comparable levels, it was recognised by military welfare worker participants that statistically, the majority of victim-survivors remain women. Military support worker Zoe, for example, noted that abuse perpetrated by a serving man against his female partner:

**Zoe:** would generally be the majority. You know, and of course there’s always exceptions and things [...] but the majority would be a serving [male] soldier and a non-serving spouse, that would generally be the majority of what we would get.

Similarly, for military support worker Frederick, when it comes to victim-survivors of abuse “it’s primarily women, of course.” This recognition is also reflected in *Tri-Service Policy on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (JSP913)*. As noted in Chapter One, while the JSP913 uses gender neutral language and draws attention to the victimisation of men, it also sits within the Government’s *Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy* and acknowledges that “the vast majority of these violent acts are perpetrated by men on women” (Ministry of Defence 2011b: 3).

On the whole, while military support workers recognised the gender disparity, they did not seem to think it was particularly relevant or remarkable - for many, it was an aside, something rooted in timeless and essentialised gender characteristics which they could not hope to undermine, or a mildly interesting but largely incidental quirk which they both did not understand and did not think it particularly important to *try* to understand. Military support worker Lily, for example, in a narrative which was reflected in several other interviews, was open about her lack of knowledge around the gendered inequalities of domestic abuse, and did not seem to think it a particularly pressing question:

**Lily:** I think it is easy to stereotype all perpetrators as male, however all our literature is purposely gender-neutral and further highlights that anyone can be a victim (or indeed perpetrator) - male or female [...]. however, bearing in mind the Government's [Violence against Women and Girls report] it would appear that the problem is primarily men abusing women - as to why - I just don't know.

In summary, while the participants cited above largely accepted, or even took it for granted, that women are more likely than men to become victims of abuse, few of them had really reflected on *why* this might be the case or thought it was important in understanding and responding to abuse, and the majority were committed to the notion that because both men and women *can* be victims, support services should be gender-neutral in approach. While there was one exception among the military support workers in the form of Zoe, who suggested that gendered identity - the ways in which men are brought up to be dominant and women to be dependent - was a likely causal factor in the gender disparity of abusive perpetration, the majority of these participants expressed sentiments similar to the ones above.

Certainly, domestic abuse support services should be made available to male victim-survivors when necessary - support for such individuals, as well as for those who experience abuse within same-sex relationships, is hugely important. It is also the case that such support has often not been forthcoming in the British context, and that both public awareness and the availability of support services are seriously lacking (Mankind Initiative 2007). However, it is deeply problematic to suggest that because domestic abuse *can* happen to anyone, it is *therefore not gendered*. I explore the gendered nature of domestic abuse in Chapter Four and I do not repeat it here, except to re-state that domestic abuse is not only considered gendered because women are

disproportionately its victim-survivors and men disproportionately its perpetrators - rather, it is perpetrated, experienced, made sense of, legitimated, and responded to through socially constructed, gendered material structures and discourses in fundamentally important ways. For Anderson, to ignore gender in analyses of domestic abuse is to ignore “the way women and men are positioned differently as both victims and perpetrators of violence [...] it is not only what men and women do that matters but also what their behaviour means in a context of structural gender inequality” (Anderson 2009: 1455). That is, despite the fact that abuse *does* happen to men as well as to women, gender remains highly relevant to its perpetration and to the responses it engenders.

In the dominant narratives which emerged from military and quasi-military support workers interviewed for this study, then, it is not that gender is never spoken about - rather, it is both present and absent in narratives of abuse in a way which leads, I suggest, to the critical potential being drained from the term. There are useful parallels which can be drawn to Whitworth’s discussions of the mainstreaming of gender into work of the United Nations (UN), in particular its peacekeeping work, which can help to illuminate my arguments here. For Whitworth, although calls to include a gender perspective in UN work have met with some success and the term ‘gender’ has been appearing increasingly within UN work, the largely instrumental, problem-solving way in which this has occurred has significantly limited its critical potential. She argues that:

while attention to gender has made some of the issues more visible within the UN and other formal venues, the manner in which it has done so has largely emptied gender concerns of their critical content. Gender critiques have been forced to fit the UN’s “way of doing business” without transforming how that business is done. This kind of incorporation of gender is ultimately an effective way of silencing critique rather than straightforward dismissal because it ensures that deeper critical questions, those that look, for example, at militarised masculinity, do not end up on the formal agendas for discussing gender and peacekeeping.

(Whitworth 2007: 17)

That is, when ‘gender’ is taken up in a depoliticised way which reproduces ideas of essentialised difference between women and men without drawing attention to inequalities and to power, it can function to silence the potential for political activism that more critical approach to gender



might be expected to bring about. In this process, the possibility that a gender analyses might usefully challenge, for example, the militarism embedded in international relations, is lost (Whitworth 2007: 109, 25-26). For Whitworth, this approach “narrows dramatically the possibilities for gender to be a transformative analytical and political concept” (*ibid.*: 109).

Similarly in this study, it is not the case that the narratives cited above make no mention of gender, or that the British military institution itself has not made efforts to counter violence against women. Gender *is* present in these discussions of abuse, albeit often only in the presupposition of the greater statistical victimisation of women: as military support worker Frederick put it, “it’s primarily women, of course.” However, while gender is present in these ways, it is largely absent from the dominant discourse as a structure of power through which domestic abuse is enacted. That is, domestic abuse is understood as gendered only insofar as women happen to be its primary victims, and no real critical attention is paid to *why* this might be. Nor is any recognition granted to the unequal social distribution of power between women and men which underpins domestic abuse or to the structures and discourses in which this distribution of power is embedded. This has the effect of reinforcing the notion, important in the gendered logics of militarism, of women as *essential victims* - not as subjects who are positioned as vulnerable to abuse through socially constituted inequalities, but rather as subjects who are *innately vulnerable to abuse because of their very identities as women* (see, for example, Peterson 2010; see also Chapter Six).

Without a systematic analysis of gender as a social construct, domestic abuse becomes an individual and problematic anomaly - a crime perpetrated by deviant men against innately vulnerable women - rather than a matter of broad social inequalities. Perpetrators of abuse are therefore problematic individuals who need to be brought back into line, their relationships brought back to ‘normal.’ Within this, it becomes possible to talk about domestic abuse and to seek to prevent it in a manner which does not call for the transformation of society, but rather results in “ad hoc” responses to individual instances of men’s violence (McCarry 2007: 405). So, for example, when Eddie states above that a gender-neutral response is essential in order to achieve “equality and diversity in the truest possible sense,” he relies on an assumption of a social structure which is essentially equal in gendered terms, one where a particular focus on gendered violence against women *produces* a gendered imbalance rather than tries to correct one which already exists (for a similar argument in the civilian context, see Harvie and Manzi 2011: 89-90). What is obscured within this narrative is the ways in which the disempowerment of the civilian

wives of service personnel is, as explored in Chapters Five and Six of this thesis, a social product which is deeply embedded within the 'normal' of the British military community. This approach therefore strips gender of its critical potential in relation to domestic abuse, obscures the necessity of broad social change in order to truly deal with the problem, and neutralises the potential of a feminist informed engagement with domestic abuse for providing the basis for political engagement with abuse and with militarism more broadly.

### **Concluding remarks**

This chapter, the third and final one to be organised around a thematic analysis of the interviews conducted for this thesis, engaged with the following questions:

- How is the causality of domestic abuse perpetrated by servicemen in the British military perceived by participants in this study? How, if at all, is militarism implicated in these perceptions?

The British military's rhetorical stance on domestic abuse is fairly strong. As I note in Chapter One, relevant policies and support materials repeatedly state that domestic abuse is "not tolerated" within the military institution (British Defence Film Library 2012; Ministry of Defence 2011b; British Army 2014)<sup>105</sup>. However, while the institution may not tolerate *acts* of violence and abuse perpetrated by its personnel, I want to argue that by failing to draw the connections between domestic abuse and gendered inequalities, the military institution effectively *does* tolerate and allows to persist the very inequalities upon which domestic abuse is based. That is, while the institution may not tolerate the weeds, I suggest that it *does* tolerate the roots which allow them to grow. In this chapter, I have explored three clusters of narratives through which domestic abuse is abstracted from the gendered inequalities which underpin it. These clusters - the racialised othering of abuse through ideas about Fijian culture, its pathologisation and removal from the realm of the everyday through discussions of the stresses associated with deployment, and the erasure of the gendered social inequalities which shape it through narratives of gender-neutrality - depoliticise discussions of abuse by masking the everyday social and political factors through which it is underpinned. Within these depoliticised framings, the space in which to highlight or to challenge the widespread structural and discursive factors which produce the

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<sup>105</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/collections/domestic-abuse-guidance-and-support-for-the-armed-forces-community](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/domestic-abuse-guidance-and-support-for-the-armed-forces-community), last accessed 22 July 2015.

vulnerability to abuse of civilian women married to servicemen in particular ways is significantly limited.

Moreover, I want to argue that the depoliticising discourses identified in this chapter also work to neutralise the political threat which could be posed by more political understandings of abuse in the Armed Forces community to the naturalisation of wider processes of militarism itself. As I argue in Chapter Four, the gendered enactments of militarism which operate on multiple 'scales' from the intimate to the geopolitical rely upon and are constructed through one another. The everyday relations and enactments of militarism, such as the production of oneself as a gendered militarised subject or one's interactions with one's serving spouse, are thus fundamentally relevant to the functioning of its more remarkable manifestations such as armed conflict, because the broad economic, social and political structures of military life which shape people's daily lives provide the basis through which the use of geopolitical violence becomes thinkable. They provide the background within which acts of war can be understood as "an inevitability, something good, or even a source of moral satisfaction" (Butler 2010: xi).

An overtly political analysis of military domestic abuse which places centre-stage its gendered enactments, then, would threaten the naturalisation of militarism by drawing attention to the politically and socially constructed nature of the gendered everyday configurations of power which constitute it. Edkins (2003: 6) describes the modern state as "a contradictory institution; a promise of safety, security and meaning alongside a reality of abuse, control and coercion." While Edkins is referring more directly to the violent experiences of service personnel who participate in military violence, her analysis can illuminate my discussions here. The subversive potential of political analysis of the everyday underpinnings of military abuse is that it draws attention to the socially and politically constituted inequality and pain which underpins the normal, which is masked and sidelined through the sanitised, linear stories which constitute the dominant strains of national and military mythology. It draws attention to the violence which underpins the very social order which claims to provide us with security and safety from violence (Edkins 2003: 5-6, 17, 52). The processes of depoliticisation discussed in this chapter dissolve the potential for political analysis which draws the links between militarism as it operates in all contexts, from the battlefield to the everyday of militarised gender and beyond into the everyday of civilian life, and in the process shuts down the space for effective political critique. Moreover, by severing the links between domestic abuse and the military gender order, these depoliticising narratives also contribute to the *reproduction* of the social relations of militarism by normalising and naturalising

the gendered status quo. In this discursive process, the idea of abuse and militarism/war as political, interconnected, gendered social processes, and the space for analysis of the gendered inequalities which underpin militarism in all its forms, is lost.

## **Chapter Eight: Conclusion**

### **Militarism in the Everyday**

This thesis posed the questions:

- How are responses to domestic abuse in the British military shaped by discourses of gender identity? How, if at all, is militarism implicated in this?
- How are responses to domestic abuse in the British military shaped by the material structures of life in this context? How, if at all, is militarism implicated in this?
- How is the causality of domestic abuse perpetrated by servicemen in the British military perceived by participants in this study? How, if at all, is militarism implicated in these perceptions?

As discussed in Chapter Two, these questions were formulated through an identification of the gaps in the existing academic literature. As well as identifying the lack of literature concerned specifically with domestic abuse in the British military, I also drew attention in Chapter Two to the failure of much of the literature which does exist on domestic abuse in various military institutions to take into account the learnings of broader feminist and critical military studies literatures on domestic abuse in civilian contexts and on forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in conflict and post-conflict settings. That is, I showed that much of the scholarship on domestic abuse in military institutions is ignorant of the insights of these two bodies of literature and, as such, does not in general apply either a gendered lens or a feminist-informed, critical approach to militarism to the study of domestic abuse in military institutions. As such, I identified both empirical and conceptual gaps in the literature, which this thesis has begun to contribute towards filling. In this concluding chapter, I draw together the key findings and arguments of the thesis, highlight the ways in which they begin to fill the identified gaps in knowledge, and offer some reflections upon their wider implications both for scholarship and for policy and support practice.

The chapter is organised around three main clusters of findings. I begin by discussing the contribution which my study makes towards the understanding of responses to domestic abuse in the British military community - in particular, towards understanding the barriers to help-seeking experienced by victim-survivors and towards understanding how domestic abuse is perceived in this context. My study provides in-depth, qualitative data about barriers to help-seeking in the

British military, which can help scholars, support practitioners, and policy-makers to better understand responses to abuse and in particular, the difficulties which victim-survivors face in trying to seek help and to make themselves safe. Next, I discuss a key conceptual intervention of my study. Learning from feminist-informed, critical studies of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings, I have argued in this thesis that the specific barriers to help-seeking experienced by victim-survivors of abuse in the military context are deeply woven into the gendered social relations which constitute militarism. That is, in contrast to much of the literature on domestic abuse in military institutions, I have argued that the specifics of the experience of abuse and the ways in which it is responded to in this context are not merely something inevitable to be worked around, but rather, are political and social constructs which are produced through the political project of militarism itself. Finally, I discuss a further conceptual contribution made by my study, which is to identify the depoliticisation of domestic abuse in the British military context as something which contributes towards the naturalisation and the reproduction of the gendered social relations of militarism. As a result, I argue that domestic abuse in the military context should not be understood only as something which is *shaped* by militarism or indeed by war, but rather as something which is implicated in the reproduction of militarism - and therefore of war - itself. The chapter finishes with a reflection on some of the questions raised by the study, the gaps it leaves, and the opportunities for future research which it presents.

### **Barriers to help-seeking**

The key empirical contribution to the literature made by this study centres on the previous lack of qualitative data, identified in Chapter Two, on domestic abuse in the British military context and, in particular on the ways in which it is responded to. My empirical contributions towards understanding the ways in which the causality of abuse is perceived in this context are discussed in a later section of this chapter; first, I reflect upon my empirical focus on the “barriers” which limit victim-survivors’ ability to seek help in this particular context. In Chapters Five and Six, I presented empirical findings which highlighted specific barriers faced by victim-survivors in this context - both “internal” and “external” (Dunn and Powell-Williams 207: 987-989). In Chapter Five, I focused on “internal” barriers to seeking help: the ways in which responses to abuse are shaped or limited by idealised discourses of military gendered identity. I discussed the ways in which victim-survivors of abuse in this study were “held accountable” (West and Zimmerman 1987) through forms of disciplinary power to the gender ideals in circulation in the military

community throughout the process of making sense of and responding to domestic abuse. In particular, I focused on the norms of stoicism and strength, and on the expectation that civilian women married to servicemen will show various forms of support for their husband's career - factors which victim-survivor participants identified as particularly pertinent to their identities as 'military wives.' I argued that when victim-survivors are held accountable to these ideals as they respond to abuse, some responses - in particular those which may entail repercussions for the perpetrator - become more difficult. Because gender is relational, and there can therefore be no femininities without masculinities (Connell 1995: 72), I also discussed the impact which hegemonic ideas about the military masculine identities of abusive servicemen had upon the responses to domestic abuse of participants in this study. In particular, I focused on the three dominant, although somewhat contradictory, ways in which servicemen have been understood in contemporary Britain - as "heroes," as "victims," and as "villains" (McCartney 2011). I argued that when perpetrators of abuse are simplistically understood as heroes, their abusive actions are likely to be overlooked; and when they are defined as victims, abuse may be understood as the result of psychological trauma and therefore as beyond their control. In both of these cases, it can become difficult to name the abuse *as abuse*, and thus it can be difficult for victim-survivors to obtain support which prioritises their safety and well-being over that of the perpetrator. I suggested that while approaching servicemen as villains may sidestep some of the definitional problems thus produced by hero and/or victim narratives, some victim-survivors who understand their abusers as particularly 'villainous' on the basis of their experiences as servicemen may experience heightened fear as a result, which may itself produce particular barriers to help-seeking.

In Chapter Six I expanded the focus of my discussion to consider the structural barriers to help-seeking encountered by the victim-survivor participants in my study - what Dunn and Powell-Williams (2007, 987-989) refer to as "external" barriers. I argued that civilian women married to servicemen are positioned by the structures of military life in liminal space on the borders of the military community - they are neither fully part of the military, nor are they fully external to it. Using the examples of housing and of welfare provision, I illustrated the ways in which civilian women married to servicemen are drawn into the military community by the institution's provision of services. I suggested that while these women do not *have* to utilise these services, many feel compelled to do so by various factors. In relation to housing provision, I argued that the geographical mobility of many military careers encourages personnel and their families to live in the housing which the institution provides, as doing so becomes the most practical and

financially savvy choice as well as the one which minimises the social isolation which a mobile lifestyle can engender. In relation to the provision of welfare services, I pointed to a number of factors - including identification with the military community, a lack of information about alternatives and/or military signposting processes which centre around the institution's own service provision, and, in some cases, victim-survivors' lack of recourse to public funds - which encourage civilian women married to servicemen to seek welfare support within the institution. At the same time, I demonstrated that the ways in which these services are provided also *exclude* civilian women married to servicemen from full participation and equal status in the communities in which they live. Civilian women married to servicemen who live in Service Family Accommodation do not have any individual claim to the homes in which they live, and moreover because military forms of welfare support are largely orientated towards the needs of the institution itself, they may fail to prioritise the self-defined needs of victim-survivors of abuse. I argued that the liminality of the space in which civilian women married to servicemen are positioned by the structures of life in the military community produces them as precarious subjects, disempowered within their communities by forms of structural violence. For many, this produces limitations upon the ways in which they can respond to abuse. Many participants in this study discussed how their precarious position in relation to housing discouraged them from reaching out for help or from ending their relationships, because of the threat of homelessness that such decisions would entail. Others shared stories in which their attempts to seek help were stymied by interactions with welfare staff who did not foreground their self-defined needs as victim-survivors of abuse.

This study is the first to collect in-depth, qualitative data on the responses to domestic abuse in the British military and, therefore, the first to discuss many of the barriers to help-seeking outlined above. It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis to offer discussions of how policy-makers and support workers might begin to assuage these barriers to help-seeking: this is something which needs to be reflected upon at greater length in a different format. I do, however, want to make two main points here which need to be taken into account in the consideration of policy and of support practice. First, studies such as this are important because policy discussions need to be rooted in an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of victim-survivors of abuse if they are to be able to improve support for this group of women. That is, approaches to both policy and to support practice need to draw upon research in order to ensure that they are best equipped to make sense of the various responses to abuse in this context and to support victim-survivors in their efforts to seek help and to make themselves safe.



Second, reflecting the “critical” rather than “problem-solving” approach of this study, my findings do not lend themselves to easy or to quick ‘fixes,’ as the barriers to help-seeking I have identified are, in general, unlikely to be easily resolved through superficial tweaks of policy or of support practice. There are some relatively simple ways in which some elements of these barriers could be improved upon - lifting the restriction on the spouses of Foreign and Commonwealth personnel accessing the Destitution Domestic Violence Concession until their husbands have been serving for four years, for example, would immediately make it easier for women affected by this limitation to seek a wider range of support. However in the main, the barriers to help-seeking which I have identified in this thesis are – as I argue below - produced by inequalities which are too systematic, too deeply woven into the foundations of militarism to be remedied by tinkering with legislation or through the introduction of surface-level changes to support practice. At its root, what is required is the empowerment of civilian women married to servicemen. As I argue throughout this thesis and below, the *disempowerment* of civilian women married to servicemen is woven into the normalised, everyday, gendered social relations of the preparation for, and conduct of, political domination and control for which the use of organised violence is a viable option - that is, it is woven into militarism itself. As such, it is difficult to imagine what kind of policy work would be able to make real improvements to the barriers to help-seeking experienced by civilian women married to servicemen without making fundamental changes to the social relations which constitute militarism itself.

### **A gendered, critical military studies approach**

This study brings the insights offered by feminist scholarship on domestic abuse, and in particular, by critical, feminist-informed studies of forms of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings, to bear on its explorations of domestic abuse in the British military. I cannot, of course, claim that I am the only scholar to have done this - as I explore in Chapter Two, Harrison and Laliberté’s work in the Canadian military context offers valuable insights into understanding the ways in which the patriarchal nature of militarism shapes military experiences of domestic abuse. Reflecting my own study, work by Harrison and Laliberté (1994; 2008) and by Harrison (2002; 2006) draws attention to some of the ways in which gendered militarism shapes responses to domestic abuse in the Canadian military context. Moreover, Harrison goes further than the present study in identifying both the patriarchal nature of military communities and the control and violence inherent in military training and in military ways of approaching the world as *causal* factors in domestic abuse (Harrison 2002: 14-22) - something which, because of its focus

on responses to abuse and because of the make-up of my sample, I am unable to comment upon with any authority. However, as I also illustrate in Chapter Two, the majority of work on domestic abuse in military institutions - including that which has been conducted in the British case (Williamson and Price 2009; Williamson 2011) - does *not* take a critical approach to gendered militarism but rather takes the constitution of the military itself for granted, and thus leaves it unexamined. This, I argue, makes it difficult to understand the specific ways in which abuse is responded to in this context, or to imagine how it might be responded to differently.

In Chapter Two, I pointed to the body of literature on sexualised and gender-based violence (SGBV) in conflict and post-conflict settings, and stated that this work demonstrates the importance of paying attention to the interconnections between war, militarism, and various forms of SGBV. For example, I noted that scholars have drawn attention to the ways in which militarised forms of masculinity may be conducive to rape, because of the “attitudes of hypermasculinity, adversarial sexual beliefs, sexual promiscuity, rape myth acceptance, acceptance of violence against women, hostility toward women, and sex-role stereotyping” which are embedded within them (Morris 1996: 700-701). Similarly, I cited scholarship which attributes the increasing prevalence of domestic abuse in conflict and post-conflict settings to the “repatriarchalization” of social and gender relations which occurs as a result of war (Albanese 2001; see also Adelman 2003; Copic 2004; Horn *et al.* 2014; Korac 1998; Zannettino 2012). That is, I demonstrated that scholarship on SGBV in conflict and post-conflict settings has drawn attention to the ways in which the perpetration, experience, and meaning of SGBV is shaped in particular ways in war and post-war contexts *because of the influence of war and/or militarism itself*.

Following this insight, and in contrast to the majority of scholarship on domestic abuse in military institutions, I argue in Chapters Five and Six that the barriers to help-seeking faced by victim-survivors of abuse in the British military context which I identify herein are shaped by militarism in important ways. Militarism - as the normalised, everyday, gendered social relations of the preparation for, and conduct of, political domination and control for which the use of organised violence is a viable option - relies at a fundamental level upon a gendered logic of masculine protection, in which the masculine is called upon to protect the feminine from perceived external threats; and in which the feminine is placed in a subordinate position as a result (Young 2003; Peterson 2010). As I argued in Chapter Four, this gendered logic is integral to militarism because it helps to “make war thinkable” (Cockburn 2010: 149); it provides some of the grounds within which war can come to be seen as “an inevitability, something good, or even a source of moral

satisfaction” (Butler 2010: xi). While the somewhat simplistic gendered dichotomy contained within the notion of masculine protectors and feminine protected may belie the diversity in the roles which men and women take on in military institutions, the *logic* of masculine protection remains important in legitimating militarism and military institutions in the contemporary world (Belkin 2012; Kovitz 2003) and in the biopolitical “production of identity and difference that is central to who fights and dies in modern conflicts” (Basham 2013: 50; see also Pin-Fat and Stern 2005: 44). Following this, as I noted in Chapter Four, the British military institution is a heteronormative space which relies upon and is structured around the idea of male and female *difference* (Nielsen *et al.* 2000; Woodward and Winter 2007: 5, 53-56), and which relies upon and functions through particular ideals of masculinity and femininity (Hale 2012: 705). The gender norms which I identify as shaping responses to domestic abuse in Chapter Five, then, are not merely coincidental; they are integral to militarism itself. That is, the expectations of stoicism and of support for the military career to which victim-survivors in this study were held accountable as they responded to abuse - and the norms of masculinity through which they made sense of the identities of their abusive husbands’ identities and behaviour - are deeply rooted within the political project of militarism. Similarly, the material structures of military life through which civilian women married to servicemen are both brought into the military community and prevented from taking a full and equal position within it - through which they are positioned in a liminal space on the borders of the military community - are likewise formulated through militarism.

As such, domestic abuse in the British military institution - like the various forms of sexual and gender-based violence which occur in conflict and post-conflict settings - is a form of violence against women which is shaped and experienced in particular ways, and which takes on particular meanings, because of the militarised context in which it takes place. To be clear, war, of course, is not militarism, and militarism is not war - as I argue in Chapter Four, militarism is the set of social relations which makes war possible. I am not arguing, then, that forms of domestic abuse which occur in conflict and post-conflict settings are *the same* to those which occur in military institutional settings such as the contemporary British military; rather, these are different expressions of gendered militarism which occur along a “continuum” (Kelly 1987; 1988) of militarised violences against women. While, as I note above, Harrison and Laliberte’s work in particular is an example of scholarship which recognises the role of militarism, as I demonstrate in Chapter Two most of the scholarship on domestic abuse in military institutions does *not* take a critical, gendered approach to militarism or identify it as a central factor which shapes

experiences of domestic abuse in military settings. In the British context, for example, Williamson and Price's (2009) work recognises the potential impact of military service upon domestic abuse *without* following this through with a gendered-conscious critical discussion of militarism or of the military institution itself. That is, while Williamson and Price recognise the role of civilian women married to servicemen within the military institution as something specific, they offer no reflections on why this might be or what this might mean in relation to militarism itself, and as a result, the depth of understanding which the study is able to produce is limited. My own approach to military domestic abuse as formulated through militarism thus makes a conceptual contribution by bringing the insights of feminist-informed scholarship on sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings to bear on this study - a conceptual approach which is absent from work in the British context if not from all scholarship worldwide. This is a useful approach because it enables a deeper, more self-consciously *political* analysis than that provided by studies which do not take militarism into account. By drawing the connections between the barriers to help-seeking experienced by victim-survivors of abuse and the social and political relations which constitute militarism, I am able to draw attention to the social and political context through which these barriers are produced.

### **The depoliticisation of domestic abuse as reproductive of militarism**

Moreover, the analysis offered in this thesis does not only consider the ways in which responses to domestic abuse in the British military context are *shaped* by militarism in a unidirectional fashion; I also suggest that the depoliticising ways in which this form of abuse is responded to is one of the many sites at which the gendered social relations of militarism are *reproduced* on an everyday basis. Domestic abuse is always political - as, indeed, is militarism. In Chapters Five and Six, I discuss domestic abuse in the British military as a specific political issue which is shaped by the gendered political project of militarism. In Chapter Seven, however, I draw attention to the ways in which domestic abuse in the British military is *depoliticised* in many of the narratives about it which were shared by my participants. That is, I suggest that the dominant perceptions of the causality of domestic abuse which emerged from the interviews conducted for this thesis serve to obscure the everyday gendered inequalities through which it comes into being and which - as I argue above - are central to the gendered project of militarism itself. The clusters of narratives which I identify - the racialised othering of abuse through ideas about externalised 'culture'; its pathologisation and removal from the realm of the everyday through a focus on

deployment-related stress; and its individualisation through narratives of gender-neutrality -mask the everyday social and political factors by which it is underpinned; thus, they depoliticise abuse.

As Edkins suggests, a political analysis of militarism has the potential to expose the inequality and the violence which underpin the very social order which claims to provide subjects with security and safety from violence (Edkins 2003: 5-6, 17, 52). Following this, I suggest that a political approach to domestic abuse in the British military - such as the one offered in this thesis - has the potential to challenge militarism more broadly by drawing attention to the politically and socially constructed nature of the gendered everyday configurations of power upon which it relies. The depoliticising narratives discussed in Chapter Seven, however, obscure the social inequalities which underpin domestic abuse and, in so doing, make it difficult to engage politically with this issue. As such, these narratives function to neutralise the political threat which could be posed by more critical understandings of abuse in the Armed Forces community to the naturalisation of wider processes of militarism itself. Within these narratives, the military gender order - the normalised, everyday, gendered social relations of the preparation for, and conduct of, political domination and control for which the use of organised violence is a viable option - is absolved of responsibility for domestic abuse and, as such, is *naturalised and reproduced*. That is, by severing the links between domestic abuse and the military gender order, these depoliticising narratives contribute to the *reproduction* of the social relations of militarism by normalising and naturalising the gendered status quo.

As I discuss in Chapter Two, while the majority of existing scholarship on domestic abuse in military institutions generally does not engage with gendered militarism, a significant portion of it points to the experience of combat deployment as *causal* in abuse - either because of the stresses of post-deployment reintegration, or because of the longer-term mental health problems which combat can cause (e.g. Byrne and Riggs 1996; Carroll *et al.* 1985; Chemtob *et al.* 1997; Finley *et al.* 2010; Glenn *et al.* 2002; Hoge *et al.* 2007; Jordan *et al.* 1992; Klostermann *et al.* 2012; Monson *et al.* 2009; Orcutt *et al.* 2003; Savarese *et al.* 2001; Sherman *et al.* 2006; Taft *et al.* 2011; Taft *et al.* 2013; Verbosky and Ryan 1988; Williamson and Price 2009). Mirroring this, scholars who have discussed domestic abuse in conflict and post-conflict settings - even those who centre a gendered analysis of militarism by arguing that war leads to increased levels of abuse through the “repatriarchalization” of gender relations (Albanese 2001; see also Adelman 2003; Copic 2004; Horn *et al.* 2014; Korac 1998; Zannettino 2012) - have generally also approached domestic abuse as something which is *caused* by conflict - something which is a result, an off-shoot, an impact of

war itself. In opposition to this, by discussing the depoliticisation of domestic abuse in the British military context as something which reproduces the social relations of militarism, I want to make a point about timelines and about causality. While domestic abuse is generally treated in the literature as something which is *caused* by combat, my analysis here suggests, rather, that it can play a role in reproducing the social relations which make combat thinkable - which necessarily *pre-date* conflict. The social relations of inequality in which domestic abuse is embedded are not only *produced* by war - *they are part of the ways in which war itself is produced*.

While this may seem, perhaps, a somewhat pernicky point, it is important because it opens up a space to think about domestic abuse and the ways in which it is responded to in the military space as an *enactment of gendered militarism*; as part of the gendered practices through which wars are fought. As I discuss in Chapter Four, militarism is much broader than war itself: if war were the tip of an iceberg floating above the surface of the water, I suggest, then militarism is the part below the waves, which is largely invisible, but without which the top-most part would not be able to float. I argue in Chapter Four against the notion of a firm divide between the intimate and the geopolitical, theorising the two as intrinsically intertwined, co-constructed, and co-dependent (Basham 2013: 14-15; Pain 2015). My definition of militarism as the normalised, everyday, gendered social relations of the preparation for, and conduct of, political domination and control for which the use of organised violence is a viable option draws attention to the ways in which war is made possible by the everyday arrangements of social life (Basham 2013: 20; Dowler and Sharp 2010; Dowler 2012; Sjoberg and Via 2010; Stavrianakis and Selby 2013). What this means is that in order to understand war, we need to pay attention not only to the acts which one ethnic or national collective perpetrates *against* another, but to the arrangement of social life *within* a given collective. We need to understand the ways in which forms of violence within particular collectives reproduce the social hierarchies through which war is made conceivable. That is, the violences which take place within a given collective - how they are perpetrated, responded to, and made sense of on a broader scale - *are also part of how wars are fought*. As such, while “rape as a weapon of war” - something which the men of one collective do to the women of another - is widely understood as a part of the gendered practices of war fighting (e.g. Benshoof 2014; Buss 2009; Cain 1999; Card 1996; Diken and Lausten 2005; Goldstein 2001; Kirby 2012; Maedl 2011; Meger 2010; Rehn and Sirleaf 2002; Salzman 1998; Trenholm *et al.* 2011), I want to suggest that the failure to holistically address domestic abuse in the British military is part of the process through which the social relations which make war possible are naturalised and reproduced and, therefore, that this too is part of the gendered processes of war

fighting. This blurs somewhat the broad divide which I identified in Chapter Two between literatures on forms of sexual and gender-based violence in war perpetrated against 'enemy' women - which are generally recognised as a gendered enactment of militarism - and literatures on forms of sexual and gender-based violence in war which are perpetrated against the women of the 'same' collective - which are generally not. With Hyndman (2001: 214), I therefore argue that scholars need to rethink their ideas of "what counts" in geopolitics - it is *not* only violences against the enemy which are part of how a nation goes to war, those violences which occur *within* the nation are also relevant, because they shape that nation in such a way that war itself becomes possible.

My argument here is, of course, limited by the narrow scope of my study and by its specific context, as well as by its focus not on causality but on the responses to abuse which occur within this particular space. This is a discussion which could, I don't doubt, be further extended and supported through a more in-depth consideration of the perpetration of abuse and of the experiences of perpetrators themselves. However, my discussions in this thesis expose responses to domestic abuse in the British military community which do not engage with it politically or holistically as part of the multiple processes by which the gendered structures and discourses through which militarism functions are reproduced on an everyday basis. This discussion aligns my work with feminist scholarship which draws attention to the blurriness between 'military' and 'not military,' and between 'war' and 'peace,' and which takes seriously the ways in which the roots of war are embedded within 'peace' (Enloe 2007: 4; Sjoberg and Via 2010: 7). More specifically, it allows me to open up a space to begin to understand domestic abuse in military institutions - the ways in which it is perpetrated, experienced, responded to, and made sense of - as part of the gendered practices through which wars are fought; as a gendered enactment of militarism.

### **Gaps in the study and areas for future research**

While this study has begun to fill the gaps in literature I identified in Chapter Two, it has also opened up new areas for study and presented new questions. This study has taken a qualitative approach, one which has enabled me to provide in-depth information on the lived experiences of this under-researched group. However, a large scale statistical study - informed by the insights of this exploratory qualitative work - would now be useful to contextualise these findings and to strengthen the knowledge base for the development of policy. Looking to the future, it would also

be interesting to see how the experiences described in this study are changed, if at all, by the adjustments occurring under the Future Force 2020 plan. Particularly, the New Employment Model for the Armed Forces included as part of this plan - which promises a reduction in the frequency of geographical moves and includes programmes encouraging personnel to buy their own homes rather than to live in Service Families Accommodation<sup>106</sup> - may reshape the position of civilian women married to servicemen within the military community and may, therefore, have interesting impacts upon responses to domestic abuse in this context. Research to track any changes which occur could be valuable.

In addition, as I discuss in Chapter Three, the sample used in this study had some limitations, and the findings of the study could be complicated and advanced through conducting additional research with a greater diversity of participants. Victim-survivors whose abusive partners were of officer rank may have different experiences from my participants, and it would be interesting and useful to gather further empirical data on what these might be. In addition, while this study has begun to shed light on the experiences of women who enter the UK as the spouses of Foreign and Commonwealth personnel, my sample did not include any spouses of members of the Brigade of Gurkhas - who have a distinct status in the British Army and in the UK - and further research to find out whether experiences are different within this subset of military personnel would also be valuable. All of the victim-survivor participants in my sample experienced abuse in marriages to regular personnel, and I think it is likely that the partners of abusers who are reservists would have different experiences as they are less likely to be brought within the institutional space of the military in any significant way. In addition, as I discuss in Chapter Three, because of ethical and safety concerns this study only sampled victim-survivors of abuse who had already left the relationship in which they were abused. This is likely to have had significant implications for the data I was able to collect. In particular, victim-survivor participants in this study tended to focus in their discussions of their responses to abuse upon their access to official services and the processes by which they ended their abusive relationships, and I suspect that interviews with victim-survivors who remain in the abusive relationship might offer more insight into the more informal, everyday ways in which women manage and cope with the abuse, and in which they seek to end the abuse without ending the relationship. Moreover, as I note in Chapter Six, most of the victim-survivor participants in this study were fairly critical of the military institution and of their experiences of seeking help within it. Given that I argue that the process of ending a relationship with a member of the military often also entails leaving the institutional space itself, I

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<sup>106</sup> [www.gov.uk/new-employment-model](http://www.gov.uk/new-employment-model), last accessed 24 July 2015.



wonder about the impact which moving away from their identities as ‘military wives’ may have had upon my participants’ perceptions of these interactions, and whether the views of those who remain within the military space might be different. Of course, the safety and wellbeing of participants must remain paramount, but if a way to learn about the experiences and views of victim-survivors who remain within the abusive relationship both safely and ethically could be identified, such research could complicate the knowledge produced through this study in valuable ways.

More fundamentally, further research is required to find out about the experiences of male victim-survivors of abuse, of LGBT victim-survivors of abuse, and of victim-survivors of abuse who are themselves serving in the military. This study has made sense of my participants’ experiences through an analysis of power as it is experienced through gender; it has approached the military as a masculinised space in which the feminine - and women themselves - are marginalised. While this approach has been useful in making sense of the experiences of the civilian women married to servicemen who have been involved as victim-survivor participants in this study, it is likely that sustained attention to the experiences of a more diverse sample of victim-survivors would complicate and challenge this picture somewhat. This does not necessarily mean that it would undermine the analysis presented in this thesis. Gender is a complex and relational social construct, and it is experienced differently by subjects who are differently located in relation to gender as well as in relation to race, class, and sexuality. To suggest that civilian women married to servicemen are disempowered by the structures and discourses of gender in the British military is not to suggest that all women are equally so, or, indeed, that all men are *empowered* by these same structures and discourses. For example, I would expect that as much as the victim-survivor participants in this study have found that their responses to abuse are limited by the gendered ideals of ‘military wifeness’ to which they were held accountable, servicemen abused by their partners are also likely to find that their responses are limited by the ways in which they are held accountable to the ideals of “warrior masculinity” (Atherton 2009: 824). Moreover, while victim-survivors of abuse who are themselves serving are likely to have different relationships to the structures through which civilian women married to servicemen are disempowered, it is not clear, without conducting further research, how this will shape their lived experiences of abuse and of help-seeking, or what this would mean for our understandings of gendered militarism in the British military context. Research focused on differently gendered experiences of domestic abuse in the British military would not undermine the basis for arguing that domestic abuse is

gendered; rather, it would provide a different angle on *how* experiences of abuse are gendered that would complicate and deepen our understandings.

Finally, there is a need for further research which investigates the various ways in which domestic abuse can be understood as part of the gendered practices of war fighting. While I have begun to make these arguments in this thesis through drawing attention to the ways in which the depoliticisation of military domestic abuse can lead to the reproduction of the gendered social relations of militarism, as I note above, I am limited in the depth to which I can explore these arguments by the sample and the focus of this study. As Shepherd (2008: 51) points out, sexual and gender-based violence is “both gendered and gendering”, and as such, men who perpetrate domestic abuse are engaged in the performative construction of themselves as masculine subjects. Following this, further research which pays attention specifically to the ways in which servicemen construct themselves as soldierly subjects through the perpetration of abuse would be very valuable, and would help to draw attention to the ways in which military domestic abuse plays a role in the enactment of gendered militarism. In addition, there would also be value in studies of domestic abuse in conflict and post-conflict settings which pay focused attention to the ways in which such abuse serves to reproduce the gendered everyday social relations of militarism within the context of war itself. It would be interesting to see whether, as I suspect, the perpetration and/or the depoliticisation of domestic abuse in times of war might play a role in reproducing the ‘home front’ in particular ways which reinforce and legitimate the use of forms of militarised violence at the ‘front line.’

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