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**Difference and Identity in Masculinity:
An ethnography on the persistence of
traditional masculinity in military
chaplaincy and the British Army**

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A thesis presented for the degree of

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of regular serving army chaplains within the British Army, focusing on the dominance of hyper and hegemonic masculinity in military culture. Despite shifts in wider modern Western society, the British Army remains deeply rooted in a traditional form of masculinity, shaping how men and women define themselves and how gender differences are perceived. This entrenched military masculinity not only influences identity formation but also reinforces gendered hierarchies within the organisation.

I argue that hyper and hegemonic masculinity continues to dominate military environments, structuring the experiences of chaplains, particularly in how they navigate identity and difference. Within the Army, padres operate in three interconnected contexts—the sending churches, the British Army itself, and the Royal Army Chaplains' Department—all of which reinforce traditional masculine norms. The dominance of this military masculinity marginalises alternative expressions of gender, particularly shaping women into caregiving, non-masculine roles, thereby sustaining patriarchal structures.

This thesis employs an auto-ethnographic approach, incorporating my own reflective voice as a military chaplain alongside the perspectives of other male and female chaplains, as well as selected service personnel. Through these personal narratives, I explore how military masculinity is constructed, experienced, and contested. In addition, I engage with academic perspectives, including Queer Theory, to provide a broader analytical framework for understanding identity and gender dynamics in the military.

By examining military masculinity in both historical and contemporary contexts, this research highlights its continued influence on organisational culture and gender roles. The study contributes to discussions on gender identity in military spaces by demonstrating how entrenched masculine norms shape the experiences of chaplains and service personnel. It also underscores the challenges faced by female chaplains as they navigate a patriarchal institution where traditional masculinity remains a defining force.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

“Come on, Padre, you can beat the women. Don’t come last.” These words echo in my mind as I reflect upon my “best effort” attempt, as it is often called in military speak, during a regimental physical training (PT) session. The field stretched out before me, and many of the service personnel had already crossed the line. They came closer, more slowly than I would have liked, as I struggled to get my breath and my legs felt like lead. I kept telling myself that the last part is always the most challenging, when the natural reaction is simply to stop. PT is a significant aspect of military life, with the aim often described as building up resilience in service personnel, ultimately with the potential of effective delivery on an actual battlefield. I have only recently reflected on these words by a soldier who encouraged me across the line. In the military there is a strong male presence, with a view that perhaps women are seen as less physical than men. Here women may be perceived as incapable of follow certain practices. This will often include those practices that demand a high level of physical and mental resilience.

This thesis explores the expression and persistence of hyper and hegemonic masculinity. I identify these as interchangeable terms and as expressions of traditional masculinity that have persisted throughout the history of the British Army, and that continues to persist to this day. I define these terms in more detail at the start of the Literature Review (below). I argue that the British Army is a unique example of this persistent traditional masculinity despite the wider development of divergent forms. It is in this world that I observe the military chaplain, both male and female, who often

mirrors these traditional expressions. It is an ethnographic study reflecting my experiences and the experiences of my interlocutors. I use the term “interlocutor” interchangeably with the term “colleague.” I also identify views from other service personnel, along with ideas in existing literature.

Research questions have been identified during the development of this thesis based on the literature and accounts that my interlocutors have shared with me. They have also arisen from reflections about my own journey as a military chaplain. As these various “voices” intermingle, I have developed, formulated, and reformulated questions arising from the complex landscape of the military contexts under consideration.

There have been specific questions arising out of my engagement with the experiences of my interlocutors. For instance, what is masculine expression in a military context? Are men and women in the military perceived differently? If there are differences, how are these differences manifested? Furthermore, what are the specific challenges faced by men and women in the military? These various and related questions have arisen on many occasions during my research. All my questions are understood within the context of military life and cannot be understood in isolation. As with ethnography, understanding human experience extends beyond individual narrative into the wider fields of culture. In other words, the individual is in a relationship with wider contexts (Chang, 2008, p. 43).

1.2 Literature Review: problems of definition

Many references have been used in this thesis. Here, I will show how these have shaped and informed my understanding of the British Army. I will also identify what is different about the British Army, being a place of traditional masculinity, with both hyper and hegemonic masculine expressions, rather than a place of expressing more diverse masculinities and femininities. This sits at odds with the current literature which suggests increasingly diverse expressions of non-traditional masculinities. In this context, there is the military padre as a unique figure. He, and occasionally she, has not featured in research about masculine expression from an ethnographic approach, nor have military padres been considered in the context of what a traditional masculinity can be.

Masculinities, a plurality of masculine expressions, is a common theme identified in this literature review. However, British Army personnel, who are mostly male, often display a particular expression of masculinity. I would refer to this as both hyper-masculinity and hegemonic masculinity. I use the term hyper-masculinity to describe masculine behaviours, including dominance, aggression, and physicality, along with a strong drinking culture. These characteristics are often exhibited by men who serve in the British Army. A term I have heard used in the army is that of the “alpha male.” In my experience, and in the experience of my interlocutors, there is a strong culture of encouragement for male service personnel to be an “alpha male.” Another term I use to describe the type of masculinity promoted in army practices is hegemonic masculinity, which has been identified by Connell (2005). As hegemonic, it is identified as the dominant form within an organisational culture like the British Army. I argue that both masculinities are the prevalent expressions of masculinity

amongst male personnel in the British Army. They are also expressed by female personnel.

The idea of the alpha male that can typify male behaviour amongst men in the British Army can also be contrasted with other more divergent forms, such as the beta male and the incel male (Ging, 2019). The former denotes a man who is subservient rather than dominant in a relationship, whilst the latter is a man who may lack engagement sexually or romantically. I argue these are not present explicitly in the military, although this does not mean that some men are not like this. The term of alpha male may be a way to valorise male behaviour as an acceptable mainstream type. I would argue that characteristics that typify traditional male behaviour in the military such as physicality, shouting, and competitiveness, are often viewed positively as expressions of a hyper male. Yet the lived experience of men and women in the British Army may not always reflect a positive experience of this expression. In this thesis, I raise the problems encountered by women who often find such expressions of masculinity excluding. There appears to be limited room for women to define themselves clearly as women. Furthermore, behaviours by women are often judged in the context of traditional masculine expression, rather than as unique expressions to be acknowledged. Although I mention hyper and hegemonic masculinity interchangeably and have suggested some typical characteristics, masculinity in its traditional form can be complex. It seems that a dominant form of masculinity has been a major influence in defining an idea of what the world is (Siedler, 1994). This suggests the dominance of reason rather than emotion. I would argue this is like the way in which the British Army historically and contemporarily communicates. Men write orders and there appears to be little space for emotional expression when training for and participating in war.

There may be a problem about what masculinity is, not only as a traditional expression but with the introduction of ever more new categories (Goedecke, 2024a). It may be that categories of masculinity, whether as traditional expressions or new expressions, are complicating matters. Yet it is perhaps too simplistic to say there is a clearly definable hyper and hegemonic masculinity, as a ruling masculinity, although this may be a stronger phenomenon in traditional societies (Ratele, 2006). It may still be worth identifying further differentiation of characteristics. There is a suggestion of a multiplicity of dominant masculinities with expressed behaviours (Coles, 2009). This study questions Connell's theoretical suggestion of hegemonic masculinity that differs from men's actual expressions. These act as subversions of the male hegemony suggested by Connell. They are also influenced by the impact of other non-traditional masculine expressions upon the domain of the hegemonic. These alternative expressions may be present as men live out their military lives. I would argue they remain dominant masculinities, although more diverse.

It may prove difficult to fit human behaviours so neatly into definable terms, despite my suggestion of a persistent traditional masculinity. What does this mean? When do more traditional patterns of male behaviour cease and become more diverse? An approach to categorising human behaviours is useful to an extent. This has been widely suggested and applied (for example by Thompson et al., 1992; Thompson and Bennett, 2015). The problem is whether categorising by measurement and scaling can yield accurate results on what human behaviour is (Kachel et al., 2016). This latter approach may be more robust, applying self-assessment tools for the individual as well as for others assessing the individual. This allows for the potential exposure of differences in data about a person's behaviour. Beyond categorising, a suggested approach is to be more critical of defining male behaviours as simply hegemonic and developing more fluid scales of measurement based on definable patterns of behaviour (Moller, 2007). This undermines the idea of two clear types of

male and female behaviour, suggesting a diversification of behaviours (Helgeson, 1994). This is contrary to my argument that a more clearly definable masculinity exists in the British Army. Further, an early research suggestion raised the idea that no clear differences between masculinities and femininities exist (Constantinople, 1973). Instead, women can express an alternative masculinity to men (Halberstam, 2019). Yet I would argue that the idea of a masculine femininity is being undermined, as it continues to be assessed against a persistent and dominant hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, it has been argued that there is no expression of an independent femininity displaying new masculine characteristics, as female behaviour is only an enactment of traditional male behaviours (Nye, 2005).

A discussion about masculine expression highlights a significant problem about what masculinity means. It is a complex area. As such, I have engaged with the need for clarification of terms and to recognise that there is complexity (Beasley, 2012), yet I argue for hyper and hegemonic masculinity, and I have attempted to define its characteristics. I accept there are differences about what this masculinity is. I agree with the idea that there is a need to move beyond a static and narrow definition (Waling, 2018). I argue that for the military practitioner, acts of hyper masculinity are the ways in which men behave by specific characteristics I have identified. This is part of a hegemonic masculinity or dominant form as part of British Army culture. I call hyper expression a traditional masculinity in the sense that it differs from more diverse expressions found mostly outside of the military. It appears that further disagreements will continue about what masculinity is. In bell hooks' *The Will to Change* (2004), the suggestion of a closer unity of collaboration between men and women in creating a more egalitarian society may be misplaced optimism. Men thinking about masculinity and those in pro-feminist thought may each have a different understanding (Beasley, 2019).

While my research has focused on Western expressions of traditional masculinity, wider global expressions of masculinity may broaden its understanding and deepen its complexity. Studies have focused on the global challenges for women who face violence at the hands of men who express traditional masculinities (Kulkarni and Jain, 2019). Masculinity in non-Western contexts can be seen as expressive in a way that is supported by a researcher such as Connell. Here, there is a hegemonic expression open to alternative and more varied expressions, which I will discuss in greater detail below. Importantly, masculinity at a global level may contain additional complexities that make it a consideration beyond a Western definitions (Ouzgane, 2013). In this respect, masculine expressions can be identified as more than the repression of women, with a focus on spirituality and masculinity. The racial makeup of the British Army is diverse in places, with people serving from across the world. This includes those from Nepal and Fiji, the two main non-Western groups found within the British Army. It may be that men from these groups display traditional male behaviours akin to the alpha male. Nepalese society is regarded as an entrenched patriarchal society in which hegemonic masculinity is expressed (Lama, 2024). It would not be surprising to see this expressed amongst Nepalese men who are serving in the military. A similar point can perhaps be made about Fijian men. In Fijian society, there is a strong presence of traditional masculinity. This continues to find expression in certain activities such as alcohol consumption, gambling, and sexual practices (Presterudstuen, 2019).

1.3 Literature on Masculinity: evolving definitions

Connell's main contribution to the area of masculinity is an exploration of the development of masculinity from a traditional hyper-expression to more divergent

forms (Connell, 2005). This is a significant and unique study as it explores what traditional masculinity looks like in the cultural context of Australian men. It is also significant for its examination of other developments of masculine expression. It is a study that sits between work that explores traditional masculinity in specific contexts and the wider developments of thought about divergent expressions of gender, as explored in Queer Theory. Like the latter, this study suggests that there are no fixed definitions of human expression. Rather, human expression can constantly evolve in the cultural space. Connell's analysis of a small group of Australian men may be challenged on whether it is representative of general trends. In this qualitative study, Connell does not provide a single reason for evolving masculinities. Instead, the possibility remains open of multiple factors affecting and shaping individual identity. This work on masculinities presents a view of evolving masculinities. This is perhaps less clearly seen within the traditional military context of the British Army. Another contribution by Connell supports a view of evolving masculinities when mention is made about there being more than one masculinity (Connell, 2001). A point is made that some masculinities are dominant, especially the hegemonic form, like hyper-masculinity. Yet institutions are identified as constructing multiple masculinities, of these being actively produced. Masculinity is not fixed but is being constructed and reconstructed, where different forms pose contradictory positions. Such developments are perhaps less clearly identified within the institution of the British Army.

Much research has emphasised the development of masculinities. In my study, I also accept that a dominant type of hegemonic masculinity does exist. Yet this is only one aspect as masculinities continue to develop. Hence there are aspects to manhood as a universal feature of different social systems that then leads to more divergent forms (Gilmore, 1991). Here, ideas about the "real man" or "true man" become more ambiguous (Gilmore, 1991, p.1). Nayak and Kehily argue that globally there are a range of masculinities and femininities suggesting difference and diversity (Nayak and

Kehily, 2008). There appears to be a movement away from traditional models of domesticity and breadwinners to shifting expressions in modernity (Ghaill and Haywood, 2007). Brittan defines this as men rebelling against the role of breadwinner, although he argues that power continues to be held by men in other domains (Brittan, 1989). Changing roles have been described as a shift from hegemonic to multiple masculinities (Ghaill, 1996). Here, the former is partly manifested in a working-class culture of drinking and fighting.

The development of different masculinities has also been examined within an educational context. The identification of these can have a wider application on our understanding of any developments in other contexts, such as a military context. This may be a very informative context for emerging expressions beyond more traditional forms. One study has revealed more diverse expressions amongst working-class males, away from the macho and towards greater diversity such as in academic achievement and entrepreneurialism (Ghaill, 1994). This seems to sit in stark contrast to those working-class young men who traditionally misbehave at school as part of their direction into manhood and working-class jobs (Willis, 2017). This work by Willis has identified a culture of working-class lads that closely corresponds to the kind of dominant male culture expressed in the British Army. This hegemonic masculinity is an expression of a masculinity found amongst young men (Frosh et al., 2002). They are assessed in relation to constructions of this and how they are perceived by others. This is a type of socialisation enacted by young men who learn how to express masculinity (Swain, 2006). Often this will take the form of hegemonic masculinity, with possibly violent and aggressive characteristics (Gilbert and Gilbert, 2017). A point has been made that the traditional place occupied by adolescent males is increasingly less certain (Kimmel, 2008). This is the liminal space between boy and man where the individual increasingly struggles to conform to traditional masculinity. This has led to

potential problems with men trying to understand who they are, as a kind of identity crisis (Buchbinder, 2012).

Other research has also addressed the problem about changing masculinities. Is this a crisis of masculinity? Crisis is assumed as a serious situation about male identity (Clare, 2000). I would challenge this and say that male identity is changing, with more experimentation concerning identity. Crisis becomes a misplaced term in the context of evolving identities (Morgan, 2006). It is doubtful whether a crisis exists for men in the military who continue to be part of a dominant and expressive traditional masculinity. Scheibelhofer and Monterescu provide an analysis of multiple factors for the development of alternative masculine expressions (Scheibelhofer and Monterescu, 2023). They highlight that anthropology has not always recognised Queer Theory as a significant area for understanding the diversity of behaviours manifest in men. Importantly, they identify the importance of specific male contexts as domains for reinforcing traditional masculinity. This resonates with my understanding of men in the British Army. It also raises a similar issue identified with Connell. This is an inability of hyper-masculine men in a hyper-masculine environment to embrace alternative masculine expressions.

Can men not embrace alternative expressions that may be regarded as masculine? I compare the British Army to being like a family. Traditionally, there are clear role distinctions that can be drawn between members of a family in Western society (Parsons, 1959). This can be regarded as a highly contentious issue. At one level, this appears as something fixed and immovable. Despite proclamations about greater role equality by some researchers (Willmott and Young, 1973), there continues to be a role distinction between men and women that reflects a difference between female domesticity and male workplace roles (Oakley, 1974). This research is relevant if extended to the British Army, as a traditionally masculine domain. Here it is the man

who continues to undertake work outside of the home. It is also an environment where men support men, but outside of a traditional domestic context. The mother appears to be largely absent, apart from female padres who, I argue, become part of a constructed role about mothering. There is research to suggest that men can play a domestic type of role as part of their hegemonic masculinity (Brandth and Kvande, 1998). This is more than paid employment and involves wider support given to family members (Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009). Despite a potential lack of involvement by men in a traditional family, men in the military may offer additional emotional support to fellow men. However, this may only serve to reinforce the British Army as a male-oriented organisation where traditional masculine behaviours are learnt and encouraged.

1.4 Queer Theory

Queer Theory is an important body of literature for understanding further trends and ideas for diverse human expression. This thinking has completely rejected and moved away from essentialist definitions, where simple binary definitions are used to define human behaviour. For instance, mainstream masculinity and mainstream femininity have been seen as natural conditions. In addition, society has been conceptualised as heterosexual (Warner, 1993). Queer Theory can be seen as challenging the assumption of heterosexuality, recognising that behavioural identity is shifting and complex. These assumptions are rejected and then identified as being based on normalising types of behaviour into male and female. Hyper and hegemonic masculinity is an example of this. There is a recognition of multiple behaviours that can be labelled as queer (Dilley, 1999). Such thinking about human behavioural complexity and how this is expressed raises an important challenge for behaviours

that may be defined as masculine or feminine. In the context of the British Army, diverse human gender expression seems a long way off. Hyper and hegemonic masculinity is still very much the dominant type being played out. Building on Queer Theory, one can argue that no matter what service personnel's gender expression seems to be, human behaviour and identity are complex and fluid, as explored extensively by Richards, Bourman, and Barker (2017). This suggests that the predominant type of masculine expression within the British Army is not necessarily reflective of how people really feel.

Queer theory provides a challenge to the essentialism and binary understanding of masculine and feminine. This theory offers a balance of thought about what people can be. It therefore challenges many of the traditional ideas and practices held by men in the British military. It offers alternatives to a pervading culture of traditional masculinity so often found within the British military establishment. Many Queer Theory works are auto-ethnographic and therefore reflect the approach in my thesis about examining individual experiences of others as well as my own. The experiences arising in Queer Theory and the experiences I have reflected on indicate a much broader non-essentialism on how we express ourselves as human beings. In the military context, this is important for challenging and beginning to change a traditional culture of masculinity.

The literature can be broadly divided into an analysis of the larger emerging movement of Queer Studies and the ethnographies that speak to this. There can be no Queer Theory without an understanding of individuals, who they are, and their experiences. Queer Theory speaks to the idea of a plurality of masculinities and femininities, for Queer Theory is about human experience and human expression. Studies about the movement of Queer Studies have included global, historical and contemporary analysis on misogyny in its various forms, such as *A Short History of*

TransMisogyny by Jules Gill-Peterson (2024). This provides a depth of understanding about our historical inheritance of culture and thought, something that I explore in this thesis about the coming together of past and present in military culture. Other works, such as *American Homo* by Jeffrey Escoffier (1998), explore the range of contemporary struggles – political, cultural, and economic – faced by sexual minorities. I would argue that within the British Army, those who display different expressions of masculinity and femininity can be subject to discrimination from men. These are the men who collaborate with the views and expressions of mainstream traditional culture. This is supported in *The Transgender Issue: An Argument for Justice*, where transphobia is identified as widespread in Western society, requiring a struggle to establish an equality with those who act as transphobic (Faye, 2021). There is a challenge here about a counter-cultural response. How do minorities within the British Army respond to a dominant male culture? What impact does this have on those who wish to remain dominant? In *Come Together: The Years of Gay Liberation 1970-73*, there is an examination of radical queer responses to the mainstream, seeking to develop change to existing societal perceptions about sexual minorities (Walter, 2018).

In support of the ideas of struggle and persecution, Queer Studies at the level of ethnography provide many personal accounts of what that struggle has been like. This wider expression provides comparative ethnographies about what it is to be masculine (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994). These suggest a much wider experience of what it is to be male, female, and what it is to be a human being. This speaks to the challenges faced by those in the military who would want to be different in their expression of masculinity and femininity. For example, in *Miss Major Speaks: Conversations with a Black Trans Revolutionary* (Griffin-Gracy and Meronek, 2023), harrowing stories are shared about the extent to which minorities can be persecuted, including radical psychiatric treatment. Likewise, in *TRANS: A Memoir* (2015), Juliet

Jacques chronicles the personal struggles of being different and seeking an alternative identity. There is a movement, whether that be in queer expression, or in other expressions such as masculinities and femininities, that breaks from the norm. These personal accounts show how breaking from the norm impacts those who seek to limit change and those who want to change themselves to express something different.

There are trends challenging traditional masculinity. This emphasises the complexity of what masculinity is. There is no longer just a traditional masculinity but divergent masculinities that extend beyond a traditional sexual division of labour (Whitehead, 2002). These speak beyond the definition of the alpha male I have defined. It has been proposed that several masculinities can exist within the workplace that are wider expressions than hegemonic masculinity (Buschmeyer and Lengersdorf, 2016). I challenge this with my contention that the “military man” tends to be hegemonic in some form. I would argue that divergent forms are often found outside of the military. Although not dominant in a military context, they provide a challenge to a traditional male culture and offer alternative ways of expression. The result has been to undermine what masculinity is. It is not fixed. It can be said that masculinity is more than being in a preconceived state of being unable to change. It has been suggested that hegemonic masculinity in the individual could be a force for change (Yang, 2020). This supports the idea of change envisioned in Connell’s work, when she wrote about hegemonic masculinity. This may be promising for the military. It may be possible for military men to change, although I have seen little of this. A starting point is to identify masculinity as a social construction. From this, as already suggested, there may be a more fluid definition of human expression (Moller, 2007). This extends beyond a traditional idea that human expression is largely fixed in the early years of primary socialisation, rather than being flexible and developmental throughout life (Parsons, 1959). There may continue to be a process of deconstructing and then reconstructing what masculinity is. One proposal is to develop more positive

aspects of traditional masculinity, such as resilience, and to leave behind negative aspects, such as emotional repression (Levant, 1992). This seems far too simplistic to simply reject within the individual those bits of unfavourable masculinity, as behaviours may be entrenched. In a military culture, it could be difficult to negotiate this in scenarios of a charged atmosphere of expressed traditional masculinity.

Connell has proposed hegemonic masculinity as the starting point for developing a wider understanding of changing masculinities. In her classic text, *Masculinities* (2005), there was an acknowledgment about masculine social evolution. This has been an enormously influential work, although criticism has been given that there has been an unhealthy focus on the idea of hegemonic masculinity rather than Connell's wider contribution to psychological approaches and non-hegemonic masculine forms (Wedgwood, 2009). What trends are there? In Connell's analysis, there is a move away from the hard inflexibility of hegemonic expression to a man of wider expression and tastes. There is literature that explores and supports this movement as a kind of progression to something better. This has included the idea that men are not antagonistic to less traditional expressions of masculinity (Bartky, 1998). There is a suggestion that men are adopting new masculine practices, with more criticality (Lomas, 2013). For example, like Connell, there is the idea of men adopting eco and social concerns, a more all-embracing approach to life (Allister, 2004). This has been described as a more inclusive approach to issues (Anderson, 2010). This occurs, especially amongst young men, who are rebutting traditional male expressions such as sexism. This has also been described as a form of protest by men against men who express traditional views about men and women (Walker, 2006). This development of changing masculinity has been described as feminised expressions being adopted into masculinity (Schippers, 2007). It could be that this is male expression, displaying some more traditional female characteristics. The problem with these changing expressions is that, according to my research, there is

little to suggest that traditional male expression in the military is being displaced by new trends.

There is also a potential issue with Connell's work. Some research suggests that changing masculinities is more limited than she suggests. This will support my idea that traditional masculinity prevails in the British Army. Patriarchy may still exist in some form despite changing expressions (Buchbinder, 2012). Self-critical reflections by men about their own masculine positions are also open to criticism in feminism, suggesting that men continue to be limited in their understanding of issues impacting women (Canann and Griffin, 1990). Connell's work has been open to critical analysis, suggesting that a hegemonic masculinity is a device for theoretical analysis of different forms (Demetriou, 2001). Here, hegemonic masculinity should be seen as a complex mix of expressions drawn from a wide variety of sources, not just from the notion of a white hegemony. However, in my view, such diverse expressions do not reflect military masculinity that is often a set of traditional hegemonic expressions. Connell has also been critical of a simplistic model of hegemonic masculinity and is aware of this problem. She has proposed a more complex understanding of hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). This will include a recognition of gender hierarchy, with an appreciation of the wide landscape of masculine expression. Furthermore, the influence of different factors locally and globally will need consideration, whilst understanding how power relations work in particular contexts. There are power relationships at work in a military context, with what I have identified as a strong historic masculinity that continues to be expressed within the hierarchy of the British Army today. This view is supported by Connell who argues for the persistence of unequal gender relationships (Messerschmidt and Bridges, 2024). This is a basis for the expression of hegemonic masculinity. It centres on the gender power relationship through which hegemony dominates.

1.5 Religious Masculinity

The hyper and hegemonic expression of masculinity as the dominant type in the British Army is also reflected in other important contexts for the construction of gender expression. As will be argued in Chapter 2, the three contexts shaping gender expression among military chaplains are the sending churches, the British Army, and the Royal Army Chaplains' Department (RACHD) which all share a traditional view of masculine expression that reflects the hyper and hegemonic constructs. Research on religions and gender expression largely supports this argument. Delap and Morgan (2013) explore a shift to more diverse expressions of masculinity in religions. Yet religious expression continues to reinforce positions of superiority for men. Indeed, research suggests that the Church of England has and continues to operate a "masculinist" approach with the embedded clergyman as a fraternity (Page, 2008). As the major sending church for the British Army and the RACHD is Anglican, there is a case for arguing that the predominance of this masculine fraternity continues into the military context.

This will reinforce the position of men within a culture of traditional masculinity, serving to undermine female identity (Jagger, 2023). Jagger is correct in identifying a deep-rooted masculinity that persists in the established Anglican Church of England. I would argue that this transfers into the RACHD that shares this Church of England fraternity. Anglicans of the Church of England have made up and continue to make up many British Army padres. For women who do not hold a position of ordained authority in the male fraternity, there will continue to be a lack of female identity. Even though more women serve in the Church of England than the RACHD (proportionately), in both organisations, there are fewer women than men overall. At the time of writing this thesis, only 7 female padres make up a total number of over 130 padres (The British

Army, 2025, Life as a British Army Chaplain). In the Church of England, for example, as of 2019, about 30% of full-time clergy were women (Church of England, Ministry Statistics, 2019). This especially applies to a lack of female senior leadership within the Church of England, nor do any women occupy a position of senior leadership within the hierarchy of the RACHD. It can therefore be argued that the male fraternity is even more established within this military context than the wider established church. The minority position of women in the British Army, both padre and non-padre, is explored in this thesis. Fry (2024) identifies this numerical position of people because of a long historical practice. Like the Church of England, the British Army is an historical organisation where the past is often practised in the present. His study is significant for understanding the importance of history. This has led directly to the lack of women in leadership and senior leadership within the established church today. What this shows, according to Fry, is the way history has prohibited women from occupying senior leadership positions. Such practices today are an inheritance of this historical tradition. For Fry, it is also about the continuance of entrenched views about the role of women and men. This is a compartmentalisation between men and women, justified biblically, theologically, and historically. This is also reflected within the RACHD, with a recognition that it is men rather than women who occupy positions of leadership and power. As a result, this reinforces the masculine nature of organisations like the Church of England and the RACHD. The senior position of women has changed more in recent years in the Anglican Church, such as in the Church of England. For example, some women hold top jobs, such as Bishops. This has been permitted since 2014, aligning the church with a more modern position on sexual equality, which was voted in favour by a two-thirds majority required in the three houses of the General Synod (made up of Bishops, Clergy, and Laity). It remains to be seen what happens in the RACHD, which, it can be argued, is more traditionally masculine than the Church of England. As previously stated, at the time of writing this thesis, there are only 7 regular female army chaplains out of a department of over 130 regular army chaplains. There

are some ethnographic responses from my female interlocutors as to why British Army chaplaincy may be unpopular for women (see Chapter 7, 7.9 Chaplaincy Recruitment). This, in part, identifies a perception that the British Army is a “man’s world.”

Patriarchy is a problem for the continuation of female inequality and the naturalisation of female and male roles. bell hooks (2004) stressed an approach that people need to work together to arrive at a solution: that men need to change and to love. In this sense, the relationship between men and women is about working together. This idea can be applied to the military context of the British Army, where men and women can learn to work together within a patriarchal organisation that is currently dominated by men. bell hooks puts forward an idea that, rather than viewing a distinction between men and women as masculinities and femininities, there is a more fundamental emotional need for connection that breaks down patriarchal barriers. There is an issue about whether it will be possible to truly work together. This relates to arguments around complementarianism, explored in this sub-section (below). It ranges from a more inclusive approach, seeing men and women created in the image of God, to a view that women complement men because they are different, reflected in the allocation of different roles (Pilarski, 2010). This is clearly expressed by those who, on the one hand, reject the ordination of women. Giles (2015) raises the creation of men and women in the book of Genesis as an argument that could be used to justify complementarianism. Yet this is a passage that could be used to argue for men and women to work together more inclusively. I would argue that the Garden of Eden gives an impression of a place where both men and women dwell in a single location. The debate about sacred male spaces in Chapter 6 is also partly about the aspiration for these divides to be challenged and broken down, so men and women can work more closely together. It remains uncertain how much traditional masculinity can be open to a more inclusive dialogue. I am also aware of my own position and development as I have thought about the role of women. I have encountered what I

have come to regard as my own bias. This has included my own unawareness and acceptance that the British Army and the RACHD is a “man’s world.” I have become more aware of how this can feel for women who serve in the military. As I have listened to fellow padres sharing their experiences, I have grown in knowledge and appreciation of the positions of others. This has challenged me to think of the British Army not as a man’s world, but as a place where all people can work together more inclusively.

The ordination of women is an important area for an understanding of religious masculinity and how it can work, especially in the Anglican Church. Despite ordination being allowed for women in the Church of England and other areas of the Anglican communion, there remains division within the worldwide Anglican Church and elsewhere. This is captured in much literature about the topic, and its scope is explored in, for example, *A Report of the Study Concerning the Ordination of Women* (2003). In this report, the main differences are identified about whether ordination should be permitted and whether limitations on ordination should be implemented. The report is important for pointing out that an Anglican consensus has not been reached. These positions remain unchanged in the various parts of the Anglican communion today. With fewer women represented within some church traditions or not represented at all, there will be a lack of female presence within the chaplain’s department. There is a masculinity that says certain places are the domain of men (as in my idea of the male sacred space explored in subsection 1.10 Ritual and Masculinity, below). The chaplain’s department can be seen as a domain where women are very under-represented. Ordained women could join the British Army, but they tend not to, perhaps because women see the military as a place for men, as I point out below. Therefore, the ordination debate alone does not explain why there are so few women serving as padres. Female ordination resistance has been justified scripturally, as originally it was only men who held public positions of leadership. This has been clearly

stated in many works and this position remains unchanged, such as in the paper entitled *Why Women's Ordination Cannot be Tolerated* (Devereux, 2023). I would argue that it is misogyny, not scripture, that provides the fundamental reason – not a new idea. This says that women are different from men (Tilby, 2024). This difference can play out in different ways about how men and women behave and what men and women do. For Tilby, this places women as accessories for men. This sounds familiar in the contexts of the British Army where women work, often under a dominant traditional masculinity.

There is complementarianism, as a direct challenge to those who support the ordination of women. It is difficult to determine what ministers, if any, hold this position who are drawn into the RACHD. Complementarianism states that women have equal worth to men but are there to support and complement men (Lockwood, 2021). It is held that there are a series of literal and irrefutable biblical truths that “correspond” with and justify this complementary argument (Coleman, 2025, p. 117). This is one hermeneutical expression from an interpretation of scripture that is seen to transcend a particular historical culture. Feminism has sought to identify a space in which hermeneutics can be applied to present a different understanding about a more equal position of women in churches (Pilarski, 2010). This will include a critical analysis and rejection of patriarchal history and the construction of new positions (Osiek, 1997). A womanist approach will seek a more inclusive understanding of the position of women today, considering patriarchal history (Martin, 1990). The current unequal position of women has been challenged, especially women being seen as accessories to men, as expressed above. Hermeneutics has also been condemned for justifying underlying gender inequalities that go unchallenged (Shorter, 2021). In effect, the complementary position can be argued to justify the authority of man over woman, a biblical mandate stated at the outset in the book of Genesis, but one that is not always clearly identified by complementarians (Giles, 2015). Such a position has been labelled as an

essentialist and binary definition about the gender roles of men and women (Pope-Levison and Levison, 2012). Complementarianism, it is argued, has allowed for an unequal relationship between men and women (Day, 2016).

Sexism is also a debated subject. The Anglican Church, especially the Church of England, and the Roman Catholic Church are major sending bodies of ordained men into the RACHD. Reactions by male ministers seem muted considering the sexism aimed towards female colleagues within the department. There is an argument that sexism no longer exists within some parts of the Anglican Church. Some may argue that sexism is an inappropriate term, in favour of biblical and theological arguments for the subjugation of women in British churches (Nason-Clark, 1987). Yet arising out of the reality of the Church of England, for example, being a patriarchal organisation, a fraternity, sexism can flourish in this environment. The existence of sexism needs to be confronted, to be called out (Matthews, 2024). Arguably, there is a disconnect between theological debate about equality and the experience of women leading churches at a parochial level (Franklin, 2020). The experience of sexism is a reality that women experience in a Protestant church context (Bauman, 2023). This is a study of the Anglican Church in New South Wales but can be relevant to other church environments as a masculine expression towards women. There are possibilities of challenge to this patriarchy. This may include women raising issues about and challenging the endemic sexism found in Anglicanism (Pillay, 2013). Other churches can also become centres for excluding women altogether, such as the Roman Catholic Church (Maltby, 2010).

Literature also discusses the structural issues surrounding the presence of women in churches. Individuals are part of and influenced by structure. This refers to the institutionalised culture of the church and responses to change. This has been opposed by some as a fundamental and unacceptable change (Sani and Reicher,

2000). There is continuing tension between change and the existing structure of the church which may inhibit change. This refers to the varying impact that an established religious authority has for allowing the ordination of women, depending on theological stance (Chaves, 1999). I would argue that church tradition is often slow to respond to these challenges in a more non-critical and adoptive way. This may also reflect the strong entrenched historicity of the RACHD and the way it continues to express a dominant male culture.

1.6 Military Masculinity

Much of the literature on masculinities is just this: it is about masculinities, not a single masculinity. Even studies on military masculinities approach this topic by arguing that there is a plurality of masculinities (Higate, 2003). However, I would argue that the British Army is an example of an organisation that has a persistent culture of hyper and hegemonic masculinity. Despite the clear desire through army policy for a diverse and inclusive British Army, this is at odds with my experience and the experiences of my interlocutors. This is primarily the experience of a traditional masculinity above all else. I would argue that this places the British Army into a unique category of its own, more than any other institution in British society. This can partly be explained by the sense that the history of the British Army and the contemporary British Army are largely one and the same, where tradition and culture are perpetuated. I would argue that there is almost no other institution in British society that has such a long and unique history of men who live out their lives in unchanged ways. There is something almost monastic about British Army life. This does not mean that men are constantly at prayer and seek to lead purer lives. On the contrary, monastic life can be seen as developing a clear masculinised identity by the

assemblage of men. This can be formed around a perseverance and expression of establishing male chastity (Murray, 2023). Parallel to this is the idea of military men who gather in the celebration of a hegemonic masculinity (Hinojosa, 2010). Seeing similarities between monasticism and the military concerning male expression, both are deeply rooted historical institutions whose practices have continued into the present. In this sense, there is a continuity of the unchanged.

I think men, with very few exceptions in the British Army, represent an archetype of traditional maleness that is both hyper and hegemonic. The presence of women in the British Army and as part of the RACHD has also reinforced the presence of a traditional masculinity. Mackay (2021) has argued that masculinity can be defined within female people and these people are given a story about who they are, such as being butch. In my experience, and the experiences of my female interlocutors, this includes a view by men that women are trying to replicate aggressive male behaviour. In McKelvey (2007), Western women who tortured individuals in the military context of Iraq are identified as behaving like men, contrary to expectations placed on them by other service personnel that they should behave like traditional women. They are capable of the unthinkable, of acting like a man. This is also about normalising gender roles in extreme contexts. There is literature to support the view that behaviours by military women are not identified as unique. This general concept is explored as a female masculinity (Halberstam, 2019). Here, there can be no femininity on its own. In my exploration of masculinity in this thesis, I have argued that femininity is often judged in terms of masculine behaviour. When it comes to female identity, there is no female identity that is unique. Women may be seen, perhaps by men, as just expressions of the masculine. For example, aggression by women may be seen as only an expression of male aggression (Lavin, 2012). Will there ever be an opportunity for women to carve out their own identity? Some of the literature suggests that women's identity will at best become an expression adopted into the masculine, as explored by Mimi

Schippers in 'Recovering the feminine other: masculinity, femininity, and gender hegemony' (2007).

I have defined hyper and hegemonic masculinity, or a form of traditional masculinity, as exhibiting particular behaviours. There is a whole plethora. This includes drinking, fighting or physicality, shouting, competitiveness, sexualisation of women, chivalry towards women, women perceived as the weaker sex, homophobia, and rationality versus emotional approaches to the world. It has been argued that competition amongst men in the workplace is a major factor in why traditional masculinity persists. This seems a likely explanation in the British Army where men, I argue, are highly competitive (Berdahl et al., 2018). This emphasises the importance of the context of the British Army for male expression. It is in the context of the British Army, as in other human contexts, that values and practices are expressed (Robinson, 2020). For Robinson, this is especially prevalent in fearless acts of masculinity. Perhaps in my area of research, this is akin to the requirements of "real men" on the battlefield. Regarding homophobia, some research has suggested that a traditional masculine expression is reinforced by the prescribed threat of new forms of masculine expression (Konopka et al., 2021). Perhaps this can help explain the continuation of a military hegemonic masculinity that has become largely impervious to new expressions. Yet there remains a call for change. This has been echoed in my argument that change is required for the current military to create a more gender-inclusive environment. I suggest this can begin with not seeing acts by men simply because of culture, but that some personal responsibility must be taken for the characteristics they display (Schrock and Schwalbe, 2009). Patriarchal expression is not an abstract concept but involves a process of self-ethical reflection (Goedecke, 2024b). This will involve tackling difficult issues such as the sexualisation of women.

An argument is that men seek out many male-oriented pursuits to align themselves with a sense of belonging in a macho culture (Simpson, 1994). I would argue that in a military context, a sense of belonging between men is essential, especially with the perception of the importance of being operationally effective on the battlefield. There is a need to understand what men are like and what men are like in a traditional military culture (Hearn, 1998). A theorising about men by men can offer valuable insights about male behaviour, as Hearn points out. I have sought to examine men and examine myself, whilst understanding female experience in a male culture. I have already mentioned the “alpha male” in the military. He features in this thesis as the embodiment of certain male behaviours (Russell, 2021). Russell explores the mythological figure of the American alpha male. He identifies characteristics such as dominance, normativity, and androcentrism resulting in a hybrid form of male hegemony. Into these characteristics, the behaviours I have identified are expressed by the military man. The culture of the British Army as history and contemporary practice legitimises these behaviours. This is not dissimilar to Russell who discusses certain discourses, such as the pseudo-scientific, that justify an American male hegemonic position. Furthermore, Russell sees this hegemonic masculinity as remaining largely unquestioned. This resonates with my understanding of an unchallenged traditional masculinity in the military. The use of language is also identified as significant. This legitimates the position and practice of hegemonic masculinity (Russell, 2021). It is a language that Russell identifies as specific to a form of hegemonic masculinity. The use of language in rhetorical tradition has been identified as a tool for the construction and reinforcement of dominant masculinity (Connolly, 2007). Although she focuses on the history of Roman rhetoric, Connolly highlights the importance of language for strengthening a culture or ideology. Specific language is used by military men in the way they address each other. Shouting orders may be regarded as a good example of military rhetoric, with clear compositional

repetitiveness. I argue that the use of language can reinforce the sense of the British Army as a dominant masculine organisation.

I have stressed the importance of understanding the contemporary military from an historical perspective. These are historical behaviours into the present day. I have understood this as an establishment that upholds and maintains the language and structures of patriarchy. This reinforces hegemonic masculinity as an inherited practice of gendered power relationships, denying diversity of expression (Griffin, 2018). From an historical perspective globally and within British society, there is an argument that the retreat of traditional masculinity has posed problems of identity and meaning for the contemporary man (Kimmel, 2018). This is at odds with my view that traditional masculinity in the military persists into the contemporary with relatively little opposition. A form of colonial masculinity has been suggested for the latter part of the nineteenth century (Sinha, 1995). I think this is relevant here for an understanding of military masculinity because it is rooted in a British period when imperialism and colonialism were deeply embedded Victorian society. It stood as a clear masculine expression of “manliness” amidst changing social conditions and the challenge of the early developments of women’s opposition to male supremacy. I see the military as the environment in which colonial expression could be imposed within the realms of the British Empire. I argue that this air of male superiority has continued. Interestingly, a study of 1950s British society also suggests that a strong traditional masculinity existed in a changing post-war society, that viewed women as people to occupy the private rather than public sphere (Gilbert, 2005). It seemed to exist despite change and co-existed with new developments. This can describe how military masculinity in the British Army today continues to exist in a wider society of more diverse expression. I have argued that military masculinity is often expressed in ritualised forms through specific events, such as in the Officers’ Mess. This has taken the form of hero-worshipping those who have served (Holt and Thompson, 2004). In this study, the

researchers suggest that a hero discourse is created. I argue that the heroes of the past are celebrated into the present. They are seen as the male heroes to emulate.

The construction of masculinity has been considered from an individual perspective on how individuals manifest various characteristics. Yet context is very important for understanding the impact that an organisation and its culture, or beliefs, practices, norms and values, has on the constructions of behaviour. The organisation is not separate from the individual, and the individual is not separate from the organisation. This indicates that there is a strong relationship between hyper-masculine characteristics and the hegemonic culture. This is about people constructing meaning through a complexity of interactions (Goffman, 1961). Although Goffman is an example of an early work, he captures the importance of what interaction is for the development of human identity. Additionally, the British Army has historical traditions and regulations that organisationally continue to impact people. The construction of gender meaning develops through interaction, as well as through history and the practice of regulations. This is complex to understand. The construction of traditional male identity within a gendered organisation can depend on a range of intersectional factors within an individual. It is therefore useful to approach masculinity from an ethnographic perspective, understanding how an individual constructs meaning (Roper, 1994). My research has focused on the experience of individuals, arguing that male identity and expression largely reflect a traditional masculinity. The construction of masculinity is specific to each gendered context. In the military, for example, there appears to be a focus on the idea of the heroic man who achieves status with his peers by his manly actions (Hockey, 2017). I argue that the British Army is a place where historical and contemporary heroes are celebrated. It is a place where male physical feats can be highly regarded. The institution of the British Army may also be a place where the expression of different, less traditional masculinities cannot be ruled out in the long term. I suggest that change is very stagnant within the military.

Yet where men gather, and cultural expressions are celebrated, it can be argued that a more inclusive masculinity may develop (Anderson, 2008). I have not seen this within the British Army where the male fraternity largely expresses traditional masculine behaviours.

Goffman (1961) compares institutions that are similar because of their regulations and uniformity. He cites the military. Like the asylum setting he explores, other organisations share similar characteristics. This includes the prison (Seymour, 2003). Seymour argues that the prison is an example of an organisation with a strong institutional masculinity amongst its inmates. Service personnel in the military, although not in prison, are highly regulated by the institution. This includes regulations for which they can be punished and rewarded, including military imprisonment for perceived serious misbehaviour. Krael-Tovi (2017) shows that the individual is rewarded for conformity to the state. This argument can be extended to any regulatory body in which individuals reside. Also, the terms of service in the military will generally not allow military personnel to leave the service before an allotted time. In this sense, the British Army may be like an open prison. It is within this institutional setting that military personnel practice their constructions of masculine identity.

1.7 Masculine Expression in Chaplaincy

Understanding the nature of wider chaplaincy enables a deeper understanding of the nature of military chaplaincy or chaplaincy within the British Army. It can be implied that in the exercise of military chaplaincy, there is an expression of traditional masculinity. Chaplaincy is often exercised in secular contexts. I suggest the British Army, unlike other chaplaincy contexts, is driven by hyper and hegemonic masculinity.

This may be different from more inclusive church-based Christian ministries. However, when reading about chaplaincy, it becomes apparent, such as in the context of health care, that there are common features between this type of chaplaincy and chaplaincy in the British Army, although these may be expressed in a more traditional masculine way in a military context.

In Fitchett's 'Recent progress in chaplaincy-related research,' there are a range of broader, similar activities undertaken by health care chaplains that would apply to the kind of activities undertaken by military chaplains (2017). A number of these are identified. This includes the spiritual care that is offered to those in health care, and I would argue in military contexts. This is often about being with people. This may also include support for colleagues. I have argued that chaplaincy in the British Army is very incarnational, drawing close to others and sharing their journey. Fitchett has highlighted that although spiritual care is not always clearly definable, it is real as chaplains in health, and in the military, identify the specific needs of individuals. There may also be some ambiguity as to whether others understand what the role of a health care chaplain is about (Ford and Tartaglia, 2006; Meurs et al., 2023). This has certainly been my experience at times, and on one occasion I was told by a service person, "Just do your thing, Padre, whatever that is." Health care chaplaincy, like military chaplaincy, is also traditionally about religious expression. Most chaplains in both health care and the military are drawn from a religious tradition. In this sense, the importance of the application of ethics held within these religions becomes significant (Nageswaran et al., 2022). This may include the care offered to those in any kind of need, focusing on spiritual requirements. It may also, in the case of military chaplains, include teaching on the ethics of war and ministering to those who have taken lives in the context of fighting. Chaplaincy is also very broad operationally, especially with the potential of engaging with those from a wide range of different cultural expressions. In health care chaplaincy, the contribution of culturally sensitive chaplains has been

recognised (Redman et al., 2024). I have often been in situations of diverse cultures, whether serving in regiments with ethnic diversity, or overseas on deployments and exercises.

As military chaplains, what we do is often not clearly definable. Everything we do can be classed as chaplaincy work. This will include engaging with others and their needs that I would maintain are broadly spiritual. As a chaplain, I become the free-moving chess piece, being with people, wherever they are. The secular context can also be described as spaces in which people dwell. In such spaces or places, military chaplaincy is identified as one among several chaplaincy contexts (Swift et al., 2015). Here, Christian chaplaincy is described as faith operating in a diverse and increasingly secular society. Spirituality becomes a complex matter to understand as there are potentially many spiritualities at work. Engagement as a chaplain in the public space, whatever that is, does not centre on traditional Christian religious expression such as regular church services. However, each chaplain will come from a particular tradition and understanding, whether that be religious or secular.

In the context of a larger question about the contribution of religion in contemporary Western society, the importance of religion can be identified under particular headings. These have been listed as the following: providing spiritual needs (not necessarily traditional religious expression), to provide community, to encourage an altruistic approach, and to help realise higher ideals (Swift et al., 2015). Unpacking each of these headings, it becomes clear that they can be applied as functions of military chaplaincy. Here, chaplaincy exists within the institutions it serves. I would argue in the military context that it serves as an expression of traditional masculinity. A male interlocutor told me that when he worked in a busy infantry regiment, "The men came to me to talk about their beliefs on an afterlife. This was usually a conversation during drunken nights in the Officers' Mess, when we gathered as men having fun." I

would maintain that this reflects both a type of male spiritual engagement and the gathering of a male military community in which the male padre can be an integral part. Another male padre shared stories with me about how “men” would often stay behind after padre teaching sessions on values and standards. This was “an opportunity for the men of an infantry regiment to reflect on what it means for a regiment to go to war. Fears were shared about wanting to get it right, as well as stories about when it had gone wrong.” This frames altruism and morality or higher ideals within a male environment. A movement away from the practice of explicit and traditional religious expression, such as church services, reflects the secular place and legal requirement in which chaplaincy functions. Yet as with all chaplaincy expression, there is also a unique space for the exercise of the sacred, including the handling of objects and narrative. In the traditions of the RACHD, this typically includes the presence of crosses during field services, often constructed out of the metal of the weapons of war, taking on a sacred status, in which narratives of self-sacrifice are shared. This is often the expression of masculine bravery in the face of the enemy (Coulter and Legood in Swift et al., 2015; Totten in Swift et al., 2015). There also appears to be an intersectionality between the sacred and the profane, between the cross and the “green kit.” In this thesis, the sacred is also identified as the sacred male space, the place where men dwell, excluding the profane, and women, to the peripheries.

1.8 Calling and Masculinity

Alongside chaplaincy is the area of “calling.” The literature has been important here for understanding how calling is shaped by gender. Sturges (2020) has researched the impact that gender has had on calling in the Church of England. She

recognises the historical impact of gender on how contemporary ministers understand what calling is. Gender impacts everything, and this is understood in various ways by clergy. Success is often measured by how a minister delivers their calling, such as by leading, ministering, evangelising, influencing, and balancing family demands. I would argue that this is shaped by a culture of traditional masculinity, especially among male military chaplains. One male interlocutor said, "I love being in the military because I can let most of my maleness out when I'm with the boys." Another delighted by telling me that he liked to get drunk and physical with the lads, especially with "no women being present." A positive view of a male military organisation was mentioned on many occasions, usually surrounding activities that were seen as male and not female activities. As one male interlocutor put it, "I prefer having fun when women are not present. There is a greater sense of freedom." The maleness of the military can be seen in the struggles that women as clergywomen face in the Church of England, which exists as a traditional and gendered organisation (Greene and Robbins, 2015).

It is worth remembering that most chaplains in the RACHD are called from the Anglican communion. There are no statistics to support this that are available publicly. Yet as Snape (2008) has pointed out, the department was exclusively Church of England until 1827. This is an historical legacy that continues today. Often, the directorate of the department speaks about the high proportion of chaplains that come from the Anglican tradition. For Greene and Robbins, the idea of a sacrificial ministry cannot be detached from the reality of sex discrimination within a religious institution. The idea of sacrifice is important in the thinking of military personnel in the British Army. It also features as part of the religious calling for Christian military chaplains who relate the idea of military sacrifice to the higher calling of self-sacrifice in the example of Christ. Calling can also be related to one's career. This also emphasises the relationship between calling and how it is shaped by gender. There is, for instance, some evidence to suggest that clergy careers are perhaps curtailed for women

working within a gendered Anglican Church (McDuff and Mueller, 2002). Certainly, from what I have seen, women with the sole or major care of dependent children seem to struggle with the demands of British Army life.

There is much literature to support the claim that female clergy careers are curtailed. Women continue to remain in more junior positions. There has been limited opportunity for promotion and for women to occupy positions of leadership (Gatrell and Peyton, 2019). When achieved, the patriarchal foundations of the church may be shaken. An aspiration may be voiced, whether serious or not, for men and women to grow together (Thomas, 2019). This is essentially about recognising hurt and the need for healing. It can draw from the richness of other Christian religious traditions. Yet how serious are men in developing this, both within the church and within the military? They are not the ones who are hurting. It can also be questioned from a perspective of a male institution that does not allow for change but rather permits and reinforces women to be identified as different (Jagger, 2021). It is therefore questionable to what extent women are making a difference to the gender makeup of the Anglican Church (Niemela, 2011). This highlights that an undermining of patriarchy is potentially limited. I would argue this is similar to a male-dominated military. Women as priests in the Church of England may continue to remain less powerful than their male counterparts. They may be limited in their presence within some social and spiritual domains that consequently limit serious opportunities for promotion to more senior religious positions (Fry, 2021). This is not dissimilar to the challenges facing female military chaplains who are, I argue, excluded from male “sacred spaces.”

1.9 Class and Masculinity

The wider literature on class also features as an important foundation for this thesis. Like calling, class can be seen as an important intersectional factor for how a person behaves and can also be studied in relation to gender. The British Army is a class-based society, perhaps, I would argue, a microcosm of the way British society was in the past. Bourdieu (1984) has identified the prevalence of class in Western society. Although he examines class in the context of French society, he makes a universal point that people become class itself, an expression of their class. This leads to notions of hierarchy and superiority, with some reflecting on what is perceived as a higher culture. The class status of the person is measured by the beliefs and expressions they exhibit. This complies with my understanding of the British Army. The Officers' Mess is often full of men who act in particular ways, being what was once described to me as "officer class" behaviour. For example, there are even books scattered around such messes that discuss the etiquette of being a "gentleman," on how to dress, and what to say. The officer class seem to be a whisper of an aristocratic class who were once recruited into the officer class. Some of this culture remains. Other classes that formed traditional class society in the West, and arguably still do, can also be seen within the institutional structure of the British Army. There is the Sergeants' Mess, again full of men, in which private soldiers have been promoted to senior non-officer ranks. Like in the messes of those of the lesser rank, such as the Corporals' Mess and the "other ranks" of private soldiers, no books on how to be a gentleman are present here. Although such books often remain unread within the Officers' Mess, they nonetheless point to distinctions of taste. Here, Bourdieu is very important for an understanding of class and cultural differences relating to groups of men in the British Army.

The importance of class is further explored by Friedman and Laurison (2019). In *The Class Ceiling*, Friedman and Laurison emphasise the importance of factors for the continuation of class and privilege generationally. A study of a small sample of 175 individuals revealed that some with privileged class backgrounds were able to rise to positions of class privilege themselves. Explanatory factors such as parental background, social connections, schooling, and university were identified. I have worked with a cavalry regiment in the British Army in which some officers were fourth and even fifth-generation men, following in the footsteps of their forefathers. Here, gender continues as a given in the background. Cavalry are regiments of historic privilege, with officers often recruited from public schools and whose connections continue into the world of work outside of the British Army. Friedman and Laurison raise important points that are explored in this thesis for understanding how class works in the British Army. In the same way, it can be argued that non-privileged status can be seen in the recruitment of all other ranks, often from the echelons of working-class society.

Expressions of masculinity may differ according to the factor of class. If we differentiate classes as having within each class several distinctive norms and values, there may be a difference in how a person expresses their masculinity. It may be that a traditional, more hegemonic masculine expression is present within specific definable classes (Morgan, 2005). This is emphasised here as those who perform manual work, the working class, as a definition of who they are. This perhaps describes the working-class soldier and those who frequent the sergeant and corporal messes. It may apply less to the officers. However, Morgan sees similarity when defining a man as a breadwinner, as this may cut through class distinctions. Clearly, what masculinity is, as it relates to class, is not a simple definition. Yet certain masculine expressions may arise within the class structure, such as the idea of gentlemanly behaviour (Arnold and Brady, 2011). Despite the development of possible

nuances, I would argue the idea of the gentlemanly military officer remains an expression of a middle and upper class version of traditional masculinity.

1.10 Ritual and Masculinity

In this thesis, I have given attention to the gathering of men who undertake activities. This includes being on the sports field playing rugby as well as in the Officers' Mess playing games. An important part of understanding what is happening here requires a review of the literature on rituals. Ritual can be broadly defined as an activity of significance. It can be argued that ritual can tell us something about culture (Bell, 1992) and in this case, something about the culture of the British Army. Following Bell's approach, we must first deconstruct what is going on. This involves seeing the ritual as an object that then requires interpretation. In this way, we can learn how knowledge is communicated in ways that are different from other forms of communication. I maintain that from my own observations of the ritualised activities of men in the British Army, it is primarily about the development of operational effectiveness as the "end state" (a military term). Ultimately, this is about being able to engage the enemy on the battlefield. Ritual will engender a sense of male camaraderie and togetherness. It is often exercised with expressions akin to hyper and hegemonic masculinity, such as shouting. In fact, the culture of the British Army is often expressed in these ways. I explore the idea of ritual via "mess games." From the engendering of camaraderie, I am struck by the special sense of male community that binds service personnel. I like the idea of the liminal "communitas" that is not always clearly definable or structured (Turner, 1969, p. 358). Although Turner's study was in a sub-Saharan African context, it also has an application to the British Army. Like any small community, service personnel in the British Army are often bound together in close

relationships. This can transcend and blur distinctions of work and play. Turner claims that ritual enables an understanding of the system in which it functions. *Communitas* in the British Army can therefore be understood as a function of becoming operationally effective on the battlefield. Ritualised activities are often clearly defined. They have rules, whether it be on a sports field or in the Officers' Mess. In the British Army, there are also rules governing behaviours relating to alcohol use. In my thesis, I have researched service personnel behaviours and what are defined as acceptable or unacceptable. This is important for the military chaplain negotiating their way through an alien system. Strangely, alcohol overuse during ritualised activities is often not perceived as a problem. However, studies on taboo suggest that a label for a taboo or indeed not a taboo depends upon a culture of adherence (Douglas, 2002). Acceptable behaviours within the British Army, such as alcohol misuse, appear to differ from acceptable behaviours outside of the British Army. Taboo is an important area for defining what I call the male "sacred" space (see Chapter 6). Douglas raises the point that a taboo is when something is rejected, in this case where gender norms and conventions may be negotiated and renegotiated. These are spaces where ritualised activities take place for men. They are also spaces where men meet and socialise. There may also be spaces of contention, such as women now being allowed to train for infantry roles traditionally occupied by men.

What does space mean? There is actual space. This space often symbolises a gender difference between men and women serving in the British Army. There may be a typology, as a kind of hierarchy, that emphasises levels of sacred space (Jackson and Henrie, 1983). Here, this recognises that a sacred and profane difference exists in religious sites. I would argue that the British Army exists on a level similar to religious sacredness. This stresses that the British Army is a male sacred space that finds expression in different ways, such as in male sports. Sacred space is a fundamental expression, it seems, of historic Western society, especially as part of religious

institutional expression (Hamilton and Spicer, 2016). I would argue that the military, as an historical and contemporary male sacred space, is an organisation that connects history with the contemporary. History and identity are fundamental to what is perceived as sacred (Stornig et al., 2021). Here it is the enactment of ritual, for example, in mess dinners with music and hero citations, that helps to define identity in the present. This continues to express a gendered understanding of men who occupy a male domain. The sacred, such as in religious expression, can be seen as deeply gendered. It is also in the everyday that men can construct gendered sacred spaces, emphasising a differentiation between what spaces men and women can occupy (de Haardt, 2017). I would argue men do this all the time in military contexts, thereby reinforcing male spaces that celebrate and reinforce traditional masculinities. Yet, expression about what is sacred is much more than history. Military personnel continue to define what is sacred, often in the everyday activities of the profane (Holloway, 2003). The male space is sacred, although the profane is important for constructing the sacred. In a military context, this idea places men in dominating positions within both the sacred and profane spaces.

The male sacred space is endemic within the military environment. Elsewhere, I describe the military as a kind of family. It is within this family that the male sacred space is expressed. It is a kind of domestic traditional masculinity in which there are male spaces (Moisio and Beruchashvili, 2016). The function of this space, according to Moisio and Beruchashvili, enables men to refine their identities. It is often not a distinctive traditional masculinity in opposition to an idea of a traditional female domestic role. However, in my research, a more traditional masculine and hegemonic expression seems to occupy the male sacred spaces in the military. It is a space in which hegemonic heterosexuality is reinforced, with an emphasis on emotional detachment, competition, and viewing women as sexual objects (Bird, 1996). In this research by Bird, resonating with my own, this male space effectively regulates the

legitimacy of hegemonic male expression, whilst suppressing other expressions. I cite sport as a key male sacred space, whether as a formal sport or expressed as games in the various messes. Messner (1995) places sport at the centre of the construction of a traditional, competitive masculinity that permeates American society, not just the area of elite sports. His research focuses on only 30 retired sportsmen, and therefore it is questionable to claim the importance of sport generally for a traditional masculine construction. However, his claim that competitive sport engenders what it is to be a man, dictating gender relations with women, resonates with my understanding of the military competitive man. He finds expression for his traditional masculinity in acts of physicality and of winning, like winning the battle, and this serves to reinforce the powerful position that men occupy in the military male establishment. For Woodward (2007), boxing is examined, a sport I mention, as very significant for the construction of male identity. I examine boxing as a sport that engenders a sense of bravery and winning, encapsulating the values of a fighting soldier.

Sport, as a male hegemonic expression, does not have to be fixed. As with Moisio and Beruchashvili (2016), it may be possible for new, less hegemonic expressions to arise. There will remain aspects such as physicality and competitiveness but not understood in the context of a hegemonic masculinity. Connell (2008) argues that in the early years of education, the way sports are taught must be questioned. There is a view that some sports are a male domain. There is evidence to suggest that discourse used in sport can take two directions: by either supporting a traditional masculinity, or by undermining it (Adams et al., 2010). Supporting discourses emphasise physicality and war. In a study by Adams et al., this is seen as having limited applicability to many wider contexts. Yet for the British Army, I argue that expressive sport in this way is part of the wider intention to develop effective fighters. For those who play rugby, another sport I examine in the context of the British Army, there is a suggestion of a more inclusive masculinity that rejects some of the

traditional beliefs and practices found in a hegemonic masculinity, such as excessive risk-taking, misogyny, and homophobia (Anderson and McGuire, 2010). In the example of rugby in the military, I see little expression of this, as its function can be understood in the context of preparing men for battle.

The military itself can be defined as a place where ritual is central. In this sense, the military organisation and chaplaincy being part of this organisation is ritual. The military cannot be fully understood without identifying many of its practices in this way (Diefendorf, 1997). Here, ritual is important when examining both the military generally and the branch of chaplaincy. Military life can be defined as a series of ritual expressions by military personnel (Wojtkowiak, 2022). This has resonated with my own experiences. From the beginning of the working day onwards, soldiers often gather in formed units, subject to more senior soldiers and officers. Actions and orders are followed in specific ways, often laid out in military regulations and as part of tradition. This also applies to chaplains who gather, often as part of professional development training, subject to curricula that include times of “worship” and “fireside chats” with visiting senior chaplains. Ritual is therefore part of the everyday for all military personnel.

Military ritual can be seen as gendered, expressed mainly by men. It is expressed within the messes at formal dinners, when music is played and citations for fallen heroes are read. It is also expressed in formal acts of remembrance. The latter stresses the importance of remembering the male heroes of the past. These services can function to perpetuate and legitimate a male military (Wegner, 2021). It can be argued that military remembrance events function to celebrate the past, bringing the past into the present. The conducting of these services can have huge significance for those present (Drozdowski et al., 2021). In the latter instance, Drozdowski researched Anzac Day, a national day of remembrance in New Zealand, Australia,

and Tonga that commemorates all those who have served and died in times of war and conflict. I have argued that the military is largely about bringing the past and present together. Ritual in remembrance becomes an effective means for maintaining both an historical male establishment and a contemporary patriarchal organisation. In Drozdewski's work, one of the functions of remembrance is to evoke a sense of collective memory with past events, even if the people present were not part of that lived history. It is about keeping the past alive. Ritualistic expression can also be part of a chaplain's wider role, functioning to bring comfort and support to military personnel. This can be part of formal acts of worship, but it can also be part of everyday chaplaincy expression, such as pastoral care (Korver, 2025). Much of my pastoral work has involved engaging with military personnel in their everyday lives.

1.11 Methodology

1.11.1 Biographical Information

My interlocutors numbered fourteen in total, seven male chaplains and seven female chaplains. This provided a balance between female and male research participants. I also see myself as an additional voice. Here I will provide some general details about my interlocutors to help maintain a level of anonymity. They were over the age of 40 at the time of my research. This reflects the fact that nearly all British Army chaplains are in an older age group. All are of white British origin. There are very few chaplains who are within the RACHD compared with the size of the British Army. There were over 135 regular chaplains at the time of writing this thesis (see *Life as a British Army Chaplain*, British Army, 2025). My male interlocutors came from a variety of backgrounds. Three had, at some time, served in a uniformed organisation, such as the police or British Army. Two of these had also been involved in the construction

industry. This included possessing skills such as plumbing and bricklaying. A further two had come from professional backgrounds in their previous careers. The other two had come from a university educational background, with a longer period in parish ministry before entering the British Army as military chaplains. My female interlocutors all came from professional backgrounds in their previous careers. Each had entered late into religious training and ministry. My own background includes university and spending a brief time teaching before I pursued religious ministry. Following a longer period in parish ministry, I then became a military chaplain. All of us entered a period of military training to qualify as military chaplains. All my male and female interlocutors were married. They all have children, all of whom are now of adult age. There were times in the earlier military careers of some when children were of dependent age. This has also resonated with my own experience in the military, having children of dependent and then non-dependent status. All my interlocutors could be defined as middle class in terms of education and current occupation. This comes with nuances of seeing life in particular ways, not least with education helping to form an understanding of issues about diversity. Other influencing factors and intersectionality should also be identified here, such as padres who are white and middle class and those who come from certain Christian religious traditions. These are factors I also apply to myself on the extent to which I see diversity and inclusion as being effective. I am middle class, white, and Church of England. What could this say about me and the way I see?

The selection of some of my interlocutors partly arose out of necessity because there are only a limited number of female padres (7 at the time of my research). I also wanted to select male chaplains of a numerical equivalent. My seven male chaplains were selected because they represented a diversity of backgrounds. However, as all my interlocutors are over the age of 40, their views may not be representative of individuals from younger or indeed older age groups. I also fall into this older category.

The older age group chosen does reflect the ages of the majority of serving chaplains. Many chaplains do not begin their military service until after the age of 40. I do not claim that padres speak for all, however they do speak for themselves. This research has sought to hear their voices. Furthermore, my main research with my interlocutors was conducted between 2019 and 2022. This focused on several military regiments in the southwest and southeast of the United Kingdom. These included infantry regiments and regiments from other corps of the British Army. I have also drawn research from the regiments I have served with during this period, including regiments before and after these dates. These have been in the southwest and southeast, with one regiment in the northeast. These included infantry regiments and regiments from other corps.

1.12 Obtaining Consent and Other Ethical Considerations

I obtained consent from my fellow chaplains to become my interlocutors by first asking them by email if they were happy to do so. In my email, I explained that I was researching the experiences of chaplains, especially considering gender and diversity issues. They all replied that they were happy to support me. One of the major difficulties with using a small number of respondents is ensuring their anonymity in the presentation of my findings. I have also included reflections from third parties. I have been careful to ensure a high degree of anonymity for all. No personal details that could more easily identify interlocutors have been included, such as name, specific age, and regiments served in. I would be hard-pressed to claim a level of complete anonymity. There is a degree of realism here that my interlocutors have accepted. The significance of confidentiality rather than anonymity is also an important consideration here. There is a dichotomy at work where I am both a colleague and an anthropologist.

It raises a potential ethical dilemma where I am a chaplain whose code of conduct is often spoken about (the sacredness of the confessional), to ensure complete confidentiality with other military personnel, including chaplaincy colleagues. This means that information shared with me should go no further. Yet there is a different code of conduct as a researching anthropologist where information may be shared with the consent of interlocutors (Lucas, 2008). As a researcher, I made my aims clear when engaging with my interlocutors. They knew that some of their views would be shared in my research, but not overt personal details. Part of the anonymity has involved the storage of data pertaining to specific chaplains chosen for my research. My initial emails sent out requesting assistance were deleted. Meeting notes were taken and then transferred to an electronic database. Those meeting notes were then destroyed. I secured any personal details in these electronic notes by setting up a document that only I have access to. Such personal details were only used to recall the person in my own mind and to help bring the experiences back to life. In time, this document will also be deleted. As I have sought to show, there will always be ethical considerations on how ethnographic research is conducted. The American Anthropological Association gives some direction (*American Anthropology Association Code of Ethics*, 1998, pp. 1-8). This stresses the obligation of the researcher to research as well as to consider those being researched. The various experiences with my interlocutors also illustrate the importance of trust. I know these people and they have shared information with me, sometimes of a deep and personal nature. They have also trusted that I will maintain a level of anonymity and that what I say will accurately reflect what they have shared.

Anonymity is a difficult undertaking, especially concerning a small number of female chaplains who could be identified. Despite avoiding specific details pertaining to individuals, I have had to admit to my interlocutors that I cannot guarantee their complete anonymity. Fortunately, this has not been a barrier to their continued

participation. There is also a further issue of trust. There is a potential that some of the details shared may be viewed by my interlocutors as too sensitive. This relates to details being seen by the chaplaincy chain of command. However, there was a robustness of attitude about being open and speaking up. In my experience and in the experience of other chaplains, more open dialogue is being welcomed by chaplains in senior leadership. Having received permission from the senior leadership team to conduct my research, I hope that senior members within the Chaplains' Department are gracious and accepting of other chaplains' viewpoints. This also includes sharing my own experiences and views. This places the sharing of ideas as a force for change, despite feelings of vulnerability.

As part of ethics approval for my thesis, I was required to gain approval from both the Royal Army Chaplains Department (RACHD) and the University. In the former there was a process for approval. I was required to contact my 2RO (Second Reporting Officer), a senior chaplain within the department. On behalf of the Chaplain General (CG), he was able to approve my research in principle, but to finalise approval he wanted to see my research proposal that I had submitted to the University. After reading the proposal, he was content and supportive of my research. He suggested that I might submit a copy of the completed work to the CG. No further actions were requested by the 2RO. The University's process for ethics approval was centred on those who participated in my research. I found this a rigorous process but necessary, as it concerned the protection of my interlocutors. This included their approval of what I was researching and their continued satisfaction through my write-up process, by sharing my write-ups with them. This allowed them to read and reflect on what I was saying and that, in their views, it was an accurate reflection about what they had shared with me. Also, this reinforced their confidence that their anonymity was preserved. This included my reiteration to them that the storage of their ethnographies remained confidential by encryption. These ethical research requirements by the

University have been rigorous and have allowed me to be confident that I have maintained the highest level of confidentiality possible.

1.12.1 Nature and Purpose of Participant Observation

I have used participant observation. This reflects my active membership within the British Army as a service person and as a padre. It is therefore the most likely and accessible method that I would use. The purpose of this method has been to explore the qualitative aspects of service life for myself and my colleagues, especially in the context of living and working within a largely male-centred organisation. My place of field work has also been my place of work in which I have participated (Allen, 2010). There is little contention here if you are approaching the field of study as a researcher, new to a context. I would suggest that working in my field has been a personal challenge for me. I have had to step back and examine the military context and service personnel as a researcher rather than a participant (Tedlock, 1991; Moeran, 2009). For Tedlock, this becomes a place where narrative ethnography develops.

There has been a debate about the relationship between participant observation and ethnography. Often, ethnographic expression has been identified as an aspect of participant observation. A researcher can immerse themselves in a particular field through which ethnography is used to develop a deeper understanding of that field (Allan, 2006; Preissle and Grant, 2003). It can be argued that although I am a participant in my research, there is something about the use of ethnography that suggests I am not undertaking participant observation (Hockey and Forsey, 2020). This can be based on seeing participant observation as a more formal process of interviewing. During my research, I have interviewed others. I have used questions

that I have already thought about. However, the interviews have often taken the form of informal discussions in which spontaneous questions have arisen. At other times, I have observed others whilst also participating, from which the events and conversations have been recorded later. Here, keeping field notes has been so important as I reflect later about their meaning and importance (Papen, 2019). Yet the field notes have also taken on an ethnographic reflection, recording what others have said, reflecting on their experiences, as well as offering my own reflections. This stresses the importance of listening to what others are saying (Lareau, 2021). As with all data, there is a requirement for analysis. To understand what people may be saying at a deeper level of experience and feeling (Becker and Geer, 2003). This is especially true when my interlocutors have shared about the difficulties they have faced working in a male-centred organisation. In a way, participant observation has taken on a more intimate meaning. I am participating and observing. Yet I am also more of an observer, going beyond merely participating (Moeran, 2009).

I have been challenged about how I can continue to observe a world in which I am such a participant. I have been right there, at the cutting edge of the field (Parker, 2017). With this comes the challenge of being so close to what a person is studying, which can be an advantage for insight, whilst not always allowing for a wider understanding of that observable world. Also, my own reflections are closely bound to this world. I have had to think about what I am saying and to begin to challenge some of the constructed meanings about gender that I have simply accepted as true. To be a participant observer has therefore also taken on an auto-ethnographic approach (Whyte, 1994). Participant observation and ethnography have together been bound up not just with individuals but also with the military organisation itself. I have realised that a study of individuals, me included, can only be understood by how an organisation like the British Army, historically and contemporaneously, constructs meanings and impacts on individuals' behaviour (Woodside, 2016). At the coal face of

my observations, I have been able to observe events and to enrich these by analysis. To understand what masculinity can be within the military (Mackellar, 2013). Here, a challenge may arise as to the relationship between participant observation and ethnography. I have observed and written ethnographically. It could be that ethnography is something that has consumed my approach, into which participant observation has fitted (Sandiford, 2015).

The debate continues about the problems of maintaining an observational role as a participant. A question could be raised about whether qualitative research, as observation, is a valid tool for research. I think this is a somewhat dismissive position. I have valued the use of my qualitative approach to gain insights. Yet a challenge remains, as I have identified. This centres on a turbulent relationship between being a participant and whether, in this sense, a person can also observe enough to understand what is going on (Takyi, 2015). One suggestion is that it is only by stepping away that we can truly observe (Kite, 1999). Perhaps I have stepped away enough to realise my own position about gender roles, that I share the culture of traditional masculinity and the construction of roles more than I realised.

A final challenge in my research has been to ensure that ethics have been observed. This is a challenge of participant observation when using ethnographic data (Li, 2008). I have been aware of this prior to and throughout my research. At the outset, I have sought to ensure factors such as consent and privacy (Zahle, 2017). This has mainly concerned the use of data from my interlocutors, ensuring their anonymity. This has been challenging because I have included stories and views that offer insight, whilst ensuring a level of anonymity that does not compromise the individual (Stafford and Stafford, 1993). Insight is important, but not at a potential cost to another.

1.13 My Research Method: weaknesses and strengths

My main research method has been participant observation, with some non-participant observation. The former involved spending time in the field with my interlocutors. I spoke with them and shared encounters. However, this did not constitute a structured interview, informally or formally. We had a chance to chat as colleagues, with my interlocutors happy to answer any questions I had. Participant observation allowed my interlocutors and me an opportunity to encounter and reflect on events in the field. This was the opportunity to develop the ethnography. As mentioned, there are only a small number of female and male chaplains in my research. This thesis has relied on such ethnographic reflections of others and by me. As such, there may be a problem concerning the representativeness of these for the wider military community. This may be compounded by the ages and class background of those concerned, as already suggested. Another study could be conducted to test findings by using a more formal interview technique for many more service personnel. This could factor in more diverse age differences and class backgrounds. Ideas about gender could also be explored in more detail to understand any nuances of views related to age, sex, and other factors such as class. However, my research was not designed to be representative. The intention was primarily to tell the story of gender and diversity experiences from ethnographic reflections. I also wanted an opportunity to tell my story. Despite a criticism of being excessively subjective, telling a story may also provide valuable insights as to how someone experiences an environment or institution, such as the British Army. This can provide a unique insight into how people experience hyper/hegemonic masculinity at work.

One difficulty encountered in my research was the potential to reflect further with my interlocutors. This perhaps proved to be a weakness of a conversational

approach, not having a set of clearly laid out questions. Such questions may have allowed me to draw out further thoughts and feelings from my interlocutors. This suggests that making sense of experiences should not always be left to a more spontaneous approach. Nonetheless, I also wanted to have an open-ended approach, which did not limit the responses in any way. The issue of subjectivity is that ethnography runs the danger of becoming biased and unchecked. An important element for the researcher is to be reflective about their results. This critical approach is also to be aware of how the researcher can potentially influence the fieldwork findings (Marvasti and Gubrium, 2023). I also acknowledge that it is difficult to be completely unbiased, especially using a personalised ethnographic approach. The approach of ethnography has been an exciting venture for me. It stands in stark contrast to a more statistical, data-driven approach. I have liked ethnography for its participatory angle, drawing close to the experiences of my interlocutors, whilst also reflecting on my own experiences.

For me, a useful and interesting way of understanding the differences between quantitative and qualitative research methods is to identify the former as being about people understood as numbers and the latter about people understood as words. In this understanding, Bernard, for example, does not attempt to favour one approach over another but rather implies a complementary relationship (Bernard, 2006). I understand anthropology to be about unpacking the lived experiences of individuals, despite an issue of wider representation. A study of a small number of female and male chaplains in the British Army has necessitated a more in-depth qualitative approach.

Ethnography has also focused on the importance of individual experience that is rooted in larger contexts. It is the life story that can provide meaning to quantitative data (Laslett, 1999). This has seemed an appropriate approach, examining the

experiences of army chaplains within the various organisational contexts in which gender is played out, including the sending churches, the Royal Army Chaplains' Department, and the British Army more generally. Ethnography is therefore not about the study of individuals in isolation but within wider influencing contexts. The nature of the context is important and can focus on the influence of culture and practices on the individual. Unlike wider-based quantitative studies, statistics or a grand narrative is not sought in ethnographic research, but rather the individual is allowed to speak. There is not so much an emphasis on the idea of an objective understanding of the individual, as between person and organisation, but rather an understanding of relationality on how the individual understands the world around them. Rational ethnography can be defined as an understanding of the "mutual" relationships of interdependence (Becker in Jessor et al., 1996, p. 56). Part of this is also to understand how I, as a researcher, relate to those whom I am researching. It is about understanding what others are saying and making sense of their accounts. It is also about making sense of my own experiences.

My ethnographic approach in this thesis is to give priority to the different ethnographic voices within military contexts. I have presented an interaction of voices and explanations to help reveal experiences of military life. The inclusion of a diversity of academic voices, not all anthropological, has provided an alternative interjection. The military can be a closed world for many who remain outsiders. My explanations in relation to how the military operates are, in a sense, auto-ethnographic, as accrued working knowledge, to assist the outside reader.

1.14 Self-Reflection as a Researcher

As a military chaplain, I have now served within the department for over 14 years at the time of the completion of this research. I am both a participant and, I hope, an observer of the role in which I live and function. The British Army is a hugely all-consuming organisation. It feels more like a lifestyle, perhaps a calling, rather than simply a job clearly defined by specific hours of work. Sometimes there seems to be no clear demarcation between living and working, especially when on exercise or deployments, where service personnel live and breathe a way of military life. I am a member of the British Army and the RACHD. I am part of an organisation that I am observing and researching. This potentially brings its own challenges as I try to be impartial. I also recognise that I am not objectifying what I am observing but see myself as part of the situation. I try to be honest in my auto-ethnographic accounts. I accept that there will also be interpretation and bias. There will also be a degree of subjectivity and emotional expression. This does not make my reflections less valid. It is rather that they fall within a particular type of ethnography that is infused with personal feeling. This suggests that what I say can still be relevant and insightful. Within myself, I also recognise that bias can arise from who I am. I am a man and therefore reflect a masculinity. Like my middle-aged male interlocutors, I may reflect more of a traditional hyper/hegemonic masculinity than I am always aware of. I have also occupied the space of the established Anglican Church, the Church of England. This remains a patriarchal organisation (see 1.2 Literature Review) and may have influenced my view of gender roles of men and women.

For me, autoethnography has focused on an emphasis of my own experiences as I relate to the experiences of others within military contexts, both as “highly personalized accounts” (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). Here, it is clear that a more personal

expression is moving away from a purely objective and scientific approach of the facts, with its validity found in what auto-ethnography is about: human experience, including the personal as well as the subjective, and even being enabled to make statements of judgement about scenarios experienced. This may expose the it is also a researcher's bias; however, it is insightful for observing the researcher as a participant within these contexts.

1.14.1 Academic Storytelling

My research has focused extensively on the use of ethnographic material, reflecting on situations and experiences of my interlocutors and myself. My thesis has included a type of storytelling. It has an element of a memoir about it combined with and supported by wider literature providing it with an academic grounding beyond a series of stories. Storytelling is important in academic work, and I have sought to incorporate those elements. My aim is to present a series of stories, supported by academic literature, to help understand how masculinity is expressed and experienced in the British Army. There is a complexity to the British Army, like a meta-narrative and greater context, that can deeply influence the ways in which the characters behave. I have sought to develop an understanding of this, especially about traditional masculine expression. I have explained this as the past into the present. The British Army is about the inheritance of a traditional masculinity that continues to find expression in the present.

Central to my stories are my characters, my interlocutors, and myself as a character, drawing together the stories and making sense of them from my own experiences. This has hopefully made the research something people can relate to

and remember. Perhaps the reader can also relate to me, understanding my journey and what I have learnt about my own constructions and internalisations of masculinity. Within this thesis, like my interlocutors, I figure as a real person within the wider narrative. My characters express themselves in the military contexts in which they find themselves. This provides a deeper understanding of their storytelling. There is also an exploration and understanding of their roles as padres in the British Army, giving more depth to their interactions with other service personnel. It can then be argued that the qualitative data is taking on a more human and relatable aspect (Patton, 2015).

In the structuring of my thesis, I have aimed for clarity through the stories I tell. Like a novel, there has been a progression of stories around the theme of traditional masculine expression as the mainstream masculinity in the British Army. This has moved from defining masculinity and femininity, leading to self-reflection about my masculine constructions of gender, and rooting these expressions in the context of an established and patriarchal organisation. The qualitative research and narrative have hopefully become coherent through this structure. There has been an aim to engage the reader, whilst also stressing the significance of my research. An important point I have considered during my writing is to understand my un-militarised reader, so to better communicate what I am saying (Hyland, 2009). I appreciate that some of my readers may not be familiar with the workings of the British Army. It is often a hidden world to those on the outside. To make this world more accessible, I have explained certain terms that may be unfamiliar and have also explained how aspects of the British Army work, relevant to the stories I am telling. A large part of my writing has been about the inclusion of descriptions of the military contexts of my stories and exploring how these stories unfold for my interlocutors. This has enabled me to bring the stories to life with greater depth. This has included some vivid descriptions, especially the atmospherics of situations, whereby the reader can visualise the scene into which a narrative is enriched and develops (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

In my introduction I begin with a vignette, setting the scene through this auto-ethnographic expression. The introduction sets out the aim and direction that my thesis will take. My storytelling centres on aspects of masculinity that are traditional expressions in the military context. My aim at the outset is to interest the reader by what I am saying and to encourage them to delve more deeply into my writings, maintaining this approach throughout (Booth et al., 2016). The vignette theme is maintained throughout the thesis as a way of opening each chapter with a story that resonates with the stories that follow. I have used this approach to make each chapter more engaging for the reader as well as memorable (Riessman, 2008). The vignette is also a way of starting to build the story that follows. The use of language has been important here, at times offering suspense, as well as stories about how traditional masculinity is manifested. Here, effective storytelling is about the use of language and evoking a powerful image for the reader (Kreps, 2015). Also, the use of language and providing a picture of what is happening can have the impact of making abstract concepts more understandable, rooting them in the unfolding stories, making them more tangible (Mertens, 2015). The thesis develops as my stories develop, building ethnographically by insights into traditional masculinity. I have tried to engage the reader with stories that contribute to the overall story that the British Army is a largely male-dominated organisation where service personnel express traditional masculinity.

The end of my storytelling in the conclusion has been my attempt of bringing together the results of the various stories in the main body. This may be like an approach in a novel, offering a deeper understanding and a conclusion to the story (Thomas and Hodges, 2010). This has included a summary and possible research directions for the future. I have tried to make clear the significance of my research as an exploration of an under-researched area, that is, masculinity and the British Army. I have stressed that traditional masculine expression, rather than more diverse masculinities, is a key finding through the stories I have explored.

1.15 Structure of this Research Thesis

All my chapters have included ethnographic reflections from my interlocutors as well as my own. I have also included some reflections from academic literature. Sub-headings are identified in each chapter. These arise in the context of the ethnographic discussions. I open with contextualising gender expression within contexts that shape gender, especially the sending churches, the British Army, and the Royal Army Chaplains' Department (see Chapter 2). This is designed to identify and contextualise the places where gender is constructed. I have structured the research by first examining masculinities and what military masculinity looks like (Chapter 3). I then examine this in the context of femininities and what military femininity looks like (Chapter 4). I examine traditional masculinity as a dominant type through which other masculinities and femininities can be defined. In Chapter 5, I examine the normalisation of gender through the construction of female roles within the military. This is seeing a woman as a mother and a mother figure. I focus on the role of women as being seen as emotional providers in the military context. In Chapters 6 and 7, I unpack the idea of women and female chaplains as a gender minority in the military from the lived experiences of my female interlocutors. This is contrasted against the male majority and is considered in the context of the British Army as an historically male establishment (Chapter 6) and analysed in the contemporary context of a patriarchally-focused British Army (Chapter 7).

1.16 The Research Process

I have approached my research from the idea of discussing the voices of my interlocutors against the backdrop of specific contexts that shape gender. I have also

used academic literature as another voice. When thinking about areas to focus on, I have used literature to help shape my ideas, along with my own experiences and the experiences of my interlocutors. Regarding ideas about masculinity and what it is to be a man in the British Army, this is clearly a feature of the experiences of both male and female interlocutors. This has included what identity means in the British Army, being a man or a woman, and how this is expressed. The literature on masculinities explores this. There are also experiences about normalising and prescribing roles for women and men. I have developed this into ideas about the mothering role identified for women in a largely male-dominated organisation. Experiences of women as a minority are also explored. This emphasises the problems women face in a military world occupied by men in an historical establishment that continues to have a strong patriarchal identity.

Chapter 2. Three Contexts Shaping Gender

2.1 An Overview of Three Gender Contexts

We enter the mess into a medium-sized hallway. The blandness on the outside of the building is deeply contrasted with the inside. There is an almost palatial blend of silver on mahogany tables, and large paintings hang on the walls. All these men in senior officer rank are in their finest uniform, staring austere from their places of elevation and status in some bygone yet contemporary Victorianism. It feels like being transported into a former time: into a home for the stately rich or perhaps even a museum. Within an Officers' Mess, there is often what I understand to be a sense of the past into the present, where comrades of the past meet with us, almost calling out to us. The British Army reveres such history into the contemporary situation, and any mess is far more than a museum; it is a kind of timeless place in both appearance and values. On dinner nights, for instance, citations may be read about the gallantry of the fallen, traditional "mess dresses" are worn, unchanged for centuries, as classical music is played. We in the present become united with the great cloud of witnesses who heard such music and participated in such events over many years gone by.

I reflect on the mess as a living example of what a context can be like in shaping gender. This is an example of one context, the British Army.

This thesis is about chaplains, both male and female, in the British Army and there are three main contexts for my research: the sending churches, the British Army, and the Royal Army Chaplains' Department (RACHD). In this chapter, I will provide a brief overview to give an understanding of these contexts in which gender issues are

expressed. I begin with the Sending Churches as this is the context by which recruitment is made possible into the British Army and the Chaplains' Department. It is foundational and provides a context shaping gender that is further reinforced within military contexts. I would argue that the three contexts shaping gender are not exclusive to each other but share important similarities. That is, they are historical organisations in which traditional masculine expression continues to be expressed, especially in the military contexts of the British Army and the RACHD.

Here, the significance of history into the present is extremely important in the continuation of masculine expression. I would argue that the idea of a colonial masculinity in the nineteenth century can be applied to the contemporary British Army (Sinha, 1995). The British Army grew out of a colonial past and continues to echo something of this past in contemporary expression. An example of this is the hero worship, as experienced on dinner nights in the Officers' and Sergeants' Messes, which are often ritualised activities, breaking down an idea of the past just being the past (Holt and Thompson, 2004). The heroic man also becomes reinvented from the examples of the heroes of the past (Hockey, 2017). I would argue this encourages a spirit of conflict in soldiers today. Overall, there is a celebration of men by men, reinforcing a timeless gendered position of power (Griffin, 2018).

I suggest that an examination of the sending churches, especially the Anglican Church, points to a particular way of seeing women as being excluded from positions of authority and power (Fry, 2024). In his research, Fry has emphasised the importance of historical culture and practice for the continuation of exclusion for women in Anglican churches today. The past is more than the past in Anglican church expression, since a masculine culture continues (Page, 2008). It places men at the centre, almost as a club, as a fraternity that has been impervious to change. This suggests there is an Anglicanism that is so male-centred that female identity is

neglected (Jagger, 2023). This assumes that men hold positions of authority based on a biblical mandate. A position of complementarianism has been advocated, placing women in the position of offering support for men, rather than having their own sense of identity (Lockwood, 2021). This will exclude a more public role, as that exercised by male disciples. Conversely, women occupy positions that are less public, yet somehow supportive of men who occupy public roles. Women's roles can be viewed as supporting rather than leadership roles. Interpretation of the Bible has led to a long tradition of practice and doctrinal teaching reinforcing the patriarchal position of men within the institutional settings of church traditions. The Bible becomes an irrefutable authority for male leadership and control (Coleman, 2025). The ordination of women debate is a good illustration of this, with some vehemently opposed on both biblical and doctrinal grounds (Devereux, 2023). The complementarian position is played out here with women being seen as no more than accessories to men (Tilby, 2024). This is expressed in the everyday. For Tilby, it is a double standard, where male rather than female expression has greater authority. This is an argument based on experience. It also seems that all three contexts share a particular patriarchal culture that has excluded women from the centre of power. Yet women have also attempted to regain ground. The accusation of sexism has been levied, with a call to challenge this at every opportunity (Matthews, 2024). In part, this is about challenging traditional hermeneutics and producing an understanding that stresses female equality (Pilarski, 2010). This may include an understanding of the Bible as rooted within a particular male culture, leading to an unequal representation of women in the public domain. Also, challenge is about developing a critique of contemporary church culture. This will involve challenging largely male religious authority, highlighting structural endemic sexism (Chaves, 1999). An example of this is the suggestion that promotion continues to be limited for women in the Anglican Church (Fry, 2021). This highlights a problem. If this is challenged, it may provide a basis for beginning to change the gendered structure of leadership that has its roots in the history of the church.

Before examining the contexts that shape gender, it is important to recognise the significance of context in an ethnographic approach. Ethnography does not stand in isolation from the larger influence of context and multiple contexts that potentially influence human experiences. It is in these human contexts that meaning is often constructed, as individuals meet and make sense of the institutions in which they live and work (Goffman, 1959). This involves the construction of meanings between individuals and the influence that culture has upon them (Roper, 1994). This is pertinent to masculinity, and as Roper points out, the ethnographic world that individuals occupy. Here, the experience of and internalisation of masculine values becomes part of the ethnography of the person. I have heard it said on many occasions that the British Army “is its people.” Despite a uniform organisation, in the case of chaplains, there is a wide diversity of individuals who join the military, who “join up” from a variety of backgrounds and churches. I would suggest that an individual will enter the armed forces having been influenced in different ways by their own wider contexts. Influencing continues within the context of military life as individuals try to make sense of the world around them. I have heard it said this is a process of “militarisation.” In this thesis, masculinity is explored at the level of individual experience for chaplains, my interlocutors, and for myself within the various contexts of a patriarchal military organisation.

The ethnographic material in these chapters is an interplay between individual experience as content and the contexts in which these experiences are encountered. The British Army can seem like an all-consuming place to work. In my experience, this is akin to the idea of my calling to Christian ministry that, at times, feels more than simply a job. I have exercised a “calling,” I believe, within the masculine environment of the British Army. I began this calling within the Anglican Church, which has been identified as a male-gendered organisation (Green and Robbins, 2015). I have continued this calling within the British Army. I have been able to express a full and

satisfying career without worrying about personally addressing an inequality of promotion to leadership positions within the church and the military. I have not had to face a career that has been argued as potentially limiting for women (McDuff and Mueller, 2002). My calling at one level cannot be separated from the environment in which I live and work. My interlocutors, both female and male, also reflect this in the accounts of their own experiences within the military contexts. I would describe experiences in military contexts more as a way of life, more as a lifestyle. On top of this, I see a spiritual dimension applied to the human domain. Both spirituality and masculinity cannot be separated, as attested to in research about non-Western religious expressions (Ouzgane, 2013). This returns to the idea of the influence of culture and context on individual perceptions. This can be messy in the exercise of a perceived calling, with the challenges of distinct human expressions such as traditional masculinity. It can potentially challenge such a calling to be less than it could be, with masculine expressions that may potentially exclude others. This should not exclude a desire that men and women can grow together in the institutions they work in. bell hooks (2004) has this inspirational hope. Although this has been questioned as an ideal rather than an achievable reality, feminism points out that men thinking about feminism and equality may be misplaced regarding the more damning experiences that women have who live and work in male-dominated places (Beasley, 2019).

2.2 Sending Churches

The religious demographic of the RACHD was exclusively Anglican and Anglican male, as this was the only sending church until 1827. There have been scholarly works written, unpacking this comprehensive and rich history (Snape, 2008). This work illustrates the male world of military chaplaincy, with a history of male

participants and male leaders. It has inadvertently pointed out the masculine and male fraternal nature of the RACHD. This is a world that has drawn and continues to draw male practitioners, largely from the mainstream churches of the West. I would argue that the Anglican origins of the department are important for understanding a continuation of establishment expression into the contemporary era. This cannot be understood without referring to a gendered history. Fry (2024) points out that it is history that so powerfully expresses itself in the contemporary Anglican Church. This is a church that reflects a male leadership deeply rooted in both its historic and contemporary structures. History is therefore very important for understanding who we are.

Those from the Presbyterian church tradition were acknowledged as having a lay role from 1827, which did not become a commissioned role until 1858 for male ministers. This is a significantly later period, as the Department was first established in 1796 as the Army Chaplains' Department (ACHD). It reinforces the idea of there being an entrenched establishment that defined the Department, and perhaps continues to define the Department even now, suggesting a kind of hierarchy of Christian denominations with Anglicanism at the top. Sexism is not the exclusive domain of Anglicanism. It has been claimed that similar structures of masculine expression also exist in other protestant religious expressions (Bauman, 2023). This may be assumed as following a similar masculine and fraternal culture, emphasising a complementarian teaching that I have discussed. Women have been deliberately excluded, as in the ordination debate of the Anglican Church. This again reflects a narrow interpretation of hermeneutics, as I have already suggested. Feminism has provided a balance to historical practice, especially identifying church history as patriarchal history (Osiek, 1997). By a womanist approach, inclusivity has been stressed to provide for a more equal position of women today, whilst acknowledging the negative contribution of patriarchal history within churches (Martin, 1990). This has

allowed for a clearer understanding of past inequalities and the need for developing equality. Yet church hierarchy continues to be dominated by men across denominational boundaries. Roman Catholic chaplains entered commissioned service as early as 1836, followed by Methodist chaplains in 1881. Hence, as time progressed, the hierarchy of Christian denominations became more widely established. It has been highlighted that the Roman Catholic Church has a more open and totally exclusionary approach of denying women any position in its ranks (Maltby, 2010). As a church, it explicitly exemplifies a subjugation of women. Another development was an expression of early multi-faith presence, with the admission of commissioned Jewish chaplains from 1892, although multi-faith practitioners have continued to be a minority as commissioned chaplains. We currently have only one Jewish-commissioned chaplain and one who is Muslim. From all sending churches and other religious organisations, the gender has been exclusively male and is almost exclusively male today. It is also worth mentioning that as of 2024, non-religious organisations are now permitted as sending bodies to the RACHD. This will include those who work within humanist establishments.

There has also been wider Christian denominational recruitment of male ministers from the twentieth and especially into the twenty-first century. This has included the following “sending churches”: the Baptist Church from the various parts of the United Kingdom, Elim Pentecostal Church, Assemblies of God, Salvation Army, and the Free Church of Scotland. This has become an ever-growing list of sending churches (see British Army, who we are: Royal Army Chaplains’ Department, 2020). While this document has been published relatively recently, it is now out of date as the RACHD has widened its recruitment from non-Christian religious bodies. This has represented a movement away from the more mainstream established churches. The inclusion of women as British Army chaplains has only been a more recent phenomenon (since 2001). The argument raised about a more inclusive approach for

women being equal seems idealistic here. Although women are gaining rights, they remain a minority across the denominations of the RACHD. Other faith workers who serve the British Army, but who do not hold a British Army commission, are all male apart from one. She is a female Sikh religious leader who is also commissioned as an RAF chaplain. The Royal Air Force (14 Dec 2018) reported online about the “First Military Sikh Chaplain and Muslim Padre graduate from officer training” with these words: “In a first for the Royal Air Force and the British Military.” Faith leaders who have a non-commissioned status are employed through the civil service as paid senior employees and not as Ministry of Defence employees. It can be argued here that the male gender context extends beyond the Christian sending churches, reflected in only one religious civil servant being female out of a total of six. The first female minister who became a full-time commissioned chaplain in the RACHD was named as the Rev’d Juliette Hulme (Harris, 2012). She came from the established Anglican Church, the Church of England. This is perhaps unsurprising as a female lead since the “established” church ministers had constituted the almost exclusive male presence within the department. Her recruitment may also have been a result of the acceptance of women into priestly holy orders in the Church of England in the 1990s. The authority for a woman to exercise a priestly role by the consecration of bread and wine may be argued as a reason for women to be admitted into the British Army as chaplains, for instance, being enabled by the established church (Church of England) to undertake full ministerial duties. The ordination of women was essential for allowing women to apply and enter military service. It proved and continues to prove divisive. I have already covered some of the arguments. On one side of the debate was and still is the rejection of the ordination of women on scriptural and doctrinal grounds, including a reading of hermeneutics that places the authority of men above women (Giles, 2015). On the other side, there is a feminist rejection of this position as a constructed view about men and women as being distinct and different (Pope-Levison, 2012). Such a view is seen as a justification for different gender roles. For those Christian

denominations of a more non-conformist tradition, Holy Communion may be regarded as a less central and less celebrated aspect of Christian expression. There is a greater emphasis on the word of God, thereby negating the need for full priestly status to be a condition of chaplaincy service as a commissioned officer in the British Army. Besides, such churches in their tradition may not distinguish the priestly and non-priestly orders of ministers, preferring a wider view of a priesthood of all believers. It was Luther who claimed that "In fact, we are all consecrated priests through Baptism" (Luther, 1539, Vol. 6, p. 407). Nonetheless, the term "sending church" is crucial here as authority for the Christian minister to serve within the British Army as a commissioned chaplain, irrespective of traditional church practices. In the case of the Anglican Church, I received a licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury giving authority from my sending church to serve as a military chaplain.

The matter of belief within Christian understanding is very important when examining any Christian denomination or church in a gender context. Often, there is an inherent belief within Christian practice that the female has a particular role, as defined within scriptural tradition. Many examples in scripture suggest an unequal power relationship between men and women, as well as the normalisation of gender roles and practices. For example, 1 Timothy 2:12 says, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet" (Revised English Bible). Thus, women may be identified as undertaking subservient roles in relation to men, such as the example in Luke 7:36-49 of the woman washing Jesus' feet. From a feminist reading, this suggests that women may perform more domesticated tasks, whilst it is the man who has a more public, authoritative and leadership role. For example, gendered housework was identified by Oakley (1974). In her work, men and women perform distinctive roles, with women in the home and men out at work. This exists in the institution of the family. I would argue this extends to institutionalised church settings. This returns to the complementarian argument,

which has created a gender hierarchy where men are superior to women, rather than women complementing men (Lockwood, 2021). Interestingly, biblical truths are sometimes considered above the influence of culture. They take on a status that cannot be questioned (Coleman, 2025). From discussions with some of my male colleagues in the Chaplains' Department, this has pointed to a divine distinction between men and women in the allocation of roles. It is not seen as a reflection of cultural practices defined within patriarchal society, or of being influenced to think of men and women's roles as learned and normalised behaviours. This ignores the influence that culture can have and seems to place gender roles into some kind of divine vacuum in the church. There has been much reconsideration about the problematic issue of defining hermeneutics without a consideration of cultural and social factors. Here, it has been argued that a space exists for a new hermeneutical understanding that translates into an argument for greater female equality in church life (Pilarski, 2010). At present, an argument for irrefutable biblical truths to justify gender division and difference avoids more difficult and intricate questions about the relationship between the divine and its mediation through the influence of cultural factors, including religious institutions. There is an argument about sexism here, allowing men to justify sexist beliefs from a hermeneutical argument, effectively ignoring their own position of bias (Nason-Clark, 1987). Within the religious institution, this may be expressed as opposition to change, with scriptural and doctrinal arguments espoused by the male leadership of the church (Sani and Reicher, 2000). Despite an argument that men can be less antagonistic about new expressions, especially in relation to a more traditional masculine expression (Bartky, 1998), men may continue to not understand or even be antagonistic towards a feminist understanding of the extent of female inequality in society (Beasley, 2019). There may be new expressions that lead to a re-establishment of an entrenched masculine position (Konopka et al., 2021).

Arguments in favour of distinct roles between men and women, justified scripturally, doctrinally and theologically, suggest that God makes the decisions. It has been cited that Christ chose only male disciples. This is a major argument against the ordination of women (Devereux, 2023). Therefore, only men should be ordained, following this clear biblical mandate, justified at a doctrinal and theological level. This view ignores the fact that women in ancient Jewish society did not have a public voice and therefore would not have been chosen for such a role. This fits in with the idea of a traditional expression of masculinity in which men, and especially the alpha male, embody certain behaviours that may be expressed publicly (Russell, 2021). I would include the presence of the voice in the public domain, and especially the use of vocality in speech to make a point. Russell (2021) also stresses the importance of language that functions to reinforce a masculine position that can be seen as traditional masculinity. I am reminded of the many displays of public speaking that Jesus delivered, such as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5). The device of rhetoric in speech has been argued as a means of masculine expression (Connolly, 2007). Would a woman have achieved the same impact at that time and place? It enabled Jesus to secure himself in the public domain. It has been argued that the subjugation of women is a product of a patriarchal reading of history where men have been the dominant and authoritative presence in societies (Martin, 1990). Furthermore, stories of women in the Bible, particularly those in the New Testament, appear to be very much in a supportive role to Jesus, such as those who gathered at the cross, as somehow subservient. In John's gospel, it is the male figure of the beloved disciple who is instructed by Jesus on the cross to look after his mother as a son would, to take her into his household (John 19: 26-27). The complementarian of the church would not struggle with this. Yet the use of scripture in this way has been condemned as a justification for reproducing sexual inequality in the church of the past and the church of today (Giles, 2015).

There is a continuation of normalised gender distinctions within the institutional contexts of churches. There have been clear rules reinforced within some mainstream churches, especially the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches, where women have been excluded from certain roles, especially the priestly role. This returns to the idea of the woman as an accessory to the man (Tilby, 2024). It will always be dressed up as a hermeneutical justification, avoiding an obvious critique of misogyny (Nason-Clark, 1987). Yet there is a call to identify such misogyny and to call it out, to challenge and to undermine it. Along with this is an intention to re-dress the sexist structural issues in the various churches that are reinforced as a male fraternity (Matthews, 2024). I have experience working in Anglican churches where women have been allocated to roles such as running the refreshment table after a church service. Such clarity of distinctive gender roles is identified by some female chaplains in this thesis. This is contrasted with the allocation of male roles within church settings and the idea I put forward in this thesis of sacred spaces for men to the exclusion of women. They are the places where it is taboo for women to function in a position of equality with men (Douglas, 2002). It is a level of sacredness established in historical practice that continues to be expressed in the contemporary (Stornig et al., 2021). These are the gendered sacred spaces. They are found within religious institutions that differentiate between men and women, delineating where each can be and what each can do (de Haardt, 2017). It is not by accident that within church traditions there is an exclusion of women and an inclusion of men, dependent upon roles. Often, it is the man in the public sphere and the woman in a background supporting role. This has been understood as an endemic sexism within churches, and especially the Anglican Church (Pillay, 2013). There is a call here to challenge this sexist behaviour, masquerading as a respectable theological position. In my experience, all such churches have been of a high Anglican Church tradition where both men and women are identified into certain divinely ordered roles (Devereux, 2023). It can be argued that it is church male leadership that helps to support the perpetuation of church male

leadership, additionally with the use of theology and scripture. This is supported in the view of the Anglican Church as a male fraternity (Page, 2008). This demonstrates an historical expression of patriarchy within the Anglican Church that continues into the present (Fry, 2024) and it perpetuates the sexist practice of relegating women to the sidelines. When I was in training to become a priest, I had a tutor who was adamant that New Testament scripture justified the non-priestly status of women in the church. For him, a woman was responsible for more domestic tasks as an example of Christian service.

2.3 British Army

2.3.1 The Historical Army as a Context Shaping Gender

An historical perspective is necessary if we are to appreciate the importance of the overall development of the British military. This section highlights how history has contributed to what the British military looks like in the contemporary era. This examination starts with an understanding of medieval developments, then progresses into the seventeenth-century movement, which first established the British Army, and then to developments beyond this into the current era. As part of this history, there is also a history of gender in the military. As with the sending churches, a similar situation has existed and continues to exist where women find themselves within an organisation that is dominated by men, who are united around a male identity (Murray, 2023). Although this argument is taken from an analysis of monastic organisations, it reflects a situation where men live and work almost exclusively. This stresses that men display certain male behaviours that highlight their masculine status within an organisation (Russell, 2021). It relates to individual behavioural traits that could be called aspects of being hyper masculine. Yet this can also be understood within the

larger influence of culture, at a broader hegemonic level that defines the institution and influences the individual (Simpson, 1994). Again, the relationship between the social actors and a sense of institutionalised culture are important for the construction of meaning, as Goffman (1959) emphasised. This refers to total institutions like the military that are dominated by a sense of uniformity of behaviour. This can be seen as a culture embodying the individual to express masculine forms which in turn reinforces the masculine culture (Robinson, 2020).

The army, specifically the army of England and not the British Army as it is called today, has a very long history dating from before the Norman Conquest (Prestwich, 1994). I would argue it could also be called a history of the army of men, with no fighting women serving in the ranks until the contemporary era. This could be described as a hegemonic masculinity in which men celebrated what it is to be men (Hinojosa, 2010). Here, military history was a deeply rooted gendered history. This army consisted of both troops from the King's household and all men of free status who were able to bear arms. Significantly, after 1066, the Normans established a two-tier military organisation consisting of infantry and mounted troops, the antecedents of infantry and cavalry regiments in the contemporary British Army. Furthermore, the use of archers became more important for clearing the way for infantry advancement on the battlefield, as in the Battle of Crecy (1346). Modern artillery support by the delivery of long-range missiles can be traced back to the archer's role. Not dissimilar to some contemporary practices, Prestwich (1994) also points out that mercenaries were utilised in addition to the formal military, such as in the Wars of the Roses (1455-85).

The English Civil War period in the seventeenth century was important for the Cromwellian establishment of a "standing army" in 1645, ready and prepared to deliver a response (Roy, 1994). The British Army today is also a standing army that can respond to a wide variety of situations related to war and humanitarian support. A view

has been put forward that with the development of the military, there has been a development of more gender diversity, including more diverse expressions of masculinity, as well as the incorporation of female presence and expression (Higate, 2003). Yet this negates the importance of a strong historical influence of hegemonic male culture on individual male expression. Military men continue to display certain behaviours within a traditional masculine culture (Hearn, 1998). There is also a suggestion that masculine expression continues in the women who serve. For example, aggression and physicality displayed by women in the military can be identified as an expression of aggression displayed by men (Lavin, 2012). This suggests that women do not have their own female identities, with some of their behaviours being defined as masculine (Schippers, 2007). A fragment of the Cromwellian force continued to exist under Charles II from 1660 until after the Glorious Revolution (1688-89), when the Bill of Rights (1689) gave parliament the autonomy to control the army (Conway, 2021). This remains extant today. The British Army dates to 1707, as a formally recognised organisation, when land forces adopted the name British Army, resulting from the Acts of Union. These Acts are more generally about unification, with the creation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, in which the British Army came to be defined as a single land force. This stands in contrast to a divided gender presence in the military where men are present and women are not. This has been defined as an inheritance from a long practice of male presence in the military (Griffin, 2018). This has not allowed for a more inclusive presence of women in the contemporary British Army. It is men who continue to hold power and to define what happens. The Acts of Union can be seen as multi-faceted, through which England and Scotland developed degrees of military unification in different ways (Rose, 1996). However, military forces were formed in 1660 during the Restoration. With further legal statutes, a standing army during peacetime, ready for activation, was established through the Bill of Rights and the Claim of Right Act (1689). Historically, the British Army had two clear expressions of force: those who were serving as a land force,

defined as cavalry and infantry, and those who also served in a naval capacity, notably the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers. From 1855, these other military specialisations became part of a unified British Army.

The British Army continued to develop in size during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to meet its overseas demands to maintain a colonial empire. Colonialism represents the spread of the British Empire, establishing territory and control throughout the world. Research has suggested that colonialism, as in the British Army, was a distinctive presentation that included a traditional masculine expression (Sinha, 1995). This included aspects of both a hegemonic and cultural expression of world dominance, and with traits of hyper-masculinity, such as physicality. I would argue that such physicality continues to be expressed in the men of the British Army today, as required in recent times to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan.

With the development of the British Army came a move to increase the professionalism of this fighting force, as with the introduction of formal training, although wealthy individuals with little military proficiency were able to purchase their officer commission, a practice discontinued in the nineteenth century (Conway, 2021). Even today, there is a recognition of class in the chapel of the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, the place where individuals train to become officers in the British Army. Plaque references identify the "Gentleman Cadet," so-called up to the first part of the twentieth century, who have fallen in conflicts, such as in the First World War. Here, class status existed with the purchase of commissions. In the British Army today, class continues to be significant as a cultural expression by the men who serve. In this sense, class is undeniably significant as a defining characteristic of Western societies both historically and contemporarily (Bourdieu, 1984). Here, there is a suggestion that class becomes the person, and the person becomes the class. The British Army can be defined as deeply rooted in a traditional class structure that continues to exist. As

in the study by Friedman and Laurison (2019), there are definable characteristics that distinguish class in contemporary Western society. This includes such factors as schooling and social connections. Within cavalry regiments, a hierarchy exists where officers are often educated at the top public schools and progress into careers in the city once they have left the military. There may also be class behaviours that manifest in distinctive ways within the military, as nuanced expressions of masculinity. Class, as working class and middle class, or upper class, may each display characteristics that could reflect behaviours of men within a military context (Morgan, 2005). For example, in the Officers' Mess I have noticed how much the idea of the gentleman seems to be emphasised. This may denote styles of language and dress. There may also be a notion of a man from a privileged society becoming an Officer who is expected to act in a gentlemanly way (Arnold, 2011).

The British Army's operational size was greatly increased during the periods of the First and Second World Wars. An in-depth as well as personal account of the vicissitudes of the British Army for this period is provided by Field Marshal Lord Carver (Carver, 1988). This seems to be very much an expression of an officer gentlemen who speaks of a British Army that is in a process of definition and refinement. After 1945, its size significantly diminished as colonial occupation ceased in many overseas locations. A major focus of a standing army was established in Europe as the British Army of the Rhine after the Second World War. This is a period in British history where new developments can be seen as co-existing with more traditional beliefs and practices. Despite social changes, it has been argued that in the 1950s, masculinity and femininity continued in a more traditional sense of men and women having distinctive roles (Gilbert, 2005). I would argue that this was and continues to be expressed within the British Army. Conscription ceased in 1960, leading to further reductions in staffing. With relocation from territories around the world, a system of consolidation and management occurred where the British Army came fully under the

control of the Ministry of Defence (1964) and then in 1972 it was established under the Headquarters United Kingdom Land Forces (Dannatt, 2016). Subsequently, the British Army has been reduced in strength, with capacity increasingly focused on weaponry and the use of technology.

2.3.2 The Contemporary British Army as a Context Shaping Gender

The culture of the British Army may be compared with the culture of the sending churches in the sense that there is a strong patriarchal tradition of normalising gender roles. This reflects a complementarian perspective where women are regarded as having a supporting role to men (Lockwood, 2021). This was clearly expressed in the Women's Royal Auxiliary Corps (WRAC), which was disbanded in 1992. This allowed women to serve in the British Army in a supporting role. This is a recent history, with a view that women did not have an equal status. A critique by feminists of the complementarian position has been to stress and reject patriarchal history (Osiek, 1997). This will involve establishing a new culture of understanding and incorporating an inclusivity of women in places where men have dominated (Martin, 1990). As with church culture, an approach of confronting and calling out inequality can be stressed for the military. This is about challenging sexism (Matthews, 2024). It may exist at both the individual and structural levels of an organisation. The latter will reflect the leadership of the organisation, whether in the church or the military, and their openness to implementing new ideas (Chaves, 1999). In the military, as in the church, past beliefs and practices continue to be expressed in the present. This can be identified as a history dominated by male presence that has led to a perpetuation of belief and practice that is highly masculine in a hegemonic sense (Fry, 2021). Such beliefs and practices become part of the expression of those who serve in the military.

It may also be difficult to define belief and practice other than a sense that the male-dominated organisation is masculine (Page, 2008). This is deeply rooted as both an historical and contemporary masculinity (Jagger, 2023).

This masculinity is explored in the chapters that follow, emphasising the presence of a dominating hyper/hegemonic masculinity. This includes a strong male identity and the expression of prescribed roles for men and women. Oakley (1994) identified these roles in a domestic context. I argue that the British Army can be compared with a family in the sense that there are roles and positions that people occupy within the family, as there are within the British Army. Gender differentiation is justified at an individual level and then reinforced through an historical culture of maleness.

Three aspects to the organisational structure of the British Army relate to the idea of there being a context shaping gender: the historical precedence of regiments, the hierarchical structure of rank, and the existence of specialisms.

Regiments and antecedent regiments continue to be identified within the amalgamation of newly formed regiments and are recognised in an order of precedence. If such antecedent regiments are older than others within a regiment, the older regiment is given greater recognition for its historicity. This especially applies to cavalry and infantry antecedent regiments and regiments that have existed for the longest period. This stresses how important history is in contemporary military practice. It is as if history is no longer history but an inherited practice for today. The British Army is a place where culture is perpetuated in those who serve by internalising the norms and values of the organisation (Robinson, 2020). This may influence the practice of operational efficiency, as a close-knit male fraternity that identifies as one and works together (Page, 2008). In my experience, this may be emphasised at events

such as the playing of a regimental or “corps march” at dinner nights. This becomes a common experience for members of the group. The earlier the regiment or corps, the earlier the march is played, represented by the presence of specific military personnel. The RACHD’s adopted march is the Prince of Denmark, written around 1700. As the “Department” was formed in 1796, the playing of this march can occur early in the proceedings of an Officers’ Mess dinner night, compared with those of other regiments or corps. British Army personnel have been exclusively male in the historical makeup of cavalry and infantry regiments, as well as the RACHD, with a similar gender makeup found within artillery and engineering regiments. In recent years, a more diverse gender expression of male and female has developed within logistical regiments, although female presence overall remains relatively small. The presence of male rather than female is clearly expressed in such places as the Officers’ Mess, where paintings of past leaders and male heroes often adorn the walls. Citations may be read as a celebration is given to the fallen. Historically and contemporarily, the dominance of male presence continues. It is in the presence of the hero that is especially significant as an enactment of history into the present (Holt and Thompson, 2004). This represents a hegemonic masculinity in the sense of a culture of the military, which becomes inculcated in those who are present, celebrating the heroes. This adds to a sense of the male fraternity within the British Army.

The hierarchical structure of rank is also an important gender consideration for masculinity. The structure of the British Army, from private soldier, through to non-commissioned Officer ranks, and Officer ranks to the most senior of positions, is primarily and almost exclusively occupied by male serving personnel. I have been constantly reminded of this fact as I have observed the gender makeup of the many military meetings I have attended. Due to so few females serving, promotions are likely to go to men and consequently will perpetuate male seniority and leadership. Fundamentally, I would argue that in service life there is a need to address the lack of

females who join. There appears to be a perpetuation of and perception about the military as being inherently male, a place where females feel unable to participate. Masculinity in this system is unlikely to be undermined when those of the male fraternity are promoted into positions of leadership and decision-making (Page, 2008). A male culture is difficult to change when it is established in the hegemonic makeup of the military hierarchy where men continue to think and act in hyper masculine ways (Hearn, 1998). This is a systematic and individual issue for men in leadership positions within an organisation that can be responsible for perpetuating an established traditional view (Chaves, 1999). This becomes problematic when, through this leadership, women are not encouraged to join. This became clear from some of my findings about difficulties in recruiting female chaplains who identify the British Army as a male organisation, a man's world. This is the persona it presents. The hierarchical rank structure itself is not the problem, but the lack of female presence is, where hierarchy then only serves to reinforce the military as a male organisation. Unless the British Army establishes more female representation in leadership, it seems likely that female recruitment will be limited.

Much of the British Army is definable within a specific gender context of maleness and masculinity. This is the dominant culture of a specific traditional masculinity that has been described as hegemonic (Connell, 2005). The typification for this is the alpha male which stands in contrast to other alternative masculine expressions, such as the beta or incel male (Ging, 2019). Although Higate (2003) has claimed a development of different masculinities in military culture, I argue this does not reflect the current masculine expressions found in the British Army today. There may be an issue with Connell, who provides too much of an overarching term of hegemonic that fails to consider more complex expressions, even though there is a multiplicity of dominant masculinities (Coles, 2009). In fairness to Connell, she recognises a need for a consideration of diverse factors that may lead to different and

more complex expressions (Connell, 2001). This affirms a general view that no definition can provide a complete understanding of human behaviours and that it acts as a starting point (Waling, 2018). However, I would argue that the characteristics of a traditional masculinity are often expressed by men in the British Army. This may be called hegemonic, hyper, and traditional. It may differ between individuals but appears as a feature in one form or another.

If there were a more diverse gender makeup within the structures of the British Army, then this could begin to have a future impact on a wider expression beyond a traditional masculine expression. Perhaps the male culture of the fraternity could be undermined. This remains to be seen. Few specialisms within the military undermine the current gender demographic in favour of men. An example is the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC). There are more women who serve in the military nursing role than are found in more traditional areas of service in the British Army, such as in cavalry and infantry regiments. Women can now also serve in combat roles, marked by a change in the law, although numbers remain very small. I have met only a very small number of serving females who have expressed an interest in such a role and in undertaking the arduous training. As with the RAMC, various other specialisations are more likely to have a less disproportionate balance between male and female service personnel, including those in veterinary and dentistry roles. Whilst on my Professionally Qualified Officer (PQO) course at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, there were a few individuals in training from these specialisms, all of whom were female. My own experience from my training at Sandhurst is that of greater female representation on this course than on the standard entry course for officers at Sandhurst. I would argue that the representation of women in specific roles reflects a traditional gender divide between men and women in society (Parsons, 1959). This is a highly traditional view. Oakley (1974) has observed a continuation of gender role division in nuclear families. The claim of conjugal roles existing between men and

women domestically, as argued by Willmott and Young (1993), was rejected by Oakley. I would argue the British Army may well reflect a more traditional understanding of gender roles that have been adopted into the military, where many women act as support staff to those who serve. This can be applied to an idea of nursing where women offer medical and emotional support to service personnel. This is seen in Parsons (1959), who argued for the role of women supporting emotionally, contrasted by the practical support offered by men. I argue that the British Army is like a family. In this family, men and women play certain roles, constructed in a traditional understanding of the distinctive roles of men and women. Here, females are also absent. It has been suggested that men may also offer support to each other as part of a hegemonic masculine expression in the military (Brandth and Kvande, 1998).

2.4 Royal Army Chaplains' Department (RACHD)

The "Department" has been formally recognised since its inception in 1796 as the Army Chaplains' Department (ACHD), becoming the Royal Army Chaplains' Department by "Royal" prefix in 1919. This was awarded because of First World War gallantry and granted by King George V. Snape (2008) provides a detailed history of the RACHD, charting its development throughout. Yet nowhere is there a consideration of the lack of female chaplains as a gender issue. This is an underdeveloped area of analysis when considering the RACHD. 1919 marked a highlight in the history of the Department. The leadership by the Chaplain General and those under his command has remained unchanged, along with the fact that he and all very senior chaplains have remained male. Arguments have already been used in this chapter and are worth stressing again. This refers to the influence of history on the formation of a Christian religious body like the RACHD (Fry, 2024). It is a long history that continues into the

present. It is a history of an organisation that is male-centred, and male-led. Also, the idea of a strong male fraternity applies well here as the RACHD was composed entirely of men until the last 20 years, whilst at the time of writing this thesis, there were only 7 full-time female padres out of a department of 135 regular padres (Page, 2008). It was an organisation entirely Anglican in its early religious makeup and has largely remained so ever since. Jagger (2023) has argued that the Anglican Church has a deeply embedded masculinity. This argument can be extended to the RACHD as an example of an established, largely Anglican body that continues to exist unchanged as a sub-organisation that operates with a strong masculine leadership structure.

I would argue that much that has been said about the church and masculine presence can be claimed about the RACHD. This is largely because the organisation historically and contemporarily remains mainly Anglican. Even when other churches are sending their ministers, the gender makeup of the Department attracts many of the same arguments covered earlier in this chapter. This includes the claim that the RACHD is complementarian in its view about the supporting role of women. There were madres who, acting in a supporting role, reflected the general idea that women offer a supportive role through the Women's Royal Auxiliary Corps. It was by the Ordination of Women that women could serve in the Department. The debate continues in several churches, and especially the Anglican Church, about hermeneutical interpretation and whether women should be ordained deacons and priests. As shown, there are those who oppose this path and those, especially feminists, who put forward robust arguments in favour of unrestricted ordination emphasised inclusivity and a new reading of scripture. Claims of sexism at individual and institutional levels can also be levied against a Department that has so few women who serve. This also returns to my view that hegemonic masculinity as a culture is being played out as hyper-masculine expressions of behaviour.

I would argue that the RACHD cannot be examined in isolation when it comes to gender. It must be considered in relation to the wider gender makeup of the British Army, itself being part of a larger patriarchal structure. This suggests that the RACHD is one part that constitutes the complexity of the British Army, which is also made up of other parts (Durkheim, 1984). I would argue that its various parts are unified by a common patriarchal culture. I have already suggested that the British Army is historically and contemporarily masculine, expressed as a fraternity of men. From a study of wider chaplaincy, especially outside of military contexts, chaplaincy in general has several aspects in common. Chaplaincy has been argued as fundamentally about the application of an ethical understanding that considers other people's needs (Nageswaren et al., 2022). Although focusing on health care chaplaincy, there is an emphasis here on people. This can be applied to multiple chaplaincy contexts. This will include an exercise of chaplaincy in the specific public contexts in which it can be expressed (Swift et al., 2015), It also includes various and complex expressions of spirituality. Yet a requirement for a spirituality that considers gender needs has not been widely considered. I would argue there is a lack of ethical understanding about the roles and experiences of women in the British Army. It has been argued that culturally sensitive approaches are required in the various contexts of chaplaincy, such as in health care. However, there does not appear to be a challenge to the culture of the organisation in which chaplaincy is expressed, in our case, the military (Redman, 2024). At present, an emphasis on military chaplaincy comparative to other chaplaincies has emphasised the unique military expression of bravery exercised by men in situations of battle (Coulter and Legood in Swift et al, 2015; Totten in Swift et al., 2015). This reinforces the prevalent view that the British Army is a place where men do battle. In this sense, it is patriarchal. The British Army is a man's world, as evidenced by some of the comments of my female interlocutors. The culture within the British Army and the RACHD, it can be argued, is patriarchal. This is significant because culture can become internalised by those who serve (Goffman, 1959). This

is partly about conformity and people wanting to fit into an organisation. In a military context, this returns to the idea of a heroic man whose status in the military amongst his men is cemented by his heroic actions, especially on the battlefield (Hockey, 2017). I would suggest most men who enter the military desire to be accepted within this definable organisation of war. They conform to the rules of the organisation to become accepted (Kravel-Tovi, 2017). This may include the internalisation and militarisation within the individual of a patriarchal culture. I would argue this applies as much to the military man as it does to the military chaplaincy man.

A distinction is often drawn between men and women, both within the British Army and within the RACHD. I have seen this at work with female ministers and other serving females who have taken on the role of baking cakes for military events. Alternatively, men are represented on the rugby pitch and other similar venues. bell hooks (2004) has argued that men and women can work together to break down patriarchy. I would argue that if this is to happen anywhere, it could happen in military chaplaincy, which may profess an ethically and culturally sensitive approach. This does not avoid the problem of complementarianism and hermeneutics that can justify women's unrepresentativeness as something divine and equal. Furthermore, there appears to be disagreement about the extent to which men can understand what women face in a patriarchal society (Beasley, 2019). If change is to happen, it is perhaps a required change at structural levels where a presence of women in the female leadership of the RACHD can begin to challenge a dominant male culture.

Chapter 3. The Male Chaplain: Masculinities

3.1 Introduction

My ego was especially enlarged on one occasion when I appeared in a military gym for a regimental PT session, and I heard various reactions. One individual shouted, “Go on, Padre. You can do this,” whilst another commented, “This Padre’s nails. I wouldn’t mess with him.” I think it was because they knew my interest and practice in martial arts. Yet there was also something distinctly masculine about the charged atmosphere and what was being conveyed. My activities were being approved of in a military context, and I was convinced they would not have been so welcome in a parish scenario with a group of parishioners. Near the end of the session, a soldier said to me, “Excellent work, Padre. You’re a hard man.” He could have been joking, but I felt that my sense of masculinity was affirmed, and it felt good.

This chapter will explore various masculinities, with the identification of a traditional masculinity that I argue is the prevalent type of male expression within the British Army. I also argue that this type of masculinity, as hegemonic and hyper, is also defined in relation to the behaviours of male chaplains. It may also determine where male and female chaplains can exercise their pastoral ministries. Perhaps women are not welcome in all the spaces occupied by men. I acknowledge that there may be a continuing problem of definition when it comes to understanding what traditional masculinity can be. Connell (2005) set a standard when hegemonic masculinity was defined. In the Introduction, I have already defined characteristics for this hegemonic type. It manifests itself as a cultural expression within individuals as hyper-masculinity. Yet difficulties arise because of the potential fluidity around expression. Not all

expressions are present in an individual, and how these are expressed may vary between individuals. Queer Theory recognises that there is a diversity of human behaviours, leading to varieties of masculine expressions that may be difficult to define (Scheibelhofer and Monteriescu, 2023). It has been argued that greater fluidity of measurement is required to recognise patterns of behaviour beyond a simplistic understanding of hegemonic male expression (Moller, 2007). This may also prove problematic. With more categories potentially being introduced, what hegemonic masculinity can be may become increasingly blurred (Goedecke, 2024). Categorisation will become counter-productive for understanding. Connell recognised that hegemonic masculinity, as a concept, is a place to begin to identify masculinities (Connell, 2001). She builds on this idea, introducing multiple factors to explain why traditional hegemonic expression may diversify, especially the influence of gender power relationships (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). I would argue that men are dominant over women in the military, and therefore, a more traditional masculinity usually prevails. This dominant form is useful as a major influence for understanding what traditional masculinity may be without allowing it to overshadow a clearer understanding of emerging forms (Siedler, 1994). This may lead us to conclude that there are perhaps several overlapping dominant masculine expressions that each contain similar characteristics of behaviour (Coles, 2009). I would argue that in the military environment there are alternative but consistent patterns of a dominant masculinity that I would call hyper and hegemonic. This is why I use these terms. I would argue that a shift to multiple masculinities that contain some common characteristics does not undermine the basic argument that a hegemonic masculinity continues in some form (Ghail, 1996). I would not argue, unlike Nayak and Kehily (2008), that a much greater range of masculine expression is emerging, reflecting a diversity away from a dominant hegemonic form. I have not seen this at work within the British Army.

3.2 Expressing Traditional Masculinity

I can recall from personal experience many scenarios where male interactions have resulted in near or actual physical contact. Those who have been serving in the army longer than myself, often referred to as “the old and the bold,” have entertained me with insights about the old army; a time and a place where men could be men (women not featured, or so it seems), before the introduction of what they saw as some rather invasive human rights regulations and practices. The stories have often evolved around regular and random fights breaking out, either preceding significant quantities of alcohol or as a way employed by “seniors” to teach new recruits lessons on how to behave. It seems that when an issue required an ultimate resolution, a fight or at least hitting somebody was perceived to be the answer – a solution to all problems.

The modern army, if we can call it this, is no longer allowed to continue such practices, but as some tell me, it still goes on “behind closed doors.” Sometimes, not even behind closed doors. I remember once witnessing a fight breaking out in “the ablutions” (toilets) in an Officers’ Mess, between courses of a formal dinner, between several officers in the regiment. “Mess dress,” the uniform of formal dinners unchanged for centuries in its style, was readjusted before returning to a grand room, filled with silver and candles adorning the mahogany dinner table.

It was on one evening, whilst partaking in a social gathering with a male colleague (a fellow chaplain), that we encountered a fight scenario between some members of a regiment and some members of the public, often called “civvies” by serving military personnel. This is often used as a disparaging term for those other people who have not made the great commitment to joining the military. I have been

privity to many situations where military personnel have felt annoyed and even angry towards “civvies.”

My male colleague and I had decided to go out for a drink with some of the young officers from his regiment, venturing to the local town. We were sitting outside a bar, whilst the young officers remained inside. It is not unusual, as chaplains, to find ourselves in a dichotomy of being both part of a group and also different and existing outside it. During this time, relaxing and sharing a drink, we heard a glass smash across the floor leading out from the main entrance to the bar, accompanied by indiscernible shouting.

We both sensed that something was wrong, realising that our colleagues were in the bar. We rushed in to be confronted by a developing fight. More glasses smashed onto the floor and two young officers were in physical contact with two other gentlemen. Both young officers had grabbed their opponents by the neck, one telling the other, “I’m going to put you in hospital.” I heard someone say, “This is no place for padres.” One of the young officers came up to us and suggested that we should leave the bar. Both my male colleague and I responded that we had no intention of leaving as we were there to support the people we serve with. At that point, we stood a few meters behind the main group. I imagined that this would be a good place to stand to be able to see if someone was going to attack the group from behind. I also imagined being in some kind of battle scenario, as a reinforcement ready to engage, if required. It occurred to me at the time that if the situation were to deteriorate, then I would require an engagement strategy. I looked at my colleague standing next to me and wondered if he was thinking the same. At least, I thought, I would be able to use some of my martial arts moves I had been perfecting in the mirror at home, showing that at times even a padre can be a combatant. It would perhaps show, I thought, that just as a padre can be with his men on the front line, this place also represented a front line. I

remember muttering to myself, "Stand and fight." The adrenaline was palpable, and I knew that by standing I was not standing alone. I was standing with my patriots, the people I had been called to serve. I knew that a reaction of reasonable force would be enough to use as an argument for self-defence.

Visible signs and feelings of traditional masculinity were at work throughout this encounter. It reminds me of the Australian men in Connell's study (2005) who continue to display a traditional, manly masculinity. Connell presents findings of traditional masculinity but also of evolving masculinities. This is like many of the studies on masculinity for modern Western society. For example, Gilmore (1991) argues that the ideals of traditional masculine expression are beginning to become blurred. Ghail (1994) has categorised diversity into several groups that have moved beyond a narrower definition of macho expression. This has been taken to the next level by some researchers who claim a significant move to much greater fluidity and diversity of expression, suggesting new masculine forms of behaviour (Ghail and Haywood, 2007). This latter study also brings in global expressions. Yet the British Army has tended to recruit globally from communities where traditional masculinity continues, especially from those communities drawing distinctions between domestic roles for women and work roles outside the home for men. Nepalese society, for instance, has been described as deeply patriarchal in this traditional sense (Lama, 2005). Likewise, traditional expressions of masculinity prevail amongst Fijians, such as physicality (Presterudstuen, 2019). There were no British nationals out with us on that particular night described above. Despite some studies arguing for increasing diversity of male expression, this did not appear to be present on the night we were out. I stress that the British Army continues to display a strong hyper and hegemonic masculinity that has not evolved to the same extent as expressions in wider society. I also contest findings from research that suggest there is a gender evolution in military contexts (Higate, 2003). Higate concludes that Western militaries reflect a

development of masculinities to more diverse forms. This is like developments found in wider Western society. Yet perhaps Higate lacks some of the in-depth experiences I have had. These are my experiences and the experiences of my interlocutors. Hegemonic and hyper masculinity, as characterised by some or all those expressions identified in the Introduction, is a cultural aspect of a male-centred institution that manifests itself in the individual service personnel. It is in these lived scenarios with other men that an essentialism of male expression may be reinforced. There are expressions that are clearly reflective of a dominant traditional masculinity. This is a clear understanding of what men are and what they do. It is also a normalisation of gender roles. Men are supposed to be men. I felt that I should stand and fight, despite my non-combatant status as a padre. I felt I needed to be a man. Perhaps I was compromising my position as at least one other officer felt it was not the right place for a padre. Behaviours in the British Army would perhaps be met with shock and rejection in many contexts of wider society. However, in the British Army, such behaviours are common, acceptable, and even encouraged.

Christianity within the military seems to produce a masculine paradigm. Here, the padre can flex a type of muscular Christianity. In my experience, this is often seen as a positive trait by male service personnel. Such behaviour would be rejected within traditional parish ministry. It shows the importance of culture and context for making a judgement about behaviours. Displays of physicality and fighting by service personnel could be seen as an extension of the battlefield. A muscular Christianity can be seen as displaying male bravery. This would be the same bravery when facing the enemy. I would argue that parish ministry presents a completely different context. Here, there is much more passivity. There is no purpose to activities in the same way as those practised by service personnel. An officer told me positively, "You're a padre. You're different from a vicar in the way a vicar behaves." I took this to mean that padres can act in different ways from those who are parish ministers. In my experience, this is

often encouraged. The power of muscular Christianity may exist in the history of the military as a tool of colonialism, about dominance and victory, that continues to be expressed (MacAloon, 2013). This emphasises the idea that the military is an expression of history into the present. It arguably applies to the British Army and those who serve within it, including chaplains in the RACHD. According to MacAloon, muscular Christianity has several aspects which includes the utilisation of a moral Christianity, stressing the challenges of life that can be played out with a positive spirit. In the case of fighting, in my experience, this is often valorised. It may be viewed as a game to be played out (MacAloon, 2013). This is perhaps not dissimilar from the games on sports pitches or in the messes.

The situation subsided, and we bid a group retreat into the night. The rousers in the pub shouted various expletives as we went. I felt confident that had we engaged “the enemy,” we would have been victorious. After all, the British Army are surely impregnable. My male colleague muttered to me, “That was a close one.” Thoughts crossed my mind, including the possibility that it could have ended badly, and then a question may have arisen as to the appropriateness of padres being present. Yet I also thought that a padre should be present, not with the intention to fight, but to be an incarnation, present with his men in good as well as bad times. This would be no different than if I were present with the men in a war-fighting scenario. This raises an important argument about what the padre should be. I address this later in the chapter about the application of the moral component of the fighting force, especially the role of the padre. A suggestion is made that there can be two distinct spaces, the chaplaincy space and the military space (Todd, 2013). On the one hand, the padre who especially comes from a sending church would normally agree with the idea of passivity from the perspective of not taking another person’s life (the Ten Commandments). However, being part of a military organisation may create a situation of complicity, working with others that do. Yet the pastoral role can be identified as

different from the military fighting role, although pastoral support is given to those who fight. On the other hand, in Todd's analysis, there may be an idea that supporting war and fighting is justified, along the lines of the Just War theory. This creates a dichotomy between the righteous side and the unrighteous side. World War Two in Europe may be seen in this way, between a righteous side (the Allied Forces) and the unrighteous side (Germany). Nonetheless, there is still the problem of taking another person's life and whether this can be entirely justified, especially if there are casualties of war, such as civilians caught up in conflict. As a padre, my colleague and I were caught up in a conflict. Although not life-threatening, there was a chance of violence and perhaps more serious injury. As a "non-combatant," it raises the issue about the problems of getting too involved in this situation. Brown and Syse (2017) raise an important point that Just War today can have a blurred definition because of the multiple and complex situations that fighting forces can find themselves in. With the example of humanitarian support they cite, I could argue that I was giving support to my fellow service personnel. However, when should this cease? Is there a level of reasonable force that justifies a physical act, even as a Christian padre? These are difficult moral questions, and to arrive at any definitive conclusion is unlikely.

As military personnel, we are never off duty, always being under the direction of military law. The problem for a British military chaplain, irrespective of gender, is about maintaining a non-combatant status, yet being aware of being able to use self-defence, as is any citizen's right. British Army chaplains, under the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC), are considered non-combatants. This does not refer to the British law of self-defence. Nor is fighting condoned, especially in a civilian environment, for any members of the armed forces. I have known soldiers and officers facing potential assault charges and discipline, administered under both civilian and military law. Military personnel fall under both civilian and military law for offences, with the latter being covered under strict regulations (Ministry of Defence, AGAI: VOLUME 2-

CHAPTER 67 - ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION, 2021). Also, there have been some situations where British military chaplains have acted contrary to the Geneva Convention by carrying weapons, such as on patrol during operations overseas. This does not apply to all chaplains of other nations where side arms, such as pistols, may be carried for the protection of the flock.

In such a charged atmosphere, with no women present, I did feel caught up in some kind of tribal community, supporting the men and being one of the men. I have known other male colleagues who have been in similar situations, some who claim that they have been in actual fights. I am struck by the idea of the “communitas” suggested by Turner (1969, p. 358). This is a difficult term to define, existing as a liminality. It is what binds a community together with a set of shared values and experiences. There are close relationships. In the case of military personnel, people share a close life on and off duty, off the battlefield with camaraderie that is also shared on the battlefield. This can even be described as a celebration of something hegemonic between men (Hinojosa, 2010). Culturally this is a celebration of what it can mean to be male (Hearn, 1998).

The desire was to join in. My male colleague commented, “That was fun.” Had I been caught up in a masculine-charged environment? On reflection, I had wondered whether female colleagues would have acted in a similar engaging way. Perhaps this was a normalisation of men’s roles as combatants. This consisted of young men living out physicality as an expression of traditional male behaviour (Frosh et al., 2002). Hegemonic masculinity has been characterised as containing aggressiveness and violence as an outpouring of hyper masculinity in individuals (Gilbert and Gilbert, 2017). I could only conclude that something “masculine” had taken place. It was the gathering of men, with alcohol, with a tribal communitas, that resulted in a special camaraderie. I felt that, despite the suggestion that I should not be there as a non-

combatant, as a man, I should. In part, I felt this was to prove my physical and mental worth to the group, as well as to my male colleague. It felt that I had taken on the values of a hegemonic masculinity, already instilled within me, having served as a military chaplain for several years. It is perhaps not surprising that a military padre should become involved in a conflict scenario as we work in this environment. I would argue this can be seen as an expression beyond Christian calling. It can also be justified as Christian calling, as part of our incarnational ministry. Muscular Christianity becomes justified in the military fighting context, irrespective of whether this can be morally justified. MacAloon (2013) suggests that a morality can be attributed to acts, as I have mentioned. These may be acts of violence that are given a moral standing according to the context in which they arise. This can include the idea that colonialism is justified, containing the view that actions are undertaken for the greater good, such as a nation's expansion.

Many padres come from first-career backgrounds that are uniform organisations, including the police and the military. I would argue that there is already an established culture of hegemonic and hyper masculinity in some form in these organisations. Hearn (1998) suggests there are behaviours in different contexts that are hegemonic and hyper, in an understanding of what men are like. This returns to an idea of the alpha male as an embodiment of specific characteristics, such as being physical and drinking alcohol (Russell, 2021). This may find expression in the daily lives of chaplains.

A question remained unanswered for me. I felt excited about the idea of both supporting my colleagues and the prospect of a fight. I wondered about the origin of this thought and feeling. Could it be that I had adopted a normalised role? Had I become some kind of embodiment of an alpha male? I have often heard the term "militarisation." This was used during my initial training at the Royal Military Academy,

Sandhurst. During regimental duty, I have often enjoyed being with other men and joining in their banter. It has often made me feel good. I think militarisation can be seen as another term for hegemony. This is a culture that is strongly macho in thought, language, and action and this becomes part of the lives of men in different social contexts (Simpson, 1994). I feel it has become almost part of me. In the example used, I had a desire to resolve a situation by physical engagement. This is physical violence. On reflection, this appears disturbing and in deep contrast to drinking tea with elderly women at a church/parish event. However disturbing such violence appears to be, the concept of the military as a fighting force, engaging with and killing the enemy, is perhaps more disturbing. In this context, it is not surprising that physical violence is used by soldiers away from the battleground. Everywhere can potentially become a battleground.

During my research, I have identified categories of masculinity and femininity as they emerge from my experience. There is a real challenge to provide an understanding of what traditional masculinity is. Categories have been provided in academic thought, such as by Connell (2001), in a definition of hegemonic masculinity. The problem is whether a meaningful category can be developed to apply to individual behaviours (Kachel et al., 2016). It has been suggested that tools be developed with two assessment methods, providing self-assessment and an assessment of the same individual by others. This may be more robust. A critique has been raised that a dichotomy between perceived masculine and perceived feminine behaviours does not really exist (Constantinople, 1973). When thinking about both male and female service personnel, the question about masculine expression becomes very important. Is there a set of characteristics that constitute female behaviour? This has been suggested as women displaying a masculinity, but as a unique female masculinity not entirely comparable to male hegemonic expressions (Halberstam, 2017). Alternatively, female behaviours may not be perceived as unique, but as reflections of a dominant

hegemonic masculinity that becomes internalised as female expressions (Nye, 2005). What may be agreed is that there are expressions between men and women that display something of a traditional hegemonic type. This has certainly been my own experience. There is also the emergence of other masculine expressions in modern Western societies that extend beyond an understanding of traditional hegemonic expressions. This has already been mentioned, as expressed in several studies, such as Ghaill (1996), who discusses the emergence of multiple masculinities. It is important to see how these gender expressions have an impact on the traditional masculine culture of the military. A crisis of male identity has been suggested generally, where men are struggling to understand who they are (Buchbinder, 2012). This may be an overplay on the idea of crisis. There may be a degree of uncertainty (Kimmel, 2008). A suggestion has been put forward that more traditional forms of hegemonic masculine expression may develop because of a perceived threat by men of a receding traditional masculinity (Konopka et al., 2021). I would argue that the British Army offers a place where hegemonic traits can be preserved and celebrated as dominant expressions.

This dominant form has also been called an “exalted” masculinity, as a dominant and leading type in patriarchal society (Connell, 2005, p. 77). This suggests a masculinity that may be special for some, raising certain expressions to a high status. Contrary to this, I have observed behaviours in male padres that may be identified as effeminate or perhaps even perceived as gay. I would suggest that such behaviours do not conform to a normalised hyper-masculine military man within the culture of the British Army or even to my understanding of normal male behaviour. This speaks the ideas that have emerged from Queer Theory about there being multiple types of behaviour that can challenge normalised perceptions (Dilley, 1999). These are often defined as “queer” by those who have a traditional sense of what is normal. There is an acceptance of fluidity of behaviour that moves beyond the limited essentialism of

simply male and female people and clearly defined behaviours (Richards et al., 2017). Earlier work from psychiatric perspectives suggests there are no fixed biological definitions of masculinity or femininity. Identity can be disrupted and redefined through social experiences. This can lead to alternative definitions of the self (Stroller, 2019). It is questionable to what extent this is realisable in a traditional hegemonic culture like the military. I sometimes imagine what it would be like if there were a military culture allowing for a greater diversity of male and female expression. Perhaps it would be like wider society with a greater development of multiple masculinities. The figure of the padre is an interesting case in point. In my experience, padres have traditionally been identified as a different kind of individual within a military setting, whose behaviours are often defined as simply behaviours of “the padre.” I have often heard military personnel speaking about an individual padre as “mad,” or “as mad as a bag of frogs,” often referring to a set of behaviours. It is difficult to understand what these phrases suggest about how men see the padre regarding a masculine norm, yet padres may be seen as different.

3.3 Militarisation of the Male Padre

For several male colleagues who come from a military or police background, the pull of military chaplaincy was its similarity to the uniformed organisations they were members of. One said, “It’s a world I’m used to.” More than this, such organisations are male-dominated and can include a range of hegemonic behaviours. Goffman (1961) has assessed the impact of organisational culture on the formation and expression of behaviours in individuals. Such places are uniformed and tend to be strictly controlled. There is an expected behaviour of conformity by those who are members. In part, this relates to the military function of men as a fighting force. This is

the gathering of men who share a close bond, as already suggested on and off the battlefield. Four out of seven of my male interlocutors had some kind of work background in a uniformed organisation, whether army or police. After leaving this work, they each trained for ministry and served full-time in a parish for several years. This is the RACHD's requirement before an individual is eligible for consideration for military chaplaincy.

I began by asking these four chaplains whether they thought coming from a uniformed background had influenced their decision to specialise in military chaplaincy. The answer was a clear yes for each person. All of them expressed the view that coming from such a background clarified how the military system works for exercising an effective ministry. Seymour (2003) has studied the prison and those who work in it. Prison guards usually wear uniforms and have a hierarchy in which orders are given. There is also a time structuring to the day for meals and other activities. Almost all prison guards are male, and there is usually a camaraderie between them. When considering these characteristics, there are clear similarities with the military. In the prison, as in the military, there may be a strong male bond that develops in which men relate to men. I was also reminded of Christian male military personnel who have sometimes expressed to me a desire to become a military chaplain. They have considered that their experience of the military system would be an advantage in being a military padre.

There are also many padres who have not come from a uniformed organisation. The idea of calling may be a significant reason for people becoming military chaplains. This is certainly my experience of being called. We are ministers of religion who serve our sending churches and are also officers, subject to the military chain of command. I would argue we are influenced by two traditions: by the cross and by the military organisation. How these are held together can be challenging. These

may even come into contradiction. For example, can padres reconcile between calling and conflict? I examine this below in more detail (see 3.9). Furthermore, calling cannot be considered in isolation from gender. The Church of England has been defined as a traditional gendered organisation in which women have struggled to find meaningful identities (Green and Robbins, 2015). A similar criticism may be levied against a male-dominated military, although, like bell hooks (2004), Thomas (2019) has an aspiration for men and women to work together to undermine gender divides. This may be an optimistic position to hold.

My own family have shared with me their recognition that I have become more militarised since joining the British Army. This came somewhat as a revelation, but I should not have been surprised. I can be influenced by culture as much as anyone else. I am reminded of Connell (2005) and the idea of hegemonic masculinity and how this form can influence individual men regarding a hyper hegemonic masculine expression. The example of the night out with my colleague is an example of this. It appears that the way I speak and act has changed. How so, I wondered? Apparently, I am more abrupt, can swear more, and give greater attention to tasks (to be delivered well). I recognise these traits in myself. I felt hopeful that these may be the aspects of manhood that singled me out as a more hegemonic and hypermasculine person, a “real man” (Gilmore, 1991, p. 1). Maybe I was becoming or had become more of a macho male as an expression of traditional masculinity (Ghail 1994). My wife has suggested that I have become a “better man,” more practical, which is surprising. This has massaged my ego. Is maleness about being practical at tasks? If we follow some studies on gender socialisation in schools, a relationship has been established between defining a traditional masculinity with working-class jobs (Willis, 2017). A socialisation is taking place that defines what masculinity is (Swain, 2006). Many padres have also come from practical occupations in the construction industry. Indeed, many service personnel have huge talents in doing practical tasks. They are not

armchair theologians. They are not the stereotypical bubbling vicar of a rural parish which is very much a stereotype. I would suggest that a traditional masculinity and the practical man are often linked together in our thinking, as confirmed by some research. I discovered during my chats with my male interlocutors that two were former plumbers, with another looking at a future career as a gas fitter after leaving the British Army. None of my female interlocutors had such perceived manly skills. Masculinity expressed outside of the military can be defined in different ways. There may be evolving definitions that stretch beyond the ability of a man to be good at practical tasks. Nayak and Kehily (2008) are strong advocates of alternative masculine expressions that reflect diversity in wider society. This is a view that suggests an evolutionary development of identities (Morgan, 2006). Connell (2005) uses the idea of the hegemonic to define a single yet evolving type. However, where history meets contemporary life there appears to be a contradiction with these findings in the context of a male-dominated military. In history there is a suggestion of a strong traditional masculinity (Thibodeaux, 2010). Here, its roots are found in medieval Western contexts. This may continue to be expressed where men feel united around ideas of what a man is (Murray, 2023). Although a study of monasticism, Murray stresses that men develop specific identities as a homogenous group that reinforces a dominant male culture.

3.4 Defining Masculinities

Willis (2017) has identified a strong traditional male culture amongst working-class boys. This carried through from non-conformist behaviour at school in preparation for working-class jobs. It is these jobs that define what a man is perceived to be. Perhaps being a soldier can be identified as a proper job in this sense. A job for

a man. There remains a traditional masculinity for adolescent males as they develop their identities, despite some erosion of traditional distinctions (Kimmel, 2008). There continues to be a definition in an increasingly uncertain world. What do men understand about themselves, about who they are in a changing world where traditional masculinity is less certain (Buchbinder, 2012)? Using an empirical approach to studying changing gender expressions in Australian men, Connell (2005) also recognises divergent forms. There is a rejection of a single explanation as to why there are changing patterns of expression, whether by nature or nurture. Connell is keen to point out that various explanations can be drawn from the clinical, psychological, and sociological/anthropological, without attempting to pre-empt any single explanation. He provides a collective approach (Connell, 2005). There is an interaction of nature and nurture in the creation of masculine and feminine identities. For Connell, the hegemonic masculine expression seeks a position of dominance in the social order. Connell has identified developments of other expressions, claiming that "secular moralism" allowed for gender explanations beyond a God view of the binary between male and female. Feminism and liberalism are examples of this (Connell, 1987, p. 23). From his sample of Australian men, Connell has attempted to define masculinities as developments into diverse forms. This reflects the development and diversification of society. There are variously defined categories, such as "Live fast and die young," "Men of Reason," "A Whole New World," for environmental concerns, and "A very straight gay" (Connell, 2005, pp. 87-182). First, classic masculinity is defined as a "live fast, die young" approach. This seems to reflect a soldier-type mentality. It is characterised by a risk-taking, drinking, and fighting culture. Second, another form of classic masculinity consists of a group of men who emphasise reason, the "men of reason," suggesting a non-emotional and logical approach that has become a stereotypical characteristic of men. This is opposed to a stereotype of emotionally oriented and feeling women. Such an approach is highly favoured in military teaching in the British Army, especially in how orders for an attack scenario are constructed.

This is all about an ordered and logical approach. Third, another category identified by Connell includes men who are involved with and challenged by new ways of thinking, such as on environmental, social, and sexual equality issues. There is a newly developing openness away from a fixed traditional masculine view of the world. Fourth, this is expressed further in the acceptance of new sexualities, such as being gay. Divergent behaviours identified by Connell are challenging more traditional masculine expressions. However, in my experience and the experience of my interlocutors, the hegemonic masculinity of the British Army remains the dominant form. It is this form that allows for a clearly definable set of behaviours. It also provides clarity on what behaviours are acceptable, unacceptable, and different.

For Connell (2005), hegemonic masculinity is a benchmark for understanding other masculine expressions. Elsewhere, there is also an acceptance of more diverse forms (Connell, 2001). There has been criticism, though, with a suggestion that too much attention has been given by Connell to the idea of the category of hegemonic masculinity (Wedgwood, 2009). It may even lead to obscuring an understanding of different expressions that may not be hegemonic (Demetriou, 2001). To redress criticism, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) have suggested that hegemony as a concept remains, but with a recognition of complex influencing factors, especially gender power relationships. Yet I would argue that a dominant form of hegemonic masculinity continues to persist in the British Army. Patriarchy continues in some form despite evolutions, especially, I would say, in the military (Buchbinder, 2012).

I have heard other labels being applied to describe behaviour according to gender. The term “alpha male” has often been used by military personnel to describe others. This relates closely to a hegemonic expression. It is an example of a label around which a constructed discourse has been formed to describe archetypal British military men. These are the drinking and fighting men. Russell (2021) has identified

certain characteristics of the alpha male in American society that include dominance. Here is a view that certain male behaviours become part of the person. One characteristic may also be male competitiveness as a reflection of dominance (Berdahl et al., 2018). The British Army is a place where men are proving themselves, becoming leaders, becoming men by feats of perceived manly behaviour. I wanted to explore this idea further with my male interlocutors, to identify whether a definable traditional masculinity is at work within the behaviour of male chaplains. I therefore raised the question about what specific aspects of military life had appealed to and encouraged them to become a military chaplain. I hoped to reveal something about masculine identity in the British Army and whether this has been expressed as lived experiences.

One male colleague told me, "I had considered a career in the army for years after I became a minister. It was a natural transition for me after having a former career in the police. I've always enjoyed working with other guys. I've been described as a man's man." This statement has resonated with my own experience as a parish priest. After my ordination in my mid-twenties to the diaconate and then a year later to the priesthood, as part of my journey within the Anglican Church, I found parish ministry a particular challenge. I felt unable to fully fit into the church communities I had been sent to serve in. As I progressed through traditional parish ministry from parish to parish, I began to have an increasing sense of alienation from both practice and people. There seemed to be a constant demand on my time to environments that I felt disjointed with, whether in the repetitive services on a Sunday or the pastoral engagements with the people in the church, many of whom were elderly women. I would often feel frustrated and bored. There is a relationship here between calling and masculinity. This can be seen in how male presence can be a strong expression both within the Anglican Church and within the British Army. McDuff and Mueller (2002) are clear that the Anglican Church is a gendered organisation in which men work and lead. This returns to the idea of an embedded Anglican male fraternity (Page, 2008). Also,

the military appealed to me because, if I am honest, it reflected a strong machismo that contrasted deeply with my own parish experiences (Simpson, 2008). I was hopeful that I could express myself in other ways in ministry, burying myself in more perceived traditional manly pursuits (Hearn, 1998). My boredom in parish ministry reflected my own understanding of what I wanted to be. This was not to serve with people much older than myself. It also seemed that my personal interests were different from and even conflicted with many of those within the church. I enjoyed exercise, going on runs, weight training in the gym, as well as playing pool with guys in the local pubs, none of whom ever attended church or church-run events. I remember getting into fights on a few occasions within certain pubs, much to the horror of some of my parishioners. This was about growing up, but at the same time, I also felt that church parochial ministry was not for me. I enjoyed the company of other men in the pub. I felt part of something that was not being provided by the church. My exercise of masculine expression was becoming a calling. I felt that I had meaning, hanging out with the guys who displayed macho characteristics, such as drinking and shouting (Ghaill, 1994). Like those young men identified by Willis (2017), I was beginning to find a unique meaning in being with other young men that was beginning to lead me to a different sense of where my work should be. I even justified it as a higher calling from God. I would often comment to my newfound pub friends that the church seemed too “religious,” reflecting on my background of rarely having attended church before my ministerial training.

It was during my early thirties that I began to explore the possibility of becoming a military chaplain. It seemed to me that I was being called by God a second time, the first time being a calling to ordained ministry, and then a second time being called by God to a more specialised form of ministry within a secular environment. I liked the idea of having an opportunity to work in another space other than parochial parish ministry in which some of the machismo I described could continue to be lived out.

Swift et al., (2015) have stressed the importance of the varied spaces or places in which chaplaincy can be expressed. In a military context, there would possibly be opportunities to live out something of the masculine. I was struck by the idea of masculine fighters. Within the military, I have learnt about the importance of celebrating the heroes who have fallen in battle (Holt and Thompson, 2004). I spoke with former military personnel, retired within my parishes, and not only did they agree that I was suited to military life, but they often found my antics highly amusing. I saw a life in the military that reflected a life more akin to the one I was currently leading outside of the church community. It was later within the military context that I discovered that certain behaviours by anyone, but especially military chaplains, are unacceptable, as we are often identified as “different” by other military personnel. We are often identified as embodying the values and standards of the British Army. However, when we get it wrong, as we sometimes do, we are not always condemned but celebrated as characters, as “legends,” taking on the behaviours of other military personnel. This returns to the idea of hero worship. The military has been identified as an environment in which the heroic man is celebrated as they construct an image of themselves with their peers through hegemonic acts of manliness (Hockey, 2017). I wanted to be a “man’s man.”

What is meant by this phrase, a “man’s man”? Ging (2019) has defined it as a form of traditional male behaviour that may include drinking and feats of physicality. Yet this is also balanced against the potential of alternative expressions, such as the beta male and the incel male. The former stresses subservience rather than alpha male dominance, whilst the latter may describe a man who is not sexually active. This is by way of saying that not all men, according to Ging, will internally conform to an alpha male stereotype in the military, although they may appear to do so. I asked a male colleague to explain to me what alpha male meant for him. He replied, “You know, to get involved with the guys in sports and to enjoy a good social life with them.”

I asked whether this had been his experience since becoming a regular army chaplain. “Most definitely,” he told me. “It’s been tremendous fun.” Several of my male interlocutors spoke about their involvement in sports, especially rugby, typically a male pursuit in the British Army. Mention was also given to playing drinking games in the Officers’ Mess and going out for drinks with young officers. Messner (1995) examined the American context of sport and has viewed sport as a device for the construction and maintenance of traditional masculinity. It is sport in the military that acts to reinforce a specific masculinity and to prepare men for battle. This is wildly different from parish experiences. One interlocutor told me, “You can really be like a man without all those expectations that are upon you in the parish.” This was an affirmation of his own ideas about traditional masculinity and what being a “man” meant for him. It resonated with my own experiences.

During my time as a military chaplain, I have enjoyed many drinking games and times out “with the lads,” such as getting drunk. I recall one senior chaplain telling me, shortly after I entered the Chaplains’ Department, that self-care is required. He told me that, in his opinion, it is good to go out for drinks “with the lads” as “they like nothing better than getting the padre drunk.” This senior chaplain was telling me that this type of behaviour was to be encouraged. It may be identified as a type of hyper masculine expression, in the sense of displaying at least one characteristic of this definition, such as drinking. This cannot be considered without acknowledging the role that history has played in the construction of male military behaviours that continue even today, and which exist in other similar institutions like the Anglican Church (Fry, 2024). A hegemonic type of masculinity can be seen as an inherited practice (Griffin, 2018). From one generation to the next, learnt behaviour is transferred between men. This stresses the persistence of a masculine culture rooted in the history of traditional institutions (Page, 2008). In the accounts from my interlocutors, there is an idea of what it is to belong to a male-dominated organisation. In their experiences, a particular

culture of behaviour, of a traditional masculinity, is being encouraged (Simpson, 1994). There is also a use of language that encourages this sense of belonging and togetherness, for example, “with the lads.” It has been suggested that language functions as a tool for the legitimization of certain perceived manly behaviours (Russell, 2021). These have been identified by Russell as referring to a history of behaviour that has remained largely unchecked and unchanged. This seems to describe the use of language very well in a traditional male culture of the military. Perhaps the idea of the alpha male is at odds with a more temperate approach that may be expected of a man of God, a minister, or a priest. This would apply to a traditional parish situation with elderly parishioners. In the British Army, it is a way of developing a closer bond with military personnel.

Drinking is not always an expression of the male padre. One of my male interlocutors commented that he joined the department “to serve God.” He did not exercise his ministry by playing sports or getting involved in drinking games. This suggests that other expressions by the padre allow them to exercise a ministry beyond a traditional hyper masculinity. Masculine expressions in chaplaincy can vary. Clearly, a sense of calling is important, with padres predominantly drawn from church backgrounds. It has been argued that an understanding and application of ethics may feature highly in a chaplain’s role (Nageswaran et al., 2022). Other aspects of a role inspired by a faith perspective may include teaching, such as on spiritual needs, and an understanding of higher ideals (Swift et al., 2015). There is an argument to say that pastoral ministry can be undertaken in bars where men hang out. Some of my male interlocutors told me that nothing is achieved by simply sitting in an office waiting for personnel to arrive. As one said, “You need to find them where they are.” This breaks down a traditional religious divide of the sacred and the profane (Durkheim, 1995). Military chaplaincy can be identified as being pastorally proactive, of finding the pastoral situations by visiting and being with military personnel. This is beyond a

Durkheimian concept of the otherness of expression arising out of religion. It may be more difficult for female padres to engage in this way. In my experience, there is a less normalised role for women in the military to become involved in certain sports and drinking games. However, the answer may be simpler than this. A male colleague told me of the importance of “loving the men you are serving.” This statement also illustrates the problem of an organisation that is full of men. Men mixing with men, getting drunk with men, fighting with men, playing sports with men. These are illustrations of how masculinity can be manifested in a traditional military culture (Hearn, 1998). These present opportunities for men to be together. The idea of divine calling cannot exist in a vacuum. For many male padres, expressions of what can be called a hegemonic masculinity by Connell (1995), can be argued as expressions of calling. This views hegemonic culture as an influence on the people who form part of the organisation in which this culture is present (Goffman, 1961). In this sense, culture and the individual co-exist.

3.5 Contextualising Masculinity

Expressions of a traditional masculinity are constructions of a normalised masculinity as the dominant form. In the context of the military, as an example, there is a strong inherited tradition of gender superiority by men, and this allows men to define what is normal (Griffin, 2018). Some of my male interlocutors told me they have observed instances of male vocalism. Some of my female interlocutors made a similar point. During the training period at Sandhurst, my male and female interlocutors often heard men shouting orders as part of their training. My male interlocutors also identified playing sports and drinking games in the Officers’ and Sergeants’ Messes

as situations involving men shouting. I can remember many such occasions, hearing the raised and impassioned voices of men.

I have tried to understand why military men should shout so loudly. I would argue it can partly be explained by a traditional masculine trait I have identified that stresses the importance of competitiveness between men (Berdahl, 2018). Men may also be especially competitive in the charged atmosphere of a dominant masculine organisation like the British Army. Research conducted by Wolff and Puts (2010) suggests that vocalism in men is a strong indicator of their dominance in both social and physical aspects. Here, voices that have a more clearly identified masculine characteristic, such as a deep resonance, are perceived as relating to a more dominant person. In a military environment, this can be expressed in a variety of situations, such as by men who hold rank and give orders, men in drinking games, and men on the sports pitch. Wolff and Puts (2010) suggest an almost primordial aspect to vocalism, suggesting that a strong masculine voice may also encourage a view that a man is more physically robust and successful in sexual exploits. A female chaplain commented, "Men are trying to prove themselves to other men." A male chaplain said, "Men are very competitive against each other, especially in the army." Such behaviour is encouraged and normalised. Some of my male interlocutors admitted to raising their own voices whilst playing sports and in the Officers' Mess. This happened during rough and potentially dangerous games like "mess rugby." This is simply playing rugby in the mess, usually with a cabbage for a ball. I have noticed how I have raised my voice, such as a shout of triumph, after completing a drinking challenge. These activities are an expression of being male, as perceived in a certain way. This supports the view that sports are a means for communicating a strong traditional masculinity. The military environment may even be compared to a school in which the orderly soldiers, like school kids, are given opportunities to express their masculinities in gendered sports and similar activities (Connell, 2008). It is also about being noticed, perhaps because

of promotional opportunities. One male chaplain told me, "I have noticed how often the personality of male officers change around their seniors, speaking loudly so they can be noticed."

In my experience, the act of shouting has been actively encouraged. I recall being told during my training at Sandhurst to "shout more loudly" in certain situations, such as when leading a group on a training exercise or playing sports. I remember one training sergeant telling me during a five-a-side football match, "I need to hear you, Mr King. Shout like a man." Another training sergeant at Sandhurst said to me, "Say it as though you mean it." The raised voice may reflect the very purpose of the British Army. This is to achieve a brave and effective fighting voice in the face of the enemy. As mentioned, this reflects the idea of what it is to be a hero. In this sense, shouting is an historical celebration of bravery that finds expression in contemporary situations. Historically, the British Army has embodied a traditional masculine ethos at its core, which has been communicated across the generations. This includes colonial expression in the nineteenth century as a defining moment in British Empire expansion, reflected in groups of men who exclusively gathered in sports and social events (Sinha, 1995). Men were men and continue to be so. A colonial spirit of male dominance remains a defining aspect of military culture. On the battlefield, as on the playing field and in the Officers' and Sergeants' messes, the warriors go into battle. Their voices can be heard above the sounds of bullets and bombs. It can also be heard above the battle noise, so orders can be given. I would argue the raised voice represents a hyper masculinity of heroism and bravery (Holt and Thompson, 2004). In this sense, the raised voice can be seen to represent the very expression of maleness, of presence and aggression. It is perhaps the clearest example, along with physical violence, that defines a normalised traditional masculinity. Gilbert and Gilbert (2017) argue that hegemonic masculinity is most clearly definable by expressions of physicality and violence. Such expressions are constructed and normalised and can

be contrasted against different learnt behaviours. Ging (2019) views expressions of the alpha male as only one definable masculinity. The beta male is also a prevalent type of behaviour. This is a less dominant form and contains characteristics that are far more subservient. It is not about shouting and not about physicality. Examples of divergent forms are provided by Connell (2005), with men who adopt a more inclusive approach over a range of issues. Yet there may be other categories of masculinity that do not relate to a divergent hegemonic form, such as the passive eco man (Allister, 2004). Newly learnt behaviours can arise in different societies and cultures. This shows that change can occur despite an overwhelming culture of traditional masculinity (Honddagneu-Sotelo and Messner, 1994). However, global studies also reveal the wide persistence of a traditional masculinity with the common characteristics of physicality and violence (Kulkarni and Jain, 2019). Yet in my experience, changing identities within the British Army is limited. There remains a strong expectation that men continue to display traits of hyper/hegemonic masculinity.

On one occasion, when my male colleague and I arrived at the Officers' Mess (at around 1900 hours), we were greeted with inaudible shouts and "Stand to attention!" by a man in a traditional nineteenth-century military uniform holding a bugle. I was joining my colleague for an Officers' Mess dinner night, held a few times a year, with similar activities held separately within the Sergeants' Mess. These events are open to military personnel and, at times, more widely to civilian guests. They are often showcases for Officer Mess regimental life when the best mess dresses are worn instead of the black-tie events, unchanged in style for centuries. At such events, mess dresses are often adorned with braided silver and gold colours. The chaplains' mess dress is slightly more conservative, yet just as traditional and unchanged. It is black, with penitential purple, and gold-coloured buttons and pips. I recall inviting guests into the messes of regiments I have served with, with a certain pride about what they will experience, curious about their civilian wonder at such opulence. A sense of pride is

often engendered in the military, dare I say, male pride. There is an emphasis on what the man looks like. He struts with confidence. Reality is constructed by an idea about what life is (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). This is especially defined in an historic military in which men relate to men, constructing meaning with history coming to life. The inheritance of large candelabra and other pure silver objects, often centuries old, adorn a large mahogany table, beneath austere-looking uniformed men as leaders who stare from the various portraits held in elaborate golden frames. There is a constructed masculinity. It is reinforced and normalised through centuries of tradition. The significance of past into present is encapsulated within historic objects, not simply as objects. They have meaning in the past and continue to live in the present. It is the continual representation of such historic objects that form part of what has been called “habitualisation” (Berger and Luckmann, 1991, pp. 70-71). They form part of the habits of men who celebrate the past into the present with expressions of masculinity.

A military example of this is in the various acts of remembrance, such as at the Australian, New Zealand, and Tongan remembrance of the fallen in all conflicts on April 25th (Anzac Day). Like objects, remembrance services symbolise the importance of the past into the present as an expression of historic masculinity (Wegner, 2021). The “last post” (the music played in the service to remember the fallen) is played not only as some historic reminder of sacrifice, but to invoke the feeling of sacrifice in those who attend the service (Drozdowski et al., 2021). As a term, an “act of remembrance” refers to acts of war and violence by soldiers of the past. It is often a ceremony involving objects. In the western part of the hemisphere, such acts are often expressed on 11 November annually. Poppies are used as a way of remembering the fallen, referring to the poppies that grew on the fields of northern France in WWI. These acts and objects hide the harsh and brutal reality of war where men and women fight. Physicality like this is perhaps the clearest expression of a hyper masculinity in a military man. It becomes a learnt behaviour for young men through the acts and

objects used in the military (Swain, 2006). I would argue that the example of the Officers' Mess is of a museum transported into the present. A celebration of the past into the present. Men who gather with an almost total exclusion of female presence. In this environment, the learnt behaviour of men is about the internalisation of the norms and values of the military (Robinson, 2020). This is essentially a celebration of war and those who have been caught up in it. A few women who serve with a regiment as so-called attached arms may be present, as is the padre. We are not identified as members of the regiment itself but are nevertheless encouraged to take on the regimental traditions.

The British military, and particularly the British Army, can be viewed as a very traditional organisation in terms of its values and practices. Individuals who join have a period of initial training, whether as officers or soldiers, always infantry in nature, learning about the history of the military. In my experience, this is entering a period of transition or militarisation. It is an expression of institutions that demand a high level of conformity (Goffman, 1961). The dominant masculinity within the military is shared between its male members as a construction of behaviour that provides meaning and purpose (Roper, 1994). Individual behaviour becomes self-regulated to the norm that is expected. I would argue that men adopt traditional masculine values, whether they believe in them or not. It is part of the process of being accepted by the organisation (Kravel-Tovi, 2017). As I mentioned before, my wife told me, after a few years, that I had changed by becoming more "militaristic", especially in the development of my organisational skills. In this example, perhaps the adage, "British Army, be the best," has some practical truth. To become a member of this traditional organisation, every individual, irrespective of the specialism they hold, undergoes a process of militarisation. This is male militarisation. I would argue a perpetuation and reinforcement of a traditional masculinity. Nonetheless, there is a sense that every individual is part of something greater than him or herself. Kravel-Tovi (2017)

emphasises the importance of a sense of nationalistic adherence to the state. In this sense, the person who conforms is no longer an individual but is part of the state. This has certainly been my experience. It is marked out by becoming British Army as part of the person. A person takes on the norms and values of this organisation. There is a uniformity in dress and conformity to regulation. Uniform can be an important indicator of what the military represents. It has been suggested that uniforms act as a visual language and representation of something more (Craik, 2003). In the example of military uniform, it reflects ideas of uniformity and conformity but may also be a symbol of a traditional masculinity. A form of dress that has been worn by the men of a patriarchal organisation. A military organisation of fighting men. I would argue this involves the development of a sense of being different, as with a uniform that defines people in a particular way (Craik, 2003). A problem with taking on the beliefs and values of an organisation is the possibility of becoming less aware. I think I have become less aware of the British Army as different, unlike my initial experiences when I first joined. It is as though the British Army, with its fighting, shouting, and drinking culture, has, over time, desensitised me to its culture of hyper masculinity. This sense of the military as different suggests a world that is different from wider society with which the military co-exists. Connell (2005) argues that masculinities are developing more complex and divergent expressions from the hegemonic form. Despite this, and the literature that suggests different masculine forms (Nayak and Kehily, 2008), the British Army remains deeply patriarchal, with its members demonstrating behaviours associated with hyper and hegemonic masculinity, with no signs of diverging gender expressions as indicated in the broader literature.

It was before and during the meal that pipes were played, reflecting regiments and their cultural heritage. The historicity for this is specifically the use of marching music to recall the fallen in battle. The lived military experience is important for transforming people into the historic figures being celebrated, the heroes they are

encouraged to emulate (Holt and Thompson, 2004). Here, the idea is that history comes alive, not just as a celebration of the past but the past becoming part of the person. I have heard the pipes on many occasions, and they appear to me to be haunting and inspirational.

The meal was thoroughly enjoyable, with the usual high culinary standards. Following it, we were asked to retire into one of the anterooms for the delights of coffee, chocolates, cigars, and more alcohol. My male colleague introduced this stage of the evening by saying, "Now the fun begins. Are you joining in?" In one of my discussions with a female chaplain and a couple of male chaplains, the point was made that they tended to retire from the mess after the meal. This avoided the festivities. There was a view that the padre being present could compromise Christian values. This supposes, like the role of a padre in war, that there may be environments in which a padre should not be involved (see section 3.9). This may be seen as a compromise to Christian morality. A male padre told me that he had become bored of these activities, taking on a kind of repetition after so many years. I had often been glad to get involved when I first became a padre, especially with the excitement and newness of these events. I have not objected on moral grounds. My colleague for the evening was also eager to get involved. Shortly into my military career, I remember another male chaplain once telling me that "most of the mistakes" are usually made by chaplains in their first few years. He made the point that military personnel "delight" in getting the padre drunk and even into trouble. I can recall so many events involving the drinking of alcohol under timed conditions, being called "a legend," and becoming a respected member of the male tribe by staggering out of the Officers' Mess to the sight of a rising sun. Perhaps these situations are what it means to be part of a strong male culture (Simpson, 1994). This is like Russell (2021) who identifies hyper masculinity as a set of definable male behaviours within the individual as an encapsulation of hegemonic masculinity. These fun times are all part of a celebration

of masculinity. This is a male lifestyle associated with a hyper masculine environment: shouting, drinking, and occasional fighting.

My male colleague began by drinking a pint of champagne from a silver goblet, as he was shouted on by the men, cheering as he did so, with loud exclamations of his success, "Bloody good effort, Padre." I simply had to join in. We both finished our successful attempts with self-acclaimed cheers, rousing the impulse of general exuberance still further. I would argue that these activities can be understood as ritual. They are very important in the British Army for reinforcing an understanding of what masculinity is. As part of this, the objects used are important. This could be a silver goblet. It could be a masculinity reinforced through presence, such as paintings of heroes who are, in a sense, present at activities. Antique silver goblets are often used for drinking games. The objects communicate a message that can be unpacked (Bell, 1992). Each object defines something of the culture of the organisation. They form an integral part of an activity that communicates meaning. Applying Bell (1992), drinking down champagne reflects the importance of competition between men. This suggests that when men gather, competition becomes an expression of a traditional masculinity (Berdahl et al., 2018). There is an individual pursuit in drinking, and yet it is also collective. I would argue that it becomes part of a wider cultural expression of uniting men together in acts that ultimately lead to cohesion of a fighting force on the battlefield. Essentially, this activity is a mess game, and like all activities of a similar nature in messes and on sports fields, their purpose is to enhance a sense of community (Turner, 1969). Interestingly, drinking alcohol is acceptable, but certain lines are not to be crossed, such as an incapacity to consume alcohol without being sick. A commanding officer told me once that perhaps I should drink less if I am unable to handle my alcohol consumption. Douglas (2002) holds to the idea of taboo surrounding ritualised activity. Taboo acts as a regulation on what is regarded as acceptable and unacceptable. Every military activity, it can be argued, has a ritualised

purpose for developing individuals as a community. I would argue that endemic traditional masculinity is reinforced as part of this. Wojtkowiak (2022) argues for the centralisation of ritual in every military act as a way of defining what the military is. This encourages a close-knit community of men who function together in peacetime, and especially in war. This will centre on the male community that becomes cemented through various acts, such as remembrance (Wegner, 2021). Acts of remembrance, as stressed already, are about bringing the history of the male military into the present as a continuation of a traditional masculinity. This may be communicated through traditional acts of worship and recalling heroes of the past in formal mess events.

3.6 Challenging Traditional Masculinity

From my experience, a practical initiative in the British Army has been a series of talks given to individual regiments about behaviour that may pose a barrier to developing inclusivity. The aim was to challenge and change such behaviour. I have sat in PowerPoint presentations where serving personnel from a specific regiment have delivered “briefs” about the requirement for diversity and inclusion. Not surprisingly, this has been met with both approval and opposition. I recall one serving officer telling me, “Why do this, Padre? It’s like trying to teach a pig new tricks. It’s a waste of time, and it annoys the pig.” There is a suggestion that in a traditional masculine environment, rather than encouraging inclusivity, new forms of masculine expression may be perceived as a threat (Konopka et al., 2021). With teaching on inclusion, an opposite result may emerge, by the reinforcement of a hegemonic culture under threat. I also had an opportunity to observe reactions to this inclusivity initiative when spending time with one of my male interlocutors in an infantry regiment. Such a regiment may be regarded as an archetype of traditional maleness and masculinity.

Nearly half of the British Army is made up of infantry regiments. All training for the British Army is infantry-based without exception. Until recently, the infantry remained one of the few male sacred spaces in the military that was allowed to exclude women. I will examine the idea of the male “sacred space” in more detail in Chapter 6. It refers to the perceived domain of men. Changes to allow women entry as fully-fledged infantry soldiers have provoked strong negative responses amongst men. I have spoken with the occasional female soldier who has wanted to train and convert to infantry. All have shared with me that they have received abusive messages by phone and through social media by serving male soldiers, often by soldiers they have worked with. Some of the reasons expressed by these angry (sometimes anonymous) men have been based on the idea of female inadequacy for the role. This returns to a complementarian idea that men and women have different functions (Lockwood, 2021). Although applicable as an idea of different service between men and women in a church context, as an argument it has a wider application to a military context. Those who see women as different and not suitable for certain roles may be reflecting a long-term endemic male culture that emphasises male exclusivity (Martin, 1990). I would argue this can apply to any historic organisation, like the church and the British Army. This has included the view that female physical strength is lacking. Furthermore, that male and female interaction is to be discouraged as it will always become sexual in nature. I have also heard the argument from male service personnel that the female is a person to protect in times of battle, thereby drawing male attention away from fighting the enemy. McKelvey (2007) argues that men and women are perceived as different, with an incomprehension by men that women can act like men. Women are not perceived as fighters, but on the contrary, they are to be protected. I would argue all these views reflect deep-seated positions of traditional masculinity. They suggest that much work remains to unpick these views directly with male service personnel and to challenge these assumptions. Besides, there are very few women who wish to join the infantry. I have heard female service personnel talking about a lack of desire to enter

an infantry lifestyle. They have said this is partly because it is an environment dominated by men.

I attended one of these inclusivity sessions with my male colleague. Soldiers and officers appeared to listen, but with expressions that seemed to reflect boredom and indifference on their faces. This session was led by a small group, two women and a man, dressed rather casually, in contrast to the perfectly ironed uniforms of the attending service personnel. The man appeared to have dirty shoes, and he was unshaven, breaking some basic rules of male military presentation. It occurred to me that to win over a group, in this case a military group of men, it may be necessary to adopt some of the basic expectations of this culture (Goffman, 1961). Goffman acknowledged the deep impact that an organisational culture can have on the ways in which individuals are encouraged to view the world. I recalled how much I have become aware of such details because of my years of male militarisation. Lists were put up on PowerPoint presentations about examples of “acceptable” and “unacceptable” behaviour, such as how to speak with and about people, especially women. There were a few smiles and sniggers from some of the private soldiers, only to be met with severe condemnation by a senior sergeant who told individuals to “shut up and listen.” This response was an expression of military discipline.

It was later, during coffee in the Officers’ Mess, that some of the views became apparent. One officer told my male colleague, “We’re an infantry battalion, Padre. It’s just the way the boys are. I’m not going to tell them how to behave because of a bunch of civvies.” This emphasised the officer’s dislike of what was perceived as a different group outside of the military. It seemed positively Durkheimian as a rejection of those outside and not part of the more inclusive inside military culture, like a view of the profane and the sacred (Durkheim, 1995). He continued, “We don’t need to change. The infantry has always been like this. The civvies need to get in the real world. They

have no idea what we do.” I would suggest this reflects a view of an historical military that has continued to inherit into the present an understanding of traditional gender relations (Griffin, 2018). Another said, “There is some need to change, but we need to be careful. If we try to change too much, the blokes will have enough and leave.” Overall, change was considered inappropriate, not least because of a perceived difference in understanding between those in the army and the “civvies.” I would suggest, like Durkheim, that part of a traditional masculine expression amongst men in the British Army is about being different, exclusive, and superior.

I spoke with my male colleague over the phone some weeks later to discuss my time with him at the inclusivity session. It was during this conversation that he told me a report had been written and delivered to the regiment’s Commanding Officer from the Diversity and Inclusion group. His words were, “It’s a damning report.” The group had conducted observations, concluding that there were both sexist and racist comments, as well as swearing by military personnel. My colleague added, “The former cannot be excused, and there’s a lot of learning required by individual members of the regiment. But the latter is excusable. This is an infantry regiment after all.” This returns to the view of a macho culture that constitutes the military (Simpson, 1994). Yet it also suggests that taboos are beginning to emerge about male behaviours (Douglas, 2002). In my experience, several military personnel in the British Army have been reprimanded for complaints made about sexist comments as an expression of a hyper masculinity. Ideas about sexualisation and masculinity are explored in more detail below (see section 3.7).

Queer Theory approaches the topic of diversity from a perspective of differing expressions of gender. This extends beyond a narrow definition of binary natures between man and woman. Queer Theory argues that human beings display wider and more diverse expressions beyond a conceptualised society as essentially

heterosexual (Warner, 1993). The label of a person being queer can refer to a range of non-traditional behaviours, reflecting a process of continual change and development concerning gender self-definition (Dilley, 1999). An understanding of the self may be at odds with a binary-defining culture. There may be a traditional male culture, like the military, that is contrary to a greater fluidity of expression (Moller, 2007). This raises a challenging situation for those who seek to be different. Perhaps someone is not or does not want to be an alpha male. As Ging (2019) has shown, there are different types of male behaviour other than the alpha male. It also provides a challenge to misogynistic behaviour and a recognition of how much our cultural understandings are inherited ways of seeing people (Gill-Peterson, 2024). These are real challenges to the position of a hyper-masculine male. It can be argued that this may lead to undermining a movement to greater diversity, as traditionally-minded men, facing challenges, decide to reinforce traditionally masculine definitions of the world, as in church traditions with women's rights seeming to undermine a hegemonic culture (Sani and Reicher, 2000). However, as Bartky (1998) has argued, men are not necessarily antagonistic to new expressions of masculinity. Rather, they may be willing to embrace these. Yet my observation of encounters between inclusivity champions and military men is not an all-embracing one. This suggests that traditional masculinity in the British Army remains strong.

3.7 The Padre and the Persistence of Hyper-Masculinity

I spoke with a male colleague who told me about an experience he had while exercising with his regiment. This involved going to a sex club with some of the soldiers during a period of downtime after the conclusion of the exercise. This included looking at female strippers. His actions can be understood as the sexualisation of women's

bodies. Sexualisation can be identified as an expression of hegemonic masculinity as an aspect of an organisation's culture (Gill, 2012). This can be internalised as an expression of a hyper masculinity within an individual, as being part of that culture. Part of the cultural expression of sexualisation has included the commodification of women, who become no more than objects for the person who sexualises them (Atwood, 1985). Women's bodies are sexualised and identified as objects for male gratification. I would argue that it is likely to be a prominent feature within the British Army which has a dominant male culture. This is partly due to power relations. When a person is objectified, power can be argued to rest with the person objectifying (Cabrera and Belloso, 2021). The British Army's position is clear, often communicated in "Standing Orders," that whilst on exercise and after exercise, places such as strip clubs are out of bounds to service personnel.

My colleague described that he felt "very bad" at having done this whilst under the influence of alcohol. Such practices of sexualisation of others may not be a way to self-preserve (Morgan, 2023). Sexualisation is contrary to the way people can relate to each other. To be able to relate to others without seeing others as sexual objects of gratification. The padre had felt perhaps that this had been compromised. There is also an added problem here about what a padre represents and the way they behave, potentially leading to a compromise about his own moral position. Perhaps the padre had felt that he had compromised his faith, and therefore, his guilt was built on who he thinks he is. Mulvey (1975) developed the idea of the "male gaze" as a sexualised expression by men as part of a masculine heterosexual viewpoint (p.11). This is about the pleasure gained at looking at another person as an object of sexual desire. This is the sexualisation of women. Consequently, women may become powerless by conforming to the image that the male gazer expects. It is in the media that such images are promoted. This would be at odds with a padre if we accept that they are a person of God from a sending church. This means that a padre is not a person to

sexualise another, if we hold to a view that such activity is contrary to a religious calling. Jesus is authority for this when he says that lusting after a woman with the eyes, especially if the person lusting is married, is an act of adultery (Matthew 5: 28-29). Nor does it provide a dignified understanding of another person. For instance, the idea of the male gaze reduces people to sexual objects. In a similar terrain to Mulvey, Morgan (2023), through an examination of visualised media, has defined the fourth wave as a reclaiming of the female body, as empowerment, whilst proclaiming the need to speak out against all forms of sexualisation that undermine the empowerment of women.

Activities such as men going to sex clubs are often identified by service personnel as breaching the “service test” for individual military conduct. It asks, has a service person’s behaviour “adversely impacted or is likely to impact on the efficiency or operational effectiveness of the service”? (Joint Service Publication, 2016). It was also an issue for the padre from a moral perspective, compromising what he referred to as “my calling to serve.” He told me that members of his regiment at the time found the situation amusing, but that he felt it difficult to get “the whole episode out of my mind.” He felt that a compromise had been made with the army’s values and standards, as well as his own ability to give effective pastoral care. “Every time I spoke with soldiers back in camp, they would make comments about it like, ‘Have you been to one of those clubs recently, padre?’” Although expressed as a joke, there seemed to him to be a serious undertone to this. It illustrated to him and to me how easy it is to cross an invisible moral line. Also, it points to a behaviour that reflects a hyper and potentially toxic masculinity of female objectification that can be lived out in military environments. I recall a senior officer from an infantry regiment telling me that when he was a young soldier on exercise in Kenya, he and others would pay prostitutes to fight each other and to inflict pain on themselves, “just for fun.” I found this story harrowing and would hope that such extreme exploitation is no longer practised. It can

be argued that violence against women is as a product of sexualisation, and one aspect of a heterosexualisation as a particular masculine expression (Coy, 2014). There is also a wider debate here about masculinity and the padre. Had an invisible line been crossed? This was the thought of the padre, and yet there are other activities of traditional masculinity, such as drinking and fighting, that may be identified as more acceptable. Furthermore, the perception of appropriate behaviour held by the padre may be different from that of other military personnel. My male colleague told me, "You need to know how far to take it. It's one thing being a man and another being a padre." His situation reminded me of another male interlocutor who told me that he ended up "snogging a girl" on the dance floor of the Officers' Mess "for all to see." Nothing was said. But he felt that as a padre, he had "overstepped the mark," often feeling awkward around other military personnel in the regiment. He felt "they all knew about it." A potential problem with this example and others, aside from a debate about the moral position of a padre, is that acts that are sexualised may have the effect of diminishing the status of the other (Coy, 2012). This may confine the identity of a woman, encouraging a limited view of what women are. This could have consequences regarding the role of women, as a masculine perspective may perceive women as no more than sexual objects for male desire. It has been argued that sexualisation produces a limited perception of what women are when they become sexually objectified (Fasoli et al., 2018). An argument has been made that this will limit the position of women and what they can achieve as part of a male strategic encapsulation on the status of women (Duschinsky, 2010). If women in the military are to achieve equality with men, sexualisation of women must be challenged.

Aside from sexualisation, there is a view that a fighting padre is a good thing as another expression of hyper masculinity. This behaviour, as with drinking, is often celebrated. I have heard male service personnel describe a padre as a "padre for the men." I have wondered what this means exactly. It could point to several expressions

of behaviour that men display, such as drinking and fighting. I remember leaving a regiment on one occasion and meeting up some months later with the chaplain who had succeeded me. He told me that stories had been shared by soldiers about a fight I had with a senior officer in the Officers' Mess. This was a complete fabrication. Apparently, it was a story re-told positively, seeming to "cement your manly status with the private soldiers." This was how he described it. On another occasion with another regiment, after drinking into the early hours of the morning with a young officer, I was told that I was a "great bloke." The use of language is significant for understanding how an individual is perceived. In the military, this will often point to behaviours that are hyper masculine to positively define an individual. Russell (2021), defining the alpha American male, has identified a range of behaviours that reflect the behaviours of men in the military. This includes men seeing themselves as holding a central and dominant role. They are the men who provide a definition of what male hegemony is and what it looks like. Likewise, Russell (2021) identifies language as a catalyst for perpetuating this male hegemony.

3.8 Being a Male Padre in a Masculine Environment

A padre may not always be defined by displaying traditional masculine behaviours. A Commanding Officer described me as a "very effective chaplain." I asked why he said this. His reply was, "You are approachable for the men. You seem human." I was also reminded of when a young officer commended me for being the "representation of the highest standards of the British Army." I interpreted this as meaning I am a person who has a high moral standard. The young officer said he was a committed Christian. I have found that it is often small acts that break down barriers with the men. This allows for more effective pastoral care. Such barriers are broken

down in the environments of a regimental bar or playing field. One officer told me that for him, the padre was great because “He plays rugby and gets drunk with the lads. All the lads love him.” For a padre, their identity is often associated with the Officers’ Mess, being a member of that mess. It is in this setting that a member of the mess is often introduced into the mess by certain acts. These were called “initiations,” a term no longer used. Military personnel have been told that initiations must no longer happen, but they do. I often hear the term “mess games.” Women are usually not included. Such games often include large quantities of alcohol and physical challenges.

There are various reasons why a padre may not get involved. I asked a male interlocutor why he had not become involved in drinking games in the Officers’ Mess. He told me, “I think it’s inappropriate for a chaplain to become involved in certain things.” In his view, it “compromised” his calling. This again returns to an idea of what is appropriate for a padre. Like the arguments about the padre and the Just War tradition (see 3.9 below), there are moral issues that can perplex a padre about their level of engagement. Should a padre kill? Thou shalt not kill. Should a padre drink? For other padres, a choice may involve gender. A female chaplain said, “These are games for the boys. I’ve never felt the need to become involved. But then again, I’ve never been asked.” Women may not be seen by the men or see themselves as part of a male-centred culture of expressions (Simpson, 1994). I have often been asked and usually get involved. For some male padres, there is an alternative view that it is important to become involved from a pastoral perspective. One told me, “It opens doors.” It seems to be a matter of personal choice. In my experience, the desire to become involved has often been based on a desire to be accepted by others. There is a challenge here. How much should a padre get involved? This returns to an idea that the padre is different in some way as a being who reasons out situations morally, that the padre feels different and is seen as different by other service personnel. In a

sense, the padre is different. They are not military in a strict sense of the word. They do not hold a combatant status. If anything, they are invited into an environment where they are observers, being aware of themselves and the world around them (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994).

These situations of being different, of being an observer, a researcher, a padre, can be blurred or even forgotten. Parker (2017) highlights this problem of being able to continue to observe when a person has become deeply involved in participation. This is a challenge for any sociologist and anthropologist. Whyte (1994) identifies his own struggles with remaining an observer in the local society he joined. I can recall an event, a mess evening when we, as Officers, had been invited into the Sergeants' Mess. This happens on occasion as part of tradition and is reciprocated. It was not long after my arrival as a new regimental chaplain. I had been selected, along with other new arrivals, to partake in a series of unknown games. We arrived wearing clothes called "smart casual," never jeans but usually chinos, a shirt, and brown shoes (the preferred colour for male officers). We were told to line up behind a bush near to the Sergeants' Mess. Then we had to run and form a line. Each of us was mock interrogated by the Regimental Sergeant Major (the RSM), usually involving a critique of what we were wearing. These are occasional informal opportunities when the RSM (known as "the senior soldier of the regiment") can exert unofficial authority over more senior ranks. We were each told to enter the mess, one at a time, by a side window through which we were pushed onto cushions. We were then told to crawl through cam nets (netting used to hide vehicles, weapons, and military personnel in the field). This was about fearlessly following the orders. As we each crawled through, we were beaten on the head and back by large plastic inflatable weapons. We then had to stand up and spin around for ten seconds. After this, we had to complete two forward rolls on a safety mat, followed by downing a pint of beer. The noise in the room was loud as the sergeants shouted at us. I remember thinking how glad I was that the whole

event had finished, or so I thought. We were each told to run into the next room, only to be faced by two very large sergeants in American football dress holding body pads. Beyond them stood a door. I was told that I had to get past them. I ran as fast as I could into them. Try as I might, I found it impossible to get through, being pushed into a wall and falling over a table. They then parted their position to let me through. I was greeted by the RSM with a pint of beer and told, "Well done, padre." On reflection, I would argue this was another example of a hyper masculinity experience involving traditional masculine behaviours. It included beer, shouting, and physicality. It also included a degree of bravery. I was bruised and had a gash on my left leg, but I remember thinking it was worthwhile. As I reflected on this experience, I had a sense that I had forgotten what it was to be a padre. I was caught up in the moment. Researchers have emphasised the importance of being able to step back enough to develop a narrative (Tedlock, 1991). I hope this has been reflected here. Allan (2006) has shown that enough observation and self-awareness is required to be able to construct a narrative that says something meaningful. In this case, a traditional masculinity was being played out. It had become a reflective event that I was able to recall in my own mind (Papen, 2019).

3.9 The Use of Masculine Language

Words are often used by men in a regiment to describe their padre. This is usually positive. I have been referred to as "a great bloke," for example. Such positive speak is invariably male in nature. When I was spending time with one of my male interlocutors, I heard a phrase used by a soldier, "I will take a bullet for him [the padre]." This is a distinctly military phrase. I have heard it used many times. It also strikes me as a very macho thing to say. The use of language is a strong indicator of culture, and

in these examples, of a strong male culture. These words are important for providing a clear indication of a macho culture being present (Simpson, 1994). As Hearn (1998) points out, as a man, I can provide an understanding of a traditional male culture by being present in and sharing with a group of men.

There are several words and phrases used in the military culture of traditional masculinity. The use of such language helps to preserve the dominant culture. Language is a very important voice for constructing meaning (Derrida, 1978). This is argued here as a two-way process, language giving meaning to culture and culture informing the development of a specific language. In the military, the function of language reinforces traditional masculinity because it is about the male soldier, the “man,” the “bloke.” It is about the image that this language creates about the male warrior. The man takes on this image.

When spending some time with one of my interlocutors, I heard his Commanding Officer address him with a greeting, “How are you, old boy?” This is using very traditional language. It points to a former time in history when such greetings were common. Men greeted men in a sort of gentlemanly manner. In my interlocutor’s infantry regiment, the use of the term “old boy” had become something of a fad, used between officers. This is an exclusive use of language for the male. There does not seem to be a positive female equivalent, such as “How are you, old girl?” This may feel derogatory when addressing a woman. How can a woman be addressed as old? This also plays into ideas about gender and what is an acceptable use in language. Language has been discussed by Russell (2021), who says that it functions to reinforce the legitimacy of a hegemonic masculinity. Men are men in the male language used to address each other, as verbal badges of honour and status. I was reminded of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS), the place where officers train for military service. The chapel walls are laden with references to

“gentleman cadet,” a term used in the nineteenth century to refer to cadets who had come from privileged class backgrounds. It can be argued that class permeates an individual to such an extent that they personify this aspect of class (Bourdieu, 1984). In this case, the privileged male class of the gentry, the male officer. Such a status, as an “old boy”, has an historical aspect here. I would argue that it points to the status of men who occupy a privileged position, such as officers in a regiment. In my experience, the phrase “Come on then, lad” has also been used. This is always used by “other ranks,” not officers, in how they address each other. As with “old boy”, it is the use of this language for the male that can be associated with class background. Just as there is a gentleman officer, marked by certain behaviours (Arnold, 2011), there may be definable behaviours that enable an assessment of people being part of another social class (Morgan, 2005). Also, a modern understanding of a “lad” may encourage thoughts about a more traditional masculinity. In other words, “a lad” drinks, fights, and objectifies women.

I would suggest that people can become an expression of a class they may be part of (Bourdieu, 1984). For example, class and especially the idea of the “officer class”, a term I have heard used, points to a celebration of a specific culture. I wonder if this is a specific macho culture of the middle class, of gentlemanly behaviour. It can be associated with hierarchy, as in the British Army. There may even be feelings of superiority. My first posting was with a cavalry regiment. These are regiments that recruit officers primarily from public school backgrounds. There is a perpetuation of class and privilege. A contrast can be drawn with the Sergeants’ and Corporal messes. These are the “lads” rather than the “old boys” of the Officers’ Mess. The “gentleman cadet” often came from families whose tradition was to have a son who served in a regiment. This was usually the same regiment into which generations of men from the same family had served. This is still the same today for officers who join cavalry regiments. This is something I experienced first-hand, with officers in the cavalry

regiment who had been educated privately and who were usually at least the fourth generation of cavalry gentlemen from the same family. Class is something that is inherited. Class background is important for the privileges that individuals are afforded (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). In this study, class is strongly generational as an inherited position of privilege, reflecting family background, education, and future career prospects. In wider society, outside of the military environment, feminism has been cited as a major challenge to this kind of homocentricity in which language has assumed a rational male-centred order that is lived out professionally (Hekman, 1990, p. 2). It is a language that makes clear distinctions between men and women. It is also a way in which women are excluded. I am reminded of being called an “absolute legend” on several occasions. “A legend” is a man doing something that is celebrated by other men in the military. On one occasion, I had become a “legend” because I completed the challenge of consuming five pints of beer in a single attempt. Activities like this have also been called “man tests.” Legend and man, I would argue, are synonymous words that mean the same thing in the world of men.

The word “legend” is a way of describing a male member of the British Army. It refers to a sense of honour and respect shown to a person because of a valued activity. I joined one of my male interlocutors on an eight-mile weighted march to be completed in under two hours. This is a particular test that soldiers and officers are required to complete annually, although this is optional for a padre in regimental duty. It is a great way of establishing honour and respect with members of a regiment. Before we began, the Regimental Sergeant Major commented on the challenge as being “a bit of a man test.” It was arduous, carrying 20 kg of weight. We would need to attempt to keep up with soldiers and officers, almost all of whom were younger than us. We found ourselves sweating and panting, almost the last to complete the test. We were cheered over the line by approving military personnel. I heard someone shout, “These two padres are a couple of legends.” I can recall many personal endeavours

in the regiments I have served in, all of which have been referred to as “man tests.” This has ranged from what are called Commanding Officer (CO) challenges, such as a weighted hike of over 17 miles across the Pennine range, to foot patrols in Afghanistan, facing real dangers of injury or death. I have faced the “man test” of extreme temperatures whilst serving overseas in desert conditions, as well as extreme cold in arctic conditions. I would argue that these situations share two common characteristics: they increase the honour and respect held for the padre, whilst also reflecting a sense of masculine achievement. This returns to the ideas about the importance of language in constructing positive meaning for men, and this, in turn, reinforces a hegemonic culture of masculinity lived out through hyper-masculine activities. I have felt more of “a man” by partaking in such activities.

There is also an attempt to emulate the male military heroes of the past. Whether that be soldiers, officers, or padres who have been awarded medals for gallantry. A significant number of Victoria Crosses, for example, were awarded to chaplains in WWI (Coulson, 2003). Officers' messes are often filled with pictures of gallant men, sometimes with copies of their medals and citations of what they have achieved. I would argue that every activity in the military has the objective of developing a person capable of fighting on the battlefield. The idea of the male military hero goes some way to explaining why men take risks, and this includes padres. This places revered military figures in history into the present in military personnel who seek to emulate these figures (Holt and Thompson, 2004). For Hockey (2017), this is a reproduction of the heroic figure of history in men expressing hyper-masculinity today. In the recent conflict in Afghanistan, padres, and I include myself in this list, would often venture out with soldiers on foot patrol or vehicle move. Even going so far as to accompany soldiers on moves into potentially dangerous situations of conflict.

There is a clear set of engagement rules that the military, including the padre, must abide by. This is covered under the Geneva Convention (1949). Furthermore, there is the matter of the Just War tradition that we discuss as padres on when and how force should be administered. We call this “the moral component of the fighting force.” What does this mean? There is clearly a position in moral theology that draws on rules that are seen as applying to warfare. This could be the Geneva Convention. It has roots in the moral ideas of the Just War tradition or theory, with some early formulation by St Augustus of Hippo, and developed later by St Thomas Aquinas (Johnson, 1981). Yet as a concept, it has developed as part of modern war development, with such issues as pre-emptive intervention and humanitarian aid (Brown and Syse, 2017). A basic question is, when is it right to intervene? Part of a padre’s role is to teach the Just War tradition. I suspect it has been given to us because of its roots in moral theology and because we are seen as moral. There is no getting away from the reality of the military as an organisation that will use violence and kill. There could be a moral issue for a padre who can be seen essentially as a non-combatant. A padre who, from a Christian tradition, agrees with the Ten Commandments. This includes not killing. I have almost felt removed from this as I have justified my position as caring for those who kill. However, does this make me complicit in killing once removed? Yet I have seen my role as primarily about caring. Do not even those who kill have needs? I have been concerned that perhaps I am encouraging a war machine. The men who, with their hyper masculinities, are physically engaging, literally fighting the “enemy.” Morality in this sense seems abstract. Theory may not always translate well into scenarios when men must decide very quickly to take another person’s life. The padre may well be nonviolent, but may also be seen as not totally nonviolent, as only being removed from the first line of attack. However, it could be argued that there are times when killing can be justified. An example may be a view of the other as the “enemy.” Yet such distinctions between good and bad are not always easy to reason through. Often, they can be based on a

moral high ground that stresses just one perspective. There are not always clear distinctions. In the discussions I have had with my interlocutors, there have been similar moral dilemmas raised and ignored. Todd (2013) stresses the importance of engaging with moral questions, especially those faced by the military chaplain over dilemmas arising in military engagement. He raises the Law of Armed Conflict and that it may be difficult to navigate through complex fighting scenarios. There is a possibility that those in the military in which the military padre serves may not always get it right. Importantly, a distinction is drawn between chaplaincy mission and military mission, suggesting that the chaplain has a different set of concerns that focus on the needs of those they are serving with (Todd, 2013). The moral component for the padre is their involvement with the chain of command in the debate about military intervention. Yet the role of the padre can also be seen as side-stepping the consequences of military intervention when it comes to a primary role of pastoral care.

I have spoken about the positive use of language to affirm male status in the British Army. This is not always the case. When an alternative behaviour is disapproved of, language can be utilised to condemn. I suggest this is a way of condemning what is perceived to be anti-male behaviour. I would argue it is defined from a position of traditional masculinity. Such condemnation may also serve to reinforce the dominance of a traditional masculinity. In a conversation I had with one of my male interlocutors, he condemned the behaviour of another male chaplain as “acting in a gay way.” This was in reaction to the way this other padre spoke. My interlocutor thought this other padre was behaving “effeminately.” He continued by using the word “disgusting” for men who partake in sexual activities with other men. Such a view can be labelled as homophobic. This is about a construction of identity explored in Queer Theory that allows certain behaviours to be labelled as queer (Dilley, 1999). Queer Studies is important for addressing a male normative definition of a world where views can reflect homophobia, transphobia, and misogyny. For Gill-Peterson

(2024), this often has an historic background that becomes inherited practice in a contemporary male culture. At present, Queer Studies continues to show that phobias and misogyny have not been successfully undermined (Faye, 2021). More work to challenge a traditional male culture is required. Moller (2007) argues that a much more fluid definition of human beings exists. Part of the challenge is to allow people a sense of freedom to be able to reflect diversity. There also remains a challenge in Christian churches, such as in the Church of England. The Living in Love and Faith (LLF) report has been heavily criticised as reinforcing a negative homophobic view about same sex relationships (see the *Campaign for Equal Marriage* website, Church of England, 2019). The church may only serve to reinforce a traditional heteronormativity that is expressed by its practitioners.

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the dominance of a hyper masculinity in the British Army. This is a traditional masculinity that has an impact on all service personnel, especially men. It can be understood as a persistent type of masculinity that has existed throughout the history of the military and continues to find expression today. It forms part of the cultural expression of military life. I doubt if there is another institution in British society that compares. I have given examples in this chapter on how traditional masculinity is expressed. It can be summed up by the term I have often heard used in the army, the “alpha male.” It is often expressed through shared male experiences of shouting, drinking, and physicality. The male padre, as with other service personnel, tends to display these. The context for these expressions can be anywhere in the life of the military, especially on the sports field and in the messes.

Not all male padres conform to this. There may be concerns in their perception of what constitutes appropriate behaviour as a man who sees himself called by God.

There is a real contrast between the expression of traditional masculinity in the British Army and diverging expressions outside. There are new ways of thinking and expressing. These are moves away from traditional masculine expression. It is a more complex and less binary understanding of the self. Queer Theory accepts that there are many explanations for human behaviour in relation to understandings of gender. These move beyond the essentialism of a simple male-female divide. A binary view can be seen as a construct that becomes accepted and normalised. Differences of expression open the potential for a conflict of cultures in the military, between the traditional culture of hyper masculinity and more diverse expressions. However, I would contend that conflict is unlikely as traditional masculinity remains dominant in the British Army. It could be argued that the British Army continues to express a historic male culture that was once prevalent in wider society. It is time for the British Army to catch up. This will involve challenging individual service personnel as old ways transition to new ways. Such a challenge applies to all, including male padres. Part of this challenge is to change perception. The use of language to uphold traditional male status reflects a view held by many male service personnel that men are an important and unified group. This is a view held within the hegemonic male culture and is internalised within the individual. Support is attributed to the “man’s man,” the alpha male. There is a reinforcement of this through communicated ritualised acts that serve to enhance a cohesive male community.

Chapter 4. The Female Chaplain: Femininities

4.1 Introduction

I was on an exercise in Canada and as part of my pastoral work I often visited an area known as the “tank park,” a place where vehicles were located and repaired. On one occasion, I visited a group of soldiers and a female soldier was present. My assumption was that she looked feminine and seemed to be out of place amongst this group of men. I said hello to her, and to my utter surprise, she responded in a deep and booming voice, “I’m OK, padre.” Trying not to look surprised, I asked her what she was doing. “Just working on the vehicles,” came the reply. I spoke with one of the vehicle commanders, recalling my experience. He told me that, “She is becoming he by gender reassignment.” This experience challenged my assumptions about what constitutes femininity and that it may be a completely alternative expression beyond my more limited view.

In this chapter, I argue that for many women, female padres included, there is pressure to conform to the dominant traditional masculinity of the British Army. This means that women will feel the need to express themselves in the same ways that men express themselves. This can be labelled as an extension of traditional masculinity. It becomes difficult to define female behaviour as a unique expression. All expressions will be seen in the context of the dominant form of traditional masculinity. There is also a challenge for women who attempt to express a femininity that diverges from a dominant form.

4.2 Defining Femininity

Spending time with my female interlocutors, I have been keen to hear their accounts of their experiences in the army, as well as their reflections on ways they felt they could express their gender. As with definitions of masculinity, I have found it helpful to begin to think about definitions of femininity. Here, as with masculinity, there are emerging expressions of femininity (Nayak and Kehily, 2008). For Nayak and Kehily, there are divergent forms that undermine the idea of a traditional female. The problem here is one of definition and understanding. Can there, according to Kachel et al., (2016), ever be a way of measuring behaviour that enables a categorisation of types of femininity? It partly depends on what grounds a measurement is made. If we assume a basic hegemonic type, all behaviours are likely to be identified as aberrations of this (Moller, 2007). This may be a problem for understanding Connell (2005), who provided an archetype of hegemonic masculinity that is too simplistic. Can female behaviour, especially in the military, even be assessed as an independent set of behaviours outside of a hegemonic definition (Halberstam, 2017)? I would argue that there is a dominant femininity within the British Army. This could be compared with a dominant masculinity, influenced by military hegemonic culture and finding expression in forms of individual hyper femininity. Nye (2005) has highlighted a problem here that female expression may only be seen as reflecting male behaviours. There is further research suggesting that female behaviour can be identified as forms of masculine behaviour. This has characterised female people as masculine, for example, displaying butch behaviours (Mackay, 2021). In McKelvey (2007), women who were accused of torturing soldiers in Iraq tended to be viewed by military men as masculine in this behaviour.

4.3 A Traditional Femininity

Halberstam (2020) has maintained that female behaviours are often not identified as unique when they reflect perceived masculine behaviours. Perhaps conversely, female behaviours are perceived as unique when they conform to a perception of traditional female behaviours. A female chaplain told me that she enjoyed being feminine. “I see myself as a girly girl.” This reminded me of the phrase, a “man’s man,” as discussed in Chapter 3. With these two terms, this is to see a man and a woman as different to each other in a traditional sense. She told me she enjoyed wearing makeup and “very feminine clothes.” She pointed out that she did not see a contradiction between serving in the military and being feminine. “There is a time and a place for wearing makeup and having long hair.” Many females serving in the British Army have long hair. According to army regulations, the JSP Joint Service Publication (2021) states, “In working dress, longer hair may either be worn in a: bun, single ponytail, single braid or corn braids/corn rows...” Men are permitted to have longer hair, but only for specific religious reasons, when the practice of their religion requires it. This includes Sikhs, Hindus, and Rastafarians. This reflects a lack of discrimination on the grounds of both sex and belief (Joint Service Publication (2014) 887, p. 19). Despite seeing herself as a “girly girl,” she spoke of her delight at the arrival of the right for women to serve in the infantry. She said, “This has been long overdue.” Yet as we spoke, she made the point, “I could never play rugby like the lads do. It’s just not in me. I respect women who can. But it’s not about this. Equal rights are not just about doing what men do but about doing what women do.” Here, she was expressing the idea that a man and a woman should be allowed to express themselves without judgement or discrimination. Regarding the infantry and the sport of rugby, this reflects ideas around male sacred spaces that I argue about in Chapter 6. Her choice of what

to be and what to do may be heavily influenced by a construction of cultural values in the individuals who occupy the military (de Haardt, 2017).

My female interlocutor attracted the attention of male military personnel in the infantry regiment where she was the padre. One told me, “It’s great to have a good-looking chaplain for a change. Forgive me, padre, but she’s far more attractive than you are.” This can be understood as men seeing women as different, as sexual objects. I examine this in more detail in Chapter 3 (3.7). The idea of the “male gaze” is the way in which men construct a definition of women as sexual objects (Mulvey, 1975, p.11). This means that people are judged not by who they are, but by how they look. Yet a sexualised female stereotype can be challenged within the military. For Soviet female soldiers in WWII, women called upon to fight found their self-identity compromised. One commented, “They needed soldiers...but we also wanted to be beautiful...” (Alexievich, 1985, p. 177). Here, there may be a desire to be traditionally feminine that is at odds with a perception of what a soldier is. This says something about how femininity is defined within a military culture. This returns to the idea that females can be understood through male constructs when acting in particular ways (Mackay, 2021). They are either traditionally feminine or, if not, then masculine in their behaviours. In a recent Parliamentary Report, the continuation of a prevailing culture of traditional masculinity was identified as a significant problem within the British Army (UK Parliament, 2021). The report stressed this does not allow women to develop their own identities, since female needs remain unidentified.

4.4 Female Behaviours Redefining Traditional Femininity

During a discussion with another female interlocutor, she told me that she enjoyed playing rugby. She had played in a civilian rugby team before becoming a military chaplain. She now plays rugby in the British Army at a nationwide level. This is a tough sport to play, especially in a military context, as it is the domain of male service personnel. Female rugby teams are absent at a localised, regimental level. I asked if she found being a female and playing rugby in the British Army a challenge. She commented, "It might not seem a thing to do as a woman, but I love it." As a sport, it could be cited as developing an "operational effectiveness" for engaging the enemy on the battlefield (British Army (2018) *Values and Standards of the British Army*, p. 30). Here, the "service test" is used to determine whether an action is deemed as having made a positive or negative impact on military operability. I would argue that every activity in the British Army, especially sports, has this same aim. This is predominantly delivered in what I would call the male "sacred space." Explored as a specific idea in Chapter 6, this places sport as one location of a male sacred space that plays an important role in the British Army for perpetuating a hyper and hegemonic masculinity. Messner (1995) argues that the environment of sport in his American study promotes a traditional masculinity through competitiveness that reinforces a general societal construction of traditional masculinity. I would argue this replicates sports in a military environment as largely male activities, despite a challenge about sports that has suggested there can be both a perpetuation of traditional ideals of manhood expression and undermining this through greater female representation (Adams et al., 2010). Some individual women are challenging the maleness of these spaces, such as on the rugby pitch or in the boxing ring. Some research has suggested the development of a more inclusive masculinity, such as in rugby, undermining traditional masculine expressions (Anderson and McGuire, 2010). This is something I

have not encountered in the British Army. It is predominantly a place for men rather than for women. With boxing, there is a clearly perceived sacred space for men. It is here that men can construct and reinforce a traditional idea of what it is to be a man (Woodward, 2007). There is an extreme physicality to such sports as an expression of traditional masculinity. It would be easy to say women are acting like men, returning to the idea of women not being able to have their own identity. This defines the normalised role of the traditional male as being physical. However, women may be redefining themselves in the traditional masculine space. These are the women being women in a new way. Another female chaplain commented on her interest in martial arts. She had been selected to participate in the British Army women's team, receiving considerable press attention. This perhaps also reflected the fact that she is a female chaplain. A female and a chaplain? This may say something not only about physicality perceived as a male trait but also about the padre as a non-combatant (see Chapter 3, 3.9). As a black belt, she performed well, winning a medal. I asked her whether she felt being a woman had been a challenge in pursuing her interest in martial arts in the British Army. She told me, "For certain. Being a woman and a padre has been a high-profile thing." Here is an example of femininity being redefined. Yet it is also an example of female expression in military sport not widely practised.

Queer Theory has already been identified in Chapter 3 concerning masculinities. It is also important here. Non-traditional feminine behaviours can challenge gendered norms. It has been suggested that there can be a movement of "resistance to regimes of the normal" (Warner, 1993, p. xxvi). This is part of what Queer studies is, by providing alternatives to the norm. With sexual identity defined as fluid, as Warner suggests, normalised behaviour is being challenged about what male and female is. This may translate into women being involved in activities that have traditionally been associated with men. However, I would challenge how effective this movement is within the British Army, which has a dominant traditional masculinity that

continues to be expressed in sport and other activities. Konopka et al., (2021) have identified a resistant masculinity that, in men, will encourage a defence of traditional masculine expressions in the face of resistance to other movements. However, Queer Theory asserts something important, that maleness and femaleness are not necessarily fixed and are open to wider expression that could challenge a traditional military masculinity. There are other ways of behaving that we can learn. These can be seen as non-traditional alternatives (Stewart, 2017). Here, the individual can learn to be something different by living alternative lifestyles. An understanding of human behaviour has often been defined by a narrow perception and definition of male and female, as a simple binary distinction (Butler, 1990). Parsons (1959) has been open to severe criticism for suggesting that we cannot be anything more than the product of male and female as clear binary expressions through primary socialisation. Parsons argues that men are rational and women are emotional, however this type of narrow distinction only leads to a perpetuation of traditional male and female expressions.

4.5 Femininity as Traditional Masculinity

There is a strong traditional masculinity that acts as a benchmark for all behaviours. When assessing female behaviour, this behaviour will often be judged as a type of adopted masculine behaviour. Nye (2005) argues that in many cases non-traditional female behaviours do not exist as a recognised feminine expression, as most behaviours by women that are not perceived as feminine behaviours are seen as replications of masculinity. This complies with McKelvey's (2007) assessment of female soldiers perceived as behaving like men in their adverse treatment of Iraqi soldiers. Alternatively, women may be expressing something about themselves that is not recognised. This has been understood as a type of female masculinity

(Halberstam, 2017). I would argue that this is defining femininity in terms of masculinity. It still reflects the dominance of masculinity in the British Army as a way of defining female behaviours as non-unique.

I spoke with one of my female interlocutors who had recently completed her largely infantry-based training at the Royal Military Academy, at Sandhurst, on the Professional Qualified Officer's course (PQO). She commented on her encounter with other females on the course who were "trying to act like men." She said they did this because they thought this was the appropriate way to behave. In this case, "by aggressively shouting orders." Vocalism has been interpreted as an important aspect of male dominance (Wolff and Puts, 2010). In this study, it was assessed that a powerful use of vocalism is an indicator of other hyper-masculine traits, including physical strength and physical aggressiveness. Within a male-dominated organisation, the voice, according to these researchers, is also a way of defining a man's position of power in the group and within the hegemonic order. In my female interlocutor's view, there are alternative ways for a woman to express orders, without using "traditional male approaches." Perhaps women can develop a feminine approach that is different from the norm. As a man on this course some years earlier, I was happy to shout orders and was encouraged. My female colleague added, "This kind of approach is simply expected and goes unchallenged." There is an expression of normative masculinity here. This may reflect an idea of the British Army as essentially heterosexual being played out in the behaviours of men (Warner, 1993). They shout as they go into battle. A way forward may be to empower women to express an authentic alternative as part of feminine expression, although this may not be recognised. There is a clear normalisation of roles constructed in Western society, as reflected in traditional ideas of different expressions being fixed in childhood within men and women (Parsons, 1959). Alternatively, men may be able to assume some less traditional masculine roles as part of their ongoing learning and development

(Brandth and Kvande, 1998). This stresses the idea of the development of multiple masculinities. Schippers (2007) suggests that masculinity as a construct can also adopt feminine constructs as more diverse behaviour. This opens the possibility of the influence of less traditionally masculine behaviours in the workplace. Sandberg (2013) argues that the establishment of women in the workplace as leaders is achievable, with the effect of developing greater diversity of behaviours. This remains to be seen in the British Army.

I am thankful that beyond Sandhurst, padres are less likely to shout. It still takes place. This is often expressed by padres, such as in Officers' Mess games. Shouting is something not often used outside of training. I remember a female officer in a regiment telling me, "I'm not going to shout at you, Padre, for not wearing your headdress when out of the building." This was enough to ensure that I wore my headdress. Perhaps this is a good example of making a point without vocalism. There is an idea that women are naturally different from men (Parsons, 1959). This stresses a perception of an emotional divide that women possess in relation to rational men. Played out, women are identified as being different from men. I would argue this could be reinforced by women who conform to the naturalised differences that are constructed about gender (Warner, 1993). One female interlocutor told me that, as a chaplain, being "professional" is important. Shouting is not. I can see how this speaks for a padre and a female that, in my mind, would not be expected to shout. A compensatory approach may also be at work here. Women may feel the need to shout the loudest to be heard and recognised in a male-dominated organisation. This may lead women compromise how they would normally act. Berdahl et al., (2018) argue that competitiveness is often exhibited in organisations dominated by men. This suggests that men will use different means, such as vocalism, to be recognised. By implication, women may adopt such behaviours. I would argue this is learnt behaviour, as much by women as by men. Negatively, this may only reinforce stereotypes of male

behaviour, where both men and women conform to hyper-masculine expressions (Feldberg and Glenn, 1984).

4.6 The Challenge for Femininity in a Male Context

A female interlocutor shared with me her challenge of being drawn in two different directions, as she saw it. “I feel called to be an army chaplain. But I also feel called to be a mother.” She even felt that the challenge of being a mother, “a woman,” as she called herself, is difficult in an organisation that asks so much of her time. This returns to ideas about the traditional role of women. Parsons (1959) saw a natural distinction of roles where women stayed at home and men went out to work. He was an academic of his time, when these distinctions could easily be made. There is also strong evidence to suggest that researchers such as Willmott and Young (1973) are idealistic about their claim of conjugal roles between men and women (Oakley, 1974). As Oakley suggested, childcare and housework were still the domain of women. There may be greater diversity today. Hauari and Hollingworth (2009) claim that men are more likely to give emotional support to family members, extending beyond paid employment. My female interlocutor’s children are older now. There is often a huge demand on female service personnel, especially with young children. There is potentially significant pressure on female military personnel who are single parents. Lately, a more flexible pattern of working hours has been introduced to help mitigate the pressures of being a mother. I have heard older service personnel raising objections to this. Often, they claim that this practice did not exist when they first joined. Yet it appears there are more one-parent female service personnel now than there were. An older member of the British Army told me, “Women shouldn’t serve in the army if they want to get pregnant.” I would argue this view reinforces the idea that

women who serve should not act like women. They should not get pregnant. In turn, this reinforces a view that women are seen as different from men and if they act like women, then they are seen as somehow unfit to serve.

An issue faced by women in the British Army is the extent to which they are identified as different by male service personnel. I suggest pregnancy is likely to reinforce an idea of difference. The physical demands of service life, especially for selection to the infantry, may be another factor for seeing women as different. They are perceived as not being as physically robust as men. These examples can be argued as naturalised differences, as constructions about what men and especially women are (Mackay, 2021). I would argue a debate is required about the nature of physical tests and whether these tests can compensate for differences, if any, in physical ability between men and women. There will always be some physically stronger women and some physically weaker men. More generally, there are other concerns aired by women who serve in a male military, such as the absence of places in military camps where tampons could be disposed of. It has been claimed that tampons were not always available to purchase in camps. These concerns and others have been raised, like the problem of ill-fitting female military uniforms that have been designed only to fit men (UK Parliament, 2021, pp. 31-32). A female colleague made the point that it is rare to see a room allocated for female soldiers who need to express milk. She told me she had suggested a milking room to the male leadership in the previous infantry regiment in which she served. She told me, "The senior officers in the Chain of Command looked at me like I had three heads." One commented, "So you want a titty room." These issues illustrate that women do have distinctive needs, and yet the male establishment has not been willing to offer solutions. It seems to me there is a strong endemic macho culture concerned with its own activities. This continues to be aired, not compensating for the needs of women (Simpson, 1994).

These are very important examples to consider for how traditional masculinity can lead to ignoring the needs of women. It appears to me that these are easily rectified with a change of attitude. Otherwise, I would argue it may also lead to a problem of recruiting and especially retaining women in service. I have heard service personnel talk about the primary importance of the needs of the military and then the individual. Yet both are required for a healthy balance. Frank (2020) argues that both community and individual needs must be met for an organisation to function effectively. If the organisation alone is considered, the individual may be undervalued, whereas if only the individual is considered, the needs of the organisation as a fighting force may not be met. I would also argue that a solution must be sought that allows a greater inclusivity of need being met for both men and women. In this endeavour, diversity and inclusion, with a recognition of different needs, are essential. This will seek to break down the stereotypes of difference based on the public and private spheres allocated to men and women (Whelehan, 1995). Here, there is a recognition of difference, but not based on stereotypical constructions. This may avoid exclusion. Inclusivity can be about working together and breaking down barriers. bell hooks (2004) is keen to emphasise that people, men and women, can work together. This is not about a continuing divide between feminists who identify men as the enemy of change. However, some criticism has been raised, questioning the ability of men to grasp the challenges that women face (Beasley, 2019). This certainly seems the case for women whose needs are not always met in the daily life of military service.

4.7 Femininity as a Traditional Domestic Role

There has been the claim that egalitarianism has been realised between men and women (Willmott and Young, 1973). This has focused on the idea that roles

involving domestic tasks and childcare have become equally shared between men and women. This has been heavily criticised as an idealised and unrealistic claim. Oakley (1974) refuted this claim. For her and for other more recent researchers, there is still a playing out of divided gender roles, where women are in the home providing for emotional needs, and men are in the workplace exercising their “rational” skills (Parsons, 1959). These are continuing traditional constructions of masculinity and femininity. I would argue that this continues to be played out in the British Army. This may be complex in the military, especially if we view the military as a kind of family unit, as I have heard suggested by some military personnel. In my experience, men support men. Is this a kind of emotionally supportive role? Is this so different from a traditionally perceived role of women in the home? Brandth and Kvande (1998) maintain that men playing a domestic type of role is not inconsistent with being part of an overall hegemonic expression. In the military, men can still be traditionally masculine but with an application of care to fellow service personnel. Earlier feminists were keen to advocate a separatist agenda, removing male presence and influence to achieve egalitarian aims for women (Hartmann, 1976). Such an approach is not possible in the military. Millett (1970) and other second wave feminists saw a separation as the only way to stem the influences of a traditional and excluding masculinity. Their views oppose the more positive inclusionary approach of bell hooks (2004). I very much favour an inclusionary approach, although its realisation in the face of a dominant traditional masculinity may be questioned. I would also argue that the traditional role of women in the home continues to be played out in the military. For example, military nurses who take care of others. I see this as a reflection of the perception that women’s role is to offer care and emotional support (Parsons, 1959). Yet there are challenges to a British Army that seems to function within the structures of hegemonic masculinity. It faces the challenges of women serving in less traditional roles, such as in the infantry. This can be seen as part of a move to bring women into

key positions that may begin to undermine the views that only men can and should occupy such positions (Sayer and Bianchi, 2004).

4.8 Uniqueness of Feminine Expression

I was sitting in the office of a female colleague serving in an infantry regiment. A voice could be heard somewhere outside. It was the voice of a man shouting. We looked out of the window and saw two men in uniform facing each other. One wore sergeant stripes, and the other was a private soldier. The situation was aggressive, with the sergeant shouting and pointing a finger at the other man. He moved his face close to the soldier's face, continuing to shout at the top of his voice. This continued for some time. Such an image may confirm a stereotype of the British Army as a shouty organisation, although in my experience, this is not always the case. Yet the voice is an important tool for maintaining military discipline (Wolff and Puts, 2010). It acts as an expression of masculinity. There is also the suggestion here that it assists in the construction of a hegemonic masculine order where men can achieve status and authority. I had not encountered such an extreme example of anger before. It appeared that the sergeant had almost lost control. He seemed unaware of anyone witnessing his outburst. I have heard service personnel who have served for a long time talk about the British Army becoming less vocal. As part of its presentation, the British Army tries to portray itself in a positive way. For example, it is concerned with becoming a more welcoming place (British Army, *People: Diversity and Inclusion*, 2020). There are other ways to communicate a message. This can challenge a more traditional male expression. For example, Mazel (1992) has examined the importance of more personal interactive approaches, especially in traditional communities. In these situations, people can become more closely bound together.

My female colleague commented, "This is terrible. I need to have a word with this sergeant." We both quickly moved through the corridor. The sergeant noticed our presence and turned to look at us. My female colleague responded, "Is everything OK?" The sergeant looked flushed and was breathing heavily. The private soldier seemed shocked by the situation. Everyone stood for a moment in silence. "OK," she said. "Can I have a word with you [the sergeant] in private, please?" She continued, "I want to speak with you [the private soldier] later. Get yourself a brew and come to my office in an hour." It came to light that there was a recurring problem of discipline concerning the private soldier. There were also claims of unresolved pastoral issues. There were several layers to this encounter. The shouting sergeant could be argued as representing an expression of a hegemonic masculinity, with the voice as a tool for this. The padre, on the other hand, was able to exercise control. A more interactive approach seemed to be at work. Her rank over the sergeant was probably a factor. She was also a female padre. Gender did not seem to be an issue here, although her presence as a woman may have had an impact on de-escalating this situation. It also suggested a more emotionally supportive role. This could also have been provided by a male padre.

Later in the day, I had an opportunity to raise the incident with my female interlocutor. She told me that it is rare to experience such an explicit incident of "verbal bullying." She continued by telling me that she did not want to "reprimand" the sergeant in front of the private soldier. Privately, she told him that the way he had spoken to the private soldier was "unprofessional." Furthermore, she added, "It's the old and the bold approach." I asked her to expand on this. She told me, "I mean, it's the way soldiers always used to address each other down the chain of command. Why can't some men just learn how to talk to another human being?" This returns to a sense of the British Army as a traditional masculine organisation. It is in this continuing expression, even today, that a macho culture is being played out (Simpson, 1994). I would argue this

incident is an important example. It exemplifies what an expression of traditional masculinity can look like (Hearn, 1998). I asked her what an alternative approach would be. She responded, “Women seem less obsessed with shouting and becoming aggressive.” I had a sense that her approach earlier in the day had encapsulated an authority without the need to raise her voice.

4.9 Uniqueness of Padre as Gender Neutral?

I spent an evening with a male colleague. His interaction with male officers was interpreted as being flirtatious, and it was suggested that he was acting in “a gay” manner. An officer told me, “Can you keep an eye on him please, Padre?” This was said with a hint of humour. The padre’s behaviour was identified as different, and it struck me that being a padre is complex, incorporating all kinds of behaviour. This could be claimed for anyone, although in my experience, oddities of padre behaviour are often accepted and encouraged. Could it be claimed that the “padre” is more of a unique category? Yet despite a difference of the padre as somehow unique, there are judgements on behaviours relating to certain perceptions of what behaviours mean, such as “gay.” The term “queer” has been used to identify a wide range of different behaviours that do not fit the norm (Dilley, 1999). In thinking about Queer Theory, there is an acceptance that behaviour can be fluid and wide ranging. For Richards et al., (2017), this will challenge traditional positions of masculinity that have tended to define male and female behaviours into simplistic binaries. A problem may exist where phobias are still present for what is perceived as abnormal behaviours. This has been identified as problematic for individuals who are seeking their own identities in a traditional environment (Faye, 2021). Certainly, padres can be seen as different. I would argue this reflects the fact that a padre is from a religious rather than military

background and therefore represents something different. As such, there is also a view that a padre can potentially get away with more than other regular service personnel. I was told, "You'll be OK. You're the padre. You can get away with anything." It is hard to differentiate between the person who is a padre and interpretations of gender. Behaviours will still tend to be judged as reflecting something that is perceived as normal or atypical. Perhaps a padre can make a difference by reflecting something atypical that can be regarded as acceptable behaviour. Bartky (1998) suggests that men, even traditionally minded men, may not be antagonistic to alternative behaviours. This may reflect an exposure to alternative behaviours and practices that are embraced (Lomas, 2013).

4.10 Conclusion

Femininities are rarely judged as authentic female behaviours on their own. Traditional, as well as hyper and hegemonic traits, appear to be prevalent. These dominant types of military masculinity are expressed in varying degrees. Such behaviours are a benchmark for assessing female behaviours. These behaviours are often seen as reflections of masculinity or deviations from it. This can be a robust femininity where women are identified as being as competitive and engaging as a traditional masculine man. Such behaviour may be identified by some as a form of non-genuine feminine behaviour. That is contrary to an understanding of female behaviour as a normalised form. Perhaps a normalised form can be summed up as a more traditional femininity encapsulated in the phrase, "a girly girl." This is contrasted with a traditional masculine definition of "a man's man." The latter has characteristics associated with traditional masculine behaviour, such as shouting. This can also be perceived as a feminine expression of the masculine, for women who also shout.

There is a challenge here for women to develop an alternative approach of feminine verbal communication that can begin to be perceived as distinctly feminine. There is also a challenge for women in a competitive male environment who may feel the need to compensate for their position to enable promotion. This could include the adoption of traditional male behaviours, reinforcing the position of traditional masculinity.

A challenge, especially for women, exists in their negotiation to break down traditional normalised gender roles. The problem here is that women may not want to become involved in male “sacred spaces.” This includes the sports field and in the messes, where drinking games are played. I would argue that the absence of a female presence will only serve to reinforce a normalised femininity that identifies women as different. The example of the female infantry soldier is a case in point. Some men have absolutely rejected the idea of women training to become infantry soldiers. Various reasons are put forward. I would argue it is because some men see women as different. When women have become involved in such spaces, such as in certain sports, they do so with an awareness of their position as women. When women do become involved, the problem of their feminine status may remain, in the sense that they can be seen by men as women acting like men.

Chaplaincy and female chaplaincy are not easy to define. A sense of calling is important for some female chaplains who use this to override an argument for normalised distinctions being constructed for male and female behaviours. It is unlikely that a strong case can be made for calling a padre a special category that is somehow different. The padre is often perceived as different by service personnel because of their religious background and values.

Gender distinctions between men and women in the British Army seem to result in limited or no provision for women operating in military daily life. This may be

shown by a lack of suitable military clothing for women and by failing to provide for distinct female needs. The role of the female as mother is important here. Often, women are seen as the natural caregivers in a domestic setting, extended to an idea of the British Army as a kind of family unit. I would argue that women may be seen as mothers by male service personnel. This may include how female chaplains are perceived as offering special emotional support for male soldiers. The woman may be seen as the homemaker and the man as the breadwinner, furthering the distinctions between their private and public roles. For some men who hold traditional masculine views, there is difficulty in accepting flexible working hours for single mothers who are service personnel. Motherhood in a traditional sense may therefore be seen as incompatible with female military service.

Chapter 5. Masculine bias on the role of the Female Padre as a Mother Figure

5.1 Introduction

“Hello, Doc. How are you today?” It was the first time that I had encountered a female medical doctor in the army. I sat in her office. The relationship between military doctors and military padres is usually very good. Along with welfare service personnel, we constitute caring within the military where various needs, medical and welfare related, can be addressed. I had come to introduce myself, as the “doc” was new in her regimental post. Our meeting gave her an opportunity to be listened to. She told me that she was doing well, apart from feeling uneasy in her medical chain of command, serving under a more senior male doctor with whom she felt undervalued. “He doesn’t understand me. He’s very traditional.” Her issue was that he was unwilling to discuss or pass patients to her. This could also have reflected her relatively junior position. However, he had pointed out to her that her main role, as he saw it, was to chat to the young soldiers “who needed a shoulder to cry on.” Her role, in other words, was to offer emotional support. I felt that the female doctor was being confined to a role that is traditionally associated with mothering and femininity. There may be a perception that the mother is there to offer emotional support to her children. The female doctor is there to offer emotional support to soldiers, usually male soldiers.

In this chapter, I will explore the ways in which male service personnel maintain a naturalised definition of a woman and especially a female padre as a mother-type figure who offers emotional support to soldiers. This draws on patriarchal assumptions about women. I am aware that I may also maintain these assumptions. I think that women can be seen as a special category of military service personnel. I put forward

the idea that this may resonate especially for soldiers who come from traditional and one-parent families where the mother has been the primary carer. From this, the soldier may connect with a female padre who is an emotional extension of the mother at home. I am aware that I am playing with the assumption of the female who offers emotional support. This chapter reads into this bias that I have. It also reinforces the view that male military personnel may identify a woman as different from a man. This will serve to maintain and reinforce traditional distinctions between men and women.

5.2 The Role of “Unconscious Bias”

It perhaps could be argued that the pastoral care received by soldiers can differ between male and female padres. This is based on the idea that a woman can bring a different dynamic to situations of engagement. Could it be that care offered to soldiers by female padres may reflect care that soldiers themselves received from their own mothers? That essentially the nature of that care, of a female caring for a young man, may be felt to be very similar? This will be based on two main assumptions that women are good at caring and that padres are seen as mother figures. In this sense, a woman as a female padre and as a mother figure can be identified synonymously as providing an emotional service of support. For Braverman (1974), the functional role of all individuals is to reinforce the dominant system of control. The actual mothers of soldiers are the women who have played a significant or primary caring role for children in the home. As I reflect on women as significant caregivers, I am aware that I am normalising the role of women as carers. This makes a perception about women as being different from men. It is again a reflection of earlier thought as expressed in Parsons (1959), that women support emotionally in the home, whilst men support instrumentally as external givers from the workplace, such as financial giving. In this

sense, I am doing no more than reinforcing a view of traditional feminine and masculine roles. I would argue that this, in turn, may also serve to reinforce a position of masculine dominance in the British Army as a place for men. As already suggested, researchers such as Willmott and Young (1973) provide an incorrect narrative about shared family roles by gender. For others, there is really difference and asymmetry (Oakley, 1974). Yet it could be argued that there is greater involvement of care by men. This does not necessarily compromise a more general expression of hegemonic masculinity in the individual male (Brandth and Kvande, 1998). For example, a male soldier may offer support to another male soldier. This begs the question whether this care would be any different from the care offered by a female to a male soldier. A woman may or may not be a better carer than a man. Queer Theory would offer a different view about human expression. It cannot be categorised in traditional distinctions of roles between men and women, as human expression is diverse, transcending gender boundaries (Jagose, 1996). I would argue that pastoral support offered by both male and female padres is a complex matter. I would also suggest that the nature of the interaction depends on the individuals involved.

Now we come to what I have been discussing, unconscious bias. This refers to the ways in which we, as human beings, interpret others around us based on assumptions. This is often knowledge we are not always aware of, but it is deeply influential. It means that culture influences us and the norms and values we hold. Unconscious bias may allow us to accept women as better emotional carers than men. Within a traditional organisation such as the British Army, a traditional masculine culture can be seen as responsible for emphasising differences between men and women (Winter and Woodward, 2007). As a female interlocutor commented, "The British military is always seen through men's eyes." She continued, "Men see what they want to see. The whole army sees as men do because it is men who make up most of the army." This suggests there is a deeply entrenched male culture that

maintains and reinforces views of women and men. As such, there are often traditional masculine views about the role of women. Martin (2025) recognises the existence of gendered care in which even menial activities for women are justified as having worth. She holds that Christianity has provided a justification for the caring and supporting role of women. I would argue the British Army is a traditional institution, like the church, in which a traditional male culture may also perpetuate a view of specific roles for men and specific roles for women. As a male in the military, I am part of this masculine culture and accept a degree of personal unconscious bias when I think about gender roles. As Breen et al., (2018) hold, this is not always clearly recognisable in the self as it may operate at a more subtle level within the individual. With my research, I like to think I have developed a greater awareness of myself as part of this problem. It is a problem because the constructed differences between men and women do nothing to promote diversity and inclusion. Rather, it can be argued that gender inequality is perpetuated (Carli and Eagly, 2001). This is a view that supports the idea that historic organisations like the church and the military continue to perpetuate traditional distinctions of roles between men and women.

5.3 Empowerment and Servanthood

There may be an unequal relationship between empowerment and servanthood for women, whose servanthood is no more than facilitating the stable position of men. In this sense, women can be identified as care providers for men, enabling the man or the soldier to be better on the battlefield. In Martin (2025), emotional care has been and continues to be an undervalued area of service. Formally, it is not well paid. Within the military, I would also argue that it may be undervalued regarding the primary importance given to delivering an effective military

mission. However, this does not mean care is not an essential part of this. Like the home, the woman in the British Army may be seen as responsible for providing emotional support to members of the British Army. I would suggest a woman may be empowered to serve as a padre, but perhaps for a woman, as I see, this may be in the perceived role of a mother. As a female padre told me, "I'm a mother at home, and I'm a mother at work." Here, Christian service by a woman may be argued as a submissive role. Braverman (1974) has written on this in terms of class within a developed capitalist society. A woman may be compared to the value that clerical workers bring to maintaining a dominant system. Research on the role of a secretary has suggested that secretaries can be identified as playing a subservient role (Pringle, 1988). This can be understood as gender and class, in which women play a particular supporting role within an organisation. Kroløkke and Sørensen (2005) have argued that in Western societies, there is a fundamental and definable gender order. It is often expressed as a naturalisation of distinct roles between men and women.

Distinct gender roles between men and women, as suggested, can be clearly defined in the context of family life. I recall a soldier telling me, "You are in the army now, Padre. You are in a new family. We are your new family." Following this idea of the British Army as a type of family, I would argue that gender roles continue to be expressed in distinctive ways. The infantry is almost exclusively made up of men. I see the infantry as very much the public expression of the military, visible and on the front line. Some women predominantly make up certain supporting roles. I have seen this within military nursing and those who serve as military clerks. Bowlby (1997) identifies domestic roles as extending into the workplace. This observation very much reflects my understanding of male and female roles in the British Army, as I have suggested. There is, I think, an observable differentiation of roles according to the genders of men and women. Of course, there will always be exceptions. Just as Queer Theory supports the idea of a wide diversity of behaviours, motherhood as a concept

can be complex (Glenn, 1994). Here, different people make up the landscape of motherhood, along with complex identities associated with being a mother, and how individuals make sense of who they are as human beings. Motherhood and what it means is therefore complex, especially according to Glenn, when it is considered in relation to women having a career outside the home. There appears to be a greater complexity as to the role of mothering than there was. This is affected by a complexity of factors in modern society, whilst a maternal role still exists (Koniak-Griffin et al., 2006). However, I would hold that in the gender binary world of the British Army, roles between men and women may be more simplistically divided. This, as I have argued, has a long historical legacy of belief and practice.

In a discussion with one of my female interlocutors, an alternative argument arose with her claim that no real gender differences exist between male and female. She told me, "It's all rubbish. I'm here to do my job." I have heard it said by service personnel that there are no differences based on sex or race. As we know this is not entirely true and it has been challenged more recently in the Parliamentary Report (2021). This report was significant for challenging those who thought that women had a conjugal and symmetrical role with men. There had been no recognition of the need to address female differences to allow women to feel more included in the British Army. The need for better fitting uniforms to be based on female rather than male shapes is but one example. The adage can be challenged – one shape does not fit all. Yet my interlocutor's point is important in the sense that the role of pastoral care is paramount for a padre. Some have served for many years, the "old and the bold" as they are sometimes referred to. They tend to hold more traditional views about what is important. For them, questions around diversity and inclusion tend not to feature. One told me, "I'm here to do a job, Padre. I don't care about all this inclusion crap. If there was a problem, we spoke about it, and it was sorted." I have wondered whether this can play into a psychological perspective of what a father's primary role can be.

Grossman (2002) found that the mother-child attachment is fundamentally important for emotional development and that fathers are more significant for activities that develop social skills. A military man could be caricatured as a man who responds and gets things done. This conversely reinforces a perception that women can undertake a mothering role to provide primary emotional care for others (Schaffer and Emerson, 1964). For Grossman, the father can still play a crucial caring role. I have encountered older soldiers who offer support and care to young male recruits. A psychological perspective that seems to support the idea of a mother figure offering emotional support can be questioned. It has been argued that attachment depends more on the responses of the man or woman rather than it being a question of a specific gender (Field, 1978).

Her view as a female padre may be different from other female interlocutors who would see difference based on gender. I continued my conversation with her and raised a question about whether she thought that she had been treated differently as a female in the military. She replied, "Not at all. I don't see there is any real difference." She continued, "Everyone talks about males and females being treated differently, but I haven't seen this in the army." She adopted a more task-orientated approach to her work. "You just need to get on with it. There's no time for gender when there's a job to do." Her view reminded me of the idea of the instrumental man argued by Parsons (1959). Her position undermines this. This suggests that men can care, and women can be practical. There is another unconscious bias at work here. It had been my view that all women would identify difference based on gender. This challenged my existing perception of women as primary carers. In this sense, there is both difference and diversity of behaviour. The statement by General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith may therefore be saying something profound: "An Army that is justifiably recognised as a demonstrably inclusive employer that respects difference" (British Army, *People: Diversity and Inclusion*, 2020).

She defined herself as “a strong woman.” It struck me how strong she was. She spoke confidently and to the point. Her approach was about getting on with it. I imagined that she is not the kind of person who would allow others to tell her what to do. I would argue she is an example of female empowerment. I loved her liberated approach in the face of gender issues. She had significant mental resilience. She highlighted to me that her approach was to “make up my own mind on things. The things that women are often expected to do in the home.” This echoes the findings that a gender distinction continues to exist when it comes to male and female roles (Oakley, 1974). However, my interlocutor did not want such distinctions to disrupt the importance she gave to the work she undertook. This reminded me of the idea of the Women’s Liberation Movement (WLM) in the West. This very much depended on the efforts of individual women with their strength of character to both highlight issues and to stand against them (Flaherty, 2017).

5.4 The Importance of Family Life

I have a family, a wife and two children. The children are significantly older now than when I joined the British Army. They have always been important to me, especially with negotiating the demands of time away on exercise and deployment. I have given some time to exploring the impact of work on family life as experienced by both my male and female interlocutors. Regarding family life, I have always assumed that my wife would take care of our children when I have been away. She can continue to be the mother at home, whilst I, the father, am involved in the world of the military. Moore (1999) has explored the idea of a sexual division of labour. This has traditionally been played out as two distinct roles surrounding the domestic context, such as the

mother or woman as the homemaker and the father or man as the breadwinner (Parsons, 1959). Furthermore, Moore suggests this can be played out in the work context with two distinct roles expressed between men and women. This could fit in with the idea of how the British Army works as a family, with a sexual division of roles, as I have suggested. I would argue this can be summed up as men on the front line in infantry and women in supporting roles, such as in nursing and as clerks. This would emphasise the idea of women as primary care providers to the real function of the British Army, which is to fight. The importance of family life in the military as a fighting force is therefore maintained.

Yet the family at home is so important. This may place additional responsibility and pressure upon female chaplains who feel they must maintain a balance between work and home. This is especially true if there is a perception and psychological requirement for women to be the main caregivers to their family at home. There are likely to be additional expectations on women continuing to perform home tasks, whilst also working outside of the home. This conflict is highlighted by Thompson and Walker (1989), who continue to see a traditional division of labour between men and women. They accept that change is possible where men and women work together in a relational way to help break down traditional gender distinctions. There is something about the liberation of women here. I would maintain that women can only be free from societal expectations if there is a challenge and a move to new ways of being (Elliot, 1995). This view emphasises the idea that women need to move away from a submissive position of motherhood. Elliot talks about a transition for women in their roles. A female chaplain told me that women could establish their own identities in senior roles. She commented, "The role of a senior chaplain is not difficult."

I have asked the question with my interlocutors about how they see work and family life impacting each other. The two male chaplains I spoke with both have

families with dependent children. Did they see having a family with children as a challenge when combined with work commitments? Such a connection of care between home and workplace may be absent for male padres. They may not see the same fathering responsibilities between home and work as a mother may. For male chaplains, the expression of chaplaincy may be confined to the workplace. In my experience, these are often activities of getting involved with the other men, such as on the sports field or in mess games. Yet research affirms the central importance that fathers play in the lives of children in the home (Lamb, 2010). This is true of the role fathers play in emotional development. I argue that the British Army is a traditional institution, and as such, there is a perpetuation of traditional roles. It is not surprising to see only more recent scholarship on the role of fathers, as traditional views have been persistent in wider society. Cath and Gurwitt (2019) observe both the traditional father outside of the home, but also the challenges to this, where fathers are adopting more diverse roles domestically, considering shifts in societal perceptions. One of the two male interlocutors told me, "I have children. Thank God for my wife. She does such a lot with them." The other male chaplain made a similar point: "My wife does a lot when I'm not around to help, especially with the children." These are examples of normalised roles attributed to women and not attributed to men.

In my experience, the British Army has been described as a family. At the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, I was told that I was "in a new family now." I would argue this comparison can be taken further by looking at positions within a regiment that are occupied by senior men. I would even say that such men take on a fatherly status. This reflects the archetype of the father identified by Parsons (1959). In this sense, senior military men are the leaders and head up the regiment. They represent, I would argue, a traditional understanding of men who command a patriarchal establishment. Like Parsons on the family, the military family appears to me as very traditional and patriarchal, as largely unchanged through the years. As I reflect on this

view, I am aware of how masculine the military is. Interestingly and comparatively, in overseas postings, the service person, who is often male, is known as “the head of household” for the purposes of military administration.

The British Army has an array of members and rules. If the members of this unique “family” do not adhere to the rules, there can be consequences. This conjures an image of a traditional family, where men can maintain the expected order and discipline. I would hold that there is an expectation about the father figure as a disciplinarian within a family. This can be extended to the British Army as a type of family. McKelley and Rochlen (2016) have identified the persistence of a hegemonic masculinity where men continue to express themselves as disciplinarians. This is not always viewed as a positive approach, with the challenge of new patterns of behaviour that fathers are adopting. Yet, as an idea, I think it fits well with the disciplinarian approach of many senior men in the military. Rules are very much the order of the day in the British Army. These are laid out as an administration order (Ministry of Defence, 2021, AGAI: Volume 2-Chapter 67-Administrative Action). Non-conformity to these may also incur punishments. The military is a disciplined organisation that demands a high level of conformity. It is an example of a total institution and is identified by Goffman as a place where members are expected to behave (Goffman, 1961). Conversely, there may be rewards for those who do conform. I would suggest the British Army feels like a strict family in which to live and work. At times, I have found it oppressive and overbearing. It has felt like everyone is concerned about maintaining the rules.

Goffman (1961) has identified the importance of the role of the individual for maintaining an authoritarian organisation. This classic work speaks to my experiences of the military, where a strong air of conformity pervades the daily working lives of men and women. I have defined this as hegemonic as part of the masculine culture of the

organisation (Connell, 2005). This is the dominant type. It then becomes a series of hyper expressions within the lives of service personnel, mostly men. Yet men must be careful not to go too far so as to incur punishment. It has been suggested that Connell is restrictive in her definition of hegemonic masculinity as the dominant type from which other masculinities develop (Demetriou, 2001). It has been argued that other expressions exist that are adoptive of wider, alternative expressions of masculinity (Bartky, 1998). Yet in my experience and in the experiences of my interlocutors, a traditional patriarchal expression exists. There may be alternative expressions, but a patriarchal masculinity continues in some form that is hegemonic in nature (Buchbinder, 2012). In the caring role of the padre, we are often involved in discipline matters concerning service personnel. We provide a listening ear to those who have failed to conform. A person can get a bad reputation very easily. I have heard the phrase “problem child” used to describe soldiers. Goffman (1961) shows us what can happen to individuals within the total institution who do not conform. They can become ostracised. This operates in the prison system, an example of a total institution cited by Goffman, where prisoners can be locked up for long periods of time or restricted to solitary confinement (Seymour, 2003). Here, the padre is often the one to support the so-called “problem” individuals.

Military personnel are divided into two categories for families connected to the military: those who are accompanied by a partner and those who are not (“unaccompanied”). The accompanied personnel live with their partner (usually married) and perhaps with children. A family “quarter” or house is assigned to them according to rank. The unaccompanied personnel usually live in “single person” accommodation, as with personnel who are single. If the service person is unaccompanied, usually a man, his partner, usually a woman, may be left with domestic responsibilities somewhere else, such as childcare and household tasks. This conforms to the findings made by Oakley (1974). It shows that even today,

conjugal roles are not shared equally between men and women. It also plays into the psychological arguments of researchers such as Grossmann (2002) who hold to the primary role of women as carers in the family. I have served unaccompanied. I was given houses to live in because of my role as a military padre. I lived there on my own with my wife looking after our dependent children somewhere else, in our family home. This was a lonely experience. We could have lived together. Yet moving every two years would have put pressure on our children and their education. Therefore, we chose the difficult route of living apart during the week and sometimes for weeks at a time. This experience was far from easy and enhanced a sense of loneliness for us both. My wife also found it difficult to look after the children and maintain her career. Everything was on her with the demands of childcare. Increasingly, my wife felt that the civilian communities in which she lived did not understand. There was an increasing sense of isolation. Now that our children are grown up, we live together, and she accompanies me.

The role of female partners as carers was identified by some of my male interlocutors. One said, "My wife has to do it all when I'm away." Another told me, "It's just one of those things. We owe a lot to our wives." Schaffer and Emerson (1964) have argued that the role of mothering has largely been the responsibility of the mother. This continues to find psychological justification that women, not men, make better carers. There is also an alternative argument to suggest that the role of women as mothers in the home is circumstantial. In this case, men and women can be equally worthy carers of children (Field, 1978). In a military context, as a male-dominated organisation, it is usually the female partner that has the main responsibility for childcare. Even if a case could be made for gender distinctions regarding a caring role, it would be difficult to argue this with housework. Over the years, I recall Commanding Officers of regiments giving thanks to partners of military personnel for their "sacrifice" at home. The British Army has sought to help partners with childcare, for those who

live accompanied, such as with creche facilities on camp. My wife and I have also accessed spaces at public schools when our children were young. However, the needs of the British Army have often come first. I have come to understand there are only three options: the child/children accompany the service personnel, they remain with the partner at another location, or they are placed in boarding school. In every case, it seems there is a compromise for the family in favour of the needs of the military family, the family that imposes the challenges of moving around.

5.5 The Caring Role of the Padre in the Military Context

I sat with my female colleague in her office. It was spacious with laid out leather chairs. Various religious artefacts hung on the walls. A coffee table stood in the middle of the room, around which the chairs were placed. On the centre of the table was a large box of tissues, opened and ready to use. They sat ready for the outpouring of emotion. I saw this office as a place of retreat, away from the harsh realities of life in the British Army.

As I sat in her office, I had a sense of padres being different from other service personnel. I have heard us being called “religious workers” and “welfare officers,” offering support for “spiritual” needs. I have favoured the term “pastoral carers,” being a caring person, partly welfare. Yet more than this, a pastoring role as a Christian expression (Redding, 2012). It can be argued here that as padres we express more than a secularised care. It comes from what we believe, and arguably who we are. I believe we are people of God and followers of Christ. Kempis (2004) talks about the role of the Christian disciple as imitating or mirroring who Christ is. This involves, at its core, a sense of sacrificial love for the needs of others. I have a strong sense of

mirroring Christ in my service to others. Currently, all regular commissioned military padres are from a Christian denomination, apart from one male Jewish padre. This may be changing soon as the RACHD drive to recruit those of other faiths and those of no faith in the role of chaplain.

A term I have heard used on many occasions is the role of the padre in understanding what the “moral compass” is regarding different situations. For Nageswaran et al., (2022), ethics play a central role in religious expression in secular environments, such as in the health service. It seems to me that padres are perceived as people who can reason out morality at the same time as administering care. Martin (2025) picks up on the theme of care that is identified as having religious roots. Yet care has also developed into more secularised expressions. It is no longer the case that the priest in the community is the primary carer, or that the woman in the home is the primary carer. Feminism and the challenge of changing gender roles are both influential in developing a wider expression of care outside of traditional practices. Often, as padres, we are covert operators of our faith and only occasionally do we become explicitly religious with the use of Christian-based services. I would argue this is a minor part of who we are. The main emphasis of our work is engaging pastorally with those around us, both military and families of military. A term often used is to be there “for those of faith and for those of no faith.” This has been exemplified in the service offered by padres in the past, such as Studdert Kennedy. We offer something distinct, not always clearly defined, in a military where support is often required. As I sat in silence in her office, I mused on these things. I was reminded of the teaching of Kennedy, who argued for supporting soldiers in public and praying for them in private (Harvey, 2010). In this sense, we are there to minister to others. We are there in person, caring for those who serve in the military (Guild, 1992). I would argue this reflects a ministry of incarnation exercised by Christ, who lived and worked with his disciples.

My female colleague often spends time sitting in her office. As we sat together, she said, "I like to get my admin done in the mornings and to visit in the afternoon. Besides, it also gives soldiers an opportunity to come and see me, knowing that I am available in my office." The practice of office time in the morning is common for chaplains, as we try to get a pattern and order to our day. Chaplaincy is a unique role, unlike any other job in the British Army. I would argue we are required to be there, a presence for people. This is an expression of what incarnation can mean.

As I sat in her office, I felt an amazing sense of privilege as well as the freedom that my colleagues and I have. We are the people within the British Army who look after people. We serve with them. As padres, we are often trusted and held in high regard. I recall a question I raised some years ago with a serving member: "Why are padres held in such high regard?" He told me, "You represent the values and standards of the British Army." He went on to talk about the importance of selfless commitment. For him, this is manifested in the sacrifice that soldiers make on the battlefield and in the ways that people lead their daily lives. Another told me that padres are "a force for good." This could have no spiritual or religious connotation. Perhaps we are seen as people who can make a difference. As padres, we are recognised, both men and women, as representing high standards. I choose to define this by my understanding of Christianity. We are incarnations of Christ. Representatives of Him whom we believe in. Kempis (2004) sees the priest as the embodiment of Christ. Everything we do, as ministers of God, should reflect this. It is a life of ministering to others. It is about bringing Christ alive into the contemporary, into the now. However, gender cannot be removed from this. I am a follower of Christ, yet influenced by the culture of the military that normalises roles between male and female. Perhaps I am guilty of applying a hegemonic masculinity to my own life, not just a life that reflects God in diversity. Yet the point about the high standing of a padre is important here. We offer support and much more, at least by those who see us and understand that

we work to a higher ideal that includes a belief in God. Much of sector Christian ministry has been identified as bringing a higher belief into the workplace, whether in a military or other public space context (Swift et al., 2015). We are perhaps idealised into something more. I would argue there is something of the otherness, the spiritual, that surrounds “the padre.” This may be held as a perception by those we work with. As Swift argues, religious workers often embody something more that people may not fully understand but do acknowledge.

The annual act of remembrance in November recalls the ultimate sacrifice. Remembrance is filled with the recognition of the self-sacrifice of those who have served and continue to serve. A padre is always responsible for the delivery of this service. Drozdowski (2021), examining Anzac Day, the remembrance service held in Australia, New Zealand, and Tonga for all who served and died in all wars, identifies this as an act whose practitioners, such as the padre, enable a collective memory of the past. This centres on the selfless commitment of those who gave their lives. A function of these services may also be to promote a traditional masculinity. This is about an historical expression of conflict that becomes a contemporary expression of a fighting male military (Wegner, 2021). Yet the padre can also embody more than a person who enables remembrance of the fallen. It has been argued that they are there to provide comfort by offering regular pastoral support (Korver, 2025). This has a more religious connotation, being a pastor, being a spiritual guide, perhaps in a Christian sense.

Many padre offices sit in the “welfare block.” The “Welfare Officer” usually undertakes a supporting role associated with the Chain of Command, such as offering practical support for those service personnel who have disciplinary actions to face or are concerned about housing and other matters. I would argue that a deeper emotional support of pastoral care can be provided by padres. Some welfare officers have

confided in me that they find their new role challenging. For many of these, it has been about “manning up” and getting on with it. They struggle to understand why some cannot do this, whether military personnel or family members. As a late-entry commissioned officer, they have spent many years serving and working through the non-officer ranks to reach the rank of Captain. I can see where this may not allow a military man to engage with some of the needs of others. More than once has a welfare officer thought of me as an appropriate person for people to speak with, especially concerning bereavement. This returns to the point made, that we may be recognised as bringing a higher belief into the workplace that can address some needs (Swift et al., 2015). As padres, we provide an opportunity for people to speak with us outside of the Chain of Command, perhaps with a perception that we can operate with greater confidentiality within the organisation. This also returns to our pastoral role of caring as identified by Korver (2025). Here, this is a role attributed to the padre who is perceived as having a distinctive role. As commissioned officer padres, we are commissioned in a unique way, holding a non-combatant status as “officers” who do not hold arms (according to the Geneva Convention, Protocol I, 8 June 1977, Art 43.2). I would argue this unique commission reinforces our mystique as padres. By this, I mean a view that we are liminal beings in a military organisation. As Roberts (2025) makes clear, chaplains are often thought of as liminal beings in the context where others work. Chaplains can also see themselves as liminal. It describes a state of in-betweenness, of being removed from a parochial context and placed somewhere else. In my case, the military, working in an organisation, but not as a fighting man. As I see it, part of our role is the flexibility we have throughout the Chain of Command. I would say we are like free moving chess pieces, moving to any place we wish to offer pastoral care. Likewise, people can seek us out. In my experience, I have offered pastoral care to many of different ranks, as well as to family members.

As I sat in her office, a visit had been arranged for a soldier to come and see the padre. The padre's door was open. This is common practice. It is rare for my office door to be closed unless there is a specific reason, such as the need for privacy and confidentiality. Our affirmation by others, I would argue, attests to the unique position we occupy in the life of the military. To be the ear that hears in confidence, at any time and in any place. It is essential that the confidentiality of the padre is not compromised. "No one will trust the padre if people think he can't keep his own council," a senior chaplain told me. The soldier had been referred through his Chain of Command, via his "platoon sergeant," a senior within a section of one of the "coys" (or companies) constituting the infantry regiment. It takes some time to understand the nuances of structure and hierarchy within regiments, usually each with its own terminologies. Such referrals through the regimental hierarchy usually occur in this way. Any pastoral issues are maintained under a similar approach of confidentiality, with the expectation that what is shared with the padre remains confidential in most circumstances. The Chain of Command will usually work at the "platoon" level. The soldier is referred from this small subsection group to the Officer Commanding (OC) of a larger group of soldiers, the coy. Such groups are referred to as "coys" within infantry regiments who are the British Army's foot soldiers, or as a "squadron" or "battery" in other regiments, depending on their history, practices, and traditions. A squadron can be found in cavalry regiments (that once used horses and now tanks), along with logistic regiments. Batteries are those that make up the artillery regiments of the British Army. In each regiment, there are usually 5 coys or similar, constituting a total of approximately 450 military personnel. It should be said that, without exception, the majority of these are men.

We were greeted with a knock on the open door. A young male dressed in "working dress" (the everyday working uniform military personnel wear) stood bolt upright in an attention stance. A common military practice regarding rank and

hierarchy is the position of the subordinate to those of higher rank. If each person is wearing a headdress, there are always salutes given by the subordinate to those of Officer rank, who hold a commission. The salute is then returned. In the absence of headdress by one or more, a stance of “bracing up” to attention is made. The body is straightened, with arms and hands placed rigidly straight on either side of the body. The young man at the female padre’s door had adopted this brace position. One of the significant differences I have noticed in military chaplaincy compared to previous civilian ministry is that military personnel, especially soldiers, will invariably stand to attention before the padre. This is unlike the parishioners in a civilian church. The padre is a serving officer, with the respect being paid to the head of the British Army, the Monarch. This returns to the recognition that we hold a commission, albeit as a non-combatant, under the authority of the Monarch as the head of the armed forces. Yet I would suggest this respect is also about the individual padre and the relationship they have with the soldiers. This requires some effort, as I have experienced. It is partly about knowing the people you work around. In this case, with soldiers who often display traits of traditional masculinity. I have tried to display some of these myself, such as with drinking and acts of physicality. This has involved an effort to understand the culture in which I work (Redman et al., 2024). For this researcher in health care chaplaincy, an understanding of cultural differences and the chaplain’s application of sensitivity to these can help assist the chaplain in their caring role.

Regulations for appropriate behaviour permeate every aspect of military life, and this relates to the encounter between soldier and padre. Writing this, I have become aware of how many regulations there are for members of the armed forces, such as in “The Queen’s Regulations” for the Army 1975 (still extant) and in the edition of the Joint Service Publication (2013). From personal experience, I have had to get used to living in a world governed by regulation. This has been part of my journey as a padre who occupies a liminal position. Yet also as a researcher, developing new

understandings in the field (Agar, 1996). As a padre and researcher, in these senses, I may be different from others who serve. Research has involved becoming aware of what I am studying, and as Agar recognises, this leads the researcher into a different place. The regulations for addressing officers are “Ma’am” and “Sir” used by all subordinates to Officer ranks. This includes to both female and male padres. I have experienced this personally on many occasions, being addressed as “Sir.” My reply has always been, “Please call me Padre.” A personal challenge as a liminal padre has been to accept that I work in a hierarchical military organisation and therefore must accept its regulations and practices.

This returns to the idea of Goffman (1961) and the expectation on individuals to conform. In this sense, a padre’s conformity to the total institution of the British Army may allow them to be a better padre. In the case of total institutions there is an expectation with regulations on how to behave. As in Goffman’s study, those who behave are more likely to achieve a desirable outcome of not being punished. For the padre, this may be to win the respect and confidence of those who work in the military. “Ma’am, I have been told by my Chain of Command to come and see you.” The soldier remained in a state of attention. “I know,” replied my colleague. “But please, relax. There’s no need to call me ma’am or to stand to attention. Call me Padre.” I would argue that we as padres are within the British Army but also counter-cultural to it. There may be many reasons for counter-culturalism. It can be seen as a movement in which individuals express their desire to be different from a more totalitarian regime (Roszak, 1995). This can arise, according to Roszak, through a rejection of traditional values. I would suggest the military padre is placed in this position as part of their liminality, as not being exactly like other military personnel. We are often pastoral religious workers who hold officer rank, existing in a unique position within and outside the Chain of Command.

The “Padre” and the “Madre” are at work. The latter title was used at the time of the Women’s Royal Army Corps (WRAC) with women who performed various roles, serving in the British Army, but as separate workers. This corps has not existed since the 1990s. Using the title madre seems strange today. Also, the title “Chaplains’ Assistant” was sewn onto their uniform, and they wore a badge that said, “Madre.” This is a use of language to denote an idea that women are different from men. Derrida (1978) explores the importance of language for the construction of ideas about what is different. This can be applied to gender. Women may be seen as different, encouraged by using different titles from men. Female chaplains did not exist in the British Army until the early 2000s. There were also expectations for women in the corps, akin to the idea of women being supportive wives and mothers in their roles. As the 1990 WRAC advert said, “As a woman in the army, you’ll be expected to cook, clean and do the dishes.” (National Army Museum, 1992). Oakley (1974) has highlighted how housework is identified as a female activity. This is clearly exemplified by the perception of what women’s roles were perceived to be in the British Army. The term “padre” now applies to both male and female padres who serve under the banner of the British Army, without a separate corps for women. Yet I would argue that these traditional perceptions about female roles persist today. These persist alongside traditional perceptions about male roles.

My female colleague was keen to introduce me, “Do you mind if my colleague stays in the room? He’s a padre, as you can see, just like me.” I was present, in my uniform with crosses and rank slide. My colleague continued, “It means you will have two padres for the price of one.” The soldier seemed more than happy with this arrangement. “Well, down to business, then,” she said. The conversation began to unfold between the soldier and the padre. I remained silent yet observant. He had encountered a bereavement in his family and was struggling. To be more precise, it was the death of his “gran” who had adopted a significant role in looking after him as

a boy. He said, "I was very close to my gran. She was like a mother to me." I was struck by the openness and the fluidity of the conversation between my female colleague and the soldier. I wondered whether she was able to make him feel more at ease because she was a female. Perhaps, I thought, he was more comfortable with her because of having a strong relationship with his gran.

Simone de Beauvoir's classic work, *The Second Sex* (1949), argues that women are put into a secondary position. This is learnt from childhood and continues later in life as women marry, enter the home as a kind of slave, and function as mothers. In this way, women are seen as distinctive in their roles from men. Men occupy a powerful outside space and have economic value. Women may be seen as the natural carers and act in a supporting role to men. This is to see a role such as motherhood as somehow submissive to the roles men may have. Garcia (2021) argues that women often choose to submit to given roles that are constructed within patriarchal cultures. This becomes a lived experience for women. The British Army that defines women as mothers, perhaps. Both men and women perpetuate this view. I accept that I am normalising the role of the female as an emotional and pastoral carer. This says something about the way I think as a perpetuator of a given norm. Yet the possibility remains that a mothering role is being played out as lived experience. It suggests that women, rather than men, are seen as providing better care to soldiers. This also made me feel inferior. I began to normalise my position as a man. I remember thinking, perhaps I am better at having a beer with the guys than exploring deeper issues. The soldier told us that he came from a broken home and had never met his father. This helped me to conveniently place the female chaplain into a mothering role.

In my thinking about gender, I may be overemphasising the importance of distinctions between men and women regarding a caring role. Within chaplaincy, there are important aspects that are deliverable irrespective of gender (Fitchett, 2017). Here,

spiritual care has been stressed. Yet it may be naive to think that perceptions about gender do not influence who is thought of as a better carer. Swift et al., (2015) have identified chaplaincy as a concern of the chaplain irrespective of gender. This will include sensitivity to ethical matters and the development of a community-centredness. Yet I would argue that the delivery of pastoral care in all its complexity cannot be separated from considerations of gender and normalising gender roles.

5.6 The Significance of the Mother Figure

As I think about what a mother can be, I am aware that I think of emotional support. I like to think I am challenging myself about this as I reflect on the role of a female padre in the British Army. My view of female emotional support is tied to the assumption that women can make better carers than men. This would be the same as making a claim that a father, rather than a mother, is better at teaching his son how to ride a bike. Assumptions that people hold about gender expression between men and women have been criticised as a product of culture where men and women are compartmentalised as distinctive categories (Barlow and Chapin, 2010). I have raised the idea that male soldiers may perceive female padres as better carers because their primary carer in childhood could have been a mother. There is nothing to strongly suggest that if that were the case they would feel like this. Here I am aware of my normalisation of female and male roles. Nussbaum (2001) has challenged some of the assumptions about distinctive roles, arguing that women are not less rational than men. I would argue that a similar claim can also be made, that men are not less caring than women. Nor could it be claimed that women or men make the best carers. Reactionary to distinctions, there has been a call for a more inclusive cultural outlook

against a mainstream patriarchy that assigns people into distinctive roles (Yanagisako and Delaney, 1995).

I am reminded of another encounter during my research. I was spending time with another female colleague. Whilst in her office, a conversation arose between her and a visiting soldier. He had been recently bereaved by the death of his mother. This was having a major impact on his attitude and ability to work. It became clear that his mother was a very significant figure in his life. He explained that she had been “the sole carer” after his father left, caring for both him and other dependent members of his immediate family. During this encounter, I recalled several occasions when soldiers visited me to discuss the death of a significant other, notably a female with whom the soldier had developed an important bond. A relationship may be made regarding an individual between a significant other and the active role of other people later in life, such as with those in caring professions (Hendrix, 1975). Yet I would argue that this relationship, where it does exist for individuals, does not mean it exists for all. During the conversation between the soldier and the padre, I was aware that I observed her performing a kind of supportive mothering role. I see this as part of my normalisation of her role as a female padre. The soldier made a point, “I can really open up to you, Padre.” This may have had less to do with the padre being a woman and more to do with her being a padre and an approachable person.

At the end of the interview with the soldier, I wanted to know more about her understanding of her relationship with the soldier. I asked her, “Does being a female padre give you a special relationship with soldiers, especially in the care that you provide”? Her answer was clear. “Absolutely.” I asked her to expand further, and she said, “I’m a woman but more than a woman. I’m a padre and a mother to the soldiers I care for, especially the soldiers.” This comment blew me away. It reinforced what I was thinking, that women fall into a traditional female role. This was something I was

trying to challenge. Perhaps the female padre was also normalising her role. She was as fooled as I was about female padres being better carers than male padres. Her response left no uncertainty as to the strong sense she had of a mothering role that she exercises as a female padre. Perhaps there is more to this after all than the playing out of a female stereotype of the mother and mothering role.

I would argue that the role that females have undertaken as mothers in a domestic context may affect the way women are seen generally and the way women see themselves. As Oakley (1974) showed, women are assigned and confined to roles in the home, where they take on the responsibilities of housework and childcare. She held that this is about the naturalisation of women's roles through a strong, persistent culture that divides between men and women. Yanagisako and Delaney (1995) argue that a naturalising of male and female roles is taking place. This is a cultural expression as a power relationship between men and women, where a natural order is assumed, placing men in positions of power, whilst women are subjugated, perhaps into a more domestic role. It is not surprising that the role of the female as a mother figure becomes a powerful and established way of thinking about what a woman is (Moore, 1999). For Moore, a simplistic understanding of a female role as mother is criticised. She rejects motherhood as a naturalised role, especially in the care role of children attributed to a woman. This is identified as a sociocultural construction. It can be argued that women in most societies, both Western and non-Western, have roles that are expressed domestically. This relates to the construction of what a woman's role is. It has been attributed to a patriarchal construction, defining and limiting women (Gottner-Abendroth, 1999). Here, there are very few societies in which matriarchal authority is exercised. I would argue that the British Army is an example of a patriarchal organisation that reinforces traditional role distinctions between men and women.

5.7 The Significance of Gender for Pastoral Care

On another occasion, a male soldier came to visit a male padre in his office. He was happy for me to be present for the interview. He was concerned about the way some members of his platoon were “treating him” within the regimental Company (Coy) that forms part of the regiment in which he was serving. He was putting in a “service complaint.” This is an action open to all who serve in the armed forces, to protect anyone who believes they are not being treated fairly. Speaking with military personnel who have served for a long time, there is a view that those relatively new to the British Army are acting like “snowflakes” (Cockburn, 2019). This is a term used to describe what is perceived to be the new, weaker people who are joining up. Cockburn describes a recent campaign to attract a new generation into the armed forces by appealing to people who may have more diverse expressions. This may include people who are concerned about their individual rights. For those who have served long-term, they would perhaps see themselves as adopting a more altruistic understanding of service life. As one told me, “The needs of the service come first, Padre.” Within this so-called altruistic approach, it could be argued that a traditional masculinity is present, perceiving other expressions as weak. There appears to be a culture of challenge by those condemned as snowflakes. I would argue this challenge is perhaps the fundamental reason why the so-called snowflake is perceived as weak. Konopka et al., (2021) maintain that traditional masculine expressions can be reinforced if a perceived threat exists from other masculine expressions. Here, snowflake can be seen as a different type of expression to a traditional military masculinity. For Ghail (1994), a contrast is made between a traditional masculinity, expressed as machismo, and other expressions that challenge this. Some have argued that antagonism by men to other expressions is limited, suggesting even that men are willing to adopt wider masculine expressions (Bartky, 1998). Yet I would

maintain that many men in the British Army continue to be highly traditional in their masculine behaviours as a preferred way to be.

I would argue that militarisation is an important concept for understanding how people adapt and change to the demands of a military organisation. I often ask young recruits, perhaps a year into their military service, how they get on with old friends from where they lived. Almost everyone talks about how their friends have changed. I often challenge this and suggest that the change is within them rather than their friends. There is an acceptance of the values of the British Army. I would argue this is less to do with the individual and more to do with internalising the values of a more collective culture. Berger and Luckmann (1991) use the concept of habituation, where culture is constructed in individuals by learning through human interaction. I would argue this will include a range of new behaviours that can be described as hyper-masculine, such as shouting and physicality. There is a reward for conformity to this hegemonic male culture. The person is accepted by those who already maintain the values of the organisation, institution, or the state (Krauel-Tovi, 2017). Otherwise, a person may be treated less than favourably.

Service complaint matters can be addressed to the padre as a confidant outside of the Chain of Command. They are someone, irrespective of being female or male, who can offer support to the service person. The soldier had raised incidents of “bullying” and, in our presence, had revealed that he had been bullied by his own father when growing up. He felt that the bullying he was experiencing in the British Army was an extension of the bullying he had encountered. “I hated my father,” he said. “Now I’m left with the feeling that I hate the army with the way they’re treating me.” This refers again to a normalisation of gender expressions between men and women, already explored. It suggests that women can be seen as better carers than men. Instead, men can be seen more as disciplinarians. The role of the father has changed.

Machin (2018) explores a disciplinarian approach as characterised in a traditional model of fatherhood. There is much more complexity, she argues, to the role of modern fatherhood. A challenge for Western fathers today is to move away from traditional practices and to adopt greater fluidity of expression. Machin maintains that men play a very significant caring role in the life of their child. No longer are there clear role distinctions between men and women when expressing care. In my research, there have been responses that undermine a clear distinction of pastoral care between male and female chaplains. For example, during one discussion with a male chaplain, he spoke extensively about the sheer number of pastoral issues and encounters within his busy regiment. He commented that he would often hear the words, “Can I have a word please, Padre?” There was no suggestion, nor did I explore the possibility, that the pastoral work undertaken by him could be compromised by the fact that he is a male padre. In another discussion with a female chaplain, she made the point about military personnel who “often need to have a chat with a padre.” From such comments, there does not appear to be a distinction of care based on gender. I would argue that this does not mean that gender is not an influencing factor. What is clear is that care was sought and offered by both male and female chaplains.

5.8 Service Personnel as a Family

Much pastoral care for a military chaplain, irrespective of gender, is done on the move. It is difficult for a padre to walk anywhere in a military camp without stopping to talk with soldiers, either being stopped or feeling the need to stop. Work for a padre is all about spontaneous encounters. A day at work for a chaplain is varied and unpredictable, in a variety of locations. In the lunch queue of an all-ranks dining facility, in the military gym, or within the various “houses,” pastoral care takes places in the

spaces where soldiers and officers work.

On one occasion, a female chaplain and I had stopped to speak with soldiers standing along a corridor. Often, soldiers can be found standing along various corridors outside of the offices of senior non-commissioned soldiers and officers. They wait to see someone higher up the Chain of Command. Often this will involve a disciplinary matter where the soldier has found himself, and occasionally herself, in trouble and is awaiting the process of being “charged” with an offence. Identified offences can range from minor matters of inappropriate dress whilst on duty through to all manner of offences that can be tried in terms of both military law and sometimes civilian law. These are often a result of a misdemeanour, an action that has fallen short of the “service test” on maintaining “operational effectiveness.” This states, “Have the actions or behaviour of an individual adversely impacted or are they likely to impact on the efficiency or operational effectiveness of the Service?” (British Army, *Values and Standards of the British Army*, 2018, p. 30). As Berger and Luckmann (1991) show, it is people who define what reality is and what the rules are. These may then be formalised. Behaviours are assessed against these formalised rules. Within the everyday life of institutions, people come into contact with each other through social interactions (Goffman, 1961). A total institution, like the British Army, is a place where people's behaviours are dealt with through formal interactive means, such as an interview. It is sometimes the role of the padre to be part of the decision-making process for a Commanding Officer when helping to determine if some extenuating circumstances may allow for a more lenient approach. The idea of teamwork is emphasised within military practice, as exemplified in “Op Teamwork.” This aims for fairness and inclusivity, encouraging the sharing of diverse ideas. I recently attended one of these all-day sessions. It is an attempt to encourage all soldiers to think, speak, and share, becoming more self-reflective, allowing them to become better soldiers (British Army, *Army Teamwork*, 2021). This, at least, is the ideal. It is also part of a

social construction of reality as explored by Berger and Luckmann (1991). It suggests inclusive involvement, although there remains a set of rules to follow. I would argue it is more preventative as an attempt to limit behaviours that may lead to disciplinary action.

It was on this occasion, along the “top corridor,” the place where the key members of the regimental Chain of Command work, that we found ourselves stopping and chatting with a soldier standing outside the Adjutant’s office, an officer in the rank of Captain who acts as a kind of personal secretary for the Commanding Officer (CO) of a regiment. The soldier was waiting to go in to be formally interviewed by the CO relating to a disciplinary matter. It transpired that he had committed a major offence. These can include assault of some kind and what is called AWOL, being absent without leave, usually from the regiment. The latter applied here. He was waiting to be given the verdict by the CO who operates with enormous power within a regimental organisation. He, and the CO, who is usually male, is in effect judge and jury. I have often reflected on how much authority a CO has. He is the most senior person regimentally, a man with the ultimate authority, referred to by some soldiers as “God.” In this sense, the soldier was about to meet his maker. With over a month spent away from the regiment as AWOL, he was looking at an equivalent time to be served in a military prison, at the Colchester Correctional Facility, where all the “bad boys” go for a period of military re-training. It is designed to reform character, before the soldier can resume their military career. There are sometimes exceptional cases that will lead to discharge after an allotted period in Colchester.

I would suggest the hierarchical structure of the British Army, especially a regiment, can be compared to the structure of a family. In this sense, a Commanding Officer could be described as the head of a family. This reproduces a patriarchal idea about the traditional male role of a father in a family. Oakley (2014) examines the

relationship between father and daughter in a family context. Patriarchy is used here to understand its influence on how relationships work. Oakley argues that patriarchy is fundamental to the father's relationship and has a wider expression in public life. I would extend her argument to include patriarchal expression in the British Army. Here, both women and men fall under the authority of the Commanding Officer. Like Machin (2018), for Oakley, there is something of a traditional disciplinarian in the father figure. Yet for Machin, this is changing as the father's role becomes more fluid. However, I would argue that the disciplinarian's role continues in a traditional sense in the British Army. This is an organisation with a strong sense of ongoing traditional patriarchy. This refers to traditional roles identified by writers such as Parsons (1959). Here, the role of the father is instrumental and pragmatic, whilst the mother is more emotional and fulfils the primary role of carer. His work is important for identifying an assumption about gender roles between men and women. These are assumptions, I would argue, that can be applied to the British Army today and the way male service personnel may think.

During this conversation with the soldier, the CO suddenly appeared at the entrance to the Adjutant's office. The soldier immediately stood to attention. The CO was aware of my presence in the camp. He welcomed me, "You must be the other padre." He then said, looking at the soldier and then back to me, "It's so good to have a female chaplain that soldiers can open up to." He continued, "This is my first female chaplain, and I find that the men really open up to her in a way they do not open up to other men." It occurred to me, not for the first time, that perhaps after all there is something real in the idea that women make better carers. Is this more than just a construction and naturalisation of a gender role for women?

5.9 Conclusion

In the emotional support we offer as padres, we uniquely fit into the hierarchy of the military, providing pastoral and spiritual care, along with moral guidance. It is in the latter role as a padre that we are identified as being the embodiment of values and standards. It is in the British Army that the padre provides support to all, and especially to soldiers. I have considered the normalising of the female padre's role as a construction of the female as mother and mother-figure. I see myself as part of this male cultural expression as a traditional masculinity where women are perceived as natural carers. This is the operation of unconscious bias. I have related this to the idea of my perception of male soldiers who may value the support that a female padre provides, reflecting the support that was provided by a significant female carer in childhood.

Often, the care that is provided by the padre is understood as an expression of calling, as exercised in an incarnational ministry. It is within the context of the military that a padre may provide an understanding of themselves as being an expression of something higher. Certainly, there are service personnel who would want to define the padre in this supernatural way. Yet gender perception as a consideration for the construction of roles between male and female padres is very important. It explains why men in a predominantly male-dominated organisation see women as being natural carers.

The idea of the British Army as a family can add to the normalisation of roles according to gender. Women as mothers can be seen as women who, as padres, provide emotional support to soldiers. I have become aware that I define women in this way. Yet there is little to suggest that men are less able to provide emotional

support. However, what is suggested is that gender role construction is something that powerfully influences the way men and women see themselves and others. Following the analogy of the British Army as a family, other figures can be identified as adopting specific roles. This will include father figures in a regiment, perhaps even the Commanding Officer as a father figure. It could be that the authoritative approach of the British Army reflects a more traditional understanding of the authoritative role of the father in the home. I suggest that all care is understood with an often-unchallenged acceptance of differences between care offered by female and male padres. This is also unconscious bias. I have often seen myself in the role of the socialising padre rather than the padre who delves deeply into the emotional needs of individual soldiers. There is a danger that men may see themselves as different from women. This may be a perception held by male padres and male service personnel alike. Here, women will occupy a different space as the primary carer. There could be a danger of defining women as different and subservient. This applied to the supporting role that the female carer had as the “madre” in support of the auxiliary corps for women prior to the acceptance of women as being able to hold a padre commission.

A padre, irrespective of gender, to some extent operates outside of the Chain of Command. They hold a non-combatant commission, without having executive authority to give orders, whose primary perceived role is that of a carer. They are there to listen and give advice. Padres have the flexibility and authority to take matters further up the Chain of Command to facilitate the care of the soldier. We assume the liminal role of the free-moving chess piece. A level of mystique and power is attributed to the padre who has a significant role in raising concerns, being vested with a special role as the carer. All padres, irrespective of gender, exercise this expectant role. It is the military hierarchy that leads to the need for a padre to provide a voice to the voiceless and often powerless soldier.

Even when pastoral care is being given, military protocols are followed, reflecting the hierarchical nature of the military organisation. This includes saluting by “subordinates,” as well as addressing officers as “sir or “ma’am.” The female padre perceived as a mother figure can be seen as a hierarchical figure who is vested with considerable power and respect. The term “padre” is often used and has its own powerful meaning. In my experience, the padre is a person who holds rank in the organisation of the British Army and who points beyond to a position of supernatural authority. In this sense, the padre is not about gender. Of course, gender perception cannot easily be separated from the ways in which calling is exercised.

Chapter 6. The Female Chaplain as a Minority: establishment as a foundation for patriarchal expression within a military organisation

6.1 Introduction

Before I became an army chaplain, I spent some time in military contexts to better understand what would be involved. I remember visiting a garrison (military) church run by an Anglican army chaplain (all garrison churches are founded in the Anglican Church tradition) who asked what my “churchmanship” was. I had met priests like him before, having trained in a traditional “high church” theological college. Wishing to impress I told him that I was a “high church Anglican,” although I suspect I was really a mixture of traditions. With a wide smile appearing on his face, he commented, “Thank God for that. A proper priest and not one of those evangelicals or other types who think women priests are a good idea.” This comment would perhaps come as a surprise or a shock to the “unchurched,” but I had heard it before.

In this chapter, the minority position of the chaplain, especially the female chaplain, is discussed within the idea of the British Army as an establishment organisation. It is the establishment as historically founded in the organisation that allows for the continuation of a traditional male culture. I would argue this is both hegemonic as part of military culture and becomes expressive in various hyper masculine behaviours. I have already explored some of these behaviours. A functioning establishment helps to maintain and reinforce the female minority position. This is also an expression of patriarchy identified in this chapter. Women, as a minority, experience what it is like to work in an establishment governed by a male majority.

6.2 The Anglican Establishment

The Church of England, or specifically Anglicanism, is embedded within the Royal Army Chaplains' Department. The RACHD began as a department that drew its membership exclusively from the Church of England. I would argue, like the British Army where history and the contemporary meet, in the RACHD, there persists a culture of historic Anglicanism. I have experienced this Anglicanism for myself. I would accept this as my subjective experience. A critical analysis of participation and autoethnography is to recognise the inherent problem of an approach that may be burdened by over subjectivism (Takyi, 2015). Yet I would hold that my experiences mean something, even just for me. Also, speaking with fellow chaplains in the department, similar subjectivisms exist. What has RACHD Anglicanism felt like for me? It consists of an attitude, an approach, and even what I would describe as an air of superiority, expressed by Anglican priests within the department. Many members in the RACHD continue to be Anglican. From my own understanding, out of approximately 135 regular chaplains (The British Army, *Life as a British Army Chaplain*, 2025) between 60 and 70 per cent of regular serving chaplains are Anglican (mainly from the Church of England but also from other Anglican locations or provinces). This percentage is often quoted by senior chaplains who constitute the directorate of the chaplains' department. It is somewhat anecdotal in its complete accuracy, although it remains true in general terms. Another significant feature of this thesis is the lack of female Anglican clergy. This has led some scholars to be highly critical of the Church of England as a male fraternity (Page, 2008). The majority of clergy are men. This has also been identified as an inherited practice of historical tradition (Fry, 2024). For Fry this has a deep and continuing impact for the Church of England as a male-centred institution. In turn, this will impact on the number of women who enter the RACHD. Already, this is a place where men are. Out of over 130 regular

chaplains, at the time of writing this thesis, only 7 are female. It has been argued that structural and cultural change is required in the Anglican Church. Chaves (1999) identifies that a problem of male leadership is the danger of perpetuating a given culture and theology. Here, to tackle this, a wider representation of women would be required in senior leadership. This would assist in replacing a male majority and give greater representation for gender inclusivity for men and women. It has been argued, and I would suggest correctly, that Anglicanism can be described historically and culturally as a persistent masculinity (Jagger, 2023). I have already discussed what hegemonic and hyper-masculinity can look like, culturally and expressed by individuals. I would argue that a religious masculinity can serve as a basis for further masculine expression within a military context. My ethnographies show something of this.

The importance of establishment became clear when I attended an annual RACHD event with a female colleague. This was entitled, "The Anglican Conference." This is a chaplaincy event for military army chaplains who are in the RACHD from the Anglican tradition. As an Anglican priest, as with all my Anglican colleagues, I am required to attend. I originally trained as a deacon and priest within the Church in Wales and later transferred to the Church of England. The licence to become an Anglican minister or priest within the British Army, as with the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, is provided by the "sending church." It is only by this authority that a minister or priest can be commissioned into the RACHD. The term "sending church" has been replaced recently with the term "endorsing authority" to reflect wider religious and non-religious sending organisations. Only recently have other sending organisations been permitted to put forward those who have a desire to serve in the RACHD and the British Army. I would maintain it is difficult to serve in the military without having a wide and inclusive approach (Ministry of Defence, *Guide on Religion and Belief in the Armed Forces*, 2011). This document acknowledges the breadth of

religious belief as well as those who do not adhere to this. There is also a question about the extent to which the military is inclusive of women. Diversity in both a religious and a gender understanding has been emphasised as a matter for every serving individual (Ministry of Defence, *A Force for Inclusion: Defence Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018-2030*, 2018). I would argue this seeks to change a prevalent military culture of traditional maleness. This may have an effect of undermining and decentralising a hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). It is Connell who suggests a development of different masculinities from the dominant hegemonic type. Despite a criticism that hegemonic masculinity may not be a foundation for other masculine expressions (Demetriou, 2001), there is an argument here that there is at least some diversification of expressions. I would hold that such diversification is limited in the RACHD, which continues to have a strong Anglican culture dominated by men.

An argument for Anglican establishment can be made in the exclusive recruitment of Anglican military chaplains, excluding all other Christian denominations, until 1827. It would not be until much later before the first female chaplain was admitted into the RACHD, after the Church of England allowed the ordination of women priests. After the appointment of the British Army's first female padre in 2012, Rev'd Juliette Hulme, she felt the situation was challenging (Harris, 2012). Research on the history of the RACHD has mainly focused on the role of chaplains, without a consideration of gender issues (for example, Snape, 2008). It was not until 1987 that the first non-Anglican Chaplain General was appointed. I would argue this reflects the Anglican nature of the RACHD. I have heard some of my non-Anglican colleagues in the department say that it is a department that feels "very Anglican." Leadership is an aspect of this. The impact of leadership representing more diverse views, including a diversity of female as well as male leaders, can challenge a prevalent religious culture (Chaves, 1999). I would argue that the current leadership allows for the perpetuation of a traditional male culture. This has already been defined by Page (2008) as a male

fraternity that can permeate every aspect of a religious institution. If it is hegemonic, as a prevailing culture, then it also affects every individual, and I would argue every male, who may behave in ways that are hyper masculine. It seems to me that it will be some years to come before a significant leadership position will be held by a female chaplain. Partly this reflects the small number of female chaplains overall in the department, so promotion may be limited. If the department is an Anglican fraternity historically and contemporarily, then change may continue to be limited.

Important here is the position of the Church of England as the established church. The Queen, Elizabeth II, had been the head and sovereign of this church, as all monarchs of the crown are, with the current being Charles III. The monarch is also head of the armed forces. I would maintain, therefore, that the Anglican military chaplain is part of an established order, holding a special place ecclesiastically as well as militarily. Yet there is also a position of neutrality in that all military chaplains from sending churches and organisations are offered a “short service commission” on the same terms of service. Here, the operation of military regulation does not reflect the Anglican culture of the department. The short service commission enables chaplains to test their vocational calling and for the military to better judge their suitability.

Returning to the Anglican Conference, I sat with two of my female colleagues in the grandeur of the Anglican Cathedral in Durham, in a cloistered room. The historic surroundings of this place are every bit medieval. I imagined sitting here centuries previously, with much of the fabric unchanged. I thought that perhaps the culture of the male establishment of Anglicanism has also remained unchanged. This cathedral was overseen by Lord Bishops who had become powerful landowners, like feudal Lords. “There are two kings in England, namely the Lord King of England, wearing a crown in sign of his regality and the Lord Bishop of Durham wearing a mitre in place of a crown, in sign of his regality in the Diocese of Durham” (The Steward of Anthony

Bek 1284-1311, Bishop of Durham). Such was the authority, standing, and power of the Lord Bishop. I thought, such an historical position of power has not been totally lost. I would argue it still whispers from history to an expression of Anglicanism today, such as in the Church of England. Fry (2024) not only provides an historical understanding of the Church of England but also understands this as a foundation for and continuation of current religious cultural expression. This is also a way to understand the persistence of a male fraternity, historically and contemporarily (Page, 2008). Most senior leaders within the Anglican church today are men. At this conference, in the charged religious environment of Durham Cathedral, all the leaders of the RACHD were men.

It has occurred to me that change may be difficult when historical practice is so deeply rooted in a contemporary expression of military culture. Yet at a hegemonic level of organisation, there may be an opportunity for challenge and change (Eyben, 2011). This has been described as a counter-cultural response, as a more diverse expression. It considers the position of women and their need for empowerment by attaining position. I would hold that Anglicanism as an expression can be regarded as having a culture that reflects a traditional understanding of men and women. This includes a normalisation of different roles according to gender. It may not therefore be very open to a counter-cultural response and is likely to be oppositional to change (Podmore, 2014). There is something here of bell hooks (1992) and her idea of oppositional gaze to critique culture. I would argue this has the potential to challenge and change the position of women who may feel isolated in a male world.

6.3 Establishment on Exercise and Deployment

As a male padre, I have often experienced that sense of being a minority of one in an isolated location. The padre exercises a ministry “in the field.” This is about being with the men and the women they serve. The experience of exercises and deployments can often be challenging, living in austere conditions and extreme climates. Historically, this has always been so, with accounts given of conditions for service personnel in various conflicts, such as in the First World War (Snape and Madigan, 2013). There are even fewer female padres who exercise a ministry in the field. Yet a minority of one is often an experience of a padre serving in the field with their unit. In this sense, it does not really matter if the padre is male or female in each location. I have sought strength in these situations, in faith and in prayer. It is within this rather discomforting ministry that padres care for others. I have often seen this as a shared ministry, serving others and others serving me, a reciprocity of support between service personnel. There are very few places to hide while on exercise and deployment when you are living in such close proximity to others. Strength and support come from a collegiality with other service personnel. For me, it has felt that acts of formal religiosity, such as services, so prized in parochial ministry, are of less significance than the practice of being there for other service personnel. Along with my Christian colleagues, we have all experienced both ordination and then another move into military chaplaincy from our respective Christian traditions. I would argue this is two callings, one to ordained ministry, which is normally parochial within civilian parishes, and another to a specialised ministry as a military chaplain. I would call this a calling within a calling. In each, I have experienced the presence of significantly more men than women. Men are in the majority, and women are in the minority.

As I have suggested, it is while on exercise and deployment that a padre will live and work closely with others. I would argue it is the living together in a predominantly male environment that does not pose a potential issue for a male padre. This became clear on an occasion when I joined a female colleague for a couple of days on part of an exercise with her regiment in the UK. Accommodation is usually basic, and this was no exception. The area of the exercise was littered with old green tents and green military vehicles, all of which provided temporary homes for various military personnel in the coming weeks. We were both accommodated in the field, giving a deep contrast to the pleasures of a posh Officers' Mess. To expect anything different would not be part of the experience of being in the military. Officers, including the padre, will experience the austerities and hardships just as any soldier does. There is a commonality of shared experience. Yet for my female colleague, her accommodation was an allocated tent just for her. This was deemed appropriate because she was identified as different, as a woman. Kent (2020) provides an analysis of global and historical definitions of difference according to gender. She argues that gender differences are socially constructed to differentiate between men and women. As in a military context, women may be perceived as different from men, so defined by how men see women as different. Kent argues there are insufficient natural differences to justify the differentiation expressed culturally and socially. This is not to say that biological differences do not exist. It can be argued that a cultural expression of difference leads to women being treated differently, based solely on biology (Lennon and Alsop, 2020).

My female interlocutor commented, "Well, here's my tent. A whole tent for myself. I wish I could be seen as a padre and not as a woman." There is nothing I am aware of within military regulations for the British Army that requires this. Instead, I would argue, like Kent, that there is a view that women are different. Attached to this is a view that separation is required. But is it the right thing to do? In my view, a taboo

is at work here that emphasises what is and what is not acceptable practice (Douglas, 2002). There are some acceptable behaviours in the British Army, such as drinking and shouting, but shared accommodation is not one of them. A separation between men and women is maintained. My interlocutor clearly struggled with this. What became clear in my mind is that being a female emphasises difference in the minds of men who allocate military accommodation. It also stresses a minority status for women in the British Army. She was the only person to have separate accommodation. She was the only woman. In contrast, the work of Wiehl (2007) is an interesting study here for the purpose of contrasting environments in which women are numerically in the majority yet feel like a minority because of inequality and perceived difference. I would argue that women being in a minority numerically can add to this sense of perceived difference.

I would maintain that the allocation of different accommodation between men and women will not allow the female padre to engage socially at the same level as a male padre. Not being present, it could be argued, may undermine a more effective exercise of pastoral ministry. It may, for instance, lead to fewer opportunities to engage with others. Sullivan (2014) emphasises the importance of presence for Christian ministers who are sent from their religious authorities to work in secular organisations, with the function of caring for others. I would argue this care is closely related to presence. In Sullivan's book, presence for a Christian minister is identified as an expression of a belief in incarnation, of ministers being present for others in the name of Christ. I would argue that a situation potentially arises on a military exercise where my female interlocutor cannot be present to build those pastoral relationships that may enable her to be more approachable. Part of the experience of military exercise is to live together and to share some of the hardships. The female living separately may provide a comfort level that is not reflective of that common experience. I would also stress that this may only serve to reinforce her position as the minority.

A cultural expression that emphasises female difference translates into physical spaces. I would suggest that physical spaces are very significant here because of what they suggest. They may become symbolic of the beliefs that military men hold about women being perceived as different. An idea of different gender spaces is that they may have less sacred meaning (Durkheim, 1995). Women do not occupy the same accommodations. This also applies to other spaces explored later in this chapter. This could mean that women are not only different but are perceived as being less important. They do not have the same opportunities to share in the physical realities of shared accommodation, of a common social life, the British Army as a man's world. Hence, Jackson and Henrie (1983) suggest there are hierarchies of sacredness when it comes to where men and women can dwell. This has also been expressed religiously. Physical spaces within Christian places of worship have been reserved for men at the exclusion of women (Hamilton and Spicer, 2016). When exploring accommodation, something that on the surface seems inoffensive, it is here that women can experience gender differentiation. It has been suggested that gender difference may be profoundly experienced in the everyday (de Haardt, 2017).

Differences of physical space may also allow for other differences, such as differences of behaviour that men may exercise together. I recall staying in male accommodation whilst on an exercise, and men showing each other their genitalia to establish who had the largest. I doubt this would have happened had a woman been there to compromise this male space. This can be seen as an example of profane behaviour. What men regard as sacred as a form of behaviour between men may not be shared by all. Holloway (2003) argues that there may be an exercise of the profane that is seen as sacred. This could apply to a military environment where men's behaviours, I would argue, can be defined as expressions of a traditional masculinity. Conversely, spaces for women can also be seen as a positive environment, especially being able to find space and time for reflection that is not always available while on

exercise. Yet there may also be a reinforcement of a gendered space taking place here. I think of the idea of the domestic space that may be perceived as a space for women to fulfil given roles (Parsons, 1959). This traditional image is reinforced when seeing men playing out traditional masculine roles within the home (Moisio and Beruchashvili, 2016). Men who may find spaces in the military for traditional masculine expressions. As a female interlocutor told me, “I am made to feel different because I am identified as a woman who is seen as different from a man.”

I sat down in my interlocutor’s tent, in her “bed space,” and I asked her the question: “What does it feel like to have your own accommodation, not sharing with the men?” She responded, “I often think about it and wish it wasn’t there. I’m a woman and perhaps we would both feel uncomfortable if we shared accommodation. I have come to accept that it’s nothing personal.” On this exercise, my female colleague was the only woman. I was curious to know how this made her feel. I asked, “What is it like being the only woman here?” She told me, “This has happened to me several times. Sometimes I have been with a handful of other women. It used to bother me. I was acutely aware of it, but as time passes, I just accept it. I’m still aware of it but I don’t think about it much. I’m here to get on with the job of being a padre. I accept that I am a woman working in a largely male environment.” I recalled a saying that I often use, *to change the things you can change and to accept the things you cannot*. This is, to some extent, true of women being in the minority in the British Army. It is not a given, as patterns can change over time. However, currently, it is often the situation that serving women find themselves in. It can become less of an issue over time, as expressed by the female padre. For her, being a padre and getting on with the job was the focus.

I have come to accept that I am part of the male majority. This is part of the establishment in which I work and live. I fulfil my role as a padre, whilst also being

aware of the British Army as a male organisation. This can also potentially be difficult for a man. Women may experience being different from men. Yet men may not be expected to be different from other men but to fulfil perceptions about the way men should behave (Simpson, 1994). In Simpson's study, he acknowledges the challenges that men face in the workplace when there are expectations about men behaving in ways that reflect an understanding of what traditional masculinity is. If a man does not conform to given perceptions and expectations, this too can place this man into a potential position of inequality. This may include a person feeling like an outsider. I have already explored the idea of a macho culture in the military which male service personnel often conform to, as a kind of hegemonic masculine culture expressed in hyper ways within individuals (Simpson, 1994). Men may be challenged about who they want to be in a gender-majority context. Yet women are challenged as a gender minority in the military, being different and separated from men. My experience on the exercise with my female colleague reminded me of other times when women have been present. I remember a time during deployment in Afghanistan when I lived in a military tent at a "forward operating base" (FOB) for a short period. The area was divided into two sections: a larger section for many male soldiers, where I stayed, and a smaller segregated section for the one female officer. I remember thinking how lucky she was, for privacy is a rare thing during the austerities of exercises and deployments. However, thinking back about this scenario, as the only female in that part of the FOB, perhaps she had felt different from others she was serving with, because of the alternative accommodation. Much is made about difference between men and women in the military. A woman in a man's world may feel different in profound ways, as the other (de Beauvoir, 1949). She does not have an identity but is considered in relation to the man. For de Beauvoir, the woman is different from man. In the military, this can possibly be expressed as different physical spaces between men and women.

Difference of accommodation between men and women is less obvious in the scenario of camp life. The new model of “single living accommodation,” where individuals have their own room, has led to there being a difference for each person. Yet the corridors for these rooms are single sex. This segregation occurs from the start of the person’s entry into the British Army. All accommodation from training and then in camp life is single living. It breaks from the long-term practice of shared rooms for single individuals of the same sex. It is in the public sphere that women may experience that sense of difference from men (de Beauvoir, 1949). This perpetuates the idea that men occupy a different space to that of women. For de Beauvoir, this has traditionally divided between the outside domain for men and the inside or domestic domain for women. Here it is the home, as a place where boys and girls are treated differently, that the woman becomes the other. I would argue living spaces for men and women in the military perpetuate this sense of gender difference. I have heard the argument that segregation is to limit the possibility of sexual relations between male and female. I remember during my military course at RMA Sandhurst (the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst), where all new officer cadets of the British Army are trained, we all had single rooms. There was a separation according to gender, with a sizeable number of women on the course occupying their own corridor. This is a course consisting of PQOs (Professionally Qualified Officers) who enter the British Army based on the skills that are used by the British Army. Usually, the proportion of female recruits is higher than on other standard recruiting courses.

6.4 Establishment in the “Sacred Spaces”

The idea of the “sacred space,” a term I have developed, is important for reinforcing gender distinctions. These are the physical spaces that are largely occupied by men, whilst women are largely excluded. This could be in the mess where

men dwell, on the sports field where men compete, and in the single sex accommodation block. I would argue the British Army is largely a male sacred space, a place that is sacred to the male. As de Haardt (2017) maintains, there are gendered sacred spaces in society that men construct. I would argue this is especially true of the British Army. This returns to an idea of the military as being deeply rooted in history, where historical practices are brought into the present. For Hamilton and Spicer (2016), history is the bedrock for what happens in the contemporary. The establishment of the British Army is, in this case, an historical organisation that has not lost its historical identity in the continuing celebration of the male sacred space.

A major issue of contention in recent years, and that continues to be an issue, is the acceptance of women into infantry roles. An argument shared with me against there being female infantry soldiers is the idea that women are different. Women should not occupy the space that men occupy. I would argue that the infantry has been and remains a sacred male space in the minds of many. The infantry symbolises what a male sacred space means, especially in the idea of a traditional masculinity that is hegemonic and hyper. It is a place from which men fight. I have served in infantry regiments where men form a close bond in the field and socially. Hinojosa (2010) argues for the gathering of military men as an expression of a hegemonic masculinity. It is a man's world in which traditional male behaviours are clearly defined. Physicality can be seen as a requirement for engaging an enemy on the battlefield. It has been defined as a specific characteristic of a traditional masculinity that reflects a real man by those involved in such acts (Robinson, 2020). Hegemonic masculinity is about a definition culturally. As with any culture, consisting of norms and values, these are often celebrated when men gather (Hearn, 1998). The "sacred space" becomes significant in the lives of the men who are part of the male culture. This is about identity and belonging. Simpson (1994) sees belonging as essential for maintaining an expressive traditional masculinity. I would argue this is important for men to be an

effective fighting force on the battlefield. The male sacred space also has an historical dimension that continues to find expression in the present. This is an historical masculinity, yet it is not confined to history. I have mentioned already the hero worship of those of the past who have fallen in battle (Holt and Thompson, 2004). This may also be celebrated in acts of bravery of military men today. Hockey (2017) has studied the idea of the heroic man. This continues to be expressed by men who achieve heroic status amongst other men. I would argue these are the military men, usually found in the infantry, who achieve status amongst their peers.

The importance of history and belonging today has served to reinforce the perception of the infantry as a sacred space for men. This is often maintained by the men who serve in these environments. They have found reasons not to accept women as infantry soldiers. I have spoken with soldiers and officers who have served for many years. I have heard comments on many occasions that women are not considered strong enough physically and emotionally to take on some of the roles that have traditionally been undertaken by men. I have also heard the argument that women should not occupy certain roles as this will make them “vulnerable.” It has been argued that seeing women as vulnerable, as emotionally incapable, is no more than reinforcing a traditional stereotype (Fineman, 2023). For Fineman, we are all vulnerable. Applied to the infantry, those who serve on the front line, whether male or female, are subject to danger. When women are seen as vulnerable, this normalises them as people who need protecting (Hazel, 2020). Hence, a traditional culture of gender distinction is preserved in the views that military men hold, maintaining traditional distinctions between male and female. I would maintain that throughout history, it has been the male majority that has determined what men and women do, and that continues to this day. As suggested by bell hooks (1994), there is a need to identify inequalities and to challenge the dominant culture that gives rise to these. A challenge to effectively undermine the normalisation of female roles in the British Army

exists in the face of an intransigent male majority. I would argue that the high proportion of men to women will only serve to maintain and perpetuate traditional masculinity, thereby defining women and what they can be.

I have witnessed many examples of female exclusion as a reflection of traditional male culture. A female colleague told me that when she was standing next to a group of males playing a drinking “game” she was told, “This is not for you, Padre. This is for the men.” I asked her why she thought the officers held this view. In her opinion, it reflected a prevalent view of what is acceptable female and male behaviour. There also remains “a chivalrous view about how men relate to women.” She commented, “Sometimes I feel excluded. It’s not intentional. It’s just how they see women.” I have heard the term “chivalry” used on many occasions. I have seen young officers stand up when a woman enters a room. I would argue that these are highly traditional practices in British society of how men can relate to women. They reflect a normalised view of what women are. Women are identified as different and to be treated differently. I would maintain that it also relates to this idea that a man is not vulnerable, unlike a woman (Hickey, 2023). He behaves chivalrously to her, believing that certain male behaviours are appropriate because she is a woman. Chivalry can be argued to be an expression of a traditional male culture. This is an expression, I would argue, where men engage with women as being different from themselves.

The young male officers decided to go into the local town for further drinks. The female padre was not asked to go with them. “I wasn’t asked because I’m a woman. They all went out and I felt excluded. It’s not that I really wanted to go, but it would have been nice to be asked.” It seems to me this experience reinforces the view held by men in the British Army that women should not occupy spaces identified as male spaces. It also returns to the idea already mentioned that female padres may be

limited in pastoral opportunities by being excluded in certain ways. I have never experienced exclusion. I have always felt encouraged to go drinking with the men.

6.5 Establishment in Sport

I spoke with a female chaplain about her involvement in sports, and this conversation demonstrated her experience of minority. This again reflects an idea about the male “sacred space.” She told me that she often “feels excluded.” It is perhaps the playing of sports in the British Army that most exemplifies cohesion and operational effectiveness. I would argue that “team” is often emphasised in team sports, because working together is more effective if war comes. I also spoke with male chaplains about their sporting experiences as a comparison to female experiences. I was aware that women may feel excluded in sports, and I wanted to know if men had a similar experience. None of my male interlocutors had a sense of being excluded in sports. The problem here is a problem of gender minority experience in British Army sports. Women are often the minority players, feeling excluded from a largely male domain, and therefore may experience a sense of exclusion. This emphasises the role that sports in the military can play in reinforcing a traditional masculinity (Messner, 1995). In a study of elite sports people, Messner identified that competition at a high physical level reinforced this characteristic of traditional masculinity. It also resonated with a wider approach outside of sports in which men may be competitive to succeed. Men, like men in the military, are driven to acts of physicality to be the winners. This seems to be an appropriate statement for describing engagement in battle to win over the enemy. For Bird (1996), the idea of masculinity as hegemonic is reinforced by the practice of certain traditional male traits, such as competitiveness. Other factors are also identified as strengthening and reinforcing

hegemonic masculinity, including identifying women as sexual objects. I would argue that competition in the military is a major expression amongst men. This can include, but is not limited to, the sports field. An example would be the annual report. Men want to do their best against their peers, for judgement against peers in the annual report is a means for selecting men for promotion.

It is also clear that certain sports are particularly the domain of men rather than women. For example, this applies to rugby. This is a sport that has been played mainly by men for a long period of time in military life. Some sports in the British Army are team sports, especially rugby. I would maintain that such sports are part of the military establishment. They become important for how traditional masculinity is maintained. This is achieved by excluding women as an example of misogyny (Anderson and McGuire, 2010). Another type of traditional male expression identified here is a tendency towards risk taking. This seems to fit the context of British Army life where soldiers may put their lives at risk in times of war. Boxing is another example of a sport in which individual participants can be engaged in dangerous situations. Woodward (2007) argues that boxing is about reinforcing male identity. It involves acts that reflect a traditional masculinity, such as being brave and winning against an opponent. Like rugby, there are acts of physicality that develop a sense of what it is to be a fighting soldier. I would argue this involves taking risks, being brave, and winning. Both rugby and boxing involve a high level of physical contact as an expression of traditional masculinity. Three of my male interlocutors told me that they regularly played rugby for their respective regiments, and a further two have played football. There was a consensus that playing these sports is an effective way to develop pastoral relationships, of becoming part of the "team." One told me, "I love playing rugby. By playing this sport on the field, I can also build up relationships off the field." Another commented, "When you play regimental sport, you are seen as one of the lads. They are more likely to be open to you." I am reminded of how much the role of a padre is

about building relationships for pastoral care. In such sports, there is a greater opportunity to get involved for the male padre rather than the female padre. Male sacred spaces in sports are, I would argue, male spaces in which the male padre can be pastoral.

Getting involved in playing sports is clearly more than about fitness. For a padre, it is about building relationships. When I entered the RACHD, I remember the Chaplain General telling us as a group of new entry chaplains that “the guys will forgive a padre most things. But they will not forgive a padre who does not love them. Our ministry is a ministry first and foremost of love. To love those under our care.” I have never forgotten these words. This can be exercised anywhere, such as on a sports field. A debate has arisen suggesting that sport is becoming something other than a device through which traditional masculinities are being reinforced (Adams and Anderson, 2010). This can include women becoming more involved in sports traditionally associated with men. In this new space for women, there may be opportunities to change a male culture and to minister to others. A problem already identified is some of the limitations arising for pastoral encounters for a female padre. I maintain that women continue to be in a minority in certain sports in the military, which are perceived to be sacred spaces for men. Yet an exception to the male sacred space in military sport is the game of netball. In the British Army, this is exclusively played by women. It could be argued that this is a sacred space for women. It is a space in which men do not participate, as it is perceived to be a sport for women. I am not aware of any of my female interlocutors playing netball. A problem with a sport as a female sport is the reinforcement of a perception of difference between men and women. They continue to occupy different spaces.

Another area of interest identified by my male interlocutors included “mess games.” These are not sports in a traditional sense, such as rugby. However, they are

activities that men get involved in, and they usually have rules regarding play. There is also a competitiveness like that encountered on a sports field. This returns to the idea that competitiveness between men as an expression of traditional masculinity is also practised beyond the sports field (Messner, 1995). It can be argued that it is an expression of daily life between men. The games are played in the Officers' and Sergeants' Messes. They usually take place in a large room, which I would argue is akin to the male sacred space of the sports field. An example of a mess game often played is called "mess rugby." Some of my male interlocutors told me they played this game. When I asked my female interlocutors, none had played. Each of my male interlocutors told me they had been asked to play or had wanted to get involved. None of my female interlocutors had been asked. I asked whether they had wanted to get involved. None of them had. It occurred to me that such a game is considered a male activity. It is designed as an extension of traditional rugby. As Anderson and McGuire (2010) make clear, a hegemonic masculinity is being played out. Like actual rugby, this is a physical activity. I have seen men hurt playing it, often fuelled by alcohol. Like rugby and boxing, I would maintain it is a sacred space for men. It is another example of a physical space in which men are believed to be the sole participants, not women. In the same way as normal sports in the British Army, mess games can reinforce the gender divide between men and women. They help to reinforce the predominant culture of traditional masculinity. Physical involvement by the padre, along with shouting and alcohol, does not cross a padre-line of unacceptable involvement. On the contrary, padre involvement is encouraged. It can also be argued that it is another example of a male sacred space where the male padre can cement and build pastoral relationships.

6.6 Winning Respect Within the Establishment

Most of my male interlocutors told me they felt integrated and accepted into their regiments. Two said they had experienced difficulties. One told me that the previous padre was “sub-standard” and had annoyed and alienated many within the regiment. He said he felt alienated because of this. He continued, “When I first arrived at the regiment, it felt like many of the officers were giving me the cold shoulder.” The other padre said his regiment was a difficult one “to become part of” because there was a “general animosity” to chaplaincy, especially with the view that it is an irrelevance. He made the point, “One day when the shit hits the fan, they will understand why chaplaincy is important.” I think about the idea of the professional stranger, a title of a book by Agar (1996). I am a professional working in the field. I also see myself as a stranger within a military environment. I am not a fighting man. I am a minister or priest who is employed to help look after people. I can get it right, integrating well into the British Army. Potentially, I can also get it wrong. I have had to negotiate my way through a culture that at times feels somewhat different from me. I have also faced difficulties integrating into the establishment of a regiment. Here, sometimes, as the only minister, I can feel like a minority. Clearly, what we build as a “padre” in military life can also be inherited by the next padre as a positive or a negative thing.

As padres, we are often identified by the general term of “padre,” applied to all. It is a collective term. I sometimes feel like I am not an individual at all. I would argue that we seem to stand for something that is different from the British Army, but also part of it. In this way, a padre is a complex mixture of history, mystery, morality, and spirituality. Vickers (2025) highlights our unique role of care within a military fighting organisation. This returns to a theme of liminality and how we are part, and not part

of, a fighting organisation. This may also throw up moral dilemmas as padres seek a sense of identity in relation to their own faith and engagement with the military (Todd, 2013). In my experience, I have had to find my own way and expression that works for me. What is clear is that in the military, there can be no escape. As padres, we are commissioned to serve others and how we do this is, to some extent, a matter of individual negotiation. It can be argued that it is about being there for others (Sullivan, 2004). However, as Sullivan shows, this is a complex matter and understanding what space chaplaincy occupies in an organisation is usually very different from a sending faith community.

The term “padre” is steeped in history and is thought to have an Indian origin dating back to the nineteenth century (Royal Army Chaplains’ Department Association: *Our History*, 2024). However, this knowledge is little known by many service personnel. The padre just is and has been part of British Army life. What a padre is continues to be defined in contemporary life. I have heard various padres called “mad as a bag of frogs” and a “legend.” The padre has also been defined as a court jester, perhaps fitting as part of a definition of madness, describing a liminal space that a padre can potentially occupy in British Army life (Thompson, 2023). I have encountered some service personnel who see chaplaincy as being “soft and feely,” perhaps contrary to a more macho expression. I would argue that padres have been held in high regard because of their involvement in operational deployments. Like on the sports field and in the mess, it is about being involved. We can face dangers with others.

Drink is often involved as a way of gaining respect from other service personnel. This has been my experience as a male padre. I suspect this approach is not the way for all padres, whether they be male or female. I had an opportunity to spend some time with a male colleague. We were both asked if we would like to go

into town, following an informal evening meal in the Officers' Mess. I recall the familiarity of this event when I have often ventured into town with officers and soldiers. The evenings are often filled with alcohol, playing pool, darts, usually a curry, and occasionally a nightclub. They have reminded me of my younger student days, being part of a group of lads. I do not recall women ever being present for these periods of extended military fun. These events also exclude wives and partners who are often at home. My male colleague told me that it is "really shocking being a padre, out with the lads when the wife is at home looking after the youngsters." He was right. My wife was doing the same. The male padre can partake in developing and strengthening pastoral relationships. My male colleague told me, "The guys never forget who you are. They like the padre being out with them. It gives you a chance to chat with them and get to really know them when their guard's down. They never forget their time with you. They really respect that." I am drawn to the idea of liminality of the padre as expressed by being there (Sullivan, 2004). It can take many forms. For Sullivan, the chaplaincy space is often encountered in various ways. This may include social environments in which a chaplain can build relationships. The boundaries between work and social life often become blurred. Yet these times have felt important for me. They have provided a sense of being one of the guys. During the working day, I have felt more able to relate to others if I have socialised with them.

6.7 Establishment Intransigence

The female chaplain may feel less included than the male chaplain. I have already discussed this as arising from an exclusion from social events. In my experience, it is rare for female chaplains to be asked out socially with a group of male service personnel. In recent years, the British Army has focused on the idea of

“diversity and inclusion.” However, the extent to which this is realised may be questioned. The topic of diversity and inclusion was raised when I was spending time with one of my interlocutors. My colleague made the point publicly that she did not think the British Army was taking the matter of inclusion seriously enough. She commented, “It’s always about being seen to do the right thing, rather than actually doing it.” She added, “This applies to the RACHD. The department is very traditional and seems unwilling to change.” I would argue that an establishment’s intransigence to change may also be a reaction against traditional beliefs and practices. This is an argument strongly supported by Konopka et al., (2021) who identify a reactive traditional masculinity, reinforcing its own boundaries against perceived threats of new masculine and feminine expressions. This is contrary to other suggestions that a more inclusive approach is being adopted by men with a greater acceptance of divergent expressions (Bartky, 1998). This is an argument explored by Connell (2005), who identifies divergent forms of masculinity. Yet this analysis of divergent forms has used hegemonic expression as a foundation from which further expressions arise. The view of an acceptance of divergency does not sit well with my own experiences of an expressive traditional masculinity within the British Army. It is a wonderful idea and would be a firm foundation for change within an existing intransigent organisation. It would suggest less intransigence, with the idea of men adopting new masculine expressions. This will include being less critical from a standpoint of a traditional masculine narrative that potentially restricts human expression (Lomas, 2013).

Chaplaincy meetings are often presided over by at least two senior chaplains, dependent upon the size of the meeting. I am often conscious of this hierarchy. One of the senior chaplains present is a person who writes part of the end-of-year report for chaplains who are present at such meetings. All service personnel receive annual reports. I have often felt the need to exercise a degree of expediency in these scenarios. There is nothing like the drive for a good report to dampen a sense of

freedom of speech. In my view, this suggests that within the British Army hierarchy and in the RACHD, there is a form of social control at work. This returns to the idea of how an institution can exert a powerful influence over people. In this sense, the person is not an individual with complete freedom. Goffman (1961) is clear about the authoritative power of the total institution over the individual. As in his example of the military, there are rules and regulations to follow. The institution wins. I would argue that the powerful hegemonic masculinity at work in the British Army, as its defining culture, leaves a deep and influential presence on men who express this culture in hyper ways. This happens, as I see it, aside from any formal regulations. The culture is powerful. Kravel-Tovi (2017) sees the example of the state and its beliefs leading to the total conformity of people who want to be accepted by the state. Like military personnel, there is a need for people to feel accepted. This can only be achieved through conformity to the greater power. I would suggest a padre is not exempt from this. It also suggests to me a degree of vulnerability of a person regarding the power of an institution. Whether, for example, a bad report would be written is another matter. Perception is important here. I have sensed vulnerability within myself. A male colleague shared with me, "Be careful what you say. You want to give the best impression to your senior chaplain." Social control is an important mechanism for regulating behaviour. It reflects the authoritarian nature of an institution that defines what is acceptable (Black, 1983). Here, the views of a person are overshadowed by another set of values. In effect, a person takes on values and becomes a reflection of the institution. The British Army is a good example of an institution that is authoritarian. I would maintain that its traditional masculinity impacts individual perception. I have felt less vulnerable by not saying anything in the presence of senior leadership who seem to me to represent the values of the institution.

Given that female chaplains are a minority group within the RACHD, I thought that my colleague's comments about diversity and inclusion were brave. She was not afraid to exercise courage on an issue she felt very strongly about. The response to her was interesting. She was the only female chaplain present. Some male chaplains nodded, some remained silent, and a few, including a very senior chaplain, responded by strongly disagreeing. He used the phrase, "I hope Chatham House Rules apply," meaning the details of the conversation ought to remain limited to the current circle of participants. It became apparent to me that this was more for his benefit than for my female interlocutor. I am aware that a potential anti-inclusion standpoint can be subject to military discipline if it can be defined as unacceptable behaviour (Ministry of Defence, AGAI: Volume 2, Chapter 67, Administrative Action, 2021). Interestingly, I would argue that this is also an example of how an institution with its own regulations can exact a level of social control over a person. He did not want to put himself in this situation. There has been significant debate about the importance of freedom of speech, espoused many times, such as in the foundational work by Mill (2016). This expresses the need for free speech. Yet where does free speech end? This has been charted as an evolutionary development, which is complex and can often depend on specific contexts (Dabhoiwala, 2025). Perhaps, according to other scholars, a balance is required between freedom of speech and what is being debated. For example, this would include a consideration of people's human rights (Nossel, 2020). There is also a debate here about when something is wrong and can be challenged. I was glad that freedom of speech was being encouraged. Attempts to bring disciplinary action against service personnel are a way to limit unacceptable behaviours, although it also limits freedom of speech. I would rather be able to debate alternative viewpoints, even those that could cause offence. This may allow for an open challenge to traditional masculine perceptions.

This male senior chaplain was keen to make the point that, in his view, too much has been made of diversity and inclusion, at the cost of free speech. He continued by saying that everyone has become too frightened to say what they think, in case “they upset the minority.” Later, during the day, I asked my female colleague what she thought about this comment. Her response was poignant: “There are a lot of chaplains in the department who don’t understand what it’s like to be a woman serving in a department predominantly of men in an army predominantly of men.” She went on to say that many of the issues experienced by women in the British Army are “simply absent” for men. She concluded, “It doesn’t affect a man directly and so they’re not bothered.” The comments of the male senior chaplain indicate the need for a debate, an exercise of freedom of speech that challenges this lack of understanding. Nossel (2020) argues for the imperative of free speech that can make a difference to people’s lives. For my female interlocutor, a divide continues about male understanding of issues that women face. I have already mentioned some of these when referring to the Parliamentary Report (UK Parliament, 2021). This has centred on the lack of physical resources for women, such as badly fitting uniforms based on male design. It points to a potential lack of understanding by the male majority of the needs of a female minority. It proved to be a damning report. Perhaps it went beyond the imaginings of male military leadership who thought that all was well for women who serve.

I spoke with a female colleague who, for some years, had a passion to train as an Army Commando. This course takes place in Lympstone, the location of the Royal Marine Commando training centre. In recent years, women have attempted to complete this gruelling course which demands mental and physical strength. Upon completion, women did not attain an infantry position. This has now changed. I have already considered the infantry as a male sacred space. I would argue that part of this is a male intransigence to change, centred on what I have already described as men

perceiving different expressions as a threat (Konopka et al., 2021). It remains to be seen whether more women try to complete the course to become an Army Commando. At present, all Commandos are men. As a woman, my colleague felt denied the opportunity to become formally recognised as a serving member of the Commandos. She therefore had no desire to even attempt a course without an award. "It's just not fair. The few women who wanted to do the course should have been allowed to with full recognition. Now women can. That's a good thing. I'm too old now." Even with the acceptance of women into infantry training, it remains uncertain as to whether many women will apply.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the experience of women as a minority. I have looked at the British Army and especially the RChD as an historic, established institution whose practices affect minority experience today. This has drawn on the lived experiences of padres, both female and male. It arises out of potential experiences that all padres face working in the British Army, which has a dominant traditional masculinity. The RChD consists of padres who often serve as the minority of one within regiments. Female padres are also a minority within a minority within the RChD, with only 7 who are in regular service at the time of writing this thesis. They are a gender minority within the RChD and within the regiments they serve.

I suggest the British Army can be characterised as a male sacred space. Examples of male sacred spaces are those relating to specific roles, such as in the infantry. This is perhaps the most acute example of a male sacred space that has strong historical roots. Other examples include physical spaces where men and

women are often separated, such as with accommodation, sports, and mess games. In the last two examples, women may be excluded and feel excluded. These are physical spaces yet are spaces that have gendered meaning. There are two issues with the male sacred space. One concerns the construction of difference between male and female. This may have ramifications pastorally for a female padre who is limited to spaces where men do not dwell, especially socially. Most of our work as padres is about building relationships, often in social environments. The other issue is the perpetuation of the idea of normalised differences between men and women. This can justify different roles between men and women. Women may experience not only difference but possibly subjugation, undertaking menial tasks for the benefit of a male majority. An example of this is the space of the home, traditionally identified as the place for women.

The male sacred space has been around for a long time. It is rooted in the historical practices of the British Army, and I would argue remains in the thinking of service personnel, especially those who are male. It is part of an expression of a traditional masculinity that can be called both hyper and hegemonic. This refers to the culture of masculinity that continues to be believed in and expressed by men. Often, the characteristic behaviour of this traditional masculinity includes acts of physicality and competitiveness. These can be seen at work on the sports fields and messes of the British Army. Men may feel that women do not belong to groups that partake in physical activities. A sense of gender difference is aided by the small number of women who serve in the British Army and the RACHD. I would suggest that it is easier to regulate the position of women by a male majority. Here, women continue to be excluded. It reflects a persistent voice of a traditional masculinity that may be intransigent to change.

There are experiences for both men and women. For men, it is often about their position of being part of a male majority. For women, they often feel a sense of being excluded. It has been a lived experience for my female interlocutors. The construction of gender roles for people cannot be separated from a sense of a higher calling from God. For some female padres, calling is important and they may wish to minimise issues of gender as secondary to their sense of divine calling. The padre also occupies a unique space within the military. This is not always easy to negotiate or to understand. This places the padre in a liminal area.

What ways may be open to challenge the views of normalised differences between men and women? Speaking up against a backdrop of traditional masculinity is a deep-seated challenge for women at all levels in the British Army and may lead to a sense of vulnerability. There is also a challenge for the male majority who may feel threatened by change. A female padre doing things that are not perceived to be part of normalised female behaviour can challenge customs, such as a female who plays rugby or does martial arts. There is a possibility that change can occur through a counter-cultural response open to all. Change will not be easy in an establishment that is so immersed in beliefs and expressions of traditional masculinity. This is about changing hegemonic culture and changing people's perceptions and practices. This may lead to a more inclusive culture. Consequently, more women may wish to serve as the idea of the British Army as a male establishment is disrupted.

An analysis of the British Army establishment reveals deep challenges to realising diversity and inclusion. There is much discussion about it, with policy put in place. However, perhaps the British Army is flawed by having such a dominant and potentially immovable traditional masculinity. Diversity and inclusion may therefore never be realised, and the male majority will continue to hold this position. The British Army has centuries of tradition as its foundation. Different ways of thinking may change

the establishment from the inside, as different people join and challenge the existing traditional culture. These people may have a view of society that is less about institution and authority and more about the representation of diverse views. They may be a people of a new order from a society that has changed more quickly than the British Army. A challenge to change involves a tension between uniformity and individual expression. If there is too much uniformity, the needs of the individual may not be met. However, too much individual expression may result in a dangerous situation for the British Army, with the breakdown of a cohesive fighting force. After all, the military is ultimately about engaging the enemy.

Chapter 7. The Female Chaplain as a Minority: patriarchy within a military organisation

7.1 Introduction

Before my deployment to Afghanistan, the senior chaplain said to me, “You will find yourself in isolated locations, often the only chaplain there.” He continued, “Think about that for a second. It can be a very lonely experience.” He went on to discuss the importance of routine to develop purpose and meaning in one’s day. I felt that my faith was going to be challenged. It suddenly seemed easy to be a Christian in a Western country, going to church and sharing faith. I was now looking at the prospect of being the only practising Christian inside camp, surrounded by hostile forces outside camp. I was reminded of Psalm 91. I have heard this referred to as “the soldier’s psalm”: “Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty” (Revised English Bible, 1989). I needed to know that there would be companionship and support. Five months into the tour, I remember speaking with a young female officer who told me, “It must be nice being accepted by everybody as a person they can approach, the padre. You should try being the only woman serving here. It can be a very lonely experience.” This echoed the words of the senior chaplain.

This chapter will continue the theme from Chapter 6 that padres, and especially female padres, occupy a minority position as they serve within the British Army. In Chapter 6, I explored what establishment means for the construction of normalised gender roles between men and women. Here, the British Army has a long practice of a masculinity that is both hegemonic as a cultural expression and hyper in the ways it is expressed by service personnel. For this chapter, I will continue to explore the lived experience of padres, and especially female padres, within the contemporary British

Army, which has been built on the foundations of traditional masculinity. I use the word patriarchy to refer to this masculinity expressed in the contemporary yet founded on history. I would argue that historical establishment is the foundation on which contemporary patriarchal values continue to be expressed. The British Army is an organisation that continues to consist largely of men, with women as a minority. The female chaplain is also a minority within the Royal Army Chaplains' Department (RACHD) compared to male chaplains. As stated already, at the time of writing this thesis, there were only 7 regular female padres in the Chaplains' Department. This compares with approximately 135 in total (British Army, *Life as a British Army Chaplain*, 2025). The numerically low statistics for regular female chaplains are often stated by senior chaplains in the directorate of the department. From my observations, these are accurate.

7.2 A Minority Within a Minority

There are two main reasons why female padres can be called a minority within a minority. First, there is the specialist area of regular military chaplaincy, of people serving in a religious and now also non-religious capacity as chaplains in the British Army. There are currently fewer than 140 regular British Army chaplains compared with approximately 80,000 regular military personnel (British Army, *Life as a British Army Chaplain*, 2025). Across the total British Army capacity (both regular and reserves), there is a strength of 137,000 (as of July 2025). Women made up 10.4 per cent of this figure, or 16,300 (UK Parliament, 2021). This figure is comparatively higher than women's representation in the RACHD. Women remain a minority in the military. Second, there are currently fewer than 10 regular female padres. This makes female chaplaincy in the British Army a minority within a minority. This position of minority

exists not only for padres. It also reflects the low number of females who serve in the British Army more generally.

The minority of female service personnel, whether in the British Army generally or in the RACHD, reflects the idea of the British Army being perceived as a male-dominated organisation. In other words, I would argue the British Army is a patriarchal organisation. In the last chapter, I maintained that a male historical establishment explains the continuation of a male military today. Lerner (1986) argues that patriarchy can only be fully understood by identifying its roots in history. These are roots that lead to further contemporary expressions. This understands patriarchy as a cultural construct that is both part of history and transcends history (Saini, 2023). This moves beyond an explanation of biological determinism. Such a position of patriarchy has been condemned for placing women into a secondary position. This has already been explored in the work by Simone de Beauvoir (1949), where male domination is condemned for subjugating women to the position of the other. A consequence of this, according to some feminist thinkers, is to allow patriarchal expression by men to dominate over women, defining what a gendered reality is (Solnit, 2014). I would argue there is a challenge in recruiting women to the British Army when it is seen as a place for men, as a patriarchal organisation. More than this, I would hold it is a place for men who display characteristics of traditional masculinity. These have been explored as hyper expressions reflecting a hegemonic male culture. One female interlocutor told me, "I didn't want to become a female chaplain in the British Army. I thought it was a place for men. A place where men could be men." This statement highlights the possibility that this perception of the British Army is widespread among men and women. It may serve to maintain a minority of women being recruited.

As a minority in a patriarchal culture, I would argue that women may have various experiences with feelings such as being excluded, isolated, alienated, and

marginalised. A female interlocutor told me, “At times I felt alone in parish ministry. At times, I have felt more alone in military chaplaincy.” This sentiment was echoed by other female interlocutors. This can be contrasted with my male interlocutors, who have relished telling me stories of going out with military service personnel socially and playing sports. This has also been my experience. I have rarely, if at all, felt excluded, isolated, alienated, or marginalised. Some interesting fictional works explore the female experience in a patriarchal environment. The classic novel, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Atwood, 1985), creates a deeply patriarchal society in which women are controlled by a strict traditional patriarchy. This is set in a society that seems historical, demonstrated by the types of dress worn by women, but depicts a patriarchy that is exercised as a kind of cult in a wider contemporary society. Although fictional, it raises important experiences of what such a society would be like for women. It also raises an important issue as to whether it echoes the reality of Western society today. Do women feel oppressed? Do women feel excluded and alienated? Garcia (2021) holds to the view that women do suffer the effects of patriarchal oppression. For Garcia, it is also about challenging the historical structures that continue to persist in contemporary society. Such a challenge could be applied to a military context. To highlight where oppression is felt and to challenge this. As Garcia points out, patriarchy is not a given but a social construct to be challenged.

Female padres have responded in different ways to feelings of exclusion, isolation, alienation, and marginalisation. A female padre said, “I have given up trying to make a difference.” Another chose to confront feelings but said this made her “feel vulnerable.” She would rather remain silent in the face of an “intimidating Chain of Command.” I assume this was made up of men. Another response was to speak up, to express a female voice. A female padre said, “I have always been a gobby woman. I’m not afraid to say what I think if I think it’s worth saying.” I would argue these statements can be seen as counter-cultural responses to a traditional masculinity. This

is a masculinity that has a strong patriarchal influence within the contemporary establishment of the British Army. A person can be part of the British Army and yet be oppositional to it. This calls upon the idea explored by bell hooks (1994), that counterculture can be a powerful influence within an established culture. It can undermine existing beliefs and practices. It can also be seen as a force for good, highlighting discrimination. Counterculture has at its centre the aim to make a difference. This may include greater inclusivity. I suggest that the use of a counter-cultural response in a traditional military context will require a balance between being challenging but not compromising an effective pastoral ministry. To some extent, the padre may be expected to challenge. A Commanding Officer told me, "Padre, you have a voice like no other. I expect you to be honest with me about problems you identify in the regiment." A senior chaplain made a point that the padre is the one person who has an overview of what is happening in the military because it is the padre who "gets to go everywhere." This returns to the idea of the padre as a free-moving chest piece.

A problem that I see is whether those in leadership want to hear what is being said by the padre. I would suggest that no one is exempt from their own agendas and biases, including the Commanding Officer. Research has suggested that being biased is part of being human, that we rely on an intuitive understanding in the way we judge others (Kahneman, 2012). Our reflections on people and situations may therefore be linked to something more fundamental within our minds. Yet we can perhaps become aware of how much we operate with bias by a process of self-reflection. Banaji and Greenwald (2016) reflect on unconscious bias, developing an awareness of how much it affects the ways we see everything around us. As human beings, we are influenced by cultures that shape the ways we see. Nonetheless, I would argue there is an opportunity for the padre to challenge these biases and other preconceptions. Another senior chaplain once told me that as a padre, I need to "get the balance" when I am

making “constructive observations.” Otherwise, he suggested, “If too much is said, you will not be listened to. You will be seen as no more than a moaner.” The idea of a person being a “moaner” may also reflect a bias that someone may have. To perceive a person as a moaner. There is a danger here, I would suggest, that a padre can feel more isolated as a minority because of what they say. This may especially be felt by a female padre who is a minority within a minority. A female interlocutor told me, “I say a lot. I’m not sure if it’s always heard. I sometimes feel like the lone voice.”

7.3 Female Minority at Chaplaincy Gatherings

During a padre’s British Army career, there are mandatory requirements to attend various courses, sometimes called continuing professional development courses or conferences (CPD). One of my female interlocutors and I were required to attend one of these. We both arrived at a place called Amport House, which was, until recently, the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre for the United Kingdom. This centre has since relocated. The Chaplaincy Centre is a unique setting called tri-service, that includes courses for chaplaincy and non-chaplaincy military personnel from the three services, Royal Navy, British Army, and Royal Air Force. I would say this military centre feels more like a home for British Army padres than for those chaplains from the other services. I think this can be explained historically. Most of the memorabilia has been transferred across from British Army chaplaincy centres, now closed. Paintings of British Army Chaplain Generals and British Army chaplaincy life fill the rooms.

We gathered in the central hallway for coffee, with various doorways leading off to lecture rooms. Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centres are converted stately homes. Their original grandeur remains intact. Many of the older Officers’ Messes have had a

similar grandeur but have often been replaced by more modern purpose-built properties. I have heard many military personnel grumble at this. They often speak about a “military legacy” being lost. I have also heard British Army padres make similar complaints. There are those who remember Bagshot Park, prior to Amport House, who are upset that a grand building is no longer part of the RACHD. History and the contemporary are joined together in military life. I have already identified this as a perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity in the lives of military men (Hinojosa, 2010). Military culture, beliefs, and practices are rooted in the past that is expressed in the present. As I have said, history comes into the present. This has also been associated with acts of remembrance in the armed forces, where heroes of the past are celebrated on solemn occasions. I explored this in the research conducted by Drozdowski et al., (2021) on the impact that remembrance of the fallen has on participants in services. This also relates to a sense of who the hero is. This is the hero of the past celebrated today by military men (Holt and Thompson, 2004).

I would argue that services and a sense of the hero in history are instances of how patriarchy works in the British Army today. An example of this is my own understanding of how the RACHD continues to consider chaplains for promotion as an expression of a male military culture. I see this as male leadership continuing to promote male leaders. This returns to the idea already expressed that the military, like the Church of England, is a male fraternity (Page, 2008). This allows for a perpetuation of an existing order, as identified by Page. It is the exercising of a strong and persistent masculinity. Furthermore, the current structures of certain organisations are deeply patriarchal. Fry (2024) makes the point that contemporary practices in the Church of England, such as men holding senior clerical positions, are a result of long and established historical practices. I would argue the British Army is open to this same criticism. This is a challenge, especially for female padres who are the minority. I would also hold that promotion is more likely to be awarded to male chaplains as they form

the majority. When I attend courses, I am reminded of this, with very few female padres attending. I have also spoken with female interlocutors who have told me they thought the British Army was a “man’s world.” This has led some to delay an application to become a padre. This is hardly a misconception, considering the small numbers of women who serve and even fewer female padres.

As we gathered for coffee, it reminded me of how much I have disliked such gatherings. Speaking with colleagues over the years, I am not alone in this feeling. I first entered the RChD in 2009 and was keen to speak to all. But in such gatherings, I have become aware that we are not all equal. I have since become content not to expand my social network beyond my chaplaincy officer rank. There appears to be a distinctive hierarchical structure within the RChD. From my own observations, those of higher rank will align themselves as a particular group, with some very senior chaplains interacting with the Deputy Chaplain General (known as the DCG) and the Chaplain General (CG). Such alignments are to be expected, as certain factors can explain why people identify as a group. Forsyth (2019) argues that many factors explain the formation of interactive groups. This could be based on sex and age. It could also denote position and authority. Conversely, there are junior chaplains, those of lesser rank, who will congregate together. It is in the latter category that I have observed female chaplains. For Forsyth, gender can be another important factor to explain the makeup of groups. In my example of chaplaincy in the British Army, rank and gender are also interconnected. In my observations, there are occasional comments and smiles from male chaplains of higher rank directed to those of lower rank. At chaplaincy gatherings, I often sense this strong hierarchy.

7.4 Academic Understandings of Minority Experience

There have been several ethnographies in recent years that talk about female experiences in the military. This shows how women's voices are beginning to emerge, even in the military, where patriarchy can dominate. These are ethnographic understandings that give substance to my academic claim that the British Army is patriarchal in nature and expression. They are ways of illustrating something about the minority experiences of women.

Lemmon (2015) has highlighted the specific challenges that women have faced within the US military context, especially the challenges of being a woman in a predominantly male environment. In her work, *Ashley's War*, Lemmon includes the story of a woman who chooses a life in special operations, in a world dominated by men. Lemmon also discusses a story of violence. Part of her experience has been to come to terms with being raped by a fellow male soldier whilst serving in Iraq. Her war has been a personal one. Experience can be about how something can deeply impact the individual. Women in the military world of special operations can also provide a degree of female anonymity when serving with men. When I served in Afghanistan, I spoke with female soldiers who told me their military uniforms provided anonymity when on foot patrol into local Afghan villages. They said they were able to conduct themselves as soldiers on the ground, along with other soldiers. They were not infantry soldiers and were often British Army medics, especially nurses. However, sometimes their female identity became known to local Afghan men. They told me this usually meant being subjected to sexual abuse involving hand gestures. Lemmon has offered an important study about her experiences. It highlights the need for more women to tell their stories and to build up an understanding of what female minority experiences

can be. Hopefully this will include more experiences from women in the British Army. Experiences have been shared from the US military context.

Williams (2006) talks about her experiences of sexual harassment within the US military. She served as a US soldier in Iraq. Serving as a female soldier, she also found it difficult to serve as a female in a predominantly male organisation. She felt a contradiction between being both accepted into a system and rejected by others who served in it. This perhaps shows that women continue to be identified as different in some ways, not entirely as equal to fellow male combatants. This may also be about the objectification and sexualisation of the female as an expression of traditional male culture. Mulvey (1975) examines the idea of men who look at women, the use of the “male gaze” as a way of objectifying and sexualising women. Behind this gaze, there is an active intention by men, according to Mulvey, to see women as sexual objects. I would argue that in a predominantly patriarchal environment like the military, this provides an environment rich for men to gaze. Yet Mulvey is herself seeing men as active viewers and women as passive receivers of this. This may not explain all men or women in the way they engage with the other. bell hooks (1992) stresses ways of seeing as very important for reinforcing existing views about others. Yet an oppositional gaze can also be used and for hooks, this involves challenging established ways of seeing. In the US military, women can take on a given status serving in a largely male environment (Williams, 2006). This can be seen as a woman being singled out as different. She is the woman serving in an environment of men.

7.5 The Female Chaplain as Different

I would argue what distinguished me from my female colleague at this conference was our difference as male and female. This seems an obvious point, but it is a fundamentally important one when considering female experience as a minority. It is within this position, the lived experience of minority in the British military, that created a sense of difference. My female colleague made the point, "I feel different because I am the only female present." I was very interested to hear her say that she felt "different." I wanted to explore what she meant by this. She replied, "When you're all men, you're all the same. When you're a woman, you're often the only one. That makes you different because you're the only one." For Park (2025), feelings of marginality are explored for those who feel on the edges of the social environments in which they live and work. It is a very real feeling for those who do not feel part of a mainstream majority. I asked my female colleague attending the conference how she felt about being the only woman present. She replied, "It's just normal. I've come to expect nothing else." She added, "Sometimes it can feel isolating and sometimes I feel reluctant to say very much." Marginality may be a powerful experience involving a range of feelings. Park suggests that marginality can be an intensely personal experience for a person on the margins. This can include, according to Park, a sense of peripheral status and isolation from a dominant culture. I think this applies well to women who work in a male military environment. I would argue that a sense of powerlessness can be identified here. Power is maintained by the male majority. Women's experiences in the British Army reflect the idea of marginality put forward by Park. In an environment dominated by men and patriarchal culture, women may feel reluctant to put themselves front and centre, to speak out against the dominant voices. This may reinforce a sense of female difference, with their views and voices remaining on the edges.

The conference I attended with my female colleague was being run at “divisional” level, with each Division being a sector of personnel from the British Army. In this case, it was British Army chaplains serving in the Division. My female colleague was the only female padre attending. She said to me, “Here we go again. I’m the only woman here.” She commented, “I get a little tired of being the only woman at these events. It sometimes feels like, as women, we are not important.” It was after coffee that we entered one of the rooms, ready for the first address. There were some introductory slides outlining the programme and the visiting lecturers. The senior male chaplain at Amport House, who was called “The Principal of the House,” spoke at length. All the speakers were also men.

I thought about the possibility that female padres and other women who serve in the British Army may feel excluded from opportunities that are available to the male majority. One example of this is the opportunity for promotion. I would maintain it is more likely that men are going to be promoted into positions of seniority because there are more men than women who are able to compete. A female interlocutor told me she felt she “will never become a Chaplain General.” In this way, the male majority is perpetuated and protected. This example highlights challenges that any minority, sexual and racial, can face at an organisational level (Pei, 2018). This impacts on individuals and their experiences. Yet Park (2025) also sees marginalisation as an opportunity to develop change. This position of marginality may allow for the development of alternative perspectives that can undermine marginality itself. This sounds like the potential for the creation of an oppositional gaze. I think there are ways to remedy a sense of difference that women can experience in military environments. One involves more women being recruited to an organisation that is not perceived as a “man’s world.” This may be difficult to realise. I had an opportunity to explore experiences around minority when another interlocutor spoke with me. I had asked her to explain how she felt being at chaplaincy conferences where she is often the only

woman. She told me, "It would be nice to see more female chaplains." I reflected on the perception that some women have suggested about the British Army being a "man's world." Only by changing this perception can there potentially be more female padres. Another way is to implement promotion in favour of women to be promoted. Would this undermine merit in favour of gender being seen as more significant? A female interlocutor said to me, "I feel denied opportunities because I am a woman. The competition is too great to compete with a chance of being promoted."

I would argue that being different is also about more than an individual being the only female. It is also about how difference can be expressed between men and women. In my chapter on masculinities, I explore male behaviours as expressions of a traditional masculinity, as hyper expressions of a male hegemonic culture. I have mentioned certain behaviours such as physicality, competitiveness, shouting, and drinking. This is not to say that women do not express these. In my chapter on femininities, I explore how women express some of these behaviours that are often identified as traditionally masculine. Yet I also mention that there are women who express alternative behaviours that are often identified as traditionally feminine. I have suggested that these identifications are often an unchallenged acceptance of cultural definitions that naturalise behaviours as different between men and women. Consequently, difference between women and men is maintained and reinforced in the British Army. Difference is therefore to be understood not as a reflection of natural and biological differences between men and women, but rather as internalised cultural constructions. This is part of what has been termed "difference theory" (Derrida, 1981, p. 14). It emphasises the use of binary simplistic definitions to differentiate men and women as fundamentally different from each other. This has been criticised as a naturalised definition, when really it is a cultural expression. At an institutionalised level, such as the British Army, it could be argued that a naturalised definition of gender difference is a fundamental expression of a traditional masculinity. It views women as

different, as the “other” (McDowell and Pringle, 1992, p. 3). The problem, according to McDowell and Pringle, is that this can lead to a sense of marginalisation and isolation for women who live and work within an institutional setting. This would support the experience of women who may feel separated from men in different ways, whether that be socially or even because of separate accommodation.

My female colleague made a further point relating to difference. “I have found that some women in the army act a bit like men. They feel they can’t be different. It’s got something to do with the idea of how a person is supposed to act in the army.” I have examined the idea in my chapter on femininities that some behaviour by women is identified as essentially masculine in a traditional sense. Halbersham (2019) has developed the idea of female behaviour being seen as feminine expression that is masculine. Female expression is therefore not identified as a stand-alone expression but as a replication of male behaviours. This view is supported by McKelvey (2007) where female torturers were condemned for their behaviours that were seen as reflecting bad male behaviours. Furthermore, there is a suggestion that when women act aggressively, this too is identified as a male rather than female trait (Lavin, 2012). I would argue that these assumptions, that women are acting like men, will only serve to define a woman as an expression of traditional masculinity. Alternatively, a woman acting like a woman may only define her in terms of a traditional femininity.

Another female colleague also made a similar point about women being seen to behave like men. She was reflecting on her time in training at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. She said, “Women are always in the minority, even on the PQO [Professional Qualified Officer] course. I sensed a pressure on myself to act more like a man to get through the course.” For her, this was expressed in the “delivery of orders,” a requirement on the course, when women often shouted their orders to make their point known. My colleague had a strong feeling that women should exercise their

own qualities as women, finding their own styles, rather than acting like men. She made the point, “It’s not our fault. We have been shown one style of leadership. The shouty style that men use. You see it all the time at Sandhurst. And it’s the way most of the army is.” I would maintain it is a traditional masculinity of physicality, loudness, and presence.

I would argue that the military is essentially about uniformity. This refers to definitions of what constitutes appropriate behaviour. Goffman (1961) defines some institutions as examples of total control through regulatory devices and an expectation placed on conformity. Amongst these institutions, like the asylum, is the military. They are defined by rules. People can be sanctioned or rewarded, depending on their behaviour. Diverse behaviours can be contrary to regulations. As an example, homosexuality was illegal in the British armed forces until the early part of this millennium. People lost their jobs if it was shown that a person was gay. It had been defined as “disgraceful conduct” (e.g. Army Act 1955; Air Force Act 1955; Naval Discipline Act 1957). Later, it was identified as being incompatible with military service. Even when regulations are not broken, it can be argued that the pressure to conform maintains a certain social control. For Goffman, the effectiveness of an institution like the military is maintained through the influence that people can have on others. It is the people who maintain the regulations and expect others to conform to these.

7.6 Calling or Patriarchy?

In a discussion with another female colleague, I was interested to see how her views on being at a conference dominated by men compared with the views of the other female chaplain. I began by asking her how she felt. She made the point, “When

I see another female chaplain at conferences, I think – amazing.” Such is the reality of there being so few female chaplains at these events. She continued, “I’m not that bothered about it. Sometimes this can be more of an issue than it needs to be.” This view may reflect an emphasis that a padre gives to engaging with others rather than seeing gender as an issue. She told me, “I love to engage with my colleagues. I love to engage with all those I serve with.” For myself, and I suspect for most of my chaplaincy colleagues, there is a sense of serving others that becomes more important than matters relating to gender. This does not detract from the presence and importance of gender as a constant influence. This can be understood in consideration about the impact that patriarchy has on maintaining relations between men and women (Rowlands, 1998). For Rowlands, patriarchy centres on the importance of power relationships. Calling is important for padres, yet an expression of calling may be argued as being caught up in the power dynamics experienced between people. A patriarchy involves the dynamics of gender that may lead to unequal power relationships. The military is a hierarchical establishment. I would maintain that power relationships are therefore inevitable. Added to this is an organisation that is male-dominated. Gender power relationships would be expected.

I see calling in the British Army as partly identifying the potential problem of patriarchy for limiting a more inclusive culture. A female colleague said to me, “I want to make a difference to female experience in the British Army.” I am reminded again of the “oppositional gaze” emphasised by bell hooks (1992, p. 115). hooks argues for a voice to influence a system from within, rather than looking at a system from the outside. The military can be a closed world. I would argue that more can be done by being in this world than on the outside. Walby (1986) identifies patriarchy as problematic for change. It is essentially a device for repressing people who hold alternative views. Although more can be done on the inside, there remains a considerable challenge for those who want a more inclusive military. For Walby,

patriarchy within people is not about authentic expression but maintaining an existing male culture. Others have reflected on how this has impacted their lives. bell hooks (1997), examining her life in Western society, has concluded that patriarchy is endemic. She understands this as a mainstream Western patriarchy where individuals can be ignored and become marginalised. A female colleague told me, "Often my voice goes unnoticed." The female chaplain who spoke about Sandhurst also raised a point about how women can express themselves in the British Army. For her, this is often linked to being part of a male culture and being able to establish a sense of position within a gender hierarchy. In her view, there is a type of woman who wishes to serve others without a desire to be promoted. Yet another who is "highly competitive", seeking to "outdo" her male peers. The distinction was described as those "who want to get along" and those "who want to get ahead." The recent Parliamentary Report on gender inequality in the British Army has identified the need to address barriers for female promotion (UK Parliament, 2021, p. 29). This report has been damning about the lack of promotion for serving female personnel. It remains to be seen whether this will be adequately addressed.

Calling is a difficult matter to work out for the individual religious practitioner in a military context. For me, it has been fraught with challenges, sometimes consisting of expressions that seem to be part of a traditional male culture I am serving in. For example, on one occasion I had consumed a significant quantity of champagne that disabled me to the point of vomiting in the toilets of the Officers' Mess, the "heads." It was after this that I had to appear in front of a senior officer of my regiment for him to clarify that I needed to control my drinking. There have been other occasions. My military career to date has been served in mostly infantry regiments where a strong drinking culture exists. Each time, I have been involved in what I would call "man tests." I cannot remember a woman ever being present. On one occasion in the Officers' Mess, I was challenged to consume five pints of beer from a large drinking implement.

I drank it down with words of encouragement, like “Come on, Padre.” After finishing it within a respectable time and vomiting out of a nearby window, I was firmly encouraged with the words, “Gleaming effort, Padre.” I remember feeling elated and thinking that I had achieved a level of acceptance amongst my peers. Walby (1986) stresses that patriarchy, which effectively creates a dominant male culture, is achieved through both a robust structure overseen by men and through specific practices that reinforce a traditional male culture. I would argue there is no other working environment in Britain where drinking is viewed so positively as in the British Army. An army psychiatrist once told me that the British Army is a very “thirsty” place. It remains a drinking culture. Yet as Walby shows, patriarchy is a male system perpetuated by men. I have encountered this as a challenge, getting involved and testing my position as a male padre. It could be that women are spared these challenges, as it is men and male padres included, who seem to end up getting involved in drinking games. I would argue that patriarchy being lived out can also be seen as part of calling. This will be calling understood in the context of what is perceived to be a military man. Here, practices can become vested with patriarchal meaning (Walby, 1996). This involves being accepted by other men. As padres, like most service personnel, we serve for only two or three years in a particular place. We then move on to somewhere else. As padres, we often relocate and need to re-establish our presence in new settings. With this comes new service personnel. I have heard good and bad accounts of previous padres. I would rather be remembered as good, whatever this means.

7.7 Minority Representation

The British Army remains a male majority, as I have observed over the years. This is despite a Parliamentary Report that calls for it to become more diverse and

inclusive from within (UK Parliament, 2021). There are parts of the British Army that have more women than in other parts. Women, for example, are almost non-existent within the infantry. They are better represented in administrative roles, in Staff and Personnel Support (SPS) and as nurses forming part of a medical chain. Even in these areas, women remain a minority. I would argue that administrative tasks and nursing reflect the supporting and caring roles that are often attributed to women. This returns to the highly traditional role distinction in a domestic context drawn by Parsons (1959) between women who are expressive or emotional, offering support to others, and men who are instrumental by providing more practical and financial support. These are highly contentious polarities, as they seem justified by a naturalisation of distinctive roles between men and women. This is especially pertinent if it is argued that the British Army is a kind of extended family in which traditional gender roles are being played out. As mentioned, Oakley (1974) gives support to the argument that women undertake the main domestic roles. This includes housework, maintaining order in the home, and the emotional support given to the husband and to the children. The perpetuation of these roles can be argued as reinforcing perceptions about gender. As a male colleague told me, "Women make good carers. I can see how they fit into a caring role." I would argue that normalising a division of gender roles will continue if women remain in the minority and men in the majority.

There is a possible dichotomy in the military between women as carers as a normalised role and some of the activities women get involved in. These activities can be seen as a powerful expression of an oppositional gaze (hooks, 1992). They are activities that may undermine a traditional masculine perception about the role of women. This challenges patriarchy that is usually reinforced through a set of beliefs maintained by certain male practices (Walby, 1996).

I wanted to know more about a female colleagues' motivation for playing rugby in the British Army. It is usually played by men outside and within the British Army. It has been argued that certain activities such as playing sports can become examples of stereotyping based on gender (Branchu, 2023). Here, the game of rugby becomes much more than a game. It represents the playing out of gender expectations about what men and women are perceived to be. In Chapter 6, I explored the significance of sport for constructing and reinforcing traditional masculinity, such as in competitive sports in the US that reflect wider cultural expressions of traditional masculinity (Messner, 1995). The example of rugby, as mentioned, can be viewed as a classic demonstration of hegemonic masculinity. For Anderson and McGuire (2010), this is a masculinity that I would argue reflects certain expressions found amongst soldiers. That is, a man who is physical, who takes risks, and who may reject more diverse human expressions, such as women who get involved in activities not considered traditionally feminine. My female colleague said, "People used to look at me strangely in the parish when I told them I played female rugby for the county." I asked if she was aware of this from service personnel. "It's still there. It's difficult to play female rugby because there are so few females." It is only in recent years that rugby has been played by women in the British Army. I asked her why she liked the game. "It gives me a buzz. I've always liked rough sports." I would argue that the presence of women playing rugby, albeit a small minority, challenges the stereotype that women are only carers. There is a place for women in physical sports both within and outside of the military, although as a minority in the British Army, this continues to be a challenge for women disrupting the norm.

I would maintain that sport can also be interpreted more widely than games played only on the sports field. This could include informal gatherings socially, such as those experienced in the Officers' Mess. They include "mess games" where men face each other, such as in "mess rugby." I would argue that like traditional rugby,

these activities reinforce the position of men as part of a traditional masculinity in the British Army. I would hold that these male expressions can be seen as having a wider application and purpose, implicitly demonstrating the physical role and battle-readiness of the soldier and how this is intimately tied into gendered understandings of masculinity (and in stark contrast to conceptions of femininity). “Have the actions or behaviour of an individual adversely impacted or are they likely to impact on the efficiency or operational effectiveness of the Service” (Joint Service Publication, 2016, Volume 2, Chapter 67). This is phrased in the negative. As with rugby and other games, these are activities that encourage physicality and bravery that may be applied to war. This effectiveness is formed off the battlefield for operations on the battlefield.

7.8 The Female Voice

The female voice is important when addressing female status as a minority and enhancing female presence. As mentioned, this can be expressed as an oppositional gaze identified by bell hooks (1992). This can take many forms, such as activities involving sport. Yet it may also be with the use of voice. An example is to speak about the difficulties that women face in a patriarchally dominated organisation (Jeffries, 1996). This could be applied to the British Army. It is a voice that is concerned about rights for women. As an expression, it can include identifying where women struggle to achieve an equality of voice with men. Jeffries is clear that it is vital for women to have a voice, especially in places where only men’s voices can be heard. Yet this also presents a situation of potential conflict. As hooks (2004) emphasises, a more negotiated understanding between men and women can be achieved. Relationships between men and women need not be oppositional. There is also scope for change through men and women working together, and men being willing to listen. This is a

worthy ideal. I would argue that perhaps men and military men are not always willing to change. A suggestion has been made that men may even become more entrenched in traditional masculinity if there is the perception that this position is being challenged and undermined (Konopka et al., 2021). I would also argue that a balance is required between countering a culture and working within it. There are possibilities to voice objections, such as female and male padres being open with the Chain of Command about gender issues. Perhaps there will be some opposition to this, but there is also a possibility of being able to work together.

The use of the female voice can be understood from individual experiences of what it can be like to speak up in a patriarchal environment. I was moved by reading the story of the "First Lady," an autobiography about an individual's journey to a greater sense of being empowered (Obama, 2018). This is a woman who used her position in US politics to speak up for human rights, including the rights of women. This is an intensely personal expression, as she journeys through life and into the world of politics with her husband. I would argue that telling stories of individual experiences is a way of impacting other people. They can be very effective for helping to change people's perceptions and may even impact cultural change. For hooks (1992), women's actions and voices are devices for proactive change. The telling of stories can provide examples of ways in which a traditional male culture can be challenged. Yet there also remains a fundamental challenge as to whether female voices are listened to enough to influence people and culture.

It may depend on who is telling the story. The padre can be a powerful presence for change. A senior soldier said to me, "There are two people you don't want to upset in the regiment. The Commanding Officer and the padre." People can hold a powerful position while in a public religious office. I would maintain that this can be based on both a belief that people hold about people who represent God in office

and the authority of the office itself. Winkett (2010) has reflected on the way she used her female voice to sing the eucharistic prayer in St Paul's Cathedral and what this may have meant for her and those listening. This may have been unexpected for a woman to use her voice. Men have traditionally been those who sing the eucharistic prayer. It was a voice that proved challenging for her to sing out. Yet this may also have been a voice that challenged others. It may have led to an oppositional stance by men as well as to challenge them to become more inclusive. I have already raised what experience is like for women who work within a male-dominated military organisation. This has included feelings of being isolated. One told me, "It's often lonely being the only woman. You feel like a silent individual." For Winkett, the silence was broken. Yet in her example of a woman celebrating the eucharistic prayer, singing out the words, there is a sense of being isolated, of being vulnerable, of being alone as the only person. This may be an apt way of describing minority experience for women in the military. The female voice can be a powerful tool for revealing what experiences are like.

It was during various discussions with my female interlocutors that the topic of the "female voice" was raised. None of the female chaplains had a positive view about being heard. One said, "I feel that heads nod but not much is going in." Another said, "Sometimes I feel listened to. But mostly minds are already made up." Rodenburg (2023) argues that the historic repression of women has denied women an effective voice today. The lack of a voice in public Western society has diminished a woman's ability to speak out and to be heard. A problem here is that women are identified as the problem, resulting from patriarchal oppression. Yet I would argue patriarchal oppression continues, like in the British Army, where the male domain does not allow for an effective female voice to be heard. The comments above, made by female padres, arose from their experiences in infantry regiments dominated by men. I have already suggested this is an environment perceived to be a "man's world." In infantry

regiments, almost all service personnel are men. One of my female interlocutors said she felt like a “brick wall” existed when discussing matters that impacted the few women in her infantry regiment. This included the uniforms designed by men which were ill-fitting and uncomfortable for women. Infantry makes up over a third of the British Army. This is a significant military footprint of traditional masculinity. The UK Parliamentary Report (2021) highlighted a lack of provision for women who serve in the armed forces. This has included badly fitting uniforms and a lack of provision whilst serving in the field on exercise.

Another female padre acknowledged that a padre is often listened to if they are identified as a “subject matter expert.” This term is often used and tends to be abbreviated to SME. However, in her experience, resonating with my own, expertise will usually and expectantly be understood regarding religious matters. This will often focus on informal discussions about God, death (such as of a soldier), and the organisation of a religious service, such as a funeral. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 3, the padre often contributes as a teacher to “values and standards” of the British Army, including raising moral arguments about what constitutes a just war understood within a framework of definable moral boundaries. In these senses, I would argue a padre is a padre, not a woman or a man. However, it remains an unanswered question to what extent men will listen to what a female padre is saying in an organisation that has a strong patriarchal culture. Discussions with padres, both male and female, have also revealed a strong theme of calling. A male padre told me, “I am there for the men who need me.” This can be seen as not relating to men or women but is about a divine calling. Kempis (2004) discusses the importance of the incarnation of Christ revealed through a discipleship in serving others. Just as Jesus taught, using powerful words that influenced others, so too are his disciples those people who speak the word of God.

An argument about discipleship and calling ignores complementarianism where biblical and theological justification is given for saying that only men and not women have a unique discipleship as priests (Coleman, 2025). It may be judged that the man has a more effective public voice. It is interesting there appears to be a very similar complementarianism in Christianity as there is in the British Army. I would argue this reflects the patriarchal nature in both contexts. This is supported in the view of established Christianity, such as the Church of England, that has operated an historical and contemporary divide between men and women. It is men who have held ecclesiastical power historically (Fry, 2024). This continues to manifest in a contemporary sense by a male hierarchical organisation (Page, 2008). Within a military context there are arguments exploring a similar connection between history and contemporary practice. For example, Simpson (1994) identifies a persistent culture of machismo that leads to a sense of male belonging and female exclusion. The effectiveness of a padre's voice for another of my female interlocutors seems the opposite of what has just been said. "Too much is made of gender differences these days," she said. For her, what is important is the exercise of pastoral ministry. "Being a man or a woman doesn't really come into it when you're a padre. It's just about getting on with the job." This is an interesting dissenting voice and speaks directly to what I would argue is about discipleship and calling. Yet gender cannot be totally ignored. She commented, "As a woman I have had to remain strong. I know that gender inequality exists."

A female interlocutor told me that in her experience as a woman, her voice is "often listened to on matters relating to women, as men see it." This was illustrated by her involvement in the "Wives' Club." She had been identified by her Commanding Officer (CO) as the "natural" link between the regiment and families, notably spouses. Most spouses of serving personnel are women. She had found the CO's assumption

annoying and frustrating. For her, it reflected the “biased nature” of the British Army and that she had been “pigeonholed” because she is a woman. She commented, “If there is a bias at the top with a Commanding Officer, what hope is there?” I have already compared the British Army to a type of family. Work on role expectations in the home, such as by Oakley (1974), suggests a persistence of traditional gender roles between men and women. Women are more likely to be confined to the more private sphere of the home. According to Rodenburg (2023), there continues to be a gendered power relationship between men and women in which men have the more public and authoritative voice. For Oakley, women do not exercise a wider influence, being confined to the tasks of housework and child rearing. My female interlocutor made the point that anything she said regarding expectations about her as a woman was “conveniently ignored” by the CO. She did not feel she had a voice on matters of gender expectations. Even when she challenged this, her voice was ignored by a senior person.

7.9 Chaplaincy Recruitment

The RACHD (Royal Army Chaplains’ Department), with its membership of serving military chaplains, has responded to the Diversity and Inclusion mandate placed upon it by the British Army. This is reflected at the individual level of each padre’s annual report, where the first objective must be about promoting Diversity and Inclusion (D&I). This is true for all service personnel reports. I would suggest the British Army is very good at formalising policy into words. It remains to be seen whether D&I is being implemented by committed individuals. Some chaplains have been tasked with looking at recruitment, focusing in part on female recruitment. As mentioned, there

are only 7 regular female chaplains out of a department of over 130 at the time of writing this thesis. As padres, we have each been tasked to encourage others to think about becoming an army chaplain. At formal gatherings this is often mentioned. A senior chaplain told me that “we all need to be trying to recruit more female chaplains. The army mandate is our mandate.” At conferences, there has been much discussion about recruitment and especially female recruitment. Discussion is important, yet in my view it is debatable whether this will translate into action and change.

I spoke with one of my female interlocutors, who told me she had been given the task of exploring the reasons why so few female ministers apply for military chaplaincy. This, for example, contrasts with the significantly higher numbers of female ministers from the Anglican sending church who serve in rural ministries. In a 2015 census of rural churches of the Church of England, 40% of assistant ministers were female (Church of England, 2015, p. 8). The Anglican and Methodist churches are a significant focus when examining the recruitment of female chaplains, as currently most female chaplains are recruited from these two sending churches. She told me the RACHD are concerned about developing female recruitment, not just for the reason of gender diversity and inclusion, but also for maintaining the number of chaplains. As chaplains leave, they need to be replaced. It can be argued that the survival of the RACHD depends on numbers. In this sense, perhaps it is numbers, rather than diversity and inclusion, that drive the need for female recruitment.

Numbers also speak to the wider issue of Christian religious secularisation. Church attendance in mainstream churches is declining. Cox (2010) argues that this is a decline in the support given to institutionalised religion. I would argue this is also part of a wider cultural phenomenon experienced particularly in Western society. Davie (2015) has explored the phenomenon of believing that does not necessarily involve belonging. This would explain how people may have beliefs but do not want to be part

of an institutionalised and formal religion. In secularisation, fewer people attend church on a regular basis. For instance, in 2013, Church of England attendance was recorded as 788,000 compared to 557,000 in 2022 (The Church of England, Statistics for Mission, 2024). I would argue this has a knock-on effect for those exploring vocational callings, such as becoming ministers in institutionalised Christian religions. At a wider level, there will be fewer people available to enter sector work, such as in the armed forces. As an Anglican priest in the Church of England, I have encountered a decline in church numbers. I have managed small village churches that have low attendance. Parishioners have said that such churches were once much better attended. This is not to say that all churches are in decline. For example, specific services such as at Christmas and Easter, classed as occasional services, can attract higher numbers (Church of England, 2024). Other, more newly formed Christian movements, notably from an evangelical and charismatic tradition, are experiencing growth, appealing to larger groups, often consisting of younger people than those in more established Christian traditions (Church of England, 2024, p. 19). The churches from which the RACHD now recruits have expanded, from the more traditional base of established churches to those of a more modern and perhaps evangelical tradition. This has been a significant development over the years. As a reminder, only Anglican Church practitioners were recruited until 1827. After this, other religious traditions began to be represented (Snape, 2008). I would argue it remains to be seen whether wider recruitment from other religious and non-religious traditions will make a difference to female numbers.

I spoke with my female colleague to better understand how military chaplains may be able to encourage female recruitment. She has had an opportunity to engage with ministers from different Christian traditions to facilitate an understanding of issues. The focus has been on why female ministers are reluctant to apply for military chaplaincy. She was asked to “report back” with her findings to the chaplaincy

“directorate” (to the most senior chaplains). She told me, “There have been lots of responses, and some are not surprising. The army is not an attractive environment for many women. A major problem is that the army, even chaplaincy, is seen as a man’s world.” This has resonated with some of my findings when exploring chaplaincy with my various interlocutors. The “man’s world” perception had been held by some of my female interlocutors prior to joining. An analysis of military masculinities has supported this perception at a cultural level, and how behaviours are manifested in individuals as expressions of a traditional masculinity. I have already explored this in some detail. It centres on the view of the British Army as an organisation that has historically been occupied by men, with a male culture that continues to be celebrated in the present. Simpson (1994) has explored belonging as important for men who gather to express a macho culture. This has been identified as a traditional military culture whose roots are established in an historical military (Hearn, 1998). My female interlocutor told me that a female minister from the Anglican tradition did not want to join the British Army and RACHD because she believed she would not be made to feel welcome. The reason identified for this was because she is a woman. Another minister made the point that she did not want to live in uncomfortable conditions, such as being outside when the weather is bad. This suggests other reasons can exist regarding the problem of recruiting more people.

Another factor that could explain the lack of female recruitment is due to childcare commitments. My female colleague told me that several ministers were reluctant to join up because of this. This indicates that women are identified as the main child carers. This was shown by Oakley (1974) in a study that undermined optimism surrounding developments to more conjugal roles in the home. Further research has supported this. This especially applies to women who have taken on a significant working role outside of the home but must still maintain most of the unpaid work in the home, such as childcare responsibilities (Hochschild, 1989). There is no

getting away from the reality in the military of periods away from home. This will seriously compromise a woman's caring presence in the home. Several of my female interlocutors reinforced this point, telling me that serving in the British Army is challenging with children. There is also a feeling that many British Army personnel see the woman as the primary carer for children. A female colleague told me, "With children, it's all about this being seen as women's work by men who have served in the army for a long time." This suggests a continuing sexual division of labour when it comes to childcare. Ferri and Smith (1996) have suggested that very few men take on the primary responsibility for looking after children. Flexible working hours have been introduced to factor in childcare, such as in the military. This has been helpful for both men and women who serve, and especially for women. A female soldier told me, "I couldn't serve without this help." In theory, this looks promising. Yet I have encountered service personnel serving for many years who are unhappy with this development. One told me, "It wasn't like this in my day." Perhaps as older service personnel retire, and new recruits join up, there will be less of a traditional masculine view on women's roles. However, there remains the challenge of exercises and deployments away from home that can last for weeks and months. It is little surprise that such commitments can put people off from joining. I delayed entry into the British Army by several years until my children were older so I would not miss out on their formative years.

7.10 Conclusion

This chapter has explored patriarchal expressions of the British Army as a contemporary form of traditional masculinity. These expressions are founded on established historical practices that continue into the present. This has an impact on

all service personnel, irrespective of gender. It is the people who constitute the British Army and make it what it is, as part of inherited belief and practice. Gender also plays an important role. There is a male majority and a female minority. In the British Army, there is a significant difference in the number of females to males who serve. The male majority is especially prevalent in the infantry. There are also specific contexts where men are present. This is exemplified on the sports field and in the messes. These areas are spaces for men, emphasising patriarchy in the military. They are spaces in which patriarchy is celebrated. Leadership is also made up mostly of men, serving to perpetuate and reinforce traditional male culture. Female padres also experience a male majority in the RACHD. They are often the only woman sent to serve in a regiment and are often the only woman in attendance at chaplaincy gatherings.

Female service personnel, including female padres, are impacted by their minority presence in various ways. The experiences they have are often profound in response to working and living in a male-dominated patriarchal organisation. I have identified words to describe their experiences, such as isolation and alienation. There are also various stories from literature about women's challenging lives relating to the military. These arise because of a female minority in a male majority. It may lead to feelings of difference and exclusion for female service personnel. I would argue this is likely to have an impact on the everyday working lives of women in the British Army. It is also significant regarding opportunities for promotion. There are more men, and so there are more opportunities for promotion available to men. This leads to a perpetuation of male leadership. There are potentially several responses to this by female service personnel. Perhaps it can be ignored in favour of a sense of what calling means, or to respond by opposing patriarchy through various activities and developing a voice that can be listened to. I would argue it remains uncertain whether women have or will develop a voice that can effectively challenge an established patriarchy. Women may also seek to conform by acting in ways that are perceived as

male behaviours, rather than being identified as unique expressions. This may serve to reinforce a patriarchal culture.

The British Army, as a patriarchal organisation, has promoted and normalised perceptions of gender and the particular roles and behaviours associated with masculinity and femininity. This influences expectations on how people should behave. It also serves to reinforce a minority status for women into roles that have traditionally been associated with women. This can include female padres socialising with spouses who are often female. The female space may be seen as different from the male space. A sexual division of labour arises. Part of this is about seeing women as different from men. Patriarchal constructions portray women as less physically robust than men, especially when it comes to certain roles, such as in the infantry. For some female padres, this may be liberating – being spared the expectations of getting involved in activities traditionally associated with men, such as drinking games. This can avoid the difficulty of negotiating a masculine culture that defines what is and is not acceptable behaviour. This also poses a challenge for female padres who may be excluded from spaces where pastoral opportunities exist for engagement with men.

I would argue that there is a need to advocate for change as a response to a strong patriarchal culture. This includes being counter-cultural, in which padres, especially female padres, can develop a voice. Partly this is about an uneven balance of power that favours men. The British Army was and is a macho culture in which men numerically dominate and lead. A shift in power will be seen as a shift from men who have a voice to women who currently have a limited voice, for women to become more empowered. This can be a voice that identifies many issues arising out of a traditional masculine expression that does not consider the needs of female service personnel. However, voices are not always heard. There is also a balance to be worked out for a padre to raise issues of concern without undermining their pastoral presence with men

who may be opposed to change. Here, a traditional male culture lived out by male service personnel may continue to be intransigent to change. I would suggest it is only with more female service personnel and a stronger voice, with changing attitudes, that change may occur. This may happen with older members of the military retiring and newer members coming in. Effective recruitment is an issue when dealing with how to attract more women into the British Army, with many continuing to see it as a “man’s world.” The number of female service personnel remains low. Women may also be reluctant to join because of the physical and emotional challenges of service life. Additional support for women has been welcomed, such as flexible working hours for childcare. However, this has also been seen as unacceptable by those who have served for a long time. It clashes with a traditional view that the British Army is a place for men and not for women because, within a patriarchal understanding, women are perceived to be the natural carers for children. In this view, there is limited scope for women to serve.

Chapter 8. Conclusions

This thesis has explored traditional masculinity in the British Army. I have suggested that it is both hegemonic as a cultural expression of the organisation and hyper in how this is manifested as behaviours within individuals. It is often powerfully expressed and clearly definable in its dominant expressions. There are several characteristics that have been associated with traditional male behaviour. These can be shown in particular ways, such as acts of physicality, fighting, drinking, shouting, and competitiveness. I suggest these manifestations provide an accurate description of how men behave in the British Army. This culture of masculinity impacts all individuals who serve in the military. Men are often active participants, as well as some women, whilst women can also come up against this culture. There are identifiable constructions of gender between men and women that may subjugate women to more domestic-type roles and men to roles outside of the home. I suggest there are few, if any, other organisations in British society that display such traditional beliefs and practices. I know too little about the beliefs and practices of the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. I am not able to say to what extent a traditional masculinity is at work in these organisations. This is perhaps something for further research. Manifestations of a traditional masculinity in the British Army seem to persist, despite developments in wider British society. These wider expressions of masculinities tend to be less traditional.

I have also researched British Army chaplains and how their behaviours relate to traditional masculine expressions. To date, no research has been conducted on this group, considering the masculine culture of the British Army. I have approached my research ethnographically. As a male padre in the British Army, I have reflected on my own experiences, having personal insight into this organisation. I have also had the

opportunity to engage with other padres, male and female, and to understand their experiences. This would have been denied to me were I not a serving member of the British Army. I would have been an outsider with limited access to information and understanding.

In this final chapter, I will begin by drawing together conclusions from each chapter, with some reflections. Ethnography has been a major reflective voice in this thesis, alongside academic literature that has added depth and meaning. Following these conclusions, I will then examine the value of what I would call some general feminist approaches on how to challenge traditional masculinity in the military. I have spoken about the need for change. One issue is how to achieve this and whether change is a realistic possibility for the British Army. A problem is that this organisation has an entrenched traditional masculinity. This has been based on the long-term historical practices and beliefs of men that continue to find contemporary expression. The past and present exist as one.

The past into the present is one way to describe the British Army. I have mentioned this on many occasions in this thesis. It is important because it identifies British Army culture as essentially an inherited tradition of beliefs and practices that are expressed by those who serve. This is achieved in various ways. Military history becomes a platform for the contemporary military. Officers' and Sergeants' messes are like museums because they hold a lot of historical memorabilia. Unlike a museum, the content is expressed in the contemporary, such as at mess events, where historical heroic figures, often displayed in art on the walls, are spoken about. Some objects also function as part of ritualised activities where they are incorporated into mess evenings, such as the use of antique drinking implements. Added to this, there may be traditional orchestral music and Celtic pipes, depending on the regiment, with historic tunes as they would have sounded in the past. These activities produce a sense of camaraderie

amongst the people present. Expressions of traditional masculinity can abound in these formal occasions. Mess members celebrate the victories of past men and gather in this celebration as a group of men. This allows for a continuation of traditional masculinity. Other contexts of remembering also reproduce this masculine past. Remembrance services as ritualised activities, such as annual Remembrance in November and at other times for specific occasions in regiments, recall past events into the present. These are sombre occasions, but like recalling heroes in mess culture, they are also a celebration of bravery. They can also remind those serving what it is to serve. Ultimately, these recollections are about acts of bravery and sacrifice on battlefields.

I would argue that British Army culture is essentially about bravery and heroism. This focuses on the individual and their acts. Male service personnel take on the values of the hero. This may also be expressed in the everyday. For instance, it can manifest as drinking together and fighting. I would also argue that all these expressions are part of a strong traditional male culture understood in the context of being battle-ready, to engage with the enemy. It is a dominant masculinity as a hegemonic cultural form that becomes hyper expressive within individuals. A challenge can be raised whether alternatives, such as non-traditional masculine expressions, can be effectively expressed within the military. This would include breaking away from some current beliefs and practices. Femininities and wider non-traditional queer expressions may offer alternatives. An example is shouting, as raised about a sergeant who shouted at a soldier, along with a female padre's response (Chapter 4). It could be argued that shouting is an expression of traditional masculinity. A more reasoned response between service personnel could be developed where shouting is avoided.

I end this chapter by looking at the possible wider implications of my research. This addresses whether an ethnographic approach could be applied to other organisations, both military and non-military. This looks at the value of ethnography, with insights from lived experiences. In this thesis, I have drawn on these from my own experiences and the experiences of my interlocutors. To be meaningful, I would argue that ethnography requires people to live and work on the inside of an organisation. This lived experience may also provide insights to other organisations. It will also provide other environments with which to compare. I have argued that the British Army is likely to be a unique example of a traditional masculine environment within a wider and more diverse Western society.

8.1 General Findings

A theme of difference is developed in my chapters. This emphasises that women are perceived as different from men. This is reinforced through the practices that exclude women. This is something reflected in the British Army generally, and the Royal Army Chaplains Department (RACChD) is not exempt from this. Both men and women are exposed to traditional masculine beliefs and practices. There are constructed differences between these genders that become normalised and part of everyday practice. The sports field is an example of military masculinity at work. It is often the place where men are, not women. It is often the place where characteristics of masculinity are played out, such as shouting and physicality. The mess can become a sort of sports field in which men get drunk and play mess games. Men are involved, and women are excluded. For men, they are part of the masculine expression. For women, there may be a sense of living on the outside. The British Army, in various contexts and in general, is what I have termed a “sacred space” for men.

Although I argue that the British Army is a clear example of a persistent traditional masculinity, there are similar traits in all three contexts that shape gender. This includes the sending churches (and more recently other sending organisations), the RACHD, and the British Army generally. They each exhibit traditional masculine characteristics, especially the sense of a gathering of men. This becomes a strong and cohesive force in which a traditional masculinity can be expressed. The RACHD is an organisation within an organisation. It has had its own authority as a department since 1796 and yet is firmly rooted in the British Army. It is one part amongst many that constitute the "British Army." I have come from a sending church, the Church of England. I have moved from one establishment to another. From the established church to the established British Army. Yet in my experience, a traditional masculinity exists at its strongest and most persistent in the British Army. This is largely explained by the strong historical practices of military tradition extending into the contemporary period. Repeatedly, masculine expression is emphasised. This is normalised and seen as different from normalised female expression. Physicality is a reality of military service. Ultimately, the British Army is about engagement with and killing the enemy, and training is about developing to this end. I suggest that all activities have the battlefield in mind. This draws on the idea of always being "operationally effective." This has involved generations of men who go to war. Activities will involve men attempting to be men, drawing on this unity of male spirit, ready for battle. Male chaplains are not exempt from this. We have our own list of honoured male chaplains in history, those who have lived and literally died in the trenches. It is little surprise that the sports pitches and messes become male spaces for the expression of masculinity and war-like behaviours. These are male-dominated environments as exemplified in the male force of the infantry regiments that are the frontline fighters. It is on the sports field and in the messes that ritualised activities are played out. These help to cement individuals together into a coherent fighting force.

As a padre, I have often been involved in discussions with my colleagues about conflict. This is an important consideration as I consider the masculinity of the British Army, as it involves the physicality of war and what men can face in the extreme. This concerns the taking of life. I would like to think that as a padre, I am not complicit in war. Yet at one level, I suppose I am. I see war as a necessary evil to maintain peace. This aside, engagement in war is clearly determined in the British Army. This has been known as the “Just War” tradition, often spoken about in padre circles. From this, there are the “rules of engagement” with the “enemy,” such as in the Geneva Convention. This includes taking life only when the life of a soldier is under threat by another, using a weapon with the intention to kill. A problem exists here in that a person may perceive their life to be in danger. There may be a more objective challenge of whether that soldier’s life was really in danger. As a Christian minister, the idea of killing is personally not easy to reconcile. “Thou shalt not kill” springs to mind. I justify my role in the British Army not as agreeing with killing, but as offering pastoral support to those who face this task. This is especially so regarding the effects I have encountered on soldiers who sometimes find it difficult to cope with having taken another person’s life.

I have emphasised a traditional masculinity in the British Army. I have used this to assess other types of constructed behaviours, known as masculinities and femininities. I have examined the importance of “Queer Theory” for developing an understanding of behaviours that are more diverse. However, I would argue these different behaviours are secondary to the prevalent male culture of a traditional masculinity in the British Army. It is this culture that often becomes internalised by the men who serve. I suggest this is the standard by which all behaviours in the British Army are assessed. A different behaviour may be rejected by the prevalent culture. I have suggested that women who display behaviours like men, such as shouting and getting physical, are often interpreted by the prevailing culture as women trying to act like men. In this sense, there is no recognised and definable femininity in the British

Army, where perceived male behaviours are displayed by women. Some women have been keen to emphasise what can be identified as a more traditional femininity, such as a desire to wear makeup. This shows that despite stereotypes of female and male behaviours, women can serve in the British Army in ways that can be perceived as traditionally feminine. There may be a problem here with the sexualisation of women. This can be seen as an expression of a traditional masculinity. Women are objectified as sexual objects. Just as there are male sacred spaces, there are often definable female sacred spaces. These are the environments that men may define as the natural spaces for women. This is manifested in activities that are associated with women, such as those undertaken at home. Hence, the often-female military coffee morning. Women are also those people who look after children, as defined in traditional male culture. Childcare for military personnel has become more common in recent years. Divine calling may play an important role for a padre. However, perceived gender differences between men and women cannot be ignored. The female padre, more than the male padre, often attempts to negotiate their way through these perceptions. This can include a counter-cultural response that needs to be held in balance with a sense of calling to serve as a minister in the British Army. In my experience, padres are expected to be challenging and oppositional, although there are boundaries.

As padres, we have enormous freedoms to go to different military contexts and to make a difference. We are the free-moving chess pieces in a military organisation. This is part of the mystery of the padre figure. This refers to a padre's liminality of being in but not of the military, as a non-combatant. This, in part, exists because we are seen as representing a higher supernatural power. I would argue that our liminality as being different from the military Chain of Command exists because of a perception about this power. Church services are only a small part of this. It is also how we appear to a soldier in our everyday interactions that really matters. This has been my experience. With this freedom, it is vital we know the boundaries, not least in the ways

we engage, that will not compromise our moral integrity with the men we serve with. Compromises can include using too much alcohol, which can get us into trouble, like other service personnel. I have expressed traditional male behaviours, including drinking too much alcohol. Partly, this has been a desire to be accepted, and I have justified it as a way of developing effective pastoral relationships.

I have explored the idea of a woman as a mother figure and a mother. It is raised as an idea and may well reflect my own bias as a man. Through my research, I have reflected on the extent to which a traditional male culture in the military has influenced me. Here, I may have a view of the world mediated through “unconscious bias.” The idea of women as emotional carers is raised. They have perhaps become seen as normalised into this role by me and other men, especially those who serve in the British Army. This is an organisation in which male service personnel may traditionally define people in terms of gender and role. I have suggested the importance of women as emotional carers in the military, filling the gap left by women in the life of a soldier who acted as a significant other in the soldier’s childhood. I have seen this view as a gender construction that, to some extent, I have accepted. By extension, the British Army may be defined as a kind of extended family in which people can potentially play out gender-defined roles. The view of the mother and mother figure in the work of the female padre, in the care she provides, may only serve to reinforce the position of female difference. Just as there is a male difference in the sacred space, there is a female difference in the care she is perceived as being able to provide. Conversely, this places men in a different position to women. They may not always be perceived as carers. This may reinforce a traditional masculinity about men who do men things and women who do women things.

I have explored the minority experience of women in the British Army. This relates to the lived experiences of women as a minority group. They are a minority

because they are women who serve in an organisation that consists mainly of men. There are some ethnographies about the difficulties women face in the US military, as well as details in the UK Parliamentary Report. There are supporting ethnographies that I have explored with my female interlocutors. Padres are a minority in the British Army. Female padres are a minority within a minority. The historical establishment of the British Army has reinforced the majority status of men as a male establishment. This continues to be expressed in the contemporary British Army. A traditional masculinity remains strong in this contemporary patriarchal organisation. It is here that women may have experiences that make them feel different and isolated. This is about the male sacred space that excludes women. These are actual physical spaces where men dwell, as well as symbolic spaces, such as activities that exclude women. Men also experience the environment of the patriarchy, usually positively, being part of an accepting male majority. Part of the problem here is the dominance of a traditional masculinity.

Another problem faced in the British Army is a perception some women have about the military as a male organisation, as a “man’s world.” There is a real issue for women, including potential female padres, who are reluctant to join up because of this perception. I would argue this is an accurate perception, as the ethnographies suggest. However, if the British Army is to embrace alternatives to a dominant traditional masculinity, then more people are required to challenge patriarchy. There needs to be stronger alternative voices that champion diversity and inclusion. Class is also a significant factor in an establishment that continues to be expressed in a contemporary patriarchy. Gender and class are bound together in a complex interrelationship. It is the men, as the majority, who are drawn from the different echelons of society and who constitute the “man’s world.” This is definable within certain regiments that historically and contemporarily draw their officers from selected public schools. This is similar in approach to the working-class men drawn into the

rank and file of the infantry. Such approaches are far from being diverse and inclusive. The “man’s world” has several terms for describing men who display the types of behaviour identified as both hyper and hegemonic. These are universally used throughout the Chain of Command, irrespective of rank and position. They are always used as positive terms of encouragement. The “alpha male” is an example I have heard used on many occasions. It refers to characteristics such as fighting and drinking, as hegemonic culture is displayed in hyper ways by individual men. Others have included men being defined as a “man’s man” and as a “legend.” There is an abundant use of these terms shared between men. Very few, if any, include women. Terms like these serve to reinforce the strength of the British Army’s traditional masculinity.

Defining the roles of people according to perceptions of gender and normalising these roles impacts everyone. However, there are some padres for whom a sense of calling takes on a greater level of meaning. This is partly about adopting a position against the gender challenges that women face in the British Army. There is a strength and resolve to continue despite a prevalent traditional masculinity. There is also “the padre.” I have suggested that this figure is to some extent liminal. I would argue that potentially service personnel, especially male service personnel, may view “the padre” as neither male nor female. They are a figure seen primarily as representing a higher power. Yet gender cannot be ignored. The experiences of some female padres suggest they can feel different and excluded because they are women.

During the ethnographic engagements I have had with my colleagues about their experiences, I have felt enormously privileged as they have shared their experiences with me. I feel I have learnt more about myself as I have listened to them. Their experiences have both resonated and contrasted with my own. This has enabled me to reflect on my own experiences in relation to the experiences of others. Their

experiences, especially those of my female interlocutors, have provided me with valuable insights. I think I have understood something about the experiences and feelings that women feel, working in a largely male-dominated organisation with a traditional masculinity. To take diversity and inclusion seriously, these experiences must concern both women and men. The British Army requires more women to provide an alternative voice. Also, it needs men to be aware of the challenges that women face. Men may then be able to better champion the change that is required. How the British Army is to change is something to be worked out. I believe this will require a deeper understanding of female experiences, especially those experiences that make women feel different, isolated, and excluded. Male padres, like female padres, have a special role in speaking out. We are essentially about caring for others with expressed needs and being able to express those needs to make a difference to the individual. We are ideally placed to encourage change, drawing on the lived experiences of women. I would argue this is about sharing a journey of faith and experience with others, whether that be with my female colleagues or with female service personnel generally.

8.2 Feminist Approaches to Change

There are several approaches I would identify as being broadly feminist. I have referred to these in the thesis. I am curious what feminist approaches say about how society can change. This will be to change the British Army into a more inclusive organisation for women. I think this is an interesting issue to pose. I would argue that ideas should have a useful potential outcome. In feminism, this is to improve the lived experiences of women. Applied to the British Army, this will involve combating a dominant traditional masculinity. I would define feminist approaches into two broad

areas: those which are more liberal and those which are more radical. This is my perception of feminism. I realise that this is also a broad and generalised definition. My understanding of the developments of the rights of women has involved concerns for achieving equality. A further development has included the idea of providing for women's emancipation from male oppression. I would suggest that a more liberal rather than a more radical agenda for change is a more realistic approach within the British Army. I think this is concerned with change from the inside. As an approach, it is reliant on being able to influence people and the current culture. This contrasts with a more radical agenda that may seek to overthrow an existing order and culture. The British Army is a very traditional and conservative organisation. From my understanding, more radical solutions that demand fundamental change are unlikely to gain support. I would suggest that for change to ever occur, it will be a slow process. It is a difficult challenge for those who want to provide alternatives to a traditional masculinity that is hegemonically rooted in military culture and individual hyper expressions. Yet change is needed. I hope that voices will grow in strength to help make women's experiences more inclusive in the British Army. I can envisage what this change should look like. It will include more women being recruited and more women in positions of leadership. This will draw from practices in wider society, where people's values are likely to be more progressive and diverse than is currently found in the traditional male culture of the British Army.

There is a deeper imagining of what a new British Army could look like. It will be more equal, with more women in the ranks and more women in positions of leadership. It could be a place where the traditional masculine culture has been challenged and then changed. The prior perceptions, assumptions, and normalisations that were part of a patriarchal British Army have been undermined. It could be replaced with a much greater diversity of expressions and behaviours. I would argue that the current British Army is heavily laden with a narrow level of uniformity. It has been

widened to allow for people of certain religions to grow their hair and beards according to the practices of their own faiths. Just as there is greater diversity of religious expression, I would suggest that this requires more development for women. This would include women developing their own authentic expressions that are not definable according to perceptions arising out of a traditional masculine culture. I see a new British Army where space has been won for women. Yet this does not have to be a female space in a separate sense. Rather, it could be a space shared equally between men and women. I think this can only arise if current traditional masculinity is challenged and undermined, leading to a new growth of ideas and expressions. This need not undermine the efficiency of the British Army as a fighting force. It could encourage individuals to be happy, to be part of a diverse team where each person feels fully valued.

Much of what happens in the British Army is a product of culture. Long hair is permitted in the Danish Army. I asked some Danish soldiers why they were allowed to grow their hair long. They told me that it is part of the tradition of their country for men. If hair lengths and beards can be challenged, so can perceptions about other areas, such as separate roles for women and men. This could lead to a single space where men and women dwell. I would argue we can be united by the celebration of our individual expressions. This is not at the cost of being operationally effective, nor does it mean we have to occupy different spaces in the military. I have worked with some brilliant female leaders and female colleagues and have been inspired by what each one can bring to the military. A phrase often used by service personnel is, "The army are its people."

8.3 Wider Applications of the Research Findings

I have maintained that the British Army is likely to represent a unique and continuing expression of a traditional masculinity. This is at a cultural level of the institution, as a hegemonic masculinity, that often results in individual hyper expressions. This is a statement that could benefit from some verification by making comparisons with other organisations. I think of comparable British services, especially the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. Other military bodies could be included, both Western and non-Western. There are many comparable possibilities. I suspect there could be significant differences in experience for women in the different military organisations from around the world. Perhaps the British Army would appear to be a better, more inclusive employer of women compared with some. I would argue that where an organisation is largely male, then a more traditional masculine culture may prevail. The challenge of change, as suggested, will remain. Any further research could include looking not only at the military but also at non-military organisations. These could be compared to understand to what extent military organisations are traditionally masculine compared with non-military organisations. I would favour understanding the lived experience of individuals within other organisations, both military and non-military. This would include the researcher providing an ethnographic understanding of interlocutors' experiences.

An area of interest for me would be to understand if the British Army remains a microcosm of a traditional wider society that no longer exists. This idea supposes that there was once a traditional British society where gender as well as social class could be clearly defined into different categories. These features still appear to be part of the contemporary British Army and remain clearly defined, based on historical practices. These can be seen as parts of an expression of a traditional masculinity.

Was there ever a British society that really existed in such clearly defined ways? I would also be interested to know how much wider cultural differences are impacting the traditional male culture of the British Army. I am thinking about recruits who perhaps come with values that are fundamentally different from those held within a traditional male culture. Does this have an impact on the way the British Army is being shaped? Perhaps there are the beginnings of change here. I would be interested to understand the relationship between the traditional male culture of the British Army and the individuals being recruited. Men may be influencing and shaping the traditional culture and challenging it into new expressions. I wonder here about the extent to which recruits internalise traditional masculine values as their own as an unchallenged position. It could be that men, and men especially as the main recruits, will go through a process of increasing internalisation of the male military culture over time. In the end, the culture gets them, or so it seems. Male recruits have told me that they feel different from friends they have not seen since before military training. I ask the question, "Who has changed, them or you?" All answer that they are the ones who have changed. This is often attributed to the training they have received with values that stress teamwork rather than individuality. This suggests there are values in training that have an impact on how others are viewed. An area of internalisation I would like to explore further is to what extent shared male experiences translate into traditional masculine practices. I have explored some of these in this thesis, including physicality, shouting and a strong drinking culture.

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