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**An anthropological exploration of
discipline and ritual practices
among the Royal Marines**

by

Mark Anthony Birchell

University of Bristol

2011

Abstract

Despite the ever-growing number of publications on Military matters, in-depth studies of its unique cultural practices are still scarce due to their well-kept high perimeter fences. The author, a former Royal Marine, was able to return to the Commando Training Centre at Lympstone as an anthropologist to carry out participant observation, following an intake of recruits throughout their gruelling year-long training programme. Focus is on enculturation of the Marine recruits during their training, giving particular attention on the intricate mechanisms that transform them from ordinary civilian men into members of what is often regarded as the world's finest elite Commando unit. The ethnography presented in this thesis will provide a key to understanding the complex processes of Military enculturation through a close look at the relationships between disciplinary and punishment practices; violence and masculinity; narratives and personhood; and will explore how these issues become known to the recruits through their practical application of body to physical labour. This thesis represents an attempt to present the so far unexplored social experience of Royal Marines training culture.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge first and foremost, Dr Dimitrios Theodossopoulos for his unwavering commitment, support, and confidence throughout. I would also like to say a big thank you to my fieldwork participants for their generous contributions, and to Major Moulton and Colonel Taylor O.B.E who arranged clearance, and granted the necessary permissions for my fieldwork to take place.

I would like to pay my respects to Adrian Birmingham who was among my participants for a while before achieving his Green Beret but, sadly, lost his life shortly afterwards. I would also like to pay respect to the departure of Major Jonny Rowlands alongside whom I took a place on the Marines Reserve Ski team one year. Jonny was also present during some of my fieldwork.

I would like to make a dedication to David Cornwell for presenting himself as a role model when I most needed one. My journey to this point began with his support and belief.

And finally, a dedication to my Grandparents June and Arthur.

Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original, except where indicated by special reference in the text, and to the best of my knowledge no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other academic award. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED ..

DATE 24/02/12

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Chapter 1

Introduction

There were times during my training as a Royal Marine when I simply didn't understand the point of such excessive use of disciplinary and punishment practices demanded upon my body. Instead of demanding and inflicting incessant measures of displeasure, why didn't they just ask politely? I regularly wondered why the training team, and staff in general, were so austere and ill-disposed. I felt as if they lived for the purpose of making me and my comrades feel dejected and unvalued. But despite this prolonged state of torment and discomfort we eventually became Green Berets and were held in high esteem, even by our training team.

This is a general experience felt by those who join Military service and denotes a process of enculturation common to all units. It is a process that transforms the identity of a civilian into a Military agent. But despite its world-wide practice, and despite the volume of literature on Military culture, I was very surprised to find only incomplete examinations of the extremely important adaptive process of enculturation that occurs during the basic training phase. For this reason I set out to examine and establish the intricate mechanisms that facilitate a group of Military recruits to be transported into an alternate sense of self.

As an ex-serviceman I would consider the enculturation aspect of training to be the most important and significant in terms of understanding what it means to be a part of Military life and culture. Despite the centrality of this process, my literature review on the sociology and anthropology of the Military revealed that the numerous and sometimes fascinating reports on Military matters only detailed certain aspects of enculturation. Probably one of the most informative accounts was offered by Foucault in his work on discipline. But through my own experience as a Marine in basic training, I felt that discipline was just one element of the process. During my research I did, however, become aware of other important issues such as the role of masculinity which has been brilliantly detailed in the work of Paul Higate (Higate, 2003), and also, the importance of

recording the experiences of the recruits themselves as demonstrated by John Hockey in his ground-breaking study of Army recruits during their basic training (Hockey, 1986).

But having carried out this examination of Military literature, I felt that the Military institution and its practices were being interpreted and understood almost entirely through Military discourse. For this reason I carried out a participant observation of a full course of Royal Marines Reserve basic training. My hope is that some of the wider-held anthropological theories would be able to assist in explaining the very intricate and interwoven processes of enculturation that have thus far been overlooked by researchers in the field. In particular, my ethnographic fieldwork enabled me to shed light on the role of violence and social status as presented by Henrietta Moore (Moore, 1994), and of the essentiality for men to perform the role of 'man' as detailed by Herzfeld in his study of a Cretan mountain village (Herzfeld, 1988).

Likewise, I've been able to interpret my participants' Military experiences through theories about personhood and narrative, for example the recruit's requirement for group bonding according to the theoretical view of Strathern in her work detailing New Guinean's understanding of personhood as an investment into the group (Strathern, 1988). Once strong group bonds had been formed by the recruits I could recognise how they were fabricating their social realities through the construction of narratives as examined by Ricoeur (1991) who treats narrative primarily as search for meaning. Because the use and interpretation of experience through narrative form became so central during the recruits' adaptation into Marine Commandos, I was able to further appreciate how their individual and collective narratives were being composed and understood by applying insights offered by Danforth (1989) in his discussion of fire-walking, and on death rituals as presented in a monograph of Seremetakis (1991).

What I hope to achieve with the presentation of my ethnography is twofold. Firstly to present the first ethnographic account of Royal Marines training culture, which is still a society largely guarded from outsiders, and secondly to present to the academic community the most comprehensive account to date of an elite Military unit's course of enculturation. This detailed understanding of institutions and their components as a relevant object for the attention of study, is - as Richard Jenkins puts it - "a matter of fundamental and methodological importance" (Jenkins, 1996, p. 127).

Methodology in the Marines Training Environment

The origins of my stimulus to research this topic were aroused by my childhood experiences of Military personnel, and through my own service in the Royal Marines Reserve. As a child I grew up in a town located in close proximity to a number of Military bases and establishments. On occasion, members from the local Military communities would move into my 'working class' home town, usually with young families, choosing to buy property in a location away from the Military environment. Members of the Military tended to stand out due in large part to their confident manner and well-presented uniforms. As a young boy I lived with my parents and siblings in a house next door to an RAF pilot. This man was well respected within the neighbourhood and was afforded much status due to the perceived idea local people held about what it meant to be an admirable member of the Armed Forces. Because of such childhood exposure to Military men in this way, I grew up believing Military service to be a prestigious occupation.

As an adult, during my own service as a Royal Marine, I became aware of how rich the Military culture was from the inside, and more importantly that it was almost entirely unexplored by academia due to the inaccessibility of the Marines environment and Military establishments in general. I set out with the aim of presenting the very first anthropological account of the Royal Marines cultural environment and a detailed explanation of its enculturation process. I hoped that by doing this I could achieve an original contribution to knowledge by presenting a cultural system not previously subjected to anthropological enquiry. I imagined this as being similar to Malinowski's (1961) pioneering work on the Trobriand Islands, where there existed a community of people who others knew about and had perhaps seen in passing but did not entirely understand. Similarly, I hoped that by carrying out a participant observation of the Marines, I could better understand their unique customs and practices, and make them knowable to academic and other outside communities.

One of the unique cultural aspects of the Marines community is that it cannot reproduce new fellows within itself due to its all-male membership. For this reason it regularly opens its doors to outsiders and offers them the opportunity to become an initiate. The outsiders, known collectively as 'the British public' who share life on the same (British) island as the Marines are traditionally the only ones from whom an application to join would be accepted. This is beholden to the fact that the British Government fund the

unique way of life that the Marines enjoy, and do so with the primary objective that the Marines, when required, will act in the capacity of political agent, usually in foreign territories, and apply their skill at violence in order to secure the desired objective of the British Government. In Foucauldian terms society or the economy make an investment of power into the Marines' bodies in order to protect the economy (the ruling classes) from overseas threats (Foucault, 1975, p. 308).

In order that the Marine recruits are trained to the required calibre of infantrymen so they can effectively perform their role (an example of which is provided in Appendix One), their preparation is long and exhausting, and mostly carried out in harsh environmental conditions. My first contact with the recruits was at Dorset House in Bristol (HQ for Royal Marines Reserve) after which I remained in their immediate company as a participant observer throughout the entirety of the one-year training course. Dorset House is both an administrative and small training centre for the recruits and is referred to as a 'Detachment' along with Poole, Cardiff, Scotland, Manchester, and London. After the potential recruits have initially attended their respective Detachments and journeyed through the 'administrative selection process' they then attend the Commando Training Centre (CTC) near Exmouth which is the Headquarters for Royal Marines training (Regular and Reserves). At CTC they attempt their physical selection tests, at the end of which the successful recruits return to CTC two weeks later and begin their year-long training programme.

The recruits selected to begin Marines training at CTC are issued their important field kit on arrival, and then launched straight into basic training serials. After just a few weeks, their training will progress to Woodbury Common which is a large heathlands, offering the demanding elements of outdoor training, where they learn to live and survive as well as learn to fight as Marines. Once the recruits have become skilled at operating on Woodbury Common they will occasionally receive training at Dartmoor National Park, a demanding and dangerous environment for the untrained due to the expanse of varied terrain and unpredictable weather conditions.

My participants (Royal Marine Reserves) work during the week in their civilian jobs and commit themselves to Marines training at CTC during weekends, from Friday to Sunday, and subsequently attend their Detachment for training on Wednesday evenings. Halfway through their year-long training programme, the recruits attend a two-week 'Phase-One-

Alpha' course held at CTC and upon Woodbury Common, which tests the skills they have learned to that point. Only on successful and satisfactory completion of the course can they progress into 'Phase-One-Bravo' training which is a further six months in duration and will prepare them for their two-week Commando Course – a gruelling course of physical and mental testing where they attempt to prove themselves worthy to wear the Green Beret. I followed the recruits through this year-long training regimen as a participant observer.

I initially met twelve recruits at Bristol Detachment on Friday 3rd July 2003, who became my primary group of respondents. My respondents from Bristol Detachment were trained together with recruits from Poole and Cardiff Detachments of which there were initially 31 recruits in total, between the ages of 17 and 34, who made up my wider group of respondents with whom I interacted. When the recruits enter into their testing stages such as the final two-week Commando Course, they are joined by additional recruits from London, Manchester, Scotland and the Army, all of whom are tested collectively at CTC, Woodbury and at Dartmoor. During such times I interacted with all the recruits to collect my ethnographic data.

Despite the numerous Detachments sending recruits to perform their Commando tests together at CTC, there is rarely a group larger than around thirty recruits due to the high drop-out rate. Of the twelve respondents who initially formed my primary group at Bristol Detachment, four respondents successfully made it through the full year-long course of training and received their Green Berets on Friday 6th August 2004 which concluded my fieldwork. Four successes out of twelve initiates is generally representative of RMR training due to the difficulty of Marines training on a part-time basis, which is done in addition to their civilian lives.

I came to develop strong relationships with my primary participant group. Although there was an initial boundary between us because I was a Marine and they were recruits, as time went on we were all able to relax in each other's company, enjoy conversation and jokes. Overcoming these initial boundaries of taboo meant that they had to break with Military ethos and call me by my first name, just as I called them by their first names. Once they had learnt to trust that this arrangement was acceptable they became increasingly comfortable at informing me about their training experiences in greater detail. I formed quicker bonds with my primary group from Bristol Detachment because I

drove them in the minibus to CTC from Bristol for all their training. My wider group (comprising the 31 initiates in total) on the other hand took a while longer to build similar levels of trust with me because they were transported to CTC from their respective Detachments aboard their units' minibuses and therefore I had less intimate contact time with them. My respondents from London, Scotland and the Army with whom I had relatively limited contact tended to address me only as 'trained rank' which is an official title for a Marine (with no additional rank such as Corporal) when being addressed by subordinates (recruits). They were nevertheless happy to join in with my research and inform me about their training experiences when I approached them directly.

Due to my status as a Marine I was granted the freedom by my superiors to conduct my research as I saw fit. For this reason I was able to move freely around the Military environment and could interact with my respondents at any time during the working day and equally during down-time. This was predominantly because I knew the rules about safety, administration, protocol and otherwise. This exclusive level of flexibility within the Marines training environment meant I could join in the training as a full participant which I often did, and at other times I could withdraw slightly to a distance and observe the group as a whole; talk with the training instructors and interview my informants. I explained my research in detail to the instructors and the recruits, which enabled them to feel comfortable and understand my 'changing positions'. That is, I interacted in the recruits lives from a number of perspectives. Sometimes I gave them orders (when specifically asked to do so by my superiors in order to help move the recruits around camp during staff shortages), sometimes I stood with the instructors talking, and sometimes I stood with the recruits talking. Likewise, I was sometimes by my respondents' side participating in some ordeal whilst encouraging them along, as in the 30 mile run. Other times I would interview them, film them and on very rare occasions when the recruits were not working through the night, I could relax and drink a beer with them in the camps' bar after training. I experienced first-hand the full range of their emotions as was provoked by the intense exercise. For the four respondents from my primary group with whom I experienced every aspect of training throughout the entire year, I became a friend and an equal.

In order to conduct this detailed ethnography of Marines training it's a select advantage and possibly essential to come from a Marines background. Being a Marine I could not only gain access to the guarded Marines training centre, but during fieldwork I was able

to roam freely in the Marines training environment and kindle close and informative relationships with the recruits and their instructors. Additionally, and very importantly, being a Marine was essential to my anthropological fieldwork because having been through the process myself, I was well placed to correctly interpret my fieldwork observations. Moreover, due to the complexity of practices and emotions caused by such a demanding regimen of training, I was able to fully understand the recruit's experiences and translate them without loss of knowledge or meaning, avoiding misinterpretations. A simple example of this is being able to tell the difference when an instructor gives the recruits a 'serious bollocking' or 'humorous bollocking', and understanding the effect it has on the recruits.

Finally, being a fully trained Marine enabled me to act as a full participant during events that a non-Marine may have found near impossible and even unthinkable. I would like to highlight the 30 mile run across Dartmoor as an example of this. During this event I was performing elite levels of fitness and endurance at the same time as being an anthropologist researcher, observing and collecting ethnographic data. When the recruits were suffering and fatigued with pain and discomfort, I was able to remain alert and tentative in order to record their experiences. I hope that such fieldwork contexts will highpoint the unique nature of this ethnography and that the insights provided will not only add to a greater understanding of Military culture but will also have implications for the understanding of the intricacies of social relationships in non-Military settings. I would like to suggest that I've been aptly placed to carry out this exclusive research because as Morris Janowitz states, "the professional soldier often sees the social scientist as naïve of Military institutions" (Janowitz, 1965, p. 31). For this reason, being a Marine and returning to study Marine culture allows me to overcome any suggestion of Military naivety.

Chapter Summaries

The thesis includes five main ethnographic chapters that follow the different stages of the training process. Chapter Two is entitled *Culture Shock and Initial Adaptations to the Regime of Discipline*, and considers the recruit's initial responses to immersion into an unknown culture. Once submerged into this harsh and unknown reality the recruits quickly begin to form bonds through the creation of a group hierarchy based on a pecking order that is determined upon individual characteristics. This particular group formation

enables the recruits to pool the few limited skills that are transferrable into this environment from the outside world. The group formation and its pool of limited skills provides the recruits with a 'mechanism of survival' whilst they adapt to their new reality.

As the recruits begin to settle into their new reality they will enter the phase of *Equalization*, which I have detailed in Chapter Three. This is a particularly harsh phase of training which presents the recruits with an experience of de-individualization through unforgiving discipline. The initial disciplinary and punishment routines are aimed at group level, but quickly become more personalised and humiliating. The regime of discipline and punishment progresses in conjunction with the absolute mediation of the recruit's time and their disallowance of any private space. Particular attention during this phase is given to the kit and weapons inspections which become the cornerstone of the mechanisms applied to stimulate successful cultural adaptation.

As the recruits begin to positively adapt to the Marine culture they'll move into *The Phase of Identification*, detailed in Chapter Four. This Phase is predominantly characterised by long and arduous endurance training in freezing conditions during which they are encouraged, through disciplinary practices, to identify themselves with a masculine ethos. As a direct consequence of the endurance fitness training required by this phase, the recruits incur a multitude of pains and wounds to their bodies which they start to interpret and experience through a solid formation of personhood and the creation of narratives. A positive reward for battling through this intense process is a slightly more levelled relationship with their training team, which is significant in their shift towards believing in their developing identities as Royal Marines.

Once they have practiced enough skills and harvested a new sense of Military identity, recruits' confidence will be stringently tested. This is covered in Chapter Five: *The Testing Stage: Exchanging Exhausted Bodies for Excellence*. This stage covers the two week Commando course and is strongly characterised by the requirement for recruits to perform as Marines over a series of highly stressful tests. The stress-states incurred by recruits are induced by the training team to re-create as close an experience as possible to the theatre of war. For this reason, in conjunction with on-going and intense fatigue, the testing stage becomes a rich ground for the creation and re-creation of narratives so the recruits can find ways of re-inventing the contexts of their course history, through which they can motivate each other to continue chasing the Green Beret. The Commando course

finale is the thirty mile run across Dartmoor; the most fundamental transitory phase of the recruit's adaptation from civilian to Marine, and is detailed in Chapter Six: *Ceremonial Acceptance*.

After a long year which has been marked by numerous phases of advancement in their masculine identities, the final two week Commando course, with its intense collection of tests and ceremonies, makes it possible for the recruits to view themselves in terms of an additional and macho social identity. This Sixth and final ethnographic chapter called *Ceremonial Acceptance* seeks to illuminate the liminal phase in which the recruits are awarded with their new statuses. This decoration comprises a number of small but official ceremonies that start with the award of their Green Berets at the end of their thirty mile run. An important aspect of this process is the recruits' attainment and acceptance of their new identity which is celebrated through a number of narratives wherein the recruits change their historical perspectives about life in the Marines, and re-invent their location into the Marines culture from one of 'recruit' - who suffers - to one of 'Marine' who belongs and can overcome suffering. Their eventual exit from liminality¹ is marked by a formal and final pass-out parade during which they can place the Green Berets upon their heads and salute the Commanding Officer, as a Royal Marines Commando.

After the ethnographic chapters detailing my fieldwork observations, in Chapter Seven: **Conclusions**, I have summarised my findings on the transformative process of civilian to Marine under the following headings, which loosely follow my proposed order of the enculturation process. *Violence and masculinity* examines the reasons that may initially draw the recruit into Marines training and how, in so doing, justification is established for the Military's use of disciplinary authority over the recruit. I will then discuss and detail the *disciplinary and punishment rituals* that are present throughout the recruits' training programme with a further consideration of *surveillance* both as discipline and as equalizing power. I will then consider the process of *de-individualization* and its role in preparing the recruits to rework their ideas from person, to *personhood*. Through the establishment of personhood I will show how the recruits can explore their new social world and changing identities through a process of *narrative*. The final section will detail the ingredients that complete the recruit's *re-individualization* into the Marines as a fully instated member.

¹ Liminality or liminal is a term used by Arnold Van Gennep in *The Rites of Passage* (1960) to describe a period of transition. Usually referred to in a religious context as a sacred phase.

Chapter 2

Culture Shock and Initial Adaptations to the Regime of Discipline

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the unsettling effects that Military culture has on the new recruits when first joining the basic training programme. I will begin by detailing their first attendance at the Commando Training Centre for their PRC² weekend. Subsequent to successful selection, I will follow the recruits as they begin their free-fall into the disciplinary contrivance at CTC³, also referred to as 'the factory'. I will attempt to highlight the unfamiliarity which causes my informants to feel anxious and alone as their unaccustomed knowledge and habits throw them into imbalance from the daily security and expertise of their ordinary lives, into this new indefinite environment. They will enter an unknown situation where everything around them looks, smells and sounds different to what they recognise.

Many of the new recruits told me that before joining, they had been thinking about initiation into their training programme with much eagerness, usually whilst in the comfort of their family homes, considering all the things they wish to achieve from the training. But as many of the recruits discover, thoughts and desires of Military successes while sitting on a warm sofa in front of the television will often become recognised as mere fantasy. The reality however, produces culture shock, an initial phase of training where recruits are submerged into a devil's cauldron of pain and angst, and are left to develop their own coping mechanisms and ways to console. This is the beginning of a fundamental part of the adaptation process which will ultimately lead the successful recruits to form their new identities as Marine Commandos.

On the whole, the new recruits seem young with an air of naivety. But the identities they desire are those of *men*; tough, rough and capable men. Men whom other men will

² Potential Recruits Course: A series of mental and physical tests that assess the applicant's suitability for selection into Marines training

³ Commando Training Centre: The Royal Marines headquarters

recognise as *real* men and whom, according to some respondents, women will desire for the ‘Wow, are you really a Marine?’ factor. For a young male in civilian society who is entering an age of identity and masculine awareness, ‘manning-up’ can be a difficult and complex endeavour. The idea that most if not all of the recruits recognise Marines training as a rightful passage from boyhood to manhood is a theme I will develop throughout the ethnography.

Through the experience of spending time with my predominantly quiet and calm respondents, I found that the pursuit of masculinity for some is merely a self-assuring experience, whereas for others - such as those who pursued a more professional approach in their civilian lives - the ‘masculine knowledge’ gained from service in the Marines will complement their existing identities, creating a well-rounded ‘brains and brawn’ character. But whatever each individual recruit hopes to achieve from training and service, his opening challenge is to cope with the shock of Marines culture, and to find ways of adjusting to it. And only *when* they have mastered the society and have *become* that society, will their rites of passage lead to the attainment of an improved masculine identity. This is a subject I will develop during my ethnography and will discuss at great length in the main conclusion.

In the following sections I will detail the recruits’ experiences during their first training and assessment sessions at CTC. After this I will follow the successful recruits as they progress to their first training weekend, where my main focus will be on the ‘group’ and its initial development and formation. In that section I will deal with the impact of culture shock on the individuals and how that pressure forces the individuals to create temporary identities through an ‘unofficial’ group pecking order. I will then present a detailed discussion of the early group formation. The subsequent section will deal with my arrival in the field and how I revealed myself as an ethnographer, followed by a section enquiring into some of the early disciplinary practices. The final section will examine an ‘isolation punishment ritual’ being performed on a recruit named Jack.

PRC Weekend

My respondents’ first attendance was on the Potential Recruits Course Weekend, which is a selection process by which those aspiring to enter the Royal Marines Reserve (RMR) are assessed and judged on their potential to fulfil the role of a Marine. The process of

securing a place on the PRC weekend is relatively straightforward. The aspirant usually phones an RMR Detachment on the number given over the internet or from various other forms of advertisement media, and speaks with the training Sergeant who will invite him along to the Detachment for a presentation evening which lasts about two hours. The evening begins with the attendees watching a video demonstrating certain aspects of the training. The video compilation strongly depicts aggression and action activities, making a direct appeal to the potential recruit's desire for strength and masculinity. In addition to the video, the Sergeant giving the presentation speaks about what will be expected of a Marine Reservist and in turn, what a recruit can expect to get from his training.

The meeting and presentation itself was relatively informal and relaxed, accompanied by the ever-present touch of Military humour and banter. One chap sitting among the potential recruits wanted to ask the Sergeant a question during the presentation. He placed his hand into the air and waited for the Sergeant to acknowledge him, after which he began his question by addressing the Sergeant as 'Sir'. The Sergeant immediately interrupted, and said with a concealed smile, "Don't call me Sir! I work for a living". The potential recruits lightly chuckled in response to the Sergeant's retort, and although the Sergeant meant it in good humour there was, like most things associated with the Royal Marines, a weight of pride and meaning behind the humour; of which the potential recruits were completely unaware. This particular witticism is one which I heard more than once during my seven years' service as a Reservist. There are a number of recognised one-liners which get collected up into the experienced Marines wisecrack-vocabulary, ready to be discharged at the right moment.

The depth of meaning behind this particular joke has much to do with the cherished identity of the Marines Sergeant. 'Sir' is the title given to a commissioned officer holding the rank of Second Lieutenant or above, usually from a better-educated background. It is also applicable to non-commissioned officers called Warrant Officers who typically come from less well-educated backgrounds and work their way up through the ranks over a number of years. It would commonly be heard said in the Marines, about a (typically young) officer, 'he was born with a silver spoon up his arse'. The Sergeant, like the Warrant Officer, would typically come from a less or non-privileged background, with less in the form of educational attainment. The Marines Sergeant is a 'man's man' who represents the true spirit of brawn, backbone and aggression. In fact, during my service, the toughest men I met, who possessed the most revered reputations were Sergeants who

had been on active service in combat. It is also the case that when a new junior officer (Second Lieutenant) joins a combat unit, it is the skilled and highly experienced Sergeant who teaches him the fine art of leading a troop in battle. So to address a Sergeant as 'Sir' is an insult to the tradition of the Sergeant's hard-earned and well-respected identity. That does not mean that Officer Ranks are not respected, of course they are, but Sergeants are simply held in very high esteem.

At the end of the presentation evening, those individuals who had been inspired were invited along to attend the PRC weekend starting on Friday 4th July 2003 at the Commando Training Centre, Lympstone, near Exmouth. On that warm Friday evening (4th July) the new recruits initially reported to RMR Bristol, located in Clifton. RMR Bristol is the Reserve Forces HQ, and consists of an old three-storey stone building. The grounds have razor-wire fencing around their perimeter and large double gates to the front and rear which are controlled day and night by the ship-keepers. On arrival, the potential recruits wait at the main gate where they identify themselves to the ship-keepers before being 'buzzed in' through a small side gate. Once through the side gate they walk to the reception where they are greeted by the two ship-keepers who are civilian staff, dressed in blue trousers and jumper, with a white shirt underneath. The reception area is old looking and the ship-keepers are secured behind a full-length glass and wooden screen which runs from the floor to the ceiling, locking in clouds of smoke from the cigarettes regularly drawn by the 'shippies'. From here the lads will be directed through to the lounge area where they will sit and await their instructions. The lounge is relatively small but has a SKY facility and a fair sized television mounted high in the corner of the room adjacent to the door, and it's the first thing likely to be noticed as one enters the room. The lads sit themselves down on the slightly worn but comfy chairs which are arranged in a square formation around the edges of the room.

My duty on this first evening, as an officer assisting in the training, was to meet the recruits at the Bristol unit and transport them down to CTC Lympstone, which is situated at the Southern end of the M5 motorway, not far from Exeter. As I arrived at RMR Bristol, I reported to the shippies with whom I had a typical exchange of persiflage as I signed myself in, denoting my attendance on the premises. Whilst writing my name, I discretely looked down the list to see which staff had already arrived. The more senior staff tend to make a more exaggerated point of looking over the list of attendees to the unit. This is one of an endless number of techniques that will demonstrate a senior man's

authority to the given audience. His action is usually made with his back straight and chest puckered out. The head remains tall but tilts downwards to the register, and the inspection is usually accompanied with a deep breath in, and outward audible sigh. This form of display demonstrates his authority to inspect.

After my polite exchange with the shippies I walked into the lounge where the potential recruits had already arrived and were sitting quietly talking amongst themselves. At first I didn't converse with them but just stood, listened and observed their behaviour for a while. I didn't reveal myself at this point because I had made a plan with the training team that I'd address all the recruits together during a given time-slot amid the series of lectures being held during the weekend. I was dressed in civilian attire so they surely thought I was there for the same reason as they were. I remained among them for a while in this large tired-looking room, which has a bar at one end. Soon there were numerous people milling around and going back and forth to the heads (toilets). There were no members of staff nearby, just a dozen potential recruits, some of whom were keeping quiet. The atmosphere was such that I did not suppose any of the lads already knew each other. There was a definite nervous tension among the group, the type of tension associated with the unknown. Most of them seemed to be subtly gripping objects such as their kit bags which were neatly placed immediately next to the chairs they were sitting on. For others, who had placed their kit to the side of the room, the chair arm or their own arms were being gripped or held as a means of comfort. The couple of lads who were having some general chit-chat seemed to be hosting a show for the rest who did not want to talk and had become an audience to those who did.

My observation of this initial encounter between the lads suggested that a group pecking order was being created. Within this new environment the criteria seemed to be simple; the lads with most confidence to speak and most interesting anecdotes to lament were asserting themselves as the dominant males in the group. The body language exhibited by the 'dominant' males was more open and less defensive. Their gesticulation was confidently animating their words and their mutual eye contact was convincing. Two particular males were leading the show and through their mutual agreement of ideas, were reciprocating each other's notion of higher group status. Occasionally one or other of the males in their immediate circle would chip into the conversation but the level of his involvement was controlled by the two 'alphas'. Indeed, the two most confident males had wasted no time securing themselves a position of recognition within their newfound

group of guys. The lads who said nothing seemed to accept their subservience to the group pecking order, which left a few moving around on middle ground, making a play for some level of identification.

After a short time observing the new potential recruits I left the room quietly in order to speak with the Sergeant-in-charge for my instructions. Due to my attendance on the training weekends with the recruits I was asked to drive them to the various training areas and back again in order to help out the training team. This seemed like a good position to be in because I felt I would be able to talk with the recruits at a time when their attention would not be consumed by their training activities. It was also a great way of building some rapport with my potential new respondents. My first instruction for the weekend was to drive the recruits to the 'parade square shed' at CTC where they would sleep for the night. After speaking with the Sergeant I went back into the lounge. As I approached the potential recruits, a few of them looked up and focused on me for a second before looking away again.

Due to the presence of some 'old school' (meaning old-fashioned) superiors in the vicinity, I was expected by them to perform my role as I had been taught while 'speaking at' potential recruits. Although my 'temporary position' as anthropologist researcher had been explained to many of the staff, they still viewed me first and foremost as a Marine who was expected to conduct himself in a particular way. I therefore addressed the recruits in typical Military fashion, saying "Right, listen in lads. My name is Marine Burchell and I'll be driving you down to CTC Lympstone this evening. What I want you do now, is collect your kit and get on the white minibus which is outside the front of the building. If you have any questions speak up, otherwise let's get moving". As I addressed the recruits, some of their faces had a slightly stunned look as they realised I had just been standing among them. At the point of finishing my sentence I motioned with my hands for them to move, and they did, with a scurry of activity. The 'dominant males' previously observed were the first up and led the way out to the minibus wherein they chose the most favourable seats. As I was slowly making my way around the vehicle towards the driver's-side door, a young lad, the last to board the bus, said to me as I looked at him, "Are you sitting in the front?" The reply that fell from my lips was "Probably be best because I'm driving". As I said that, I heard some of the other lads laugh, but I didn't mean to make a joke at the expense of a potential respondent - it's just too easy to slip into banter mode whilst in the Marines environment. I sat in the driver's

seat, closed the door and began to fill out the vehicle log book, which must be done for insurance purposes, before the vehicle moves off. As I did so I considered the haste with which the recruits responded to my earlier instructions to go to the bus. After all, they had not been shown or taught to act in such a manner. My enquiries with them later on that evening revealed that they were responding to ideas of Military stereotypes as observed on TV programmes and from general chat with friends and relatives who had Military experience.

Once the minibus was fully loaded with kit and bodies we began the two hour journey. As I was driving I felt that the mood of the recruits was a mixture of tiredness, anticipation and excitement. For most of the journey, the lads were quiet and talking softly among themselves. Occasionally they would pipe up and ask me some questions about the forthcoming assessments. There was a part of me that wanted to answer their questions and help them prepare psychologically for the tests. However, Military experiences have a tendency to stick in one's mind. I was thinking about when I was a recruit in their situation, and asked one of my instructors what we'd be doing for the assessments. I got a very stark reply, "Listen mate, don't ask too many questions alright". And that was that. This particular Corporal turned out to be a good friend later in my career, but nevertheless, I was conscious not to break too many traditions, because after all, I didn't want the new recruits to inadvertently let on to the training team that I had been priming them. Moreover, prior knowledge may have given them some advantage over the recruits coming in to CTC aboard buses from the other training Detachments in Poole and Cardiff.

I felt as if the journey was just as uncertain for me as it must have been for the recruits. Like the recruits, I didn't know what to expect from the next 12 months' training programme. Of course I understood the Military aspect of things, but my goals and expectations for the challenges of fieldwork that lay ahead were just as much unwritten chapters in the book of my life, as Commando training was in theirs. I think that for me and my respondents, this first journey to CTC was a time of reflection, but most importantly, preparation for the unknown. I didn't feel overly concerned about not using this opportunity to speak with my respondents too much because I realised that some mental preparation was essential for everybody and furthermore, I would have the whole year ahead to spend with them.

During my training days as a recruit, the bus journey meant a time of transformation; a time to temporarily pack away the highs and lows of everyday life and unpack my Military facade. And it did indeed feel like a façade on some occasions, particularly when the training seemed less well organised and a touch lame, or on the rare occasion when the training team appeared fatigued and disinterested. But recruits could not express such emotions; instead they have to believe with conviction every moment in the man they so madly want to be. My new potential respondents may also need to discover a similar façade which disguises any undesirable emotions such as fear and uncertainty. But what starts off as a ‘disguise identity’ of a confident and strong recruit, must eventually develop into something real. It is an interesting time for both them and me because essentially they will be creating and forming the cultural group that I will be studying, and until they begin their training, my cultural group does not exist; suffice to say, they will soon become the natives of this other society.

Arriving at the Commando Training Centre

We arrived at CTC around 22:00 hours, in our white minibus. As I drove the vehicle to the main gate I noticed the recruits becoming aware of our arrival. Their eyes became alert and they all shifted slightly in their seats so as to get an unobstructed view into the camp through the main gates which were being guarded by an armed Marine. Once I had presented myself to the guard room and obtained the necessary security clearance, I drove the minibus down through the centre of the dimly lit camp, past a number of plain stone buildings to a large hanger, known as the Drill Shed, where the recruits made their beds for the first night.

I knew the exact location of the hanger due to the time I had previously spent there learning drill. I steered the vehicle off the small road which brought us through the camp from the main gates, on to a large parade square from which I could drive the minibus straight into the hanger, where a number of recruits from the other Detachments were already beginning to settle down for the night. My recruits were silent. As I drove gently into the drill shed the atmosphere had become dominated by the docile rumble of the minibus engine. There was no lighting other than a few strained rays coming in from outside, producing a muted light in a cold open space.

After halting the vehicle I turned around from the driver's seat and said to the recruits, "All you need to do now is get your kit and find a space near the others, over there, and get your heads down. You will need to be up in the morning in plenty of time to have a shower and be ready for breakfast at 07:00 hours. Your training team will be along to brief you at around 06:30 hours. Any questions?" No one asked me any questions. I showed them where the toilets were by pointing to the farthest corner of the shed. I remained in situ while the recruits quietly and efficiently arranged their sleeping space and got themselves ready to sleep. Their bed for the night consisted of a roll-mat on the cold concrete floor with an arctic sleeping bag for cover. These items were issued to them for the weekend prior to leaving Dorset House⁴. They all tended to lay out their roll-mats and sleeping bags first, in order to mark their space. Once the roll-mat and sleeping bag was in position the general consensus was to place the rest of their kit at the head-end with one or two using their soft kit bags as a pillow. Shoes and clothes that had just been removed were placed to the side of their bed or at the foot. The new recruits naturally organised their kit in this way. They settled down very quickly and in no time at all the shed was silent.

I was informed by the training team that I would be the only Marine in the drill shed with the recruits that night and so I decided to make myself a bed in the minibus which was parked next to the recruits. I lay across a row of back seats. It was not a particularly comfortable night's sleep, but I was dry and warm, and most importantly, by staying in the minibus I could be easily located by anyone who needed me. I was up early the following morning so I could observe the routine of my potential respondents. They appeared sleepy and lethargic, but nonetheless I was pleased to see that they allowed themselves enough time to get up and ready for when the first member of their training team came in to march them over to the galley for breakfast.

After the recruits had eaten their breakfast they spent the weekend being escorted around the camp for attendance at a number of presentations, lectures, exams and physical assessments. They had very little down-time. Their time was organised by the training team who orchestrated the recruit's bodies from one space to the next. The group as a whole were facially and bodily expressing the signs of stress and anticipation. When standing to attention they looked unnaturally stiff, as if about to topple over like a set of

⁴ The official name for the building at RMR Bristol is Dorset House, and it is most commonly referred to as such.

wooden skittles in a strong wind. Likewise, watching them march looked as if they had lost all fluency of movement from their limbs. They looked rigid and awkward, accentuated further by their civilian attire, rather than the pristine uniforms of the regular recruits who are in service at the training centre. The recruits showed very little sign of relaxation. Whilst sitting in lectures their backs were upright and taut. And although their eyes glanced around the room, their heads remained in a forward-facing position. On receipt of each subsequent set of orders the recruits seemed panicked, looking to each other for confirmation of the required action. But the recruits experienced the most urgency in the gymnasium during their fitness tests. Whilst in the gym they were not permitted to stop for a second. For some, the gym tests caused the greatest of discomfort and unfamiliarity from the usual pace of their body movements.

As they entered the gym they were confronted by a number of PTI's (Physical Training Instructors), all of whom were standing loud and proud. The recruits were immediately shouted at whilst getting into line. Their first set of directives was from the training staff about the gym etiquette they would adhere to. The intense tempo of the pending session was set from the start by the energetic and spirited masculinity of the instructors. The new recruits were unfamiliar with the bombardment of strict directives and to some extent looked fearful. The rules they were given included strict commands not to scratch, itch or even touch their faces at any time. The recruits caught doing so were punished with verbal belittlement and some form of physical task such as push-ups. The recruits were set to work at once, beginning with a warm-up. One respondent commented to me afterwards, "I thought the warm-up was it". By this he meant the warm-up was so demanding, he believed it to be the fitness test, until they begun the fitness test! I did my very best to keep track of the buzzing activity, but it was difficult. At various stages of the gym session, the numerous PTI's would each take small numbers of recruits to their separate testing area. At times there would be some recruits climbing the ropes, some doing circuits, and others doing a series of floor exercises such as star-jumps. The gymnasium was vigorous with verbal directives and physical strokes.

Due to the hard work and exertion required in the gym session, I noted the recruits beginning to look more settled because for most of them, the gym activity presented some familiarity. When they were told to do fifty press-ups, they knew what this was, and how to do it. It mattered not that some couldn't do as many as fifty because the very fact that they were trying earned them praise from the instructors. The instructors would say,

“Good effort you, well done”. For most of my recruits, their short time physical training in the gym aligned with their preconceived ideas about what it means to be in the Marines.

The gym training session on the potential recruit’s course was the first activity which gave a number of the recruits some hope that they would be able to cope, and continue with the impending training programme. I seized an early opportunity to ask my respondents about their pre-attendance expectations of the weekend. The general response was that they overwhelmingly imagined things to be more civilised and leisurely. At the time I didn’t take any specific notes but do remember one recruit telling me how he’d thought that the accommodation would consist of a warm room with a bed, sink and shower; because that’s the basic level of accommodation he was used to. He was shocked when he found himself having to sleep on a hard concrete floor in an open drill shed with many others, all sharing a very small toilet facility. Another respondent told me he did not sleep well on his first night, and spent most of the night thinking about home. After the gym session, in general, my respondents commented that although it was tough at the time, they felt good for doing it.

At the end of the PRC weekend, I looked back feeling that I had achieved something special. I had the pleasure of seeing that of the many who attended the Potential Recruits Course, a large majority were deemed fit and strong enough to begin training, set to commence in two weeks’ time.

A Methodological Complication

During the PRC weekend, my only disappointment arose from missing the opportunity to address the recruits as a whole, during their series of lectures. This would have enabled me to explain exactly what my purpose was as ethnographer and their role as potential fieldwork respondents. Originally, a twenty minute slot was planned for me during the lecture phase, so I could present to the recruits and staff together. I planned a small talk and had written a few notes about what I was going to say. But unfortunately, the timescales for the weekend went adrift and some sessions ran slightly over time, and quite understandably therefore, my ‘non-essential’ lecture session did not come to fruition. This was disappointing to me because my priority on the first weekend was to ensure that the recruits knew who I was and how I hoped they’d become involved with me. Moreover, I

needed to be sure they could differentiate my concerns with them as ethnographer and participant, from the concerns the training staff would have with them - in the hope that they would not 'hide' when I approached them.

Despite my personal disappointment at the forfeiture of my lecture slot, I was pleased with the early observations I gleaned. In particular, it was fascinating to see the recruits enter the selection weekend with no Military identity whatsoever and observe their search to find an aspect of the weekend that they could identify with. Thus, I felt that the gym was a significant moment which gave hope and inspiration to the recruits, because through this activity they could do something they understood and could relate to some of their pre-conceived ideas about Marines' life. It was during the gym training session that I could begin to see an inkling of the Military man showing in the undisciplined and untuned civilian bodies that encased and concealed their greater aspirations.

I left the weekend looking forward to the ensuing training in two weeks' time so I could continue to observe their transformations. As for my lost presentation to them about who I was, I decided my best hope would be to begin the next training with this as my number one priority. I planned to get around them all, one at a time if necessary, to explain my purpose.

The First Training Weekend

On Friday 18th July my fieldwork respondents 'turned-to' for their first weekend training serial at CTC as a result of being selected for recruit training two weeks ago on the PRC, as detailed in the above section. Just as they did for their selection, they arrived at CTC on board a minibus from their various Detachments. Unlike the selection weekend my respondents were now in accommodation for the first night. The minibuses began to arrive from 21:00 hours. I noted in my fieldwork diary:

'My respondents are in good spirit but with no discernable organization or common sense in terms of the kit they require'

They settled down for bed relatively quickly in order to be up and 'fell-in' outside the training team office for 06:45 the following morning, as per their orders.

The following morning, Saturday 19th July, I got myself up especially early in order to be ready for when the first recruits began to surface. I was surprised to find that some had risen from their beds as early as 05:15 hours. As the recruits got themselves ready I couldn't help hinting to them, that if they were required to be outside the team training office at 06:45 then that really means they need to get there for 06:35 so that they are fell in and ready five minutes before the required time, as is Marines tradition. It seemed very clear that some of the lads were not used to such early rising and as a consequence were lethargic and tired-looking. For the first time they dressed in their Military uniforms which had been issued to them on their Wednesday evening Detachment night, during the previous week. They marched themselves to the training team office. I noted:

'Their marching was very disorderly and very un-Military looking.'

During their 'first-parade' at the training team office the Sergeant instructed them to make sure they ate a full breakfast because they would need the energy in order to complete their day's training. After they had been addressed by the training team, a Corporal marched them across to the galley for breakfast (scrans) at 07:00.

The recruits walked into the galley in single file, being told by the Corporal to take off their (blue) berets as they enter the building. The galley seems rather dark when coming in from the outside. It leads down a number of winding steps to the serving area where there are a number of Chefs frantically working to keep the food trays replenished. There's a choice of full cooked breakfast, or cereals and fruit. The galley is large and by the time the recruits get there it's already half-full with the regular recruits busily tucking into their scrans. My new recruits quietly select their food and find a couple of long empty tables at which they can all sit together. As they find themselves seats, I notice that the Regular recruits are looking at them, because to the regulars, my respondents are unfamiliar. The new recruits, however, did not look back at the regulars because they seem to have immediately sensed that they are at the very bottom of the food-chain. The new recruits restricted their curiosity to the immediate space they were occupying, and turned their attention to the TV mounted upon a pillar, showing the morning news.

During breakfast there were mixed emotions among the recruits. Whilst it was exciting for some, others felt very apprehensive. On the whole, their facial expressions were blank and their heads facing downward. But overwhelmingly they were relieved to be in

uniform (rig) whilst marching around the camp. One respondent told me, “I felt silly and out of place when we were marching around camp in our civvies⁵ on the PRC weekend”.

After breakfast the new recruits were marched over to the drill shed for 07:55 hours. The drill shed presented the recruits with some familiarity amidst this new Military environment because it was where they slept during the PRC, two weeks previous. They could almost remember how to get there through the camp from the galley. Once there, they were told to sit on the side of the parade square and watch the course of Regular recruits practicing drill with their Regular Drill Instructor. The Sergeant in charge of my recruits told me, “By watching the regulars do it, they can see what is expected of them”. I felt that what the Sergeant had said was not just a ‘throwaway comment’ but in fact a statement which carried a weight of truth, primarily because drill is a very difficult and technical skill for a group of men to learn to perform together perfectly. Drill is not just a series of movements or a bodily form, but is also a feeling which creates a distinct and proud atmosphere, an honourable atmosphere, of strength and burly spirit. A body of men working and moving in harmony to this degree of Military precision makes the heart thud. The sheer momentum excites the air, and I noticed my recruits enliven as they looked-on at the Regulars. One of my respondents sitting to my immediate left said, “It’s impressive to see the teamwork of the Reg’s”. Another commented, “They are perfectly spaced, in perfect step”.

I felt that watching the Regulars’ practice drill gave my respondents important early examples of how a group of Marine recruits should work together, and importantly, what working together will ‘sound like’ and feel akin to. Subsequent to this experience I recorded in my fieldwork notebook:

‘Recruits themselves starting to look-out for each other and stronger ones helping less organised ones with morning admin,’ and ‘Good affiliation with each other = starting to get together – No seeing themselves as recruits from different units but one unit as a whole’.

Looking back over these fieldwork notes as I write them up, I’m slightly sceptical that I had recorded my observations correctly because the timescale does not seem drawn out enough for my respondents to begin working and functioning together as a whole. Surely they would need to have spent more time together before the strong emerged to aid the

⁵In this context the word civvies refers to civilian clothing, whereas in another context the same word may refer to civilian people.

less organised? But as I think further back to my own training experience as a recruit, I remembered how much faster and more intensely these things happened, as a result of being in this pressurised and stressful setting. And indeed one of the most fascinating aspects of the Marines training environment is the forceful pace of life and none more so than during this early stage of culture shock.

As a result of my early observations I felt that a group pecking order had begun to form from the requirement that the new recruits each find a temporary identity as a means to experience a sense of belonging through recognition of an acknowledged character within this body of men. I would suggest that hasty affiliation into the group through the early formation of a form of group structure will markedly increase the chances of a recruit's success at Commando training.

Discussion about Early Group Formation

Of the aforementioned points, I would like to briefly expand on my use of three expressions in particular: pecking order, temporary identity, and my assertion that quick affiliation into a group structure will increase a recruit's success at training. The pecking order that was quickly created by the recruits was one that I could not compare with a hierarchical or meritocratic form *per se*, because the recruits are forced, through the training methods applied by the training team, to establish equal standing with one another. Thus it is strictly unacceptable for one recruit to place orders upon another, unless the justifying circumstances arise whereby a training team member verbally empowers one particular recruit to take leadership or command over the rest. Even then, leadership means to head-up a group task such as marching or organising. Recruit leadership does not extend to the abuse of power by giving individual orders for personal gain. Instead, the pecking order my respondents established was fashioned based on character traits like strong, weak, organised, slow, funny etc. From the hurried 'character pecking order', proper bonds were established over time through 'complementary opposites' such as the strong encouraging the weak during physical tasks, the organised helping the unorganised during admin tasks, and those with comedic qualities keeping morale high with funnies, wit, and satire. Through this logic the recruits who possessed the most desired character traits were awarded highest status and respect by their peers.

The 'character pecking order' then, is a function that leads to the recruits establishing what I then termed as temporary identities. I see them as temporary identities because at later stages, as I will show progressively through the following chapters, there will be many successive shifts from one temporary identity to the next. The recruits' identities are like a living animation of the many changing thoughts and experiences that constantly establish and re-establish their own ideas and understanding of who and 'what' they are. Their identities will not just depend on their Military training successes and achievements, but may also be determined by the state of the group dynamic, which I observed as being in a state of constant flux. For example, if the initial pecking order of status within the group is based on individual characteristics, particularly in the early stages, there may be cause for sudden and significant change every time a recruit drops out of the training programme. This is due to my previous observation that long-term bonds begin to form based on complementary opposites. My understanding of this process during fieldwork leads me to suggest that it is an intricate process whereby recruits need to pool their collective skills, strengths and weaknesses in order to succeed.

This pooling process is not as simple as A helps B, and C helps D. It is more a case that A, with his specially acquired knowledge on polishing boots brilliantly, will teach that skill to a number of his peers who are failing boot inspections. Recruit B, who is a very strong runner, will volunteer himself as traffic marshal during road runs and consequently have to do twice as much running and sprinting than the rest of the group who 'plod' steadily together in formation. By the strong runners volunteering as traffic marshals, the weaker runners can remain in the 'pack' and improve their stamina and skills at running through the steadier pace. So if recruit B drops out of the training programme due to injury, the group hierarchy will change, especially during the next road run when Recruit C may earn group respect by sacrificing a more 'comfortable' run among the pack in order to take on the extra physical exertion required of the traffic marshal. If neither recruit C nor anybody else volunteered for the job of traffic marshal then the training team will select someone indiscriminately. If the selected recruit is one of the weaker runners, he may fail and drop out of the run through exhaustion and will be taken via minibus to meet the successful recruits at the finish line. Arriving at the end of the run in a minibus is considered a sign of 'weakness' and not being able to carry oneself across the finish line. This recruit will suffer some loss of status within his group of peers.

The third point I wanted to expand on briefly was my observation that during this initial 'Culture Shock' phase, the need for my respondents to bond quickly is essential for their future level of success. This is not just because of the above point about pooling skills for the benefit of the group, but also because of the amount of stress that the training programme places on the recruits, making it extremely difficult and unlikely that they can succeed without mutual support from one another. Through my observations I believe this archetypal need is the very foundation on which Marines training culture and early group solidarity is formed.

A further observation, regarding the above pecking order development, is about the extent to which the bonding process is of fundamental importance to the recruits and yet, largely unrealised by the training team. That isn't to say that the training team are ignorant to it - on the contrary, especially since they have been through the training themselves. But more specifically the training team's identities have changed a great deal since they were recruits. They now possess identities imbued with a level of status and rank far removed from the lowliness of recruits. The training team are not concerned with the intricacies of the recruit's group functionality; they simply see them as a group of recruits, of which the strong will pass and the weak will fail.

So the identity flux which typifies my respondents' training is not without its duality. As outlined above, the training team see the recruits as being at the bottom of the food chain and thus of no importance. Neither do recruits get any respect, because a number of them will drop out of training at some point. So to this 'outside observer,' albeit the training team, my respondents are identified as a 'group of Marines recruits' with no internal structure other than the Military structure which they fit into as a single body of men. But, as a result of my inside access to the group, from the outset I was sensitive to the existence of an embryonic group structure - a character pecking order, as detailed above.

Arriving at the Field and Revealing Myself as Ethnographer

The above section described the early formation of group solidarity established as a result of 'culture shock'. Culture shock in the Marines is not just a response by new recruits being exposed to unfamiliar customs, environments and people, but is chiefly a consequential reaction to the unforgiving regimen of discipline. This section will continue

examplifying from the first training weekend and mull over the role of discipline during the onset of the Culture Shock Phase.

After their introduction to drill, as detailed in the previous section, the recruits were transported to Woodbury Common at 09:00 hours. They were taken to a position called RV-4 (rendezvous point number 4). The minibus eventually leaves the small winding country road and makes its way over dirt track terrain to the RV (rendezvous). The recruits become alert, as they get bounced around in their seats by the rocking vehicle hitting enormous pot holes. Approaching the RV for the first time I'm reminded of a passage in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* when Malinowski describes his entrance to the main island community through the thick vegetation and how he is "able to see into a palm grove, like an interior, supported by pillars ... which indicated the entrance to the site of the village" (Malinowski, 1961, p. 61). Our minibus drove straight through some thick and overhanging bush into the RV position where the training team tent had already been erected by the advance party. One by one the recruits de-bussed with their Bergen rucksacks slung over their shoulders on one strap like a school bag. They were trying to take in the essence of the immediate environment; the soft quiet of nature and the slightly damp smell of morning woods. But without delay, they were being ordered to form up in two ranks and stand to attention with all eyes facing forward. They were struggling to comply; their lackadaisical habits tempt them into looking around, but they are yelled at, "FACE FORWARD!" This is discipline - being taught to ignore what you are not told you need to notice.

The principle of learning what to notice is essential for recruits. Professor John Gray, who specialises in European thought, explains that as organisms, humans process fourteen million bits of information per second⁶, but that the bandwidth of consciousness is an indiscriminate eighteen bits. He pronounces therefore, that humans only have conscious access to a millionth of the daily information used to survive (Gray, 2002, p. 66). This explanation assists enormously in gaining an understanding of the initial difficulties faced by the recruits during culture shock, about which 'eighteen bits' out of the 'fourteen million bits' of information from this entirely new culture they must learn to recognise and pay attention to.

⁶ Gray describes the bandwidth of consciousness as measured in terms of ability to transmit information measured in bits per second. In Gray, J. *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals*, 2002, p. 66.

Whilst formed up in two ranks recruits were addressed by the training Sergeant who informed them that they would begin their morning's training by learning the essentials of bivouac construction, followed by a lecture on food at 11:15, health and hygiene at 13:00, sentry routine at 13:45, followed by a yomp (Bergen carry at fast pace) up to 'Look-out Copse', Map Reading, and more yomping.

After the initial demonstration of 'Bivvie' construction performed by the training team, the recruits were ordered to pair-up and begin their practice. This practice session was an important moment for the significance of my fieldwork because it was when I felt that the recruits became 'my participants'. The time given for practice at constructing and concealing their bivvies in an all-round defensive position was relaxed and without the supervision of Staff. Without delay, I made this my opportunity to divulge myself to the recruits. I went from pair to pair, explaining my role as ethnographer and my anticipation that they'd be happy to participate, and be filmed by me. It was here that I established my list of the entire recruits' identities along with their ages and occupations. I had to work fast and with a slightly mechanical manner because one never knows when the wind will change in a Military training environment.

Discussion about Being Jack and the Isolation Punishment Ritual

Whilst introducing myself properly to the recruits it was a great opportunity to get to know them all a little better and to get a feel for their general characters. This more relaxed bivouac construction practice allowed some room for certain recruits to show their colours a little more. In particular I noticed a recruit named Jack who seemed to be showing great difficulty and abstinence at cooperating with his peers. He had what I'd describe as a spiky response to others. A spiky attitude such as Jack's should not be confused with the type of aggression that is desired in Marines culture. Aggression is a controlled quality which is directed appropriately at the proper time. The correct administration of aggression is an attribute which earns high opinion from the training team and, through the fullness of time, brings status. A spiky attitude like Jack's, on the other hand, is associated with immaturity and the inability to gel-in with fellow recruits. In an intensive and close-knit group of males who are ceaselessly creating new coping mechanisms that deal with stress and fatigue, an immature attitude can offend the squad's dynamic. In terms of the 'group pecking order', an aggravating personality will not be

awarded a positive position. Instead he is negatively labelled and associated according to his annoyances.

As the course of training progressed, I noticed participants labelling recruits like Jack sometimes with a name, and sometimes with an imitation of their most annoying idiosyncrasies. Jack quickly became referred to as 'Jack' but the name Jack was only said with what the recruits considered to be his irritatingly mixed, but mostly Northern accent. The bonded group slowly began to reject him, not out of spite, but for his inability to find a suitable position of stability within the group pecking order. Once at the periphery of the group, Jack was fully exposed and quickly spotted by the circling sharks, the training team, who finished him off.

As a reflection on these circumstances, I am drawn to a passage in a book by psychiatrist Victor Frankl, a survivor of the holocaust. He wrote in a very rich ethnographic account, that whilst imprisoned at a labour camp, he and his fellow prisoners could accurately predict, within a day or two, which of them would be next to die. These predictions were determined by various signals relating to the rate of failing health shown by the perishing individuals (Frankl, 2004). Although I am very cautious at highlighting parallels between the horrors of Jewish labour camps and RMR training, I suggest it to be noteworthy because in each case there is a group of men who rely heavily on one another for mutual support, 'dark' humour and group belonging which help during prolonged fatigue and exhaustion. And like the prediction of death in the labour camp community, the 'death' of a recruit's training career can often be as well predicted.

In the case of Jack, he was left to find his own exodus to the outside edge of the group, and was left naked for the training team to feast on - which they did. Once detected on their sonar, following any instance of his undesirable traits, the whole group were punished. Whilst undergoing the punishment activity they would be told by the training team that it was their fault - the group - for not 'getting around Jack and squaring him away'. I recall one such example of this when the group were fell-in after having been given some down-time to eat their scran. When the training Sergeant addressed them he said, "Is everybody here?" One of the recruits muttered coyly, "We're waiting for Jack, Sarge." In response the Sergeant snapped, "If anyone else calls me Sarge I'm gonna stick my boot up their arse. I'm a Royal Marines Sergeant, not fucking Sarge". The Sergeant placed a mocking but hostile emphasis on the word 'Sarge'.

The Sergeant looked agitated as he turned towards the darkened area of trees from where he expected Jack to eventually emerge. The Sergeant impatiently asked, "Well where the fuck is he? Why's every other fucker managed to get here on time and that twat's nowhere to be seen?" The Sergeant grew increasingly agitated. He turned back towards the two ranks of recruits and placed his hands on his hips, but with his hands clenched as fists, and with his hard dry knuckles appearing significantly bigger than usual through his growing anger. The atmosphere was tense and the recruits looked petrified because this Sergeant has an unforgiving nature and is reputed by his peers as an animal. He has been in plenty of combat during his service as Regular Sergeant, and allegedly loves to hit people. In this instance, he was causing the recruits to exude fear into the air; the recruits became increasingly tense and apprehensive. "Right", the Sergeant sneered, "Get on the fuckin' ground in the press-up position, all of you, FUCKING NOW". He placed the new recruits into the press-up position bearing in mind they are wearing their belt-kits around their waists, weighing around ten to fifteen pounds. This is a stress position for discipline or punishment. He asserted his voice coldly, "Right, you're gonna remain in this position until Jack gets his fuckin' arse out here".

These new recruits had not yet built the core strength required to cope with this type of physical and mental strain for too long before the onset of pain and discomfort. Their arms were quivering; backs hyper-extending under the weight of their kit. They were continuously chastised and told to correct and hold their positions. Some of the recruits began to suffer the pain of having stones and twigs trapped underneath their hands which dig in but feel as if they have cut in, because of the prolonged strain. The recruits did not know when Jack would eventually appear from the trees, so the duration of their punishment felt like an eternity.

As Jack came into sight, he immediately noticed the recruits in pain. The Sergeant slowly turned his torso towards Jack, just fifteen metres away, and said to him in a super-calm, but contorted voice, "Get here you". He signalled with his hand for Jack to stand at the front next to him and said, "You can stand here and watch them. They are being fucked about because YOU couldn't be bothered to fuckin' get here on time. If I tell you to be somewhere, YOU FUCKIN' BE THERE". He had eyes of the Devil and the calm of the ocean and said with barely any lip movement, "Fall in line, the rest of you stand up".

The above type of punishment practice is ironically, focussed on Jack, despite it being the group who endured the physical discomfort. This is the most severe punishment type because it has the unavoidable function of isolating the recruit who caused it from inclusion into a most fundamental bond-building disciplinary practice serviced by the group. If on the other hand, a recruit makes a mistake, but is actually a desirable candidate, the group may still be punished as a whole, but essentially, the recruit who caused the bungle would play a full part in the punishment ritual. This actually teaches the lesson-to-be-learned, whilst continuing to strengthen group bonds through their shared experience of pain and distress. Conversely, the lowest-profile type of physical punishment is where the responsible recruit is punished in isolation. He may have to do press-ups or make some other kind of physical forfeiture in order to show he is now consciously aware of his blunder.

But for Jack, his days were numbered. This type of punishment is symptomatic of a fallen man. I asked my respondents how they felt about their chastisement. I was told, “He [Jack] fucks it up for us, all the time”, and “He’s just thick as fuck”. Before the punishment ritual I don’t remember hearing such harsh words about him. Most of the dislike towards Jack was expressed through mockery and what the lads refer to as ‘piss-take’. After the punishment, it became explicit dislike. The mechanism of Jack’s demise was swift: once it became apparent that Jack could not locate himself within the group pecking order, the group placed him at the side-line. The Sergeant read this message, and in combination with Jack’s unsatisfactory performance and his distinct lack of discipline and form, he ordered the ‘isolation punishment ritual’ which was when Jack was forced to watch the group being punished for his mistake, causing him great shame among his peers. This occurrence symbolically removed Jack from the group. After this weekend’s training experience, Jack never returned.

Chapter Conclusion

Some of the important themes I hope to have highlighted during this chapter began with a consideration as to why my fieldwork respondents made the initial commitment to join and train in the RMR. My primary consideration at this early stage is dominantly suggestive that for the most part, they are seeking a new identity which can offer them a number of gainful advantages within the every-day course of civilian life. Although I do acknowledge that there is also a strong emphasis on recruits wanting to learn Military

skills and tactics, I cannot visualise this being of chief concern. Firstly if it were, I would envisage a career in the Regular Marines as more suitable rather than the RMR, or ‘weekend warriors’⁷ which is a generic nickname given to reserve troops across the Tri-Forces.

One Regular Sergeant from the training team did insist to me that, “The only reason anybody joins the RMR is because they are bored with their life at home – there’s no other reason”. Although he did not expand on this point too lavishly, it does follow that if my respondents were bored with their lives at home, then concomitantly one could say that they are bored with their *identities* and the limitations as to what those identities can achieve. For this reason the excitement of RMR training and adventure mixes well with the anticipation of a newly perceived self-image. This idea is somewhat supported in *The Social Effects of Military Service* by James Alden Barber (1972), who argues that “Military service increases the employability of an individual within the public employment arena by increasing individual qualities such as self-esteem, self-discipline and the ability for team work”. For John Gray, on the other hand, action preserves a sense of self-identity that mere reflection dispels. He argues that the reason men turn to a life of action is as a “refuge from inexistence” (Gray, 2002, p. 194).

The next significant theme discussed was one which occurred during the recruits’ first meeting with a Royal Marines Sergeant at the presentation evening. Here, a recruit referred to the Sergeant as ‘Sir’. In response to this the Sergeant retorted by saying, “Don’t call me Sir, I work for a living”. Although this was a line which generated a laugh among the Sergeants’ audience, with my knowledge of Marines customs I was able to understand the expanse of cultural knowledge the recruits were yet to appreciate. The Sergeant’s motivation for his rejoinder was fuelled by an intimate working knowledge regarding the weight of meaning that a word such as ‘Sir’ may have when said in the wrong context. The titles ‘Sir’ and ‘Sergeant’ both carry a degree of pride, identity and

⁷ In addition to ‘weekend warriors’, some reserve troop units are nicknamed ‘SAS’ meaning Saturdays and Sundays. Traditionally, Marine Reserves are most commonly referred to as ‘Rubber Daggers’. This labelling culture has changed markedly during the past decade due to the essential relief Marine Reserves have offered Regular troops on the front line. Due to the recent shortage of resources, the continued deployment of RMR has provided the opportunity to prove their ability as being equally capable to their Regular colleagues. I suspect herein lay the reason why I rarely heard RMR referred to in terms other than ‘RMR’ during my fieldwork. I will also point out here that the standards required by RMR recruits who aim to achieve their Green Berets is every bit exacting as for the Regulars. All training and testing is carried out in the same places and to the same standards. It follows that the value imbued in having earned the right to wear the Green Beret is no less for reserves as it is for regulars because essentially they are indistinguishable one from another. Having achieved his Green Beret, a Marine reserve is trained to operational standards and immediately deployable as is a Regular.

meaning according to the particular conceit and set of denotations involved in achieving either. I hope to have shown how a simple word such as 'Sir' which is used in civilian society to denote respect, can be taken as an insult in Marines culture. In this case the Sergeant's identity is imbued with masculine meaning that he has earned through hard physical labour and front-line combat. So even being referred to with a higher-ranking title is not brushed off because to the Sergeant this may be perceived as an inferior form of masculinity due to the examples I gave of the typicality of officers coming from 'silver spoon' backgrounds.

After the presentation evening, the successful recruits attended the PRC weekend. I made the observation that whilst they were waiting for their transport at the Detachment in Bristol, there were immediate signs of an early hierarchy beginning to form. This early dominant display by the most 'confident and interesting' recruits was winning them status. Surprisingly I couldn't find any references in anthropological and sociological literature regarding early group formations of status within a recruit's Military setting.

As the PRC weekend progressed I witnessed the early effects of culture shock, caused as the recruits were shot-gunned into the Military training camp routine. The early displays of their unfamiliarity within the environment were apparent in their exhibiting despondency about their faces and body. This all changed once they were being put through their paces in the gymnasium, a large and pristine building representing a temple to the body. Inside it they found that the bodily actions of physical tests were tantamount to the familiarity of their prior 'Military' practice and preparation at home.

During this Gym testing session the recruits began to find their feet, their rhythm and a sense of knowing. The physical work at this early juncture was vital for an initial bond formation among them. They were mutually creating a rhythm of physical activity which penetrated deep into the fabric of the group. The instructors took control of each caption of time and organised the rhythm of practices, inscribing durably in the recruits' bodies, in the way of a tempo of actions, an entire partnership with time which, would over time become conceived of as a part of each individual (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 76). Bourdieu argues that through enacted belief, the body is treated as a living memory pad, or an automation, that will "lead the mind unconsciously along with it" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 68). I do, however, appreciate the less elaborated version offered by Carl Gustav Jung who talks of learning without realizing. He says that information goes straight into the

unconscious where it is remembered and in doing so it skips the conscious altogether (Jung, 1960, p. 112). I hope to have shown that through the familiarity of physical fitness activity in the gymnasium, the recruits found an initial basis of identification with Marines culture that wasn't entirely alien from some of their civilian practices.

After the PRC weekend the recruits attended their first training weekend where they were in full uniform. One recruit demonstrated a very early awareness of being an outsider when he commented to me that he felt silly and out of place when he was here on the PRC weekend wearing civvies.

Focusing on their first weekend's training, I presented a discussion about my observations of early group formation. During this discussion I picked out the salient points such as: a group pecking order based on character traits; temporary identities which were the first of many expected progressive shifts in their identities; and my observation that quick affiliation into the group would provide the recruits a stronger chance of success at training, particularly through the initiative of pooling skills. I hoped to show here that the training is not hierarchical, mechanical and authoritarian, as some older accounts on Military institutions may have put it. To the contrary, here we have complex and interwoven combinations of hierarchy and equality, discipline and help. Paradoxically, the pecking order leads to help for the weak. What is more, it could be seen that disciplinary 'breakdown' is achieved through instituting equality in this way.

My observation that recruits pool skills and resources has to some extent been addressed by Becker, talking more generally about group dynamics. He argues that when a group finds itself sharing common problems in a common situation, some of the group will try to find answers and report their findings back to the rest of the group (Becker in Hockey, 1986, p. 7). Through my more detailed description of early group formation I hope to have shown that recruits don't just share information gathered from outside their immediate group, but will also find ways of sharing any 'useful' information they possess within the group as a means of establishing a pecking order.

To conclude with one final point from this chapter, I would like to highlight once again the previous paradoxical point that the pecking order leads to help towards the weak. It does, but not without even further complexities. I hope to have demonstrated this by paying particular attention to the dialogue in the final section titled *Discussion about*

Being Jack and the Isolation Punishment Ritual. Here, Jack couldn't locate himself within the group hierarchy and was therefore placed at the periphery where, in conjunction with his unsatisfactory performance, he was spotted by the training team. The training Sergeant performed what I coined the 'Isolation Punishment Ritual', which foresaw the end of Jack's membership.

This clearly adds a further dimension to the idea of helping the weak. Interestingly, it was Jack's attitude and sense of group cohesion, or non-cohesion, that was weak, not his body or his physical skill-sets. This idea of failure at Military training due to an inability to form group cohesion has also been approached by Nelson who looked at school performance as a predictor of later Military success. His research showed that a student who was expelled from school is more likely to quit from Forces training than a student who was well integrated within the school system and one who was able to accept authority (Nelson, 1976, p. 84). Nelson's work takes a more traditional approach by demonstrating that a recruit's chances of success can be determined by his ability to integrate successfully into organisational hierarchical structures.

My fieldwork on the other hand can add complexity to this by showing that a recruit's success at training can be just as well determined by his ability to successfully integrate into the hierarchical structure within his peer group. With this point in mind I'd like to suggest that to gain a thorough understanding of successful Military integration, it may not be enough to consider an individual's acceptance of organisational structures and authority, but as well, a further appreciation may be required of the degree to which a recruit can integrate into the smaller inter-personal group structures and hierarchies that form within the organisational structure itself.

In this chapter, I hope to have introduced some of the recruits' initial responses to the programme of enculturation. In the following chapter, I will describe how the pace and intensity of training increases dramatically as the recruits become subject to harsher discipline and punishment practices through the requirement for them to become 'equalized' with one another.

Chapter 3

Equalization

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explicated how immediate immersion into the Marines environment affected the recruits. After this initial culture shock, and once the environment started to become more familiar, my recruits entered into the next progressive phase which I refer to as *equalization*. I'd like to suggest that although I have separated the subjects of 'culture shock' and 'equalization', the period of transition from one phase to the other is difficult to determine. For this reason I focussed on the PRC weekend and the first training weekend in the previous chapter to demonstrate the initial period of shock; like the initial chill when diving into cool ocean waters. But essentially once in the water, the swimming begins whilst the shock is still subsiding. The equalization phase is essential in order to strip the recruits of any ideas about grandeur they may have, and to render them all equal to each other at a base-level which holds them in no rank or status. I hope to demonstrate that the mechanisms in this phase will force the recruits to recognise they are in a Military environment, wherein their civilian identities are removed from them. This is an important function of enculturation as preparation for subsequent phases later in their training when they are reinstated with a new Military identity.

To explain equalization I will first offer an introduction about the equalizing power of the Camp (or Barracks) environment and the challenges facing new recruits as they learn the rules of acceptable physical movement through the grounds. I will then add to this dimension in the subsequent section by explaining the challenges recruits face inside the accommodation rooms, focussing on the process that stimulates creation of equal identities through the ideal of environmental perfection, and room inspections. From room inspections, the emphasis will change to a focus on group-movement inspections, and the equalization created through early learning practices of drill and marching in an assemblage tempo.

During the first two sections of this chapter, I'll demonstrate that equalization practice, in its initial stages, is applied to the group as a whole. In the third section, the spotlight will shine brighter on each individual's own mistakes as picked-up by the training team during the kit and weapons inspection. As a result of these mistakes, I'll detail how the recruits are punished through the medium of their bodies, which I describe in the final section as a 'Post-Inspection Body Sacrament'.

Recruits as Seeds: Trodden into the Earth of the Military Environment

The sheer power of the Commando Training Centre environment and all its suggestions of supremacy are what make a Marine feel strong and proud when he walks through it. For the new recruit, however, it's a different experience. The symbols that can empower the Marine will subordinate the recruit. The Marine will walk proudly with his beret upon his head - he belongs here and everybody knows his face. He couldn't possibly do wrong because he has learned the rules and norms that make it possible for him to navigate a perfect path in this hardnosed setting. But it isn't just his knowledge that assures him safe passage; it is his Green Beret which possesses similar properties to Harry Potter's invisibility cloak, as written by J.K. Rowling (1997). The recruit, on the other hand, is illuminated by the colour of his blue beret, which makes steering through his impending environment a very tricky one.

The Commando Training Centre is a highly skilled environment and requires constant attention to detail and pathfinding. From the outset, the recruits seem aware of the snares and snake traps that lie, waiting and ready to strike at them if they incorrectly negotiate their surroundings. For a new recruit, it's like a giant game of snakes and ladders, and skills must be developed quickly in order to get from one location to the next with least attention and without stepping on a snake's head. One strategy my respondents picked up very early was to run everywhere. Even in their down-time, they ran to the Naffi (Camp Shop) and back when they wanted some nutty (sweets and chocolate). Dan, one of my respondents told me, "If you run you don't have to salute when you see an officer, because you're running". He also explained, "And it looks like you're putting in effort and not strolling around". Some of my other respondents described to me how they had worked out the best routes to take to the various places they'd frequent, such as the laundry rooms and the stores. These optimum routes minimise the chances of being seen by anybody who may 'pick them up' on their actions. In particular they will avoid going

past the training team office or the areas that officers tend to walk along as they move between the Officer's Mess⁸ and the HQ offices. One of my respondents, Tris, told me that, "As I was marching along the road, on my way back from the Naffi, an officer approaching me from the opposite direction verbally reprimanded me for not saluting him as we past each other." "I just didn't realise he was an officer" he said with a bemused look. Suffice to say, the ability to recognise the level of rank of an approaching other, whilst he is still afar, is a skill which must be learned quickly.

The equalizing effect of the training camp environment has tremendous power over the recruits in a multiplicity of ways. In consequence, despite the recruits' every effort to go un-noticed whilst moving from point to point around the training camp, they cannot avoid being seen altogether. They will strive for the same goals whilst inside their rooms, but the challenge for them here is that they have no privacy or place to 'hide', and the non-existence or non-provision of private space is a key aspect of the equalizing process, which functions to create the required phase of identity assimilation in the recruits. This idea will be explored further in the following section titled *Identical efforts: The Room Swap Exercise*.

Identical efforts: The Room Swap Exercise

When I first entered basic training I found it hard to say the least. Although for the majority of time my Military service placed me under the gaze of men I admired and aspired to, there were occasions when I had to submit myself and my individuality to men I did not value a great deal. I remember one Saturday night in particular whilst I was in a pub with old school friends in my home town about 150 miles from the Commando Training Centre. I had never known any Marines in my home town. This night, while telling stories with a couple of mates, I heard a third mate, Ali say, "Mark's in the Marines". A slim fellow around ten years my senior strolled confidently towards me and introduced himself as a Royal Marine Corporal. So we talked. At the time I was still in my basic training so he immediately established himself as the dominant one, and proceeded to play his ace card of power, asserting command over me and my

⁸ Also called Messdeck aboard ships. It's a building solely for the use by Officers in which they are accommodated, eat, and socialise.

body for the rest of the evening, no doubt, in a bid to impress my mates and more importantly my female mates. The real sticking point for me came a little later on when I was standing at the bar chatting with a friend. Through the corner of my left eye I saw the Corporal approach me again (I was hoping by now that I'd got rid of him). He leaned in so his head was just half a foot from mine and quietly but directly said, "Take your hands out your pockets." That was an order. I took my hands out of my pockets to satisfy him, and carried on conversing with my mates, hoping nobody overheard.

Considering the context and surroundings, at this less informed time of my life, I could not understand why such an unnecessary use of authority could gratify one's ego. The flip side, however, was that I learned a valuable truth about Marines culture and suddenly began to make more sense of the technologies of institutionalised power.

The lesson I learned from this incident is the reality for Marines culture, and no more so than when a young recruit is in his basic training and going through *equalization*. Equalizing the recruits is an essential job for the training team in order to form up the recruits as a squad of equals, thus, equal to each other and yet equally inferior to their training team. The shift into equalization might be well described as the point at which the culture becomes less of a shock and more of normality. It's worth noting also that during this phase, the recruits being made to feel inferior to the training team is merely one liminal stage of many that they'll pass through. In these early phases it's essential that the instructors take complete control and command over the actions and bodies of their recruit syndicate in order to instil into them the necessary requisite of obedient qualities.

The instructors, equipped with their Marines' 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1984) and in possession of total power, will part by part reinstate the recruit with Military skill and knowledge, eventually leading to the completion of their new identities. Once this process is complete and the recruits have achieved their Green Berets they are free to seek promotional advancement if so desired. If after some years of commitment to the Marines, an individual gains rank above his original training team, he will be addressed appropriately by all concerned, without exception. In my personal experience, training

teams tend to look on with great pride when they see one of their original recruits go on to achieve career success in the Corps⁹.

But for now, it is made quite clear to recruits that their civilian identities, statuses and achievements are of no value in the Military theatre. Through a bombardment of subtle and direct insults, invariable criticisms and physically deadening punishments, recruits will quickly learn to respect their training team, and in addition try to please them. This method is effective in the Military setting because of a few key principles. Firstly, the Marines (the institution) have the supremacy to award an individual with a very commanding and widely esteemed identity. This identity can be gainful in social circles, family circles, professional work-related arenas and ultimately it can enhance self-respect and self-image, which I'll set out in more detail in the Conclusions Chapter. The second principle ensuring that recruits will adhere to the equalization phase is that there is one way only to attain the desired identity; to give oneself willingly to the training team. They say: you do – period. Any equivocation over this principle and you're out. An additional principle of note is that the Marines are a very small and elite club of men; therefore respect for the culture must become an aspect of life which remains true whilst in and out of the training environment.

In the opening paragraph I gave the personal instance of a Corporal giving me a petty order whilst in a public house. The principles set out above ensure that I did not disobey because essentially he knew my training team, and was very quick at asking the right questions in order to establish this familiarity. Had I rebutted his paltry order, his word would have gone straight back to the training team and I would have been seen as a renegade who had not embraced the Commando ethic. This could have made my future training very difficult. Furthermore, in the course of my basic training I had been conditioned to expect negative consequences as a result of denying a superior his right to dominate me. It is for this set of reasons that recruits swiftly learn to 'take all that's thrown their way - on the chin, keep quiet and *just do.*'

A recruit allowing a superior man to dominate him and his body fully, can be an unnerving idea that one needs to get used to very quickly. But like all situations and circumstances in Marines life, there is a survival saying; often an expression, or some

⁹ The name Corps is often used within Military culture to refer collectively to a branch or service such as the Corps of the Royal Marines.

type of truism, which puts things into some perspective and of course a humoured context. I asked one respondent how he was finding 'it'. He responded with a tolerant smirk, "They can't make you pregnant, so how bad can it be!" This is a saying which I was very familiar with from my own experience in service. The particular logic behind this axiom works well in the macho Military culture because pregnancy is explicitly related to women, which in an all-male Commando culture is associated with weakness, and so the saying infers that they can't weaken your body and therefore can't weaken *you*, so they can only make you stronger. This rationale allows recruits to unearth some sensibility in seemingly senseless rituals of physical pain which can often be brought about on a whim owing to no more than a measly misdemeanour.

On one occasion, at the end of a long day's training, I witnessed one of my respondents commit a misdemeanour which resulted in an apparently absurd ritual of discipline referred to as 'a fuck about'. My respondents were in their Grots (rooms) at CTC having been ordered to sweep the floors, dust and clean. There were six guys per grot and they were working hard in order to get their grots ready for the pending inspection. The lads typically divided their labour and attention to glean the best results in the short time they were given for the task. Whilst one was sweeping, another would be following with the mop. A third was dusting all the window ledges, a fourth cleaning all the surfaces such as the tops of lockers, beds and tables. The fifth man was in the heads (toilet) with lads from other rooms cleaning sinks and loos. The sixth man was the one to commit the misdemeanour. Quite unbelievably, he sat on his bed with just a towel wrapped around his waist, looking like he couldn't be bothered to join in. At that moment a particularly mean Corporal walked in, saw the recruit sitting on the bed looking decidedly laid-back and instantly exploded with a flurry of profanities. The Corporal then stormed out on to the landing area and ordered all recruits out from their rooms. Once on the landing he preceded to berate them for an appalling level of room cleanliness and general lethargic attitude. He then ordered a 'fuck about factor' type punishment. His growling instructions were that each room of Nods (recruits) had to swap rooms with another. So, the six recruits in room number five would all go into room number six, and concurrently the room six recruits move into room five. They didn't have to simply move their bodies into the other room; they had to swap all possessions including Military kit, bed sheets and pillows. The object was to move all of their perfectly stowed and immaculately hung clothes and ruin the fine art of their precisely made beds, only to start the whole process over again in the next room. They were given half an hour to complete the task, after

which time they would be standing to attention at the end of their beds awaiting the follow-up inspection.

When I asked the Corporal about this punishment, he told me, "When you walk into a room expecting to see them working to get it all squared away, and you get some loafing and others laid out on the bed as if they don't give a fuck, you need to make them think. I guarantee I'll never find them laying on their beds again when they should be preparing for a room inspection. Plus it's gonna be a tough inspection for them which they'll be expecting." I then asked him if this punishment type was typical. He said, "Well, it depends really. But they haven't had it too bad when you consider that some of the Regulars have been kept up all night, being fucked about from one room to the next like that." I also heard anecdotally that a troop of Regulars were once ordered to set their rooms up outside in the pouring rain. This involved taking their beds and lockers out as well as their kit. Their 'rooms' were then inspected outdoors!

These disciplinary tools are commonplace during basic training in the equalization phase. The recruit's efforts are continually 'equalized'. So in the case of my fieldwork respondents preparing for their room inspection, where there would have been some better organised recruits well prepared, with their beds made well, kit ironed and folded away as per regulations, there were other less organised members who were panicking and rushing to be ready for the looming inspection. However, as a result of the Corporals 'Fuck About' punishment, they will all be rushing together to prepare for the follow-up inspection, and as a consequence their time management becomes equalized.

At the commencement of basic training, the equalization phase is introduced delicately and is focussed on the group as a whole, as demonstrated in the 'room change' exercise, thereby enabling the recruits to get a grip on themselves whilst managing their initial culture shock. As they advance in their training, equalization practices become increasingly directed at individuals, making it more personal and for that reason extra humiliating. Equalization will continue along a structured time-line until it reaches the half-way point in the training programme by which time the maladjusted recruits would have been weeded out, leaving only a small handful of hopefuls deemed ready to advance to *The Phase of Identification*, detailed in Chapter Four. But in the meantime continued equalization practices such as 'the room swap' will enable the recruits to locate their early Military identities as 'those who learn by doing exactly as they're told' whilst at the same

time building a group identity into the working practices and shared effort of the group dynamic. The following section *When Drill Sergeant says 'YOU' he means 'YOU All'*, further details the group equalization principle through the practice of drill.

When Drill Sergeant Says 'YOU' He Means 'YOU All'

Having described in the above section that equalization practice in the early stages of training is aimed at the group as a whole, it is worth highlighting the occasional exceptions. Upon receipt of a new recruit intake, the training team need time to assess the individual characters and ascertain their training requirements. Some recruits will require more severe 'corrective training' than others and if the 'wrong' recruit was to step out of line in front the 'wrong' instructor, he may find himself being disciplined independently from the group. An example of this was when the recruits were formed up in two ranks on the parade square. The drill Sergeant addressed them and forcefully said, "I want bags of effort here today and won't tolerate any wankers." He paused for a moment, inhaled a deep breath while looking the two lines of recruits up and down, screwed his face up to look mean, and asked "Now, are there any wankers here that I need to know about?" A voice from within the ranks muttered, "I can think of one!"

Needless to say, this recruit had a high need for disciplinary training. On hearing the comment, the Drill Sergeant made him hold his rifle high above head-height where it was to remain whilst he spent the entire drill session running continuous laps around the parade square, receiving regular verbal abuse from the Drill Sergeant. This is a particularly unpleasant punishment. Physically it's agonising, and mentally it's shameful, especially as every passing member of the training team will chip in with his own dose of verbal abuse, being able to de-code the recruit's actions as being the result of having committed a severe offence against the order of things.

I want to bring back into focus my main point here that in the initial stages of equalization it's the group not the individual which is subjected to humiliation. At the outset, the tasks for the group are very basic, such as learning to march in synchronisation, time-keeping as a whole and getting kit issued. These basic concepts rarely fabricate an occasion for individuals to get singled out, unless as in my example above, a recruit consciously sticks his head above the parapet. Once training begins to advance and more specific and specialised skills need to be absorbed by the recruits, then the instructors will begin to

personalize the equalization technique by shouting directly at the recruit for example, ensuring at the same time all other recruits can see and hear the scolding. This is a degrading experience and the recruits avoid it at all costs. But in the initial phases, the training team tend to level their focus through vocal discipline at group level. If an instructor does single out an individual, it happens in such a way that the rest of the group will not know exactly who is being shouted at for making the mistake. The ethnographic example below will demonstrate this early group equalization principle. I will concentrate on my fieldwork respondents' first drill-square training session where they were given a firm introduction to 'Corporal Authority' and 'Sergeant Shouts-A-Lot.'

It was a hot sunny morning and my respondents were in the drill shed formed in two ranks. Their training Sergeant began to demonstrate what drill was and how it was to be executed. My respondents started with the basic turns followed by the march. From the outset of the training session, the Drill Sergeant imposed his controlling voice upon the recruits.

“TURN TO THE LEFT, LEFT TURN,” the Drill Sergeant boomed out in his broad Scottish drawl. The recruits turned. **“I SAID FUCKING LEFT, THAT’S YOUR FUCKING RIGHT; YOU! LOFTY, HOW COME EVERYBODY ELSE MANAGED TO TURN TO THEIR LEFT, TURN TO YOUR OTHER FUCKING LEFT. COURSE, TO THE RIGHT, RIGHT TURN. CONCENTRATE; YOU LOT BETTER START PAYING ATTENTION.”**

As the drill practice continued I could see my respondents beginning to tune in to the required level of concentration and effort. It looked as though everyone was trying desperately to execute the Drill Sergeants commands correctly in order to avoid bringing any unwanted attention upon himself.

“COURSE, FORWARD MARCH. LEFT - RIGHT - LEFT - RIGHT, YOU AT THE FRONT THERE, YOU ARE COMPLETELY OUT OF STEP WITH EVERYBODY ELSE - GET IN STEP. YOU, LOFTY IN THE MIDDLE STOP TICK-TOCKING, OPPOSITE ARM, OPPOSITE LEG. YOU’RE MARCHING ALONG LIKE A FUCKING HANDCUFFED CRAB. COURSE, COURSE HALT. TO THE RIGHT, RIGHT TURN. DID I SAY RELAX? STAND TO A-FUCKING-TENSION. SHOULDERS BACK, CHEST OUT.”

As my informants ‘stood fast,’ the Sergeant and the Corporal began to inspect them, but from a distance, not up close and personal. They looked up and down the line of men for a reason to engage and make a joke, “WHAT’S WRONG WITH YOU LOOKING SO MISERABLE?, YOU’VE GOT A FACE LIKE MY FUCKIN WIFE – FACE LIKE A SMACKED ARSE,” said the Drill Sergeant in dry humour.

As per my point above, the discipline was rather impersonal. For example, no names are mentioned. Again, this is merely incidental because as yet, the training team are not familiar with their new recruits. One might notice from the above ethnographic example that general names were used such as ‘You’ or ‘Lofty’. This is a very effective method of individual naming at group level. For example, had the Drill Sergeant shouted, “Andy, swing your arms to shoulder height at the front”, Andy would immediately have begun to swing his arms higher, whereas for others in the group, their focal point during the high intensity and disciplined work would be more focused on relief that they had not been singled out and therefore they’d assume they were doing it correctly and wouldn’t apply extra effort or concentration. If, however, as in the example above, the Drill Sergeant uses the term ‘YOU’ or ‘LOFTY’ (meaning ‘you’), the recruits will not know exactly whom he is berating. The effect being that the term ‘YOU’ will cause everybody to assume it is they, and follow the instruction thus ensuring the arm is being swung up to shoulder height at the front. This slightly more complex meaning of the word ‘you’ replaces words such as ‘everybody’. The phrase ‘everybody swing your arms higher’ will of course attract the group’s attention, but in this high intensity *I say, you do* Military environment, the term ‘everybody’ does not deliver the same poignant and directed attention-getter as the all-encompassing ‘you’ which stuns all recruits into adhering to the ensuing order.

As the successful recruits continue to advance in their training through the stage of group level berating, they quickly notice the increased intensity and personalization during their lessons in humiliation. Quite often one of the training team’s favourite moments for asserting equalization tactics is during the highly disciplined kit and weapon inspections. I will detail an account of this type of inspection in the ethnography below and demonstrate the increased anxiety produced by the more individualistically focussed disciplinary and equalization practice.

The Dreaded Kit and Weapon Inspection

Kit and weapon inspections form a fundamental aspect of field training discipline and on-going equalization process. From the very start of my participants' course of training they became very familiar, very swiftly with the much dreaded kit inspection. During the equalization process the training team would examine every square inch of the recruits' kit, their weapons, their uniforms and their bodies. Inspections could sometimes be particularly unpleasant with hugely intense 'corrective training measures' being served for shortcomings. In order to describe and present a measure of the panic and anticipation caused by kit inspections, I will illustrate the occurrence and the discourse as it transpired during my fieldwork on one particular weekend.

To set the scene, it was a wet and cold weekend on Woodbury Common several weeks into training when my participants arrived back at their RV (rendezvous point) from a tiring navigation exercise. They were told that the following morning there would be a kit inspection at first light. My respondents were tired, damp, chilly and hungry. They had to eat, clean themselves, clean their kit, their weapons and spend the night doing sentry duty on a rotation basis, as well as get an hour or two's sleep. I sat and talked with a couple of my informants, Dan and James, while they heated up their food in a mess tin burning over a gas stove. They were frantically scrubbing their weapons to make best use of the half hour or so of daylight that remained.

Dan, a twenty year old student of Politics and History told me:

“It's typical though init, just when you're knackered and all you wanna do is get in your sack, you're gonna be fannyng around cleaning everything, and you know you're still gonna get a bollockin in the morning.”

I asked them how they felt about having kit inspections, and was told laughingly by James, a 28 year old Commercial Driver, “It's just an excuse to piss you about really”.

I then asked if he thought the training team enjoyed giving kit inspections?

James:

“Yeah, they fuckin love it,” he said smiling.

Dan looked at James, also smiling and said, “They just enjoy bollocking nods don't they?”

James replied to Dan, “Some of the things they say is quite funny though.”

Dan:

“Yeah especially when you’re really trying not to laugh,” he said as he looked back at me with a defiant look.

James laughed as he said, “Yeah it’s like bein’ at a funeral when you know it’s taboo to laugh,” which made all three of us chuckle due, I suspect, to the shared knowledge we have of that sentiment.

I thanked the lads for their insight and left them to get on. I wandered observantly around the RV area but kept myself in the shadows to the rear of their bivouacs. They were occupying a well-used RV area, one which I had been to many times myself as a recruit. The mood of the RV area can be as changeable as the weather depending on what the training team have in store, but this night it was strangely peaceful but motivating to watch. The light was fading fast, accentuated further by the densely overhanging trees. As I listened I could predominantly hear the wind rushing through the tree branches creating an overhead whistle. But down at ground level there was shelter from the wind. Noise down here just doesn’t seem to carry; there is too much dense matter around hungrily absorbing the sounds. I could hear the recruits’ busy working but the sounds I hear have no echo, they were deep thuds - even metal clanging on metal creates a docile resonance. I watched my respondents taxingly scrub at their weapons to remove the day’s rust formation from the working parts. I continued to walk around. I stopped at a bivouac, crouched down, and asked Andy, a 34 year old Fire Fighter, “How’s it going?”

He said, “Oh hi trained rank,” I caught him off-guard.

“How’s your kit preparation going?” I asked as I pointed to his gear.

“Well its mingin and I can’t hardly see anything now and we’re not allowed to use torches so!” he shrugged his shoulders.

I couldn’t help but feel for these guys at times because I’ve experienced their level of fatigue and anticipation for morning inspections. Having passed through the same training myself three years earlier, I understood the stomach-wrenching feelings produced by an emotion of despondency and labour in vain. I placed my hand on his right shoulder as I went to stand up and said, “Just do your best,” and he acknowledged my sentiment with a single forward nod of his head.

I continued to walk in an anti-clockwise direction around the RV. Every recruit other than the two on sentry duty were sitting or crouching outside their bivvies with their rifles stripped. The working parts from inside the rifle were stored safely in their berets on the

ground, and the larger parts such as the butt were immediately to their side. They were all using their issued weapon-cleaning kit to polish their rifles, and those who used their mess tins for the evenings' cooking had been actively scrubbing that back to a mirror-like shine with a small piece of scotch-bright. Despite their very keen effort to make immaculate all the obvious parts of their kit, I was starting to suspect I knew how the morning's inspection would go. I walked away from my respondents' RV, up a shallow hill about 75 metres to the training team tent where I could get a warm coffee and write up my day's notes and observations in relative comfort under a light. I could also enjoy listening to the training team members entertain one another for the evening with their well-developed repertoire of jokes, 'ditts' and stories, which were often hilarious.

The following morning I was up early to wash, shave and eat. I prepared myself and my kit for the day ahead. It was still dark but I could hear some rustling of kit and more clatter from the inspection area. As I walked down to the designated flat ground, encroached on all four sides by trees, thick bush and gorse-bush, I could see a few of my informants setting out their kit on the ground. It was almost like arranging art on a canvas. Slowly they appeared one by one from the RV area clutching armfuls of loose gear. Every last piece of equipment they have with them must be put out for inspection. Their rifles must be completely stripped down and laid out. The recruits who set up soonest took advantage of their extra preparedness and continued to polish and clean anything that's shiny.

Ten minutes before the inspection, they were all standing to attention behind their kit. Two Sergeants and a Corporal slowly walked down to the inspection area and addressed the recruits; the inspection began. As each of my informants was approached they were to stand to attention and call out their service number followed by their rank (recruit) and surname. For example when I was a recruit and a training team member approached me to inspect my kit, I would stand to attention with my legs and feet together, arms straight by my side, shoulders back, chest out, head up and say, "Papa-nine-zero-zero-four-five-four-lima, recruit Burchell, Sergeant."

The training team are methodical when examining recruits. They first look at the way their subjects are dressed, looking for polished boots (but not balled), correctly zipped and buttoned garments, and an immaculate beret. They then look to see if they have shaved properly. Training teams always ask recruits if they have washed too. After being

informed by the recruit that he had washed, the instructor would then check their wash kits to find evidence of damp or moisture. Recruits only ever tried to 'wing it' once! Weapons are generally examined thoroughly and very few recruits' would be up to standard. To the surprise of my informants, the training team even examined their razor blades for dirt and rust.

As the First Sergeant was inspecting Ben's kit he turned sternly to him and said, "Right, what's this?"

Ben looked but did not seem to see anything. The First Sergeant impatiently said, "Look again, you see it?" and he held the razor blade closer to Ben's eyes. "It's rust. Why have you got rusty fuckin razor blades in your wash kit? What's gonna happen when you cut yourself shavin with that? You're gonna get infected."

Ben stood motionless as the First Sergeant squared right up to him, "Have you had a shave this morning?"

"Yes Sergeant," he said trying to sound as convincing as possible.

The First Sergeant raised his voice, "Who's your oppo¹⁰?" Ben pointed at Daniel. The First Sergeant turned his head towards the nominated man and crinkled his nose, "Right you get over here. He said he's had a shave but he's in a shit state. Why didn't you tell him he hasn't shaved properly? That's your job to check each other off. You can both stand-by." The First Sergeant was making very clear to the two lads the importance of both shaving and maintaining clean kit. He explained to them that the consequences of not having shaved are that in this environment the recruit would not be as hygienically kept as when he has a clean shaven face. He explained further that if he came to use a gas mask, he would have to be clean shaven in order for the mask to create a perfect seal against the skin around his face. Responding with enthusiasm to every one of the First Sergeants points, Ben and Daniel replied, "Yes Sergeant." The First Sergeant then left Ben and Daniel in a state of bewilderment and walked a couple of paces to his right to inspect the kit of his next candidate, Ian, a 26 year old IT team leader in a bank.

The atmosphere was becoming intense. The recruits endured very little rest and were now having to impress their training team with well turned-out kit in the hope that they would avoid having to undergo the physical chastisement that always immediately follows an inspection for those who fail to impress. Whilst the First Sergeant was conducting an

¹⁰ When working in pairs, one's partner is called an 'oppo'. This may have been derived from the term 'opposite number'.

inspection of Ian's kit, the Corporal and Second Sergeant were also conducting kit inspections on other recruits. The recruits who were last to have their kit inspected told me afterwards that the longer they had to wait for their inspection, the more they were dreading the training team's wrath. With the three different inspections happening simultaneously, the recruits still waiting were getting a taste of what was to come. More importantly the training team's patience was growing thin.

Whilst I stood frantically scribbling down as much of the dialogue as I could, I noticed that Charles, a 21 year old BSC student in engineer design was having his mess tins closely inspected by the Corporal, "What's that? That is filthy."

The Corporal had already been unimpressed with the standard and cleanliness of Ryan's kit which he had inspected beforehand. Ryan is a 20 year old BSC student in engineering science, and Charles' Oppo.

The Corporal threw Charles' mess tins into a prickly and thorny area of bush to the front of the inspection site. Corporal then picked up some clothing, gripped it tightly and almost put it in Charles' face, "What's this?"

"That's my dry kit Corporal," Charles said quivering.

"So why isn't it waterproofed. What good is this gonna be when it pisses down later on and gets soakin fuckin wet?" The Corporal started to empty all of Charles' kit out of its packets onto the ground creating a jumble: "That is in a shit state. You can stand-by." This was an important lesson for Charles. The Corporal firstly pointed out that because he has to eat out of his mess tin, it needs to be spick and span. When the Corporal threw it into the bush, it was in fact a very prickly gorse bush. This was Charles' punishment for presenting a dirty mess tin: he has to then endure the discomfort of crawling into thick overgrown gorse to retrieve it. The second of Charles major mistakes pointed out to him was that his 'dry kit' was not in waterproof bags. This is essential. As a Marine or recruit is out in all elements, more often than not they will be soaking wet by the end of the day. As part of their field routine, they must remove their wet kit and put on their dry kit before getting into their sleeping bags for the night. This will prevent them from suffering hypothermia for example. A set of dry kit might typically contain underwear, trousers, T-shirt and a warm long-sleeved top. In the morning they must remove their dry kit, re-seal it in the waterproof bag and put back on their wet kit from the previous day.

Through the night, their wet kit will be with them in their sleeping bags in specially sewn netting type pockets. This will allow the kit to dry slightly from the recruit's body heat. Also, as a tactical precaution, if the troop had to make a hasty move due to an enemy attack, their kit is safely inside the sleeping bag which can be shoved into the Bergen. It's essential that no kit or litter is left behind because this will provide an enemy with vital information about who was there. In some ways this isn't too far removed from tribal warriors who practice high levels of cleanliness so as not to leave behind any refuge of their persons, or else the enemy may use these items against the warriors through sorcery and voodoo (Freud, 1913, p. 114).

Replacing wet clothes from the previous day onto the naked body may not seem like such a hardship. However, the reality is that at 05:00 hours on an icy cold morning, upon the Common or out on the Moors, the recruits will have to strip naked, with no shelter except any over-hanging trees, wash, shave and then place ice-cold wet clothes back on. I remember one respondent on an icy morning, having made the terrible mistake of leaving his wet trousers outside his sleeping bag and bivvie during the previous night. When he awoke the next morning, his trousers were caked with ice. In a bitter cold environment he had to rise from a warm sleeping bag, remove his warm clothes, wash in the sub-zero climate, and then force his legs into the ice-clad trousers. He tensed his entire body, grimaced, and told me in pain, "It's like putting on freezing fucking cardboard".

Charles, however, has learned his lesson about waterproofing in a far milder way during warmer summer months. Had he not had his dry kit waterproofed and it had rained all day, or if he was undertaking amphibious drills, he would not have had a set of dry kit to warm up in at night, and therefore he runs a major risk of becoming a liability to the troop. Charles would not have had all this detail explained to him by the Corporal because there isn't time for that. For this reason, the training team look for essential mistakes and structure their language concisely and accordingly to ensure the vital parts of the message get through to the recruit and his comrades. Essential messages will usually evolve around life-threatening issues either to the individual or to the troop as a whole. So in the case of Charles, if he eats from a dirty mess tin he may get an upset stomach, so the punishment of having to fish his tin out from the gorse may adequately fit the crime. On the other hand, the offence of not waterproofing his clothes could lead to hypothermia and death, therefore the punishment required for him to learn from this experience needs to be more severe, and therefore more memorable. Fittingly, he was told

to 'Stand-by' which means that at the end of the inspection he would be more harshly punished with his comrades who also made potentially fatal mistakes.

Another recruit receiving punishment for poor standards was Tris, a 20 year old student reading a BSC in sport science. He was being inspected by the Second Sergeant. One of Tris' water bottles was half empty. The Second Sergeant is a very relaxed man who doesn't need to raise his voice owing to his natural control and authority. Without any evidence of aggression he gently handed the half-filled water bottle to Tris and said, "Tip this over your head."

Tris went to bend forward.

The Second Sergeant halted him in his movement and elaborated: "No, you'll stay standing upright, take off your beret and tip it over your head, all of it."

Tris hung his head forward and soaked himself.

"How about this one," said the Second Sergeant as he inspected the second water bottle from Tris' kit. "And this one," he calmly said as he handed the water bottle to Tris. "In future your water bottles will be full to the rim. What good is it going into battle with a half filled water bottle?"

During fieldwork, I found that in kit inspections there exists a wealth of humour. I'm not sure why exactly. Maybe I find the humour so funny in what appears to be a serious 'bollocking', or maybe I just get a great sense of relief that I can walk around and watch the activity freely when my mind still firmly retains the memories and emotions of inspections I had to endure as a recruit when all my hard work and effort was ripped to pieces. From an ethnographic point of view I wish I could slow down time and activity, and watch all the inspections because I was missing so much information due to the three training team members carrying on concurrently. I briefly tried to stand back and watch all three at once but I couldn't record the wealth of information. So I decided to continue concentrating on one at a time.

Whilst I was observing the Second Sergeant inspecting Tris' kit I missed the First Sergeant inspect Ian's kit but was in time to observe him inspect Edd, a 17 year old self-employed carpenter.

"Why has your dry kit got a wet fuckin T-shirt inside it?"

"Don't know Sergeant," said Edd, trying to pull a fast one.

The First Sergeant's eyes immediately narrowed and his face turned stern.

“What do you mean you don’t fuckin know. You do know because you fuckin put it in there. You obviously couldn’t be bothered to put yesterday’s wet kit back on this morning and stow your dry kit away again. After you’ve got that second set of kit wet today you’ll have no dry kit to sleep in, so you’ll sleep in wet kit and end up going down with hypo-fuckin-thermia, then what good are you to your unit? I’ll have 50 press-ups for the T-Shirt and 50 for saying you don’t know. Get down now and call ‘em out loud one by one so everybody can hear.”

Like Charles, Edd made an unacceptable mistake with his ‘wet and dry’ routine. The First Sergeant knew only too well that Edd could not be bothered to endure the discomfort of putting the previous day’s wet T-shirt back on when he got up that morning. For this, he received the press-ups, which would single him out and embarrass him in front of his mates, and he would be ‘standing by’ for more after the last man had been inspected.

The First Sergeant then dexterously swaggered slowly across to examine Matt’s kit. He glanced over it for a moment but then looked back at Edd doing his press-ups.

Edd was working hard trying to get them done quickly, “Twenty one, twenty two, twenty...”

The First Sergeant looked down at Edd, pursed his lips tight to his teeth and shouted, “Proper fuckin press-ups. That’s all the way down so your chest touches the floor. Start again.” Because Edd lied to the First Sergeant by saying he didn’t know why there was a wet T-shirt where his dry one should have been, the Sergeant made him pay by maximising the amount of ‘shit’ he gave him. So Edd was awarded 50 press-ups for leaving his dry T-shirt on, 50 press-ups for lying, he would receive extra ‘shit’ during his press-ups for lying in the face of the First Sergeant, and due to the severity of placing a wet T-shirt where the dry one should have been, he would be ‘standing by’ for an extra unsympathetic serving at the end.

Meanwhile, the Corporal was unimpressed with the way in which Paul, a 29 year old self-employed builder, had packed his sleeping bag into its stuff-sack. “How much space is that gonna take up in your Bergen? Why do you think it has a compression sack? So you can shrink it right down init.” The Corporal pulled the sleeping bag out of the sack and threw it across the floor, “Did you have breakfast this morning?”

Paul stood hard to attention, “No Corporal,” thinking that was a perfectly good answer.

“No. What do you mean fuckin no? Why not?” The Corporal retorted.

“I didn’t have time Corporal.”

The Corporal’s voice got even louder, “Well you fuckin make time. How you supposed to do a full day’s work if you haven’t eaten. That’s why each ration pack is three and a half thousand calories because you need the energy. Stand-by.”

Edd was now fatiguing and finding his press-ups hard work, “Eeerr, sev-en-ty one, ahh, eeerr, sev-en-t-y two, eeeh.”

The First Sergeant shouted across at him and continued to abuse him: “IF YOU DON’T STOP FUCKIN LOAFIN WITH THOSE PRESS-UPS I’M GONNA COME OVER THERE AND PUT MY BOOT UP YOUR ARSE.”

And so it goes. Like every inspection during the equalization phase, each recruit will get picked up for something. In this way they can all be criticised and punished as individuals, in a group. By the end of the inspection my respondents are feeling demoralised as they pack their kit back up. Paul said to me, “I spent fuckin ages doin that.”

I went over to see Charles who had some of his kit thrown into the bushes by the Corporal. He had climbed right inside a thick bramble bush trying to locate his kit. His clothes were getting caught on all the prickly branches.

I shouted in, “Have you found it yet?”

“No,” Charles groaned.

I asked him, “What *are* you looking for?”

“Don’t know.”

“How come you don’t know?”

“I was too busy looking forward when he was bollockin me. Didn’t want to look at what he was doing and piss him off even more.”

Charles’ statement inspired me to ask the Corporal whether there was any particular reason why he shouted at recruits when they made mistakes. He replied, “Well, when they’re out there, a mistake could mean life or death of himself or his mates, so basically, in training, when they fuck up, you know yourself from your training, if you get a right bollocking you won’t make the same mistake again because you’ll remember it.” I can

think back to my own training and confirm that this reasoning seems very true. My comrades and I only ever seem to have made a mistake once.

The equalizing power of the kit and weapons inspection is unique. Virtually every recruit has been equally downhearted and made to submit fully to the mastery and skill of their training team members. Despite their near sleepless night and superb effort to prepare for the inspection, there were no praises for them. They are left wondering what it must take to satisfy the dragons. But they are not left wondering for long before they face the corporeal discomfort of their body-centred punishment. This is detailed in the next section, *Afters: the Post-Inspection Body Sacrament*, in which I aim to highlight how the body will now be used to continue this disciplinary equalization process.

Afters: The Post-Inspection Body Sacrament

For a very small minority of my respondents, the morning kit inspection did not evoke too many emotions. Jon, a 24 year old PhD student in Engineering, as I had come to expect, never received any criticisms from the inspecting Sergeant. He simply said to Jon, “Good, pack it away.” I asked Jon, “How do you think you managed to get through the inspection without any criticisms?” “I have no idea,” he said, “But I’m just glad I’m not getting beasted.” By this, he was referring to his comrades who failed their inspection. The lads told to ‘stand by’ were about to receive their ‘corrective training’. The First Sergeant was beginning to look agitated as he shouted at the top of his voice, “Fuckin hurry up and get that kit stowed away, stop fuckin loafin and get your fingers movin.”

My informants began to fluster under the pressure being placed upon them. They were also feeling some anticipation for the punishment which was now so imminently upon them. The First Sergeant shouted, “Right, ditch your fuckin Bergens and line up, NOW, MOVE.” All the recruits fell into line and were marched down a mud track at double time until, after five minutes or so they reached a clearing in the trees, looking out and down, over some open ground. The First Sergeant commanded, “Those who passed your kit inspection stand to the side.” Jon and two others moved away, “For the rest of you, you will learn that when you have a kit inspection, it means a KIT INSPECTION. The standard I’ve just seen is completely unacceptable, so you better start to switch on and start putting in bags more effort or your training weekends are gonna become pretty un-

fuckin-pleasant.” First Sergeant held his arm up and pointed to an expanse of land. “See that lone bushy-top tree on the horizon at your one o’clock? Around it and back, MOVE.” My informants scurried off down the hill heading across rough, pitted and grassy terrain to the designated tree about a quarter of a mile away, whilst Jon and the other two (whose names I haven’t recorded in my fieldwork notes) ‘stood fast’ and watched as the morning sun began to shine down on them.

While I stood watching my respondents clambering clumsily over the harsh terrain as they began to disappear into the distance, I was attempting to understand their perspective by making connections with my own training experience. I started to remember a similar punishment that I and my comrades had to do. We were often told to run to objects on the distant horizon and back. We were also told that if we did not work hard we’d have to do it all again. I remember we’d be exhausted while trying to negotiate the often harsh terrain. We’d be encouraging each other on, constantly reminding ourselves that the training team were watching us like hawks, so we needed to continue working hard so as not to have to re-run it. I remember that the fuel spurring us on was the fear that our training team was judging our every step and being unsatisfied with our performance. Under such high pressure and high fatigue situations, the tendency for a recruit’s mind’s eye is to magnify his every move. In my mind, I used to believe that my training team could physically see what my eyes were seeing and experiencing. In such circumstances it would not occur to me that I was a mere blob on the horizon as my training team looked on from a distance. The intensity of the exercise combined with the fear that the training team evoked in us, created a sort of paranoia.

As I stood with Jon and my two other respondents I realised that I was reflecting on this thought because I became aware that the Sergeants and Corporal were not taking any notice of the recruits as they ran to the bushy-top tree and back. The three of them were standing looking in at one another and having a conversation about acting. The First Sergeant was explaining to the other two how a mate of his is a film extra. The Sergeant was illuminating in detail the ‘skills and abilities’ form that his mate had to fill in, in order to get chosen for his current role on a film set.

I know that like myself and my comrades when *we* were in basic training, my informants were running to the bushy-top tree and back under the illusion that they were being meticulously monitored. The reality was that no one (except me) was even looking at

them. This observation became crucial to understanding the weight that the equalization phase has on the recruits' interpretation of things. What is more, this examination can go a long way to explain how discipline can be instilled into a recruit. It is instilled into the very fabric of his being so that at all times he believes he must deliver a flawless performance of effort because, although he cannot see those who are watching him, he is certain that he's being closely watched at every moment, similar in theory to Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon.

The panopticon (Foucault, 1975) was a design for an ideal prison which was never fully implemented but nevertheless had some of its main principles incorporated into prisons in the 19th Century in Britain, Europe and the USA. The panopticon consisted of an inspection tower surrounded by cells built around the outside edge. Each cell had two windows, one of which faced the outside, and the other facing the inspection tower. The design enabled the guards to see the prisoners at all times, although the prisoners could not see the guards due to the Venetian-style blinds fitted to the windows of the inspection tower. The design allowed the prison staff to keep the prisoners under constant observation while they themselves remained invisible. Through this practice, prisoners would be controlled by the idea that they were under constant observation, just like my recruits when running to the bushy-top tree and back.

After the recruits had completed their exhausting punishment run, I enquired into the feelings and experiences that it threw up for them. I asked Andy, "Did you work hard on the run?" He replied, "Yeah we had to."

I enquired further, "What do you mean you had to?" He explained to me, "Well if we didn't we would've just got another bollocking." I clarified, "So did you feel as if the training team were watching you all the time then?" He answered with a hint of frustration, "Yeah, they were; they always are; everything we do."

Chapter Conclusion

The sometimes harsh personal criticisms and disciplinary practices that my informants would have to endure during equalization phase were essential in order to prepare their minds and self-discipline for the next stage of their training which I call *The Phase of Identification*, detailed in Chapter Four. During *The Phase of Identification*, the recruits

will be learning advanced endurance and complex Military tactics which will require that they are well organised and highly motivated. For this reason, I hope to have shown that the *equalization* phase has well prepared the recruits to work hard in the (apparent) absence of their instructors, as detailed in their run to the bushy-top tree and back. Furthermore, the equalization phase has successfully weeded out the weak and faint hearted.

In the ethnography presented in this chapter, I have highlighted that within the Marines training environment, there is no private space and therefore no place at which any individual can set up an authoritative presence or 'ownership' of leg-room. Recruits are kept moving at all times whilst in open space such as journeying through the camp, and are therefore unable to settle anywhere other than their own rooms. I have also shown how the training team wreak havoc on the recruits' rooms, creating the effect of further instability and non-settlement by making them swap the location of their beds with recruits in other rooms. This process placed every recruit, that is, the organised and unorganised, back under equal pressure due to the time restraint given for the task. This type of disciplinary practice has been theorised by Foucault who postulated that discipline within society is often used by persons in positions of power who wish to assert a form or type of dominance over others. His work is applied particularly well to the Military's use of discipline for its value in training infantrymen to a required calibre.

According to Foucault's theory (1975), an essential element of discipline is undoubtedly the mediation of a recruit's time. Put simply, a recruit at CTC has very little of his own time. The training team maintain constant control of the recruit's time and therefore the recruit's body. I'd like to suggest that when this type of disciplinary practice is applied to Marine recruits in the form of a 'room swap' exercise, as a consequence of the bodily control Foucault documented, it will further strengthen a recruit's affiliation to the group's character trait pecking order that I documented, reinforcing group bonding and functionality.

During the particularly harsh period of training in the equalization phase, certain survival sayings are assimilated or passed down from the training team and more advanced recruits as macho forms of advice, such as, 'they can't make you pregnant so how bad can it be?' The recruit's repertoire of masculine survival expressions are beginning to develop whilst the disciplinary focus is still at group level. In addition to the use of

'survival sayings' I hope to have highlighted an important emphasis on the complex use of words and sayings, explored in further detail through my analysis of the Drill Sergeant's use of words.

Here, I offered a consideration as to why the word 'YOU' for example, is used when the intended audience is all of the recruits together. I hope to have established that the term 'you' doesn't actually intend to demand the attention of any one particular individual, but is in fact a method employed to engage the whole-hearted attention of all the recruits collectively through the fearful thought that the Drill Sergeant was singling out a specific individual. This caused all the recruits to follow the Sergeant's order exactly as if it were they who were being targeted, when in fact the targeted recruit, whose miss-actions caught the eye of the Drill Sergeant, retained his anonymity.

Unfortunately for my respondents, the luxury of anonymity only lasted for so long, as was highlighted in the succeeding section which focussed on kit and weapon inspections. During these inspections which began a couple of weekends after the Drill Training, the disciplinary focus became more individualistic. Recruits could no longer hide behind the protection of an unspecified verbal scolding. During the kit and weapon inspections, individuals were deliberately humiliated in front of their peers and it was the potential severity of the disorder of his kit item that would provide the determining factor as to the severity of his punishment.

I hope to have made a feature of the custom that if the unkempt kit item was not potentially life-threatening such as Charles' dirty mess tin which could have caused an upset stomach, the punishment would be relatively minor. If, however, the kit item could be deemed as potentially life-threatening such as Edds' mistake of placing a wet T-shirt into the waterproof bag that should have contained his dry T-shirt, then he would face a harsh punishment delivered at group level, after the last inspection was completed. Throughout this process I hope to have highlighted, firstly, the use of a condensed focus on the language that a training team member would use to get across the essentials of his message of correction to the recruit, and secondly, that of the equalizing power assumed by the kit and weapons inspections. That is, despite the recruits' enormous effort that went into preparing for the morning inspection, all but three failed. The admonished recruits were made to feel that their efforts were equally useless and unworthy. This type of practice is essential during equalization training because as Morris Janowitz points out,

the recruit must be stripped of his civilian ties in order for them to be replaced with those requirements of the Military and thereby to substitute a new basis of identification (Janowitz, 1965, p. 78).

After failing their kit and weapon inspections as detailed in *The Post-Inspection Body Sacrament*, I explored how the recruits were punished for their 'administrative' errors through the medium of their bodies. The object of running to the horizon, around the bushy-top tree and back, was to give them time to consider their past labours, and to inscribe lastingly in their bodies the pain caused by wool-gathering to diligence. From the viewpoint of Foucault (1975), the recruits, during their training process, are there to have power invested into their bodies which will be made possible through this tough regimen of physical discipline. I would suggest that the Marines disciplinary program is constantly exercised and re-enforced by the training team through practices such as kit and weapon inspections which lay out to the recruits a seemingly justifiable authenticity for a session of applied physical discipline.

While the recruits were undertaking their disciplinary run, I also considered the role of performance enhancement due to what I will refer to as 'imagined surveillance'. I suggested the role of an amplified self-awareness, in that, due to the recruit's heightened stress and fatigue he may think his every move is being closely monitored by the watchful eye of the training team, when in fact they are talking about acting on film sets. I have correlated this phenomenon to Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. The significance of using the panopticon comes from Foucault's assertion that to train a recruit, his attitudes and behaviour have to change in a similar way to a prisoner being rehabilitated (Foucault, 1975, p. 124). In this sense, I hope to have drawn attention to some the Marines' key methods for rehabilitation of behaviours.

What is most characteristic about the equalization phase is that it sets apart two main types of recruit. The first are the 'wannabees' and the second are the serious contenders. The 'wannabees' are the recruits who love the image and fantasy of being a Marine but don't actually have what it takes, and are therefore destined to drop out of training sooner rather than later. In this sense, the recruit's fantasies according to the work of Wendy Holloway, are linked to desire for power and good social standing (Holloway, 1984). I will discuss this theme at greater length in the main conclusion where I hope to make a case that RMR training can offer the attainment of a Military masculinity and improved

civilian status which will subsequently attract high numbers of applicants. The reality, which is supported by the high drop-out rate, is that most applicants respond to their fantasies of power and don't actually intend to apply themselves to a masculine reality.

The serious contenders for their Green Berets are the recruits who I will still be writing about in the next chapter. For the serious contenders, in many respects this phase has been the hardest. As I hope my ethnographic examples have shown, it is a phase during which, no matter how desperately the recruits try to please their training team members, they will be unsuccessful. According to the point of view of the training team, this type of relating provides the recruits with the inspiration to keep trying, but also tests the spirit of their loyalty by disallowing any hint of accomplishment. It is a form of frenetic desire and successful group integration that will see through those who eventually succeed this passage of scant incentive. Using insights of Bourdieu's, one might see that fundamental oppositions of a recruit's social order are constantly reinforced during any interaction between training staff and recruit, through the oppositions of dominant and dominated (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 72). As my ethnographic detail unfolds, I hope to show that although I agree this to be the case during equalization, the recruits will not always be opposed to their training team. I hope to demonstrate an increased complexity in addition to this general assertion about Military 'oppositions', by showing that an essential component of the recruit's eventual adaptation to the Marines will require, to some degree, that the gap of opposition between training team members and recruit is closed down. John Hockey (1986) similarly made a correction to the general misconception that power structures in the Army only worked from top to bottom. He showed that Privates do have the power to negotiate with their Corporals.

Surprisingly, this important issue which I refer to as 'equalization' is not featured in any detail in anthropological ethnographic literature of the Military. I found this omission surprising because it is of such significance regarding factors that will determine a recruit's success or failure. The equalization phase is an essential elemental stage which will either confirm or reject the proposed identity of the candidate as a potential Royal Marine Commando. One author who does consider these issues to some degree is Foucault (1975) who talked of 'normalisation' as an idealized norm of conduct, which I will discuss further, in the Conclusions Chapter. I hope to show as my ethnography continues to develop how 'normalisation' is one of a complex number of mechanisms that

equalize the recruits and thus enable them to form strong group bonds, which in turn will support their interpersonal needs throughout training.

To sum up, the intensity of equalization increased significantly as my respondents fought their way through Phase-One-Alpha training, which is about five months long. At the end of Phase-One-Alpha they attended a two week course which tested all of their basic skills and fitness thus far developed. This course is essential because the recruit may not pass to the next level until he has reached the required level of change (Foucault, 1975, p. 244). Those recruits who passed the two week course progressed into Phase-One-Bravo to learn their Commando skills and endurance. Phase-One-Bravo training is signified by a different type and colour of headdress than Phase-One-Alpha. Phase-One-Bravo is the developmental stage I refer to as *The Phase of Identification* detailed in Chapter Four.

Chapter 4

The Phase of Identification

Introduction

This chapter will explore the identification of the recruits with the Commando ethos. Primarily, this phase of training makes thorough use of the body, tactics¹¹ and a sense of learned discipline in order to ingrain a new identity into the bodily foundation of each recruit. My observation of this phase of training begins at around the half-way point in their programme, once they have attended a two-week assessment (Phase-One-Alpha Course) which tested their assimilation of the basic skills they have thus far been taught. The successful recruits will return from their course to the training environment at CTC with a new status and identity, Phase-One-Bravo (Phase 1B). My 1B fieldwork respondents are now most noticeable for the plain green cotton ‘cap comforter’ worn on their heads rather than the blue berets emblematic of 1A recruits.

The recruits who have now progressed to the 1B training phase will have to push their bodies harder than before as their instruction becomes characterised by long arduous endurance training. On the upside, however, they will begin to enjoy the ‘honoured’ reward of a new type of relationship with their training team. At this stage of training, the training team recognise that those recruits who have endured these first six months not only deserve a little respect, but are also more likely to see through the remainder of the course. Therefore, from the training team’s point of view it is less of a risk to begin forming relationships, and to some extent ‘friendships’ with their course of recruits. Foster puts it that “by the half-way stage in training the instructors start to treat the recruits at least semi-human” (Foster, 1998, p. 56).

This forthcoming six month training period is what I refer to as the *Phase of Identification*. Through my ethnographic fieldwork during this adaptive period I will attempt to demonstrate how my fieldwork respondents begin to learn - or in Marines terminology ‘take on board’ - their new identities as Royal Marine Commandos. I’ll

¹¹Tactics are referred to as the combination of skills required to create a complex set or order of movements.

attempt to detail significant examples of their development, such as an increased consciousness about the importance of group solidarity that will ultimately enable my respondents to bridge the remaining gap between 'half-trained' and Royal Marine.

Extracts from January: We All Get Punished for Each Others' Mistakes

For the recruits who succeeded into Phase 1B training, their first weekend began upon Woodbury Common on Friday 9th January 2004. This was also their first training weekend back after Christmas leave. I initially noted in my fieldwork diary that:

'The men are in good spirits, keen and motivated.'

More significantly, I noted:

'Most of the men who I expected to remain in training are still here. They seem to be a certain group who have a particular bond with each other. Very like-minded.'

My initial observation at the beginning of 1B training suggests some support for a principle theme which has run through this ethnographic account so far: that the forming of bonds and a solid group identity is a vital ingredient for success in this customarily harsh Military environment. I also noted in my diary that at this halfway stage of training I have only eleven remaining respondents out of my original 31 from Bristol Detachment, which I hope shows support for my claim in Chapter Three's conclusion that there is a high dropout rate from RMR training due to the gap between a recruit's fantasy of a masculine identity and his ability to apply himself to a masculine reality.

Now that my eleven enduring respondents had mastered the basic field crafts in their 1A training phase, they would pick up the pace significantly as they turned their attention to advanced tactics, combined with long arduous physical 'body shaping'. During this first weekend back after their two-week assessment course, they would be learning special tactics such as 'fire and manoeuvre' which incorporates 'attack under fire' and 'withdrawal under fire' techniques. But before the practical element of this weekend got underway, my respondents had a couple of in-field lectures.

Their first lecture was about 'coming under enemy attack'. As I looked on during the lecture I noted that the recruits seemed particularly aroused by the subject matter. Thomas

said to me afterwards, “The way he [the training team member giving the lecture] was explaining it was making me aware that there is a *them* and an *us*, and the only way we’re gonna get out of it [meaning an enemy attack situation] is by watching each others’ back and staying really tight”. The theme of the weekend’s training was centred on an enemy attack. First, the recruits were to listen while theory and tactics were explained to them, then they would engage in the practical training.

As I filmed their practical training in fire-manoeuvre techniques, the light was beginning to fade after a long day’s exercise on the common. I was comfortably hidden in some dead ground with my camera propped on my rucksack while my respondents were advancing towards me as if I were the enemy. They were lined out, much like a rugby team going forward; men to the left and men to the right. Notwithstanding their fatigue, they were looking like suitable Marines. They were working in perfect harmony with one another. While two men were down on their bellies providing covering fire at the enemy location, two others were up, running forward, with purposeful zigzag bounds for a few metres, then hitting the ground and opening fire so the two who were providing the covering fire before could advance forward – a technique referred to as ‘pepper-potting’. I saw two sets of muzzle flashes to my left, then movement to my right, and then muzzle flashes from my right and movement to my left. In no time at all I was filming my respondents from the flanks as they advanced past my position. They were tired and breathing heavily. There was a lot of shouting as they remained in constant communication with one another during the fire-fight exercise. And to ensure that they were putting in maximum effort, their instructors were behind them screaming the correct command of movements.

As darkness fell upon the common, the long hard exercise drew to a close and ‘endex’ (end of exercise) was declared. I collected my things together and made my way over to the men. I knew they would be exhausted due to the intensive nature of fire-manoeuvre drills. But as I got closer to them, I noticed they were all smiling. They were standing in a huddle drinking water and eating food, and laughing. They were in very high spirits and excitedly talking about what they had just achieved. I joined their conversation and praised them for how good they looked by explaining the piece of film I had captured of them.

My respondents were really excited by the idea that they were looking efficient like Marines in battle. Their faces were alive and animated as they looked at one another and retraced the achievements of their training exercise that day. This was a particular moment from my fieldwork that sticks in my mind. It is possible that what was so significant about this moment may only be understood when placed into its greater context. That is, my respondents had completed their Phase-1-Alpha course at the end of November and into December, which was a hard and uncomfortable two week period. On completion of this course they went on Christmas leave for three weeks during which most of them enjoyed a relaxed break with friends and family. So this first weekend back for the recruits gave rise to a mixture of emotions and statuses such as a new identity as Phase-1-Bravo, a new head-dress to symbolically show their new status, and a slightly more relaxed training team who seemed to be showing a little more respect towards them; they also endured an exhausting weekend's exercise after having been jettisoned back into the zone of high intensity work. All of the aforementioned had one significant effect, and that is a tighter and more focussed bond between the recruits. I could see it, and as I further describe below, they could feel it as well.

My fieldwork observations lead me to suggest that each time my respondents performed their increasingly difficult training activities, mutual support became a higher priority. This is a necessity to enable them to succeed with the increasingly intense physical nature of the tasks. During Chapter Two, while my respondents were thrown into culture shock, I demonstrated examples where individuals who were not in step with the group momentum would not be singled out for chastisement, but rather the instructor would address his dissatisfaction at the group as a whole. During Chapter Three, the phase of equalization, I demonstrated that humiliation and disciplinary focus had proceeded to target offending individuals more directly, and as a result the individual would be singled out and punished, usually by some physical hardship. During this current chapter, the phase of identification, discipline will be dealt-out differently again.

I have opened my ethnography with the first significant occurrence of this new phase of training - that is my respondents' increasingly intense bond with one another. The increased bond between recruits during this new and challenging phase of their training is no coincidence because in this phase, when one of the recruits performs unsatisfactorily, everybody will be verbally and physically punished for it collectively. No one person will be highlighted as the one at fault. The 'one' at fault is now the group.

I asked one of the training Sergeants, “When one person fucks up, why do you punish the whole course?” The Sergeant didn’t even pause to think about his answer. He motioned straight towards the recruits with his head and eyes as he told me, “They should be looking out for each other now, so when one gets it wrong, by punishing the whole course they aint gonna do it again. And at this stage, if someone is getting it wrong it’s because either he isn’t concentrating or because his oppos aren’t looking out for him, either way they’re gonna learn quicker to switch on if they all get pulled up for it.”

After my respondents finished their demanding day’s training they went back to their harbour position to clean their kit, eat food and get some sleep for the night. The following morning they were to be fell-in ready for a kit inspection at first light in the company of an attending Lieutenant. The Lieutenant was very interesting to observe because generally an Officer’s manners differ quite considerably from the lower non-commissioned ranks. Throughout my period in the field, I do not recall once hearing an officer so much as raise his voice. They generally keep a calm, composed and authoritative manner, and can often appear physically different to lower ranks. The more commonly seen ranks of Corporal and Sergeant tend to differ in their more physically ‘ready’ bodily appearance and are happy to use the full force of their voices at any opportunity. The Sergeants and Corporal also tend to select words of a more restricted vocabulary type, often bridging sentences with profanities or using profanities to place particular emphasis on certain aspects of their command or instructions to the recruits. A further and noticeable difference is that officers tend only to address subjects while the individual is standing to attention in front of them, whereas the opposite is true for the Corporals and Sergeants who have a tendency to voice instructions and make general comments during instalments of action and movement.

Although the kit inspection went relatively well, a couple of the recruits were slow at packing up their kit. The Colour Sergeant (‘Colours’ for short) began to lose his patience and raise his voice. Although the majority of the group had their kit packed away and were ready to go, two of them were not so organised. Colours raised his voice in a way that seemed to make this already large male grow to twice his size, “RIGHT ALL OF YOU, DITCH YOUR KIT. NOW, GET YOUR KIT OFF, OI YOU, JUST LEAVE YOUR FUCKING KIT WHERE IT IS. ALL OF YOU FOLLOW ME NOW!” While a couple of members of the training team stayed behind to look after the kit, my respondents followed the Colour Sergeant a short way to a clearing in the woods where

they received a 'beasting'. The term 'beasting' had become synonymous with Marine training. In this context it refers to physical punishment that works the body to the point just beyond exhaustion. It can be a very unpleasant experience, depending on the exact type of beasting dished out.

However, due to some new political movements within the Military, I have noticed that among the instructors there is a heightened awareness about the use of certain types of language that would have been used as par for the course in times past. The term 'beasting' is no exception. I witnessed it being sarcastically referred to as 'corrective training'. Similarly, 'Beasty Knoll' which is a steep hill that recruits are forced up and down as a form of punishment, I heard referred to instead as 'Warm-up Knoll'. I continued to observe Colours bellowing out to the recruits as they performed some gruelling physical running tasks which clearly left them exhausted and slightly bewildered, especially after the morning kit inspection had been relaxed and relatively successful.

The wisdom that lay behind the theory of punishing all recruits for the mistake of one or two now became apparent. After they had finished their 'corrective training therapy' they were sent back at once to pick up their kit and fall in line. When they arrived at their kit they secured their webbing and rifles to their bodies and then, despite the on-going bombardment of verbal orders being thrown at them creating a rather panicked environment, the recruits all joined around the two whose bad kit order was the reason for their punishment, and helped stow it away. I asked Jon whose kit was ready and in good order, "What do you think of your beasting?" He told me, "Well, we should have got around them earlier, instead of being stood there watching them." I asked the same question to one of my informants whose bad kit order was the cause of their punishment. He pursed his lips and blew out a huge sigh of exhaustion and said, "I'm fucked [very tired]". He had less to say than Jon because although Jon had demonstrated the Commando spirit by not apportioning blame on his oppos, my second respondent was feeling the guilt for his part in causing the punishment to arise in the first place.

So far I hope to have shown that the recruits are taught that they must now function as a collective. The training team will not tolerate any egotistical or individualistic self-concern, and neither is it acceptable to look at one another as an attempt to locate the point of blame. January's training was a pivotal time for adaptation to this new and final

way of relating to disciplinary punishment. The training team hit the recruits hard with the ideals that all individuals will find their location at a collective centre so they can face the highs and lows together. This practice ensures that they learn to retain focus on and awareness of each other at all times, which is critical for success at the hardships ahead.

Extracts from February: A Cold Commitment to Pain

By this time, my respondents had realised more than ever that they were required to ‘hit the ground running’ on their training weekends. They had a lot of learning to do in preparation for their Commando course later in the year. Their training was now firmly focussed on endurance and fitness in preparation for this. Significantly, during this first February weekend, my respondents were merged with an existing 1B course of recruits. The existing course participants were six months ahead of my respondents but for various reasons had not yet attended their Commando course which is a series of final tests, at the end of which the successful recruits will be awarded their Green Berets and full status as Royal Marines. The existing 1B’s were looking to take their course in a few weeks’ time, but for now they continued to revise their knowledge and maintain their fitness by training with the new 1B’s (my respondents) whose purpose was to learn knowledge and build their fitness.

On one cold Friday evening the recruits travelled to CTC in the minibus as per the usual routine. On arrival they went straight to their accommodation to sleep in preparation for the busy weekend that lay ahead. First thing on Saturday morning I watched my respondents perform particularly well on the Bottom Field Assault Course, although unfortunately, as per tradition, Thomas was still failing his rope climb. As a group they were well complimented by the PTI’s for their effort and hard work. I noted in my fieldwork diary that their marching back to the accommodation was ‘brilliant’. Once back at their grots Andy commented to me, “I feel as though there is a good team spirit among us all.”

After getting changed into clean rig, my respondents marched through the camp to a set of classrooms near the training team office. There they received a series of pre-field lectures on Observation Posts (OP’s) and signals, focussing on the 349 radio followed by the 350. These two radio types have been in Military service for many years. In fact, you

might equate them more with a World War II radio when the size, shape and weight are considered. They are heavy and cumbersome but almost indestructible. Learning about radios is not generally very interesting to many recruits, and I noted in my diary that:

'The general mood is less than enthusiastic and yet it is a key skill that we need to learn. General bodily postures are slumped – not erect. Old ph 1B asking questions about sigs.'

After their series of classroom lectures the recruits were taken to Woodbury Common to put their newly learned skills into practice. I wrote in my fieldwork diary:

'14:00 – On Woodbury Common doing OP training. The training is now starting to get more aggressive. The recruits are worked faster and harder. Instruction is given more brief but more certain. The recruits are not being 'molly cottoned' any more... They are all paying attention and listening in to the instructor.'

The pace of training throughout February remained intense, and I also noted in my diary that my respondents were exposed more to the weather now than before. In fact, when I consider my February observations, there are two key aspects which characterise the experience: the cold and the pace of training. I have no doubt that although the recruits were being worked harder as part of their progressive endurance training, the freezing weather conditions would have been a factor influencing the training team's choice of exercises and in turn, the recruits' motivation to work hard. It was apparent that during these cold spells the recruits were functioning with measurable happiness and comfort whilst committing to hard physical training. As Thomas put it, "It's alright when you're on the go, but as soon as you stop, you freeze your bollocks off."

Being exposed to the icy cold conditions on the common is not just a matter of learning survival skills and learning to operate as a unit in adversity, it is also a rite of passage. A fundamental aspect of a recruit's rite of passage is his bodily commitment to pain and discomfort, and February epitomizes the extremities of body temperature and tolerance. One Saturday morning the recruits did an eight mile load-carry with 70 lbs. of kit on their backs. Although their footsteps were crunching down on the hard frozen scrub, their bodies were drenched with sweat. After this load-carry they undertook an all-day navigation exercise across the common, ending at 23:30 hours with the occupation of a harbour position, in which they were to set up an all-round defence.

Harbour occupation is a slow and tactical procedure which requires lots of patient waiting and lying on the ground in cover, while two scouts check a potential resting area for its safety from enemy activity. As the main body of men waited in cover, the temperature dropped and the ice reformed across the floor. The recruits started to lose body heat drastically and because they have been on the move all day they were not wearing any 'warmers kit'. During a tactical exercise such as harbour occupation, total concentration is required. It is forbidden to start fiddling with kit in an attempt to get a woolly jumper on. The guys moved slowly into the harbour location and laid out their positions in the shape of a triangle which provided an all-round defence. They remained silent and watchful while a sentry was set up and scouts sent forward of the location to check for enemy. The sky was clear and the harbour site afforded some cover from tall trees above. The air smelt of cold and ice and the place was silent except for some very faint rustling a few metres away. Finally, the order was given that the occupation had been successful and that the recruits were to break into their nocturnal drills and routines. In particular, this means a rota for sentry throughout the night. I walked over to see Jon who was in a sentry position at the time. He was soaked through and lying on ice. He told me that the hardest thing was to maintain a proper hold on his rifle because his hands were sore with cold.

As the night progressed and the temperature dropped far below zero, the harbour quickly fell silent and motionless as the men sought out the comfort of their slugs (sleeping bags). Thomas explained to me that his time in his slug was going to be short-lived as he'd soon be up to do sentry at 03:00 hours. He said, "It'll be worse getting out of my warm slug and having to lie out in the ice." He went on to explain that he would relish every minute that he had inside his slug because it was relatively warm, he could rest and essentially the time was his own. Or so he thought! Like most things in Marines training, nothing should be taken for granted. That night, the recruits were 'bump-moved'. The training team played out a surprise attack which they began by dousing the harbour location with smoke grenades and thunder flashes and a heavy follow-up of machine gun fire.

The recruits were on the move all night as they engaged in fire fights, withdrawal under enemy fire, and location of ERVs (emergency rendezvous points). They had to reorganise themselves, yomp to another (safe) location and occupy a second harbour position. Once the second harbour position had been occupied, they had little rest before breakfast,

morning admin' routine and preparation for the kit and weapon inspection - which they all failed miserably and were subsequently harshly punished for.

This type of training routine is mentally and physically exhausting but the recruits find their strength and will through the collective pooling of their emotions and strengths. They become firmly drawn together by this stage through the pain of their shared journey. As one recruit told me, "You know that whatever you're going through, the others are going through the same". He then went on to say "There is something really motivating when you all find it just as hard, and you keep each other going. And as well, you don't want to be the one who can't make it and let everyone down."

As a final observation about the course of this month, I could see a direct benefit from mixing my respondents with the existing 1B course. The existing 1B course had all but mastered the Commando team spirit and was entirely in sync with one another throughout. I noticed my respondents tuning into this ethos, and although their February training was characterised by fatigue and consequently a weight of mistakes, they still managed to serve their punishment rituals graciously, as a unit of men who were by then displaying the characteristics of a shared interest and servitude to the group.

Extracts from March: Fortification of the Group We're Becoming

March was a training month that demanded a huge investment of pain and discomfort from the recruits. It comprised non-stop, wet, cold and morale-sucking exercises. The recruits began one particular Saturday morning with a ten mile yomp carrying around 100 lbs. of kit on their back. They left CTC heading toward the common to practice endurance and tactics. During the yomp, they spread at the correct distance from one another and were patrolling with their rifles as they would in a live situation. For the first time in their training they experienced a painful pull between the shoulder blades that feels as though a knife has been inserted and left there. They also had to contend with blisters that, due to the weight of the carry, became sore after just a couple of miles.

At around the half-way point of the yomp, I asked Tris how he was coping. He said, "I can't believe that pull between my shoulder blades from carrying this kit". I asked him whether he felt that the training team would be happy with the effort everyone seemed to

be putting in. He answered, “Well we haven’t been shouted at too much which is surprising because it’s really hard to concentrate when your shoulders are killing so much”. I said, “Are your shoulders the biggest problem?” Not to my surprise he told me, “No, my feet are killing too. Feels like I’ve got a massive blister on my foot, but I suppose that’s just part of it – learning to ignore it”. As the carry continued, the recruits started dropping their heads, stumbling on uneven terrain, and began to get shouted at for not ‘looking sharp’

Towards the end of the carry, I looked around for signs of the superb teamwork evident during their last training weekend. It is not as convincing now. The recruits were tired and harassed by the elements of the weather. They were more inward-looking and soul-searching, seeking the strength and determination they needed to complete this yomp the full ten miles to their RV area. I wrote in my diary:

‘They are only helping each other in a general sense rather than in an instinctive sense.’

Taking this note reminded me that when the recruits are fresh in the field they are actively seeking out one another. For example when they are practicing tactics and manoeuvres, they need to remain aware of each other’s physical position in relation to their own. In the prolonged state of fatigue brought on by the load-carry however, they were not aware of this. This demonstrated to me that the group, as the body of fundamental importance and survival, had not yet become instinctive to them. I would like to expand this discussion below.

Discussion About How Changing Characteristics Mark the Phases of Identity and Group Development

I would like first to refer back to Chapter Two - Culture Shock. During this initial phase, the recruits knew little or nothing of Military life, a fact which was made paramount by the level of their dislocation toward their new environment and its accompanying idioms, norms, rules and values. This first period of group character development can be termed ‘*individual civilian identities*’. In this, there is very little awareness of being part of a group and neither has there been time for any incorporation of Military identities; they are presenting themselves as individual civilians. One caveat to this, however, is that

although I say there is very little awareness of a group or incorporation of Military identities, I have to express caution by distinguishing between what is fantasy (as discussed in the previous chapter) and what will, in time, become ingrained into the men's bodily fabric. In terms of fantasy, at the very outset of training, some respondents commented to me phrases like, "I've always wanted to be a Marine" and "I feel like I've achieved something by getting in the Marines." From my interaction and observations during this early phase, it was clear that some of the men, as demonstrated with the two narratives above, already referred to themselves as Marines. So it may be fair to say that they had begun to identify as Marines. However, I'd like to argue that this is a fanciful identification, as will become evident by the high rate of recruits who continue to drop out of the training programme. Instead, I hope to show that the process of assuming and assimilating a Marine's identity is a far more complex and rewarding process.

After the evident *individual civilian identities* during Culture Shock, I observed the group progressing to a new set of characteristics which I will refer to as '*group formation whilst retaining individual civilian identities*'. This is synonymous with the Equalization phase detailed in Chapter Three. This set of characteristics was demonstrated through the formation of a group brought about by the need for unity, mutual support and cooperation. At this stage group bonding is a thought-provoking process wherein the recruits become aware of the 'character pecking order' as they continue to establish for themselves a place within, at this fast paced time of changing group dynamics. But as the character pecking order is primarily based upon qualities imported from the civilian world, no ingrained Military identity can yet be claimed by the men and therefore the group formation retains its civilian origins for the time being. During this phase the group will have built up a little experience of Marines training, and in conjunction with the training team making them fully aware what is required of them, they are becoming aware of their transitions.

In addition, I am hoping to show in this chapter - the Phase of Identification - that group characteristics are progressing further to '*group fortification incorporating Military identities*'. Here, I see a shift insofar as Military identities are starting to emerge as a result of their advancing training. In conjunction with their emerging identities, I'd like to suggest that the group dynamic is viewed as *group fortification* because by this stage of the training programme, those who are most likely to have quit have done so, and therefore the remaining recruits are likely to see through the remainder of the programme

together. This in turn gives the group more stability as the dynamic can now settle down in the absence of any further foreseeable disruption which could cause a re-shuffle of the pecking order when it occurs. With this increased group security the recruits begin to invest heavily into its meaning. During this phase the recruits established a full awareness of what is required of them to be a Marine, and that includes the realisation that their group is the most fundamental unit.

As the recruits continue to practice being Marines and continue to develop their group value through investing in one another, they will migrate into the final phase of characterisation in what I'll refer to as '*Royal Marines group unity*'. This will be explored in the next chapter - The Testing Stage. In short, during the testing stage, the training team will be looking for evidence that a significant transformation of identity has taken place and that the recruits have acquired group solidarity. But most importantly, both identity and group should be starting to feel natural.

I would like to return now to the recruits doing their load carry as they reach the end of their yomp, where they were subject to a foot inspection by the training team. For some, there was no real concern. But others had to have their feet treated with a glue-type substance which temporarily seals the blister, offering a disinfecting benefit as well as some temporary pain relief. I noticed one recruit in particular, Thomas, having trouble taking off one of his socks. "How's your foot?" I asked. He screwed his face up in pain and said, "I can't get my sock off, and it's stuck to my blister where it's been bleeding so much".

"Ouch!" I replied, with what was probably not my most constructive response of the day! "Yeah!" he retorted, with what was probably not his most eloquent response of the day!

Thomas did receive some good team support, as myself and a couple of respondents gathered round and watched as he sucked in a lung-full of air through his teeth and slowly ripped the blood-soaked sock from his wound opening it up to the dirt. Once his sock was off and clear from the wound, we all marvelled for a moment at the impressive skinless blister on the ball of his foot, about the size of a fifty pence piece. His pain seemed to subside for moment while he showed off his trophy of determination, until he saw the Corporal walking over with the medical kit. In this context the medical kit means just one thing – it's going to STING!

The Corporal knelt down next to Thomas, "Lets avva look." he said, quite insincerely. "Ah don't worry," the Corporal continued, "We'll soon fix that up". The Corporal opened his medical box and pulled out a tin of iodine, shook it and sprayed it on to the wounded area of the foot. Iodine dries-on to skin and takes on a ghastly burnt orange colour. Thomas did seem pleasantly surprised that it had offered him some relief rather than the extra pain which he had been expecting. The Corporal then pulled out a small tube of glue-type substance and said with a slightly mischievous smirk, "This might sting a little". Thomas pursed his lips and tensed his whole body in anticipation as the Corporal began to apply the glue. "This will just create a second skin over the top of the sore; let it dry before you put your sock back on", instructed the Corporal. I looked at Thomas, whose face had gone deep red as he resisted the overpowering urge to scream about the stinging sensation.

I gave him a minute to compose himself and asked how he felt about the pain. He said, "I can hardly feel anything now, but it killed when he first put it on."

"What about the pain you experienced with it during the load-carry?" I asked.

He explained, "Well I could feel it coming after about two miles, and by about four miles it was red raw. So literally, for the last half of the yomp I was in absolute agony every footstep. Plus my shoulders were really hurting from the weight of my bergan, so a bit shit really."

"How do you feel about it all now you've completed the yomp?"

"Yeah I'm 'appy now. I wasn't gonna wrap¹² or anything b'cause pain is just a part of it. And I'm always getting blisters anyway so I'm sort of getting used to them"

I then asked Thomas, "Would you have kept going with that blister if you were, say, with your mates rather than with the Marines?"

"Probably not", he replied promptly.

"Why's that?" I asked.

"Don't know really, you just wouldn't if you were at home, there's no point. But here you have to. It's the only way you'll get through the training, is if you can handle the pain that goes with it."

I asked him, "Does it change the way you feel about pain?"

He explained, "It does in the sense that you have to try and ignore it. Like, at the start of the yomp, when it first started to rub badly, every footstep was agony, like it just

¹² 'Wrap' in Marines terminology means to quit. A superb translation is offered by Carl Gustav Jung who refers to its meaning as 'will-less surrender' (Jung, *On the Nature of the Psyche*, 1960, p. 114)

makes you angry, if you know what I mean. And it just gets to me because I *always* get them. But after a while I just accepted that, that was gonna be part of every footstep and tried to ignore it.”

“And did you manage to ignore it?”

“No”.

I tried to offer a little encouragement by saying, “It’ll be worth it when you get your Green Beret.” Surprisingly he answered, “Yeah, then I can go and buy a decent pair of boots.”

Unfortunately for Thomas, he always suffers from severely blistering feet caused by the cheaply-made and ill-fitting issue boots recruits have to wear. Thomas, along with one or two others who regularly suffer with foot problems, have realised the marked association between feet and morale. Thomas once explained to me that he approached a member of the training team with his susceptibility to bad blisters caused by the boots. But the Sergeant told him he had to wear the issued boots until he had completed his Commando Course, and then he could wear his own boots.

After their foot inspection, my respondents spent the afternoon on a demanding navigation exercise in the pouring rain. I noted in my diary that they had to work extremely hard in order to reach their objectives from point to point. On reaching their final objective at the end of the navigation they went straight in to an attack on the ‘enemy’ who were waiting to ambush them at that location. They did well, finding and attacking three of the enemy locations, but missing the fourth.

A Surprise Enemy Attack

After their navigation and enemy attack, my respondents made their way back to the RV area where they ate, cleaned and rested. By 22:00 hours the RV area was at peace. A sentry was set up on a roster basis offering protection for those who were sound asleep after a tiring day. The only audible sound became that of the light wind gently rustling through the tree branches. That is, until 23:30 hours when my respondents became subject to (another) surprise enemy attack played out by the training team. The recruits awoke to loud explosions, white light flashes and a torrent of machine gun fire. The enemy were closing in fast on their harbour position, shouting and screaming at them and causing

chaos and confusion. My respondents were crawling out of their sleeping bags and bivvies completely disorientated. They all shouted, "STAND TO" "STAND TO" and attempted to form an arc around their position. They returned fire on the enemy, located purely by the direction of opposing muzzle flashes. The majority of my respondents were in a fire fight with an unknown enemy, when I noticed one of my respondents standing and trying to put his kit on, who in reality would have been shot by this point. The rest were firmly on their bellies taking cover behind tree trunks or within the natural troughs in the ground's surface and returning a good weight of fire. One member of the training team then switched roles and played the part of the recruit's troop commander and ordered them to withdraw to the ERV (emergency rendezvous). Working in pairs they grabbed their kit and evacuated their position amid a torrent of explosions, smoke and ongoing white light flashes. They all reached the ERV but looked drained and disorientated. They were instructed by the Sergeant, "Put your kit on the ground in front of you, line up, stand still and don't speak."

The recruits stood to attention for nearly half an hour before they were addressed with the bad news that after their RV position was searched, the training team had recovered some kit that had been left behind. This is not the sort of mistake they should have been making at this stage of their training, and they paid dearly for it.

Overall, the month of March was a great success. Certainly from my point of view an invaluable part of the Marines' training cycle had been reached, whereby another new consignment of recruits had begun their training with the RMR and were undergoing the initial stages of training that my respondents underwent around half a year ago. There was a point on one Sunday morning when my respondents and the new One-Alpha recruits were at RV 4, brought together by their respective training teams who needed to confer the plans for endex that morning. As I watched the two sets of recruits, the difference was remarkable. Whereas my respondents were looking like Marines, the new One-Alphas were fidgety, undisciplined and in no discernable order. I noted in my fieldwork diary at the time:

'The new Ph 1 Alpha's who are on their second field weekend -- there is a distinct lack of inter-group non-cooperation/coordination... Seeing new Ph 1 A on the same weekend as my Ph 1 B has given me an invaluable gauge of measurement of my 1 B progress -- They are now distinctly different in all ways and are treated distinctly different by their training team.'

Extracts from April: Specialist Instruction

The turnout from my fieldwork respondents on the first weekend in April was just four men out of the original thirty one from Bristol Detachment. There were a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the turnout among all recruits was not impressive due to an important England rugby match showing on the TV, as I was told by one of the training team. The Sergeant told me, "I didn't expect a great turnout this weekend because of the rugby; I've had all the excuses going on the phone this week."

I suspect from my own experience of RMR training that those who would sacrifice a training course in order to watch a rugby match would not have the determination or commitment to continue through the increasingly intense schedule ahead. A further factor which may have had a dramatic impact on the number of drop-outs was the weather conditions. The recruits had almost completed a whole winter by this time. The winter months can be miserable, cold and extremely uncomfortable in the Marines. I remember when I was training as a recruit during the winter months, it was not infrequent that I would be lying in pain on some ice whilst soaking wet and unable to feel any part of my body, and I would ask myself:

'What the heck am I doing here? Why am I putting myself through this? I should be at home cuddled up with my girlfriend in the warm.'

Like my four respondents who had turned out this weekend, I kept attending the training weekends and the mid-week training on Wednesday nights at the Detachment, despite the immeasurable discomfort at times. Just like my four respondents I wanted something that I could never achieve by choosing easier and more comfortable options in life. Unfortunately, Marines training requires physically and mentally demanding sacrifices from the very first moment of exposure along a harsh 'rite of passage' in return for something that is far from definite. My respondents each had an inimitable reason for thrusting themselves into their personal transformation, motivated by each of their own life experiences. But most noteworthy, they now needed each other to achieve it.

I have noticed through my fieldwork to date that my respondents barely broach the subject of personal motivation and desire. In an environment where my respondents share very compact personal spaces with one another and talk of all kinds of things openly and jokingly, they nevertheless keep to themselves the very factor that motivates them. The

stock answer when I ask my respondents what they are looking for through this training is that they want a Green Beret. Frustratingly, it is very difficult to encourage further elaboration. I would suggest this could offer further support towards the idea that RMR training offers the chance for recruits to work towards a masculine identity, and their silence surrounding it is typical of the anti-masculine impression one would reflect if he were to own up to being here through wanting to be 'a man'.

When I think back to the reasons that drove me through my recruit training in previous years, I wonder how many others might have a similar story. For me, coming from a broken home and experiencing many let-downs and put-downs throughout my teenage years I was left feeling as though my confidence had waned. Marines training for me was an opportunity to restore faith in myself and my sense of worth. I soon recognised how differently people treated me and spoke with me once they knew I was in the Marines. By the time I had achieved my Green Beret, I genuinely felt like a new man - or actually, the man I had always been - but as a Commando I seem to have achieved the right that others around me accept *my identity*. Whether people respect the strength and skill of a Marine or whether they are responding to the typical masculine media images of a Green Beret is a slight misnomer. The one thing I am confident about is that all of my respondents have a personal reason or desire, as I did, which drives them through their pain and discomfort. Maybe it was a taboo subject or maybe there was just never the time and opportunity to unearth their deep rooted desire. I suspect that quite simply, it just would not have been considered very manly to express such feelings in detail. For this reason I offered you mine in the passage above.

The last four remaining recruits from the Bristol section who did attend training experienced a significant shift in the way they were to conduct themselves from this point on. They were informed by the Sergeant that they'd be doing a patrolling exercise and would therefore be learning to patrol properly like a Marine. This meant that they were not to run anywhere as they had been expected to do previously. Sergeant explained to them, "You are now to move constantly and swiftly so as to conserve your energy." This change of emphasis marks a significant shift in their type of discipline, from running everywhere to controlled and meaningful movements. In conjunction with this I also noted in my diary during a pre-exercise lecture:

'They are relaxed and in good spirits. They are being spoken to on more of the same level rather than being spoken down to – as they would have been whilst in 1A. The content of the lectures are far more strategic and tactical than before.'

I also noted from watching the pre-exercise lecture that my informants were responding particularly well to this Sergeant. His lecture was calm, enthusiastic and he was extremely knowledgeable. Most significantly, he was communicating with them as equals. For the rest of the weekend I noticed a distinct shift in the behaviour and attitudes of my recruits. Whilst listening to the lecture they were all mirroring the Sergeant's body language in one form or another. During the patrolling and fire-fight at the end of the day, their motivation, enthusiasm and professionalism seemed to take on new levels. It appeared that my respondents' identities were morphing from recruits into Marines with the increasing respect, belief and encouragement they were receiving from their training teams.

This was a physically demanding training month which gave rise to many significant identity shifts. For my respondents, the high point was being instructed on 'four-man patrolling' and 'withdrawal under enemy fire' by a former SBS (Special Boat Service) Commando. Jon told me, "This guy is amazing. Just watching him move around is amazing".

Extracts from May and June: We'll Get by With a Little Help from Our Training Team

Over the next two months, as I eagerly watched my fieldwork respondents, they continued to make significant leaps forward in their personal and group development. They were now in their growing stage where professionalism is the key. They were receiving expert training, all of which was being delivered calmly and precisely. By the time my respondents were into the month of May, it had been many weeks since I had last heard them being shouted at or being disciplined. And now the summer months were approaching, my respondents were unrecognisable as the men they had been at the end of the previous summer. They were beginning to exude confidence, strength and self-respect.

On the final training weekends leading up to their Commando course I watched them perform effortlessly and perfectly, exercise after exercise. One Friday night, soon after my respondents arrived at the training area they were taken straight out on a yomp across the moors. They left their RV area at 22:00 hours arriving back at 01:00. Despite the management of their civilian lives all week, once they arrived at their training location, they immediately switched focus to their role as Marines. I noted in my fieldwork diary:

'During the yomp, the 1-Bravos were knowing of their expectations, and during times when we had rest stop, they immediately went into an all-round defence. The yomp was not taxing on their ability... The bravos are in good spirits... they know what is expected of them and are keen to tackle this weekend without any fuss. 07:00 the bravos had a field inspection on RV 4. This for the bravos was an old routine, they are well squared away.'

9th, 10th & 11th July: Confirmation Weekend

During the past year I had watched my fieldwork respondents grow into a close-knit team of Royal Marines. After many weekends of hard graft and commitment to themselves and the Corps they were now attending their final training serial called 'confirmation weekend'. This weekend is not a strict pass or fail, but rather the recruits are watched very closely by their training team who will, by Sunday morning, determine if they are ready to attend their two week Commando course starting two weeks later. There is much at stake on this weekend for the recruits and training team alike. For the recruits it is the penultimate course of training before trying for their coveted Green Berets. For the training team, they need to be sure that the recruits they put forward will pass the course before entering them onto it. It is much like a university lecturer with a PhD student, whereby the success of that student may reflect upon the lecturer.

The atmosphere was tense throughout the weekend. Altogether there were just twenty recruits in attendance. However, very few of these were my original respondents from the past year. In addition there were several recruits from the Regular Army, who had been training in an Army Commando unit and attended Royal Marines Lympstone to take their Commando course. There were also Royal Marine Reserves from London, Manchester and Scotland all of whom trained in their respective geographical locations until the confirmation weekend and the subsequent Commando course. From my original thirty

one fieldwork respondents from the Bristol section with whom I began my participant observation nearly one year ago, I was down to just four: Jon, Tris, Andy and Thomas.

The weekend started with the much-dreaded Bottom Field Assault Course at 08:15 hours on Saturday. My respondents were displaying plenty of aggression and determination to pass all four elements of the test: the 30 foot rope climb, assault course, fireman's carry and the full regain. In the next chapter, *The Testing Stage*, I will describe these events in full. Many of the recruits passed all four elements, although unfortunately for Thomas he failed the rope climb once again. He said, "I'm so annoyed, I know I can do it". I suggested that when he got the chance at the end of the weekend, he should convince the selection Sergeant that he would conquer it 'on the day of the race'. Thomas' problem of not achieving the rope climb seemed to have become psychological. He said, "I literally got three or four inches from the top. I just need to do one more shift and I'm there but for some reason I can never make that last one." He looked a little distressed so I advised him, "I know it's frustrating, but forget about that now and focus on the rest of the weekend and the bits you are good at, and show the Sergeant you are ready for your course." He nodded, expressed a glimmer of optimism and said, "Yeah", with a firm gesture. I understood Thomas' plight because I too had struggled on the 30 foot rope climb during my training. I wanted to encourage him as much as possible for the rest of the weekend.

After the Bottom Field Assault Course the recruits were fell-in outside the PTI's office when I was informed about the death of Adrian, a good friend of mine with whom I attended much of my recruit training. Adrian was a brilliant Marine who tragically lost his life one night in Cardiff. Many of the recruits standing in front of me at that moment would not have known Adrian, but I still remember many things we did together in our training days. One of my clearest memories was when Adrian, myself and Cookie were running in the same syndicate on the Bottom Field Assault Course. Adrian fell off the zigzag wall, cut his chin open on the way down and ended up stranded in the barbed wire underneath. He used to tell me that I was like a little whippet around the Bottom Field Assault Course, and later on that day he said that he had fallen off the wall because he was running too fast along it, trying to keep up with me. And that is the unique thing about the Marines and which was exemplary in Adrian: even when things go wrong, Marines don't feel sorry for themselves, they will search for some humour in it somewhere.

Despite feeling sad on hearing of Adrian's death, I tried to focus on my fieldwork respondents. The pace soon picked back up as they went down to the 25 metre range to zero their rifles, ready for the endurance run in the afternoon. When preparing to fire live rounds from a rifle, the sights first need to be adjusted to the specifics of the person using it. A few rounds are fired at targets, after which the instructor will take certain measurements of the distance between the 'group of hits' and the centre of the target (at which recruits were aiming) and that will be converted into the measurement by which the sights on the rifle are adjusted. It is important to accurately zero the rifle because the seven mile endurance assault course ends with a rifle shoot whereby a certain standard of accurate hits will determine a strict pass or fail.

After lunch the recruits were ready at the start line of the endurance course for a 14:00 commencement. The endurance course will often cause recruits anticipation and some stress because it is a long hard graft which could all be in vain if the live shoot at the end does not go well. I noticed at the start line that a couple of recruits were rolling condoms over the barrel of their rifles and securing the ends with elastic bands. This is a practice I had seen before, the logic being that the condom should stop any dirt and grit going into the barrel whilst on the muddy, wet and stinking assault course, and in particular, whilst crawling through the clay-pit obstacle. It is a good idea especially since many recruits in the past have failed the endurance course purely because their rifle failed to fire on the range at the end of the run, caused entirely by soiling that had formed in the barrel and various working parts.

The endurance run went well except for three recruits who got lost. The following morning's nine mile speed march also went well. At the time when we were getting ready to travel back to RMR Bristol at the end of the weekend, I felt a lot happier when I received the news that all four of my year-long fieldwork respondents had been selected to attend their Commando course in two weeks' time. We were all grinning like Cheshire cats the whole way back to Bristol and spent the entire journey having a fun relaxed laugh and joke comprising many stories, jokes and ditts. Whereas my respondents would usually be tired and sombre on the way home, on this occasion they were elevated and excited that their Commando Course and Green Berets were within arm's reach.

Chapter Conclusion

I hope to have detailed in the ethnography above that *The Phase of Identification* has been predominantly characterised by long and arduous endurance training aimed at sparking a process of adaptive thinking or believing, during which the recruits begin to identify themselves with the Commando ethos. Their reward for battling through this intense process is a slightly more levelled relationship with their training team. John Hockey writes that “the division between the training team and the recruits ensures a bond between the recruits. Because the recruits are under the same regimen of discipline together, that will create a ‘them’ (training team), and ‘us’ scenario” (Hockey, 1986, p. 46). Although I do agree with the fundamental nature of this idea, I hope to have demonstrated during this ethnographic chapter that despite popular assertion, the recruits’ terms of relating with the training team does change remarkably toward the end of the course.

I hope to have shown that the Marines training system does not operate an entirely rigid set of oppositions between the recruits and their training team but rather it begins a process of change as the recruit builds up respect from the training team for his continued hard graft and effort. Moreover, the increased respect and friendliness from the training team is an important part of the recruits’ preparation for their Commando course and thus, their final phase of identity attainment, because eventually the recruit and trainer may be serving side by side and therefore there is a need for a process of transition of relations from the opposites of recruit/trainer to Marine/Sergeant. Hockey (1986) also suggests that the division between training team and recruit is essential for recruit bonding. Again, I hope to have added insightful complexity to this knowledge by showing that at the outset the recruits do not have an internal group leader and therefore one must be established through the character pecking order. The character pecking order remained functional throughout my recruits’ training programme and only when the recruits reached the stage of their training covered by this chapter, *The Phase of Identification*, was the group function able to begin to provide strong bonding and identifying rewards due to its more settled dynamic.

I hope to have highlighted certain points from January’s training. First of all the recruits’ transitional status was symbolised by a change of headdress awarded at the completion of their two week assessment course held before Christmas. A further point I hope to have made from my observation of January’s training is that due to there being just eleven

recruits remaining at that time from the original thirty one from the Bristol unit, there was a much closer investment made into the group, both by the training team and by the recruits. From the training team's point of view, they were left with the most serious and committed candidates and were therefore endowing the group with shared discipline to help strengthen loyalty among its members. I offered an example of this with a discussion about past training phases when punishment was dependant on the principle that he who makes the mistake will be punished for it. In this phase of invested discipline, when one recruit fails to impress, the whole group is disciplined and punished equally without the offending individual being held in negative regard by either the training team or recruits. A description of this type of occurrence was given after the Colour Sergeant disciplined the recruits for an abysmal effort at the end of a kit inspection. They were all punished for the lethargy of two, but when I later interviewed the recruits about their thoughts, no blame was apportioned. This is a theme which I will fully develop in the concluding chapter. In short, I hope to provide a demonstration of the complexities and varying forms of disciplinary practices. Moreover, I hope to demonstrate that certain discipline practices are 'training phase' specific. I'd like to suggest that this detail is a result of my close participant fieldwork and has not been detailed by other authors in anthropological or sociological Military literature.

As the training moved into February, I have established with my extracts that as well as the training team investing more into the group, so too did the recruits. February was characterized by freezing cold weather and a sustained pace of intense training. Here I suggested that an important aspect of the recruit's physical activity was their rite of passage achieved through a bodily commitment to pain and discomfort. The recruits managed their demanding programme through increased group bonding which acted as a hub for their pooled emotions and strengths, all made accessible to one another through the sufferance on their shared journey. I hope to have demonstrated a group functionality which ties the need for group bonding as a mechanism for success, with the pooling of group resources as a means of successfully making the physically painful rite of passage. Moreover, I hope to have demonstrated that group support for physical pain is administered through the establishment of a collective consciousness of it.

In March I started noting more about the level at which my recruits were beginning to act instinctively within their presented circumstances and environment. I offered one example during a ten mile yomp when my recruits were weary and slightly beleaguered

by the elements of the weather. They were more inward looking and soul-searching, seeking the strength and fortitude they needed to complete the exercise. I wrote in my diary that they were only helping each other in a *general sense* rather than an *instinctive sense*. With this, I suggested that when my respondents were fresh in the field they were enthusiastically seeking one another out. However, whilst in a protracted state of lassitude they were not. This demonstrated that the group ethos, as the body of fundamental importance and survival, had not yet become truly 'instinctive', by which I mean the production of basic principles and behaviours essential for Military competence. I then set out to present the stages of 'group instinct instillation' and sub-titled these stages *Discussion about how changing characteristics mark the phases of identity and group development*. I will return to this in the Conclusions Chapter.

During the month of March I also started to notice the rhetoric of pain and the many ways in which the recruits would marvel over raw wounds. In this sense, when a recruit had a bad injury, showing it to his comrades before carrying on against the elements of the pain would show off his determination and manliness. I provided a particular demonstration of this with Thomas's severely blistered foot during the ten mile yomp. I hope that this revelation went some way to show how the recruits begin to construct their internal ideas of strength and masculinity through outwardly displays of their pain. Moore summarises it beautifully when arguing that "the body suggests power, and that one must recognise that people's lives are lived through actions that are performed in structured space and time" (Moore, 1994). The point I hope to make in addition to this is that the recruits, through their pain rituals, will have begun to relate to their bodies in a whole new way. Picking up Moore's point that the body is suggestive of power, I'd like to make the case that the body can only be suggestive of power if it can first display power.

Herein lies the logic of arduous Marine training and its eventual provision for a legitimate masculine identity. Thus, the recruits learn to work their bodies beyond normal pain barriers as demonstrated by Thomas with his foot abrasion by saying he wouldn't have pushed himself that far if he was at home with friends. Through the constant pain rituals which are enforced upon them, the recruits start to normalize pain and discomfort, and concomitantly stop responding to it. Through developing an increased threshold for pain, the recruits learn to work their bodies longer and for harder than 'normal' which results in them developing bodies that are fitter and stronger than 'normal'. In addition to the physicality of the body, the recruits construct narratives about their increased skill and

strength in order to recognise its significance as an interpretation of masculinity. I will discuss narratives in more detail in the following chapters.

As the recruits entered the month of April I hope to have shown that they were being spoken to more as equals by some members of the training team. This change of relationship continued to improve throughout May and June. In particular I pointed out that in May, I noted that I had not witnessed the recruits being shouted at or disciplined for some weeks, which was indicative of the recruits' progressive development towards their new identities and the higher level of skills attainment. Most significant during this three month period was the sustained pain and discomfort ritual which the recruits called endurance training. This training phase is paramount in the development of their masculine identities and physical strength.

At the confirmation weekend in July I noted that there were just four of my original 31 recruits remaining: Jon, Tris, Thomas and Andy. In the next chapter, *The Testing Stage*, I will detail the experiences of these four recruits whilst undertaking their Commando Course.

Chapter 5

The Testing Stage: Exchanging Exhausted Bodies for Excellence

Introduction

How can so many incredibly fit and strong young men, all in their physical prime, find themselves voluntarily on the brink of collapse and exhaustion? After a long hard year of physical and mental punishment, dilapidation and much despondency, my fieldwork respondents are about to face the toughest two weeks of their lives. They are about to begin their two week Commando Course; what I call *The Testing Stage*. Their compelling year of blood, sweat and extreme fatigue will now be concentrated into an intense series of tests, scrutinised exactly by men of the Green Beret. This chapter will highlight the process during which, over a two week period, my informants make the most considerable modification to their identities in order to prove themselves fit enough to be called Royal Marine Commandos.

The testing stage is a long and gruelling two week course comprising a number of tests. The course is populated with my year-long fieldwork respondents who will attend the Commando Training Centre along with Royal Marine Reservists from London, Manchester and Scotland Detachments. They will also be joined on the course by a few members from the Army who have been Commando trained in the Army and are sent to CTC for their testing stage. As well as having their physical and mental endurance tested to the full, my respondents will also be working with people they may have never seen before which will also test their group solidarity and their Military habits that by now should have become inscribed into their Military fabric. I applied the word 'habits' to refer succinctly to the acquisition and instinctive application of a set of skills and movements that by now should enable all recruits, whether from the same or different Detachments, to act and operate with one another through a shared platform of understanding and communication. This shared platform should over-ride any regional, race or class differences between the recruits.

The ethnography that follows will focus on the first ten days of the two week Commando training course and will, among other matters, focus on the recruits' performance of their Military habits. I will provide a day by day description of the Commando tests that will be attempted and whilst doing so, make an attempt to demonstrate the liminal significance of each. My respondents have worked long and hard at their Marines training for a whole year with the aim of achieving their Green Berets. I began this participant observation with 31 respondents from Bristol Unit, who over the past twelve months have withered down to just four: Jon, Thomas, Andy and Tris. During the first ten days, my four respondents will give themselves fully in order that they may attempt the ultimate rite of passage: the 30 mile run across Dartmoor which will be detailed in the final chapter: *Ceremonial Acceptance*.

Friday Night Arrival and Day One

On Friday 23rd July 2004 my fieldwork respondents arrived at CTC by minibus just as they had done many times before. They arrived around 21:30 hours, got booked straight into their accommodation, unpacked their kit and went to bed. During the morning of Saturday 24th July the recruits from Bristol Detachment along with the men from other Detachments, which I'll refer to generically as 'the Course' (Marines terminology), got themselves up, showered and fed early in preparation to do a Bottom Field acquaintance. Whereas my respondents had become very familiar with the Bottom Field Assault Course over the past year, the same was not the case for all. The recruits attending from RMR London, Manchester, Scotland and the Army may have only had one previous opportunity to practice these tests due largely to the geographical distance between their weekly training ground and CTC.

It is for this reason that the Physical Training Instructors (PTIs) give an 'acquaint' for most of the tests prior to the official timed runs. An acquaint is a walk-through-talk-through explanation and demonstration of each individual obstacle on each of the numerous obstacle and endurance courses. Saturday morning's Bottom Field acquaint was followed in the afternoon by the Endurance Course acquaint. Every test has to be completed within the allotted time and with their belt kit (CEFO) and rifle on their backs weighing around 35 lbs. The weight of the rifle is approximately 9 lbs and the belt kit must be at least 22 lbs, which is the assumed weight once the storage space within has

been maximized with essentials such as ammunition, food, and water. The belt kit is weighed by the training team at the start and finish of each test. The belt kit must weigh 22 lbs at the end of the test, hence it will weigh more at the start to allow for the water participants will need to drink during the event.

Day Two: The first Pass-out Test

During the morning of Sunday 25th the course members were getting themselves psyched up to face their first pass-out run. A pass-out refers to a pass or fail timed Commando Test. Once a recruit completes his Bottom Field timed run during the two-week Commando Course, he'll never need to run it again. This is why the final tests are referred to as the Bottom Field Pass-out or the Endurance Pass-out because each successive completion represents another significant ceremonial transformation from recruit to Marine. For my fieldwork respondents, each successive pass-out is another liminal phase journeyed through. During the first test which is the Bottom Field Pass-out, three course members failed.

In order to provide an in-depth insight about the mental and physical punishment that my respondents are exposed to on each day of their Commando Course, the detailed Ethnography from day two that follows will focus on the experiences of three of my yearlong respondents who ran together in the same syndicate over the Bottom Field Assault Course, known generically as the 'Bottom Field'.

The Bottom Field is situated within the Commando Training Centre and is the last part of the camp you come to after having entered through the main gates. The Bottom Field training area runs parallel to the estuary and is completely open to the elements. In the winter the field is either freezing cold or very wet and very muddy with a chilling wind which feels colder still when it strikes the recruits, because they always tend to be wet through from the rain or from their profusely sweating bodies. The Bottom Field area is completely enclosed within a high security fence which runs around the circumference of the camp and is protected further by roaming guards on sentry duty.

The Bottom Field arena houses a number of training serials such as the 25 metre shooting range, the Tarzan Assault course, various small training huts referred to as 'stances', a ropes training area, and the Bottom Field Assault Course which is what I'll be presenting

in the following section. Through the duration of my recruit's training programme they become well acquainted with the Bottom Field Assault Course. From the very first time they attended CTC at the beginning of their training programme the recruits are timed and harassed around the Bottom Field obstacles. Almost every time the recruits attend a training weekend, they suffer the four elements which collectively make up the Bottom Field until finally, at the end of their year-long training, they attend the Bottom Field pass-out and perform on it for the final time whilst on their two week Commando course, which they must pass satisfactorily in order to progress onto the rest of the punishing Commando course. At the end of the two week Commando course, assuming the recruits have passed all the gruelling Commando tests, they will be awarded their Green Berets.

The thought of becoming a Commando was a very distant celebration for the recruits whilst at the beginning of their training and whilst going through their introductions to the Bottom Field for the first time almost twelve months ago. In advance of their pass-out test, the recruits were given a Bottom Field acquaint the previous day. They were simply told that they would need to put in 100% effort. During the early hours leading up to the pass-out, they were becoming slightly apprehensive. On the morning of the test, the recruits were met by the PTIs outside the PTI office, which is situated adjacent to a small car park at the top of a steep embankment which rises up from the Bottom Field area. They were waiting in a perfect line, side by side, wearing their PT (physical training) kit, their webbing and carrying their SA80 rifles slung across their shoulders. The recruits' facial expressions looked particularly apprehensive. Several recruits indicated to me that they wanted nothing more than to get through this test in order that they may begin to quench their apprehensions by getting the first one 'in the bag'.

From where my respondents were standing they could see the obstacles that they'd soon be going over. Even from a distance the obstacles looked big. The recruits from far-away Detachments who were less familiar with CTC were trying to sneak a look at them whilst they were supposed to be lining up with their backs to the Bottom Field, awaiting the PTI to exit from his office door. The atmosphere felt tense with nervous energy. The recruits' bodies were taut but fidgety. One recruit explained to me quietly that he had an uneasy palpitation in his stomach. Another recruit disclosed to me, "It's weird, but I just feel a bit weak all over. Think it's nerves," he said as he laughed reticently.

After what seemed an endless wait in silence, the PTI Sergeant appeared from his office door with two assistant Corporals. All three of them were immaculately dressed in their white and red PT vests, combat trousers and black combat boots. The Sergeant addressed the recruits and told them that 110% effort was required at all times whilst on the Bottom Field. He informed them that if the recruits put plenty of effort into the session it would be over more quickly. If they did not put enough effort in, they will simply have to do more. Throughout the year I spent with my respondents, I never heard them being told exactly what the applications were for the obstacles they spend so much time learning to master on the Bottom Field, but then neither did they ask. They very quickly became aware of the rule, 'you don't ask why, you just do'. This rule is rigidly enforced by the very impersonal but professional relationship between the recruits and their training teams. At best, there is a scoreboard at the beginning of the assault course listing the fastest times ever achieved on the obstacle course by previous recruits, which was pointed out as the target they would then work towards. Their target and rationale was one which emphasised bags of effort and an optimal performance over the four elements of the Bottom Field which are the 30 foot rope climb, the assault course, the Fireman's Carry and the full rope regain. The ethnographic description that follows will take the reader on a tour around these four elements of the Bottom Field.

This ethnographic description of the Bottom Field will focus on the experiences of Thomas, Jon and Tris as they encountered their various hardships on the assault course. During their year-long training programme my respondents became very familiar with these obstacles. Many would refer to them as the bread and butter of a Royal Marines basic training. For my respondents, the Bottom Field became a constant yardstick by which their changing ability and physical skill was measured, by themselves and by the training team. As they learned to become Marines over the year, they learned to further apply themselves to the Bottom Field with an aggressive and determined manner.

Thomas

Thomas is 23 and works as a radio engineer. He comes from a working class background and has always been taught by his parents that if he wanted anything in this world he would have to work for it. He considers himself to be a quiet person who will never be the first to start a conversation, but prefers listening to others. Thomas told me that he had admired the Marines for many years. As a schoolboy he and his friends would talk of

Marines as if they were a kind of indestructible human being. These ideas were all interlinked with the romantic notion and popular media images of a Commando such as that impersonated by Sylvester Stallone in the *Rambo* films. Thomas would love to have a Green Beret for two reasons. Firstly, he believes he is fit and strong enough to make it through 'Green Beret' training, and secondly, he would quietly love his peers to think of him as a Commando because he explains that this would make him feel stronger and more confident within himself.

Thomas began his training programme in the RMR with a positive attitude. He became reasonably fit before he applied for the potential recruits' course in the hope that would help him through the selection by impressing the instructors. Although Thomas was no stranger to keeping fit, he said that the type of training encountered in the Marines is very different from anything he had done before. In particular he had struggled on the 30 foot rope climb all the way through training. In fact the rope climb had quickly become his nemesis.

The 30 foot rope climb is set outside in an area which offers no shelter from the elements, which means that when it rains the rope is not only wet but can be covered in mud from the boots of those who have previously climbed up it. There is no safety equipment for this obstacle other than a gravel pit around the base which may absorb some of the impact should a recruit fall. From the bottom of the rope, the top looks like it is a mile away and even further still when it's wet and slippery. The length of the rope is accentuated further by the sheer weight of the kit that the recruit carries on his back. Upper-body strength alone will not secure a successful climb to the top. A recruit must also include a good level of technique. Most recruits find it a bit of a struggle lugging 35 pounds of kit up a 30 foot rope. Even those recruits who reach the top most quickly don't get there without a fatigued body.

Thomas and the rest of the course initially watched the PTIs demonstrating the technical skill required for the exercise. The recruits were then instructed to climb to the top of the rope in loose order (without carrying any of their kit on their backs) to practice the correct climbing technique as well as the correct technique for coming back down the rope whilst maintaining full control over their bodies. Thomas found it comfortable enough to complete this task. He explained that he was not sure if he was getting the technique correct so he was relying more on his upper body strength to pull himself up. After he had

climbed to the top of the rope without carrying kit, Thomas and the rest of the recruits were required to put on their CEFOs and rifle, weighing around 35 pounds and to then climb the rope again.

After the initial rope climb instruction, Thomas and the recruits were shown around the Bottom Field obstacle course. The instructors demonstrated each obstacle slowly one by one to ensure the recruits could see how they would be required to get over the obstacles safely and in the quickest time possible. After each of the obstacles had been demonstrated to the recruits, they were then allowed to go over them in syndicates of four, practising the correct methods. The first time they did this they were not carrying any kit. Thomas enjoyed this aspect of the Bottom Field despite finding it tiresome. He seemed to have a good balance between the various requirements of the body for this series of obstacles, including his agility over some of the more demanding ones. The Fireman's Carry was not difficult for him either - he was able to plod comfortably over the 200 metre run whilst carrying another man and another man's kit on his back. Similarly the full rope regain over the tank of water came quite easily to him.

Thomas had become increasingly apprehensive about the rope climb. In a whole year he never once managed to get to the very top of the rope. At best he would get within 6 inches of the top. He said that by the time he was almost to the top he would not have any strength left at all. He told me that after climbing the first 29 and half feet, that last 6 inches seemed impossible. He told me, "It's just become a psychological thing". From talking to Thomas, I had the distinct impression that he knew he could make the climb but just could not pull off the last little bit in his training sessions. He was confident that he would pass it on the day of his test due to the added pressure.

Unfortunately for Thomas, he failed the rope climb during his pass-out test. He will be given a second opportunity on Wednesday when the course return from their four-day field exercise.

Jon

Jon is 24 years old and tells me he is a PhD student in Engineering. Jon speaks with pride about the family background that he comes from, both in terms of the privileges and experiences his parents have provided for him, and in terms of what his father achieved

working for the Foreign Office. He says that his parents are both professional people who have worked hard to get to where they are today and gives the distinct impression that he aspires to their professional success. Jon is an interesting young man with a private school education. He always has something positive to say and a smile to go with it. He loves the idea of being a Commando. He is fit and strong with a well-trained body and a purposeful mind to complement his physical ability. In many respects he is stereotypically iconic of a Royal Marines Commando, both in his outward appearance and in his physical and mental balance of skill and ability.

To write the Bottom Field into poetry would be no more difficult than watching Jon move gracefully and skilfully from one obstacle to the next. He does not struggle or panic and neither did I ever see him phased by any task or undertaking. He never dreads a physical training session like most, but simply gets on with it. He always has a determined and knowing look in his eye and a smile made of steel. Jon moves around the Bottom Field Assault Course as if he controls time - he simply has the correct time allowance for every obstacle worked out in his head and moves around the course in perfect harmony.

The assault course itself consists of eleven separate obstacles which are all set out in the formation of a 400 metre circuit which the recruits run in syndicates of four. The recruits line up at the start side by side, many of them looking apprehensive as they compose themselves for the start of the course and await their instructions to begin. For most of them, the weight of the kit on their backs would be playing heavily on their minds as they start to contemplate the probability of completing the course in less than the five minutes allowed. To the recruits running this course it is not merely five minutes of exercise - it is exhaustion to the degree of pain which overpowers all other bodily senses. Jon was the exception to the rule because he never looked truly tired but merely stretched a little.

The first obstacle was a water jump which Jon cleared easily, followed by a five foot wall to climb over. He then had to sprint to a set of low bars presented like a fallen gate under which he crawled on his belly across sharp edged gravel, remembering to keep fingers tucked into a fist so as not to cut his hands on the shingle. At the other end of the crawl he sprinted to the monkey bars. The monkey bars are particularly challenging because at any time Jon will be clinging onto the bar with one hand supporting his full body weight and 35 pounds of kit. He managed to keep his momentum perfectly across the bars. Even in the wet when the metal bars are slippery, and in the cold when they are covered with ice

and his hands are frozen, Jon would still move fluently across them while others would have struggled or would drop off into the freezing waist-deep tank of water below.

After the monkey bars, Jon ran up a steep and narrow ramp until he was on top of an eight foot high wall. The wall is only about a brick's width wide, 20 feet long and in a zigzag formation. All around the base of the wall lies barbed wire which presents an unpleasant landing if anyone were to fall off. However, Jon attacked the wall with quiet aggression and jumped off the end, clearing the barbed wire and making a perfect two-footed landing onto a gravel base. Unlike some recruits who then take a second or two to re-compose themselves and find their feet, Jon simply hit the ground with his feet and was then straight into a sprint run towards the next obstacle - the Half Regain.

Having arrived at the Half Regain, the recruit's body is starting to feel fatigued. Jon climbed to the top of a ladder and once there he lay down flat on the single rope which stretches across 20 feet and began the task. He pulled himself across a suspended rope, a bit like a tightrope, to the half-way point where he then allowed his body to drop to the underside of the rope whilst maintaining a grip with his hands and keeping his legs hooked around the rope so that he was not completely dangling. Once hanging on the underside of the rope he then had to employ the regain technique which would correct him, positioning his body back on top of the rope so he could pull himself the rest of the way across. Most recruits struggle with the Half Regain, but for Jon the technical skill comes easily.

Leaving the Half Regain, Jon needed to sprint hard up to the swing bridge, crossing it with no more than two strikes of the feet and a good two-footed landing. Jon then got to the four foot wall which he cleared with style. At this juncture, the majority of recruits will be pulling, throwing and yanking themselves over the wall followed by a 50 metre up-hill struggle to the next obstacle which is the standing gate. The 50 metre uphill run really tests the determination of the recruit. Even for Jon, his body now feeling as though it had no energy left, his legs would feel they were made of lead. The weight on his back would start to become indistinguishable from the weight of his body as he fights to pick up each leg one by one and only through sheer determination did he manage to continue to drive his body forward. Jon told me that it was this part of the course that he found the hardest. He said afterwards, "It's strange really because it's just running and not crawling over obstacles – but you're knackered". Unlike most recruits, even when Jon is exhausted

and running up this demanding part of the course, his head was held high and he was still focussed.

Once at the top of the hill, Jon climbed over the gate and disappeared into one of four underground tunnels – none more than two and half feet in diameter. The tunnels are around 30 feet long, completely dark and they zigzag. Jon crawled thorough at speed, and after emerging from the other end he tried to sprint to the final obstacle. Jon told me that because the PTI is waiting with a stopwatch after the last obstacle, he tried to give his all. It is a steep near-vertical hill with a rope running up it. Jon grabbed the rope with both hands and positioned it so that it ran between his legs and pulled himself up it. At the top he found himself on a fifteen foot high wall with giant steps which he then jumped down one by one. At the bottom of the giant steps he had a final twenty metre sprint to the finish line. After crossing the finish line Jon went to the centre of the assault course where there is open space. He walked around in a big circle and cooled off whilst the rest of the recruits were completing their runs.

This assault course must be done in less than five minutes, which requires an enormous effort. Jon regularly completed it in just over four and a half. As with the assault course, Jon had little difficulty in completing the 30 ft rope climb, the Fireman's Carry or the Full Regain. When Jon first started running the Bottom Field a year ago, he said "I enjoyed it, it was fun." However, by the time he took his Bottom Field pass-out, he had started to dislike it due to what he described as 'over-familiarity with it'. After getting it over and done with on his pass-out run, he said "It's all downhill from here". This is a common feeling among recruits due to the Bottom Field being one of the most challenging tasks. Equally, a number of recruits will say that passing the Bottom Field gives them a confidence boost to go on and complete the rest of the course with additional motivation and optimism. I never had an ounce of doubt that Jon would glide through his Bottom Field pass-out on this occasion.

Tris

Tris, a 20 year old student, says that although he comes from an ordinary background his parents place a lot of emphasis on his career success. I understood Tris to mean that he came from a working class background and like a lot of working class children he never had significant privileges or spoils. Tris says he has family members who are currently

serving within the Regular Armed Forces. He explains that to a degree there is an expectation that he will follow a similar career path. Tris was not particularly articulate but I got the impression that he was trying to indicate that a career in the Armed Forces could offer upward social mobility which would be thought highly of by his family and as a sign of success. The highest motivation for Tris came from the need to impress his family with success, and moreover to succeed with the hardships of Military training in the same way that other family members had already done. For Tris, success in the Reserves while he finishes his degree will offer him important experience for when he joins the Regular Forces later on.

From the beginning of his training Tris never seemed to enjoy any of the physical tasks, but unlike most recruits he was very determined and applied himself to the training in a consistent manner. From talking to Tris I got the idea that he never had any doubt that he would succeed at his training, however, that didn't mean that he had to like it. It was almost like a duty that he just had to undertake. Tris told me, "I want to get through training without being noticed by the training team, I want to be *The Grey Man*." He wanted to just fit in and get through the training programme as comfortably as possible. From the beginning of his Commando training until the day he completed it, Tris showed constant gains and improvement in all aspects. He became increasingly stronger on the rope climb, and although he never got much quicker around the assault course, he certainly became ever more confident with his ability. He was always able to get across the Full Regain but hated the Fireman's Carry.

The Fireman's Carry was the most disliked event for Tris. The aim was reasonably straightforward. Tris had to put another recruit across his shoulders in the style of a Fireman's Carry and run 200 metres in under 90 seconds. In addition to the recruit that Tris would have to carry, he would also be carrying both men's sets of kit. In short, that's 70 pounds of kit on his back plus a man, across 200 metres in less than 90 seconds, and this would be done after the rope climb and the assault course had already exhausted most of the energy from his body. This test is one of pure grit and determination. Tris would focus, drive forward and not think of anything other than the finish line. He told me, "I don't have any problems doing it; it's just ball-bagging". Noticeably, none of the recruits could stand up straight for a short while after completing this run due to their exhausted weight-bearing bodies. At the finish line Tris' face was a picture of desolation. As he

gulped down water from his water bottle which he carries as a part of his kit, he exclaimed, "I love it once that's out the way".

The Full Regain is the last obstacle attempted and consists of a single rope about 45 feet across and suspended eight feet above a pool of water. You get to it by climbing up a ladder. Once there, the recruit would lie flat on top of the rope and start pulling himself out into the middle where he would be dangling over a tank of water about the size of a small swimming pool. Tris said, "What I hate most about this is when I first lay flat on the rope, because it hurts me nuts". Whilst in the middle of the rope Tris would have to keep hold of the rope with both hands and then tip himself off so that he was completely hanging underneath the rope. He would then have to use the correct technique in order to get himself back on top of the rope so that he could pull himself across the rest of the way to the other side where he can then climb down a scramble net. The Full Regain is more challenging than the Half Regain because on the Half Regain the recruit will keep his feet on the rope whilst dangling underneath. On the Full Regain however, the recruit will allow his entire body to dangle below the rope, maintaining contact on the rope with just two hands. This makes the recruit's task of getting his entire body back on top of the rope very challenging. Tris fell off the rope once during the winter months because whilst dangling underneath the rope he did not seem to have enough strength left in his upper body to get his feet back up on the rope and ended up in the tank, which was not a good experience especially because the water was ice cold. The tank is five feet deep so Tris was completely submerged when he initially hit the water, which left him in a state of temporary shock. The pool has ladders like the ones found in any public swimming pool, but he was not allowed to use them to exit - instead he had to claw his way out over the raised sides which rise about three feet above the water's surface. Due to the weight of his kit this is an almost impossible task and Tris therefore had to rely on a couple of his comrades to drag him out of the tank once he had 'swam' to the side. Like Jon, Tris passed all four rudiments of the Bottom Field pass-out in good form.

After the Obstacles

The Bottom Field presented my respondents with a mixture of feelings and emotions which I had the rare opportunity of observing and experiencing along with them. Most notable was the amount of sheer effort and hard work they were always applying to the tasks they were set. From the outset, it became a way of life for my respondents to work and train hard, especially on the Bottom Field where there was no escape from the

scrutinising and ever-watchful eye of the PTI instructors. On the morning of the pass-out my respondents were further subject to a second party of critical gazes from the rest of the training team who gathered on a slightly raised embankment to the side of the Bottom Field. By standing on the embankment the training team had a perfect and unobstructed view of the whole Bottom Field training session. The training team stood in a huddle and commented on the performance of the recruits at each stage of the tests.

At the end of the Bottom Field session, the PTIs handed my respondents back to the training team who then took them away for a shower and a clean-up before their next test which was a long hard 'load carry'. At this point, my respondents were looking drained of energy, their faces and hands grubby and their clothes wet through from either sweat or water where a couple of recruits fell into one or other of the water obstacles. At this point in the winter months they would have been shivering, but during these summer months they started instead to dehydrate. Nevertheless the recruits are expected to overcome the discomforts that their physical body is temporarily experiencing and stand perfectly still and to attention with an erect and proud posture in three ranks, until a member of the training team marches them back to their accommodation block where they can take a shower. They will be trooped back through the camp in full view of anyone looking on until they reach their destination. The member of the training team giving the drill will be keeping the recruits in close check by making loud and constant verbal commands. The recruits will be looking straight ahead and in complete submission to every man who is wearing a Green Beret, and who passes his gaze over them.

By the time my respondents have had their shower and crammed a couple of chocolate bars down their throats, their bodies have begun to recover from the draining effects of the morning pass-out session. As they re-dress themselves in fresh uniform, they make talk together and share their experience of the Bottom Field. This is a very important process for them because they tend to speak openly with one another and tell each other about their failings. Any difficulties that any individual had will be acknowledged by his peers and in turn, he will be reassured that everybody finds it hard, and that it will be OK in the end. The mood of my respondents picks up very quickly at this time, and soon they begin to laugh and joke about the hardships they have just incurred. Noticeably, my respondents become slightly excitable and use very large and exaggerated gesticulation to assist their explanations of particular moments that happened in the course of the session. I'll discuss this point further in the section below.

Recruit Narratives and the Re-Contextualisation of a Bottom Field Experience

Due to the physical intensity that the recruits were subjected to on the Bottom Field, they were left feeling exhausted and somewhat dilapidated. Soon after their shower, however, they began to 'pick-up' very quickly. As with most occasions of this sort, the conversation would begin with a general comment being thrown into the room. Whilst Tris was drying off with a towel, he looked into the middle of the room rather than at anybody in particular and said,

"I am glad *that* is over".

Jon smiled, and with it his whole face lit up as he added,

"yeah, one down".

Tris looked directly at Jon,

"That was definitely a lot harder than we've done in most Bottom Field sessions"

Thomas chipped in,

"Yeah I thought it was too, to be honest".

Tris explained to both Thomas and Jon,

"I think it was the warm-up. There's no way it's usually that knackered".

A recruit from Manchester Detachment joining in the conversation by saying,

"Well it's the first time I done it and glad it's the last"

Jon replied to this .

"First time? Shit, how lucky is that," he exclaimed whilst looking to Thomas and Tris for general agreement. He looked back to the Manchester Detachment recruit and said, "We've had our arses kicked on that Bottom Field constantly for about the last year".

The Manchester Detachment recruit said with an expression of surprise,

"No way! Do you actually come here to do your training all the time then?"

I remained in the room with the lads to listen to and record their conversation. The pattern with which the conversation developed was not dissimilar to most conversations that take place after a particularly demanding physical session. As illustrated above, the conversation begins from a place of tiredness where small sentences are offered into the group which suggest the subject matter. The first offerings are usually about a shared feeling such as how demanding the session was or how tired the body is left feeling. This stimulates the other recruits to join in with the conversation due to their shared knowledge of the subject and their need to express the stressful experience. As more

recruits join in with the conversation the general mood begins to lift through their change in emphasis to one where the difficult session is recounted according to narratives about celebrating the hardships they have overcome. These types of conversation, if uninterrupted, usually work up to a crescendo where the recruits are smiling and laughing as they look back over the session.

An interesting point regarding these post-trauma conversations is the gradual change of context in which they are communicated. To begin, when the mood is low and the recruits are tired, the difficult events are remembered within a context of hardship, pain and suffering. From my observations and unstructured style of interview with the recruits immediately after these kinds of events, I became aware that the recruits reported them to me and to each other with a general sentiment of dislike, and disassociation from its emotional charge. However, as the pace and tempo at which the narratives are being spoken begin to pick-up, I would also notice that the context of the session would begin to shift from disassociation and rejection to one in which the recruits become engaged, as a feature within the narrative itself.

Through a shared input from the group, the narratives become a celebration of their masculinity and identification as developing Marines. For this reason it is an important requirement of the ritual that all the recruits who are immediately witness to what I'd like to term as 'narrative re-contextualisation' must make a contribution to it. The significance of making a contribution is because in turn, this shows group agreement and approval for the new context in which the painful events are being re-interpreted and subsequently will be remembered. By the end of the narrative re-contextualisation session, the recruits are no longer looking abused and down-trodden, but are talking in positive regard about one another in terms of what they observed each other doing. From their observations of one another, they select relatively isolated but decisive moments and enter them into the narrative.

As I observed the recruits' process of entering each other into the shared narrative, I concluded that there were a couple of rules that the participants were expected to follow. Firstly, they did not seem to enter themselves into the narration - they only seemed to enter each other. Secondly, if they did want to recount and enter a particular experience or emotion state of their own into the narrative, they would do so in relation to someone

else's action. For example, I noted Jon entering an action which helped define his movement on a particular obstacle. He looked at Thomas and said,

“I actually thought I was going at a pretty good speed across that zigzag wall until I looked up and saw you go flying past”.

I interpreted Jon's information as a way of inserting into the narrative the fact that he was efficient and fast on the zigzag wall obstacle. In order to insert his speed - a sought-after quality - but so as not to appear self-appraising he then added the complimentary comment that Thomas went 'flying past' him. By entering an action of greater speed for Thomas, he could disguise his own self-appraising action-entry. To place this point into my context as anthropologist observer, I described earlier in the ethnographic example from the Bottom Field, that the zigzag wall is only about a brick's width wide, 20 feet long and in zigzag formation. All around the base of the wall lies barbed wire. Although this is an obstacle that the recruit should try to run across, it is still a relatively slow one. In an attempt to maintain balance and not to slip off into the barbed wire below it is usually dealt with cautiously. At most, a recruit who is particularly quick across the wall may gain one or maybe two strides over a slower recruit.

I'm hoping that my objective perspective can add an understanding of the event as it was more likely to have happened, rather than through Jon's perspective of high speeds. It is worth adding here an additional consideration that the recruits' perspectives and memories of difficult events may already be somewhat skewed from a more likely reality, due to the state of high arousal and stress that they would have been experiencing at the time.

Once the recruits were satisfied with their narrative's new context, they were up-beat again and looking forward to their next challenge.

Hard Training is Made Easy with Taff Around

Having accomplished the first task, the recruits were feeling good about themselves. They had been told by the training team that they would need to apply 110% effort whilst on the Bottom Field, and they did. Their level of effort was constantly gauged by the PTIs who, although in an unspoken way, made it quite clear that they would be merciless in adding to the intended physical session if they did not feel they were getting enough from

the recruits. The motto as spoken by the PTI Sergeant was, “Work hard and keep it simple”.

The pass-out session on the Bottom Field far exceeded anything my Respondents had expected. An Army recruit commented to me, “Even the warm-up knackers you out”. The warm-up is like a circuit training session, which kept my respondents running non-stop for over a quarter of an hour, using every part of their body. A number of recruits expressed to me that once the warm-up was over and it was time to begin, that it already felt like it should be the end. Pure efficiency was required of them - it had to be visible and the activity had to be constant. Their bodies and eyes had to look supercharged, infused and fully engaged with their purpose on the Bottom Field; which was effort. According to the training team, the Bottom Field itself had to look and feel alive. It had to become a living organism before the PTIs would be happy that they had achieved their goal in the training session. My respondents came to understand the purpose and rationale of the Bottom Field in much the same way, as a measure of hard work, determination and strength of mind. I never heard any of my respondents ask the question, “What is the point in doing that?” Once confronted with the Bottom Field, the recruits seemed able to relate the requirements of it to the physically and mentally versatile job that they were ultimately being trained to do.

In sum, the Bottom Field assault became an event of many emotions for my respondents as they progressed through their training programme. It has been designed to test every aspect of a recruit’s nature and every muscle in his body. It is an important part of his drill because it provides mechanisms that can break him emotionally at the start of his training year and then rebuild him nearer the end. As the training programme progressed, my respondents went through a number of peaks and troughs in terms of how they were viewed externally and more importantly, how they felt internally about themselves. By the time they had completed their Bottom Field pass-out for the final time on this morning, the general consensus among those who successfully passed was a feeling that they could take on anything presented to them, which was just as well because later that day they had to carry 120 pounds of kit on their backs for over ten miles, which was just the beginning of a very tough four day field exercise. Thomas, along with two other recruits who failed the rope climb, would be granted another opportunity to succeed on their return from the field exercise on Wednesday. But for now, like the rest of the course

they must remain positive and prepare to depart CTC at 14:00 hours for the commencement of their four day exercise.

Carrying 120 lbs of weight on their backs over the ten miles caused serious blistering feet for many of the course. Two of the recruits barely made it and one failed. At the end of the yomp in scorching sun, the course participants were all subject to a foot inspection. As an outcome of the foot inspection they would need to be declared fit in order to proceed. After clearance at the foot inspection the recruits could partake on the ensuing four day field exercise which would test all the field craft skills they had learned during the past year. They are rigorously assessed on their patrolling, reconnaissance, camouflage, fire-manoeuvre tactics, weaponry and many more of their essential basic Commando skills.

Their first night was spent occupying an OP (Observation Post) from which they watched the training team's building, which for the purpose of this exercise was the enemy base. They recorded the movements of its inhabitants as well as undertaking patrols and close range reconnaissance. At the request of the training team I assisted them in acting the part of an enemy soldier for several of the serials which were designed to test the recruits' powers of observation in the dark. Taff, a training team Sergeant, and I did night serials at 00:30, 04:30 and 06:00 hours. It is worth pointing out that the name Taff has been assigned to him by his comrades to denote his Welsh heritage. In the Marines, as in other cultural circles in Britain there tend to be a number of men called Taff, Jock (Scottish) and Paddy (Irish). Interestingly, whereas Scottish, Irish and Welsh men tend to be referred to more generically, the English are assigned a greater number of categorisations based on their regional heritage, for example 'Brum', from Birmingham. In small groups just the nickname itself would be used when addressing one another, whereas in larger groups or when talking about a comrade who is not present, the nickname would be used followed by his surname. For example I had a Sergeant during my training called Brum Warrington. It seemed as if nobody knew his real first name because Brum became synonymous with him, as is tradition in Marines culture.

Taff is a charismatic character, a natural story-teller and comedian. I would often hear my respondents reporting to me that they most enjoyed training when it was conducted by Taff. At regular intervals he would sit them down and tell old war stories and ditts which had arisen from his many years' Regular service. Taff would mesmerise the recruits with

his larger than life comedic gestures and fabulous vocal intonation which he used perfectly to emphasise the rib-tickling absurdity in his perception on social reality. In terms of how most training team members would present and perform their roles to the recruits in order to command the required respect and subservience from them, Taff was the exception to that norm. At times my observations led me to think that he placed himself right on their (low) level in order that he could communicate and engage with them whole-heartedly, but yet the recruits showed no signs that they might take advantage of his generosity. The recruits looked forward to their next three days in the field with Taff around. One recruit said to me, "I wish all of them were like Taff".

Days 3, 4 and 5: Living in the Open Environment

On the third and fourth days my respondents were carrying out long-range reconnaissance missions, and Ob (observation) stances. They were split into three sections ensuring one section was always in the OP performing constant observations on the team building. At 06:00 hours on Wednesday, 'Endex' (meaning end of exercise) was declared. My respondents were exhausted having had little more than around three hours' sleep per night. They were transported back to CTC by minibus where they had to hand back certain field-kit items to the stores, clean themselves and their personal kit, eat lunch and be ready at the Tarzan Assault Course raring to go for 14:00 hours. Unfortunately for Thomas and the two other course members who failed their Bottom Field pass-out on Sunday morning, they would have to do their re-run prior to the Tarzan acquaint. Thomas and the other two lads did the Bottom Field re-run at 13:30 hours. Thomas passed this time. But unfortunately the other two recruits failed for a second time. They will be granted one last chance later in the course. If, however, they miss the mark on any other test they will fail the course. I asked Thomas how he was feeling. He said ecstatically, "Excellent. I knew I would do it. I used a slightly different grip on the rope with my legs, locking off rather than trying to grip with my feet, I felt as though I could have kept going well beyond 30 feet."

At 14:00 hours they began the Tarzan acquaint which is a high altitude assault course designed to test their courage. The first half of the course is set up with ropes, cargo nets, zip wires and thin planks of wood used to cross over from one obstacle to the next. The course is designed to make the recruits feel vulnerable by the absence of too many safety mechanisms. One slip or a fall could be horrendous. The second half of the course joins

onto the Bottom Field assault course and finishes with a near-vertical 30 ft. (approx.) rope climb up a wall to the finish. The Tarzan Assault begins with a zip wire from a great height - after climbing up a series of ladders to the top of a tall tower the recruit must hold a piece of rope in one hand, throw the loose end over the zip wire and then take hold of the other loose end with the other hand, and that's it! When the recruits are tired and carrying the additional weight of their rifle and belt kit, the leap off the platform can be daunting. I felt very comfortable to be watching this rather than participating with my respondents (which on this occasion I was not permitted to do).

As I stood watching my respondents I remembered how I felt whilst preparing to do this test on my Commando course three years ago. The zip wire was my most feared event. As I launched myself onto the zip during my pass-out, I almost lost my grip on the rope - my heart felt as if it had increased its rate of beats ten-fold. Had I have lost my grip I would have fallen around 50 feet to the grass with 30 lbs of kit on my back whilst travelling in a forward motion. Many of my respondents reported to me that they were experiencing the same anticipation about the zip wire. They were not re-assured when they were informed by the PTIs that technique and concentration is vital because just two weeks previously, a recruit did let go of the rope and fell to the ground causing severe injuries including a broken pelvis. He was medically discharged from the Marines. One of the Territorial Army recruits told me, "I want to leave the course because I just don't want to go down that zip wire".

Day 6: Three Tests in One Day

On Thursday morning at 08:30 hours the course participants were being tested on their weapon handling drills in the weapons stances. This is a pass or fail weapons test. All members of the course passed. During the tests it was realised by the training team that the Territorial Army recruit who was afraid of the zip wire jump the day before had now gone AWOL (Absent Without Leave) from the course. He never returned.

At 10:55 hours the course were in the indoor swimming pool to do their Battle Swimming Test (BST). They wore a full length set of overalls, a belt kit (but not at full weight) and a rifle slung across their backs. The test began with a jump into the water off a high diving board, followed by a thirty metre swim, and treading water for three minutes. For the few

very strong swimmers this is a reasonably comfortable test but for the moderate and weak swimmers it is worrying and very unsettling. The weight of the kit being carried entails recruits fighting just to keep their heads at the water's surface. This test is tiring and feels alarming because of the mouthfuls of water going down the throat instead of much-needed oxygen.

I stood on the side of the pool and watched in anticipation as one recruit started to show signs of struggle and despair. He had a small frame and did not appear strong enough to counter the weight on his back. He started fighting his kit. The irony here is that his kit is designed to save his life but in this circumstance it might take it. His face began to spend more time under the water than above it. He stopped being able to breathe sufficient oxygen and realised he could not make it to safety. He started panicking noticeably and then started to sink. I felt as if I now know what a man's face and eyes would look like as he realises he's about to drown. The Sergeant PTI ordered two men in swimming trunks to dive in and pull him out. He failed the test and consequently the whole course, because had this incident have been real, he would have died. He was RTU'd (Returned to Unit) the following day.

Later that afternoon, the course was due to begin their endurance pass-out run, starting at 14:00 hours. They left CTC at 13:15 having to find their own way to the start of the endurance course which is around three miles away. The endurance run consists of a giant obstacle course around four miles long, followed by a three mile road run back to CTC. The first obstacles require my respondents to crawl flat on their belly through giant 'Smartie tube' tunnels often full of stinking water in the pitch black. These tubes can be 30 to 50 metres long and a metre or two underground, which is incredibly claustrophobic for some recruits. The big guys can barely fit into the tubes. The ground media is sharp and cuts skin easily while the tin walls are jagged, posing a constant threat to the head. Thomas described to me how this obstacle makes him feel paranoid. He explained:

"As you're crawling through in the pitch black you can feel your arms rubbing against the inside tin walls as you fight to squeeze through. I get totally paranoid that I'm gonna get stuck or gash my head open on a piece of jagged tin on the roof".

My respondents on the whole report similar interpretations about the feelings aroused whilst fighting their way through the tubes. They are dark, damp and isolated conduits

buried several feet underground. Whilst crawling through, my recruits tell me they are only aware of the echo caused by their movements as they scamper over the loose shingle which lies submerged under the foot or two of sometimes putrid water. As the recruits exhaustingly drag their bodies and 35 lbs of kit through, they explain how their clothes are constantly getting hitched on jagged tin sticking out into their path. Some of the bigger recruits tell me that there are certain points where they only manage to get through with a violent and panicked struggle. The training team always have several picks and shovels with them in case the walls cave in whilst a recruit is clawing his way through. The tubes are around three feet in diameter and at times the water level is so high that there is just about a foot of breathing space between the surface of the water and the roof of the tunnel. The nature of the tubes dictates that once in, there is no way of turning back.

After the series of tubes and tunnels had been negotiated my respondents continued to make their way cross-country to the 'sheep dip'. This is a short concrete tunnel entirely submerged in dirty water. Many recruits fear this obstacle. The object is to jump in to a pool of water and swim through a submerged tunnel which is not actually big enough to swim through. The only way to complete this obstacle is through teamwork and an absolute trust in the group bond. The recruit going through the tunnel takes a deep breath and forces himself under water to the entrance of the tunnel. As he does so, one of his comrades who is in the pool with him will grab his trouser belt and force him forward into the tunnel. At this point, the recruit in the tunnel is technically stuck. Quite simply he has been wedged into a tube fully submerged in muddy water, a bit like a cork in a bottle. Left there unassisted, he will likely drown. So to complete the obstacle, a third recruit is waiting at the exit end of the tunnel. He is deep in the water with an arm fully stretched out into the tube waiting to feel some part of the recruit's body so he can grab it and pull him the rest of the way through the tube and up to the surface of the water. A swift and successful completion of this obstacle is reliant on the first recruit getting into the correct state of mind so he does not panic, the second recruit shoving the first fully into the tunnel as far as he can, and the third recruit at the ready to receive the first at the tunnel's exit. During the early stages of my fieldwork when the recruits were being familiarised with this obstacle, I observed some very high levels of anxiety during their preparation. As Jon came through the tunnel and clambered out the other side, he quietly shouted to me as he sprinted off,

"At least it's not the winter".

The final obstacle is the 'clay pit'. It is exactly as it sounds - a naturally formed bog which my respondents cannot try to run through or they will sink. It is like quicksand, but not quite so quick. They must disperse their body weight across the surface and crawl. It is hard, hard work. One of the Army Privates later described the experience as though he was paralysed. He said,

“You just can't move. Especially with your kit on and covered in that clay shit, it weighs a ton”.

Once the recruits have made it across the surface of the clay without getting sucked into it, they must then climb out by finding a way up the small slippery and muddy embankment whilst carrying what feels like another person on their back caused by the weight of clay that sticks like glue to every part of them and their equipment. The recruits will often not be able to claw their way out without assisting one another. This is the last obstacle at the end of the four mile obstacle section of the seven mile course and it completely saps any remaining energy.

After the clay pit my respondents have a three mile run back to CTC with kit and boots that feel double the weight from all the super-adhesive clay that they are now caked in from head to toe. Once the finish line has been crossed at the 25 metre shooting range inside the camp, and assuming that completion is within the required time, the recruits must immediately shoot on the range and achieve the required number of successful hits. They are tired and breathing heavily, and after all their effort on the endurance run a couple of recruits failed because their rifle failed to operate correctly on the shoot having become too clogged up with dirt from the endurance course obstacles. For this reason, keeping the rifle clean whilst on the endurance run is number one priority. For a Marine it's no good 'taking a battle to the enemy' if the rifle fails when you engage because you didn't keep it from getting soiled.

The Endurance course is tough and drains the body of energy. Ten of the recruits failed the endurance pass-out: eight on the run and two at the shoot. Fortunately my four original respondents from Bristol Detachment passed with reasonable comfort. The day was complete by 17:00 hours. They had the evening to themselves to dhobi (wash and clean) their kit, eat lots, rest and prepare for the following day. Today was a particularly energy-absorbing day. In particular I noted in my fieldwork diary:

'Anxiety increasing as the Commando tests gets closer'

'Commando tests' in this context refers specifically to the nine mile speed march, Tarzan Pass-out and 30-miler, all of which are scheduled for the second week's testing.

Day 7: More Practice amid the Tests

The course turned to (assembled) on Friday morning for 07:45 to do a timed practice run on the Tarzan Assault. After each recruit had finished, he had to stand in formation and wait until the whole course finished before the PTIs tell them their times and whether or not they have passed. Whilst waiting I would walk around quietly chatting to them. I noticed how anxiously they waited to hear their times. On this occasion I was asking my respondents how they found the run. Tris replied, "I was blowing out my hoop the whole way round". This expression is used to indicate that one orifice to breathe in and out of is not enough! Unfortunately, four of the recruits failed the timed run. The rest of the day consisted of lessons on the GPMG (General Purpose Machine Gun), a very heavy duty, belt-fed weapon. I remarked in my diary:

'The weather has been great so far and the recruits have not had any rain to contend with'

Day 8: Ceremony and Taboo

Saturday was essentially a rest day except for the ten recruits who needed to re-take the Endurance course. Prior to this, the whole course had a morning duty at 11:00 hours to attend the stores and draw their Green Berets and Commando Flashes. The Commando Flashes are stitched onto the upper arm of one's uniform and bears the words 'Royal Marines Commando' to signify status. Recruits may only do this once awarded them at the end of their 30 mile run on Tuesday. The Green Berets however, require a little more attention. They need to be shaped in a particular way which I'll describe as the 'beret shaping ritual'.

The beret shaping ritual begins as soon as the recruits return to their accommodation with their berets in hand having drawn them from stores. They had previously practiced this ritual when in their Phase One-Alpha training at the start of the course. Phase One-Alpha was denoted by the presence of the blue coloured beret for which they received shaping

instruction from their training team. Having practiced with the blue beret, they would now apply the practiced shaping skills to their soon-to-be permanent Green Berets.

I followed a couple of informants as they took their berets to a sink in the toilet and shower room. They ran the hot tap until the water was running at its hottest. Once hot, they filled the sink and then placed the beret upside-down into the water for around three minutes. The hot water rendered the material supple, allowing it to be moulded to the desired shape. As one of my informants took the beret out of the sink he placed it straight onto his head, being careful to place the cap-badge area above his left eye. He then smoothed the material over from left to right so that the beret fitted tightly and shapely to the left side of the head, creating a lip which hung slightly down the right side. In conjunction with the smoothing-over, the beret had to be manipulated around the cap-badge area to create the correct 'upright' appearance.

My informant then held the beret firmly in place with his hands so the material could cool down and 'set'. I noticed that some recruits added in an extra stage to the headdress preparation: after having placed it upon their heads for shaping, they would assist the cooling and setting process by submerging it in a sink filled with cold water. They generally repeated this procedure two or three times before achieving the desired shape. Having achieved the correct shape they tended to leave the berets upon their heads whilst moving around their accommodation block, allowing it to set and begin drying in the moulded shape. Here, it is essential that they observe the physical boundaries of the accommodation building that they are in. For the purpose of the beret shaping ritual, the accommodation space becomes temporarily exempt from observance of the beret laws of all other space which the Marines community occupy, which contain strict rules of taboo. Under no circumstances can the Green Beret be placed upon the head of a recruit in any space or at any time other than how I have described it above.

Once the berets have begun to stiffen, the recruits look for a suitable ledge to place them where they can be left undisturbed to thoroughly dry out. Once a suitable ledge has been established such as a window-sill or top of a locker, the surface of that space will be cleaned of dust as if to prepare a sacred ground on which the beret can sit and be admired. I observed a respondent gently take the beret off his head and place it on to a prepared window-sill with the rim of the headdress resting on the surface and the folded-over

material hanging over the ledge. One respondent told me, "I just can't stop looking at it." He used his thumb and fore-finger to gesture to me as he said, "I'm this close."

Once shaped and placed onto their sacred setting positions, the berets will be left in place all day to dry. The drying and setting ground that the berets rest on is considered sacred due to the existence of another taboo that surrounds the setting process. Quite simply, it is forbidden for any person, except him to whom it belongs, to touch the beret during the drying part of the shaping procedure. The significance of this rule is that the training team are also included in the taboo. It's worth noting one final point - that these taboo rules are not taught to the recruits, and neither are they found written down; they are learned through exposure to the Marines culture and through learning the value placed upon the Green Beret. Freud talked about taboos being so strongly ingrained that, in certain societies, even contact with an item that belongs to a taboo person can cause death to the person who touches it (Freud, 1913, p. 50).

During the afternoon, the recruits left the berets to set and dry whilst they attended the endurance course re-runs for those who failed their pass-out run on day six. It is a condition of their rest-day that the recruits who passed the run first time will turn-out to support their comrades on the re-run. Some will actually run the course in loose order (without kit) so as to encourage their mates who previously failed. Only one recruit from the re-takers failed. He became lost whilst running through the wooded area at the end section of the obstacles on Woodbury Common. Provided he doesn't fail any other tests, he will be granted one further attempt at the endurance course on day thirteen - two days after he will have run the 30-miler.

Back at the 'grots', the recruits placed a name tag inside their dry and shaped berets and handed them back to the training team¹³ who were tending to administrative matters in the training team office referred to as RFTT (Reserve Forces Training Team). The berets will then be officially awarded to them along with the Commando Flashes at the end of the 30-miler (assuming they have passed all the other tests). However, they will not actually be permitted to wear their Green Berets upon their head until they have been presented one final time by the Commanding Officer (RM) on Friday morning at the pass-out parade.

¹³ The taboo about touching another man's beret is lifted once the beret has been shaped and dried.

Day 9: The Nine Mile Speed March

Early on Sunday morning, the course gathered on the top field which is situated outside the perimeter fence, on the opposite side of the road that runs past the main gates of CTC. In preparation for the nine mile speed march the recruits had to ensure that they were ready to begin on time by checking their kit over and most importantly ensuring their kit weighed the correct amount (22 lbs). The general rule of thumb was that recruits were responsible for acquiring their own measuring apparatus and sourcing appropriate weights to place in the pouches on their belt-kit in order that it weighs true. When the PTIs arrive at the start of the run they will as a matter of routine produce their own scales and measure each person's kit. If it falls shy of the required weight, the recruit must find some stones and rocks to place inside the kit. He will then bring it back and have it re-weighed. On this particular morning, a number of recruits' kit was weighing a pound or two underweight. I could sense the frustration growing in the training team until finally the PTI Sergeant said to the group in a reasonably forceful voice,

“If anybody else hands me under-weight kit, I’m gonna stick a fuckin brick in it and you can carry it around your speed march”.

After this disappointing start the recruits proceeded over the nine mile speed march. This is a fast paced run whilst carrying their kit. Spencer (nickname) failed and was not given a re-take opportunity because he also failed the endurance course pass-out on Thursday afternoon - thus ‘two strikes and you’re out’. He pulled out of the run with just one mile to go. He said, “The pace was OK but my Achilles was killing me and I just couldn’t carry on”. I asked him how he was feeling about that to which he replied, “I don’t feel so bad with it being medical reasons”. He said he was gutted but at the same time very positive about coming back to re-take the course when he is fitter and stronger. One of the Sergeants commented, “He’s weak”.

After the day’s training had been completed, the recruits were in their relative grots servicing their kit when one recruit announced to each dorm that they were to be fell-in outside the accommodation block in ten minutes. The recruits hastily dressed themselves appropriately and uniformly, and then hurried down the stairs where they lined up on the concrete pavement by the entrance door and waited. Their course Corporal came walking toward them from the direction of the training team office. As he approached, the recruits stood to attention. The Corporal told them, “Stand easy”. They relaxed from the taut upright posture with their hands by their sides, to hands behind their backs and legs

slightly apart. The Corporal proceeded to give them stern words about their lack of preparation before that morning's speed march. He said to them, "You're on your Commando course now lads - you should have this sort of thing squared away, it's basic stuff". It was more of a pep talk than a disciplinary. The Corporal left after no more than five minutes so the recruits could get on with their admin.

This particular incident is very symbolic of the liminal phase in their training they have now reached. If this type of negligence to requirement occurred during earlier training phases, they were sure to have been harshly disciplined. But due to the liminal significance of the two week Commando course they were approached much more on the level of an equal. This provided the recruits with extra motivation for the rest of the course due to their newly perceived closeness with their Corporal. It also served the purpose of preparing the recruits for the final transformation into Marines, where they would need to be self-motivated without the need to receive orders, which was now just a few days away for those who go on and succeed.

Whilst I was chatting to the recruits in their grots shortly after this incident, one recruit said to me, "I was quite surprised how chilled out he was about it. Normally we'd get a bollocking". When I enquired further as to why he thought the Corporal was chilled out on this occasion, a second recruit chipped in with "Perhaps he got some from his missus this morning". The recruits all laughed at this quip. Then a third recruit offered in a sincere tone, "I think it's because we are on our Commando course and they just treat you differently once you've got this far". The first recruit then added, "Yeah, I don't think they wanna fuck you about too much if they can help it - while you're doing your tests". I thanked the lads for their input and left them to prepare for the Tarzan Assault course the following morning.

Day 10: The Tarzan Assault Course and Preparation for the 30-Miler

On the morning of Day 10 my respondents threw themselves into their Tarzan Assault pass-out. Three of the recruits failed - one of the three didn't finish because he fell off one of the obstacles whereas the other two were just too slow getting around the obstacles. They will have to do a re-run later the same day. The comment made to me by the PTI Sergeant was,

"They failed because they were lacking in aggression".

In context, this means that the Tarzan Assault is extremely demanding on an individual's determination and fitness. When running the course a recruit needs to get angry and aggressive with it in order to push himself around at the required level of intensity. The three recruits who failed re-ran the course later that afternoon but only one of them passed the test, a recruit from RMR Scotland. He passed with a minute and a half to spare which would have given him a very good time. When I asked him why he couldn't have achieved that time on his earlier attempt, he answered,

“I really don't know, it's weird, I just couldn't get myself going earlier”.

I asked him if he felt extra motivation because his mates had passed and he hadn't. He explained,

“Yeah, probably. I did feel like I let the unit down a bit. But a lot of it was probably seeing them all turn out to show me support”.

Later on Monday evening the recruits were moved to Oakhampton Camp by minibus in preparation for their 30 mile run the following day. This event for most of my respondents was the most intense and emotional event. It will be detailed in the following chapter *Ceremonial Acceptance*.

Chapter Conclusion

The phase of training which I have referred to as *The Testing Stage* has been strongly characterised by the requirement for the recruits to perform as Marines. In this chapter I have described in some detail the first ten days of the two week liminal period which sits on the back of their year-long training programme. Essentially I'd like to show that the testing period referred to as *Commando Course* is a liminal period of time where the recruits should have reached the required level of acclimatisation to Marines working and operating conditions. This readiness is tested by sending the recruits on a number of varying courses, some familiar and some never before attempted. The sensibility of these obstacle courses is that whilst performing on them the instructors can control the activity and thereby create stressful and difficult circumstances for the recruits, in which they'll need to perform and demonstrate mastery of their skills. For the recruits, to perform their Military skill is to perform masculinity and control over the prevailing circumstances. In the Conclusions Chapter I hope to draw on the work of Herzfeld's *The Poetics of Manhood* (1988) in order to develop the idea that for men to prove themselves worthy of

a masculine status, they have to try constantly to achieve the desired identity through performance of it.

The recruits demonstrated the principles of sustained performance with an enormous measure of effort. Further challenges faced by the recruits, which I detailed at the beginning of the chapter, were created through an amalgamation with other Marines and Army units with whom my respondents had never trained or met before. For the recruits this presented a dimension of the unfamiliar because whilst training within their usual groups, the recruits became accustomed to the working practices of their familiar colleagues. Working within an entirely new group could have potentially posed some challenges. As Nigel Foster puts it in his book *The Making of a Royal Marines Commando*, the level of Marines training is such that:

“CTC is the only training centre in the world where men are trained to Operational Performance Standards which means they are capable of taking their place in an operational Commando unit the moment they leave basic training” (Foster, 1998, p. 38).

With this in mind I hope to show how being put with other unfamiliar recruits is a necessary test of their skills at gelling-in with one another and showing success at communicating in the required tongue.

As the tests got underway, I gave a detailed ethnographic example of the Bottom Field Assault Course as experienced by Thomas, Jon and Tris. My aim here was to provide the reader with a ‘feel’ for what the physical experience of attempting a Marines assault course might be like. After the recruits had finished their particularly challenging Bottom Field session I highlighted their shared conversation during which they changed the context of their unpleasant experience into a positive celebration of their masculinity and accomplishment at performing and overcoming the difficult tasks. I referred to this as the narrative re-contextualisation ritual which was a well-practiced ritual that generally followed most group hardships. I hope to demonstrate as a result of hearing numerous narrative rituals, that the re-contextualising of unpleasant experiences serves a number of purposes. Firstly, the recruits are able to change an unpleasant memory into a positive-action memory. Secondly, it is a means through which they can recognise and celebrate their achievements at masculine feats. And finally it serves as a flux facilitator -- a method

by which they can re-energise and re-assume a positive outlook which is essential for success at Commando training.

During a general conversation with one respondent whilst in the Galley one evening, I noted his comment to me, "It's weird how you always talk about it afterwards as though you really enjoyed it at the time". This recruit's statement highlights that there is a consciousness of this process, raising the question: if training can be such a negative experience, then why do recruits speak so fondly of it afterwards? The answer according to Faris is in the affinity that the recruit has with his Drill Sergeant (Faris in Goldman & Segal, 1976, p. 16). Faris argued that recruits find meaning and value in unpleasant training experiences through their relationship with their Drill Sergeant ('Course Sergeant' in Marines terminology). If the relationship is strong, then the recruits will remember the incident according to the positive association with the Drill Sergeant, who was present at the time.

In contrast to this claim made by Faris, I would like to make the case that their post-training positive memories are created because recruits have re-contextualised them through shared input and agreement from the group. I would also like to suggest that any positive affiliation that forms part of the memories will be with one's comrades rather than one's training instructors. In the re-contextualisation ceremonies to which I bore witness, the instructors were largely presented in the narratives as big tough masculine men who made the training conditions very difficult, in fact worse than they sometimes were. In this sense the recruits could further accentuate their hardships and thereby increase the celebration for overcoming the unbearable difficulties set by the ogre-like instructors.

One further point I would like to offer in support of my suggestions is that during the course of their training, the recruits had a number of different training team instructors. Whereas Faris suggests that recruits would have one particular Drill Sergeant, my recruits did not. According to Bachman and Blair (1976), by training recruits with different training teams, they will be kept on their toes and not able to become familiar with the training team's personalities and idiosyncrasies. I'd like to suggest that in the same way, neither would they establish the strong affiliations that Faris claimed. I will fully develop the topic of narrative in the conclusions.

As the recruits were nearing the half-way point in their testing I highlighted some of the more serious tests such as the Tarzan Assault, which was a high altitude course testing the recruits' levels of vertigo. It was here that a recruit from the Army told me, "I want to leave the course because I just don't want to go down that zip wire". After the Tarzan Assault, the recruits prepared for their Battle Swimming Test (BST) which was carried out in the indoor swimming pool adjacent to the gymnasium. I specifically highlighted the struggle faced by one particular recruit who failed this test and thus failed the whole course with immediate effect. Interestingly, for most tests, when a recruit fails, he will usually be granted a second and even a third attempt at passing it, providing that it is the only test he's failed. I'd like to suggest that the reason for this stark contrast can be understood in terms of the perceived threat and danger of failure. In this sense, the theory is similar to the one applied during kit and weapon inspections where the severity of punishment for a failed inspection was weighed up according to the danger that the failed item posed to the health and welfare of the recruit. In the case of the BST it stands to reason that if a recruit is to go on and serve in an amphibious warfare unit and can't swim, clearly the consequences are likely to be fatal. By offering these examples I hope to have shown that the severity of a recruit's failure during testing is correlated directly to the potential severity it would cause to him or his comrades whilst on active service. I don't recall seeing these important connections being detailed by other authors.

As the course entered into day nine, participants were focussed on their nine mile speed march pass-out. I made particular reference here to Spencer who had to pull out of the run due to his Achilles injury. Unfortunately for Spencer, he had already failed his endurance run as well. As a consequence he was RTU'd (returned to unit) from the course. I asked him how he was feeling about that to which he replied, "I don't feel so bad with it being medical reasons". I hope that by offering another example of failure and rejection from the course and therefore the Marines culture, I am able to demonstrate that as the pace, stress and intensity of the tests continue to increase their burden on the body, the recruits, regardless of their year-long devotion to Marines training and the high level physical fitness they have achieved, are nevertheless unable to show they have adequately adapted for full acceptance into the Marines community. This point can also demonstrate that despite the enormous investment of power that the Corps has thus far made on Spencer during the past year, Marines culture would rather reject a recruit, possibly forever, than to make the slightest of exceptions to its qualifying standards.

During their preparation for the speed march, the recruits ruffled the feathers of the PTI Sergeant due to their unacceptable kit preparation. That evening they were given a ticking-off by their course Corporal. I would like to suggest that this seemingly small incident did in fact carry a weight of significance in terms of the recruits' progression through the liminal period of Commando tests. I made the point that in times past, the recruits would have paid heavy penance for such inattention to correct kit preparation. When I asked the recruits afterwards what they thought of the Corporal's relaxed approach, one recruit told me, "I think it's because we are on our Commando course and they just treat you differently; once you've got this far".

Another recruit added, "Yeah, I don't think they wanna fuck you about too much if they can help it – while you're doing your tests".

I offered the interpretation that the recruits were going through an essential transition due to their increasingly close proximity to full Marines membership. For this reason the training team were starting the process of welcoming them on board by levelling the responsibility for self-motivation at their own feet.

I would like to make a further point regarding the significance of this incident. When one considers the reasons offered by the recruits as to why the Corporal was so relaxed in his manner towards them, which were typical responses, they showed an entirely different understanding of social reality than the one I am attempting to present. I hope to seek support with this example for the idea that the 'natives' in this culture are subject to a social reality which executes mechanisms of change upon them of which they are relatively unaware.

The final summary I would like to make about the events covered in Chapter Five centre around further recruit failures, this time from the Tarzan Pass-out when three recruits failed. A PTI told me, "They failed because they were lacking in aggression".

I'd like to suggest that his reference to lacking aggression is the same as saying that the failed recruits are not masculine enough for membership. Later on that day the three recruits were given a subsequent opportunity during which only one of them passed and with a considerably good time. When I asked him if he found extra motivation to pass the re-run because his mates had passed and he had not, he replied, "Yeah, probably. I did feel like I let the unit down a bit. But a lot of it was probably seeing them all turn out to show me support".

In light of this offering, I would like to suggest that the intensity and stress state caused by this high altitude obstacle course was more than this recruit could bear whilst exposed to it in isolation. He was therefore unable to perform his skill efficiently enough. When he returned later in the day to re-take the run, as is custom, his comrades also attended in order to show support and encouragement. With this support he finished the course in a very fast time. I would like to suggest that this is a good example of the idea that success at achieving full Marines membership is heavily determined by successful group solidarity and peer support as a means of adjusting to the required calibre of masculinity.

I would like to suggest with particular reference to my above example, that my work is highlighting some very important issues around understanding the strength and meaning of group solidarity. Within Military literature, detailed reports are few and far between. Morris Janowitz argued that the reason sociologists began to get involved in the study of the Military was essentially to understand what could make a soldier better. Early conclusions showed that the answer, according to Janowitz, was to be found in ideas of group solidarity (Janowitz, 1965, p. 28). In light of this I hope to further demonstrate a depth of knowledge about group solidarity and its functional importance in my discussion on personhood in the Conclusions Chapter.

Before setting out my conclusions, however, I will present the final ethnographic chapter – *Ceremonial Acceptance* – wherein I will detail the recruits' final Commando test and their emergence from liminality as recruits, into Royal Marines.

Chapter 6

Ceremonial Acceptance

Introduction

After nearly two weeks of relentless testing as detailed in the previous chapter, the recruits now face their omens on the well-renowned thirty mile run. This final physical act of passage will truly test their commando spirit. On successful completion of the run they will be clapped across the line by their training teams and by their senior commanding officer, the Colonel.

This chapter will explore some of the rituals and ceremonies that accompany the thirty mile run, and detail the self-empowerment narratives that follow completion of this final testing stage. I will further detail the Green Beret award ceremonies whilst hoping to capture the recruits' experience of enervation and elation, during this final and most significant transitory ceremony.

I will begin the chapter by first setting the scene with some exploration of the recruits' preparation prior to the thirty mile run. For them, the mental preparation began during their minibus journey from CTC to Dartmoor the evening before their test.

Day 11: Last Night before the 30-Miler

Gruelling! That one word might best describe this final experience and the measure of performance my respondents are about to give. The unique aspect of the 30-miler is that unlike the preceding tests it never gets rehearsed and for that reason alone it causes the most anticipation. This run is a tremendous test of team spirit, team bonds and collective will-power, pushing exhausted and painful bodies and mental attitude, and fighting against the unknown. After a whole year of preparation, the recruits are now ready to attempt this final test. The 30 mile run is the most talked about challenge, and is solely responsible for most of the trepidation that the recruits have been experiencing over the

past two weeks. It is without doubt the most demanding challenge on their pain thresholds.

To place it into context one should consider the London Marathon which is 26¼ miles on a relatively flat road performed by athletes who are at peak condition prior to the start of the race. The 30-miler is a different story. It is almost four miles longer and is run across Dartmoor, an environment which includes changeable weather conditions, hills which at times are so steep it's almost a vertical climb, and terrain which is characterised by ruts, holes, bogs, long grass and rocks. The recruits will normally run the course in syndicates of eight, each man carrying his personal kit weighing around 35lbs (including water), plus one safety Bergen weighing around 30 lbs which members of the syndicate carry in turn. The most compelling factor is that at the start of the run the recruits are not in peak physical shape due to having already completed almost two weeks of Commando tests. By the time they are at the start line and ready to begin the 30 miles, their bodies and minds are already exhausted. Most recruits will have feet covered in blisters and sores, and bodies which are bruised and battered. Thomas who regularly suffers from blistering feet will be starting the run with a raw open blister on his right foot about the size of a squash ball. In a similar vein, one of my respondents from RMR London has a sore on his lower back the size of an A4 sheet of paper caused by his belt-kit rubbing during the aforementioned endurance tests. It will now continue to rub with every footstep – like sand paper – for another 30 miles.

During Monday evening my respondents were taken by minibus from CTC to an old-looking stone hut at Oakhampton Camp from which they will begin the run early the following morning. The stone hut is isolated on the moors at the end of a long track. It is basic, but functional and clean. It is a single storey hut split into two dorms. As you walk in through the front door, one room is to the left and one to the right. My informants were all situated in the dorm to the right, whilst I was in the dorm to the left with the training team because there was no available space with the recruits. By the time we arrived on the Monday evening, my respondents had a couple of hours to check their kit over and get themselves ready for the run. They were given their evening meal at 19:00 after which they started getting ready for bed.

My routine on arrival at the camp consisted of carrying my kit into the hut and locating a bunk. Once I realised what room I would be in, I waited for the training team to select

their beds before setting out mine. I did this on purpose because as a 'guest' I wouldn't wish to appear presumptuous by taking first pick of the bunks. Bed selection in Marine culture, like many things, has a pecking order. My bed ended up as the one closest to the door. The theory tends to be that those with the highest status locate their bed closest to the back of the room. The further from the door you are, the less people will have to walk through 'your space'. Thus, being by the door everybody walked through my sleeping space. I sorted out my belongings, placing most of it under my bed, and using the bed-knobs as convenient rigging to hang my clothes on.

The training team seemed unusually subdued and were not engaging in their typical banter, story-telling and humour. I put this down to the recruits being in ear-shot, just across the corridor. On this occasion the usual rules that exist ensuring that training team and recruits have separate 'living quarters' is overlooked. It maybe that due to the remote location of the hut on the moors, the compact accommodation has to suffice. However, it could succinctly be gleaned that at the end of the 30 mile run, those recruits who are successful will be awarded their Green Berets. The close proximity that the recruits now have to the training team's established Marine status could be the reason that the usual ritual of segregated sleeping spaces for the recruits and the training team can be relaxed slightly.

I quietly walked into my informants' dorm wearing just a t-shirt, my boxers and socks. I was getting ready for an early night too in preparation for the run but wanted to talk to my informants before hitting the sack. They were mostly wearing very similar attire to me and some were already in their beds making the most of their resting time. The atmosphere in the room was rather passive, soft and quiet. It felt as though there was a complete absence of the usual high spirits and testosterone that I came to associate so strongly with the spaces that my super-charged informants occupied. This evening was different - they were different. I spoke with several of my informants about how they were feeling and what they were thinking. Jon said to me in an extremely calm voice, "I'm feeling good, tired, but good". Andy told me, "I'm just thinking that this time tomorrow we'd have done it". I walked down the left hand side of their dorm to Thomas nursing his feet. He was carefully cutting away the masses of dead and blistered skin from the arches and balls of his right foot. He had an open raw wound about the size of two fifty pence pieces wrapped around his left heel as well as the ones on his right. It had started as a blister on Sunday, bled all day today and for tomorrow he tells me, "I just

don't know how I'm gonna do it with this, it's fuckin agony". I asked him how it was making him feel. He said, "I'm shitting myself. I'm worried that when I wake up in the morning, it's gonna be so painful, I won't be able to walk". As he detailed to me the sheer pain his wound was causing, he grimaced with his teeth pressed firmly together and his mouth wide at the corners.

Whilst looking at the sore I could feel his pain. I sat next to him and told him about Cookie, one of my closest mates throughout my training - a really hard and muscular man who, the night before our run across the moors, was in exactly the same situation with the same type of abrasion. I sat and explained to Thomas how Cookie told me the night before the run that he just couldn't do the run the next day. His foot sore was the worst I'd ever seen. I told Cookie that he was going to do it, even if I had to drag him for 30 miles, that we were in it together and we hadn't come as far as we had to fail at the last hurdle. Cookie soon began to rationalise that he could do it! He had to do it, after everything he'd been through - even if he could not walk for a month afterwards, it would all be worth it. I told Thomas that I'll never know how much pain Cookie went through on that run but he made it. We all made it because we helped each other the whole way. I told Thomas how I will always admire Cookie for his strength and courage that day.

I left the guys to get their much needed rest. The unusually low-key but relaxed mood that filled the space in my informants' dorm was playing on my mind as I lay in my bed thinking. I could not determine whether its cause was sheer fatigue, anticipation and fear leading up to the 30-miler, or whether it was a ceremonial atmosphere. I lay trying to remember the mood among my comrades the night before our 30-miler, but I cannot remember that detail. The mood was so unusual I had to make some sense of it. I know what fear, fatigue and anticipation feels like, and that's not it. Shortly before I fell to sleep I concluded that the atmosphere was ceremonial. It struck me that my recruits had been through the toughest experiences imaginable over the past year in order to achieve that special Green Beret. It seems so appropriate that they were sitting quietly contemplating tomorrow's run, the toughest of all challenges and an event that will mark the end of their transitory phase from recruit to Royal Marines Commando.

Discussion about the Significance of Pain

As detailed above, Thomas was in a significant amount of pain and had been for many days. As for all recruits attempting the 30 mile run, pain and fatigue were going to present a particular challenge that must be overcome in order to succeed. For this reason I would like to suggest here that the reward for each recruit who journeys through the long drawn-out experience of pain and difficulty is the attainment of an identity formulated on his ability to endure beyond the naturally occurring point of fatigue. In this context I would like to suggest that the Commando identity is earned by fulfilling certain criteria that are socially defined. This social definition is enforced and re-enforced through the creation of narratives about the experience. In the following discussion I would like to point out what I suggest to be complexities in the creation of 'pain narratives'.

Whereas I discussed unpleasant experiences, in Chapter Five, as being re-contextualised, when talking about pain I would like to suggest that there is a slight difference in that the narratives are re-created. To illustrate this point, I suggested in the previous chapter that when the recruits experienced an unpleasant training session such as those performed on the Bottom Field Assault Course, the source of the displeasure came from high levels of stress and intensity created by the PTIs. Afterwards, the recruits re-contextualised the training session from one of displeasure to pleasure. The case with pain is different. However, I must first make the distinction between pain being caused from injury such as blisters and that caused by carrying exceptionally heavy kit for prolonged periods of time, as the recruits did during the 'load carry' at the start of the four day field exercise. The distinction here is pain and not displeasure. I would like to suggest that when the recruits are recounting feats of overcoming pain, they do not change the context in which the experience occurred. If at all, the pain is exaggerated, but the context of agony and hurt remains in situ. The narratives are simply re-created for the audience to 'enjoy'.

A further distinction I would like to make is that re-contextualisation, as observed during my ethnographic fieldwork, was about an experience that the recruits equally shared by all being part of the same unpleasant ritual. Re-creation on the other hand is a personal narrative told by one recruit to the rest about his particular struggle to overcome a wound or injury. Significantly, I would like to suggest that the wound had to have been visible in order for it to have qualified for a re-creation narrative. If the wound is not visible, and therefore not provable, to complain about it in Marines culture is negatively labelled as 'dripping'. It is for this reason that I never knew that Spencer was suffering with his

Achilles until he dropped out of the nine mile speed march and failed the course. I suspect it was also for this reason that afterwards, when I spoke to Spencer about his failure, he talked about it so casually and positively - because similarly, it would be considered bad kudos for him to have placed the blame for his failure at the foot of something 'unprovable'.

I would like to suggest that the functionality of re-creation narratives is a means through which pain can be celebrated. For example, I heard my respondents talking about the enormity of their wounds and the crippling agony caused by them. The narratives highlight that despite overwhelming discomfort, their measure of masculinity and bravery is such that they would still complete the sustained endurance test. Any recruit who can complete a test under these conditions is afforded an audience from the rest of the group as a gesture of their admiration for his courage. Subsequently he will be awarded with social recognition for being able to demonstrate the 'Commando spirit'. It is for this reason that the cause of pain must be visible.

I offered a similar example from my own recruit training to Thomas when I told him about Cookie. My narrative about Cookie was slightly different in that Cookie and I were both permitted to re-create it. I was allowed to join him in the narrative due to my proximity to his pain and injury. I made sure he wasn't going to quit on the 30 mile run despite his pain that I could see and hear the whole way round. I also pinned Cookie to the bed whilst a medically-trained Corporal poured some stinging glue-like remedial substance into his wound to help seal it. For this reason I could bear witness to the extent of his injury and was therefore allowed to document it in the re-creation narrative.

One final function of the 're-creation of pain' narrative I observed that draws a parallel to the re-contextualisation narrative was in the benefit it provided to the group as a whole. Once the un-impaired recruits had felt the pains of the injured man through his narrative, it had the effect of quashing any complaints about terrible pains and discomforts from the others due to their relatively fit state. I would like to suggest that this had an influencing factor on the re-creation narratives that the un-injured recruits would then construct about themselves. Firstly the narratives for the 'relatively fit' would be re-constructed through group input due to the assembly in their shared experience, and secondly the narratives would be re-constructed with ideas of relative ease and comfort, because when contrasted to the re-creation of pain narrative, the healthy recruits' experience was comparatively

comfortable and therefore reconstructed as such. This functionality further assisted the way that the recruits could look back and view themselves as strong and increasingly capable.

The Closing Feet Ritual

The following morning I was woken especially early by the sound of my informants preparing for their run. They were up at 02:45 for a 03:00 breakfast. They were due to start the run at 04:00. I got up and prepared my kit whilst at the same time trying to keep tabs on my respondents in order to record their mood and activity. But the bustle which I was most interested in was the 'feet preparation ritual'. This particular ritual is probably the most practiced among the recruits and has the significance of marking a phase prior to some arduous physical activity. The feet are the most precious part of the body and the most vulnerable to injury. One recruit explained to me, "Once your feet go, your whole morale goes". Similarly, another recruit put it, "Just by putting on a fresh pair of socks when you're out in the field can make all the difference".

After watching the same foot ritual being performed on a daily basis over the past two weeks, I began to understand it as a form of expression towards care of the body. The foot ritual which is practiced by all recruits is a method of preparing the feet against the formation of blisters and sores. The ritual comes in many different forms according to one's personal preference for materials and according to his particular complaint. Jon for example tends to rub Vaseline between his toes because, he says, "It stops them from rubbing together and blistering". Tris on the other hand explains to me, "I cake them in foofoo (talc) and wear two pairs of socks. That way the powder absorbs the moisture and the second pair stops the friction on my foot". I went over to see Thomas to find out how he was preparing his feet. He told me that he had sprayed iodine on his wound to disinfect it, after which he applied a fresh Compeed plaster which is a very clever invention that sticks onto blisters creating a second skin. He too applied Vaseline to the areas around his toes and wore two pairs of socks to try and create some extra cushioning. I noticed that Andy was wrapping a couple of his toes in white sticky medical tape. He told me, "These toes always blister which is why I tape 'em up. I also wrap tape around my heel to stop those fuckers rubbing too".

Some recruits explained to me that they regularly soak their feet in a bowl of surgical sprits because it hardens the soles. Others reject that idea in favour of regularly using moisturiser to keep the skin well-conditioned. Other recruits buy special types of insoles or additional arch supports. The training instructors, however, will generally place the emphasis on good quality pure woollen socks. In all cases the foot preparation ritual is generally carried out with much care and attention. Even as ethnographer, I was not exempt from the ritual. I powdered my feet first, and then put on one good pair of woollen walking socks followed by an expensive pair of Han-Wags, which are German Special Forces boots with additional 'super-feet' insoles. Due to my vulnerability to blistering feet, I invested in good boots whilst I was still a serving Marine. Unfortunately for the recruits they may not purchase good boots until they reach the rank of Marine. Until then they are told by their training team that they have to complete their training in issued boots, which are cheap and horrible. One recruit explained to me that he wears his boots on the golf course to continue increasing their subtlety. I was able to make sense of this by remembering when a training team instructor explained to me earlier in the year, "Once boots are so worn-in that they're about to start falling apart that's when they're best".

Final Reflections before the 30-Miler

As the recruits neared readiness, I noted in my fieldwork diary:

'Very apprehensive and disorganised this morning. Training team becoming slightly agitated at their disorganisation and some shouting at the recruits to get themselves sorted out.'

I was back at my bed checking-off my equipment when the exercise leader, Taff - a man I had always looked up to - asked me if I was going to do the run with the recruits rather than take one of the vehicles between the checkpoints. I told him I would love to do the run as long as he was happy for me to do so. Actually I did have some apprehensions about doing the run because I had been injured recently and had not done any running or training for nearly two months prior to the Commando course. The thoughts flying through my mind in that split second were feelings of horror about failing in front of my informants, and concerns that I would not be at the finish line to record their victory as they crossed over it. But then I remembered why we do these runs in training: the hardest

time is the first time and after that it just gets easier. Taff said, "If you have any problems you can jump in the wagon with me." I replied, "OK, thanks Taff, but I reckon I'll be fine." Quite strangely I began to feel excited about doing the run with my informants and began visualising the rich ethnographic experience of sharing this auspicious event with them. I re-did my boot laces 'symmetrically' tighter, re-ordered the kit in my day-sack, changed my clothing and made my way out of the building to find syndicate number one, with whom I would run the course. Syndicate two would begin their run half an hour after syndicate one and the third syndicate half an hour after that.

Although the most feared test, ironically by the time my respondents were at the starting area they were becoming more upbeat and positive about this event than any other, a stark contrast to their passive mood during the previous evening. As we made our way to the starting area Tris said to me, "I know I'm gonna do this because I've come too far to fail now." Andy commented, "All I'm saying to myself is this is the last thing I have to do then it's all done." I then saw Thomas with whom I was speaking the previous night about his foot wounds. He came out of the old hut limping badly towards the starting area. His face filled with a fearful expectancy, he said, "I can't believe how much this is going to hurt." I said nothing in response because his words and emotions at that moment took my memory back to when Cookie and I were hobbling to the starting area prior to doing our 30 mile run. I stood, took a deep breath of the pure fresh air and just watched for a moment. I felt as if I had gone back in time and was watching myself and my comrades. I could remember exactly how I was feeling when I did the run, and now I was enjoying the privilege of being able to combine those inner experiences with a more objectified vision of the same 'once only' event.

The 30 Mile Run

There were three syndicates of recruits running the course. I wanted to place myself in with the first syndicate so that I would be at the finish line to see all the recruits cross it with camera in hand, but had decided I would establish a better sense of continuity to my experience if I could run it with my participants from Bristol Detachment who I had come to know very well over the course of the past year. I did mention these issues casually to Taff and 'fortunately' the Bristol lads were placed into the first syndicate which made me very pleased. As the Course Sergeant called the first syndicate into formation the scenery

went quiet as if somebody had turned the sound off. As the recruits stood at the foot of a rippled hill dotted with protruding dark rocks, the scenery appeared grey in colour, as the morning steadily broke. The only audible noises were the slight rustling of cloths and the wind as it skipped off the barren landscape and hit at the back of the ears. As I gazed over the recruits, their breathing seemed irregular and they nearly all stood with their mouths slightly open drawing in greater quantities of the fresh and unpolluted air. The Course Sergeant ordered in a semi-casual tone:

“Okay, down to the gate”.

As the Course Sergeant pointed in the direction of a small gate marking the boundary surrounding the stone hut, the recruits gently turned and walked smoothly towards it without so much as a muttering between them. The only exception was Thomas who was clearly in pain as he limped determinedly. Once at the gate they were united with the instructors who were ready to run the course with them. The recruits didn't stop at the gate but followed the instructors as they lead them out into the wilderness. As they went through the gate, Jon and Andy to the front, Thomas and Tris behind them, the Course Sergeant set his watch so he could time a 30-minute interval after which he would order the next syndicate to begin the run.

The instructors running with the syndicate conduct the pace of the run. From their experience at endurance, they can precisely determine the stride at which the recruits need to run with their 35 lbs of kit, over the 30 mile all-terrain course in order to achieve it in less than the eight hours allowed. After the instructors had walked them away from the hut at a quick pace, about one hundred metres, Paddy – who previously served as a Royal Marines sniper - ordered the recruits to begin running: “Nods, prepare to break into double time – DOUBLE TIME”.

The pace was not offensive notwithstanding the recruits already have torn bodies from the past two weeks of successive and relentless testing. The pace settled straight into a calming tempo. The recruits were reminded by the instructors to remain in two lines behind them, and to ensure that they stay in closed-formation at all times. Closed-formation means to stay bunched up as opposed to open-formation which is to spread out.

After approximately the first ten miles my respondents came to their first check-point. They were met by a Land Rover driven there by two of the training team who had by this point unloaded some food boxes which contained warm pasties for the recruits to 'trough

down' and of course water to refill their bottles. I noticed in particular the evident contrast between Jon who was blazon with strength and ease, and Thomas whose skin colour was paling as he battled with his pain. I asked how he was feeling. He looked up at me as if he wanted to burst into tears and simply said, "I'll be alright".

As I observed the lads standing around scoffing down their pasties - as many as they could throw down their necks in the allotted time - their group formation, circular in shape, seemed to be forming a ring of reassurance. For these few minutes they all looked into the centre wherein I felt they were connecting with one another through a shared observance of that moment which provided for them a temporary reprieve from the ordeal.

After just a few minutes, they were shot-gunned straight into the second leg. My respondents expressed to me that they felt quite refreshed after the quick stop, except for Thomas who came off the worst as a result of stopping. He told me that before the stop his injury had gone almost numb, but after the stop it was worse than ever. Once into the second leg, they re-focussed on the run and reverted back to near silence. I would like to suggest here that although the recruits were not verbally interacting, they were in fact in constant communication with one another through the rhythm of their shared action. This was most noticeable whilst running along easier terrain where their combined footsteps were fully synchronised with one another. Out in the wilderness when the dominant sound is the rhythmic thud of boots and faint rattle of kit, the tempo becomes almost hypnotic. The shared cadence settled the recruits into a relaxed state and looked as if it was taking their minds off the pains that were sure to be emerging within their bodies. One recruit described it to me as "It makes it easier when you're in step because you don't have to think about it".

As the recruits approached the twenty mile marker, the Land Rover was waiting again with more much-needed water and pasties. By now the recruits were soaked through with sweat and starting to look slightly raggedy. They were slightly more disorganised during this stop. They frantically re-filled their water bottles, scoffed food and some re-did their boots so they were comfortably tight. In no time at all they were well into their twenty-first mile. It wasn't long after this point when they started falling out of formation and were being reminded by the instructors to 'close-up' their ranks. Every so often they would be reminded by the Irish boom of Paddy's voice, "Close up your ranks".

By around the twenty-fifth mile, a recruit from London Detachment was starting to fall behind. Paddy would turn round from the front and tell the lads to close up again. The London recruit then had to run faster to catch up because of his increasingly slower pace behind the rest of the lads. Eventually the instructor brought him to the front and informed the rest that they needed to 'get-around him' and keep him going. Jon, being the strongest in the group was told to go to the back, where it is toughest. He didn't mind doing this because he was well prepared for the run.

They began their final ascent up a long and steep hill which went on for nearly a mile. Just a further mile or so over the other side was the finish line. The recruits were struggling up the hill, gulping down huge quantities of water and any food they had left. They were all downwards looking as they dug-out blind. Tris looked across at me and exclaimed, "Gonna need a chin repair kit by the time we're at the top of this fuckin hill".

Two of the recruits were now either side of the London recruit who could barely walk. An instructor shouted back and reminded them, "Keep him going lads because if he fails you all fail". That is the harsh reality of the 30 mile run - that it's a team test. Every member must finish within time in order that they all pass together. For this reason the recruits now had to put aside their own physical exhaustion and attend to the weakest member who had fallen to his knees. The fallen recruit was a big man. An instructor shouted, "Get Him Up". Three recruits got around him, two to the side and one to his rear. They hardly had the strength left to move their own bodies let alone lift this sizeable man. All three recruits heaved at once, bringing him back to his feet. Even Thomas, whose every footstep fiercely rubbed away at his raw and open wound, was to the man's right, lifting him off the ground. The other four recruits watched exhaustedly.

As they started moving forward again, Andy told me, "This kit is fuckin killing me". The 35 lbs of kit they began with started to feel like it was double or treble that weight, he told me. I noticed Tris trying to adjust his kit by pulling it about slightly. This gave him a few seconds of relief before the straps begun cutting back into his skin. He told me with a tortured expression, "Every fuckin one of these straps feels like it's cutting into you". As I looked at another recruit, I noticed he had one hand placed on his back at the base of his spine, creating an extra barrier between his body and his kit that wrapped around the entirety of his waist. He grimaced, "My back's so fuckin sore; it's rubbin' like a bastard".

They eventually approached the long drawn-out zenith with little over one mile to the finish line. An instructor looked back and shouted, "Give him his fuckin weapon back; you all carry your own kit". The weapon was handed back to the failing London recruit who didn't even have the strength in his arms to place the strap back over his head; so his oppo did it for him. He slowed right down, almost to a standstill and wobbled on his feet, about to drop to the floor again. One recruit shouted to the rest, "Don't let him fall lads or we'll never get him back up". They all plied him with water and sweets which one recruit still had in good supply. They took it in turn to encourage him onwards. At least one recruit kept a hand on him at all times, offering personal physical contact and motivating reassurance.

As I looked at him, I saw a 'zombie'. It didn't look as though there was a human there anymore. The sustained physical labour had sapped the warmth from his soul. His eyes were no longer capable of focussing, they were open wide but looking at nothing. The rest of the recruits fell about as they too tried to generate what remaining energy they could whilst at all times continuing their effort forward. In no time at all Jon became the only recruit strong enough to ensure the man from London would make it to the line. Jon was by his side, slightly to the rear. He grabbed a fistful of material from the kit and clothes in the area between the London recruit's shoulder blades, and was effectively holding him up and pushing him onwards. Jon constantly told him, "Come on mate, we're nearly there. Just keep digging out mate. Just keep putting one foot in front the other. We aint leaving you behind because we're all gonna do this together, so just keep putting one foot in front the other. That's it mate keep going, we're nearly there now mate".

They came over the hill to a downwards slope where they could see the finish just half a mile ahead. "There's the finish line lads," shouted Paddy, a wiry veteran who has maintained their pace throughout the run. I sensed an enormous sense of joy and relief among the lads as they looked up to see the gathering of vehicles and Marines dotted ahead. Jon excitedly shouted at the London recruit, "There's the finish line mate, look up and see it, we're there". Paddy ordered them to fall back into formation now that they had come into view of the commanding officers who were waiting to see them across the line. They picked up energy and pace as they rolled down the gentle hill which narrowed at the bottom to a single dirt track which leads them for the last quarter of a mile to the finish. As we joined the dirt track, the instructors ordered the recruits into tight formation and

perfect synchronisation of their footsteps. They immediately fell into the running pace with which they had become so familiar.

I signalled to Paddy my intention to go on ahead. I sprinted the last quarter of a mile down the dirt track, over a small hump-back bridge into the finish area where I prepared and set up my camera to record the recruits coming across the line. I noticed there was a high ranking Colonel among the dozen or so training team and instructors who'd gathered to witness the impending moment.

As the sound of the recruits' synchronised footsteps filled the air, the Royal Marines standing at the line gathered to form two lines, one each side of the dirt road. The recruits finally came into sight as they ran around the final bend and over the hump-back bridge. As they approached the welcoming party it was hard to believe what these recruits had just endured. They all looked as if they'd only run a mile or two at the most. They were in perfect formation and all were bearing a strong confident posture with their shoulders back, chests out and heads held high. The Marines and ranking officers clapped as the recruits passed between them. The applause-filled sacred space that the recruits crossed over as they passed between the Marines marked a physical space of liminality, on the other side of which they were just a whisker away from being welcomed into the Marines with full membership as one of the 'natives'.

The 'Final' Finish Line

As the first of the three syndicates came over the line in perfect step and harmony, I could see on their faces that they were choked up at the honour of being clapped across the line by so many Marines of varying ranks who had completed their training in just the same way. As my respondents ran across the line and past the training teams, the instructors all turned their torsos, following the recruits with a constant round of applause until they had run all the way past. The training teams looked truly delighted.

The finish line was a magical place for my informants. The sun was smiling too, providing the recruits with a luscious warm heat. For my respondents who were first across the line, with an hour to wait until the second and third syndicates were both in, they just enjoyed the delight of their achievement and basked under the sun. They were

given food and drink to replenish their exhausted bodies. I made a very specific point of individually congratulating all of my respondents whilst at the same time paying particular attention to my year-long respondents from RMR Bristol. I remember Jon's expression in particular. He was smiling as though he was the happiest soul. I could not believe for a moment that he had just run the 30-miler. He even made exhaustion look effortless! I said, "What do think Jonny?"

"Nice," he said smoothly. He made the 'OK' gesture with his right hand and added, "Well happy with that." I then turned to Thomas and congratulated him for an exceptional effort at making the run with the injuries he was carrying on his feet. He clutched his forehead with both hands, "Can't believe I've done it," he exclaimed. As with all of my respondents at that moment, I couldn't get too much out of him. They were elated but exhausted, hyped-up but drained, hugely proud and emotional. But most importantly they had made it.

The Green Beret Award Ceremony

After all three syndicates had come in and been given enough time to rest a little, sort their feet out, eat and drink, they were ordered over to a luscious green grass area where they fell-in. The Colonel (RMR) addressed them with a congratulatory speech before awarding each of them their Green Berets. As the Colonel approached each recruit they were to stand to attention. The Colonel had the Course Sergeant to one side and a Corporal at the other carrying the stack of hats. Taff, the Course Sergeant, introduced the Colonel to each recruit as the Corporal handed the beret - identifiable by the recruit's name tag inside - to the Colonel. The Colonel then presented the recruit with his Green Beret and Commando flashes. The Colonel shook each recruit's hand before moving on to the next. Again, on being awarded their berets, recruits were still not permitted to place them upon their heads until their formal ceremonial pass-out parade on Friday morning. The recruit who failed his endurance course previous to the 30-miler was excluded from having his beret awarded by the Colonel. He will receive his separately if he successfully passes his final re-run on day thirteen. After the Colonel presented the berets to my respondents they were bussed back to CTC. Whilst on the bus they were in a state of euphoria. I observed most recruits holding their berets on their laps whilst others slept through the journey.

Once back at the camp they took their berets into the Course Captain, one at a time, where he performed the ritual of placing the Globe and Laurel cap-badge onto the front of the beret. The Marines cap-badge carries a particular historical significance in that it depicts the most fundamentally defining battle victories fought by the Royal Marines. I observed an enormous sense of pride and achievement as my informants came out the training team office one by one admiring their berets and cap-badges. These berets are symbolic of everything they have experienced and achieved over the previous year and a key symbol to their new identities that will be ceremoniously awarded to them on Friday morning at the pass-out parade. Before that time my respondents have much kit and admin to sort out. They also have some low-key celebrating to do. On Tuesday evening the recruits went to Jolly's (the in-camp bar) for a beer. I joined them and the mood was great.

Day 12: Discussions about Self-Empowering Narratives

The day after the gruelling 30 mile run, my respondents were awarded a rest-day. They did more admin and returned loaned equipment to the stores. On Wednesday night they went to Jolly's for a beer and were keen that I joined them again – not that I needed an invitation for this task! The mood through the night was very relaxed and happy. My respondents spent most of their time going back over the past two weeks and re-living the difficult moments with a shared sentiment of their hard work, guts and success. They took great pleasure in telling stories about one another, as seen from each others' point of view. The evening was calm and superb. We all sat together for hours in the warm evening air, out on the patio drinking lager, smoking cigarettes and recapping our favourite moments.

A particularly popular topic for the recruits was the comparisons and contrasts that recruits from the different Detachments made about their respective hardships, and the interesting idiosyncrasies of their different training teams. They also went to great depth comparing the divergent geographical locations that they trained on whilst at their respective ends of the UK. But more often than not the conversation would return to their time shared over the past two weeks and their favourite defining moments. Particularly interesting was their regular and increased use of profanities in the telling of their

narratives. Jon said to Thomas, “Mate, your fuckin face on that 30-miler, I do not know how the fuck you did it, your feet must have been, just, fuckin hanging off.”

A London recruit said to his oppo, “What about when we were in that shitty fuckin clay pit, I honestly thought we were fuckin stuck. I was pulling you like fuck but your boots were just sunk right in.” In these examples from the evening’s conversation there was a huge emphasis on creating ‘impossibly difficult situations’ which were emphasised through the use of bad language. As they talked about the different hardships, the main theme would focus on how they overcame these hardships without too much drama. In essence, the narratives were told in the style of overcoming tough situations as a ‘natural thing for them to do’.

I would like to suggest that the form of the narratives here took on the form of self-empowerment. In this sense the recruits have now completed all of their hardships and have serviced a heavy duty of penance upon their bodies and to the Corps. They are at the door of their long-awaited transition into full membership of Marines culture, and in the absence of any exceptional and unforeseen circumstances, they have finally made it - short of the formal ceremony on Friday morning. For this reason they were now in a phase of celebration and anticipation of their impending new status. But whereas previously, narratives were either re-contextualised or re-created, this phase of narrative demonstrates a change of *emphasis* from one of being tested to one of being triumphant.

This form of narrative is very similar to the re-contextualisation narrative except in its practical meaning to the recruits. For example, the re-contextualising narratives were born during a phase of hardship, and provided essential motivation and understanding at difficult times. The self-empowerment narratives on the other hand are being created during a time of celebration with the aim of providing the recruits with a means by which they can talk about themselves as Marines and as having masculine identities and masculine ways of overcoming difficulties. The self-empowerment narrative then, places emphasis on them being able to succeed over a difficulty *because* of their masculinity, whereas the re-contextualising narrative placed its emphasis on overcoming hardships in order to *become* masculine.

Day 13: His Final Chance

Despite the enormous undertaking his body had endured over the past twelve days, the recruit who failed his endurance re-run on Saturday (day 8) passed in 65 minutes on the morning of Day 13. One of the PTI Corporals ran the Woodbury Common part of the course with him (to ensure he didn't get lost again), and two of his comrades ran the second part back to camp with him to offer support and encouragement. This is an excellent time especially considering he undertook a 30 mile run just a day and a half previously. We all clapped him across the finish line. He was a little nervous on the shoot but achieved nine hits out of the ten shots allowed. He had his beret awarded to him in situ beside the 25 metre shooting range. He was delighted. When I asked him how he managed to pull 65 minutes out of the bag, he replied, "I didn't want to be the only one going back on the bus without my lid¹⁴". This statement in conjunction with his exceptional time under the circumstances demonstrated to me the motivational power of his comrades.

During the afternoon on Thursday the course had to hand their berets back to the training team so they could have them awarded formally at the pass-out ceremonial parade the following morning. That evening I wandered from room to room speaking with my informants. The general feel among them was that they were very relaxed and feeling very pleased with themselves. It was quite commonplace to hear the recruits talking in terms of a 'great sense of relief' and a 'great weight having been lifted from their shoulders'.

For the most part, the recruits were happily relaxing for the evening in each others' company in their rooms. Most recruits were especially looking forward to the pass-out parade in the morning and after that, being able to travel home to their families and partners. It wasn't uncommon to hear recruits making conversations around the two most prominent things on their minds that evening – their Green Berets and their partners. One recruit told the room, "My girlfriend has already text me to say she wants to wear my lid while I fuck her".

Another recruit put it, "I'm just gonna lay there starkers with just my lid on and let my missus look at it while she fucks me". In another room during a similar conversation, one recruit said to his comrades, "First thing I'm gonna do when I get home is make my missus put my lid on and then fuck her brains out".

¹⁴ The word 'lid' is often used instead of Green Beret.

I would like to suggest that through this type of rhetoric the recruits were firstly presenting the Green Beret as symbolic of masculine violence and their new recognition of it, and secondly, explicitly connecting it to their sexual prowess as an expression of their new sense of masculinity that has been achieved through their success at Royal Marines training.

Day 14: Emerging from Liminality

The morning of the pass-out ceremony was extremely exciting. Every face in the vicinity was full of smiles and joy. Even the training team were 'unusually happy'. The pass-out was set to take place at 10:00 hours at a small parade square outside HQ main offices. The recruits turned-to in plenty of time and whilst waiting enjoyed casual conversation with some of the training team members. As 10:00 hours neared, the course of recruits lined up in two ranks where they waited until the Colonel (RM) appeared. Once the Colonel was present a couple of training team members underwent a few formalities with him – this Colonel is very important. Then when the Colonel was ready he made an opening address to the expectant recruits.

On completion of his speech, the first recruit was called forward to the Colonel. As each recruit's name was announced by Taff, the recruit had to march forward, stopping just short of the Colonel's position, where he was to bring himself to attention and salute the Colonel. The Colonel would salute back, after which he approached the recruit to present him with his Green Beret. As the Colonel presented the Green Beret, he and the recruit would shake hands whilst turning to face the official photographer who captured the moment of exchange.

On receipt of his beret, the recruit had to take off his existing headdress, the 'cap-comforter', and place his Green Beret upon his head. Once on his head, he was to fully compose himself before saluting once more to the Colonel. As the Colonel returned the salute once again, the recruit would follow the correct marching procedure back to his place in the course formation. Once there he stood proudly while the procedure was completed for each of the recruits in turn. At the end of the award ceremony, the Colonel made a final address to the course, adding a finishing word on his admiration for their commitment and courage. He then left the parade square.

The course remained in formation whilst the photographer took a few photos which in time would be sent to them as a memento of the occasion. Once the photographer had finished, the course was fell-out – as Marines. They were all beaming with smiles. The training team remained around them to mingle and chat. The new Marines made the most of this feeling and seemed to really enjoy talking with members of their training team as equals. The atmosphere was relaxed and jubilant.

I made sure I spoke with each of my year-long respondents from Bristol Detachment.

Jon told me, “I am well happy”.

Thomas, still hobbling said, “It was well worth it. I’m gonna rest for a month now”.

Tris said, “Phew, that’s it. I’m gonna go home and read the paper”.

Andy told me as he shook his head, “It just doesn’t seem real”.

Within half an hour after the pass-out parade had finished, the new Marines were boarded onto their relevant buses and dispatched from the Commando Training Centre. Course Endex.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has summarised the most fundamental transitory phase of the recruits’ adaptation from civilian to Royal Marine. After a long year which has been marked by numerous phases of advancement in their masculine identities, the final two-week Commando course, through its intense collection of tests and ceremonies, has made it possible for the recruits to view themselves in terms of an additional and macho subject position (Holloway, 1984). The more significant themes detailed in this chapter began with a consideration of the foot ceremony that generally takes place before most physically arduous training sessions. I cast a particular spotlight on Thomas and the exceptional difficulties he was suffering with the injuries to his feet. The foot preparation ceremony was understood by my participants on the whole as a practical way to protect and strengthen the foot’s endurance when placed under such strain. From an anthropological perspective, however, I would like to suggest that the foot preparation ceremony offered the recruits psychological readiness for the battle ahead.

The foot preparation ritual was provision for the 30-miler. During this preparatory tradition I presented a further discussion about the context and significance of pain. In this case, I suggested that pain was presented in narratives through the re-creation of the pain experience rather than re-contextualising it, as I suggested was the case in Chapter Five. I offered the example of Thomas who had particularly bad foot abrasions. I suggested that a significant aspect of the re-creation ritual was that the plaintiff could show physical evidence of his injury in order that it qualify as re-creation narrative and is not merely seen as 'dripping'. I then gave an example of how I as ethnographer was not exempt from the foot preparation ritual. I made the decision to run the 30 mile course with my respondents as a great opportunity to gain some invaluable ethnographic data by being close with them at what was generally considered as their most trying time. For this reason, I prepared myself for the run with a well-rehearsed foot preparation ritual.

Some of the experiences I gleaned whilst undertaking the run were the observance of what I suggested were rhythms of non-verbal communication among the recruits. Although for the most part the recruits were not verbally interacting, they were in constant communication with one another through the rhythm of their shared action, producing a sense of timing and comfort at a time of great stress to their bodies. In this sense the group action produced a familiarity through movement and sound which allowed the recruits to settle into a form of understanding through bodily function.

The great pay-off for their group rhythms was the honour of being clapped across the finish line by a healthy number of their training team and ranking officers. Here, I noted a particular sacred space that existed for them as they passed between the two lines of applauding Marines. Once out on the other side, they had completed all of their performance tests which was marked by a ceremony whereby the Colonel (RMR) presented them with their Green Berets. Significantly, they were not permitted to place their berets upon their heads, but instead were to keep possession of them until they had arrived back at CTC where they each took their berets into the Course Captain at the training office to have the Globe and Laurels cap-badge ceremoniously placed onto it. In making sense of this ceremony I would like to refer to the work of Sigmund Freud in *Totem and Taboo*. Freud (1913) considered the role of the totem as a means through which the ancestors of a particular society could be both remembered and worshipped. This form of ancestral worship strengthens group solidarity and membership to it. In this sense the Marines cap-badge is treated as a form of totem where the history and identity

of the group can be passed on to its newest members. This form of worshipping group symbolism established by my ethnography can demonstrate further complexities involved in ensuring that a recruit's identity is built around the idea of group solidarity based on, as Zahar (2001) puts it, certain beliefs of inclusion and exclusion. This has the effect of creating a stronger identity for the individual and in turn, the group.

After their hard final test the recruits were granted some down-time to kick back a little and enjoy a celebratory beer at the camp bar. I noted that one particularly dominant feature of the conversation during this time was the development of what I referred to as self-empowerment narratives. I defined the self-empowerment narrative as different from the re-contextualisation narrative because a difference exists in the experience of the ordeal, which is determined by the recruit's phase of adaptation. Thus, having now completed all of their Commando tests which mark the end of their intense and sustained physical training episode, the self-empowerment narratives are used to place a large emphasis on being able to overcome difficulties because of their newly perceived sense of masculinity. The re-contextualising narratives on the other hand, were constructed during times of great troubles to the body and therefore had emphasis placed on overcoming hardships in order to *become* masculine.

One further set of narratives I briefly examined were those that I observed during the final evening before their pass-out parade. A number of my informants made graphic connections between the significance of having achieved their Green Berets, and their sexual desires once back home and re-united with their partners. I suggested that through this sexually aggressive expression the recruits were firstly presenting their Green Berets as symbolic of their newly achieved violent identities, and that secondly they were making explicit the connections of this new identity to their sexual prowess as a countenance of the new sense of masculinity that they had achieved through accomplishment at Royal Marines training.

The final mark of their accomplishment was awarded to them during the pass-out parade - a full emergence and re-individualization from their long-endured space of liminality between civilian society and full inclusion into Marines culture. From my ethnographic point of view, the significant moment during the ceremony was when on receipt of their beret, they were to take off their existing headdress, the 'cap-comforter', and place the Green Beret upon their heads. Once placed, they were to fully compose themselves before

saluting to the Colonel (RM). As the Colonel returned the salute, they were to follow the correct marching procedure back to their place in the course formation. Once the exiting speech had been given by the Colonel, the recruits were fell-out as Marines. The Green Beret for the recruits was the award of the most iconic of all symbolisms reflecting their new status as Marines and masculine men. I hope that this principle establishing symbolic importance can be applied to non-Western cultures to better understand the significance and meaning of bodily markings or scarring performed in societies such as the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard E. E., 1940).

The Nuer receives facial markings (called *gaar*) as part of their initiation into adulthood. The pattern of Nuer scarification varies within specific subgroups. The most common initiation pattern among males consists of six parallel horizontal lines which are cut across the forehead with a razor, often with a dip in the lines above the nose (Evans-Pritchard E. E., 1940). A notable difference between this and the experience of the Marines is that arguably the Nuer people will display their adult status through every aspect of their life because of the permanence of their scarring, whereas the Marines will be subject to societal and cultural customs that require them to remove their headdress (their symbol of 'adulthood') at some occasions in order to perform certain non-overlapping subject positions (Holloway, 1984). I would like to suggest that this adds to a discussion I will be developing in the conclusion chapter about the complexities of multiple identities among Western societies, and most specifically about RMR training as offering the opportunity to obtain an 'additional identity' which can be displayed accordingly.

Essentially, the symbol of the recruits' new status marks them as having been welcomed into the Marines culture as full members. I hope that I have been able to demonstrate that this new masculine membership is achieved by a continued exposure to tests where the recruits can demonstrate their ability, and ceremonies where they can celebrate the completion and mastery of the tests. In conjunction with this, I hope I have shown the importance of ceremony in Marines culture as a rite of passage that will ensure their progressive masculinisation marked by a number of ceremonies which celebrate the various stages of the passage (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 230).

In addition, I hope to have made the case that the type of identity achieved by Marines through their various customs and rituals produce essentially different identities than

other types of identities that are obtained automatically and with no application of effort such as being male or female. In Gay-Y-Blascos' study of Spanish *Gitanos*, she explains that at the birth of a child, its genitals are celebrated. Here, the child is socially conditioned to be proud of his or her genitalia, since this will be their focus for building a self-identity (Gay-Y-Blasco, 1997, p. 521). In this case Gay-Y-Blascos is describing a prescribed identity that can result in an individual's image being socially constructed. I hope to have pointed out that the Marines on the other hand, were in control of constructing and performing their own representations through the practice of actions that will allow them to culturally define their own desired identity.

In **Chapter Seven – Conclusions**, I will attempt to highlight the main themes from my ethnography and its relation to wider theoretical frameworks.

Chapter 7

Conclusions: Civilian to Commando from an Anthropological Perspective

Introduction

In the last five chapters, I have detailed my ethnographic fieldwork observations in a chronological order, from when the recruits first joined Commando training to when they finally passed-out as Royal Marines. In this concluding chapter I will attempt to pick out and summarise the main themes in my work and construct them in an order that will enable me to demonstrate the centrality of discipline and how it affects this process of enculturation (of which I have provided a concise summary in Appendix Two). Before setting out my specific findings, however, I would first like to locate the unique nature of my work by placing it into a chronology of some important research already carried out on the anthropology and sociology of the Military.

Whilst carrying out my background research on available anthropological and sociological accounts of the Military, I was very surprised to find on the whole that the accounts offered about Military discipline and the enculturation process were either incomplete in terms of their limited perspective, or they were only concerned with a specific aspect of the system. On the whole the mass of anthropology and sociology of the Military reported insights on how Military institutions work and their corresponding relationship to wider society - that Military culture, although set in contrast to civilian culture, is still interchangeable due to the mass of migration of personnel between the two.

Some important research and understandings offered in the 1960s, was well typified by academic Morris Janowitz in his early work describing certain characteristics of the Military Environment (Janowitz, 1965). Janowitz carried out research on Military institutions for the inter-university seminar on Armed Forces and Society, which at the time of printing was considered to be the most comprehensive review of sociological

research on the effects that Military service had on the individual. Janowitz was Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago and was considered to be the leading American Military sociologist. He had published important books on Military and political sociology and moreover had encouraged the academic field of sociology to undertake a more detailed approach to the study of social roles in Military organisations. Janowitz's aim was to provide a precise identification of the elements that exist within Military environments in order to help explain what impact the Military has on basic socialisation. Unfortunately, Janowitz's work concentrated largely on re-socialization into the wider society rather than socialization into, or within Military culture.

Offering sociological insights into Military service in the 1970's was James Alden Barber, a political scientist who referred to the work of Janowitz in his essay *The Social Effects of Military Service* (Barber, 1972), in order to consider the positive and negative effects of service in a Military institution. Similarly, Barber's approach considered the impact of Military service from the viewpoint of the wider society. For example, he would show how Military service could increase the employability of an individual within the public employment arena by increasing individual qualities such as self-esteem, self-discipline and the ability for team work. Barber demonstrated how soldiers are taught from day one to have pride in what they do, and how through the Military regimen each individual has instilled into him a degree of discipline which becomes a habit he will keep long after leaving Military service. Again, this type of research, although valuable at the time, did not tell us much about the instillation of discipline and how it would not only stay with an individual for life but would become the mould from which Barber claimed all their habits would be formed.

I would like to suggest that early Military academics never truly studied the individual in an attempt to create detailed understandings of human experience. To support this idea further it is worth highlighting Barber's claim that by the time a man enters Military service his attitudes are so well set that any changes to his attitudes during Military service will be minimal (Barber, 1972). In contrast to this view, my research indicates that individuals of varying ages and backgrounds are capable of going through immense changes as a result of intense Military training. The end result of training and service is a series of mental and bodily adaptations, which are the processes and changes I will be attempting to describe.

Although the work of both Janowitz and Barber provide some important foundations for sociological studies of the Military, neither of their approaches offer an understanding of the intricate processes of enculturation that occur within the Military structure. In this respect neither Janowitz nor Barber are unique. Most Military sociologists of that time produced an overwhelmingly management-orientated body of research. However, this paradigm did begin to shift slightly when John H. Faris conducted research of a Military basic training programme.

Faris (1976) conducted research based on participant observation of basic and advanced infantry training. He also conducted extensive interviews of trainee soldiers and drill sergeants as well as further observations of training in 1972, 1973 and 1974 at three different training centres. Faris not only moved Military academia forward in terms of a qualitative research methodology but fundamentally he made the claim that a recruit's orientation into the Army can be reflected in his feelings towards his drill sergeant, and that only an examination of this can shed light on the socialisation process of the all-volunteer force (1976)¹⁵. One of the important themes I will be demonstrating in contrast to Faris is that during socialisation or enculturation as I refer to it, rather than concentrating on a recruit's affiliation with his Sergeant, I hope to show that the important and defining bonds that a recruit makes are with his comrades, and that these bonds are essential for his success at enculturation

Writing in the later part of the seventies, Bachman and Blair (1976) collected data compiled by The Survey Research Centre and The Centre for Research on the Utilisation of Scientific Knowledge of The Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. Some parts of their research were supported by the Office of Naval Research and the Army Research Institute for the Behavioural and Social Sciences. Realising the importance of a more focussed study on Military socialisation, Bachman and Blair argued that the process of socialisation into a Military unit is the main criterion to judge whether a soldier will gain a positive or a negative attitude towards Military service. Bachman and Blair, like Faris, can be credited for improving the quality and direction of Military fieldwork through the 1970s and its focus on the important theme of socialisation, but with very little ethnographic detail. However, the funding for the research and emphasis placed upon their research objectives was essentially of a more statistical essence, for use

¹⁵Faris' reference to the 'all-volunteer force' has been a term well used by many researchers and therefore it is worth pointing out Bachman and Blair's (1976) understanding of the all-volunteer force, which is 'those who volunteered for service rather than those men who had to be drafted or conscripted in to Military service.'

by the Military authorities, rather than for the improvement of academic understanding as such. It wasn't until the mid-1980s when an exception to this was put forward by John Hockey in his book *Squaddies: Portrait of a Subculture* (Hockey 1986).

Sociologist John Hockey is a former Regular Soldier of the British Army, who after his Army career, carried out the first ever sociological study of an operational Army unit, probably made possible by his affiliation and therefore his access to it. Hockey studied two types of behaviour: firstly obedience to the Military hierarchical system, and secondly disobedience to it. Hockey's study was unique because he inserted himself into the cultural group he was studying and lived with the 'squaddies' as they went through their basic training. As a result of his study he was able to describe how the Military management hierarchy affected the attitudes of the Privates and how in turn they felt about their superiors when given their orders. Hockey challenged traditional representations through the more intricate understanding he collected during the participant study. Hockey was able to show that although the Privates may well have been at the bottom of the pecking order, they were not the least powerful. He described how the Privates were, as a collective, able to negotiate the terms on which they chose to accept their orders. Hockey's study of obedience within the Military hierarchical system has important implications towards a better understanding of power relations. This important theme is one which I will also be describing in some detail through my work on the mechanisms of Marines enculturation, which as I hope to show, is largely dependent on the application of discipline and the recruits' acceptance of it. The importance of studying power and obedience, especially within political institutions like the Military, is highlighted through Foucault's assertion that "humanity will reach maturity only when it is no longer required to obey" (Foucault, 2000b, p. 306).

Into the 1990s, the quality of research detailing aspects of Military culture continued with a particularly fine example from Paul Higate (published 2003) in his book *Military Masculinities*. Higate presented a collection of essays written by himself and other contributing authors which provide in-depth detail about the centrality of masculinity within Military culture. Through the addition of Hockey and Higate's style of sociological perspective, the Military can be understood from the viewpoint and experience of those directly involved in it rather than as a presentation of the institutional structure. Unlike his predecessors, Hockey placed his emphasis on gaining an insight

about how his participant informants experienced Army life and how they made sense of their day to day existence during their Army service.

From Janowitz's traditional sociological accounts of Military service, to Higate's detailed ethnographies on Military masculinities, my ambition is to develop the theme further by presenting an understanding of group functioning in Royal Marines training culture as a social reality that is not accessible through native understanding (Davies, 1999). As a further addition to the mass of work provided on Military studies, I intend to approach an understanding of Military experience through the theoretical perspectives of wider anthropological theory in an attempt to explain various rituals and ceremonies.

Whereas traditional anthropologists and sociologists presented what they saw as Military culture, and Hockey presented Military culture from the viewpoint of the Privates' experiences, I would like to present it as a social reality which is not known by the inhabitants. I hope to show that there exists within Royal Marines training culture a social reality that is separate from that of civilians, and the 'natives' (the recruits and their trainers), which is nevertheless accessible by way of anthropological investigation and understanding. My intention here is to provide the opportunity to know and understand another aspect of a social reality that exists within Royal Marine culture which has not previously been explored.

A typical understanding of what it means to be a Marine according to my participants involves ideas of strength, valour, honour and pride. The reports I heard were largely based around ideas of masculinity and performance. Their understanding of the training process was largely about learning Military tactics, survival skills and weaponry. The general response I received when I asked my respondents why they had begun Reserve Forces training was 'to be trained to be a Marine'. When I asked them how they understood Military culture, the stock answer was 'you do what they tell you'. When I proposed questions around their (the recruits') relationships with one another, the general feel would be 'we are all in it together' and 'we have to look out for one another'. So broadly speaking, the understanding purveyed by my participants about their social reality was understood at a very practical level. Their general interpretation conveyed to me was that 'Marines training is tough because they are the best' and 'you have to prove that you can hack the training to be a Marine'. Jon told me one afternoon whilst polishing his boots, "You have to learn the necessary skills to fight in an elite unit and I guess that's

why they make the training so physically demanding in the way that they teach you, *because it's an elite unit*".

Through his statement, Jon presented to me the idea that because the job of a Marine in the theatre of war is mentally and physically demanding, then the training has to be constructed likewise in order to prepare the recruit for what may lie ahead. In the light of these accounts offered by my participants, I would like to suggest that they reflect the recruits' understanding of their social reality during training as one of practice and preparation. I would also like to suggest that the same general perspective is offered by the training team. One Corporal told me, "The reason they have to practice the same thing over and over is so when it happens in the field, they don't have to think, 'shit, what do I do?'" Instead, the training just takes over and they'll react automatically. And that's the differences between living and dying".

A good deal of my research inspiration came from the work and theories of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. Foucault for example made brilliant and detailed analyses of themes central to Military mechanisms such as the use of discipline and punishment (1975). He also detailed the relevance of time in terms of effecting control over the bodies of those who are subject to its strict time-tabling. His contributions have been enormous. Likewise, Bourdieu (1999) provides an understanding based on concepts of practicing the body through tempo and logic.

To bring my aim into focus, I felt that despite the sometimes detailed information that is presented about Military culture and Military realities, what is missing is a complete and detailed ethnographic text which ties together the many intricate and complex aspects of a full Military programme of enculturation. With this in mind I would like to present my ethnographic fieldwork as the first anthropological participant observation of Royal Marines Culture, and secondly, I would like to bring together some of the most prevalent theoretical strands of Military research and offer a full interpretation of the intricate mechanisms that are collectively referred to as 'the enculturation process'. I'd like to suggest that my ethnographic fieldwork can demonstrate how various strands of established anthropological theory can be used to demonstrate how the cultural mechanisms used in Royal Marines basic training create an alternative reality, which in turn can enable successful transformation of a civilian into a Commando. I hope that I can provide the most detailed and complete anthropological account of Military enculturation

offered to date. I would like to offer my ethnography as an important contribution to knowledge because of the understanding I hope to detail about a relatively closed off and little understood institutional culture.

The study of institutions and their constitution as a relevant object for the attention of study is, as Richard Jenkins puts it “a matter of fundamental and methodological importance” (Jenkins, 1996, p. 127). But specifically in terms of my Military ethnography I refer to Foucault who asks whether the Military institution is the nucleus of all political institutions. (Foucault, 2000b, p. 60). Although I don’t intend to answer this particular question as it is beyond the scope of this thesis, his view in conjunction with that of Jenkins does highlight the importance of an increased understanding of the Military culture. This requirement for improved knowledge is further pointed out through Foucault’s (1977) discussions on power and discourse. Foucault sees a given discourse as a reflection of power structures and what one deems to be truth or valid knowledge is based upon the discourse of that time. Thus, one should seek to uncover power structures in order to strive for equality and in doing so, power structures may be revealed and analysed for their truth claims (Borin, 2001). I would like to offer a final word from Quincy Wright as to the importance of Military study. Wright argues that an anthropologist can understand more about the difficulties of organisation and of world peace by observing smaller organisations and sub-cultures. Opposition he argues is as essential as co-operation (Wright, 1965, p. 239).

I will now attempt to summarise the main themes of my ethnography and detail the mechanisms of transformation from civilian to Royal Marine in the sections below. I have organised my discussion in the various sections according to their centrality and importance to a presentable chronological order of the way in which the themes unfold during the enculturation training programme. The first conclusions section on masculinity and violence sets out a starting point for the enculturation process which, for the recruit begins prior to his joining. In this way I present the idea that the main lure into Marines training is for the acquisition of a new masculine identity which can offer increased social standing. I hope to show that the pre-joining desire for masculinity provides the initial legitimisation for disciplinary and punishment practices to be administered upon the recruit’s body.

In the second section on discipline and punishment practices I will be providing a detailed picture of the variety and complexities of disciplines used in Marines training, and moreover, I will attempt to show that the discharge of a disciplinary punishment is dependent on situation and context. I will attempt to adapt the theme of discipline further in the third section and develop the use of surveillance as discipline. To do this I will present a view of disciplinary application through the physical environment, followed by the idea of discipline as imagined surveillance.

Having discussed the multifaceted forms and applications of discipline, in the fourth section I will attempt to show why discipline is so important and why it is invested so heavily into the recruits. This section will demonstrate how discipline is used from the start of a recruit's training programme to de-individualize them and in turn, encourage their development into personhood. Following on from this theme, the fifth section will focus on the use of narrative. I will attempt to show that essentially because of the overbearing measure of discipline thus far experienced by the recruits, which was necessary to de-individualize them, and to create the required stress states for effective combat training and formation of personhood, narrative creation and re-creation provides an essential tool through which the recruits can recount their stressful experiences in a way that will make sense to them. Through the process of narrative re-creation I will attempt to show that the recruits have access to a continuing process by which they can re-invent their histories and contexts of experience, and therefore their own identities.

Finally, in the sixth section I will show how the training team gradually ease off from hard applications of discipline in order to encourage the recruits to self-discipline and to function fully at the level of personhood. A further product of gentler disciplinary dissipation will enable the recruits to start forming closer relationships with their training team and to start acting less as recruits and more as Marines. This shift in behaviour prepares them for their final set of ceremonial procedures at the end of their training where they will be re-individualized and realised as Royal Marines.

Violence and Masculinity: A Socially Acceptable Identity

This section will conclude some of the significant insights my ethnography has been able to contribute towards establishing a fuller understanding of the Military's enculturation

process through its location to ideas of masculinity and violence. This section will attempt to establish a theory as to why membership into Marines culture might initially present as appealing to potential recruits. I will relate my ethnography to wider anthropological theories in an attempt to show that primarily, potential recruits are drawn in to Marines training by their craving for a socially legitimate masculine identity.

I would like to begin by suggesting that masculinity was the main motivating factor that inspired my fieldwork respondents to join Royal Marines training and to take their first step into this new and rugged culture. The majority of my respondents had come from working and lower middle class backgrounds and recognised violence and masculinity as a means to obtain status and social respect, unlike their upper middle class counterparts whose ambitions for status were more closely linked to economic attainment (Bourdieu, 1973). The desire for a new masculine identity not only brought the potential recruits into the Marines arena but continued to motivate them throughout their training. As Richard Jenkins puts it “individuals seek to be, or seek to be seen to be somebody or something” (Jenkins, 1996, p. 22).

An important relationship that ideas of masculinity creates is its legitimisation of discipline, which is an essential aspect of recruit training. In order for the Marines disciplinary regimen to hold any authority over the recruits and their actions, the mechanisms of that control must first have been validated. From the sometimes restricted information that I acquired from my participants about their specific motivations to join, I found that on the whole they had a wish to enhance their life position through the addition of social status which in the form of Marines training would result in masculinisation. These ideas of masculinity and the Marines were obtained through their personal experience, as was the case with Tris who came from a Military background, or through exposure to media images as was the case with Thomas. One Sergeant demonstrated this point superbly when he explained to me,

“When the Corps are down on recruitment, they’ll plaster images of their latest campaign all over the newspapers. It’ll be some Bootneck¹⁶ with a GPMG¹⁷ strapped across his chest and a big headline saying ‘Heroes’ – that really gets people applying”.

¹⁶ The term ‘Bootneck’ means Royal Marine and originates from the Nelsonian era when leather uniform stock was worn around the neck.

¹⁷ Meaning General Purpose Machine Gun; a heavy duty belt-fed weapon.

With the application of Wendy Holloway's theory (Holloway, 1984) I would describe this sort of pre-entrance image as a fantasy that can be applied to help understand the type of person an aspiring Marine would like to be and how he would like to be seen by others. In this case, the fantasy is linked to power and good social standing. Holloway explains this in terms of subject positions, suggesting that it is useful to approach an understanding of what makes people take up certain subject positions. In the case of my respondents, the masculine identity of Marine can be arrived at by developing a notion of 'investment'. An investment, she describes as something between an emotional commitment and a vested interest. When this theory of investment is applied to the Marine recruits, their commitment can be found in the relative power conceived by them in terms of the fulfilment or prize that the intended subject position as Marine Commando can provide (Holloway, 1984)

To expand on Holloway's idea of investment, I would like to refer first of all to Peter Wade who demonstrates that the goal of a man's identity and personhood is determined through his engagement in strategies which he invests in as a means to maintain certain self-representations and social evaluations. He uses the analogy of men investing in two competing discourses, one of the family man and the other which he refers to as the *hombre parrandero*¹⁸. For a man to be considered a *hombre parrandero* by his peers is a cradle of stature among men as well as an expression of male solidarity (Wade in Moore, 1994, p. 68).

Wade goes on to argue that for a man to be a successful *hombre parrandero* he must hold a fine balance between family life and his pursuits at being male among men. This does stand in slight contrast to Regan de Bere's view for example, that although male masculinity in the Navy is central to Military identity and belonging, family will nevertheless come second to the Navy (Regan de Bere, 2003). I particularly like the view put forward by John Gray which approaches the issue in terms of conflict of needs. He argues that "although we crave security we are easily bored and similarly although we are peace loving, we have an itch for violence". He also argues that "although we are drawn to thinking, at the same time we hate the fear and unsettlement that it brings" (Gray, 2002, p. 116). This is a particularly apt expression that I feel represents the general feeling I received from my fieldwork respondents. Through Gray's understanding they get the security through personhood, the violence through development of their new

¹⁸ From Spanish meaning male 'party animal'.

masculinities and as is typical of Marines training, they are not necessarily required to think too hard about it.

Establishment of an idea that connects the attainment of a Military masculinity with better recognition within family life and in the wider society as a whole is a particularly useful application to the recruits featured in my ethnography due to the part-time nature of their Military service. The Marines as a Military Unit (RM – Royal Marines) fully train and maintain a Reserve Force (RMR – Royal Marines Reserves) for the purpose of extra manpower that can fulfil the full role of Commando as and when required. This is a cost-efficient way of maintaining a surplus which solves the problem of ‘too many or too few’. In relation to this point I would like to suggest that my ethnography offers further original insights as a piece of research because the vast majority of other Military research has been done on full-time Regular Military groups and usually once they have been established as soldiers. My study looks at a reserve or part-time unit, and explores the experiences of people living civilian lives for the most part who at weekends submit their bodies and minds to a Military institution to become empowered as an economic and political government agent. I will present considerations throughout about how part-time or limited cultural exposure can have dramatic effects on individuals.

So whereas Regular soldiers usually take on housing in Military quarters, Reservists live in normal civilian communities and are therefore indistinguishable from any other family (Jessup, 1996). By establishing an understanding of the importance of a male masculine identity, I hope to show that RMR training for the recruits is not just a pursuit within itself but rather is a means of masculine empowerment through politico-Military agency within Military culture which can then be transferred out of the Military culture and into civilian society as an identity with which social standing can be claimed. In this sense the desire to begin Marines training can be seen as an investment into the self. Henrietta Moore explains that there are multiple types of masculinities and femininities depending on which organisation or institution one may be representing (Moore, 1994). I would like to expand on this idea by suggesting that by representing the Military, one’s earned status will be more prestigious than masculine identities sought from non-Military organisations because of the Military’s legitimate link to power and violence. Hopton says that militarism is the major means by which the values and beliefs associated with ideologies of hegemonic masculinity are eroticised and institutionalised (Hopton, 2003).

This point is demonstrated well by Summerfield & Peniston-Bird who highlight the role of the Home Guard during the war. Here, it is pointed out that these men were not allowed to join the Regular Army but despite this, the men still wanted to fulfil their masculine identities by supporting the war effort, and therefore did so by taking on a combative role. Although in reality it was unlikely that the Home Guard would ever have experienced a real battle, membership into the Home Guard enabled the men to experience the male masculinity associated with the war effort and its legitimate violence (Summerfield & Peniston-Bird, 2003). RMR training and the acquisition of a masculine identity in this sense can be used to re-assert the natural order of things (Moore, 1994) and can be a particularly strategic decision on the part of the intending recruit, as was the case for the Home Guard, especially during a time when society is changing and gender roles are becoming confused.

Regardless of a changing society, there still remains a particular pressure on many men to fulfil a masculine role. Hopton attempts to provide an understanding of this idea by referring to 'hegemonic masculinity' which boys and men are generally encouraged to aspire to. He argues that in order for males to achieve an acknowledgement of higher social status, they must be able to demonstrate qualities such as "stoicism, domination of weaker individuals, competitiveness and heroic achievement" (Hopton, 2003, p. 112). Although I would like to agree with this point in principle, my ethnography does, however, show a more complex series of behaviours in the pursuit of masculinity. For example, during my recruits' first turn-to at RMR Bristol to attend their PRC weekend I observed the beginnings of what later developed into a recruit pecking-order based on personal qualities in which the highest status was awarded to the recruits who were naturally more dominant and 'interesting'. However, as the course of training progressed, the recruit pecking-order ceased to allow for domination of one over another, but saw that a system of pooled skills would ensure that those who were weaker would benefit from the stronger. This idea was discussed in full in the section on *Discussion about Early Group Formation* in Chapter Two. The complexity which early group formation highlighted with regards to the pursuit for masculinity indicated that paradoxically it could not be achieved through competitiveness and domination as Hopton suggested, but rather, through mutual assistance and a form of male relationships based on personhood and shared experiences.

Hockey, who also considered the relationships between his participants, presents this view on masculinity - that a soldier's identity during training is associated with violence, danger, heroism and risk-taking (Hockey, 2003). This view does help locate my observations that recruits persevere with their training because whilst they are doing so, and whilst suffering the hardships of their physical and emotional pain, they are at the same time celebrating their masculinity and mutually learning and practicing to be men in this wholly masculine environment. But I would like to add an extra complexity to the idea of recruits learning to be masculine by suggesting that the recruits' training team are acting as their role models and dominant oppressors at the same time. In this sense I would like to make a proposition that through the recruits' association with their masculine training team they will come to believe in their membership through this power of association and physical proximity with their powerful and masculine bodies. I would like to demonstrate this point by drawing a parallel to the power of association, by referring to Paul Stoller's apprenticeship Among the Songhay of Niger (Stoller & Olkes, 1989).

In this superb ethnography, Stoller travelled to Niger with the sole purpose of disproving the existence of witchcraft. But regardless of his initial scepticism, after practicing the craft as a sorcerer's apprentice for a short while he became terrified that he had been placed under the spell of a witch doctor and fled the Songhay to return home. I would like to offer Stoller's ethnographic account as an example of the power of association and belief whilst training as a subservient in a foreign culture. But association alone was not the only vehicle utilised by the Marine recruits for the attainment of their new masculine identities. I observed that through their associations and observations, and in conjunction with their narrative creations, which I will explore in more detail in a later section, the recruits were required to practice being masculine just as Stoller was to practice being an apprentice sorcerer. In this sense I would like to refer to Herzfeld's study as signposted in Chapter Five.

Michael Herzfeld, in talking of discourse and performance rituals, makes a discussion of what he calls the 'poetics of manhood' in a Cretan village (Herzfeld, 1988). Herzfeld argues that Cretan men present themselves in a kind of public performance in which being a good man is less important than being good at being a man. The successful presentation of selfhood depends upon an ability to identify the self with larger categories of identity, and doing so while presenting himself in a dramatic way which concentrates

attention on the performance itself, thus giving a successful performance. According to Herzfeld, it is this self-illusiveness of social performances, and in the concomitant backgrounding of everyday considerations that individuals discern a poetics of social interaction. In this sense, the self is not presented in everyday life so much as in front of it (Herzfeld, 1988, pp. 10-11).

Herzfeld's theory of masculinity attainment neatly adds some extra perspective to the example of attainment by association which I highlighted with Stollar's ethnography. However, I would like to now point out a fundamental difference between this and the masculine identity achieved through Marines training. Whereas Herzfeld made the argument that a masculine identity needs to be continually performed in order to be maintained, the Marines masculine identity on the other hand does not require any performance to re-enforce and retain once it has been achieved. Thus, the Marine identity, once accomplished, remains structurally stable, just like incorporation into the category of adulthood in cultures such as that of the Nuer, where puberty rituals or other similar rites of passage are practiced.

Until the point is reached when the recruits are awarded their Green Berets, they practice furiously to achieve masculinity as suggested by Herzfeld, knowing that at any moment their efforts could be disposed of. Whereas once the recruits have reached the point of Green Beret status they no longer have to work at their masculine performance to retain it. I would like to suggest furthermore that the labour invested into learning to perform as a man through Marines training can be interpreted as a labour-value (Foucault, 1966) which is given in exchange for the new identity. In this scenario the masculine Marine identity is highly valued and highly prized due to its relative inaccessibility. The high value in this case is again related to the hardships invested into its achievement.

In addition, I would like to submit that from the point of the Royal Marines as an institution, my respondents are presenting their masculine identities of Marines culture as real and applicable identities which add to the status value of their masculine impressions. This can be demonstrated by placing the Marines image into contrast with the tough image of a person on the street that has created a masculine appearance by wearing certain clothes and by fashioning certain stylistic body movements. In this case they may not be at all tough but rather, live and present themselves to the world according to a masculine fantasy. The Marine on the other hand has been developed by the institution

into a real physical and usable masculinity. Thus when they are placed into a unit and sent to a theatre of war they are a physical expression of Governmental power and dominance over the nation-state they are invading. So for the Government, the individual Marine is an agent of applicable physical power which enhances the strength of the Nation. For the individual Marine however, training is a school of masculinity and manhood which enhances his individual power over other people (Moore, 1994) outside of the Marines cultural environment.

I hope that the above considerations are helpful in establishing an understanding of some of the most fundamental issues that influence a recruit to join and remain on the tough course of Marines enculturation. In particular I hope that I have been able to add a degree of complexity where earlier reports on the subject did not. For instance, in Chapter Two I referred to *The Social Effects of Military Service* by James Alden Barber, who argued that Military service increases the employability of an individual within the public employment arena by increasing individual qualities such as self-esteem, self-discipline and the ability for team work (Barber, 1972). I hope to have shown in addition to this how Military service can have a far more complex impact on an individual when in the public arena.

With this in mind I would like to start developing my ethnographic findings by moving on from a consideration of the recruits' motivations to join the Marines, to a discussion about the complex and fundamental mechanisms that shape and reform him. To this end I will direct the reader to the following section on Disciplinary and Punishment practices.

Disciplinary and Punishment Rituals: Types and Practices

Once an individual has been inspired to join the Marines he must then give himself willingly to his training team in order to be transformed physically and mentally to perform the role of Marine Commando. The main mechanism that he will be exposed to throughout the entire course of his training is discipline. The use of the word 'discipline' in relation to my ethnography is somewhat synonymous with the act of punishment. Essentially, I would like to suggest that Military discipline is substantiated and when necessary reinforced through rituals of punishment. Likewise, the practice of appropriate punishment re-informs the recruits of their need to continually express a disciplined

manner. When the recruits are seen to relax their discipline and become 'civilian like' they will be punished again to remind them that Marines are disciplined people.

New recruits on training courses have a few impressions of what discipline is from snippets of film or third-hand accounts, but their actual training experience is very different. From their first arrival at the Royal Marines Commando Training Centre, the new recruits became a featuring part of a relatively unknown practice – to the outside world that is. Their bus journey which transferred them from an environment of moderation to a new world shaped by discipline was in some respects a parallel of Malinowski's experience when dropped onto the beach at Boyowa Island, only to turn and see the boat go out, knowing at that moment that he must stand up to, embrace and learn the unknown (Malinowski, 1961). For my recruits it was a near identical set of circumstances. They had arrived at the heart of an unknown society called a camp. The walls were tall, the colours bleak and the atmosphere slightly eerie. They had formed the impression from their outside knowledge that time spent here among the Marines could earn them a masculine identity. But in order that this process may take hold, they would need to submit themselves to Marines discipline for a sustained length of time. For some, this is a given; for others, they would realise they had made a mistake by coming here and would want to leave almost as quickly.

The disciplinary regime in Marines culture is probably the dominant reason for a feeling of 'culture shock' amongst its hopefuls. Marines training has to assert a huge number of changes upon the recruit in a relatively short period of time in order that he is fit to serve as a battle-ready Marine. Nigel Foster puts it that "He must grow from adolescent to mature man in far shorter time than society or nature allows" (Foster, 1998, p. 57). The central features of what makes this enculturation process possible are the many forms of discipline and punishment practices that unfold during training. In this concluding section about discipline, I will attempt to summarise and conclude the many complexities of Marines discipline as discovered during my ethnographic work, and its centrality to the other prominent themes which are essential in the indoctrination of a civilian to this harsh style of life.

In conjunction with my ethnographic conclusions about the disciplinary process I would like in particular to consider some of the more notable contributions made by Foucault. My aim in doing this will be to demonstrate a current understanding as well as to assist in

locating my own theories into the greater context of established work. Furthermore, I would like to demonstrate in this way how my ethnographic work can add to the complexity of current knowledge by demonstrating discipline as a multifaceted and intricate part of Military enculturation.

Michel Foucault has been very influential in providing detailed accounts of Military discipline and punishment exercises. In his work *Discipline and Punish* (1975) he establishes the evolution of disciplinary practice by highlighting the point in history at which discipline became a recognisable method with which soldiers could be 'created' for greater efficiency. Foucault postulated that by the 18th century the soldier had become an agent who could be made 'out of formless clay', and constructed into the required calibre of man (Foucault, 1975).

Foucault explains discipline through reference to two main technologies of punishment. The first type is *monarchical punishment*, which is performed by repressing the populace through brutal public spectacles of executions and torture. The second type, *disciplinary punishment*, is the one I will be focussing on in order to locate my ethnographic findings. It is what Foucault argues is practiced in the modern era and gives authorities power over their subjects. He goes on to contend that disciplinary punishment will lead to self-policing by the general public and thereby eliminates the requirement for brutal displays of power as practiced in the monarchical period (Foucault, 1975). For Foucault, discipline which arose transnationally between the 17th and 18th centuries is a more subtle form of power which, when applied to the training of soldiers, could be used to make and form them and thereby eliminate the need to rely on their individual characteristics.

Foucault described the process whereby the human body, through the correct application of discipline, could be mastered and turned into the automatism of habit. He refers to this process with a historical reference, as having "got rid of the peasant" and being given "the air of a soldier" (Foucault, 1975, p. 135). I have adopted this general theoretical framework and applied it to my ethnography. In this way I hope to show that the experience of the recruits entering the Commando Training Centre is akin to "entering a machinery of power that explores them, breaks them down and then re-arranges them into a political anatomy" (Foucault, 1975, p. 138)

In order to develop further his understanding of the adoption and practice of discipline, Foucault talks in terms of the Protestant Armies of Maurice of Orange¹⁹ and Gustavus Adolphus²⁰, whereby Military discipline was being accomplished through a rhythmic of time, punctuated by pious exercises. For centuries, Foucault wrote, religious orders had been masters of discipline. But once other disciplines such as the Army had begun to alter them by refining them, they soon became a measurement of quarter hours, minutes and then seconds (Foucault, 1975, p. 150). With this point in mind I would like to suggest that my ethnography shows that through this historical development between the relationship of time and discipline, increasing levels of intense physical output in more and more finely defined time-frames will have the effect of increasing the clarity and definition of the identity produced.

Foucault talks historically of the qualities that a man would have possessed in order to be a soldier in times past, such as “alertness, taut stomach, strong fingers, thick thighs, and one who was generally agile and strong so that when he became an honourable pike bearer he could march gracefully in step” (Foucault, 1975, p. 135). My ethnography demonstrates a picture affiliated to Foucault’s principle that suggests that the modern Military man is entirely shaped. I would like to offer an initial demonstration of this by recalling some of the instructions given to the recruits whilst on their PRC weekend. For instance, the training team made it clear that they were not looking for ‘supermen’ or just for those who may be fit and strong already, but for those with the potential to be trained as Marines. During a session of press-ups, one PTI said to the recruits:

“When you get tired, don’t give up. What we are looking for is potential, that is, the right frame of mind. The physical stuff, we’ll teach you.”

I would like to suggest that this example highlights that the Marines will be selecting not necessarily those who are already fit and strong, but those who can be successfully shaped and formed into a Marine as a result of intense exposure to the disciplinary regimen.

My main aims in quoting Foucault’s work on Military discipline in the above passages are two-fold. Firstly I would like to acknowledge his general influence on my work, and to acknowledge that his work has helped me to recognise the many and diverse complex disciplinary practices during my fieldwork. Secondly I hope to show the margins in his

¹⁹ Maurice of Nassau, Prince of Orange (1567 - 1625). Dutch general and statesman and son of William I.

²⁰ Gustavus Adolphus (1594 – 1632), King of Sweden.

work when trying to accomplish a full understanding of how exactly discipline shapes and builds strong Military masculinities through the process of Military enculturation. In a similar way to Foucault, Hockey puts it that Military socialisation is powerful enough to change the self-image of recruits as they learn to identify with masculine ideas of being. He says that the training process introduces the recruit to a whole new social world where they need to learn anew how to walk, run, turn and even speak (Hockey, 1986). By focussing on disciplinary practices, I will be attempting to fully detail the phases of socialisation that cause such marked changes to the recruit's identity by providing an in-depth insight into the workings of the intricate and subtle processes that form the perpetual exchange of information between my respondents and their instructors, and importantly between themselves through the medium of shared personhood. It is with this in mind that I will now detail the many types and practices of discipline that I observed during my ethnographic fieldwork.

Discipline: types and practices of the Royal Marines

The type of disciplinary exercise awarded is to some extent determined by the degree of a recruit's ill performance. This ill performance will be determined by the training team according to their perception of whether the ill performed is deemed an offence against them personally, and therefore an insult against the order of things (Moore, 1994), or whether it is a more tolerated kind of gaffe caused by fatigue for example, or as a reasonably expected part of the process of learning. For example, if the latter is the case and the recruit has not turned out at parade to the required standard, his punishment will usually be given in quantifiable form, for example fifty press-ups. In this case the recruit has the relative comfort of being able to aim to complete his press-ups with a measured focus. Here, the pain inflicted upon the recruit is pointed at his body - in his mind, he merely suffers slight humiliation. In the former case however, where a recruit may show disobedience to a member of the training team, or perform some action that endangers him or others, the price for this more severe offence will likely be given in an unquantified form. For instance, he may have to perform a series of unpleasant movements, or hold still in a stress position until his punisher feels gratified with the payback and orders that the recruit may stop. In this type of punishment, the body will undoubtedly fatigue first, and become painful, and therefore it is the mind that has to endure pain over the body. This type of punishment is aimed at causing disciplinary hurt to both mind and body.

Throughout the duration of my fieldwork research there were many occurrences that fell into the above two categories of disciplinary punishment. From the examples that I explored in the earlier chapters, I would like to demonstrate an instance of the quantified punishment by referring back to Chapter Three where I detailed Edd's penance of fifty press-ups for putting his wet T-shirt into his dry kit. Here the instructor's very loud and forceful verbal scolding will have ensured that Edd would not risk making that mistake again. Furthermore, the volume at which the training team member reproached him ensured that all other recruits would have benefitted from the message. In order to demonstrate an un-quantified punishment I would like to refer again to Chapter Three when the drill Sergeant said, "I want bags of effort here today and won't tolerate any wankers. Now, are there any wankers here that I need to know about?"

A recruit's voice from within the ranks muttered, "I can think of one!"

On hearing this, the drill Sergeant ordered the recruit out of the rank formation, made him hold his rifle high above his head where it was to remain whilst he spent the entire drill session running continuous laps around the parade square, receiving regular verbal abuse from the drill Sergeant. This was a particularly unpleasant punishment. Physically and mentally it would have been agonising, as well as awfully shameful. Foucault referred to this type of punishment display as the 'crime-punishment sign'. He argued that punishment can be made visible for all to see, which produces a "learned economy of publicity" (Foucault, 1975, p. 109).

Following on from the above descriptions of disciplinary punishment, I would like to add that the two types of practices described above are not finite. There are a multitude of offence types, all of which are punishable. Further complexities are created by the context of the specific environment in which the offence occurs, according to the training activity going on at the time, and additionally whether there is a higher ranking officer standing witness. I will detail these three types in turn.

The environmental context is most likely to influence whether punishment is dispensed imminently or as a threat of future violence (Moore, 1994). So, if the violation is performed in an open environment such as the Bottom Field or on the moors, a physical punishment will be dispensed with immediate effect. In the case that the environmental context is deemed suitable for immediacy, the next successive categorisation which determines the severity or intensity of the punishment is determined by the available 'open range' of the environment. If the offence occurs on the Bottom Field for example,

which is a relatively small enclosed space within the confines of the Commando Training Centre marked by boundaries in the form of perimeter fencing, then the physical punishment will be short and intensive. Here, recruits may be ordered to take off their kit and then face five or ten minutes of rigorous exercises such as push-ups, star-jumps, squat-thrusts and sprint runs to named obstacles and back again. They will perform this type of ritual whilst being relentlessly verbally harangued by the training teams present, which adds significant pressure. This is slightly different to the open range punishment dispensed on the moors or upon Woodbury Common. On the common for example, with the absence of visible boundaries, the punishment would be less intensive but would be sustained for a longer period of time such as twenty minutes or half an hour. I gave the example in Chapter Three when my respondents were ordered to run around the bushy-top tree and back. In this example, the obstacle which acted as their marker was described to them as the 'bushy-top tree' because that was the only way it could be distinguished to the recruits from their distant starting point.

Of the environmentally determined punishments, the above examples were of punishments that could be doled out immediately due to being situated in what I referred to as an 'open range'. In contrast to this, a punishable offence may be categorised as having occurred in an environment unsuitable for rituals of physical discipline, and I will refer to these as 'closed range' punishments. I observed this whilst the recruits were without field kit, wearing clean and fresh clothes and attending lectures inside the teaching classrooms at CTC. Here, if a recruit was to display a measure of inattention to the instructor he would be disciplined by a threat of violence to come. In these circumstances I would hear the training team use a stock phrase: 'you can stand-by'. To 'stand-by' means to be ready, or to make ready. During one particularly long afternoon of classroom lectures and radio operating instruction, the trainer felt that the recruits were becoming too lethargic. He suddenly shouted at them, "If you lot don't start pinning your ears back and listening in, you can stand-by". On another occasion the instructor told the recruits, "Right, you lot clearly aren't paying enough fuckin attention so I'll be speaking with your PTI's to ensure you're thoroughly woken up in your Bottom Field session this afternoon". In this example, the threat of violence was made more personal and more real by the terms 'I'll be speaking to' and 'your PTI's'.

A second set of disciplinary and punishment determining factors that my observation enabled me to define are those governed by the type of training activity and tempo

(Bourdieu, 1999) at the time of the offence. In terms of the training activity, the measure of discipline asserted upon the recruits is determined by the potential seriousness caused by that particular mistake occurring. For example, in Chapter Five I detailed the twenty-five metre shoot that my recruits needed to pass at the immediate end of the endurance course run. As they came into the finish area (there is no actual line) which is adjacent to the shooting stance, they had enough time to prepare their weapon before being called forward - four at a time. They walked into the shooting area through an entrance space in a flimsy looking picket style fence. The range area from the outside is highly visible and entirely open. But despite its openness and lack of sturdy physical boundary, the space is highly defined (Foucault, 1975) by the extraordinary level of control that the training team exert over each well-practiced set of exacting and definite movements that a recruit may make - but only on command.

A mistake whilst using live ammunition in the shooting range is unthinkable. As you look down this small range there are human-size targets erected in front of a tall, built-up, brickwork sand bunker. But if you were to look to your immediate left or right, you would see comrades and training team members. If, when looking down the range, you were to veer your focus off to the left at a 115 degree angle, you would see the Bottom Field Assault Course with other intakes of recruits training on it. To the rear of the sand bunker or buffer, you would see the well-used rail line which runs from Exmouth to Exeter, and beyond that, an estuary. In this environment of concentrated activity, one stray round could have catastrophic consequences.

Due to the potential severity caused by a mistake, recruit movement is stringently controlled by at least three training team members whose concentration on their orders and the recruits' task is immeasurable. The recruits are trained so that in this environment their physical movements are organised into prescribed sets which includes prescription of control over the weapon, ensuring that at all times the barrel is facing directly down the range - there is no leeway. On being given the order 'Load' they must follow the particular set of movements that complete that order. When they are told 'Adopt the prone position' they will do so exactly by carrying through a number of well-practiced movements that alter their standing position to a lying position, whilst at all times maintaining complete and unwavering control over their rifle. This form of self-control at the immediate end of the seven mile long gruelling endurance course which renders the recruits wet, cold and fatigued is a true measure of their learned discipline.

A punishable mistake in this highly controlled environment could be warranted by as little as an incorrect movement or a hesitation whilst carrying out rifle drills. That same mistake during a different training activity such as weapons training with no ammunition in an empty stance or upon Woodbury Common may be corrected without the need for discipline. In much the same way, whilst on general manoeuvres, the rifle does not need to be so stringently controlled, to the point where exaggerated and sometimes unnecessary movements of the rifle may go entirely unnoticed by the training team.

In terms of tempo, I observed that the punishment type will be set either in chorus with the cadence of the training activity or in stark contrast to it. For example, whilst undergoing intense training on the Bottom Field, the punishment would be equally intense, but distinguishable by the change of activity. Alternatively, I observed occasions when the recruits were sitting on the ground upon Woodbury Common listening to an instructor explaining a particular tactical movement. The location is away from the training centre and its hierarchical milieu and so the mood is more relaxed. Here an instructor might suddenly, and without warning, ask a recruit of his choosing a question about some aspect of what he has just explained. If the recruit cannot answer satisfactorily, the instructor will tell him to do some token of punishment such as a mere twenty press-ups. The order is given in a relaxed way and the recruit may equally carry out his press-ups in a relaxed fashion. This type of exchange often raises a friendly laugh among the other recruits, which is sanctioned by the instructor as a show of good will and in keeping with the session and its associated discipline in a light-hearted spirit. In this instance, training tempo was the first consideration and determining factor of whether or not the punishment would incorporate the environmental range.

To summarise the training tempo then, I hope to have shown that when the rhythm of activity is up-beat, the corresponding punishment will include a consideration of the available environmental range. Alternatively, when the tempo of training is calm and relaxed with a slightly more personable feel, any need for discipline or punishment that arises will likely be given without reference to environmental range. It is also worth noting that the calmer tempo and non-consideration of range is more closely associated with the later phases of training and thereby serves to reinforce the greater level of acceptance that the recruits are afforded by their training teams. This type of relaxed approach to discipline is a part of the preparatory transition from recruit to Marine. In this sense, the training team start to treat them more as an equal, but at the same time maintain

control and authority by reinforcing their power by awarding punishment for perceived misgivings. This stands in blatant opposition to high tempo training that would most likely consider environmental range as a primary factor included in the punishment type. These types of punishment rituals are more closely associated with the earlier phases of training where the main form of relations between training team and recruit was one of dominant and dominated.

A third determining factor which I observed as having a marked influence on the punishment type was the presence of a commissioned officer. In Chapter Four I articulated a particularly unpleasant discipline ritual carried out over 'warm-up knoll'. The actual name given to this punishment ritual was 'it pays to be a winner'. In this case the recruits were ordered over some dead ground spanning a couple of hundred metres and up to the top of a short steep knoll (referred to in times gone by as Beasty Knoll²¹). Once at the top, the recruits had to turn around and come back. There are generally three rounds. In the first round, the first three recruits back across the line can stand aside while the rest are sent back to negotiate the course again. In this second round it is the last three back who will be sent back to do it one last time.

The only time I observed this particular punishment ritual carried out was in the presence of a Lieutenant who came along for one day in order to address the recruits and the training team, and observe the progress and practice. On this occasion, as the punishment ritual started to get underway, the officer stood on top of a stump about three feet high. This accentuated his high rank with physical stature that towered over the training team, who in turn with their erect and powerful postures, towered over the cowering recruits.

My observation of this isolated incident leads me to suggest that the severity of the ensuing punishment ritual was performed by the training team for the benefit of the inspecting Lieutenant. In this case the training team demonstrated the virility of their 'Marine-ness' and command over the recruits. This was accomplished by powerfully commanding an enormous expenditure of pain and effort from the recruits in order to entertain the emotional states of the attending officer. The expressions on the recruits' faces were numb and their eyes looking empty and desperate. I would like to propose that within the Marines' masculine and violent culture, if a training team can cause excitable

²¹ The name Beasty Knoll is derived from the term 'beasting' which was used regularly in times past to denote severe physical punishment.

changes to the inspecting officer's emotions through demonstrations of control, power and dominance - all for the purpose of honouring his presence with this show of entertainment - then he will report favourably on the training operation. It is also noteworthy that at the end of this punishment ritual, the Sergeant who orchestrated the spectacle asked me to erase it from my video camera. He politely said to me,

“I hope you don't mind, but if someone was to view that footage out of context it could be taken the wrong way”.

So far I have detailed some important and determining factors that help understand the recruit's social reality and the centrality of discipline and punishment rituals upon his experience. In order to complete the detail of the complexities that define these ceremonies I would like to turn to one final distinction of punishment and discipline forms that are determined according to the phase of training the recruits are in. For the first example I will consider the first phase of training which I referred to in Chapter Two as *culture shock*. Here, whilst in their earliest stages of training the recruits were, in general terms, disciplined at group level. However there was the unusual occurrence when Jack could not locate himself within the group structure. This contributed to his increasingly side-lined position from the group, which may have been a factor in his added deterioration at performing his role. With the combining factors of poor performance and rejection from the group, Jack was subjected to what I called the 'isolation punishment ritual'. In this case he was made to stand and watch whilst his comrades were physically punished for his wrong-doing. This ritual sealed his seclusion from the group and his fate to quit the training.

One further point I would like to consider briefly staying with Jack's demise through the isolation punishment ritual is the idea that in this case the group of recruits as a unit may have the combined influence to affect the disciplinary and punishment decisions of the training team. It was the united group which placed Jack to the periphery where he continued to struggle at integrating himself with the group and Marines' ethos. The idea that the group as a whole can have some influence over their Sergeant is supported to some degree by the work of John Hockey in his book *Squaddies* (Hockey, 1986).

Hockey gathered his sociological information by living with and observing Army recruits whilst they were in training and whilst going on to serve with an operational unit in South Armagh. He demonstrated that within Military subculture it is not the case that the chain

of authority simply works only from the top - down, but that even the most subordinate recruits have a means of negotiating orders with their superiors (Hockey, 1986). I hope that my detailed example of Jack can add to Hockey's assertion by showing that the Marines recruits didn't simply have a power with which they could negotiate small comforts as highlighted by Hockey, but rather they had the collective power to bait the training team into performing the isolation punishment ritual with Jack as the subject. By having Jack ejected from the group, they would receive fewer punishments and attract less critical attention from their training team. Michel Foucault also wrote on this point in his work *Discipline and Punish*. He argued that the power and influence of discipline and punishment has the ability to turn a whole group against a particular individual if his behaviour or other aspects are undesirable (Foucault, 1975, p. 130)

The recruits detailed in this ethnography were in a very early phase of their training when Jack's isolation punishment ritual occurred. In this case, I would like to suggest from the viewpoint of my own experience at going through Marines training that Jack was not an entirely appropriate candidate for course completion and that the training team took the opportunity to perform the isolation punishment ritual in order to finish his service sooner rather than later. I hope that this description can show the practice of some ruthless types of punishment in the early phases of training when the high numbers of in-take have displayed enough of their basic qualities and fibre to assist the training team in identifying the inappropriate candidates and effectively weeding the group down to the few stronger candidates.

As the training progressed to the phase I refer to in Chapter Three as *equalization*, the main objectives for the application of punishment were to normalise the recruits and to stimulate their transition from person to personhood (Strathern, 1988). This was achieved by the initial delivery of discipline and punishment at group level so that no one recruit was highlighted as making a mistake, but rather, when a training team member spotted a mistake his accusation as to who caused it was aimed at the group as a whole. The ensuing effect of this anonymous type of discipline and punishment practice was that during the early stages of training when the recruits were still learning generally basic drills and practices they were all benefiting from the lessons imparted to them, bringing them together by creating a standard level of Military competence at performing the essential etiquettes and drills. I would like to demonstrate this by offering the example given in the section '*When Drill Sergeant says "YOU", he means "YOU ALL".*'

In this example, whilst teaching basic marching drills to the recruits the Sergeant shouted out:

“COURSE, FORWARD MARCH. LEFT – RIGHT – LEFT – RIGHT, YOU AT THE FRONT THERE, YOU ARE COMPLETELY OUT OF STEP WITH EVERYBODY ELSE – GET IN STEP. YOU, LOFTY IN THE MIDDLE STOP TICK-TOCKING, OPPOSITE ARM, OPPOSITE LEG.”

In this example the words ‘you’ and ‘lofty’ are among some of the stock phrases and terms used in Marines training which are not aimed to denote anybody in particular, but instead draw every recruit’s attention at the Sergeant’s spoken directive of correction.

As the training progressed, the privilege of anonymity was removed and the recruits began to get singled out and punished individually for their blunders and inattention to detail. This progression was detailed in the kit and weapon inspections later on in the *equalization* phase. At this stage of training, a general standard was expected of the recruits and therefore anyone falling foul of this standard was punished according to the severity of their blunder, because this was representative of a learning gap in their particular knowledge and practice. I offered examples that showed that if an unkempt kit item was not potentially life threatening such as Charles’s dirty mess tin which could have caused an upset stomach, then the punishment would be relatively minor. If, however, the tousled kit item could be deemed potentially life-threatening such as Edd’s mistake of placing a wet T-shirt into the waterproof bag that should have contained his dry T-shirt, then he would face a harsh punishment delivered at group level after the last inspection had been completed, in addition to the press-ups he was ordered to do in situ.

Another interesting aspect of disciplinary types based on this phase of training was that those who passed the kit and weapon inspections by presenting themselves and their kit to a fitting standard would not get punished. They were afforded the reward of some time-out during which they could stand relaxed and enjoy the benefits of their proper labours whilst the rest of the recruits paid contrition to theirs. It would require a certain calibre of recruit to pass through these inspections without criticism. I gave the example at the end of Chapter Three when Jon managed this feat with two other recruits who scraped through their inspections with minor criticisms and thereby avoided having to run around the bushy-top tree and back.

As training continued to progress, the on-going forms of disciplinary and punishment types became more determined by the requirement for continuance to reinforce group solidarity whilst undergoing the intense and adaptive training which I detailed in Chapter Four, *The Phase of Identification*. Here I offered the example during a kit inspection in the cold month of January when two recruits failed to impress the training team with their unacceptable attitudes and standard of kit presented to the inspecting Colour Sergeant. This training phase dictated that the whole group were disciplined and punished equally without any individual being considered as the cause of punishment by his fellow recruits. A description of this type of occurrence was given after the Colour Sergeant disciplined the recruits for an abysmal effort by two particular candidates at the end of a kit inspection. The recruits were all punished for the lethargy of two openly-named recruits, but when I later interviewed the recruits who did not incite the punishment, no blame was apportioned. In this case the training team reinforce the idea that success is not achieved by ensuring your own organisation, but rather that attention must be projected to group level by all members.

As the recruits continued through the remaining months of training they would only be punished according to the principles of this third phase of discipline and punishment practice. Punishment became noticeably less and less frequent as the recruits became sharper at performing their drills, and as they neared their Commando course. Towards the final liminal phase of their Commando course the disciplinary practices exacted by the training team began to blend into the fourth and final disciplinary phase of their training. The blend happened seamlessly through a gradual relaxing of the disciplinary intensity and control over the recruits' bodies during general training. Ultimately, the phase four type punishment seemed little more than a good ticking-off. This type of occurrence was demonstrated in Chapter Five after the recruits' less than satisfactory preparation for their nine mile speed march during the *testing stage*, causing the PTI Sergeant to voice his dissatisfaction. After the day's training the recruits received the order to stand outside the grots. They were addressed by their course Corporal who - in what was described by one recruit as a 'chilled' voice - told them to buck their ideas up.

I would like to suggest that this final form of discipline is signified by its apparent absence of punishment. I would also like to suggest that the relaxed telling-off given by the Corporal was a very important part of the recruits' final transformation to Marine. Here the Corporal was introducing the recruits to the idea of equality and role-

responsibility. I have used the term 'role-responsibility' here to denote an alternative social reality where one has to operate according to the rules of self-discipline. Here the recruit is in a preparatory phase for his impending shift of identity to one where he will quickly need to adopt the appropriate forms of acting as a Marine Commando.

Once a recruit finally makes the transformation to Marine he will move into a fifth phase of disciplinary training. I can briefly summarise this from my own experience of being a Marine. Simply put, discipline will remain a central aspect of life but is performed out of necessity for good practice. Whilst at Marine status, any punishment deemed necessary whilst on further and advanced training is given and received in good spirits. This form of discipline and punishment practice will continue to enforce solidarity whilst simultaneously preventing any rise in bad feeling toward one another, because it may be worthwhile pointing out that a Marine can enjoy an almost mutual relationship with his superior ranks – notwithstanding of course any situation that may arise out of misconduct.

I would like to suggest then, that my ethnography shows that the categorisation of punishment types and their corresponding forfeiture may be context dependant. In this sense, I hope to have shown that there does not exist a fixed protocol or set of standard operating procedures that determine how an issue shall be resolved. This environment does not present in the way of a judicial court whereby an action is categorised into an offence type, and then results in a pre-determined convention of minimum and maximum penalty – that is of course, if the accused is found guilty of ill doing. In Marines culture, the recruits' training team are bestowed with all the powers of offence categoriser, witness to the perceived offence, Judge, Jury and executioner. The training team have authority to exercise all these powers and privileges at once and simultaneously. The result of this power is complete command over the recruits' bodies, which in turn is perceived by the recruits as a constant threat of violence against them, kept at bay only by total submission to the man giving the orders and instruction.

The unwritten sanction of disciplinary practices in the Marines bears much weight on the recruits' conscious efforts not to do wrong, because without an official structure or set of written guidelines, the recruits cannot foster a means of working out where there are loopholes within the system and neither can they predict the harshness of punishment. This is a major contributing factor to a recruit's on-going obedience and willingness to perform

pleasingly in front of his training team. Foucault explained this phenomenon as being a small penal mechanism which existed at the centre of all disciplinary systems. He argued that the Military penal system enjoys the privilege of making its own judgements of any offences that are committed by personnel, and moreover, will exercise whatever punishment it chooses (Foucault, 1975).

My purpose in locating the above ethnographic observations on discipline and punishment practices within the theoretical framework offered by Foucault is twofold. Firstly I hope to validate my ethnographic observations and conclusions within his established theory, and secondly I hope the detail I have been able to provide can add an alternative and more detailed account of Military discipline and punishment rituals than Foucault offered. Whereas Foucault talked of discipline in terms of its historical development and in terms of its practical application and transformative powers, my anthropological research offers rich and detailed ethnographic accounts of the multi-part experience itself. Furthermore, I hope to have raised awareness that discipline and punishment in Royal Marines training should not be understood simply in terms of being discharged when a violation occurs. Instead, I hope to have highlighted issues such as phase specificity and issues that predicate that when an infraction occurs, the training team member or punisher must first consider a number of criteria that will categorise the offence type. Once the category of offence has been determined, the appropriate form of discipline or punishment will be selected from those available and appropriate for discharge in the current environment and training activity. In this sense discipline is not a simplistic application, but one which arises from a multitude of complexities, all of which are context dependant.

I hope to have highlighted that the training team also experience a social reality which poses to them considerations and challenges. This shows that an enquiry into disciplinary and punishment practices in the Marines should not focus entirely on the effects experienced by the recruits. For example, should a training team member assign a punishment ritual inappropriately through the abuse of his power over the recruits, then he may suffer embarrassment or shame in front of his peers. In Marines culture, to show oneself up shamefully goes against the etiquette of performing the masculine and violently measured role of Marine. In this sense, the ordering of punishment in a modern Military can be a concerted business. It is one of fine balance between sanctioned and corrective chastisement set against an individual training team member's own need to

experience a thrill of his power and control over willing and obedient recruits. Foucault puts it that abusing one's power over others is to be a slave to one's appetites. A true leader on the other hand should exercise power over himself not to indulge in fantasies by abusing others with his power (Foucault, 2000b, p. 288).

As a final addition to this point, I hope to have made a case that although the training team members may have power of complete authority over the recruits, through the strict honouring of personhood expected by each Marine in the training team, the balance and regulation of this power is kept in check through its shared holding. This mechanism should prevent any abuse of power over recruits through the idea of a Marine brotherhood, where to disgrace oneself is to disgrace one's comrades. I hope that this example will also help make sense of the requirement for 'personhood' as an essential part the process in creating a violently masculine 'person'.

To summarise, I would like to suggest that the continued need for the expression of discipline is a skill which must eventually become a habit. Whilst the recruits are learning the skill of discipline, their training team will remind them every time they display an expression unbecoming of a disciplined Marine. This reminder is communicated through the medium of punishment. Eventually, the skill will form into a habit. Once the expression of discipline is a habit, the Marine is able to seem disciplined even whilst relaxing. Once the Marine has formed discipline into habit, then he is always aware of his surrounding environment and is constantly alert and ready. Once this state has been reached, then discipline has been successfully internalised²² by the recruit.

Surveillance: Brickwork and Imagination

In the previous section I offered a detailed account of disciplinary and punishment practices. One particular type of discipline I would like to expand on further in this concluding section is the way by which the environment is effectively utilised to further accentuate disciplinary power. I would like to highlight two distinct forms of environmental discipline within Marines training culture. The first is when discipline is reinforced through the physical environment, and the second is when it is imagined.

²² 'Internalisation' was a term offered by Foucault in *Madness and Civilization* (1961) to describe the point reached where a requirement has been learned and made habitual.

In terms of the physical camp environment, I would like to begin by referring again to the work presented by Michel Foucault. Foucault postulated that discipline would not be effective without the correct training environment, which he referred to as an architecture of power that can make people docile and knowable (Foucault, 1961). When considering the effect that the harsh and disciplinary Military environment has on the recruit, one cannot overlook the importance of the architectural layout of the Commando Training Centre. Of particular interest are the parallels Foucault drew between the use of authority and surveillance as disciplinary measures, and his reference to Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. Similarly, I have benefited from better interpretation and understanding of the Marines environment and its methods of surveillance through the logic of the panopticon.

Jeremy Bentham, a 19th century English philosopher and social thinker, developed the idea of the panopticon as a prison (Foucault, 1975). The panopticon was an ideal prison that consisted of an inspection tower surrounded by cells built around the outside edge. The design enabled the guards to see the prisoners at all times, although the prisoners could not see the guards due to Venetian-style blinds fitted in the windows of the inspection tower. The design allowed prison staff to keep the prisoners under constant observation whilst they themselves remained invisible. A major implication of this as demonstrated by Foucault was that as ancient prisons became replaced with modern ones which were open and visible, the prisoners became subject to constant surveillance. In this sense Foucault warned that visibility is a trap and it is through this visibility that society can impart its control through systems of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1975). This theory postulates that increased visibility provides for additional power over people being located at an increasing individual level which ultimately leads to institutions being able to track people throughout their entire lives.

In the same vein as Foucault's panopticon theory, I observed the tool of hierarchical observation being well utilised within the Commando Training Centre, allowing the training team on camp to constantly monitor the movements and conduct of the recruits. Similarly to Bentham's concept of the panopticon, the training camp is configured with high razor wire fencing around the perimeter and two entrances, both with armed guards. The presence of authority is further accentuated by the more senior Marines who work a sentry routine, walking around the inside perimeter of the camp. During the training day, the recruits are continuously observed as they move around CTC to their various training

locations. There are training staff and senior officers at every corner, both inside and outside the buildings, who will be repeatedly correcting the behaviour of the recruits.

A particularly fitting example of this is when the recruits are fell-in outside the training team office. Whilst assembled here they can be observed by their training team from inside the training office through a window fitted with one-way glass. I observed numerous occasions when the recruits were unknowingly being watched from within the office. During their early stages of training the recruits were unaware they were being observed and would fidget and sometimes make utterances to one another. On some occasions a Corporal would exit the office and present himself to the recruits whilst shouting at them for their 'inattention to attention'. In correlation to the discussion in the previous section on disciplinary phases, during the early equalisation phase the recruits would be punished as a group with a series of press-ups. As the recruits progressed and the disciplinary methods became more personalised, the training team would exit the office and single out a couple of recruits one at a time and chastise them for their lack of discipline whilst waiting in formation. It was never revealed to the recruits that the windows were fitted with one-way glass and it wasn't until completion of their course when they went into the training office to have their cap-badges ceremoniously fitted by the Captain that they would have had the opportunity to notice. As one recruit exited the office after having his cap badge attached he said to me:

"I never realised they had one-way glass in there, that's a bit cheeky isn't it."

As with Bentham's panopticon, the training team office is centrally placed whilst the recruit's accommodation is situated around the edge of the barracks. Every time a recruit moves from 'A' to 'B', he can be discreetly monitored. Although Bentham's plan depended on one guard being able to observe all inmates simultaneously, the Military camp does achieve the same effect with slightly more staff who will not hesitate to deliver an intense verbal scolding for any improper conduct witnessed. In this way, the shared responsibility of the various training teams at CTC will produce the same effect. Here, instead of one observing 'prison guard', I observed one uniformed set of disciplining 'guards'. I gave an example in Chapter Three highlighting the recruits' heightened awareness of the surveillance on them whilst in the camp. They told me how they would try and overcome a verbal scolding from a passing Corporal or Sergeant by running everywhere.

According to Foucault's principle, the recruits are not controlled here by brute force, but are controlled by surveillance and stimulation (Foucault, 1975). In correlation with the idea of Bentham's panopticon the recruits would be psychologically controlled as they make their way through the camp. My participant respondents expressed to me that there were times, especially immediately after being disciplined for a misdemeanour, when they were most fearful of being watched whilst moving through the camp. They would do everything as exactly as possible in order to avoid any further 'corrective training'.

The challenge for the recruits however, is that they have no privacy or place to 'hide', and there is no provision for private space. The camp seems closed-off from the outside, but once inside, it opens up in a way that fully exposes the recruits within. I explored the issue of exposure to surveillance in Chapter Three in relation to the equalization process. Here the physical environment is used well to make it clear to recruits that they have no space to call their own. Goffman (1969) puts it that outside of an institution, for most people there is an area or place which can also be considered as hidden or private where individuals can be themselves and temporarily release their role or public identity. But for the recruits at CTC, even whilst they are on their own time at the end of the day's training, they are always wary of a surprise room inspection. I elaborated this idea by detailing the 'room swap' exercise in Chapter Three which reinforced the notion of intrusion and unsettlement.

Having now highlighted the normalising powers of the physical environment at CTC by referencing my observations with the work of Foucault and Bentham, I would like to progress to the idea of imagined surveillance. I would like to suggest that disciplinary surveillance does not operate solely within the confines of the camp walls, but can actually become instilled into the recruits as a form of 'hyper-sensitivity to surveillance', the effects of which would be carried across the physical boundaries of the camp and out into the field. To demonstrate this point I would like to refer back to Chapter Three when my informants were ordered to run to the bushy-top tree and back as a form of punishment for failing their kit inspection. I proposed that whilst the recruits were undertaking this punishment and were at one point completely out of sight from the training team, that they were nevertheless under the illusion that they were being meticulously monitored when the reality was that no one (except me) was looking at them. The training team were turned inwards and conversing among themselves about

acting on film sets. After the run I asked Andy, "Did you work hard on the run?" He replied, "Yeah we had to."

I enquired further, "What do you mean you had to?" He explained to me, "Well if we didn't the training team would've just made us do it again."

I clarified, "So did you feel as if the training team were watching you all the time then?" He answered with a hint of frustration, "Yeah, they were; they always are; everything we do."

I would like to abridge by offering the idea that intense subjection to physical exposure and surveillance within the physical confines of the camp creates a hyper-sensitivity to scrutiny. In this way, oppression by surveillance in its physical form such as a passing Corporal whilst walking through camp, one-way glass and physical exposure through room swapping punishments will imprint on the recruits' consciousness an awareness of scrutiny. In turn this will create what I would like to describe as imagined surveillance. That is, once the recruits have been conditioned to feel as if they are always being watched, because it has been enforced and reinforced that they are, then the training team have achieved complete power over the recruits even when they are absent.

By locating my ethnographic observations within Foucault's theory, I hope to have demonstrated the level of control and power over a recruit that is achievable through surveillance. I hope this can also offer some insights into the effects of surveillance not only within Military training culture but within the wider society as well. In an age which is increasingly dominated by surveillance methods such as CCTV, ANPR cameras²³, mobile phone tracking, shop loyalty cards, and open exposure such as reality TV shows, Facebook and Twitter, there is perhaps a question to be asked about the effect it is having on individual experiences and interpretations of life.

Bearing in mind the effects of physical and imagined surveillance that my ethnography has demonstrated, I would like to pose the question with regards to wider society, as to what level of choice is offered to individuals as to whether or not they wish to subject themselves to constant surveillance? Whereas the recruits' subjugation was voluntary and with an end result that empowered them, for members of the public constant surveillance is not voluntary. Furthermore, according to Foucault's theory (1975) this subjugation will

²³ Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras, used by police to discretely monitor vehicle movement on the highways.

disempower individuals and concomitantly empower institutions to track individuals ever more closely throughout their lifetime.

Having now completed my explanation of forms of discipline practices I would like to progress in the following section by demonstrating why discipline is so important and why its application is essential to the enculturation process.

De-Individualization and Personhood: A Sound Investment

So far in this concluding chapter I have set out the main characteristics of the Marines and how their image lures potential applicants with the promise of masculinity. In pursuing a masculine identity, the recruits have submitted themselves to a programme of discipline. In this section I would like to show that an important part of discipline is to create strong group bonds which I suggest are essential for both success at training and for front-line service. But the process or preparation required to create group bonds is complex. I would like to propose that through the correct application of discipline the recruits will first have to be equalised before they can form a strong group bond fit for Military cohesion. A Military group bond requires that its members are prepared, if necessary, to place themselves into mortal danger for the benefit of the group and its mission.

With particular reference to the work of Goffman (1974), I will first highlight some of the prominent theories relating to equalisation, followed by a detailed demonstration of the process the recruits experienced as observed during my ethnographic fieldwork. Having achieved this, I will then show how equalisation succinctly leads the recruits into forming group solidarity which I will attempt to explain by reference to personhood as presented by Strathern (1988).

Following on then from the above section about discipline, Foucault refers to a 'micro-penality' of time, in which he incorporates lateness, inattention, negligence and the body, with regard to incorrect attitudes, irregular gestures and an absence of cleanliness (Foucault, 1977). For Foucault corrective methods for any of the above infractions will consist of a range of punishments from light physical tasks to petty humiliation. In short, the objective for a regime of disciplinary power is to 'normalise' (Foucault, 1975), by

which he means a uniformed body of men who are alike and obedient. Foucault's description of normalisation may provide a good starting point to understanding what I refer to as equalisation.

Foucault most notably presents the notion of normalisation in the context of his explanation of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1975). He reasons that normalisation is the construction of an idealized norm of conduct. When applied to the recruits it will account for the way they are to conduct themselves as detailed in instructions given by their training team. This detail will include for example, instruction on how to march, stand to attention and how to handle a rifle. The detail they display is then rewarded or punished depending on their conforming to or deviating from this detail. For Foucault, normalisation is a tactic which provides for a maximum amount of control over an individual with a minimum expenditure of force. Whereas Foucault focuses on normalisation as an application of control, I would like to present equalisation more significantly as an essential part of the process required for strong group formation.

A distinction that is more similar to my idea of equalisation is offered by John Hockey who sets out two main phases of recruit training (Hockey, 1986). He suggests that firstly recruits go through civilian role dispossession and secondly the phase of adaptation and adjustment. What Hockey refers to here is essentially the stripping of civilian norms and knowledge in exchange for a Military way of life. This closely describes the equalising process that I will detail shortly. I would finally like to consider the usefulness of the term 'deindividuation' as put forward by Philip Zimbardo (Forsyth, 2006). Zimbardo's theory maintains that a collective of people can be so powerful that under certain circumstances, virtually anyone can be transformed regardless of their characteristics. According to this theory, the power of a group situation necessitates that people can escape normative regulation whilst in crowds and mobs. Thus, the occurrence of deindividuation promotes new norms which then become the standard for the group. Through this new set of group standards, group members are encouraged to conform according to the social influence of the group rather than to think about norms individualistically.

The sum process of equalisation marks a particularly harsh disciplinary phase of recruit training. The procedure exposes the recruits to a set of disciplines made knowable to them through the power of the Military environment and its apparatus that exist at CTC. These environmental powers as detailed in the previous section on surveillance are serviced

through the physical environment. To expand this, Chris Shilling for instance analyses naturalistic, social constructionist and feminist theories of the body with reference to Bourdieu. He propounds that the body is a receptor rather than a generator, that the body is shaped, constrained, and invented by society. He refers to the process as the body having to act first as a 'receptor' before it can become a 'generator' for displays of power and status (Shilling, 1999, p. 70). I would like to incorporate Shilling's theory in order to tie up my own explanation that through equalisation the body will become receptive. I would like to suggest that the body's receptivity will first of all open up the recruit to group bonding, or personhood, and secondly, through these bonds the recruits can begin to generate and practice experiences of their new masculine roles as Royal Marines. Essentially, the idea of normalisation presented by Foucault, civilian role dispossession by Hockey, deindividuation by Zimbardo and receptivity by Shilling, I will refer to collectively as de-individualization.

Having clarified my meaning of de-individualization I would now like to add clarification to a distinction I offered in Chapter Four and the section entitled *Discussion about How Changing Characteristics Mark the Phases of Identity and Group Development*. In doing this I am to offer an important observation and clarification of the complex process that recruits pass through in order to develop from individuals to a group solidarity, or person to personhood (Strathern, 1988). I would like to suggest that during Culture Shock, the recruits were characterised by *individual civilian identities*. In this sense they had entered the Marines culture with only their knowledge of how to be an individual in a civilian society. However, with the application of discipline and the progression of training, the group progressed to the Equalization phase where their characteristics had transformed into a *group formation (or group consciousness) whilst retaining individual civilian identities*. So here, the recruits were still holding onto their civilian identities, but were forming as a group through the 'character pecking order' which I detailed in Chapter Two.

As a result of the disciplinary practices specific to the Phase of Identification that stimulate de-individualization, which I detailed in the previous two sections on disciplinary practices, recruits' characteristics were able to flux again to *group fortification incorporating Military identities*. Here, the recruits had begun to lose their civilian identities and started believing in themselves as Marines. I have also presented the term *group fortification* to mark the point when recruits begin to realise that the

essential ingredient for success at being Marines is beholden to group solidarity and cohesion. The group is now operating at the level of personhood and is able to provide an invaluable support system which the recruits invest in heavily. During this final phase the recruits make good use of narratives (detailed in the next section) as a means of reconstructing their identities into masculine identities which will see them into the final stage of character development I called *Royal Marines group unity* (detailed in the final section).

Having presented the above order, and having located in it the stage at which de-individualization occurs, I would now like to demonstrate the various phases of de-individualization that a Royal Marine recruit will experience. However, I must make the distinction that the de-individualizing aspects I list below are not to be confused with those caused by physical discipline alone. Although the process is reinforced by the threat of discipline and punishment rituals, the nature of the de-individualization is a product of the ability that CTC has to segregate itself and the recruit from wider society during training periods.

I would like to relate my observations to a theoretical framework offered by Erving Goffman. As a brief introduction to Goffman's ideas, I would like to acknowledge his work on 'total institutions' (Goffman, 1974). Total institution according to Goffman is applied to a group of people who reside and work together in general seclusion from the wider society and are usually subject to stark oppositions between staff and residents. In *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1975), Foucault discoursed total institutions through the language of 'complete and austere institutions'. I will however refer to Goffman for my examination of the intricacies of these particular de-individualization practices in Marines culture, due to the similarity between his model of what he calls mortification (1974) and my own fieldwork observations. I would like to acknowledge that Goffman's work has helped me to recognise and interpret a number of de-individualizing mechanisms within Marines culture, and determine them as such. I will demonstrate each of my points with examples from my ethnographic observations with the intention of demonstrating the reasons why certain seemingly innocuous events happen during recruit training.

The first step towards de-individualization occurs at the point when a potential recruit makes the decision to join the Marines. In doing so he has to surrender his freedom to perform multiple subject positions (Holloway, 1984) during the course of the day and

commit to just one - the Military recruit, who will not be permitted to enter alternative subject positions into the Military environment. Once the potential recruits have turned-to for the 'potential recruit's weekend' they will face physical tests, written tests and a formal interview. During the interview they will be required to submit a quantity of personal detail for the purpose of their security clearance. This personal information is collected, including indicators to his civilian social status which is held on file at the Detachments where it is available for the training team to view if required. For those who are selected for training, they will go through the formality of swearing allegiance to the Queen, and finally they will be provided with a set of instructions such as how their hair must be cut, length of sideburns etc., which must be in place for their subsequent training session. This phase will discount most of the recruit's existing base of self-identification, as well as coding and shaping (Goffman, 1974) him so he can be placed into the Military mechanism.

During the recruit's intervals of training, they will not be permitted the use of any personal kit. In this way they cannot manage their own personal image within the Marines environment but instead, must comply with the uniformity of Marines culture. I gave the example in Chapter Four when Thomas explained to me that he approached a member of the training team complaining of his susceptibility to bad blisters caused by the ill-fitting issued boots. The Sergeant told him he had to wear the issued boots until he had completed his Commando Course, after which he could wear his own boots. Being able to wear his own boots once having passed the course also follows my notion of re-individualization which I have suggested is synonymous with the awarding of the Green Beret.

In addition to the removal of personal kit, the recruits will also have their names removed and replaced with a Military-issue name. I would suggest that there are two types of Military name - the formal one and the many informal ones. In terms of the formal name I gave the example in Chapter Three describing how a recruit must stand to attention and introduce himself to the inspecting Sergeant. I demonstrated this with my own name and personal service number when I was a recruit, "Papa-nine-zero-zero-four-five-four-lima, recruit Burchell, Sergeant." In terms of the many informal names, the training team would continuously re-enforce their separation by gaining a recruit's attention with, "You" or, "Nod" or a favourite used by one particular Corporal was, "Twatty Bollocks". With the loss of personal identifying features such as name and personal kit, the recruit is

without a normal capacity by which to present his typical image to others (Goffman, 1974).

In addition to the loss of his personal image, the recruits will be constantly degraded by the training team through the team's command over the recruit's body. I gave numerous examples of recruits being ordered to adopt the degrading posture called 'press-up position'. Degradation would continue through verbal difference, which forces the recruit into undignified verbal postures (Goffman, 1974). I was able to make this observation on a daily basis during my fieldwork. I noted how my respondents were conditioned to speak to their training team with a passive voice. Any talking back or hint of a quarrel would result in severe punishment. In talking of indignities, Goffman suggests that in addition to the degradation an individual must enact, are the indignities he must suffer from others (Goffman, 1974). I gave an example of this in Chapter Two, detailing the process by which Jack was placed outside of the group due to his 'disruptive' behaviour.

The next de-individualizing power I would like to demonstrate is one which is created through the shared accommodation where recruits have no private space, as demonstrated by the 'room swap exercise' in Chapter Three. The denial of private space is accentuated through the indignity of having to perform what might normally be a private act, whilst in the company of others. Furthermore, shared accommodation forces interaction with others and particularly for some, there may be issues such as the requirement to interact and share space with those who are of different ages, or descendant from different class backgrounds. Goffman talks in terms of the denial to hold oneself above others via formal styles of address (Goffman, 1974).

The penultimate de-individualizing powers I would like to highlight result from what Foucault referred to as a micro-penalty of time (Foucault, 1975). In this sense, the recruits' time was subject to minute details of activity such as cleaning their weapons to an exacting standard, when in normal circumstances an individual would pass his own judgement on a required standard of cleanliness.

The final sets of de-individualizing powers are located in a recruit's constraint to independence, expression of his own exploits and of course his free will (Goffman, 1974) which is constrained by the Military environment and by the extra set of Military judiciary laws to which all recruits are subject.

The sum total of this complex use of institutional de-individualizing powers at the Commando Training Centre in conjunction with relentless physical discipline is a course of recruits who can act in a common capacity with one another. I would suggest that this is essential because firstly it ensures that their schooled aggression is aimed outwards and not turned in at one another through competitiveness. Secondly and essentially the recruits can form close trusting bonds which are untarnished by mistrust, jealousy, ideas of grandeur and plays for status. The exception to this rule is the type of status I detailed whilst discussing the group characteristic pecking order where statuses earned by comedic qualities and so on, are socially acceptable through their provision of functionality to the group as a whole. I will present this idea in full during the following concluding section on *Narratives*.

The result of the above exploration of de-individualizing processes is that the recruits have effected transition from person to personhood. As equals they may now reap the benefits that personhood provides. The importance for the recruits to begin to recognise their actions in terms of personhood is summarized in Zahar's work entitled *Proteges, Clients, Cannon Fodder* (Zahar, 2001). Zahar points out that within the in-groups and out-groups that can be observed in militia cultures such as guerilla warfare groups, there is always a strong identifying factor within the community. These identifiers can be as obvious as whether or not someone is on the same side of the cause, or simply derived through constructions such as religion or language (Zahar, 2001). I would however like to point out that my ethnography has shown added complexity to the term 'in-group' and its associated identifying factors. Essentially even though my recruits are already in an in-group formation, they can still be on the outside within. I will demonstrate this point with reference to Jack, as in earlier sections. In this case, although the recruits were a group separate to civilian culture, and separate again to the training team, Jack was separate from the rest of the group. This considered, I would like to suggest that any identifying factor of group recognition is not clear-cut or necessarily obvious, but rather is determined purely by location of the subject looking on, or the experience of the subject looking out from within.

With the establishment and stabilisation of a strong group bond I would like to offer the observation that successful adaptation and acclimatisation of stress-states is therefore possible through the resulting mutual support found in the development of personhood. It may be worthwhile explaining here what I mean by 'acclimatisation to stress-states',

because I would like to suggest this is a very important aspect of Military enculturation not covered by other authors. Put simply, the job of a professional Marine can at times be highly stressful, especially whilst in combat. Despite the high level stress-states caused in battle and regardless of any ensuing situation, the Marine must be able to maintain incisive attention to detail and particularly to his precise tactical manoeuvres.

During training then, the Marine must be taught how to operate exactly under any conditions. For this reason the training team and particularly the PTIs create high levels of stress through intensifying discipline. By intensifying discipline, particularly in an 'enclosed open-range', the instructors can exact a boundless degree of control over the recruits' bodies and thereby command a great commitment of the body to its physical environment. An example of this type of intense discipline was offered in Chapter Five which detailed the experiences of Tris, Jon and Thomas on the Bottom Field Assault Course. Through the instructor's creation and simulation of stress-states akin to the battle field, the recruits could learn the skill of performing whilst being placed under immense pressure. Mastery of this skill and ability is what I refer to as acclimatisation to stress-states.

Finally, I suggested that successful acclimatisation would be made possible once the group could relate to one another through the idea of personhood. My fieldwork observations led me to believe that the stressful experiences of acclimatisation training were made bearable through group support. According to Foster "no man can succeed on his own; loyalty to one's fellow recruits will become the biggest reason for not quitting" (Foster, 1998, p. 46). Moreover, through the group, acclimatisation experiences can become knowable and understandable to the recruits through narrative form, which I will be discussing in the next section. In the meantime, now I have detailed the process of attaining personhood, I would like to outline what is meant by it.

In order to provide a general understanding of what I am inferring by personhood, I turn to the theoretical view of Marilyn Strathern from her work *The Gender of the Gift* (Strathern, 1988). Here, Strathern makes the observation that the way New Guineans understand social relationships is different than in the West. Whereas Westerners tend to see people as individuals, New Guineans tend to view people more as a collective. So whereas women for instance are often described as repressed in the West, in some other societies they are not seen in the same way. Instead they are seen as empowered through a

shared investment into their social group through which they can determine a sense of value and meaning. The investment and value being referred to here is an alternative to Western concepts of investment being based around economics and one's proximity to a means of wealth. I would like to demonstrate this now by drawing contrast to Max Weber's work (Weber, 1930) which in some ways typifies Western concepts of value and meaning. He presents the Protestant ethic as an investment of labour for the accumulation of wealth, idealised by its glorification to God. An alternative concept presented in this ethnography is that a Marine recruit's hard labour is an investment into personhood, all for the glorification of the Corps.

Using Strathern's theory of personhood and applying it to my fieldwork respondents in this way, it becomes easier to appreciate how the idea of personhood introduced by the training team involves a reliance on the group at the expense of individual autonomies. The training team introduce through training an alternative set of ideas about personhood which is more collective and less individualistic in its orientation. I would like to suggest that this understanding of personhood allows us to benefit from broader anthropological discussions on personhood and the comparative observations of anthropologists who have highlighted how people in non-capitalist societies invest their actions into more collective undertakings.

Although I am keen to apply the theory of personhood to my recruits, in order to establish the idea that the recruits invest heavily in each other for the accumulation of strong bonds, I will nevertheless acknowledge Foucault's claim (1975) that recruits' bodies are put to an economic use through their (encouraged) belief in the Sovereign. Foucault argues that soldiers are a cog in the economic machine and act as a political body to protect the economy from overseas threats (Foucault, 1975, p. 308). Although I do agree with this take, it nevertheless helps to point out that this ethnography is focussed on the idea that the recruits believe in each other and form personhood as a mechanism to protect their interest at succeeding with training. Their training experiences do not incorporate a primary awareness of themselves as a political body being primed to protect national economic interests, but rather as a group of men protecting their own shared interests at obtaining a new masculine identity.

As personhood develops it will also need to be maintained and re-enforced which I would suggest is achieved through the continued application of disciplinary practices and rituals.

I found support for this observation in the work of Clifford Geertz (1973) in his considerations of ritual and social change among the Javanese. Geertz suggests that ritual and practice have the important social function of reinforcing social and group ties (Geertz, 1973, p. 142). In this way the social structure of the Marines' ever changing group dynamic can be continually held strong. This strengthening function becomes paramount as certain characters drop out of the training programme. For example, if a character that is held in high esteem 'wraps'²⁴, or is 'binned'²⁵, the rest of the group may carry a sense of 'mourning' for the loss of their companion. This is detected by the training team in terms of the recruits' lowered mood and their lacking motivation, for which they are punished with a discipline ritual, which in turn reinforces the new group order and dynamic.

Within the above text I hope to have shown the importance of equalization. Firstly I hope to have established the idea that discipline is essential to stimulate the de-individualization process. Once the recruits have been de-individualized and are operating in tandem with one another, they can begin to transform their social relations into one of personhood. Personhood I suggested will provide an invaluable support mechanism essential for the recruits' acclimatisation to stress-states. Personhood is also essential for the creation and re-creation of narratives which is presented in the next section.

I would like to tie up this section by turning briefly to an application of my work to the field of identity. Richard Jenkins argues that the relationship that exists between an individual's unique identity and a collective shared identity is left largely unexplored by social theorists. He argues that here is no comprehensive understanding about how identity works or is worked, or even of what it is. He argues that something important is taken for granted and something important is missed (Jenkins, 1996, p. 19). In response to his view, I would like to suggest that in today's complex society one form of understanding, about how identity works, can be attributed to the greater intensity and pace at which human lives are being lived and experienced. As my ethnography shows, increased intensity of energy - particularly in terms of labour - can shape and define one's physical and/or intellectual identity with more precise detail and definition, especially in terms of one's particular representation and expression to others. This more defined outward expression can in turn result in an individual taking more command of how

²⁴ 'Wrap', meaning to quit. A fuller version of the saying is 'wrapped his tits in'.

²⁵ 'Binned', meaning discharged from service at the discretion of his training team.

others see him. This can further provide an alternative understanding of the reportedly growing leisure and fashion industry, both of which are vessels for an individual to add extra pursuits into their schedule with the result of crafting out a more defined and precise social image.

With this in mind I would like to refer back to earlier discussions about non-Western societies like the New Guineans as presented by Strathern (1988) where there is a greater investment into personhood. I would like to propose that in some non-Western cultures where there may be an absence or limited availability of social pursuits such as leisure and high fashion, through which one can add complexity and intensity to one's daily life, the result may be the observance of less individualised social identities. As a result, in these societies lies less emphasis on the creation of outward displays of individuality.

I would like to suggest that my ethnography demonstrates this process by showing how my recruits were stripped of their individuality at the start of training, in order that they could later form personhood and group solidarity. Personhood was essential for their advancement through training and for collective success at training. Once the recruits eventually achieved success and became Commandos they were each re-individualized, and back in civilian society they would celebrate higher social status, achieved through the added complexity of their new social identity, incorporating the 'earned' aspect of Royal Marine. This type of achieved social status offers members of an economic society the opportunity to improve their social standing through their commitment to labour. Essentially, their increased intensity of experiences and addition of an extra subject position (Holloway, 1984) achieved through RMR training enables them to re-create and re-define themselves with the inclusion of a particular type of (masculine) identity.

One further complexity that this theory will highlight when applied to my ethnographic fieldwork group is one of contrast. Based on my above suggestions, the uniqueness of the social culture within Marines training environment demonstrates that despite being located within a wider Western society based more on person than personhood, Marines culture nevertheless needs to re-create a social experience of the supporting role through 'personhood' among its recruits in order that ultimately it can craft the particular type of 'person' required to fulfil the masculine and violent role of Royal Marines Commando. Moreover, and somewhat paradoxically, within the Marines environment it is the higher rate of intense labour and discipline that creates the conditions for personhood to develop

and sustain, whereas according to my suggestion above, intensity of labours and pursuits would usually craft individual characters and more autonomous identities.

Narratives: Re-Creating a Body Experience

So far in the previous concluding sections *I have described the process leading to the creation of personhood*. In this section I will be presenting my conclusions on the main reasons for personhood. To do this I will begin by showing how the recruits experience stress-states through the physicality of the body in relation to the theory offered by Bourdieu. Secondly I will attempt to show how the recruits interpret their bodily experiences through narrative form. Before detailing my observations on recruit narratives I will set out theories offered by Ricoeur, Danforth and Serematakis as a means of locating my observations into wider theoretical concepts.

I would first like to set the scene by briefly returning to the idea of stress-state creation on the Bottom Field as mentioned in the previous section. One of the most important reasons why the instructors create a stressful training environment is to develop the recruits' functioning under conditions that will be most alike their operations theatre once they have left the training centre and potentially gone on to serve the Corps on the front-line. According to this logic the recruits must learn to make decisions and function as a tight group without allowing any ensuing circumstances, external to group functioning, sway their requirement for close communication and physical proximity. In terms of a theatre suitable for the creation of operational stress-like conditions, the Bottom Field serves particularly well due to its relatively small enclosure or 'enclosed open-range'. This type of concentrated environment dictates that at every moment during the Bottom Field practice, the recruits' movements and experience of reality are precisely generated and controlled by the PTIs. Watching this from the side-lines is akin to watching a conductor show his mastery over an orchestra and the subsequent tempo and rhythm.

On the Bottom Field, instead of using their hands like a conductor, the PTIs use their voices. To substitute for the conductor's slow drawn-out movements of the arms, the PTIs talk more slowly and with a lower tone, and as the music conductor begins to speed up his arms, extending into small and quick flicks of the wrist, the PTIs raise their voices, speak faster and move their attention from one recruit to the next in quick succession

ensuring there is no reprieve from the crescendo of their orchestration. In this way the PTIs hold the recruits' bodies in a temporary state of suspension from their normal sense of reality which in turn generates an alternative reality made knowable to the recruits through the experience of stress and fatigue. To this end, I would like to suggest that therein lies the logic of repetitious practice at being exposed to well-orchestrated stressful training on the Bottom Field. That is, to make this temporarily alternate reality into a knowable and familiar part of reality through its gradual normalisation. In this way, when the recruits are exposed to high levels of stress whilst in battle they can duly apply their full attention to the ensuing tactical manoeuvres without being side-lined through exposure to an unaccustomed reality.

I hope this example demonstrates that within the Royal Marines Commando Training Centre, there are a number of small enclosed spaces referred to generically by recruits and their training team as 'obstacle courses'. Within these obstacle courses, time and space can become highly defined through a bodily commitment to intense physical labour, which is measured by the requirement for a relatively high number of exacting movements to be performed over a given frame of space, and within the prescribed measurement of time. Nigel Foster puts it that "instructors put continued pressure on the recruits in order to simulate the high pressure environment of the battlefield" (Foster, 1998, p. 51)

Whereas Foucault (1975) talks of discipline breaking bodies down and re-building them, I would like to suggest that an important aspect of discipline is its role as a mechanism which makes it possible for instructors to create an alternative social reality entirely for the purpose of exposing recruits to it. This exposure will cause stress on the body through corporeal enactment against the physical environment, which in turn makes the stress knowable to the recruits' conscious minds. The stress is severe to begin with, but will eventually subside as the recruits acclimatise. As a result of the full acclimatisation process the recruits will come to know an alternative social reality in which they can realise their attainment of a masculine and violent identity. With this in mind, I would now like to consider how this array of discipline and exposure to stress-states will begin to effect the required identity change.

I would like to suggest that once the training team have entered the recruits into a high stress-state through the physicality on assault courses such as the Bottom Field they will

then instruct them in Military skills whilst in that sustained state of pressure. This is also the basis by which kit and weapons inspections as an exercise of attention to detail can be understood. In this way, recruits are usually given very little time or poor conditions in which to prepare for an inspection. I gave the example in Chapter Three of Dan, a 20 year old student of Politics and History who told me,

“It’s typical though init, just when you’re knackered and all you wanna do is get in your sack, you’re gonna be fanning around cleaning everything.”

But this pressure is functional and created by the training team in order that, as Foucault puts it, “This mastery of perfection allows for the transmission of the knowledge that was owned and had already been perfected by the inspecting master. Examinations and inspections guarantee the movement of knowledge” (Foucault, 1977, p. 187).

The sum effect of the tirade of inspections and exposure to stress-states is to learn competence under pressure. With this in mind I will now turn to Bourdieu for the use of one of his noticeable metaphors which neatly summarises the concept of ‘cultural competence’ as ‘a feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1999) which, related to my fieldwork respondents, could be explained as a practical mastery of their Commando skills acquired through practice and the unconscious experience of their physical bodies (Jenkins 1992). According to Bourdieu’s theory (1999), for my respondents to acquire mastery in their training environments, they would not need to consider interpretations by intellectual reasoning in order to learn strategies, but rather they would require little more than the practical knowledge of how to expedite their physical bodies within an environmental space according to what one should and should not do, the aim being to gain alternative strategies within the given symbolically structured space (Bourdieu, 1999). Inscription into the recruits’ body through intense labour during training will create bodily rhetorics (Bourdieu, 1999) through which their masculine identities are constantly performed. This type of performance, according to Bourdieu’s theory, is unconscious as opposed to the examples offered by Herzfeld in his section on masculinity and violence, which are examples of conscious performances.

Through an understanding of Bourdieu’s work I found myself in a much stronger position to identify with and interpret the many constant repetitions of skills and tactics that I observed my respondents developing. I would like to suggest that the recruits were not learning the majority of their skills through academic or intellectual cogitation, but rather

they were absorbing the required skills through the physicality of their bodies. As I observed my respondents, I began to understand more clearly the effect caused by their bodies being placed into repetitious contact with the physical environment such as the Bottom Field Assault Course. This produced a series of movements which gradually soaked into the very fabric of their bodily fibre (Bourdieu, 1999).

In conjunction with their increasing levels of fitness and strength and their deepening appreciation of physical and mental discipline, the recruits were adapting and bringing their training environments alive, making things look as the waves do when they roll along the ocean top. With this vision, I also came to understand that the important factor bringing the recruits closer together was their shared experiences of their bodies and the training discipline that their collective bodies received. My respondents' bodies were undoubtedly being repeatedly practiced as a medium for their training and education, and were therefore employed as the vessel for empowerment to their new identities.

In order to provide one additional basis from which to interpret recruit movement within their training environment, it's well worth considering an observation by Tim Ingold, that the key to understanding action is in its union of bodily movement and perception (Ingold, 2011). Ingold argues that all action is, in one way or another, skilled. He argues the skilled practitioner is required to learn to ceaselessly attune his movements to perturbations in the perceived environment without ever interfering with the flow of action. He also adds that this level of skill, rather than being innate, has to develop as a part of an organisms own growth and development in an environment (Ingold, 2011, p. 94). Applying this theory to the sustained effort recruits give to obstacle courses, in order for them to become skilled Marines, the recruits are to practice the talents of overcoming environmental hindrances like those simulated by the variety of obstacles on the bottom field, whilst at the same time learning to maintain the tempo and flow of their movement as insisted by their instructors. This type of learned skill will prepare the recruits for the theatre of war when maintaining combat momentum over varying terrain and its impediments, will be essential to successfully overthrow an enemy position.

In sum, I would like to propose that identity transition is first initiated through the willingness of the recruits to subject their bodies to a sustained level of physical and mental pain. After the physical experience of this pain, the recruits would re-enforce their actions through creating narratives about it. This is the point where I would like to

highlight the link from physical action to narratives about the experience. The importance of narrative after a physical experience of the body lies in its transformative powers that change an often dull and painful physical exercise into an experience which, when recited in this way, could be transformed into evidence of the recruits' success and manliness for having achieved the particularly difficult task being discussed. This provided the recruits with a creative mechanism for celebrating and assigning meaning and value to their efforts.

The scholarship of narratives is particularly useful in anthropology, chiefly for the analysis of ritual because it tends to be signified by clear beginnings and ends, since it is thought of as an event separated by time and space from other realms of social practice. This enables the translation of the ritual experience into narrative form. In order to set out an understanding of the use of narratives for interpreting the experiences of the recruits during my fieldwork, I would like to turn first to a distinction provided by the work of Paul Ricoeur.

Ricoeur (1991) first makes reference to the Socratic claim that the un-examined life is not worth living. He talks in terms of the examined life as a narrated life, drawn to a struggle between concordance and discordance, the purpose of which is to determine a narrative identity rather than to have a narrative identity imposed on oneself. He treats narrative primarily as search for meaning otherwise emaciated by time. In this sense historical discourse is not merely a literal description of the past and a figuration of temporality but more than that, it is a precise depiction of the substance of a timeless drama, depicting humanity wrestling with the experience of temporality. That said, narrative sequence is not just a reproduction of temporality, though this may be an expectation in some cultural settings. It is more likely to express what narrators themselves regard as a significant relationship between experiences (Herzfeld, 1988, p. 209).

Through Ricoeur's theory on narrative I have been able to apply to my observation of the recruits' enculturation a system of interpretations that deliver an understanding of how the various parts of their experience can be translated by them into a whole new identity. Expanding on this idea, I would also like to refer to Nadia Seremetakis' (1991) interpretations of women, death and divination in Inner Mani as a way of understanding the performance aspect I observed whilst the recruits were creating narratives. Seremetakis showed that a central referent of lament narrative was the ritual process of

performance itself. It is within this enclosure that biography, emotions and local history should be understood. Here, performed dynamics of the bereavement ritual included involuntary reactions and uncontrollable affective pulls. Thus, at times there was a temporary suspension of documentation during the ceremonies. Seremetakis shows that when these women mourn they communicate their pain by turning their bodies into a text of expression (Seremetakis 1991, 73). The lament text can therefore be understood as a means by which women translate and construct their own versions of the world. In the proceeding text I will show how I have been able to apply this theory to my study of enculturation. But first I would like to briefly consider one more useful perspective on the interpretation of narratives as put forward by Loring Danforth (1989) in his work *Firewalking and Religious Healing*.

For Danforth, a fire-walk is both a search for self-realisation and simultaneously a search for self-transformation, with the ultimate goal that people can feel released from a confining experience of life (Danforth 1989, 267). In this way the act of fire-walking can provide psychological idioms for the expression of suffering and is a symbol or a metaphor for what it really stands for, that is, the self. In essence, the healing discourse of fire-walking is dominated by several powerful rhetorical systems that are central to its therapeutic process - the rhetoric of empowerment and the rhetoric of transformation (Danforth 1989, 266). The fire-walk is above all an empowering experience. Again, in the following text, I will show how I have been able to apply this understanding to the interpretation of Military enculturation as experienced by the recruits.

The above examples I have offered by Ricoeur (1991), Danforth (1989) and Seremetakis (1991) all present ways of interpreting narrative as ways in which people understand such issues as the construction of their reality and matters of personal identification. Similarly, during my fieldwork I witnessed many occasions when recruits would do just this. I would now like to offer some examples of this before presenting the four main categories of recruit narratives that I determined in relation to the above authors.

Generally it was the more positive-minded and upbeat recruits who created the action-text about their training pursuits while the less creative would sit listening-in with attentive facial expressions. The more artistic recruits who could re-create wonderful and colourful interpretations of their previous pains would often earn status over the less artistically abled. This extra status was awarded for the invaluable contribution that was being

serviced at group level. On a number of occasions I observed two or three of my informants narrating a particularly hard training task that they had undertaken together. Their actions would become exaggerated and their faces would exhibit a look of joy and achievement. They would talk in turn and sometimes all together about a particular painful and difficult measure of the physical punishment or endurance exercise they had faced with one another.

It was sometimes like watching a play. They would re-perform certain aspects of the challenges, highlighting feelings and fears, in combination with particular harsh words that at the time of the incident were fired at them by the training team. On some occasions the recruits performing in the play would each recite their own unique perspective during a particular moment of disciplinary punishment, crafting out a *multi-dimensional* perspective of a single incident which was previously understood simply as 'misery-inducing physical punishment'. Now, with their addition of artistry and re-creation, they had transformed the incidence of misery into a celebration of success, laughter and achievement. The recruits not involved in the narration would sit still, looking on with a mesmerised guise. If I asked my respondents how they felt about a punishment ritual immediately after it had been effected, they would often report it in terms of the 'pointless' pain and heartache that had been caused them. If, on the other hand, I ask them about it after a narration had been performed, the general consensus would be far more buoyant and my respondents would report their experiences using more general phrases of acceptance such as, 'You've just got to get on with it' and, 'It wasn't too bad'. Occasionally I would be told, 'We shouldn't have fucked up'.

I would like to suggest that these narrated plays are essential mechanisms applied by certain creative members of the group both as a coping mechanism for their often dire and uncomfortable situation, and as a means of exploring and assimilating their commitment to pain and endurance. The group benefits enormously from the talented playwrights and actors who perform the narratives because through the addition of a comedic perspective and the re-contextualisation of despair into a feeling of acceptance, the recruits feel more contented about their treatment by the training team and can look forward to their next training serial with less trepidation. This skill by the playwrights and actors is rewarded with the addition of extra in-group status. This extra status is awarded to the narrators by the rest of the group through their show of appreciation. The writers and actors are afforded the floor for their performance while the 'audience' look on, substituting

applause with laughter and expressions of appreciation. This uncontested limelight lends the writers and actors extra power and status in much the same way that a Hollywood actor or director will gain power and status by captivating audiences with their creative talents. In the case of the recruits, the audience is captured by their positive interpretation of an often daunting experience.

Recruit status that is achieved through playwriting and acting can be described by applying an insight offered by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu (1984) argues that all actions will take place within a social field, which is an arena for the struggle of resources. Within any given arena, agents will try to distinguish themselves from others by acquiring capital which is considered useful within that arena. Applying this to my fieldwork research, and the type of power the recruits are legitimately allowed and able to play for, I would like to suggest that 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu, 1984) which although in general terms would refer to cultural capital and good taste, can also be interpreted as 'cultural competence' (Bourdieu, 1984) which is the most socially acceptable and desirable form of power and status achievable by the recruits whilst they are within their Military training arena.

Having now given an overview of recruit narration, I would like to pull together and summarise the four most distinguishable and commonly used types of narrative ritual I observed during my fieldwork, all of which have been detailed during my ethnographic chapters.

Re-contextualisation narratives

What I have termed 're-contextualisation narrative' follows the interpretive framework given above with reference to Paul Riceur (1991). Re-contextualisation is a form of narrative well utilised by the recruits which accompanied them through most of their training right up until the point of completing their Commando course, at which point they largely substituted what I termed 'self-empowerment narratives'. I initially detailed re-contextualisation narratives in Chapter Five as a response to the recruits' on-going experiences of unpleasant training sessions in particular those performed on the Bottom Field Assault Course. As detailed in the initial discussion on stress-states, the source of displeasure on the Bottom Field is the high level of stress and intensity created by the

PTIs. After the physical ritual, the recruits re-contextualise the training session through narration, from one of displeasure to pleasure.

A further distinction I made about re-contextualisation was that is about an experience that the recruits equally shared, usually through being part of the same awful punishment or exercise ritual. As more recruits join in with the narration, the general mood begins to lift through their change in emphasis towards one where the difficult session is recounted according to narratives about celebrating the hardships they have overcome. I also suggest that it is an important requirement of the ritual that all the recruits who are witness to re-contextualisation must make some contribution to it. The significance of making a contribution, even through acting as audience, is to show group agreement and approval for the new context in which the painful events are being re-interpreted and subsequently will be remembered.

Re-creation of pain narratives

The interpretation of pain was demonstrated well by Serematakis (1991) in the above text. With reference to her theoretical views, I would like to suggest that the occurrences of what I term the 're-creation of pain narratives' were experienced parallel to the re-contextualisation narrative described above. In Chapter Six I presented a detailed description of the re-creation of pain narratives which I distinguished as being about pain caused from physical injury such as blisters or sheer over-burdening of the body through heavy load-carries. The distinction here is one of pain and not displeasure - displeasure being the case for re-contextualisation. I suggest that when the recruits recounted feats of overcoming their pain they did not change the context in which the experience occurred. If changed at all, the pain was exaggerated and the context of agony and hurt remained in situ.

I further distinguished re-creation as a personal narrative told by one recruit to the rest about his particular struggle to overcome his wound or injury. I suggested also that the wound had to have been visible in order for it to have qualified for a re-creation narrative. If the wound is not visible, and therefore not provable, complaint about it in Marines culture would be negatively labelled as 'dripping'.

The function of re-creation narratives is as a means through which pain can be celebrated as a measure of masculinity and bravery. The recruit who can achieve completion of a test under extra-painful conditions is afterwards afforded an audience from the rest of the group as a gesture of their admiration for his courage, and he will subsequently be awarded with social recognition for his demonstration of the 'Commando spirit'. It is for this reason that the cause of pain must be viewable. One final function of the re-creation of pain narrative I observed that draws a parallel to the re-contextualisation narrative was in its benefit to the group as a whole. Once the un-impeded recruits had felt the extra-pains of the injured man through his narrative, it had the effect of quashing any complaints about terrible pains and discomforts from the others due to their relatively fit state.

Self-empowerment narratives

I made reference earlier to Danforth's (1989) insight into the transformative power of narratives. This 'self-empowerment' form of narrative became an essential element of the recruits' realisation of their new status as Marine Commando. It became most noticeable after the recruits had completed all of their Commando tests, when their narratives took the form of what I referred to in Chapter Six as self-empowerment. Whereas previous narratives were either re-contextualised or re-created, this phase of narrative demonstrated a change of *emphasis* from one of being tested to one of triumph.

The self-empowerment form of narrative is very similar to re-contextualisation except in its practical meaning to the recruits. For example, the re-contextualising narratives were born during a phase of hardship, and provided essential motivation at difficult times. The self-empowerment narratives on the other hand were being created during a time of celebration with the aim of providing the recruits with a means by which they could talk about themselves as Marines, and as having new masculine identities and new masculine ways of accomplishing difficulties. Self-empowerment narratives for the recruits placed emphasis on being able to overcome difficulties thanks to their new masculinity, whereas re-contextualising narratives laid the emphasis on overcoming hardships in order to become masculine.

Future masculine-action narratives

Most recruits were especially looking forward to the final pass-out parade and being able to travel home to their families and partners afterwards. But it was the night before this when 'future masculine-action narratives' came to light. Whilst talking with the recruits in their rooms as detailed in Chapter Six, I heard a great emphasis on ideas and fantasies about wearing their Green Berets whilst having sex with their partners. I suggested that through this type of rhetoric the recruits were firstly presenting the Green Beret as symbolic of violence and their attainment of it, and secondly explicitly connecting it to their sexual prowess as an expression of their new sense of masculinity that had been achieved through their success at Royal Marines training.

I would further suggest that this kind of narrative is preparatory for some of the recruits' re-entry into civilian society through the expression of their ideas about how a masculine man might display this new status to his partner with a ceremonial sexual act. The depiction of their Green Berets as being part of this sexual ritual is a reminder about the legitimacy of the Commando's new power, and that his partner is now having sex with a Marine, which according to some of my respondents is a particular fantasy made known to them by their partners.

In all the above examples of narrative it is possible to see a common theme running through the subsequent discourse. *That is, through* the systems that are being used in any one case, the participants are able to assert a raised social awareness as well as a collective and individual identity. The rituals are used not only to give out information to others, but to absorb information too. The narratives operate as a means of gaining insight and answers about the surrounding world, often delivering some form of comfort and satisfaction.

I hope to have shown with my ethnographic work that although discipline is an important element required for a change in identity to occur in infantry men as suggested by Foucault (1975), it is by no means the only required element. I hope to have shown that the disciplinary act itself is merely one of many acts, and that the transition of identity is not complete until the exposed recruits have been able to re-construct the acts of their experiences into a frame of reference that affords them an interpretation of their actions into social meanings.

Finally, in addition to the above examples of narrative offered by other authors, through my study of Marines training I would like to suggest that I can offer insight into an additional complexity of experience and narrative, and the accompanying relationship to identity. I would like to propose the idea that narrative can be constructed and interpreted differently despite being narrated about the same thing and having been experienced by the same person under the same external environmental conditions. For example, the recruits' experience on the Bottom Field Assault Course, and concomitantly the narratives the recruits construct about it, will change as they advance through training.

Essentially, the obstacles on the course do not change and neither do the circumstances that bind the recruit's body whilst he must endure them. What does change is the recruit's proximity to his new identity. Thus, as he gets ever closer to realising his new masculinity he re-constructs and re-contextualises an event in his personal and shared history that has already been created and re-created. By the time the recruits reach the end of their year's training, they would have recreated their Bottom Field histories many times over.

I would like to suggest that what is interesting about this process is that each time the Bottom Field history is re-created, it is done so because the preceding physical experience contained within it a shift or advancement of skill, strength and power that was not an aspect of the recruit's physical ability the previous time. With this advancement of ability follows a requirement to update the narrative about the Bottom Field. As mentioned above, the Bottom Field comprises near identical routines each time it is performed and therefore the physical sessions and subsequent histories can potentially merge into one memory of it rather than appear as a succession of occasions.

I would therefore like to suggest that through constant repetition and practice at rituals such as the Bottom Field Assault Course, recruits are provided with a means by which their measure of masculinity can be constantly improved by their continued revision of its accompanying narrative. I would also like to suggest that due to the high stress and narrowed focus during the Bottom Field Assault Course, the many physical performances will merge into one memory of it, and the many separate performances dissolve into time. In other words, all Bottom Field performances will be remembered as a whole because there is nothing to distinguish the many exactly repeated physical experiences from each other.

For example the different training sessions are likely to be remembered if there were some form of anchor distinguishing any one particular session from another. If on one occasion a pink elephant walked through the enclosure whilst the recruits were training, they would be able to distinguish that session from the one when the blue elephant walked through, and those two from the one where ‘nothing’ happened. But in the absence of brightly-coloured elephants, it is narrative construction that enables the recruits to add meaning and distinction to their activities where ‘nothing happens’. Through the addition of meaning and distinction by way of narrative, and by revising the meaning inscribed into those narratives after consecutive training sessions, the narrative histories can become a form of ‘automated log’ recording their physical progression towards greater masculinity. It is in this sense that additional narratives such as pain recreation can act as an anchor and therefore a way of distinguishing between repetitions of historical events.

Along these lines I would like to propose that Jon inserted himself into the group narrative about the Bottom Field as described in Chapter Four because firstly it created an anchor for memory – possibly because it was a particularly ‘memorable’ session for him, but secondly because he was creating his own personal narrative at the same time as the recruits, including him, were creating their group narrative. Jon said to Thomas, “I actually thought I was going at a pretty good speed across that zigzag wall until I looked up and saw you go flying past”.

I suggest that the first notable feature of this example is that both individual and group histories of experience were being constructed simultaneously from the same shared narration. I would like to suggest further that the reason for Jon’s insertion in this case was that whereas the group as a whole were happy with the construction of meaning in the shared narrative, Jon was not. Jon is more physically and skilfully advanced than the other recruits and therefore wanted to add his own personal narrative into the group narration as an anchor for his own personal perception of a slightly greater proximity to the sought-after masculine identity. Thus, as the rest of the group came off the Bottom Field with a feeling of dejection, Jon was quietly experiencing a feeling of ease because the assault course didn’t stretch him in quite the same way as it did the others. He told me afterwards with a wide smile, “I quite enjoyed that”.

I would like to conclude by suggesting that it is in order to skilfully strike a balance of representation during the narration rituals that the playwrights are afforded extra status for their skill. On the whole, it is they who decide how to paint the group histories through the artistry and pace of their interpretation.

In the discussion above I have been able to draw out the main features of the narratives and analyse the many ways in which recruits use narrative to create understanding about their training experiences when otherwise the physical experiences are repetitive, largely indistinguishable one from another, and can be lost in time. I also have shown that the construction, revision and re-revision of the narratives are an essential aspect by which the recruits can transform their identities so that they include 'Commando'. Carl Gustav Jung put it that "every advance in culture is, psychologically, an extension of the consciousness, a coming to consciousness that can take place only through discrimination" (Jung, 1960, p. 69).

In the following and final concluding section I will consider the sum total of the entire adaptive process with a consideration of the recruits' re-individualization into the brotherhood of Marines.

Re-Individualization: Acceptance into the Royal Marines

So far in the concluding sections I hope to have detailed the process which leads the recruit from wanting to join the Marines, to the point which is covered in this section – his final pass-out parade and inauguration as Royal Marine. The final pass-out parade is the most significant phase for the recruits because it confirms their full acceptance into the Marines, as a Marine. This final ceremony marks an exit from their year-long liminality as a recruit to what society can recognise as a masculine male identity.

The process of acquiring these new masculine identities has been an arduous journey for the recruits and a complex one for the anthropologist. Once the shared personhood and narration practices (as detailed in the previous section) had created and confirmed new interpretations about the recruits' worlds, and subsequently various new identity shifts, these new ideas and images about themselves must be validated (or not) by their training team (Jenkins, 1996, p. 21). This process of validation has happened in equally small

shifts or stages throughout the training programme. Generally, as the recruits have completed each significant phase of training and been able to successfully demonstrate the associated new skills during the 'testing periods', their progression has been acknowledged by the training team either by the symbolic award of for example, a new form of headdress, or more often recognition through the absence of discipline and punishment rituals.

One of the main theories that has influenced me as a method of understanding this transition to masculinity that the recruits have been undertaking is the theory of liminality as put forward by Van Gennep (1960). This theory has been used to good effect in the study of ritual. The idea is that the liminal period of ritual signifies the initiate as being in a special state apart from both society and normal life. Van Gennep talks in terms of a sacred state following the stage of separation from normal society, with the final stage being reincorporation (Van Gennep, 1960). This is a particular way of approaching the recruits' training programme. Firstly because whilst training the recruits are kept away from mainstream society and associated only with Marines. But most importantly, Van Gennep's theory enables me to break down the training programme for further analysis.

For example, as an overview, inclusion into the Marines will take the form of three significant phases: Civilian, signified by civilian clothes and manners; Recruit, signified by the issue of uniform; and Marine, signified by the Green Beret. Because of the enormity of changes required to be made by the recruit, I would like to suggest that one ceremony will not be enough for him to make and realise the changes required for a successful *adaptation from Civilian to Commando*. For this reason, recruit culture is organised around continued repetition of liminal phases, *each with a concluding ceremony*. For example, the adjustment from civilian to recruit has its own liminal phase called PRC (Potential Recruits Course) detailed in Chapter Two.

Within the training phase, which is signified by two different types of 'recruit headdress', are smaller phases such as One-Alpha, signified by a blue beret, and One-Bravo, signified by a green cotton 'cap-comforter'. Each of these phases can be broken down further. For example, phase One-Bravo is broadly split into endurance training, skill at arms, advanced training, commando course acquaint, commando course and final pass-out. Again, each of these phases can be broken down further still, such as the Commando course phase that runs over two weeks, as detailed in Chapter Five. As also detailed in

Chapter Five, each phase of the commando course is broken down into tests, for example the 30 mile run on day twelve. The test on day twelve is imbued with ritual, passage, ceremony and narrative. I gave the example of the foot ritual before the run, the run itself which was a 30 mile long passage that tested their 'Commando Spirit', the ceremonial award of their Green Beret at the end of the run, and the self-empowering narratives after the ordeal. As detailed in Chapter Six, each of these elements is broken down further into even smaller successions of movements and practices. I gave examples of this by detailing the precise order in which Thomas dressed his foot, and I detailed the ceremony of movements whilst the recruits were being issued their Green Berets by the Colonel (RMR) at the end of the 30 mile run.

During earlier phases of training in phase One-Alpha, the absence of requirement for 'official' rituals and ceremonies is replaced by the instructors' discipline and punishment. This is an intensifying ingredient to training through the creation of a greater number of rituals and ceremonies. For example, the foot ritual performed prior to the 30 mile run was done at ease by experienced recruits. However, when in basic training as new recruits, the instructors would watch them preparing for a run. Oftentimes the recruits would take too long due to their inexperience and Military immaturity. For this lack of zeal, they would be verbally scolded by the instructors, and sometimes physically punished.

Once the recruits are able to complete the foot ritual in good time, they will no longer experience the wrath of their training team with regard to this ritual. This 'absence of a disciplinary ceremony' enables the recruits to recognise successful attainment of a new skill. All skills are meticulously taught to the recruits in this way. By the time recruits achieve their Green Berets they would have undergone a plethora of rituals and ceremonies in order to have achieved their numerous finely detailed skill-sets. Moreover, the attainment of these skill-sets is one of several meanings embellished by the Green Beret alongside masculinity, brotherhood and the Commando spirit, to name but a few. I would also like to make the distinction here that the succession of phases and their various rituals and ceremonies highlighted above are each characterised by a physical act of the body. This is in contrast to the various phases I have identified and used to label the chapter headings, which are not phases the recruits will necessarily be aware of. Moreover, this does highlight the complexity of labelling and categorisation that can be

applied to a single set of social phenomena, dependent of course on one's experience of it and relation to it.

But as influential as Van Gennep's theory is, I do recognise that there are other perspectives, which I have also considered to be applicable as explanatory models for describing the 'liminal' process of Military identity attainment. For example, I would like to briefly refer back to the work of John Hockey who talks about 'the phase of adaptation and adjustment' (1986). What Hockey refers to here is the same as what I have referred to as 'ceremonial acceptance' or re-individualisation above. Chris Shilling on the other hand, in his work on the body and social theory (1999) describes this same process as the body having to act first as a 'receptor' before it can become a 'generator' for displays of power and status (Shilling, 1999, p. 70). I detailed this idea in the previous section on de-individualization.

The attraction of Van Gennep's theory, however, is its flexibility in application. I have been able to apply it to the larger categories of ceremony as well as to the ever increasing smaller and more defined categories. In this way I have been able to increase the detailed definitions in my presentation of knowledge through greater compartmentalisation of knowledge (Schopenhauer, 2007). I would like to acknowledge that I also combined with this some influence from Bourdieu's work on rites of passage, that will he argues "ensure the progressive masculinisation marked by a number of ceremonies which celebrate the various stages of the passage" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 230). What I hope to have shown with this examination of ritual and ceremony is what I believe Foucault referred to as 'transmission of knowledge' (Foucault, 1977, p. 187).

So in sum, I hope to have shown with my ethnography that in order for Marines to operate under highly stressful battle conditions, they must first have obtained the relevant highly defined and accurate skill-sets. These skill-sets are made up of individual skills and movements. Each skill and movement is a form of knowledge which must be successfully transferred to the recruit in such a way that it becomes a habit or 'instinctive'. In order for it to become a habit that can be successfully referred to during battle, the recruits will learn it during conditions of stress. The conditions of stress are created with the application of discipline upon the body. Discipline is also used to create small rituals and ceremonies. Through ritual and ceremony, recruits can realise the

attainment of each skill as they effectively acquire them and demonstrate them in turn to the training team.

Whilst demonstrating 'skill-sets' as they do on the Commando course, the 'pass-out' ceremony is more significant and by way of 'positive ceremony'. However, in displaying the attainment of small and intricate skills in the earlier stages of training, successful attainment will be marked by the absence of ceremony. In this sense, when they get something right they are rewarded by not being punished. This presents a form of juxtaposition where the reward is the absence of the punishment for its mistake. There is rarely any form of positive regard toward the recruits for their successes. So, in the event that they get their skills wrong, they are punished for it. The insertion of this punishment ritual will act like the positive ceremony does, except that it is not a positive experience for the recruit. But what the punishment does is mark the occasion with an anchor so the recruits will remember their mistake and pay due diligence to it the next time it is performed.

The anchor will mark the occasion through the physical application of the body to its environment. This is similar in theory to my earlier discussion about narratives acting as anchors for specific training serials where they are otherwise indistinguishable from each other. In this way, I hope to have shown that the application of discipline to the body in conjunction with ritual and ceremonial practices will allow the training team to transfer their knowledge of skills and skill-sets to the recruits who in turn will be able to rely on them manifesting as habit during the pressure of battle.

Bourdieu (1999) for example, saw bodies as individual entities which require physical labour in order to transform them. This transformation is further influenced by the way in which an individual learns to develop and shape their physicality and learn to present their bodies by such mediums as walk and dress. Bourdieu locates the body as the main source of change (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 72). I hope that my ethnography shows that although I do agree that the body is required for change, I would not suggest that it can be seen as the main source of that change. I hope to have shown that within Marines training culture, discipline is at least as equally required in order that the body can be applied to the mechanisms of change, and as detailed above, any changes made to the body will become subject to a number of complex rituals, ceremonies and narrative before the recruit can actually realise those changes. I suggest on this basis that it is not until the

recruit realises the changes that he can believably display his new socially legitimate identity through physical displays with his body.

More significantly I hope to have shown that all these essential accomplishments of skills that have been intensified into a succession of critical moments have enabled the recruits to progressively realise their new identity acquisition. The act that enables them to finally 'see' their new identity is the ultimate pass-out at which they are awarded their Green Beret. Foster puts it that:

“Recruits are never that much aware of the mental changes they're going through. Only when they look back at the end of it all and compare their characters then with the type of men they are now, do they realise they have undergone a sea of change from boy to Marine” (Foster, 1998, p. 51).

Every one of the recruits at the final pass-out were there because they had earned their place by proving their strength of body and mind over the course of the previous twelve months, and by earning the right to wear the Green Beret, which is their most momentous cultural and group signifier. Whilst the recruits could not wear their uniforms in civilian life, one could argue that the recruit's body is then employed as his social signifier of status and physical prowess. Foster argues that the Commando spirit dictates that the ideal involved in wearing the Green Beret is not about physical prowess but about shared ideals and mental strengths (Foster, 1998, p. 68). Foster's view may be true for these new Marines whilst they are within the Military culture, but in civilian society these ideals are not visible. However, physical prowess is visible, and can be displayed and performed accordingly. In this sense, there is a rhetoric of masculinity, where the muscular and finely-tuned body will be displayed, along with the recruit's erect posture and confident manner, all of which are well documented traits of a Military man (Foucault, 1975).

I hope that with the closure of this concluding section I have not only given a detailed understanding of Royal Marines training culture but more specifically, have been able to adequately demonstrate the main features and their many complexities that comprise the mechanisms of successful enculturation from civilian into Royal Marines Commando. As well as providing an original anthropological exploration of Marines culture, I have also managed to incorporate the use of existing theory on the Military, firstly to provide a frame of reference for my own work, secondly to assist with my understanding and

interpretations, and finally in order that I can add knowledge and understanding to the existing theories and provide a detailed demonstration of the Royal Marines enculturation programme.

I would finally like to suggest that the findings within this thesis can be applied to other Military cultures in a general sense. This can provide increased understanding of Military mechanisms. I believe this is important because although Military training is well established as a method priming people to carry out its basic function, I would like to suggest that there is still little in-depth understanding about its mechanistic complexities and how exactly they work. The anthropological study of Military training can provide social sciences with valuable insights into the processes that inform group solidarity, helping us appreciate how a regime of discipline and punishment, combined with self-justificatory (and culture-generating) narratives, can transform civilian identities and give rise to a new, complex, de-individualised and re-individualised sense of shared personhood. This study has been a first steady step towards this direction.

Glossary

The Royal Marines unique culture possesses its own language which comprises over 500 words. These words will have no or little meaning to the general public, but for the Marines they comprise a part of his everyday vocabulary. For the Royal Marine recruit, this language is another cultural adaptation that he is required to make, thus providing for a common language from one Marine to another.

Ace	Good or excellent
Animal Run	To go wild whilst on shore leave
Bandwagon	Over-snow vehicle
Banjo	Multiple meanings: a) broken or broken down (banjoed) b) a sandwich i.e. an egg banjo
Banyan	To picnic on a beach
Basha	Temporary shelter in the field
Belay	To cease an action
Bimble	Wander casually without haste. Said to have one's 'thumb up bum'
Bite	Allowing another to draw you in to an argument
Bivvy	A temporary field shelter (bivouac)
Blues	Blue uniform of Royal Marines worn for ceremonial purposes
Bootneck	Meaning Royal Marine. Originating from Nelsonian era when leather uniform stock was worn around the neck
Bombed Out	Crazy
Boss	Informal but respectful way of addressing the officer in command
Brammer	Exceptionally good
Bren	Light machine gun (303/7.65 cal)
Brill or Brills	Meaning Brilliant. Said to pre-date contemporary teenage slang by several decades
Bronzy	Possessing a distinctive sun tan
Brothel Creepers	Suede shoes or desert boots worn as uniform on board ship
Bug-Out	Withdrawal from the situation

Buzz	A rumour or general description of the situation
Cheese-Down	Uncontrollable laughter
Chit	Paper, usually referred to a financial claim form
Chopper	Helicopter
Chuck One Up	The action of saluting
Cloggie	Dutchman
Common Dog	To use one's common sense
Corps-Pissed	Obsessed with the Royal Marines
Crab	An RAF service personnel
Crack	To get something done/overcome
Crappers	Very drunk
Cream In	Collide
Crimbo	Christmas period
CTC	Commando Training Centre, Lympstone, Devon
Dhobi	Have a wash or do laundry
Dig Out Blind	110% effort
Dip Out	To come off worse
Dischuffed	To take offence
Ditch	To throw away or discard
Ditt	Telling a story
Dog Watch	Two short watch periods that equalize the watch roster
Drip	Moaning, or to express a dissatisfaction
Drop A Sprog	Giving birth to a child
Earwiggling	Eavesdropping
Essence	Stunning good looks
Fall Over Backwards	When one goes to great lengths for something
Fat Knacker	Overweight or unfit
Flakers	Exhausted
Foo Foo	Talcum powder
Galley	Kitchen or dining hall
Galley Mong	Female working in the galley
Gen	The truth
Glimp	To take a sneaky look
Globe and Buster	The Corps crest or badge
Glop	Take a slurp or drink hurriedly

Glophead	A drunkard
Goffer	Multiple meanings: a) a punch b) a wave c) a cold drink
Gonk	To sleep
Green	Naive
Greenie	Saltwater wave
Grey Funnel Line	Royal Navy
Grolly	Unpleasant
Gronk	Unattractive woman
Guz	Plymouth, origin from WW1 radio identification letters for the port
Hand	Efficient and trustworthy person
Heads	Toilets
Horse Box	Sergeants' mess
Ickies	Money
Ish	Fully equipped or being the best
Jack	Royal Navy service person
Jack Up	To get something organised
Jenny	Female member of the Royal Navy
Jimpy	General Purpose machine gun
Jolly	An easy job, or recreation
Kag	Useless and unwanted
Kit Muster	When one's entire kit is laid out for an inspection
Lash Up	To treat
LC	Landing craft
Limers	Soft drink
Loopy Looney Juice	Alcoholic drink
Make and Mend	Time allocated for equipment maintenance or time off
Maskers	Masking tape
Mankey	Filthy
Matelot	A sailor
Minging	Dirty or drunk
Mod Plod	Ministry of Defence police

Muscle Bo'sun	An individual who prides himself on the strength of his body
Nause	An inconvenience
Neaters	Undiluted spirits
Nod	Royal Marines Recruit
Nutty	Confectionery
Nutty Fiend	Someone who has a sweet tooth
'O' Group	Meeting where orders for an operation are given to subordinates
Oolu (or Ulu)	Jungle, or area of heavy vegetation
Oppo	One's buddy or opposite number in a two man team
Party	A female
Pash	A long-term girlfriend or fiancée
Percy Pongo	Army soldier
Picturize	To give an explanation
Ping	Locate or identify
Pipe	Broadcast a message over ship or camp speakers
Piso	To be careful with one's money
Plums	Did not successfully attract a female
Plums Rating	One who is always unsuccessful at attracting a female
Pompey	Portsmouth
Prof	Legitimate gain of an item, or in a situation
Pussers	Corps equipment or regulation 'done by the book'
Puzzle Palace	Headquarters building
Rabbits	Gifts or souvenirs collected from a 'rabbit run'
Raider	Rigid raiding craft
Redders	Hot
RFTT	Reserve Forces Training Team
Rice	Effort
RM	Royal Marines
RMR	Royal Marines Reserve
Rock-All	Nothing
Rock-Ape	Royal Marines mountain leader
Rubber Daggers	Royal Marines Reservist
Rug Rat	Baby
Run Ashore	Leisure time away from a camp, base or ship
Sad-On	Miserable

SBS	Special Boat Service
Scran	Food
Scran Bag	A bag on mess deck in which spare or damaged clothing and rags are collected
Sea Daddy	An experienced Marine who takes charge of an inexperienced one
Secure	Tidy away once finished with
Shave Off	To speak out of turn or express annoyance
Shoot-Through	A failed attempt
Sippers	To take a measure of another's drink
Skeg	Reconnaissance operation
Skin	Immature or inexperienced young man
Skinters	Broke, or no money
Sneaky Beaky	Intelligence personnel
Snowtrac	Predecessor to the bandwagon
Snurgle	To go cautiously or crawl
Sods Opera	Show produced by a unit to entertain themselves
Sprog	One lacking in experience
Stacks	One who is successful with females
Stag	Sentry duty
Stand Easy	A break usually for tea or coffee
Sweating Neaters	To be worried
Teenies	Small utility helicopters flown by Royal Marines Air Squadron
The Corps	Generic term for Royal Marines
Thin-Out	To depart
Threaders	Fed up
Three Badger	Marine or sailor of low rank but well experienced
Trap	Successfully chat up a female
TRF	Training and Reserve Forces Royal Marines
Troop Bible	Book containing details of all individuals in a troop or sub-unit
Trough	Eat
Twitter	Talking without purpose
Up Homers	Invited to one's home
Up The Line	To travel away from the base

Wallah	One who operates a small shop or stand, usually in an unofficial capacity. i.e. 'Goffer Wallah'
Wet	A drink
Winger or Wings	A close friend or comrade
Work Your Ticket	Arrange to leave the service
Wrap	To give in or stop trying
Yaffle	Eat hurriedly
Yeti	Spectacular fall whilst skiing
Yomp	Marching with a heavy load, usually a force march
Yo-Yo	Young officer under training at CTC, Lymestone
Zap	To shoot or be shot
Zeds	Sleep

Appendix One: The Royal Marines

Performing a Role of the Royal Marines

I will present the Marines culture from the position of unfamiliarity as done by Miner in his presentation of *Body Ritual among the Nacirema* (Miner, 1956). I hope this perspective will offer an insight into the Marines and thus allow for an appreciative stance on the changes required of a civilian, in order that he may become a fully operative Marine.

Due to the wealthy status of the British Government in comparison to many other national governments in the world system, the British Government can afford to fund a number of different groups of people known collectively as Military personnel. The many different groups of Military personnel who populate various geographical pockets upon the main island are, with a little inside knowledge, highly distinguishable from one another according to their own particular remit and specialised type of skills at violence. The Military system displays the particular level of skill and specialisation of each Military sub-culture in the form of a uniform type and most distinguishably in the form of a headdress that each member is issued on successful initiation. The Marines are denoted by a Green Beret which bears a cap-badge, embellished symbolically with the community's culturally defining moments that were achieved by the Marines' ancestors.

The three main groupings of British Military people are as follows: the Army whose special skills are for a more close-quarter kind of violence on the ground; the Air force who utilise the space above ground where their highly intelligent grasp of aerodynamics and laws of physics enable them to perform their violent skills whilst travelling at incredible speeds over phenomenal distances; and the Navy whose specialist skills are performed upon the water's surface which covers around 70% of the world's overall surface.

The Marines are a considerably small and elite community who fall into the broader categorisation of (Royal) Navy. But what makes them unique is that their violent skills transcend the two broader categories of Navy and Army. They are the British Government's amphibious warfare experts. This specialised and complex skill type

makes them highly deployable for Military campaigns due in most part to the fact that an 'enemy territory' will secure a protective position by building defences into the surrounding land, or through its reduced accessibility afforded to it by the existence of surrounding water. The Marines have become expert at approaching an enemy territory from both land and sea whilst going undetected. This particular ability is celebrated in their cap badge motto: *Per Mare Per Terram*²⁶.

Once on the fringes of an enemy community or particular strong-hold, the Marines breed is such that they can create the illusion to any passing gaze that their body is not there. Put simply, their highly specialised skill at camouflage enables them to become invisible against any environmental background surrounding an enemy location. Marines can survive in this state of physical stealth for long periods of time, regardless of extreme weather conditions that may be characteristic of the local climate.

Occupation of a strategic position on the immediate outskirts of the enemy objective is generally used for one of two main reasons. The first reason is to form an observation post from which they can perform reconnaissance. Marines are well schooled in methods of collecting cultural information about their enemy. They will meticulously detail the enemy movements, which include comings and goings in and out of the community, routines, states of morale, and types of preferred weapon being used by these 'others'. They will also sketch drawings of the physical environment and any strategic locations that have been formed on it.

All this cultural information that the Marines establish from their observation post about their enemy will if required provide for a well-informed plan of attack. Suffice to say, the second reason for occupation of a strategic position on the fringe of an enemy community is to provide a springboard from which they can execute a surprise raid. This type of attack is a method of violence well-favoured by the Marines and is almost always carried out at first or last light. During the raid, especially if it is a fierce one, should one of the Marines be shot or otherwise injured, he is left while the main body of men continue their tactical advance on the enemy position. Only after the enemy have been neutralised and the location secured will designated Marines tend to the needs of any Marines fallen during the battle.

²⁶ Motto of the Royal Marines. From Latin meaning By Sea and By Land.

I offer the above cultural painting of the Marines primary objective as a means by which one can better understand the cultural adaptation that is required of a civilian when he enters into Commando training and initiation into the Marines community.

Appendix Two: Royal Marines Enculturation Process

A Concise Description of the Royal Marines Enculturation Process

Based on my ethnographic observations I would like to propose the idea that Military discipline is a mechanism established through recourse to ideas of masculinity and threats of violence, which, when applied to recruits as a means of controlling and defining their sets of movements, will, in conjunction with highly intense physical labour, create an alternative reality recognisable by its character of intense stress. Once the recruits have been entered into this stressful reality, the training team will instruct them in drills, tactics and manoeuvres until they can be performed with 'Military accuracy'. At this point the recruits have demonstrated their adaptation and acclimatisation to operate as professional Marines.

Success at the adaptation and acclimatisation process is made possible through the formation of a strong group bond which can provide the recruits with a mechanism for expression and understanding in terms of shared personhood. The ideal of shared personhood is made accessible to the recruits through the many and varying forms of discipline and punishment practices they'll be exposed to. The initial discipline and punishment practices were specific to stimulating equalisation of the group. Once equalised, a different set of discipline and punishment practices were bestowed upon them to encourage development of the previously mentioned group formation and personhood. Once personhood had been firmly established, the recruits have in place the necessary support network required in order that they may succeed with their acclimatisation of stress states all of which are made knowable through bodily enactment against the physical environment, which in turn enables that the stress experience can become recognisable to the recruit's conscious mind.

Once the requisite stress state has been made familiar enough that the recruits can effectively and efficiently perform the required level of complex tactics and manoeuvres habitually whilst subject to it; then I consider they have come to know the relevant social reality. Their transcendence into this stressful and violent reality has been determined by their ability at performing skilfully in it and by their propensity to it.

In their pursuit to identify themselves with this alternate reality the recruits made generous and often severe and painful sacrifices to their body's and mind which, they made sense of between them through the creation of narratives. Their reward is twofold; the right to wear a Green Beret, and the right to construct and perform a socially legitimate masculine identity.

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