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**Calibrating the Moral Compass:**  
**An Aristotelian Virtue Ethics Approach to**  
**British Soldiers Moral Agency during**  
**Complex Expeditionary Operations**

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PhD

2022

**Calibrating the Moral Compass:  
An Aristotelian Virtue Ethics Approach to  
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of the University of  
Northumbria for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

Research undertaken in the Faculty of  
Business and Law

January 2022

## Acknowledgements

To begin, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to my supervisors, Dr Angus Robson and Dr Gosia Ciesielska, for their excellent guidance, unwavering support, and patience throughout my doctoral study. Their vast expertise and experience served as a source of encouragement for me throughout my academic research. I would like to express my gratitude to the Northumbria University library for their technical assistance with this study. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Ministry of Defence for allowing this research to proceed during a period when historical complaints regarding the military deployment in Afghanistan were ongoing.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the individuals who participated in this study for providing incredibly personal and painful stories of their experiences in Helmand Province during a period of intensive combat action. Without their willingness to speak candidly and without reservation, this study would not have obtained the essential data that, when analysed, provides a philosophical viewpoint on navigating the complex and risky conditions the next generation of soldiers will face. I would like to extend my gratitude and best wishes for their future endeavours, wherever they may be.

Finally, I would want to express my gratitude to my wife, who provided unfailing support, understanding, and encouragement during this research; without you, I would not have been able to accomplish it. Your zeal for proofreading and constructive criticism has resulted in this thesis being presented as the crown jewel of my academic career. With gratitude comes apologies, and I would like to apologise for torturing you with interminable discussions about Aristotelian virtue ethics, but at the very least you now know the path to *eudaimonia*.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to the 453 British soldiers who were killed in battle, 615 who were severely injured, 2187 who were wounded in action<sup>1</sup>, and all those who continue to bear the psychological scars from Operation Herrick.

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<sup>1</sup> Operation Herrick casualty tables. Revised on 25 February 2016 due to additional records being found within other sources of Field Hospital data.

## Abstract

As the British Army departs from conventional warfare, it must prepare for the complex challenges of the future operational environment that will exist between peace and war. As a battle-hardened and experienced Infantry moves towards a more diverse and complex operational environment, the British Army's professional and moral credibility depends on soldiers' ability to think and act with reference to right and wrong at the ambiguous and highly scrutinised intersection of tactical and strategic direction.

This insider research employs a phenomenological research approach to examine British Infantry soldiers' self-perceptions about lethal and crucial non-lethal decisions within the framework of the Afghanistan conflict. The most significant empirical finding is that Infantry soldiers were divided into experienced soldiers who relied on their own judgement to make lethal decisions in consideration of both short- and long-term risks to themselves, their comrades, and local people (who may or may not have been enemy combatants) and inexperienced soldiers who relied on a rules-based approach lacking the flexibility provided by experience. Secondly, during the decision-making process, experience was distilled through the application of the virtues of compassion and practical wisdom. Respect for others and selfless commitment were visible in the actions of the soldiers in this study, which suggests that two of the British Army's key values were embodied in the concept of moral agency for the soldiers in this study.

This study contends that Aristotelian virtue ethics provides resources for cultivating practical wisdom and compassion that can endure not just the situational pressures and constraints of complicated expeditionary operations, but also the daily ethical dilemmas inherent in the narrative unity of life.

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Dedication</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Declaration</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b> .....	<b>15</b>
1.1 Historical Context .....	15
1.2 Theoretical Context .....	20
1.3 Research Context .....	27
1.4 Rationale .....	30
1.5 Research Gap .....	37
1.6 Research Question, Aims, and Objectives.....	39
1.7 Methodology .....	40
1.8 Thesis Structure .....	43
<b>Chapter Two: Aristotelian Virtue Ethics</b> .....	<b>47</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	47
2.2 Aristotelian Virtue Ethics .....	47
2.3 The Situationists Critique of Virtue Ethics.....	51
2.4 The Empirical Justification of Virtue Ethics .....	55

<b>2.4</b>	<b>Aristotle's Virtue Ethics .....</b>	<b>58</b>
2.4.1	Ends: <i>Telos</i> .....	58
2.4.2	Goods: <i>Eudaimonia</i> .....	59
2.4.3	Function: <i>Ergon</i> .....	60
2.4.4	Virtue and Habituation .....	62
2.4.5	Virtues and Emotions .....	64
2.4.6	Virtues and Friendship .....	65
2.4.7	Practical Wisdom: <i>Phronesis</i> .....	68
2.4.8	The Doctrine of the Mean .....	70
<b>2.5</b>	<b>Alasdair MacIntyre's Virtue Ethics .....</b>	<b>72</b>
2.5.1	The Moral Agent .....	73
2.5.2	The Notion of a Virtue .....	77
2.5.3	Practices .....	79
2.5.4	Institutions .....	85
2.5.5	Traditions .....	89
2.5.6	Narrative Unity of a Human Life .....	93
	<b>Chapter Three: Context and Moral Behaviour .....</b>	<b>97</b>
3.1	Introduction .....	97
3.2	Social Structures and Moral Agency .....	97



3.3	Social Structures and Military Operations.....	100
3.3.1	Operation Telic: Iraq War ( <i>Baha Mousa Report 2003</i> ).....	103
3.3.2	Operation Enduring Freedom: Iraq war (Abu Ghraib – <i>Taguba Report 2005</i> ) 105	
3.3.3	Operation Enduring Freedom: Iraq War (Sunni Triangle - <i>101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division Report 2006</i> ).....	107
3.3.4	Operation Herrick: Afghanistan ( <i>Telemeter Report 2011</i> ) .....	110
3.3.5	Operation Slipper: Afghanistan ( <i>Brereton Report 2020</i> ).....	113
3.3.6	The Deepcut Review 1995-2002: ( <i>The Blake Report 2006</i> ).....	115
<b>Chapter Four: Ethical and Character Development in the Military .....</b>		<b>118</b>
4.1	Ethics and the Military.....	118
4.2	New Wars .....	122
4.3	Moral Character in the Military .....	124
4.4	Soldiers of Character Study: British Army.....	126
4.5	Dishonesty in the Army Profession Study: US Army .....	127
4.6	Ethics in the US Military .....	129
4.7	US Army Enlisted Ranks Ethical Training.....	131
4.8	Ethics and the British Army .....	134
4.9	The Values and Standards Approach.....	136

4.10	British Army Ethical Training .....	141
4.11	Summary of the Key Literature.....	144
<b>Chapter Five: Methodology .....</b>		<b>147</b>
5.1	Introduction.....	147
5.2	Epistemology .....	149
5.3	Research Strategy .....	151
5.4	Research Design .....	153
5.5	Research Methods.....	154
5.5.1	The Inside Researcher .....	155
5.5.2	Access to Participants .....	162
5.5.3	Piloting .....	163
5.5.4	Selecting the Combat Units for the Main Study .....	167
5.5.5	Selecting the Participants .....	169
5.5.6	Data Gathering .....	170
5.5.7	Data Analysis .....	176
<b>Chapter Six: Findings.....</b>		<b>187</b>
6.1	Introduction.....	187
6.2	The Participants .....	188
6.3	Main Themes .....	190

<b>6.3.1</b>	<b>Theme One: Reasons for Action.....</b>	<b>190</b>
6.3.1a	Purpose Guided Actions.....	193
6.3.1b	Tactical Purpose.....	194
6.3.1c	Strategic and Professional Purpose.....	197
<b>6.3.2</b>	<b>Theme Two: Length of Service.....</b>	<b>198</b>
6.3.2a	Subjective and Objective Approaches to Moral Ambiguity.....	199
6.3.2b	Practical Wisdom.....	200
6.3.2c	Theoretical Knowledge.....	205
6.3.2d	Professionalism and Judgement.....	207
6.3.2e	Compartmentalisation.....	211
6.3.2f	The Influence of Social Structures.....	212
6.3.2g	Non-military Social Structure.....	213
6.3.2h	The Military Social Structure.....	216
6.3.2i	Changes in Behavioural Reference Points.....	218
<b>6.3.3</b>	<b>Theme Three: Core Virtues.....</b>	<b>220</b>
6.3.3a	Respect for Others.....	226
<b>Chapter Seven: Discussion.....</b>		<b>230</b>
7.1	Introduction.....	230
7.2	Reasons for Action.....	230

7.3	The British Army as an Institution .....	232
7.4	Compassion in twenty-first century Soldiering .....	236
7.5	Practical Wisdom in twenty-first century Soldiering .....	240
7.6	Summary of Discussion .....	243
<b>Chapter Eight: Conclusion and Contributions .....</b>		<b>246</b>
8.1	Summary of the Argument .....	246
8.2	Original Contribution to Knowledge .....	248
8.3	MacIntyrean Empirical Inquiry .....	250
8.4	Tradition Constituted Inquiry .....	251
8.5	Practice, Goods, and Institutions .....	253
8.6	Responding to the Situationist Critique of Virtue Ethics .....	255
8.7	Practical Wisdom and Compassion as Military Virtues .....	256
8.8	Emotions and Moral Agency .....	258
8.9	Practical Implications .....	258
8.10	Researching the Hard to Reach .....	261
8.11	Limitations of the Study .....	263
8.12	Indications for Future Research .....	264
8.13	Areas of Contention .....	266
8.14	Institutional Authorisation for Research .....	266

8.15	Operation Northmoor .....	267
8.16	Qualitative Data Analysis .....	267
<b>Afterward.....</b>		<b>269</b>
<b>References:.....</b>		<b>273</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>		<b>284</b>
Appendix 1:	Glossary of Military Terms .....	284
Appendix 2:	Interview Pseudonyms.....	285
Appendix 3:	Interview Questions and Theoretical Rationale.....	286
Appendix 4:	Sample Interview Transcript.....	289
Appendix 5:	Compassion Coding Diagram.....	292
Appendix 6:	Practical Wisdom Coding Diagram.....	293
Appendix 7:	Abridged Research log .....	294
Appendix 8:	Institutional Research Consent .....	300
Appendix 9:	Student Research Ethical Issues Form.....	301
Appendix 10:	Organisational Research Consent Form .....	303
Appendix 11:	Organisational Research Consent Form .....	306
Appendix 12:	Participant Engagement Letter .....	307
Appendix 13:	Participant Consent Form .....	308

**List of tables:**

Table 1: Selected Combat Units.....	168
Table 2: Six Stage Thematic Analysis .....	178
Table 3: Participant Characteristics .....	189

## Declaration

The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the UK Ministry of Defence or any other department of Her Majesty's United Kingdom Government. Furthermore, such views should not be construed as an official endorsement of factual accuracy, opinion, conclusion, or suggestion by the UK Ministry of Defence or any other department of Her Majesty's United Kingdom Government.

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas, and contributions from the work of others. Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on August 25, 2019. I declare that the word count of this thesis is 88,000 words.

Name: Darren Redgwell

Signature:

Date: 30 August 2022

## Chapter One: Introduction

*Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives – choice, not chance, determines your destiny (Aristotle).*

### 1.1 Historical Context

The Directorate of Land Warfare (DLW) stated in the Operation Herrick Campaign Study that the British Army was deployed in Afghanistan in response to the 9/11 attacks and the collapse of the Taliban-led regime in Afghanistan between 2002 and 2014, when large-scale combat operations ceased (DLW, 2015, p. xxvii). As part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the United Kingdom's primary responsibility was to support the Government of Afghanistan (GOA) in creating and maintaining a secure environment for the reconstruction of northern Afghanistan, according to King (2010). King argues that the strategic decision to send British forces into Helmand Province in 2006 signified a dramatic escalation of the British military's commitment to Afghanistan, changing a small-scale military stabilisation mission into large-scale combat (p. 311).

Despite the then Secretary of State for Defence John Reid's (2006) assertion that the British Army would complete its reconstruction mission without firing a single shot, King (2010) suggests that the fighting in Helmand was the fiercest since the Korean War.

Between 2007 and 2009, British soldiers fired millions of rounds of ammunition, with King noting that by December 2009, the number of British soldiers killed in Helmand had increased to 240, with an average of more than one death per week and hundreds more critically injured. King stated that politicians and senior military personnel were becoming



accustomed to the notion that the campaign would continue for years, if not decades. The conflict in Afghanistan showed little indication of abating (pp. 311-313).

According to King (2010, pp. 314-315) and the Operation Herrick deployment records (2015, p. xxi), In 2006, 3,500 soldiers from the 16 Air Assault Brigade were deployed to southern Afghanistan, covering a tactical area of responsibility of almost 600 square miles. King contends that the Infantry element of the brigade comprised of fewer than 500 soldiers, who were immediately outnumbered and surrounded by a large number of well-equipped Taliban insurgents (DLW, 2015; King, 2010). As the war in the south intensified, the United Kingdom slowly raised its military strength to 10,000 by 2009, with 240 killed in action and 470 seriously wounded casualties recorded (MoD, 2015a, pp. 1-2). In 2009, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) authorised Operation Entirety, putting the British Army on a war posture and devoting all of its resources to supporting operations in Afghanistan (DLW, 2015, p. xxxv).

The 2015 Operation Herrick campaign review described how Operation Entirety was formally established in April 2009 by General Richards as Commander-in-Chief Land Forces (CLF) and then pushed further by him as Chief of the General Staff (CGS).

Operation Entirety was a thorough institutional reform programme designed to adjust to the institutional Army's "gearing" in order to achieve tactical and operational success in Afghanistan - what some have referred to as "bending the Army out of shape" (DLW, 2015, p. xxxv). According to the Operation Herrick review, previous to Operation Entirety, the campaign was misaligned with its objective and had a limited grasp of the environment in which the Infantry was operating. Due to the UK MoD devoting all of its limited military resources to one mission, a generation of officers and soldiers were educated and equipped exclusively for operations in Afghanistan, according to the report. The 2015

review noted that although the British Army paid a high price for its deployment to southern Afghanistan, its fighting spirit was tried and proven, resulting in a tough, self-confident, and battle-hardened force (DLW, 2015, p. xxviii).

The 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) noted that since the end of the large-scale combat mission in southern Afghanistan in 2014, the nature of war and rivalry have evolved continuously, and the demands placed on the United Kingdom's Armed Forces have expanded and diversified at a rapid rate (MoD, 2015b, pp. 15-23). The review identifies how sophisticated adversaries have acted swiftly and will continue to do so in order to weaken the conventional strength of the British Army built during Operation Herrick. The review concluded that possible causes of conflict were multiplying and appearing in an increasing variety of ways (MoD, 2015b, pp. 15-23). Although it was formally created as part of the government's defence policy in 2015, the British Army began addressing post-Afghanistan concerns in 2011 when the MoD concluded Operation Entirety. The transition from large-scale military operations to smaller, more specialised operations predicted future difficulties for the British Army. According to the 2011 Army Doctrine Primer (ADP), the interdependence and integration of the global system were increasing. British Army doctrine emphasised that the nature of combat had evolved as a result of war's repercussions and human progress, such as improvements in technology, knowledge, and necessity, and was frequently characterised by competition, congestion, disorganisation, connectivity, and restriction (ADP, 2011, pp. 10-16).

In 2015, the SDSR and subsequent MoD Joint Doctrine Publication Volume Five (JDP5) (JDP5, 2015, pp. 3-10) outlined how the United Kingdom's defence strategy had shifted away from Operation Entirety and large-scale warfare, requiring the provision of forces with a high level of military effectiveness, adequate readiness, and a clear sense of purpose

for conflict prevention, crisis management, and combat operations. Both documents specified that the British Army was obligated to supply forces for the safety and security of the United Kingdom, as well as to help with the evacuation of British nationals abroad when necessary (JDP, 2021, pp. 3-6), and to provide support to resilience operations in the United Kingdom (JDP2, 2007, pp. 1-8), which included Military Aid to the Civil Power (MAC-P), Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MAC-A), and Military Aid to Other Government Departments (MAG-D)). According to the SDSR, soldiers must be capable of performing a variety of difficult and complex military duties in order to carry out objectives matched with changing strategic conditions (MoD, 2015b, p. 6).

Ben Wallace, MP, the Defence Secretary, announced in 2021 that with the implementation of Defence in a Competitive Age, the British Army will alter its operating style to fulfil the vision for Global Britain and to protect the United Kingdom, its population, and its interests from developing threats (MoD, 2021a, p. 4). Furthermore, on November 25, 2021, the Defence Secretary presented to the House of Commons the most major restructure of the British Army in almost two decades. The "Future Soldier" reorganisation would alter the current Army composition into a more adaptable, cohesive, and lethal expeditionary force. The Defence Secretary stated that the MoD would prioritise equipping soldiers with the ability to comprehend, compete, and operate in all domains, outlining an Army in which the United Kingdom can take pride not only for its past victories, but also as a credible and relevant force capable of addressing national threats and overcoming future problems. The Defence Secretary concluded by emphasising the importance of operational, cultural, and institutional reform for setting the future soldier in the best possible position to compete in all old and new areas and to contribute to the good of the world (Wallace, 2021). General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, Chief of the General Staff of the British Army,

issued an Army Briefing Note (ABN) titled 'Future Soldier' in response to the Defence Secretary's speech, stating that the integrated review had set the British Army on course for its most radical transformation in two decades. Under 'Future Soldier,' the Army will become more agile, more integrated, and more expeditionary - ready for the next challenge, not the last (ABN, 2021).

Given the Army's largest restructuring in decades and the announcement that a smaller force will be more agile and expeditionary, I argue that it is timely to examine whether Aristotelian virtue ethics can provide resources to aid the transition from a single-purpose warfighting Army to a newly formed organisation facing new and challenging environments. General Carlton-Smith's remarks about preparing for the next challenge and not the last justifies, in part, investigating if Aristotelian virtue ethics might provide resources for understanding good soldiering in the context of twenty-first century military operations.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the individual experiences of 14 soldiers in Afghanistan between 2007 and 2014 who were required to make lethal and important non-lethal force decisions in confusing situations. With a focus on how the past can help shape the future by examining an environment that, while unique, generated the same characteristic components of dispersal, ambiguity, and prolonged situational pressure, which, according to the British Army Leadership Doctrine (ALD), reflect the predicted challenges that the British Army's future expeditionary operations will present (ALD, 2021b). This study examines how 14 Infantry soldiers operating in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, during a period of intensive conflict approached lethal and non-lethal decision-making in high-risk and confusing environments.

## 1.2 Theoretical Context

This study is based on Aristotelian virtue ethics, which Hursthouse and Glen (2018) characterise as one of three primary normative ethics systems in the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. In contrast to the method that emphasises obligations or laws (deontology) or the approach that emphasises the consequences of acts, this approach emphasises virtues or moral character (pp. 1-1.1). By emphasising character development, Olshoorn (2011) argues that virtue ethics provides a stronger foundation for military ethics than its biggest rival, rule-based deontological ethics. In addition, Olshoorn contends that whereas rule-based ethics aims to the ethical bare minimum, virtue ethics requires significantly more, including the type of supererogatory deeds demanded by the military. Olshoorn continues his argument by asserting that virtues are recognised as the optimal method for stopping soldiers from engaging in wrongdoing, because virtues are regarded as superior to regulations or codes of conduct enforced from above. Olshoorn says that when no authority figure is present to prevent inappropriate behaviour, professional norms and regulations are frequently ineffective (pp. 5-7).

Robinson (2007a) asserts that although it is safe to believe that the majority of military forces embrace characteristics such as courage, loyalty, and discipline, they may no longer be sufficient. To begin with, Robinson argues that they contain few rules governing soldiers' conduct toward civilians they are tasked with safeguarding, and that they do not appear to consider the unique restrictions soldiers encounter in 21st-century military operations. Robinson believes that traditional values benefit the military community more than the larger society (pp. 23-36). Robinson and Olshoorn's statements provide a good beginning point for establishing the study's theoretical foundation. This study will follow to two major texts on Aristotelian virtue ethics. The first is Aristotle's *Nicomachean*

*Ethics*<sup>2</sup>, in which Aristotle's commentary emphasises the virtue question: how should we behave? How are we going to live? Second, is Alastair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*<sup>3</sup> (2007), where he presents the ideas of practices, goods, traditions, and institutions.

### **Why Aristotle?**

Becker and Becker (2001) believe that it is difficult to exaggerate Aristotle's influence on Western philosophy. They contend that Aristotle's effect on philosophy has been unparalleled for nearly two millennia, in disciplines as diverse as logic, metaphysics, science, ethics, and politics. His work in ethics and politics, especially his theory that individuals ultimately want *eudaimonia*, often known as happiness or human flourishing, was one of his most enduring contributions (p. 91). Crisp (2000) notes that Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics had a profound impact on the schools of thought that emerged immediately after his death, particularly Stoicism and Epicureanism. Crisp argues that it was the topic of scholarly discourse during the early Middle Ages and was widely read in the Western world beginning in the twelfth century (p. viii).

According to Everson (1996), Aristotle maintains that the purpose of a community is to achieve a goal; only when this goal is achieved can the group be regarded a community. Everson notes that Aristotle argues a community is formed through collaboration, with the goal of promoting the common good and developing a better and stronger community based on the strength of the current partnership; thus, a stronger partnership tends to produce a more persistent rate of good for all (p. 36). In contrast, Jowett (1999) contends

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<sup>2</sup> Translated and edited by Roger Crisp, 2000

<sup>3</sup> Third edition published in the United States, 2007

that, according to Aristotle, members of a society should act as partners and promote the common good. The highest good is the pleasure and virtuosity of all citizens. Therefore, the community must construct a foundation that enables the citizens to achieve this happiness and virtue. Aristotle held that a community is excellent if its members are excellent, as the pursuit of virtue is what makes a group a community, as Jowett notes (pp. 1-9).

According to Crisp and Slote (1996), *Nicomachean Ethics* is structured around three fundamental themes that serve as the basis for moral character development. First, books I and II are about human nature, then books III–VI are on character embodiment, and finally books VII and VIII are about friendship (pp. 1-19). When discussing habituation in *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle asserted that states develop from similar behaviour<sup>4</sup> (IV.I, 1103b), and individual experiences shape the formation of virtues since the development of personal attributes is a product of habituation. Therefore, Aristotle contends individuals must ensure that their activities align with their attitudes, as any deviation will be reflected in their attitudes. According to Aristotle, because human behaviour can evolve into a habit in some way, it is crucial that people behave appropriately in all situations (I. VIII, 1098b).

Similarities exist between Aristotle's concept of virtue ethics and the structure and purpose of the British Army, given that they are a community dependent on people within their community who share the goal of safeguarding the vulnerable. The narrative in Army

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<sup>4</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics* is referenced using Bekker numbers which combines a book, chapter number, a sequence of numbers and a lowercase letter to specify the part of the text cited. Book 2, Chapter 8, section 1098b being (II. VIII,1098b).

Doctrine Publication Volume Five (ADP5), titled *Soldiering the Military Covenant* (2000), suggests a community with a distinct purpose that requires strong bonds between members of the military community and acts of selfless commitment for the benefit of the larger community and others and not just for the benefit of individuals. ADP5 stipulates:

The country expects soldiers to be available at any time, to go anywhere and carry out a wide range of potential missions in support of government policy, often as a last resort. This requires soldiers with high degrees of personal and collective commitment, self-sacrifice, forbearance and mutual trust. Together these cement the morale and teamwork so essential for operational success. Soldiers are required to subordinate their individual aspirations, rights and needs to those of the team and higher purpose (ADP5, 2000, pp. 1-1).

The second chapter of ADP10 *Land Operations* (2017) describes how officers and soldiers must avoid behaviours that jeopardise their professional capacity or diminish morale by undermining trust and respect between dependent individuals. Therefore, according to the Army, the military community must be more demanding of personal conduct, which in larger society may be considered as a matter of personal choice (ADP10, 2017, pp. 3-23). Moreover, the *Developing leaders* (2016) publication states that the Army's ethos binds the Army together and shapes its values and standards, and that in order to achieve an 'ethical' environment - where there is a shared understanding and practice of what is deemed 'right' by the Army and nation - the ethos, and values (Courage, Discipline, Respect for Others, Integrity, Loyalty, and Selfless Commitment) and Standards (Lawful, Appropriate, and Professional) need to be routinely articulated, discussed and supported (ALD, 2016c, pp. 7-10). Together, Aristotle and the British Army share several commonalities that serve to justify the use of Aristotle's works in this study.



### **Why MacIntyre?**

In contrast, Moore (2015) asserts that Alasdair MacIntyre is a well-known figure in the field of ethics, with his 2007 book, *After Virtue*, being his most widely read work and establishing him as one of the most influential contemporary moral philosophers, with Moore asserting that his importance as a contemporary philosopher of virtue is undisputed (p. 101). According to Beadle and Moore (2011), Aristotle's international standing is evidenced by the existence of a global academic community committed to his work and by the social sciences' utilisation of his work (pp. 85-121). Beadle and Moore (2006), assert Alasdair MacIntyre is better known as a moral philosopher than as an organisation theorist and is extensively read outside the field of philosophy (pp. 1-2). Beadle and Moore argue that MacIntyre has made a substantial contribution to the emergence of virtue ethics in management philosophy (Beadle, 2013; Beadle & Moore, 2006; Coe & Beadle, 2008; Moore & Beadle, 2006) arguing that MacIntyre's account of institutions and its relationship to practices is applicable in virtually all contexts (p. 3).

MacIntyre (1988) proposes: “There is no standing ground, no place for enquiry, no way to engage in the practices of advancing, evaluating, accepting and rejecting reasoned argument apart from that which is provided by some particular tradition or other”(p. 144). MacIntyre notes that those outside a tradition lack sufficient rational, and indeed moral, resources for enquiry and rejects detached objectivity. For MacIntyre, tradition is the form of rational enquiry, and progress only occurs via participation in the internal dialectic, or “conflict,” of a tradition. MacIntyre encapsulates his epistemological scheme, which he designates “tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive enquiry (MacIntyre, 1988, pp. 349-370).

So how might we understand the armed forces in light of the importance of tradition?

*Soldiering the Military Covenant* (2000) begins with a declaration that all British soldiers share the legal right and obligation to fight and, if necessary, kill in accordance with their orders, as well as the infinite liability to sacrifice their lives in the process. This is the singular essence of military service (ADP5, 2000, p. 0101). According to the 2016 *Developing Leaders* publication, the Army's culture is the overall organisational environment; it is relatively stable and resistant to short-term change. It is maintained and supervised by the Army's strategic commanders, but over time it will be moulded by the attitudes and actions of the organisation's members (ALD, 2016c, pp. 7-10). ADP10 *Land Operations* (2017) explains the principles by which the British Army conducts operations and describes Integrated Action, a unifying concept that guides the coordination and execution of operations regardless of whether they entail combat, engagement, security, or support. It examines the concept and fundamentals of land operations, as well as their planning and execution (pp. 1.1-3.1). ADP10 additionally addresses interoperability, the organisation of ground forces for operations, and the manner in which they support and are supported by other components (pp. 8.1-9.1). ADP10 also describes the tactical functions, operational organisation, and many doctrinal frameworks, as well as the tactical actions that contribute to Integrated Action (ADP10, 2017).

Using the *Soldiering the Military Covenant*, *Developing Leaders*, and ADP10 *Land Operations* narratives (ADP5, 2000; ADP10, 2017; ALD, 2016c) in light of MacIntyre's tradition constituted inquiry (MacIntyre, 1988, pp. 349-370) and his schema on practices, goods, and institutions where he argues that practices are a coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity supported by an institution (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 187-191), similarities can be drawn from what the British Army propose as 'the

unique nature of soldiering' (ADP5, 2000, p. 0101) also being a tradition within which a coherent complex form of socially established cooperative activity to achieve the purpose of protecting UK interests as outlined in the 2015 SDSR (MoD, 2015b, pp. 5-8). The similarities between MacIntyre's commentary and the structure and mission of the British Army provide an appropriate vantage point from which to conduct a theory-driven insider researcher approach among a highly specialised community.

MacIntyre (2015) states that there is still much to learn about the "practices" of armed conflict (p. 15), which will be covered in Chapter Four of this thesis. MacIntyre's tradition constituted inquiry, virtues-goods-practice-institution schema, as described in *After Virtue* and later in *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity* (MacIntyre, 2007, 2016), in conjunction with Aristotle's concepts of practical wisdom, habituation, friendship, and ends, *Nichomachean Ethics* provides a conceptual framework for a philosophy-driven examination of a complex combat mission from the perspective of 14 soldiers who have participated in high-risk, ambiguous operations in Afghanistan.

Although leadership is discussed in some of the material cited in this study, it is only to illustrate where leadership has failed, hence supporting the case for character development. No attempt is made to examine moral judgement, development, or decision-making via the lens of theoretical leadership frameworks in this study. In addition, this research does not intend to extend beyond Aristotle's and MacIntyre's philosophical views of moral character development, and the literature review has purposely omitted broader theories. This study will analyse numerous commentators on moral agency, but only to argue the use of Aristotelian virtue ethics as the ethical framework for giving resources for understanding soldier moral agency in twenty-first century operations.

### 1.3 Research Context

The rapid deployment of UK ground forces from a stabilisation mission in northern Afghanistan to a combat mission in southern Afghanistan during Operation Herrick in 2006 provides a context for comprehending how the 14 soldiers in this study, who were dispersed over large areas and disconnected from established command structures, made lethal and non-lethal decisions. Thrown into an environment that contradicted the rules and doctrine governing stabilisation operations, according to DLW, British Infantry soldiers found themselves operating in a rapidly evolving environment, dangerously isolated from senior commanders, and with inadequate communications and limited resources, which was exacerbated by the significant shift from stabilisation to expeditionary war fighting (DLW, 2015, p. xxxv). During an interview in 2011 as part of a House of Commons review, Lieutenant General Sir Robert Fry, the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff between 2003 and 2007, illustrated the complexity and speed of the deployment by stating that the most important question regarding the events of 2006 was how UK Forces went from a plan to provide security in a small area to "fighting for their lives less than two months later in a series of Alamos in the south of the province"(HOC, 2011, pp. 25-33). The setting and context of Helmand Province between 2006 and 2009 were truly expeditionary and provide a context for understanding how the soldiers in this study made life-or-death decisions in a climate not only conducive to moral disengagement, but also under the intense scrutiny of international media and state actors.

The 14 participants in this study had varying degrees of combat experience in Afghanistan between 2006 and 2014, including the period between 2007 and 2009, which the Operation Herrick casualty report identifies as the period with the highest level of combat action and casualties throughout the entire conflict (MoD, 2015a, p. 2).

The 2015 SDSR detailed a strategy for smaller, more complicated operations based on the premise that the world is presently in a state of crisis. The SDSR determined that health, the economy, politics, industry, labour markets, and the social fabric of society were confronted with unprecedented challenges, resulting in an environment characterised by fear, insecurity, unpredictability, and an unprecedented rate of change across a broad range of contexts (MoD, 2015b, pp. 5-8). In its 'Leading Through Crises' booklet, the British Army emphasises how the world has united in an incredibly coordinated effort to safeguard people and livelihoods. The booklet notes that while this may be unusual, soldiers who have previously engaged in high-intensity operations have expertise working under similar pressures that are anticipated to be characteristic of operations in the twenty-first century (ALD, 2021b, p. 4).

This research goes beyond the typical link between researcher and subject. I joined the army in 1989 at the age of 16 and spent the majority of my career in combat Infantry units until my retirement as a Late Entrant Captain in 2018. During this time, I was promoted through all seven enlisted command posts, culminating in my assignment as Regimental Sergeant Major of an Infantry unit engaged in combat. I completed the last four years of my service as a commissioned officer after reaching the pinnacle of my non-commissioned career. My military service is notable because it includes not only a variety of roles and social systems, but also a period of military operations that has not been replicated since and is unlikely to be reproduced in the future due to the current nature of military operations. My experience includes assisting police operations in Northern Ireland against Irish republican terrorist groups and civil disorder, post-war stabilisation in Bosnia, combat and counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, firefighting in Belfast, anti-drug operations in Jamaica, and Olympic security operations in London. I provided professional

assistance to armed security operations in Saudi Arabia, Africa, Jamaica, and the United Kingdom in accordance with the Terrorism Act of 2000.

My operational deployments to Afghanistan, during which I served with some of the subjects in the study, are quite relevant. I, like the study's subjects, had endured physical and emotional suffering as a result of specific combat engagements in Helmand Province between 2006 and 2014. My goal was to investigate how the soldiers in this study constructed and comprehended their reality in response to their experiences and interactions in a highly complex and deadly environment. Taking a fresh look at this phenomenon from the perspective of not only a soldier, but also a peer with similar war experiences, I attempted to hear the voices of each participant in order to comprehend their lived experiences of moral ambiguity in challenging circumstances. This can also be inferred from the words participants used to describe their emotions and how they made sense of unfamiliar situations and the attendant influences.

I intended to avoid commissioned officers from the commencement of this research for the reasons I shall discuss in Chapter Five. As a 30-year Infantry veteran who has conducted high-risk, complex operations at every soldier rank within the soldier command element, I would argue that the bond between officers and soldiers is not as strong as the bond between non-commissioned officers and their soldiers, who have a more operationally forged peer relationship. As a fellow soldier and peer with similar experiences, I contend that the participants' first-hand stories provide crucial insight into moral agency in complex, high-risk situations.

## 1.4 Rationale

British Army discourse on the evolving nature of conflict dates back to 2000, well before the Afghanistan operation. ADP5 *Soldiering the Military Covenant* (2000) illustrates how, in the absence of a clear adversary, conflict prevention and post-conflict actions may require soldiers to forego the natural military response in battle. According to the Covenant, success may be significantly more difficult to define or describe, and the purpose may be to avert the need for the type of violent military action that is the objective of war. This will necessitate great dexterity and self-control from all ranks, in addition to the standard warfighting abilities. In addition, the Covenant describes how conventional distinctions between front and rear, combat support, combat service support, and command support elements would blur as more soldiers face comparable personal risks and obligations during operations in and around civilians (ADP5, 2000, pp. 2-14).

The Covenant (2000) makes it abundantly clear that all ranks will be required to demonstrate tremendous initiative, adaptability, creativity, moral fortitude, and judgement. Liaison and language needs will increase, as will the difficulties of sustaining the values and standards of the British Army while serving with or under the command of others. As crises and operations unfold, missions, rules of engagement (RoE), and military posture are likely to change, the Covenant outlines how soldiers of all ranks must be able to perform effectively in the face of ambiguity, uncertainty, and change. All of this, according to ADP5 will need an ever-increasing degree of adaptation on the part of the individual soldier when he or she is sent to foreign locations on short notice (ADP5, 2000, pp. 2-8).

Sanders (2012) noted that ADP5 (2006) detailed concepts on initiative, adaptability, creativity which can also be evidenced within the British Army's 2006 analysis of their

military operations in Northern Ireland conducted under Operation Banner<sup>5</sup> between 1969 and 2007. The campaign review identified that intelligence and adaptability of leaders and soldiers were significant determinants for actions. The review drew attention to how the capacity to comprehend the logic of the theatre demonstrated a degree of intelligence and cultural understanding that not all soldiers possessed. The mental agility demonstrated in rapidly creating organisations and processes in response to changes in the risks was remarkable and, according to the review, not universally displayed elsewhere in the armed forces (MoD, 2006b, pp. 8-12). Key parts of British Army doctrine in 2006 were the Manoeuvrist Approach and Mission Command, which functions on the principles of speed of action and analysis of situational factors. This approach was expanded to include non-combat operations in the Army Field Manual Volume 1 Part 10 (AFM10, 2009) .

Developed during the height of the Helmand conflict in 2009, the United Kingdom's counterinsurgency doctrine (2009) echo's AD P5 (2000) by outlining how soldiers of all ranks will assume greater responsibility, influence, and relevance in complex operations. The document indicates how soldiers will likely be operate in smaller units separated from their higher headquarters and established leadership structures. References are made throughout to the fact that even the smallest actions of soldiers can have operational, strategic, or even political repercussions, and that soldiers of all ranks must adopt new attitudes, ways of thinking, and skills (AFM10, 2009, pp. 3,5-27). Walker (2017) asserts

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<sup>5</sup> **Operation Banner** was the operational name for the British Armed Forces operation in Northern Ireland from 1969 to 2007, as part of the Troubles. It was the longest continuous deployment in British Military history. More than 300,000 soldiers served in Operation Banner. At the peak of the operation in the 1970s, about 21,000 British troops were deployed (MoD, 2006b).



that British soldiers no longer engage in the type of mass standoff between nations that was prevalent during the "cold war" era. Rather, Walker argues that since the 1990s, postmodern military have been engaged in tasks and missions that are both flexible and global in scope, frequently occurring outside of nation-state borders in distant locations. Walker also argues that while soldiers have lately been involved in some of the most difficult and dangerous operations in the history of the British Armed Forces, a new and softer type of military competency, such as peacekeeping and crisis management, is gaining hold (p. 8).

In order to draw comparisons with the British Army, retired Dutch General de-Vries (2013) comments that expanding the military's function beyond traditional combat places additional moral pressure on the modern soldier, causing them to face more difficult ethical circumstances. De-Vries observes that modern wars require greater moral awareness from soldiers than previous conflicts due to the fact that current operations are predominantly unit-based and conducted in relative isolation, with a small number of soldiers covering a vast area of operations, frequently without direct support. De-Vries says that the moral complexity of modern battles has increased due to the fact that opposing forces are frequently disguised as civilians, making them impossible to distinguish from innocent residents, and thus are free to disregard international law. In conclusion, de-Vries argues that current military operations involve substantially more ethically difficult situations than previous wars and conflicts (p. 4).

According to Mileham (2016), Alasdair MacIntyre opened the 2013 International Society of Military Ethics conference at Notre Dame University with a harsh critique of the current perspective and understanding of military ethics in the Western world. MacIntyre has long emphasised, according to Mileham, that ethicists cannot be neutral; otherwise, we sacrifice

our humanity and the good ideology. MacIntyre went on to explain how the term 'war' has grown perilously vague (p. 125). In contrast, current British Army doctrine such as the Army Leadership Code (ALD, 2016a), the Developing Leaders Guide (ALD, 2016c), the Army Leadership Doctrine updated in 2021 (ALD, 2021a), and Leading Through Crisis (ALD, 2021b) outline how the evolving nature of military operations necessitates new methods of thinking and behaving, as well as the capacity to make sound decisions under hardship and ambiguity. Lieutenant General Brown<sup>6</sup> explains that material solutions alone will not provide soldiers with a decisive advantage over the huge array of fast-growing future difficulties they will encounter. To face the challenges of this new paradigm, Brown asserts that the Army must invest in its most valuable resource: its people (Brown, ALD, 2016b, p. 10). According to the Army Leadership publication (2021), the effectiveness of operations depends more on people than on equipment or tactics. People determine not only the effectiveness of an operation, but also whether a force retains its moral legitimacy (ALD, 2021a, pp. 1.1-3.6). General Carleton-Smith, the current Chief of the General Staff (CGS) of the British Army, believes decentralisation and delegation will foster intelligent collaboration, swift action, and grassroots initiative among soldiers, "soldiers demand freedom, not micromanagement" (ALD, 2021a, p. i).

In contrast to General Carleton-Smith's comments about decentralisation and micromanagement, the findings of military inquiry reports into the circumstances surrounding ethical failures at Abu Ghraib (Taguba, 2005), Bahu Musa (Gage, 2011), the 101st Airborne Division (101AD) in the Sunni Triangle (101AD, 2011), the Australian Defence Force (ADF) Special Air Service (SAS), (ADF, 2020), and Marine A from 42

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<sup>6</sup> Commander US Army TRADOC, quoted in the US Army Human Dimension White Paper dated 9 Oct 14

Commando (MoD, 2014) identifies how soldiers were deployed across large areas with reduced leadership structures that relied on self-regulation of behaviour in the face of ambiguous and dangerous situational challenges. All of these official investigations which will be covered in Chapter Four, highlight that despite well-established military rules and discipline being in place, soldiers committed illegal acts of extreme violence and killing with relative ease.

On and off the battlefield, the British Army's ethos and the conduct of its soldiers have often been criticised. In 1988, the Adjutant General produced a report titled "Bullying and Initiation Ceremonies in the Army" to notify Commanding Officers about Army Board efforts to reduce the likelihood of such conduct. It emphasises that a loss in "off-duty" supervision and less communication and contact between officers, warrant officers, and non-commissioned officers and their men may have contributed to the apparent failure to report such conduct in certain instances (AGC, 1988). Nicholas Blake QC also gave a report to the House of Commons in 2006 regarding the circumstances behind the deaths of four soldiers at Princess Royal Barracks, Deepcut, between 1995 and 2002. The report identified numerous deficiencies in the Army's approach to duty of care and cited several contributing factors, such as a reduced supervisory regime, abuse of authority, individual integrity deficiencies, bullying, harassment, disconnected and distant leadership oversight, and improper instructor selection (Blake, 2006, pp. 382-386).

Ministers have recently criticised the British Army for both its institutional grasp of broader society and its soldiers' conduct during peacetime. In November 2021, a newspaper investigation on the unsolved 2012 death of Agnes Wanjiru, a Kenyan hairdresser who worked near a British facility in Kenya, further damaged the British Army's reputation. In November 2021, the Army's senior command was called before the

Defence Secretary to account for a number of moral shortcomings identified in a recent parliamentary report, which stated that wartime limitations cannot be used to justify out-of-touch institutional arrangements. The report identified female victims of assault, bullying, and institutional prejudice (MoD, 2021b, pp. 16-26). It is notable that the conclusions of this report are reflective of those in the Deepcut report published 15 years earlier.

According to a MoD statement, the hour-long discussion between the Defence Secretary and the Army's senior Generals in Whitehall was "open and candid" and that recent events "brought to light serious concerns that require the participation of all of our people to resolve." The MoD said, "The British Army is only as good as the people who serve in it, and we must address the "core and cultural challenges" afflicting the military (MOD Press Office, 2021). Following the meeting, Army Chief of Staff General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith was quoted by BBC News as saying that the Army would conduct an independent evaluation of its culture in order to "reinforce the best and filter out the worst" as well as improve training and pastoral care (Beale, 2021).

The British Army has the difficult problem of operationalising not only the SDSR and JDP5 ideals, but also military operations characterised by reduced supervision levels, dispersion of smaller numbers of soldiers, and self-regulation, all of which are emphasised not only in the SDSR (MoD, 2015b) but also in the MOD interpretation of the SDSR (JDP5, 2015) and British Army doctrine for delivering the SDSR and JDP5 (ABN, 2021; ADP10, 2017; ALD, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2021a, 2021b).

The connection between past ethical failures on and off operations, the impact of Operation Entirety on the British Army, and the British Army's future concept of operations provides the context for understanding the rationale for determining whether Aristotelian virtue

ethics can complement the Army's transition from a single-purpose warfighting organisation to one with a more diverse expeditionary nature. Future deployments of the British Army are unpredictable, but the nature of conflict is constant. It is political, human, riddled with uncertainty, volatility, chance, and friction, as well as a struggle of will against competing demands, all of which will require initiative, prudence and personal self-restraint.

JDP5 (2015) states that military success in complex circumstances while adhering to the deployment's purpose, the moral component, and the broader UK strategic mission is a massive undertaking where success or failure may depend on soldiers' judgments and actions in conjunction with initiative operating models (JDP5, 2015, pp. 2-7). According to the Military Covenant (2000), the British Army has a significant obligation to prepare its soldiers to deal with complex ethical challenges that cannot be resolved with conventional warfighting skills. Those in positions of leadership are required to fulfil their responsibilities and duty of care to subordinates (ADP5, 2000, pp. 1-3).

This study does not assert that the British Army is uninformed of the need to adapt to the shift in operations, which has been clearly documented since 2000 (ADP5, 2000) and is still an enduring theme in Army and Joint Doctrine Publications (JDP5, 2015) and Army leadership doctrine (ADP10, 2017; ALD, 2021a, 2021b). McCormack (2015) contends that whilst the need to adapt is well documented, there has been no change in the values and standards approach from the pre-2000 era despite the fact that there has been a significant shift in the military's use alongside long-standing cultural problems that are out of step with wider society's expectations (pp. 5-11). With a sustained emphasis on a values and standards approach to soldier moral agency, it is prudent to investigate whether Aristotelian virtue ethics can provide resources to assist the British Army as it transitions

from warfighting to complex twenty-first century expeditionary operations that will place greater ethical pressure on soldiers operating in the grey area between peace and war.

### **1.5 Research Gap**

Carrick, Robinson, and Connelly (2016) argue that despite the growing number of internal military leadership doctrines, the British Army remains uninvolved in the minimal academic study on military ethics. In addition, they contend that there is scant empirical information regarding the real effectiveness of military ethics teaching, and that findings regarding the most effective approaches are largely speculative (p. 10). In addition, the former head of the British Army's ethics committee, the Revd Dr PJ McCormack MBE, claimed that the Army's inability to construct an ethical good from which ethical principles and organisational values may be taken, justified, and defended is a serious conceptual flaw. While the British Army's current strategy to developing moral character is well defined in their leadership doctrine, McCormack (2015 ) asserts that due to the failure to ground its values and standards approach on an ethical good (ethical foundation), or adequately explain the ethical principles from which those values may be derived, explained and defended, it is dangerously disconnected from the demands of complicated expeditionary operations and society in general and is in critical need of attention (p. 2).

McCormack (2016) further argues that the British Army's values in their current form are subjective and relative, and he suggests that other organisations with which the Army would want to avoid moral entanglements could, at least in principle, if not in practice, claim to share the Army's ideals, with the exception of "respect for others." McCormack notes that due to the subjectivity of the principles as they are currently defined, cases such as Baha Mousa have demonstrated that values such as loyalty may take on a radically

different and relative emphasis under particular circumstances and settings, resulting in inappropriate behaviour and reputational damage to the Army (pp. 2-7).

MacIntyre's 2015 contribution to the Routledge Handbook of Military Ethics synthesises the arguments of Carrick, Robinson, Olshoorn, Lucas, and McCormack by demonstrating a connection between "ethics" in the military and applied and professional ethics more generally (Lucas, 2015; McCormack, 2015 2016; Olshoorn, 2011; Robinson, 2007).

According to MacIntyre (2015), the military's significant shift in the types of operations it undertakes further complicates the developing ethical challenges associated with training the military profession in its moral commitments. This, according to MacIntyre, has resulted in an insufficient knowledge of what war is today, throwing doubt on many previously accepted truths. As MacIntyre concludes, it is essential to recognise that these insights are not intended solely for an academic audience, implying that the least likely scenario in which insights into moral agency can be developed is through interactions within such a restricted and narrowly specialised community of discourse. Instead, MacIntyre contends that research conducted from a distance on what has been learned in and from engagement in the practices of armed conflict in the recent past and near future would once again be useful. According to MacIntyre, "given the current level of ethics in the military, that time has not yet arrived"(MacIntyre, 2015, p. 13).

This study investigates how Aristotelian virtue ethics can provide resources to overcome what McCormack contends as the lack of ethical foundations in the British Army's current approach to moral behaviour, which is exclusively determined by their leadership paradigm. This study employs a theory-driven examination of the knowledge gap observed by McCormack and MacIntyre as a result of the lack of engagement with moral philosophy within the British Army's doctrine (MacIntyre, 1999b, 2015; McCormack, 2015 2016).

## 1.6 Research Question, Aims, and Objectives

### Questions:

1. *Does Aristotelian Virtue Ethics provide resources for understanding good soldiering in the twenty-first century context?*
2. *If so, which are the virtues that are most important to this understanding?*

### Aim:

To explore the moral narratives of Infantry non-commissioned officers from the perspective of Aristotelian virtue ethics.

### Objectives:

This aim is developed further in the following objectives:

1. To review the work of Aristotle and Alasdair MacIntyre in respect of the applicability of their work to empirical research in professional ethics
2. To explore Aristotelian virtue ethics and its application to military contexts alongside reports into serious failures in military ethics
3. To interpret empirical data to explore the self-understanding of British Infantry soldiers in respect of lethal and critical non-lethal decisions in the context of the Afghan conflict.
4. To propose practical contributions to policy concerning professional ethics in the British Army, based on Aristotelian premises
5. To examine whether empirical findings may contribute to the development of Aristotelian virtue ethics



## 1.7 Methodology

It is essential to stress that I started this study with long-held assumptions formed over my 28-year service in the military. The British Army is the only organisation responsible for bearing arms in defence of British interests, making it a unique institution (ADP5, 2000, pp. 1-3). The nature of Army operations mandates, as a result, that those who join the Army ensure their ideals and conduct are congruent with those of the Army (ADP, 2000, pp. 3-5). Even if these distinctions are meant to be minor, they contribute to the idea of a community that is partially isolated from the larger society. This division is enhanced by military authority and laws that frequently exceed those that govern the public. In addition to internal professional standards and governance, the Armed Forces Act and the Manual for Service Law govern soldiers (JSP, 2006; MoD, 1975, 2006a). The role of the British Army in safeguarding the United Kingdom's interests necessitates immediate access to weapons, ammunition, and sensitive equipment of interest to terrorist and/or criminal organisations. Thus, Army bases are increasingly segregated by security fences, armed guards, CCTV, and the Official Secrets Act (MoD, 1989) all of which are designed to prevent criminal trespass<sup>7</sup> which subsequently constructs a community in partial isolation from the wider society (JSP, 2001). In addition, this isolation is accentuated by the independent nature of military barracks, which provide cooking, recreational and social, medical, and housing amenities that are typically present in society outside of the workplace.

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<sup>7</sup> A designated site is a location (such as a licensed nuclear site) which the Secretary of State designates highly restricted in the interests of national security.

Walker (2018) argues that it is not a stretch to characterise military environments as total institutions in the style of Ervime Goffman, who classified Army barracks as spaces kept away from society and where traditionally maintained separations, such as between family and work, are mixed (Goffman, 1968, p. 16). In addition, Walker notes that, despite its rarity, a comprehensive institution adopts an overall purpose or mission that blurs distinctions between people and places them under different constraints than those outside the organisation; they are to be shaped and fashioned by collective goals (p. 1). Moreover, Walker (2010) asserts that there is occasionally an uneasy relationship between the military and society that often goes unnoticed until occasional points of friction are brought to light. This presents the concept that the world of the professional soldier is, at least in some ways, distinct from the civilian world (p. 91).

Walker's views align with the Army's attitude to behaviour as stated in ADP 10 Land Operations (2017), which states that the Army employs a more rigorous approach to personal conduct that may be seen as a matter of individual choice in broader society (ADP10, 2017, p. 2). This unique approach ensures that the Infantry has a culture of camaraderie and trust, which contributes to the social fabric of the soldiers which is strengthened by shared adversity and mutual reliance. This includes offering and receiving support, helping and being helped, and correcting and accepting criticism within a tight military circle (ADP10, 2017). Walker's (2010) insider research on career soldiers leaving the British Army served as a foundation for my own insider approach to this study. As with Walker, I quickly realised that my status as a professional soldier and member of a closed-group Infantry structure placed me in a unique position to engage the participants as both a researcher and a colleague with shared experiences, which, according to Creswell, allows for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon than surveys and quantitative statistical

methodologies (Creswell, 2014, pp. 5.0-7.0). Therefore, this study is predicated on my personal belief that it is unlikely that researchers unfamiliar with the unique contextual environment of the military community and their purpose could produce rich data on soldier moral agency, specifically the use of lethal force in a complex combat environment, through interviews or impersonal quantitative data collection methods. This is why my chosen research method aligns to MacIntyre's theory of tradition-constituted inquiry, which rejects detached objectivity and argues that anyone without experience of a tradition lack the cognitive and moral resources for inquiry (MacIntyre, 1999a).

My approach to comprehending the deeper layers of human experience hidden under surface awareness required a personal approach founded on a shared knowledge of soldier camaraderie within the military community and the intensely personal emotions involved with combat. As a recently retired soldier I did not need to concern myself with acclimating to the research environment and/or participants. Similar to Walker (2010), I was immune to the impacts of culture shock that the military environment may have on outsiders unable to comprehend its uniqueness and hence was able to blend into the military community without disrupting or disrespecting the environment's distinctive social traditions.

I was able to translate the meanings participants attributed to their behaviours in relation to themselves as actors within their social structure and associated traditions by applying a theory-driven methodology. I conducted the interviews as though they were a conversation between two soldiers talking in line with the norms of the military community. Peer engagement helped them to share their unique experiences in a less formal manner, which might not have been possible with an outside researcher unfamiliar with the distinctive character of military service and the community it is housed within. This approach was

fundamental to my methodology because it enabled me to provide a voice to soldiers who are not generally involved in military research but have substantial experience working at the human interface between strategy and military effectiveness in complicated expeditionary operations. The soldiers who participated in this study were educated on the topic and encouraged to offer their personal experiences during conversations which resulted in rich and useful data. The data gathered was analysed using thematic analysis as described by Clarke and Braun (Braun & Clarke, 2012, pp. 57-71) supported with the use of the Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS) programme NVivo (NVivo 12 researchers' guide, 2017).

## **1.8 Thesis Structure**

This thesis consists of eight chapters and is intended to lead the reader through a logical progression, beginning with an introduction to the research problem and concluding with a discussion of the findings and their implications for the fields of military ethics and the larger discourse on moral character development. As an appendix, a dictionary of military terms has been supplied to help readers understand military language with which they may not be familiar. I use tables and figures sparingly to condense text into a pictorial summary that will aid the reader in navigating the thesis and acquiring the information I intend to communicate.

### **1.8.1 Chapter Two**

The second chapter is organised into four sections that cover various Aristotelian virtue ethics topics. The first section provides an overview of virtue ethics, followed by a summary of the situationist critique of virtue ethics and the response from a virtue ethics perspective. The third section discusses Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, which contains

sections on the development of moral and intellectual character, virtues, friendship, purpose (*telos*), practical wisdom (*phronesis*), and Aristotle's concept of happiness (*eudaimonia*). The fourth section examines Alasdair MacIntyre's moral theory as presented in *After Virtue*, which explores the concepts of practices, goods, institutions, and the narrative of a human existence.

### **1.8.2 Chapter Three**

This chapter will discuss the research on the contextual influences of ethical behaviour. Inquiry reports and academic literature on specialist organisations such as the Armed Forces, the Roman Catholic Church, educational and sporting organisations will be examined, along with a number of official military investigation reports concerning major individual and institutional failings in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australian Armed Forces.

### **1.8.3 Chapter Four**

The issue of ethics in the military will be examined, with a focus on the Armed Forces of the United States and the United Kingdom. The current British Army Values and Standards approach to moral conduct will be examined, together with a summary of pertinent literature and parallels.

### **1.8.4 Chapter Five**

This chapter examines the study's phenomenological design and methodology, as well as their respective theoretical foundations. The fifth chapter justifies my strategy and approach by describing my position within the study according to the concept of the insider researcher. As a means of minimising the possibility of personal bias, I will also emphasise

my position within the study and my technique for reflexivity. The interpretation of data in accordance with thematic analysis and Heidegger's hermeneutic circle concept (Heidegger, 1927), which emphasises the interpreter's need to comprehend the text as a prerequisite for interpretation, will be investigated. The ethical approval process, interview piloting, participant selection, interview procedure, participant permission, and ethical issues are covered in depth. This study was deemed high-risk due to the sensitive nature of the inquiry and the possibility that participants would stray into places connected with unpleasant memories. Chapter Five discusses participant protection and the identified risks to me as a sole insider researcher engaging in trauma-based conversations.

### **1.8.5 Chapter Six**

In Chapter Six of this thesis, the significant findings from the coding and connection coding methods, as well as the accompanying narrative for each finding, are provided. As a result, this chapter does not attempt to demonstrate every code identified throughout the data analysis process; rather, it focuses on those codes that are pertinent to answering the research question. Several extracts from participant interviews are utilised to support the conclusions since it was deemed vital to emphasise key themes by doing so.

### **1.8.6 Chapter Seven**

This chapter focuses on discussing the important findings and situating them within Aristotle's and Alasdair MacIntyre's Aristotelian virtue ethics framework. In the discussion section, the implications of these findings and their position within the research gap are presented. Using a conversational tone, Chapter Seven presents a narrative explanation that integrates all of the preceding chapters and leads the reader from the study issue to its theoretical significance.

### **1.8.7 Chapter Eight**

After summarising the entire study, the final chapter develops an argument on how Aristotelian virtue ethics might provide resources for military character development as well as a broader approach to moral agency in challenging situations. In the remainder of this chapter, I will present a conclusion narrative that outlines prospective expansion strategies for this study.

### **1.8.8 Afterward**

Noting that the scope of this study runs from 2016 to 2022, I believe it is crucial to explain not just how this study was conducted, but also more recent events that have occurred after the conclusion of the study. These occurrences present another story that not only verifies the study's premise but also highlights the study's theoretical implications for comprehending successful soldiering in the twenty-first century are as important now as they were during the period of the study.

### **1.8.9 Appendices**

Numerous documents are provided to demonstrate the rigour of the study, as well as diagrams illustrating the procedure for discovering statistically significant results. The presentation of extracts from interview transcripts and the research journal are provided to highlight key aspects of the study at appropriate times. Included is paperwork detailing how organisational and individual consent was obtained and how the data were to be utilised.

## **Chapter Two: Aristotelian Virtue Ethics**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter Two will cover literature on Aristotelian virtue ethics, with the primary body of literature offered in two sections detailing Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Alasdair MacIntyre's moral philosophy on character development (MacIntyre, 2007). This chapter describes virtue ethics as an approach to ethics that emphasises the significance of a person's character in moral reasoning. The second section will address Alasdair MacIntyre's moral philosophy, which emphasises the significance of moral goods defined in connection to a community engaged in "practice"—what he calls "internal goods" or "excellence goods" (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 181).

### **2.2 Aristotelian Virtue Ethics**

According to Banks and Gallagher (2009), virtue ethics theories are representative of agent-centered and relationship-centered ethical theories, as opposed to rule-based and principle-based ethical theories (such as Kantianism/Deontology and Utilitarianism), which are concerned with the question "How should I act?" Hursthouse (1999b) argues that virtue ethics has reemerged as a counterargument to deontology and consequentialism, citing dissatisfaction with the ideas of duty and obligation and their central places in moral reasoning as the cause. (pp. 67-82).

Banks and Gallagher assert that virtue ethics theories strive to answer three basic issues that MacIntyre claims are at the heart of contemporary ethical thought: "Who am I? ", "Who should I become? ", and "How should I get there?" (Banks, 2012; Banks & Gallagher, 2009; MacIntyre, 2007). Arthur et al. (2018) note that virtue ethics emphasises



the necessity for moral character as a foundation (developmentally, motivationally, and ethically) for effective moral functioning, as opposed to just obeying rules (deontology) or maximising happiness (consequentialism) (pp. 29-34).

Furthermore, Foot (1978) believes that it is essential to recognise that moral character changes throughout time. People are born with a variety of natural tendencies. Some of these innate features, such as a calm and friendly demeanour, will be advantageous, while others, such as an irritable and jealous personality, will not. The factors to which a person is exposed as a child, according to Foot, can either encourage and develop these fundamental tendencies or discourage and impede them. Foot continues by adding that a range of factors, including parents, teachers, peer group, role models, encouragement and attention received, and exposure to various situations, can influence character development. Through education and habituation, Foot contends that our innate tendencies, the raw material with which we are born, are shaped and developed through time (pp. 1-37). Foot, Crisp, Slote, and Oakley and Cocking's (2001) observation that moral education and development are essential components of virtue ethics, moral development is presented as dependent upon the availability of positive role models, at least in its early stages. The virtuous agent, according to Oakley and Cocking, acts as a model for the learner of virtue. Initially, this entails the formation of the correct actions from which habit will develop (pp. 7-38).

Crisp (1996) notes that modern virtue ethics is influenced by Aristotle's understanding of character and virtue and that the essence of character is a state of being which depends on having the appropriate inner states. Crisp argues, for instance, that the virtue of mercy includes having the proper emotions and inner states regarding feelings for others.

Moreover, character is also a question of action, and according to Crisp, Aristotelian ethics

is an action-based ethics, because having good dispositions requires being motivated to act in accordance with them. Recognising that kindness is the appropriate reaction to a situation and having a sufficiently friendly temperament will lead to an effort to act kindly (pp. 596-598). In contrast, Foot (1978) argues that despite the situationist claim that character can be affected by even the smallest contextual factors (Alfano, 2013; Darley, 1973; Doris, 2002; Harman, 2000; Ross & Nisbett, 1991; Sherif, 1936) this is not the case as character attributes that are stable, consistent, and dependable across a variety of situations are a defining characteristic of virtue ethics. Foot argues that if a person possesses the character trait of kindness, they can be expected to behave gracefully in all situations, toward all types of people, and for a lengthy period of time, even when it is difficult to do so. Foot contends that a person with a specific personality trait can be counted on to behave consistently over time and not just in a given situation (pp. 1-13).

In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle argues that in order for people to become just, they must engage in just actions. According to Aristotle, a student of virtue must cultivate the proper habits in order to be inclined to perform virtuous acts (II.I, 1103b). Sherman (1989) and Crisp (2000) contend that Aristotle constructed virtue ethics as part of his effort to comprehend and live a moral life, and that his character-based approach to morality posits that we acquire virtue via engaging and practicing appropriate activities. Aristotle believed that a person develops an honourable and moral character through fostering virtues such as honesty, courage, justice, and charity. *Nicomachean Ethics* emphasises that by developing virtue, people are more likely to choose the right course of action when faced with ethical dilemmas (II.VI, 1106a). Crisp (2000) states that throughout *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle argues that virtuous people exhibit ideal character qualities, and these traits emerge from natural inner tendencies, but they must be

fostered; once formed, they become stable and dependable. Aristotle maintains that a virtuous person is someone who is rational in a variety of settings across a lifetime because it is their nature, and not to maximise utility, obtain favours, or do their duty (pp. vii-xxxvi).

Aristotle observes that the human good is defined as a soul activity that is consistent with virtue and, if there are multiple virtues, with the best and most complete virtue (I.VII, 1098a). Consequently, this discovery raises the question of what characteristics are meaningful and which are not. In Book II of Nichomachean Ethics, Aristotle discusses the virtues required for *eudaimonia*, specifically Prudence (*phronesis*), Temperance, Courage, Justice, Generosity, Liberality and Magnificence (II.VII, 1107b). In comparison to a habit such as drinking tea, Hursthouse (1999a) describes virtue as an exceptional character trait, a deeply ingrained disposition within the possessor. Hursthouse continues by asserting that possessing a virtue enables an individual to notice, feel, anticipate, appreciate, desire, choose, and more importantly act, and react in particular ways (pp. x-275). In *After Virtue* (2007), MacIntyre argues that virtues are not just dispositions that affect how a person acts, but also how they feel. According to MacIntyre, morality does not require acting against one's predisposition but rather acting from it, which entails cultivating the virtues (p.149).

Mason (2003) argues that according to Hursthouse (1999a, pp. x-275) there is a distinction between virtue ethics and other ethical frameworks which place a premium on rules or obligations, or theories that place a premium on the consequences of actions. For Hursthouse, the basis of virtue ethics lies in the individual's character (pp. 250-251). By and large, Bibus (2013) states that virtue ethics emphasises what it means to be a human being by placing a premium on examining 'our character and motivations in order to discern right from wrong'. Bibus concludes that virtue ethics demonstrates that morality

transcends rules and obligations but does not 'ignore principles or consequences' nor is it 'independent of principles and obligations' (pp. 37-38). As MacIntyre (1999a) argues, 'principles and rules also play a significant, if not exclusive, role in determining whether or not people are being virtuous' (p. 111). Today, a diverse range of approaches are classified as virtue ethics however, despite their diversity, they all have one thing in common, they are concerned with the moral agent's character or motivations and with people's relationships with others.

### **2.3 The Situationists Critique of Virtue Ethics**

While there is a case for character within key texts on virtue ethics, Travis (2011) proposes that there is a competing 'No Character Challenge' which is mostly driven by situationism. Situationism, according to Travis, is the belief that, when it comes to analysing and predicting behaviour, people should not focus on an individual's personality, but rather on the circumstances in which they find themselves. Travis asserts that situationism must be distinguished from other assertions regarding the relevance of the situation in behaviour because situationists such as Doris and Harman (Doris, 2002; Harman, 2003) consider themselves to be criticising traditional explanations of character, particularly those provided by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Travis contends that this is because no one would argue, for instance, that a person's behaviour is affected by the circumstances in which he or she finds himself by suggesting it should not be strange that behaviour when driving a car and presenting a lecture is vastly different (Travis, 2011, pp. 1-4).

Since the 1930s, when Sherif proposed that social circumstances influence perceptual judgement (Sherif, 1936), the significance of situational conditions has been extensively discussed in psychology and philosophy. According to Kristjánsson (2008), situationists argue there is no such thing as character, at least in the sense of how people perceive it and

that people have no enduring characteristics as their behaviour is situation-dependent (p. 56). Miller (2021) asserts that Gilbert Harman's studies stretching all the way back to 1999 (Harman, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2009), and John Doris's work (Doris, 1998, 2002, 2010) are the driving force behind the situationist critique of character traits within virtue ethics. Miller claims that Harman and Doris adapted findings and assertions from the situationist approach in psychology to modern moral philosophy. Miller asserts that Harman and Doris chose to emphasise a single virtue, compassion, and to draw on psychological research on pro-social behaviour. Given the nature of the published studies, Miller finds that compassion was a natural choice. In the past six decades, several research studies on helping behaviour have been undertaken, which Harman and Doris use to demonstrate how the actual findings, as they understood them, could challenge Aristotelian virtue ethics (Miller, 2021).

According to Skewes et al. (2013) in the 1950s, Solomon Asch conducted a series of experiments that are widely recognised as illustrative of the impacts of social conformity. In these tests, participants were given cards with a reference line and a series of comparisons, of which only one was the same length as the reference. Each participant was instructed to select the comparison that most closely resembled the reference. Skewes et al. remark that it is essential to comprehend that the correct response was always obvious and that just one individual genuinely participated within the rules whereas other people in each group were present to provide influence had different instructions to follow. The remaining participants were told to reply consistently erroneously to specific trials.

According to Skewes et al., Asch discovered that the majority of participants complied with at least some wrong group responses, while subsequently admitting they were aware those answers were incorrect (p. 1291). Blum (2018) contends that Asch's experiment

revealed that participants would disregard the evidence of their own eyes in order to adhere to group judgments about line widths, illustrating the enormous effect settings may have on people (Blum, 2018).

From the 1960s onward, according to Andrew (2013), social psychologists continued to emphasised the situational inconsistency of human behaviour, arguing that factors such as the level of noise, scent, brightness, and the atmosphere have all been shown to have statistically significant effects on individuals, which contradicts what virtue ethics philosophers assert (Anscombe, 1958; Foot, 1978; Hursthouse, 2013; MacIntyre, 1988, 2007, 2016) that virtues are stable and situationally consistent over time (pp. 451-472). Milgram (1963) undertook his infamous obedience experiments where he claims that two thirds of participants were willing to inflict increasingly severe pain on a protesting, screaming, and finally unresponsive victim simply because the experimenter firmly but politely instructed them to do so. Darley and Baston conducted a 1973 study in which Princeton Theological Seminary students encountered a person who appeared to be in need of assistance while en route to deliver a lecture; 63% of subjects tended to assist if they were not going to be late for the lecture, but only 10% did if it caused them to be late (Darley & Batson, 1973).

Zimbardo's (1971) Stanford Prison Experiment indicated that participants rapidly adopted the social roles that were required of them. In the 1970s, Darley, Baston, Milgram, and Zimbardo, among others, expanded on Asch's early findings with their own seminal research. The first three studies demonstrate, in their translation, propose that a relatively small situational manipulation with no apparent moral relevance exerts a significant influence on people's moral behaviour, and, more crucially, that no personality component appears to produce such an influence. This, according to their findings, shows that

individuals who appear to possess the global character traits outlined by G.E.M.

Anscombe, Hursthouse, Foot, and MacIntyre (Anscombe, 1958; Foot, 1978; Hursthouse, 1999b; MacIntyre, 2007) as measured by conventional personality assessments, do not act on these global traits; otherwise, conduct would vary based on traits rather than circumstances.

Prinze (2009) notes that a number of philosophers, most notably Harman and Doris, argued that these implications weaken a specific interpretation of virtue ethics and that character appears to be subjectively inactive, whereas situation exerts influence (pp. 117-144). Blum (2018) believes that the controversial Milgram experiment reveals how susceptible individuals are to compliance in particular contexts. According to Blum, what makes Zimbardo's account of the Stanford Prison Experiment unusual and compelling is its notion that all it takes to turn people into enthusiastic sadists is a jumpsuit, a billy club, and the permission to dominate fellow human beings (Blum, 2018). Prinze also asserts the research indicates that personality qualities are either local and effective or broad and ineffective. Independently, Dorris, Harman, and Alfano argue that there is a growing body of psychological literature arguing that human behaviour is inherently inconsistent across situations and remarkably sensitive to minute environmental changes, and that even small situational cues are more predictive of behaviour than the actor's personality or character (Alfano, 2013; Doris, 2002). Doris (2002) argues that neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics is grounded in empirically inadequate psychological assumptions (pp. 15-61). According to Darr (2020), Alasdair MacIntyre, one of the most influential figures in virtue ethics, has been a frequent target of situationist criticism, with *After Virtue* frequently cited as an example of a virtue ethics method Doris and Alfano argue is based on erroneous factual assumptions about human psychology (Alfano, 2013; Doris, 2002). In contrast,

Aristotelian thinkers such as Hursthouse, Foot, G.E.M. Anscombe, and MacIntyre feel that such characteristics can be fostered; however, Alfano, Doris, and Milgram would argue differently (Alfano, 2013; Doris, 2002; Milgram, 1963).

#### **2.4 The Empirical Justification of Virtue Ethics**

Although there is a substantial body of literature on the situationist argument for lack of character, the counterargument is also well-established. The most crucial evidence, according to Jayawickreme et al. (2014), is not the effects of settings seen in social psychology studies, but rather the evidence of persisting individual differences obtained by correlations of people's behaviour across multiple situations. This position, according to Jayawickreme et al., is reinforced by a plethora of empirical evidence for individual behavioural variances, and virtue-centered ethical inquiry is not threatened by psychological research (p. 283).

Miller argues that although the situationist case has theoretical and practical implications, this does not imply that the works of prominent virtue ethics philosophers such as Rosalind Hursthouse, Michael Slote, Julia Annas, G.E.M. Anscombe, Roger Crisp, Phillipa Foot, and Alasdair MacIntyre should be abandoned. Miller emphasises the ongoing controversy over whether Harman and Doris's interpretations reveal that the majority of people lack compassion and adds that a number of philosophers argue that they do not (p. 1.2.1). Miller adds that substantial issues have been raised about the Zimbardo prison experiment, and Blum argues that the popularity of the Stanford Prison Experiment appears to extend beyond its scientific legitimacy (Blum, 2018). In addition, Sreenivasan (2002) stated that neither the Milgram nor the Darley and Batson Princeton Seminary evaluations offer considerable insight into the absence of compassion (pp. 60-61).



Kristjánsson (2008) argues that the methodological challenge to situationism, based on the assertion that each of the situationist-supporting studies was executed and/or interpreted incorrectly, is not uniquely Aristotelian. According to Kristjánsson, the Milgram Experiment had features of subject unpreparedness, the experimenter's persistent pressure, the experiment's rapid pace (which gave the subjects' behaviour a knee-jerk quality), and the slippery slope nature of the subjects' judgments. Kristjánsson also notes that Sabini and Silver's (2005) careful examination of this experiment concluded that the disruption to our conception of character will be 'local' rather than 'global,' (pp. 550-561). Miller (2021) asserts that this revealed a tendency to submit more or less unquestioningly to the commands of articulate, dominant 'institutional experts' and to act like Romans when in Rome in order to avoid embarrassment, as well as to follow without question what other apparently reasonable people around them do (p. 63). Miller argues further that this undermines the arguments of Harman and Doris by saying that the findings of the relevant research should be interpreted as revealing the influence of opposing virtues rather than as demonstrating a lack of virtue. Miller suggests, for instance, that rather than asserting that the Milgram experiment demonstrates that the majority of participants lacked compassion, a more accurate interpretation is that their compassion was overshadowed by the work of another virtue that appeared to exert a stronger influence at the time. According to Miller, obedience is one candidate for this virtue (p. 121).

According to Jayawickreme et al., (2014) using the principal outcomes of circumstances as evidence against individual differences in virtue offers further challenges. Even the classic research cited by situationists provide some evidence that some people are compassionate. Jayawickreme et al., Latané and Rodin (1969) assert they found seventy percent of participants investigated a cry for help in an adjacent room when they were alone, but only

seven percent did so when they were with another person who did not respond to the screams. The fact that a seemingly minor change in the situation resulted in a significant decrease in compassion (from 70% to 7%) demonstrates the effect that slight adjustments in settings may have on compassion. Nevertheless, Jayawickreme et al. contend that the individual variability within each of the two experimental circumstances opens the door to virtue attributes as explanations for behavioural diversity. In fact, those who did assist (seven percent of those who did so when a bystander was present) may be good research subjects for the study of compassion. According to Jayawickreme et al., their compassion in such a situation is a possible demonstration of the significance of the virtues, as they helped even if many others did not (pp. 287-303).

Despite Doris and Harman's claim that situational factors influence behaviour more than personality, Jayawickreme et al., Kristjánsson, and Miller argue that their interpretation of the findings of Milgram's obedience experiment provides only a single aspect of what can be understood from the original results, indicating that Doris and Harman's arguments are not compelling (Jayawickreme et al., 2014; Kristjánsson, 2008; Miller, 2021). Wielenberg (2006) also argues that there is a second approach to understand Milgram's data, arguing that rather than demonstrating a lack of character, specifically compassion, the results also provide insight into people's character. Wielenberg argues that the data reveals a distinction between people willing to inflict life-threatening agony and those unwilling to do so. For Wielenberg, examining the results in this manner reinforces the case for character, as there were participants who would not shock others regardless of the situational demands, suggesting that the situation is not always the most powerful motivator for behaviour (Wielenberg, 2006, pp. 470-479).

## 2.4 Aristotle's Virtue Ethics

Aristotle (384–322 BCE) was a Greek philosopher who studied Plato and was Alexander the Great's personal tutor. He wrote on philosophical and non-philosophical matters such as biology, literature, politics, logic, metaphysics, and ethics (Becker & Becker, 2001; Natali, 2013; *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2000). The foundation of Aristotle's ethics is that "all behaviours are directed toward the good" (Gensler et al., 2004).

### 2.4.1 Ends: *Telos*

According to Aristotle, the right definition of the good is that toward which everything is directed (I.I, 1094a). In addition, Aristotle observes that although numerous sciences and realms of knowledge exist, their respective aims are distinct (I.I, 1096b). The end of medicine is health, the end of military activity is victory, the end of housebuilding is a house, and the end of other activities is something else; however, the end of every action and logical choice is the good. Consequently, according to Aristotle, if all actions have a purpose, that purpose is the good, and if there are several purposes, these are the goods (I.VII, 1097b).

Nussbaum (1999) argues that Aristotelian virtue ethics is not concerned with good actions, but rather with the role of motives and passions in making outstanding decisions, with character, and with an agent's complete life history (pp. 163-201). According to MacIntyre (2007), a person's entire existence is a story that alternates between various activities and the roles associated with those activities (pp. 204-226). Hursthouse and Glen (2018) contend, in contrast, that Aristotelian virtue ethics establishes a foundation for ethical cognition and behaviour that is not restricted by rules addressing the acts themselves or their results (pp. 1.1-2.2). Aristotelian virtue ethics contends that ethics is about becoming

a certain type of person and that human life has a *telos*, a Greek phrase generally translated as "purpose" that all individuals should try to achieve (I.XIII, 1103a). According to Hursthouse, the focus in an Aristotelian perspective of moral behaviour is not how a person "should" act, but how a person "should" live (Hursthouse, 1999a, pp. x-275).

#### **2.4.2 Goods: *Eudaimonia***

According to Stedman (2010), Aristotle's ethics is a study of how humans ought to live in order to achieve the highest good, *eudiamonia* (p. 57). According to Crisp (2000), the Greek term *eudiamonia* is commonly rendered as "flourishing," although it can also mean "thriving." According to Aristotle's definition of human nature, which is characterised by rationality, human beings seek this highest good, this flourishing. Therefore, humans pursue *eudaimonia* by exercising excellent judgement and thriving throughout their entire lives. To achieve this, one must lead a virtuous existence (p. x). Aristotle asserts that *eudaimonia* provides an explanation for why a person should live and act in a given way. The opening sentence of Nichomachean Ethics declares that all skill and investigation, and similarly, every action and rational choice, are thought to be directed toward some good (I.I, 1094a), which is then detailed in two forms. Aristotle identifies the first category of goods as those that are subservient to a specific overarching end. For example, medical practice is subservient to health, and military strategy is subservient to victory (I.I, 1094a), indicating that these are always goods for the sake of something else, a means to an end within a particular discipline, according to Aristotle. This naturally presents the question by Aristotle that since all ends are pursuits of specific disciplines and hence distinct, is there an end to which all disciplinary fields are directed? (I.I, 1094a). Aristotle considers the second sort of commodities: things for their own sake, not for the benefit of something else (I.I, 1094b). Aristotle observes that knowledge of such a thing must be vital for human

existence and suggests that, like archers, humans are more likely to hit the mark if they had a target to aim at. Aristotle makes it quite evident that individuals must make some effort to comprehend the objective in order to aim effectively (I.I, 1094b).

Although certain goods can be both desirable in and of themselves and for the purpose of anything else, Book I of Nichomachean Ethics demonstrates that happiness, as Aristotle argues, is the ultimate good because it is pursued without regard for anything else (I.VIII, 1097b). Aristotle substantiates his claim that happiness is the highest good by suggesting the majority of people agree on the term, since both the masses and sophisticated individuals refer to it as happiness, with happiness being understood to be synonymous with living well and performing well (I.IV, 1095a).

### **2.4.3 Function: *Ergon***

According to Aristotle, everything has an *ergon*, a Greek word that loosely translates as function, and the quality of a thing depends on how well it carries out its function (II.II, 1103b). Murphy, Kallenberg, and Nation (2003) clarify Aristotle's concept of *ergon* by asserting that comprehending an object's function enables one to assess it in terms of good and bad. In addition, they illustrate *ergon* through the example of a wristwatch, claiming that if the goal or *telos* of the watch is timekeeping, or if it is functionally defined as a system for keeping time, then knowledge of this *telos* enables evaluation of a drastically inaccurate watch as a "poor" watch. In addition, functional definition permits the identification of the watch's functional imperative: "Watches ought to accurately display the time" (p. 11).

Blasi (2006) asserts that in contrast to Thomas Aquinas's natural law theory, which asserts that God established natural law to enable humans to participate in God's eternal law and

that God gave humans the ability to discern what is good, Aristotle argues that virtues arise in people neither by nature nor contrary to nature, but nature gives them the capacity to acquire them, and completion comes through habituation (II.I, 1103b). Aristotle states that virtue is classified into two categories: intellectual virtue and moral virtue. Intellectual virtue is developed primarily through education, which is why Aristotle points out that attaining it requires experience and time. Character virtue (*ethos*) is the outcome of habituation, which is why it gained its name through a small variant on the word "*ethos*". As a result, Aristotle makes an important distinction in that it is apparent that none of the character virtues are inherent in people by pointing out that nothing natural can be conditioned to behave un-naturally. Aristotle demonstrates this point by suggesting a stone that naturally falls down cannot be habituated to fall upwards, even if thrown up ten thousand times; fire cannot be trained to burn downward; and nothing else that naturally behaves in one way can be habituated to behave differently (II. I, 1103b). As an acorn naturally develops into an oak tree, Aristotle argues that humans have an innate desire to be virtuous and that humans grow by adhering to their nature (II.I, 1103b).

If, as stated in Book I of Nichomachean Ethics, humans are the only known entity capable of reasoning, then practising reason is the actual *ergon* of human life according to Aristotle. Humans will be able to live a decent life and be equipped to find *eudaimonia* if they exercise reason correctly and live a life of *arete*, a Greek term typically translated as excellence or virtue (I.VII, 1097b). Aristotle asserts that to develop the human *ergon*, the components of the *arete* person's soul must be in harmony and in the proper sequence, allowing the individual to have a decent life and eventually achieve *eudaimonia* (I.VII, 1098a). Crisp (2000) notes in his translation of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics that Aristotle's *ergon* notion has come under fire. Crisp presents the question, "do humans have

a defining activity?" Is not rationality a quality shared by other entities, namely the gods? Why should we presume that what is good for a human being is synonymous with performing well in one's characteristic activity? Perhaps a morally excellent human life is not the best for my personal well-being. Why should practising rationality not involve using reason to pursue personal pleasure, honour, or power? Crisp states that Aristotle may simply be importing his own definition of happiness into the argument (p. xiii).

#### **2.4.4 Virtue and Habituation**

Aristotle writes within Nichomachean Ethics that to create a moral character capable of acting virtuously out of inclination, it would be necessary to practice relevant character virtues from childhood in order to develop virtuous habits that would later equip individuals to become virtuous through the performance of virtuous deeds (II.III, 1104b). Aristotle says that virtues can be compared to abilities that are learned via practice of the associated activities, for example, builders through practice of constructing and lyre players through practice of playing the lyre. Similarly, people become just via their actions, temperate through their actions, and bold through their actions (II.I, 1103b). Aristotelian virtue ethics places a premium on the characteristics produced as a result of comparable acts and hence emphasises the relevance of the activities themselves.

Hursthouse (1999a) argues that the nature of a person's upbringing poses a difficulty for virtue development. Hursthouse argues that if a person has received the erroneous education of the emotions, according to Aristotle's depiction, their chances of obtaining virtue and, by extension, *phronesis* later in life, by the enthusiastic effort of adopting a certain viewpoint, are close to zero. Hursthouse contends that if a person has been raised in a corrupt society, it is highly likely that he will be incapable of recognising certain facts,

even if they are right in front of him, and/or even if he makes every humanly possible effort to correct for self-interest and prejudice and to open himself to the free, unrestricted workings of sympathy (whatever they may be) (p. 80). As Aristotle states, the man who “lives in accordance with his feelings,” interested only in the pursuit of pleasure, “such a man would not listen to an argument to dissuade him nor understand it if he did” (X.IX, 1179b).

Similar to Hursthouse (1999), Aristotle believes the process of cultivating *arete* through habituation and education with the goal of noble behaviour also has the potential to destroy it through unthinking behaviour. Aristotle states that the origins and modes of development of any virtue are equal to those of its corruption, pointing out that lyre players evolve into either good or bad lyre musicians through lyre playing. Aristotle argues this is also the case of builders and all others, since when people construct properly, they develop into good builders; when people construct poorly, they develop into bad builders. If this were not the case, according to Aristotle, there would be no need for a teacher, as everyone would have been born excellent at their skill (I.II, 1103b). Aristotle makes the critical point within Nichomachean Ethics that a character must be related to actions, as the ensuing states are determined by the contrasts between them. Aristotle makes it abundantly clear " that how people are habituated from their earliest years is critical; Aristotle states "in fact, it makes a great difference-or rather, it makes all the difference" (II.I, 1103b). Aristotle emphasises the critical interaction between individuals and communities drives the habituation process. The action of structuring appropriate activities from which virtue can be produced through habituation transcends the person. Aristotle asserts that what happens in cities corroborates this as well, because legislators shape citizens into good citizens through habituation, which is just what every legislator seeks. For Aristotle, those who do not do it well miss



their mark, and it is here that a good political system differentiates itself from a bad one (II.I, 1103b).

#### **2.4.5 Virtues and Emotions**

In Book II of Nichomachean Ethics, Aristotle defines virtues and their relationship to emotions. The human soul, according to Aristotle, is composed of three elements: feelings, capacities, and states (II.IV, 1105b). Aristotle defines feelings as appetite, rage, fear, self-confidence, envy, joy, love, hatred, longing, emulation, and pity which he generally aligns to pleasure or pain. Capacities are described as the things on the basis of which people are described as being capable of experiencing these feelings on the basis of which, for example, they are described as capable of feeling anger, fear or pity. Aristotle presents states as things in respect of which we are well or badly disposed in relation to feelings. If, for example, in relation to anger, we feel it too much or too little, we are badly disposed; but if we are between the two, then well disposed. And the same goes for the other cases (II.IV, 1105b).

Clark (2011) states that Aristotle did not regard compassion as a virtue, although it later found a position in the Thomistic/Christian virtues of mercy and charity. At the same time, mercy (*miser cordia*) is described as the inward consequence of generosity, which is intimately related to neighbour love (p. 422). According to Di Blasi (2006) Aquinas defines mercy as "man's compassionate heart for the unhappiness of another"; it is always directed toward another person, not toward oneself (p. 11). Clarke also asserts that Aquinas defined pity as "sympathy for another's sorrow; if it is appropriately directed toward another and not toward oneself" In contrast, Clark contends that Aristotle defines pity as "a form of anguish at an apparent evil, damaging, or unpleasant, which occurs to someone

who does not deserve it, and which one could expect to occur to oneself or someone close to one" (pp. 422-427). According to Ryan (2010), Aquinas presents a comprehensive perspective on compassion as a suitable pastoral response. It requires exact observation and the guidance of prudential judgement in relation to truly good activities, and the absence of basic compassion can dehumanise individuals (p. 172).

MacIntyre (1999a) contends that the virtue of misericordia (mercy) must extend beyond communities that nurture tight relationships to what he characterises as the passing stranger (pp. 125-126). MacIntyre supports this by arguing that people frequently belong to more than one community, and moral action necessitates that even strangers be treated with the same respect as members of close communities by treating them as if they were already a member of a close community. MacIntyre demonstrates how the virtue of misericordia was evident when, according to Sophocles, a shepherd charged with killing the child Oedipus hid the child out of misericordia (p. 123). Bernacchio (2018) asserts that according to MacIntyre, mercy, the virtue that directs us toward the pressing needs of others, plays an important role in human communities, especially in maintaining networks of giving and receiving that allow us to live with vulnerability. Bernacchio argues that this explanation also demonstrates MacIntyre's genuinely Christian, non-sectarian politics of the common good. Bernacchio contends that MacIntyre maintains that the common good consists mostly of these interdependent relationships of giving and receiving that are sustained by the virtue of mercy (para. 7-12, 2018).

#### **2.4.6 Virtues and Friendship**

Walker (1979) states that Book VIII of Nichomachean ethics distinguishes three types of friendship: friendships of kindness, pleasure, and utility (pp. 180-196). Aristotle saw

friendship as one of life's greatest pleasures and believed that a life well-lived should revolve around such a bond. According to Aristotle, friendship benefits both the young and the elderly by keeping them from committing errors and by caring for and assisting them in completing duties they cannot finish owing to their weakness. Individuals in their prime benefit from friendship because their greater capacity for thought and action when surrounded by friends enables them to perform noble things (VIII.I, 1155a). Aristotle says that "good friendship" is the most desirable sort of relationship because it is based on mutual respect for the values held dear by each party (VIII.III, 1156b). Aristotle argues that it is the people themselves and the characteristics they represent that motivate two parties to become involved in each other's lives, and that people who lack empathy or concern for others rarely form these types of relationships because their primary objective is typically pleasure or utility (VIII.III, 1156b). Aristotle concludes that friendships founded on virtue require time, trust, and mutual development to create.

Aristotle realised that such a bond could only get stronger with time and that if it did, it would last a lifetime however few things come close to the worth of such a relationship. For Aristotle, people refer to their shipmates and fellow soldiers as friends, as well as those who share other types of community with them. Aristotle argues that the scope of their community determines the scope of their friendship, as it also determines the scope of their justice by proposing what constitutes injustice against each of these friends varies, and the unfairness rises in proportion to the friendship's proximity. For example, Aristotle asserts that defrauding a comrade is more heinous than defrauding a fellow citizen, failing to assist a brother is more heinous than failing to assist a stranger, and hitting one's parent is more heinous than hitting anybody else. The demands on justice naturally rise in tandem with friendship, as both involve the same individuals and are of same magnitude. For Aristotle,

the adage, "What friends have in common," is accurate because he defines friendship as based on community (VIII.IX, 1160a).

On the other hand, MacIntyre (2019) takes issue with elements of Aristotle's concept of friendship. Addressing the 20<sup>th</sup> annual conference at the di Nicola Centre for Ethics and Culture with the theme of friendship, MacIntyre asserts that Aristotle's argument that virtue and goodness could only be achieved by a narrow slice of the population, namely, the Greek male elite was not representative of a true concept of friendship. MacIntyre argues that because human beings are dependent rational animals who need to be able to make good judgements about themselves and the world in order to flourish, a key element of true friendship then is the ability to tell one another the truth. MacIntyre contends that insofar as people's minds are not so informed, they are liable to go astray in a variety of ways, to be victims of ignorance, arrogance, deception and self-deception. For MacIntyre, people not only become unable to flourish but also unable to recognise they cannot flourish. People make bad decisions, for they can hope to avoid bad decision making only by deliberating in the company of a certain kind of other. MacIntyre further argues that the true friend, must not only be a "perceptive inquirer" and "rigorously honest," but they must also "care enough about others living a good life as individual agents to insist on them being truthful as well, so that with their assistance, people may learn to rectify their errors and dispel false beliefs" (pp. 147-155).

MacIntyre (1999a) concludes that "each of us needs such others if we are to deliberate well and make good choices. Each of us needs such others if we are to achieve the self-knowledge without which we cannot flourish." According to MacIntyre, when people develop into autonomous practical reasoners, they frequently, but not always, get what they require in order to contribute to others who now require what they required

previously. MacIntyre establishes a relationship between friendship, community, and the development of practical reasoning by outlining how individuals become self-sufficient practical thinkers as a result of their participation in a network of connections with specific persons who may give what people need (p. 99). Whilst MacIntyre argues that communities are needed for people to flourish he does not assert that friendship and the network of giving and receiving is a sectarian activity. MacIntyre's account illustrates the way that the virtue mercy continuously reinscribes bonds of solidarity even in our highly "liquid" modern context. MacIntyre notes that we "move in and out of communities" and belong to multiple networks of giving and receiving (p. 122).

#### **2.4.7 Practical Wisdom: *Phronesis***

According to Crisp (2000) *Phronesis*, a Greek term generally translated as practical wisdom or prudence, is fundamental to Aristotelian virtue ethics since choosing the correct course of action cannot be reduced to a mathematical formula. Crisp observes that practical wisdom is less about the ability to apply rules and more about the capability to see situations accurately (p. xv). Fowers (2016) states that *phronesis* is the skill to make prudent judgments about which virtues are required in certain circumstances and the most effective means to implement those virtues. Fowers maintains that *phronesis* involves moral observation, thought, and choice to determine what is significant and how to handle the central components of the circumstances to arrive at an appropriate course of action (p. 415). For Aristotle, *Phronesis* is mostly the consequence of education, which requires experience and time, whereas character virtues such as courage, temperance, and justice are the result of habituation (II.I, 1103b).

Aristotle writes in *Nicomachean Ethics* that *eudaimonia* is a soul activity through exercising reason properly in accordance with the suitable virtue, or, if there are several, the one that best matches the situation (I.VII, 1098a). Aristotle divides the soul into two categories: non-rational and rational. The non-rational soul is the component that distinguishes between needs and desires, is motivated by emotion, appetite, and desires, and is capable of spontaneous action (I. XIII, 1102b). The rational side, which is uniquely human, is the rational half of the soul; it is the part of the soul that calculates knowledge in order to make meaningful decisions and steers the non-rational soul on the right path toward what is best (I.XIII, 1102b). Cooper (1984) asserts that Plato offers a different view of the human soul in *The Republic*, which he frames as the Tripartite theory. According to this view, the soul now consists of three distinct components: reason, spirit, and appetite. (p. 17).

Cooper (1984) argues that desire in the appetitive and spirited parts is not a matter of belief in what is right and wrong; these desires emerge irrespective of any views about what is right or best (pp. 18-27). The example of drinking is used to demonstrate how the three regions of the soul interact. In Book II of Plato's *The Republic*, he asserts the absence of reason enables appetite, which occurs naturally in response to happenings in the body, to motivate a person to drink. Reason, on the other hand, believes that knowledge about a particular circumstance may imply that drinking is not the best course of action at that time. If desire is subordinate to reason, the link between appetitive desire and action is severed, and reason takes precedence over appetite (Book II, *The Republic*, 1998). Taking both Aristotle's and Plato's descriptions of the soul into account, the central theme of reason triumphing over desire is clear when cultivating moral character, as is the imperative to use reason to make judgments in light of specific circumstances. The division

between rational and non-rational parts of the soul facilitates the study of the two categories of human qualities found in Nichomachean Ethics: intellectual and character virtues (II.I, 1103b).

As previously mentioned, MacIntyre (1985) asserts that moral virtue and practical wisdom must coexist for the correct exercise of moral virtue, practical intelligence is essential. On the other hand, practical wisdom requires character virtues, or else it degenerates into a crafty ability (cleverness, in Aristotle's language) for connecting means to any end, rather than to objectives that are truly beneficial to humanity (p. 154). Hursthouse (1999b) contends that according to the traditional account, the intellectual virtue of *phronesis* or moral wisdom is what enables one to distinguish between the truly useful and agreeable and the merely apparently so; something that, despite being intellectual, cannot be possessed independently of the full possession of the virtues of character (p. 77).

#### **2.4.8 The Doctrine of the Mean**

In Book II of Nichomachean Ethics, Aristotle describes virtue as "a state involving rational choice, consisting of a mean relative to humans and determined by reason and the reason, that is, by reference to which the practically wise person would determine it". Thus, virtue, according to Aristotle, is a middle ground between two vices, one of excess and the other of deficiency (II.VI, 1106b). Aristotle continues by arguing that humans have an emotional propensity for things that are either favourable or unfavourable. If people experience anger excessively or inadequately, for example, they are ill-disposed; yet, if they fall somewhere in between the two extremes, they are well-disposed, and Aristotle holds the same for the remaining situations. According to Aristotle, virtues and vices are not feelings, as we are

classified as good or bad based on our virtues and vices, not on our emotions (II.IV, 1105b).

Aristotle points out that identifying the mean, which cannot be determined through arithmetic progression, in conjunction with reason, will guide a person to do the right thing at the right time, in the right way, in the right amount, and toward the right people (II.I, 1106b). Although ambiguous and essentially the foundations of the situationist critique (Alfano, 2013; Ross & Nisbett, 1991), Aristotle contended that all virtue operated in this manner, with the proper action being in the middle of two extremes, implying that there is no all or nothing in Aristotle's understanding of the mean. In Book II of *Nicomachean Ethics*, the mid-point is discussed in relation to the moral character virtue of generosity, with an emphasis on actions carried out in accordance with virtue being noble when carried out for the sake of what is noble: "so the generous person will give for the sake of what is noble and in the proper manner and to the proper people, in the proper amounts, at the proper time, and so on" (II.VI, 1106b).

Aristotle contends that the application of the of the mean requires an understanding of *Phronesis*, which enables a person to judge what is expected of them in terms of feelings, decisions, and actions in a given scenario, and so enables a person to locate the character virtues mid-point and act appropriately; thus, every practitioner in a science avoids excess and deficiency, strives for the mean, and selects the mean, not in the thing itself, but relative to the person. Concerning emotions, Aristotle continues to state that having them at the appropriate time, about the right things, toward the relevant people, for the right reason, and in the proper manner is the minimal and optimal, and this is the task of virtue. Similarly, activities have an excess, a deficit, and a mean. Virtue is concerned with thoughts and acts in which excess, and deficiency represent misses, while the average is



applauded and on target, both of which are virtue-defining attributes (II.VI, 1106b). In his statement of the "doctrine of the mean," Aristotle argues that anyone can be angry or donate or spend money. However, doing so in the appropriate context, with the right amount, at the right time, with the right purpose in mind, and in the right method is not something anyone can do or is easy (II.VIII, 1109a).

According to Aristotle, a person who fails to implement *phronesis* may fall short of its standards both by omitting to give away money when one should (which is stinginess, a lack of charity) and by giving money away when one should not (which is wastefulness, an excess of generosity). Furthermore, in *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle contended that the mid-point is reached by a knowledge of the situation, as evidenced by Plato's drinking example. Aristotle states that people can feel dread in excess or insufficiently, but being terrified at the proper time, of the right things, and so forth is "the middle and best" (II.VI, 1106b). Aristotle illustrates how *phronesis* is applied to virtue by noting that ten and two pounds of food, respectively, requires reason and wisdom to determine the appropriate amount of food to give to different people, rather than arithmetic progression. Aristotle argues that by using reason and understanding, a person can determine whether six pounds is too much for one individual but not enough for another (II.VI, 1106b). This example demonstrates how the doctrine of the mean operates in practice.

## **2.5 Alasdair MacIntyre's Virtue Ethics**

Knight (2008) observes that Aristotle was the first great philosopher of *praxis*, a Greek term that is frequently translated as action, and of humans as actors and claiming that it was while investigating this idea that MacIntyre coined the term "Aristotelian" for his own philosophy (pp. 317-329). According to MacIntyre (1981) one of the most surprising

aspects of Nicomachean Ethics is its near-complete lack of moral principles (pp. 27-34). As Fowers (2016) notes, while there is an overarching imperative to act virtuously, Aristotle views virtue as a process of creating excellence in character, which inevitably results in fine and noble behaviour (Fowers, 2016, pp. 415-421). For Aristotle, our distinctive activity is guided by practical wisdom and character virtue; for virtue directs the course of action, while practical wisdom directs the course of events. Aristotle states it is impossible to be virtuous in the literal sense without practical wisdom (VI.XII, 1144a).

### **2.5.1 The Moral Agent**

MacIntyre (1999c) expands the discussion on moral agency within social structures by focusing on the relationship between a person's specified position within a social structure and the person in their own right who performs various roles throughout their life.

According to MacIntyre, a person's life is a series of positions within many social systems, as demonstrated by a train operator who was simultaneously a father, the treasurer of his sports club, and a wartime non-commissioned officer. MacIntyre asserts that a moral agent is a person who possesses the capacity to think beyond the social standards and rules that govern each function and to apply the principles that apply across a lifetime. MacIntyre points out that a person cannot be a moral agent without first comprehending themselves as a moral agent on a daily basis, and that they cannot exercise the capabilities of a moral agent unless they are capable of comprehending themselves as legitimately accountable for the ability to use those powers (p. 314).

Becker, Lucas, and Khemka, assert moral agents have a moral obligation to refrain from causing unjustifiable harm (Becker & Becker, 2001; Khemka, 2020; Lucas, 2015).

MacIntyre (1999c) argues that historically, moral agency has been reserved for individuals

who can be held accountable for their conduct. Children and people with various mental impairments may lack the ability to act morally (p. 313). In comparison, Haksar (1998) maintains that moral principles can be construed in a variety of ways. In the most simplistic interpretation, it is sufficient that the agent is capable of adhering to some of the exterior standards of morality. Thus, Hasker maintains that if certain agents are capable of abiding by moral laws such as "murder is wrong" or "stealing is immoral," they are moral agents, even if they behave solely for prudential reasons like fear of punishment or even if they are incapable of acting for moral reasons (p. 49). MacIntyre (2015) provides a succinct description of the concept of moral development by arguing that people do not become virtuous by attending lectures and conferences on ethics. MacIntyre argues that moral agency requires being schooled in pertinent habits of thinking and conduct in everyday practice, as people cannot have the virtues of courage, temperance, and justice without also possessing the kind of practical wisdom that Aristotle referred to as *phronesis* (p. 4).

MacIntyre (1999c) states that each role includes standards that apply to the individual performing that role, but the individual must be able to distinguish between role standards and broader normative standards. MacIntyre says that this demands responsible consideration and the confidence to challenge the role's standards regardless of the outcome. MacIntyre suggests that human beings have the capacity to recognise when they have reason to question the authority of evaluative and normative standards that are distinct from those embodied in the institutions of their particular social and cultural order, and thus share equally in the capacity to transcend the limitations of those established standards in thought (p. 314). Additionally, MacIntyre also identifies that this requires an individual to present themselves as someone with a broader identity than the constraints of

their role within a given social system. MacIntyre emphasises that the individual must have moral confidence since they will be required to make judgments that discriminate between norms applicable to various roles that may conflict with one another. This is a critical comment in terms of implementing wider society's norms, as the rational person making informed decisions must be viewed as rational, not as simply rebellious to role standards. According to MacIntyre, the moral agent must have faith in her or his own moral judgments when they are of the type "even though relatively commonly agreed upon in this social system that someone in my role should act so in these circumstances, I believe that I should act otherwise" (p. 316).

MacIntyre (1999c) argues this kind of questioning and the capacity to step back and re-evaluate one's participation in established role-structures is at the heart of what it means to be a good human being. MacIntyre emphasises that this assurance does not come easily and takes practice in interactions that stimulate critical examination by other moral agents. According to MacIntyre, individuals must have demonstrated their capacity for moral deliberation and judgement in different scenarios by routinely putting their arguments and conclusions to the critical examination of trustworthy others, such as co-workers, family, and friends. However, MacIntyre suggests caution in that such people are not always trustworthy, and some may have an increased proclivity for error. Thus, for MacIntyre, in order to have confidence in deliberations and judgments, people require certain types of social relationships, forms of social association in and through which deliberations and practical judgments are subjected to extended and systematic critical examination, which teaches how to make judgments in which both we and others can place their trust (pp. 316-318).

When assessing what a youngster knows and does not know, Thomas Huxley (1929) advised, "begin with the most vital subject of all—morality as a guide to behavior" (p. 377). Samuels and Casebeer (2005) suggest that just because a circumstance has the potential to exert disproportionate influence over people, it does not mean it must. Perhaps by comprehending and admitting the situation's potential influence, the situation's power can be defeated. Through this enhanced understanding, moral agents entrusted with cultivating a person's social surroundings can contribute to the formation of systems that foster ethical behaviour and development (p. 74). According to MacIntyre (1999c) this is about a person's behaviour being consistent with their character, not limited to the specific role they fill. MacIntyre cites the lost property manager who gives a loaded gun to a mentally disturbed owner on the pretext that they owned it, and the train conductor who was in charge of transporting victims to Auschwitz to demonstrate his point. MacIntyre says that this highlights how, by not stepping back and challenging moral standards beyond their role, each person may claim they have performed their responsibilities admirably, yet their actions are clearly devoid of moral agency (p. 314).

Possessing a virtue alone does not make a person virtuous; Hursthouse (2003) says that virtue must be transformed into virtuous conduct by a person with a complicated mind-set. A fundamental characteristic of this mind-set is its unwavering acceptance of a variety of factors as justifications for action. Hursthouse asserts that an honest individual cannot simply be defined as such if their actions are motivated by a fear of repercussions if detected. In comparison, recognising behaviour based on the premise that "to behave otherwise would be dishonest" demonstrates genuine virtue (p. 11). Aristotle writes in *Nicomachean Ethics* that individuals must also evaluate what they naturally gravitate toward, for various individuals have distinct natural tendencies toward distinct aims, and

they will discover their own tendencies through the pleasure or suffering they experience. Individuals must draw themselves away from error in the other direction, for if they pull far enough away from error, as when straightening bent wood, they will attain the intermediate condition (I.II, 1109b).

### **2.5.2 The Notion of a Virtue**

Alasdair MacIntyre (2007) argues in Chapter 14 of *After Virtue* that there is no universal approval of a particular set of overarching qualities by stating "there are simply too many disparate and contradictory notions of virtue for the concept, or even for its history, to have any true coherence" (p. 181). MacIntyre argues that his vision of a coherent definition of virtue necessitates an understanding of three separate stages, each of which must presuppose the previous one. The first step is an overview of a practice; the second stage is a story of a whole human life; and the third stage is an examination of moral traditions. In addressing the first stage, MacIntyre refers to his second remark about the various definitions of virtue and argues that this notion of a particular form of practice as the arena in which the virtues are displayed and in which they are to gain their main, if imprecise, meaning is critical to the overall effort of defining a core concept of the virtues (p.187).

MacIntyre (2007) continues to argue that these distinctions are not limited to the quantity of virtues or the order in which they are ranked; they also encompass variances in how virtues are seen across time periods and cultures. MacIntyre continues to describe the virtue conceptions proposed by Aristotle, the ancient Greek literature of Homer, and the New Testament in order to substantiate his statement that the concept of virtues lacks true unity. MacIntyre makes many significant points in his comparison, the first being that, while Aristotle's list and the New Testament's list of faith, moral excellence, knowledge,

temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love differ; MacIntyre argues they are conceptually and logically equivalent in that a virtue is a trait whose exercise results in the accomplishment of the human *telos* (p.184).

MacIntyre (2007) points out that this observation demonstrates that both Aristotle's and the New Testament's lists of virtues are associated with a person inside a holistic life idea, with the end being the good for humans, natural for Aristotle, or supernatural for the New Testament (p. 184). According to Murphy, Kallenberg, and Nation (2003) the second point MacIntyre argues is that the Homeric virtues of bravery, strength, and cunning on the battlefield for a soldier would show that a virtue is a trait that enables an individual to fulfil his or her social role. Murphy, Kallenberg, and Nation contend that while the Athenians inherited the Heroic society's language of virtue, the *polis*, a Greek word generally translated as city-state, had a distinct substance and vocabulary due to substantial changes in social structures since Homer's time, and as a result, Athenian terminology ceased to associate *arete* with the performance of a social role and began to refer to general characteristics of human life (p. 154).

The third and perhaps most striking observation MacIntyre (2007) makes is that, while all three lists appear to be distinct in terms of the identity of specific virtues and the association of virtues with social roles and a *telos*, MacIntyre notes that "each of these accounts asserts not only theoretical, but also institutional hegemony" (p. 186). MacIntyre supports his claim of institutional dominance by stating that Aristotle condemned barbarians because they lacked agriculture; New Testament Christians believe there is no salvation outside the apostolic church. MacIntyre says that one of the most significant findings from his comparison is that virtue demands acceptance of specific characteristics of social and moral existence that must be defined and explained. MacIntyre continues by

citing two examples: first, in the Homeric meaning of virtue in the context of heroic societies where the practice of a virtue demonstrates the characteristics necessary for maintaining a social role and demonstrating excellence in a well-defined field of social practice; to excel is to excel in war or in the games, as Achilles does. Second, when Aristotle speaks of human excellence, he frequently alludes to a specific form of human activity, such as flute playing, combat, or geometry (p. 187).

MacIntyre (1985) notes that the concept of virtue encompasses not only the holistic concept of the good life, but also specific behaviours (family, education, employment, leisure, etc) and that it is feasible to distinguish specific virtues associated with particular acts (p. 186–187). As a result, the moral habituation of virtue is the process of gradually employing our naturally given dispositions in the proper manner (p. 154).

### **2.5.3 Practices**

The concept of practice will be explored first in order to shape MacIntyre's (2007) account from the perspective of this central concept. Randal (2002) notes that while examining MacIntyre's moral ethics, it is critical to grasp two critical limitations. To begin with, MacIntyre does not intend to imply that the virtues can be exercised solely through his concept of a practice and that his concept is defined differently than the current usage of the term (pp. 14-21). MacIntyre (2007) defines practice as:

by a 'practice' I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended" (p.187).



Kallenberg (2011) highlights four key ideas in MacIntyre's notion of a practice. Practices, to begin with, are human endeavours. These are not, however, solitary individual pursuits, but rather socially formed cooperative activities. Such actions cannot be carried out alone; they require the participation of like-minded individuals. Apart from being social, these activities are complicated enough to be sufficiently challenging and cohesive to work towards a common goal. Kallenberg elucidates this by stating that practices are never simply a collection of technical skills. Kallenberg asserts a practical skill naturally entails perceptions of the pertinent goods and purposes served by the subject skill. While building a house requires practice, taking a shower does not. Tennis is a game of practice, yet hitting a backhand is not. While medicine is a skill, gargling mouthwash is not. Second, practices provide intrinsic benefits to the activity. Certain practices, like jurisprudence, generate external commodities as by-products: money, fame, and power. Kallenberg continues to argue that genuine practices are defined by "internal" goods—those benefits that are recognised and appreciated solely by participants (p. 36).

### **2.5.3a Internal and External Goods**

At this point, it is necessary to evaluate MacIntyre's conceptions of "external" and "internal" goods in practice. Knight (2008) proposes that the relationship between rules and practices might be explained by the famous anecdote in *After Virtue* of teaching a child to play chess. As an incentive to play chess, a youngster is offered candy, and additional candy is given if the child wins the game. Thus, the child continues to play in order to win the candy. Knight writes, "The child is therefore launched into a social practice and obligated to learn its rules." However, as long as the child's sole objective is to acquire candy, the youngster will obey chess rules insofar as doing so assists the in acquiring candy. The child will be motivated to cheat if it results in the acquisition of more candies,

and he or she will be motivated to abandon chess if they can obtain sweets in another way. Sweets, like the money required to purchase them, are an "external" goods of chess (pp. 317-319).

According to MacIntyre (2007) there may come a time when a child plays chess for the sake of the game, to develop analytical skills and imaginative strategies, to prepare for the intensity of competition, and to excel in any way that chess requires, rather than playing chess solely for the purpose of winning. MacIntyre refers to this as an "internal" goods of chess playing (p.188). Knight (2008) argues that as long as the child internalises this "internal" good and follows the rules of chess conscientiously, as well as by developing skills and emulating the standards of excellence established by other chess players, the child will have reason to act in pursuit of it rather than candy. Knight observes that such incorporation of socialisation into a practice may be viewed as socialising and teaching the child (p. 317-319). Randal (2002) observes that the external rewards associated with chess-playing by socioeconomic circumstance are candy for children and fame and money for adults. However, there are alternative means of obtaining such things, and they are never obtained only through the performance of a single behaviour. By contrast, there are benefits inherent in chess-playing that cannot be obtained through any other means than through chess or another specific game of practice. They are internal in nature, as they can be detected and recognised only by participation in the exercise at hand (pp. 14-19).

Sinnicks (2014) draws attention to another example MacIntyre provides to illustrate the process of engaging in practices for the purpose of obtaining goods. MacIntyre (1994) provides another example from the world of fishing when he suggests fishermen may have first joined the crew for the purpose of their wages... "but later gained an appreciation for and commitment to fishing excellence from the rest of the crew" (p. 285). Sinnicks argues

that this level of awareness and commitment is only attainable if the fishermen have been properly initiated. These examples demonstrate that individuals do not need to seek out a practice in advance in order to realise its internal benefits. Employees may initially require supervision and instruction before gaining an understanding of the commodities associated with their roles (p. 236) .

By contrast, Sinnicks (2014) also contends that MacIntyre's concept of practices' intrinsic goods being fully understood only to people who have experience with them is problematic. By arguing that only those who are fully engaged can judge when a practice's historically established standards have been met or exceeded, Sinnicks raises the possibility that practices are cognitively closed because the inexperienced lack sufficient knowledge about a practice to pass judgement on it, or on the success or failure of those who do possess the relevant experience (p. 240). Despite reservations about MacIntyre's assertion on internal goods, Sinnicks notes that MacIntyre's ethics has generated considerable interest due to its capacity to extend beyond the application of a conception of ethical conduct to roles, organisational contexts, and forms of employment. Rather than that, it serves as the foundation for an explanation of how such pursuits, while enjoyable in and of themselves, might aid in the development of virtues (p. 241).

According to Moore and Beadle (2006) MacIntyre suggests that, in general terms, "external" goods always belong to individuals as their possessions, and the more one individual owns of these goods, the fewer there are available to others. This makes external goods identified with competition in which there are winners and losers (p. 3). MacIntyre (2007) states that while internal goods may also be the result of competition, their attainment is for the benefit of the individuals who are involved in the practice. The virtues relate to internal and external goods in that the exercise of the virtues enables the

attainment of internal goods and the lack of exercising the virtues prevents that attainment (p.188-190).

Randal (2002) states that the virtues' beneficial influence can be viewed in terms of the fact that the virtues of justice, courage, and sincerity are necessary components of any activity involving internal goods, and these virtues should be performed in conjunction with other practitioners. Understanding this would perhaps avert the child's inclination to cheat, as was the case with the chess game. This is to state that certain expectations exist regarding the interactions between individuals involved in a profession (pp. 16-21). MacIntyre (2007) argues that the subject virtues are intrinsic to the definition of such partnerships and can be viewed as necessary ingredients for practising excellence in achieving internal goods (p.191-192).

In *After Virtue* (2007) MacIntyre establishes a relationship between virtues, goods, and practices when he states that the positive effect of virtues can be seen in terms of the fact that the virtues of justice, courage, and truthfulness are necessary components of any practice that involves internal goods, and that these virtues should be exercised in relation to others who participate in practices. The subject that virtues are intrinsic to the definition of such partnerships can be viewed as necessary ingredients for practice excellence in achieving internal goods. MacIntyre argues that a virtue is an acquired human attribute that, when possessed and exercised, tends to enable people to attain the internal goods of practices and, when lacked, effectively inhibits people from attaining any such goods (p.191-192). Beadle (2017) asserts that MacIntyre argued in *After Virtue* that a quality must operate within the contexts of practices, individual lives understood narratively, and the traditions of relevant communal settings in order to qualify as a virtue. The individual life, in this sense, is central to his later writings in *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*.

Beadle states both texts are consistent, but the perspective has shifted, and with it a revised definition of virtues as: 'merely those characteristics that enable agents to identify both the goods at stake in any given situation and their relative importance in that situation, as well as the manner in which that particular agent must act for the sake of the good and the best' (pp. 219-220).

Kallenberg (2011) observes that the third aspect of MacIntyre's schema is that practices have standards of perfection without which the practice's internal benefits cannot be fully realised. Engaging in a practice includes acknowledging the authority of specific criteria that may define the discipline. This entails conforming personal preferences and ideas to the standards in place at the time. Kallenberg articulates this by emulating MacIntyre's chess-teaching a youngster in *After Virtue*. The delight of chess comes from having played well, and the historical community of practitioners has defined what constitutes excellence. Practitioners have recognised that stalemate is not a desirable end game in the same way that checkmate is, and that executing sophisticated strategic movements is more fulfilling than executing simple defensive tactics (p. 37). Randal (2002) asserts that because practices have a history, standards may alter over time and are not impervious to criticism, but they also do not defy the respect needed by these standards. The historical dimension is critical and necessitates the exercise of virtues, as practising entails not just with other practitioners, but also with those who came before us in time (p. 51). To learn from history, MacIntyre (2007) states that the characteristics of justice, courage, and truthfulness are also essential, as these values foster the appropriate mindset for learning from and respecting history without dismissing it (p.190-192).

### **2.5.3b Growing a Practice**

Kallenberg (2011) identifies the fourth element of MacIntyre's schema: systematic expansion of practices. Over the years, as practitioners strived for excellence on a daily basis, the standards of the practice gradually increase. Kallenberg demonstrates this concept through the use of medicine. While physicians were undoubtedly earnest in treating fevers with leeches, contemporary physicians possess abilities that far exceed those of their forefathers (p. 37). May (1983) asserts that modern practitioners are inextricably linked to their forefathers by emphasising how earlier physicians strived for perfection, particular advancements in medicine having been created. However, May also states that improvements in technical ability does not adequately convey what the concept of systematic expansion entails. Additionally, it encompasses how technically proficient physicians have learned to comprehend how a patient's health is a function of a wider system. Thus, medicine is gradually broadening its scope to include care for the full patient in all of his or her psychological complexity (pp. 27-31).

There are several additional critical components to comprehending MacIntyre's concept of practice. MacIntyre (2007) argues that practices must be identified in relation to institutions. Of course, practices should not be compared solely to sets of technical skills. Likewise, institutions must not be confused with practices. Chess, physics, and medicine are all examples of practice for MacIntyre, while chess clubs, laboratories, universities, and hospitals are all examples of institution (p.194).

### **2.5.4 Institutions**

According to Beadle and Konyot (2006) internal goods (goods of excellence) are obtained from practice, in contrast to external goods (goods of effectiveness), such as fame, power,

and profit. Typically, the virtues' significance to agents is first realised through early engagement in and witnessing of activities. Such experience reveals the inherent value of such characteristics as practical judgement (*Phronesis*), courage, fairness, fortitude, and temperance in achieving the internal goals of practice successfully. In contrast, Beadle and Konyot also state their relationships to the acquisition of external goods are defined by contingency rather than inherence. Institutions, on the other hand, are required to create the external commodities required to support practices in general and uniquely (p. 128).

MacIntyre (2007) states:

Institutions are characteristically and necessarily concerned with...external goods. They are involved in acquiring money and other material goods; they are structured in terms of power and status, and they distribute money, power and status as rewards. Nor could they do otherwise if they are to sustain not only themselves, but also the practices of which they are bearers. For no practices can survive any length of time unstained by Institutions (p.194).

Furthermore, MacIntyre (2007) argues that the relationship between practices and institutions – and hence between the external goods and the internal goods of the practices at issue – is so intimate that institutions and practices typically form a single causal order. MacIntyre continues to argue that practice is always susceptible to the institution's acquisitiveness, and that the practice's cooperative care for common assets is always susceptible to the institution's competitiveness (p.194). According to Beadle (2017) one of the difficulties in applying MacIntyre's ideas to business ethics has been reconciling his continued hostility to capitalism and modernity. However, Beadle notes that MacIntyre's most recent book, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, is the first time MacIntyre endorses a contemporary business organisation as an institutional setting for practices and a management initiative for enhancing the experience of work (p. 221).

Beadle and Moore (2006) suggest that MacIntyre's concept of institutions and practices is applicable to virtually any situation asserting that MacIntyre himself noted that the term encompasses a broad range of practices: arts, sciences, games, Aristotelian politics, and the creation and maintenance of family life all fit within the concept (p. 3). MacIntyre (2007) argues that:

The role of the virtues is evident; practices would be corrupted by institutions if it were not for the influence of justice, courage, and truthfulness. The 'health' of a practice, its integrity and wholeness will be proportionate to exercising of the virtues, which has the ability to sustain the institutions which socially bear the practice (p.188).

MacIntyre (2007) suggests this would be demonstrated empirically by the fact that, without virtues, only external rather than internal goods would be recognised in the context of practices. As a result, the values of justice, courage, and integrity frequently prevent us from attaining fortune, celebrity, or power. Additionally, if external commodities become prominent in society, the concept of virtues may naturally fade away (p.195-196).

Beadle and Konyot (2006) state that individuals who administer institutions must balance the claims of internal and external goods in order for practices to develop. In context to the British Army this would be defined as the practice of soldiering housed within the institution of the Army. Framed within the notion of a MacIntyrean institution, the Army is not only responsible for the distribution of external goods such as money, status and power derived from the military rank system, but also internal goods through the opportunities to practice activities aligned to their purpose of protecting UK interests in complex environments which generate positive emotions within those engaging in the practice of soldiering. Beadle and Moore (2006) observe that MacIntyre's criticisms of conventional management for failing to accomplish this are well-known. Nonetheless, his work



demonstrates that the appropriate execution of this function is a distinct activity (the proper form of politics) that necessitates the application of virtues (p. 7). MacIntyre (2007) asserts that the creation and maintenance of forms of human society, and therefore of institutions, possesses all of the features of a practice, and, more importantly, of a practice that is especially connected to the performance of the virtues (p.194). Beadle and Moore (2006) explain this by arguing that senior managers, those who have outgrown their practice and now represent the institution that houses it, have the same opportunity to exercise virtues in the institution's creation and maintenance. Beadle and Moore further claim that MacIntyre is highlighting the core difficulty of his ethics, namely that "practices are frequently perverted by their institutionalisation processes, when elements like money, power, and prestige are permitted to infiltrate the practice" (MacIntyre, 1994, pp. 283-304). Thus, a critical component of the entire virtues–goods–practice–institution schema is a focus on the institutional level in order to determine which characteristics of the institution will help it avoid distorting the practice it houses (Moore & Beadle, 2006, p. 6).

Randal (2002) argues that condemning virtues' meaning and function to rituals and institutions would severely limit their substantive application (pp. 35-52). According to MacIntyre (2007) there must be a *telos* that is capable of transcending the restricted goods of practice in terms of the good of an entire individual human life viewed as a totality (p.201–203). Moore and Beadle (2006) argue that virtues are permanent character traits (as are vices), not practice-specific but universally necessary for the flourishing of any profession. The virtues enable the individual to accomplish goals inherent in practices and accomplishing those goals across a variety of practices and through time is critical to the individual's search for and progress toward their own *telos* (p. 15).

### 2.5.5 Traditions

MacIntyre's enduring interest in the intimacy of the link between agents' behaviour, self-understandings, and the social institutions they inhabit is hermeneutic in nature. Beadle and Moore (2011) state the narratives that agents use to make sense of their lives are strongly influenced by their level of engagement in and dedication to specific tradition-informed social practices, those that enable agents to answer queries such as 'What are you doing?' and 'Why are you doing that?' According to Beadle and Moore only people who share narrative traditions may provide intelligent responses to such concerns (pp. 2-3).

MacIntyre's (2007) definition is deceptively straightforward:

“A living tradition ... is an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition. Within a tradition the pursuit of goods extends through generations, sometimes through many generations. Hence the individual's search for his or her good is generally and characteristically conducted within a context defined by those traditions of which the individual's life is a part, and this is true both of those goods which are internal to practices and of the goods of a single life” (p. 222).

Coe and Beadle (2008) state a recurring theme throughout MacIntyre's writing has been the idea of a certain sort of community conducive to the flourishing of virtues. Coe and Beadle further assert this is underpinned by a complicated social theory in which institutional arrangements and the ideologies that inform them either encourage or inhibit engagement in tradition-constituted practices (p. 9). MacIntyre (2007) explains how virtues are cultivated through involvement in community-based initiatives, practice-embodiment institutions, and practice-based communities, each of which provides a greater level of support. MacIntyre also states that this will enable us to distinguish in a clear way those beliefs about the virtues which genuinely belong to the tradition from those which do not (p. 186).

Flett (1999) asserts that rational enquiry, as understood by MacIntyre, is antithetical to detached neutrality. Seminal to a tradition's rational formation is its particular social and cultural context (pp. 6-20). MacIntyre (1988) argues that the history of a particular community frames modes of enquiry and furnishes terms and concepts used in its intellectual scheme. So, MacIntyre states, "philosophical theories give organised expression to concepts and theories already embodied in form of practice and types of community" (p. 390). According to MacIntyre, local life shapes the particular teleology of a tradition, its concerns, objectives, aims, and conceptual scopes, as well as its emphasis and bounds. The rational tradition analyses, arranges, and interprets raw evidence in order to provide the community with a reasonable justification and philosophical solution. MacIntyre reaches two conclusions. The first is that, when analysing particular philosophical issues, such as justice, we cannot grasp the theme in isolation from its tradition. A tradition is an overarching system of thought that establishes limitations on particular topics and gives norms to which the protagonist may turn for reasonable justification. The total of the pieces is greater than the whole. The evaluation of the appropriateness of a particular component, such as a system's sense of justice, is contingent on the adequacy and eventual vindication of the entire system. MacIntyre also finds that each rational tradition utilises local resources and is developed in accordance with a conceptual scheme distinct from that of a rival tradition. Inquiry procedures will reflect these distinct notions and attitudes. For MacIntyre, recognising this potential incommensurability is a prerequisite for reaching consensus. By precisely describing the divergent characteristics of competing traditions, a clearer explanation for the variety of perspectives is offered, so altering the issue and making it susceptible to resolution (pp. 133-389).

MacIntyre (2007) argues practices are also related to traditions in the sense that they are transmitted through them. Traditions are frequently formed in part by an argument explaining the commodities that, when examined, provide the tradition with its particular point and purpose. MacIntyre comments that "Tradition" is the framework under which people pursue goods. This occurs occasionally throughout the generations. These are the goods that exist within practices and the goods that exist inside a particular life, each of which is a part of a tradition. To emphasise a previous point, MacIntyre argues narrative history is crucial for comprehending behaviours, traditions, and the lives of individuals both independently and in relation to one another. MacIntyre asserts this is because the history of a practice is made understandable via the lengthy history of the tradition through which people learn about their current form of the practice. To further define these crucial relationships, MacIntyre argues the history of people's lives is generally rooted in and explicable through the histories of numerous traditions. Traditions can be preserved and strengthened, or they can deteriorate and perish. This can occur as a result of failing to exercise adequate virtues (pp. 204-218).

MacIntyre (2007) observes that virtues serve a multifaceted role. Not only do they sustain the relationships necessary to achieve a variety of internal goods within practices, and the context of an individual life in which an individual seeks out his or her own goal in terms of the good of a whole life for him or her, but they also sustain the traditions that provide the historical context for practices and individual lives. Traditions can be corrupted by a lack of virtue exercise, just as organisations and behaviours that derive their existence from such traditions can be corrupted. MacIntyre suggests that the virtues serve a purpose not only in sustaining the relationships necessary to achieve the variety of goods inherent in practices, or in sustaining the form of an individual life in which that individual may seek

out their own good as the ultimate good, but also in sustaining the traditions that provide the necessary historical context for both practices and individual lives. Injustice, a lack of sincerity, a lack of courage, and a deficiency of the necessary intellectual virtues will corrupt traditions, as they do the institutions and practices that take their existence from the traditions of which they are modern expressions (p.223).

Having an awareness of the traditions to which one belongs or those with which one is confronted is a virtue because it enables one to envision future possibilities that the past, as transmitted through traditions, has made available to individuals in the present. Thus, for MacIntyre, living traditions serve as a bridge between the past and the future (MacIntyre, 2007, p.222–225). MacIntyre's description of the virtues requires an understanding of social life in which the virtues strengthen traditions and actions associated with those traditions. These entwined social interactions are comprehensible within the narrative contexts in which they exist. MacIntyre later refers to this as sociological self-knowledge, which he defines as the capacity to understand oneself and those around you in terms of your and their roles and relationships to one another, to the common goods of family, workplace, and school, and to the structures that distribute power and money. MacIntyre maintains that it is critical to someone's life what they define as success or failure in the workplace or elsewhere, as well as the role that their conception of success plays in self-organising their lives (p. 211).

MacIntyre (2006) makes a critical distinction between an individual's definition of success and the risk it poses to the individual and institution. According to MacIntyre, success in hierarchy-based institutions requires making oneself acceptable to superiors; the characteristics that please those superiors become treated as virtues, and the institutionalised relationships' norms become authoritative. MacIntyre warns that

conformists who structure their activities around the pursuit of a successful career may never have reason to consider whether their goals are compatible with those of a rational agent, and thus misunderstand both what it means to be a rational agent and how their assent to a dominant social order prevents them from becoming a moral agent (pp. 211-212).

### **2.5.6 Narrative Unity of a Human Life**

MacIntyre (2007) asserts, it is rationally justifiable to conceive of each human life as a unity so that people might attempt to define each of these lives as having a purpose and so that people can comprehend the virtues as serving a purpose in enabling an individual to create one sort of unity rather than another out of his or her existence (p.203). For MacIntyre, a life's unity is determined by a character's narrative unity which can be seen of as the orderly or chaotic pursuit of numerous internal and external goods. Practices form a unified whole to which one must learn to respond. MacIntyre asserts the virtues not only enable people to pursue the goods inherent in practices, but also sustain them in the relevant pursuit of the good. In his most recent book, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity* (MacIntyre, 2016), Kretz and Lenne (2018) observe MacIntyre continues to position his account of virtue in relation to social practices, accountability, communities, and moral traditions (pp. 129-133).

MacIntyre (2007) also states that the nature of this unity provides an acceptable *telos* for the virtues, such that the unity of that life and virtues coexists with the virtues that preserve that unity. For MacIntyre, the paths to this concept present some unique and philosophical difficulties. On the social side, modernism fragments each human life into chunks that are inextricably linked. On the philosophical side, there is a tendency to consider human acts

automatically and in terms of discrete components. In order to understand MacIntyre's description of the virtues, one must first recognise that a human life is a unified whole rather than a chronology of separate deeds and incidents. This also implies that the unity of a virtue in an individual's life is explicable only in terms of it being a quality of a unified life, which should be defined and appraised holistically (pp. 204-226).

MacIntyre (2007) further asserts that the concept of unity is connected to the characteristics of human life. This is apparent in the way that human actions are connected in such a way that people can comprehend what someone is doing if they understand their objectives and their relationship to their surroundings. MacIntyre illustrates this concept by posing the question, "*what is he doing?*" to someone working in a garden. MacIntyre contends that while the responses "*digging,*" "*gardening,*" "*preparing for winter,*" or "*pleasing my wife*" may all be true, a correct response requires knowledge of the person's goals. Separate from intentions, beliefs, and contexts, behaviour cannot be truly identified. Finally, we characterise human acts through a narrative history that provides us with the knowledge essential to make them understandable (p.204-210).

Associated with the notion of storytelling in relation to the unity of human life is the fact that each tale possesses an element of unpredictability and a teleological quality.

According to MacIntyre (2007), there exist preconceived notions about various conceivable goods that influence our choices and subsequent behaviour. These might be viewed as the aims or objectives for which people strive. MacIntyre asserts that people begin their lives with one or more defined roles that they later learn about. The present is shaped by a picture of the future that emerges as a *telos*, a sort of end or aim. The narrative concept of selfhood implies that people are the protagonists of their unique history, and that selfhood is correlative. For MacIntyre, people are all interwoven into one another's

narratives. Each life's tale is connected to a larger set of narratives. People have a connection to one another's narratives (p.215-218).

Additionally, MacIntyre (2007) states it is critical to ask what constitutes the wholeness of an individual's life. MacIntyre argues that the explanation is that unity is the encapsulation of a narrative in a single existence. To inquire, "*what is best for me?*" is to inquire how I could best live out and complete that union. To inquire "*what is good for man?*" is to inquire what all responses to the preceding question must have in common (p.218–219). The moral life is unified when people ask the two questions consistently and attempt to answer them in deed and word. According to MacIntyre, the unity of a human life and the unity of a narrative quest are equivalent. For a narrative or to-be-narrated quest, the corresponding criteria for success or failure in human existence as a whole are the same. A final *telos* and a sense of what is beneficial to people define such a search (pp.218–219).

MacIntyre (2007) also points out that virtues are dispositions that sustain practices and enable people to obtain the internal benefits of their practices. Additionally, the virtues will sustain people in the proper pursuit of the good while they confront evils, perils, and temptations. The virtues inventory will include those necessary to sustain the type of household and political communities in which men and women can work together for the common good. This results in a conclusion regarding what constitutes a good life for people. It is a life lived for the purpose of pursuing the good life for people, and the required virtues are those that enable them to gain a better understanding of the good life (pp.218–219).

MacIntyre (2007) notes that the good life is sought in relation to the unique function that each person plays, and people are always either the son or daughter of someone, resident of



this or that city. What is beneficial to people must also be beneficial to those who fill such positions. The history people inherit from their family, city, and nation comprises the given realities of human existence, and these truths impart "moral particularity" to people's lives. For MacIntyre, each person has a historical and social identity that enables them to be a piece of history and the keeper of a tradition. Practices are relevant here because they have histories, and what a practice is susceptible to is the means of transmission utilised to pass it along through generations. Furthermore, virtues are relevant here because they maintain the relationships required for activities (p.220-221).

## **Chapter Three: Context and Moral Behaviour**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter is not designed to comment on the jus ad bellum components of the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan or perceptions of war in general. The focus is on the context of moral behaviour by examining how situational factors might influence how an individual behaves in specific settings. Beginning with an overview of the relationship between social structures and behaviour, this chapter investigates civilian and military organisations, focusing on elements of British and American military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The third chapter finishes with an examination of the extant modern ethical frameworks of the United States and United Kingdom Armed Forces. Literature on ethical conduct and each force's approach to character building will be drawn from their respective official military doctrines.

### **3.2 Social Structures and Moral Agency**

According to Sherman, to cultivate virtue, individuals must be provided opportunities to practice being virtuous (Sherman, 1989). Samuels and Casebeer (2005) assert that this requires cultivating a person's social milieu in such a way that the environmental forces impacting human behaviour make virtuous behaviour the norm as opposed to the exception. Samuels and Casebeer continue to emphasise the significance of how people react in diverse settings, with a special emphasis on personality/environment interaction, as it is only then that individuals can alter their behaviour to increase the likelihood of performing virtuous action. Again, only those who recognise and appreciate the situation's subtle influence can take complete control over their moral decisions (p. 78). By

comprehending Samuels and Casebeer, one can deduce that a true understanding of the circumstances may enable individuals to overcome biases. For instance, Ross et al., (1975) discovered that fraudulently generated ideas persist despite regular debriefing. Ross contends that the impact is abolished only by process debriefing, in which people are made aware of the processes underlying the formation and persistence of incorrect beliefs (p. 890).

Numerous classic studies on the subject have come from the long tradition of exposing specific immoral behaviour resulting from situational pressure. For instance, Hartshorne (1928) discovered that children's immoral behaviour varied depending on the environment (e.g., stealing money, lying to avoid getting another child in trouble, and cheating on a test) (pp. 47-55). Other investigations revealed further instances of unusual behaviour.

Milgram's controversial obedience studies reported that people would intentionally shock another subject to death if the experimenter instructed them to continue (Miller et al., 1995, p. 4). Darley and Latane's 1968 bystander effect demonstrated that when another subject was present, subjects were less willing to intervene in an emergency than when they were alone. Indeed, Darley later observed that even seminary students en route to delivering a lecture on the "Good Samaritan" would be unable to assist if they were pressed for time (pp. 377-383). Zimbardo's 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment is a well-documented example of how a social structure can influence a person's behaviour, as the purposefully constructed environment altered participants' behaviours to the point where the experiment had to be terminated early due to an increase in violent acts committed by those assigned specific roles within the experiment (Zimbardo, 1971, pp. 6-9). In an interview with the Telegraph, Lance Armstrong responded to his 2013 cheating conviction by arguing that cheating is defined by an unfair advantage and that the fact that everyone in professional

cycling cheats supports his claims that he was acting within the unwritten, but widely accepted, win at all costs ruthless atmosphere created by professional cycling (Telegraph, 2013).

McCabe and Trevino's 1993 study of institutional determinants impacting cheating behaviour indicated that academic dishonesty was not only taught through observation of unethical peer behaviour, but also institutionally encouraged (McCabe & Trevino, 1993, p. 44). McCabe maintains that in an environment where cheating is accepted, honest students feel disadvantaged, and cheating may be viewed as a legitimate means of acquiring and retaining an advantage. McCabe et al. (1999) added that high school pupils believed that "cheating was a natural part of life" and that "fundamental adjustments must take place at the social level before change can occur, given that the adult world sets such poor examples" (p. 211). Slobogin (2002) noted that according to a CNN online article, children today look to parents and society for a moral compass, and when they encounter inappropriate behaviour, they wonder why they are held to a higher standard (para 9). Samuels and Casebeer (2005) propose that individuals whose occupations include personality/environment interaction should be aware of the effect their everyday presence has on moral "operational settings." According to Samuels and Casebeer, one technique for modifying a dysfunctional organisational culture is to alter the social environment. In this situation, leaders may provide verbal support for people who bring unethical behaviour to their attention. A simple comment such as "you're doing the right thing" may have a huge effect on an individual who harbours doubts (and serves as a potent model to others in the organisation). Leaders who exemplify a dedication to ethical conduct help to the establishment of an atmosphere characterised by integrity (p. 83).

Recent catastrophic moral shortcomings within the Roman Catholic Church have demonstrated the dangers of institutional behaviour that is in direct opposition to the purpose for which it exists. According to a 2020 independent investigation into child sexual abuse within the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, faith-based organisations were distinguished from the majority of other institutions by their declared moral mission. The report states that in the case of child sexual abuse, that moral purpose has been undermined over decades by both those who perpetrated the abuse and those who turned a blind eye to it. The Church's disregard of children and young people's physical, mental, and spiritual well-being in order to safeguard its reputation was in direct conflict with its purpose of love and care for the innocent and vulnerable (Jay et al., 2020, p. v). Another independent inquiry of child sexual abuse within the Roman Catholic Church in France determined in 2021 that the church had shown "deep, comprehensive, and even cruel apathy" for years, defending itself rather than the victims of systemic abuse. The majority of victims were youngsters around 10 to 13 years old. Sauvé highlighted in his report that when confronted with this scourge, the Catholic Church's initial response was to protect itself as an institution, and it has shown utter, even callous disregard to those who have suffered abuse (Sauvé, 2021, p. 3).

### **3.3 Social Structures and Military Operations**

According to Olshoorn (2011), modern military ethics instruction involves encouraging soldiers to display restraint even when their opponents do not. Recent events have proved, according to Olshoorn, that moderation is not always simple to achieve, and there appears to be a tendency to feel that some manoeuvring room is created when the opponent stops following the rules. Olshoorn argues that higher objectives are frequently used to justify practices that would otherwise be considered unethical, providing for more space. As a

result of the September 11th, 2001, terrorist attacks, for instance, similar grounds were used to justify the use of interrogation tactics like as sleep deprivation, stress postures, and waterboarding to extract information from detainees. Therefore, it is essential to develop methods for enhancing the moral consciousness of military personnel. As rules and standards of conduct are typically considered to be of limited utility in the military and the majority of modern militaries focus on character development to produce virtuous soldiers, airmen, sailors, and marines, it is commonly believed that character development is the most important aspect of military training (pp. 3-4).

There are numerous situations in which an individual's ability to remain morally upright has been compromised by their surroundings, and they have resorted to utilising local moral standards rather than their own. Zimbardo (1971) reported in a contentious manner through his Stanford Prison study how rapidly moral behaviour could deteriorate in an environment devoid of rules. Milgram (1963) also provides controversial empirical evidence that roles within contexts might change behaviour. According to military investigative reports, the early atrocities committed by American, Australian, and British soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan reveal an astonishingly swift transition from moral agent to perpetrator of needless and brutal violence causing bodily and emotional pain (101AD, 2011; ADF, 2020; Aitken, 2013; Gage, 2011; MoD, 2020b; Taguba, 2005).

Equipping soldiers with the skills required to satisfy national standards, as advocated by Ben Wallace MP, is a time- and resource-intensive endeavour (Wallace, 2021). To make the most of its limited resources, the British Army delivers generic training to all of its soldiers in order to prepare them for war, and combines this training with theatre-specific, pre-deployment preparation for units and individuals assigned to specific missions. The Operational Training and Advisory Group (OPTAG) provides this instruction (ADP10,

2017, pp. 10.11-11.11). According to the 2016 Chilcot report on the Iraq war there were insufficient soldiers in theatre to effectively manage the situation in which they found themselves. Forces in post-war Iraq were widely dispersed on the ground, as peace support and stabilisation activities necessitate a much larger number of soldiers than combat does. According to Chilcot, the soldiers in Iraq became the only law enforcement agents in their area of operations (Chilcot, 2016, pp. 85-101).

Brigadier Aitken (2013), who authored the Aitken report in 2013 that investigated the unlawful killing of Baha Mousa, an Iraqi civilian detainee, emphasised how, in the instance of Iraq in 2003, the majority of training offered to the first three waves of soldiers deployed to theatre centred on combat capabilities. The report detailed how the current British Army policy on arrest and detention was insufficient to prepare soldiers for all of the issues they would face in post-war Iraq (pp. 10-18). According to Aitken, the pre-deployment training (PDT) packages and their underlying ideology were based on the Law of Armed Conflict (MoD, 2004) guidance however, they heavily favoured a conventional war scenario. Aitken says PDT detailed how prisoners of war were to be treated but made only scant reference to the treatment of civilian detainees, a population with whom soldiers interacted with significantly more following the formal conclusion of hostilities in April 2003 (pp. 10-19). Aitken described the post-war Iraqi scene as initially exuberant. By mid-May, the traditionally persecuted Shia population in and around Basra had become mistrustful and frustrated as post-war aspirations and expectations were not adequately met by those they initially viewed as liberators. There was no administration or government in Iraq, fuel and potable water were in short supply, electricity was intermittent, and hospitals were overflowing with combat-related casualties. Law and order were obliterated as a result of coalition bombings that destroyed bridges and vital roads and prisons were

emptied, and criminals were freed onto the streets. Parts of Basra had descended into complete anarchy, as crime was prevalent. Several hijackings, child abductions, revenge killings, vehicle thefts, and burglaries occurred (pp. 12-16).

### **3.3.1 Operation Telic: Iraq War (*Baha Mousa Report 2003*)**

Baha Mousa, an Iraqi national, ceased breathing at approximately 21:40 on September 15, 2003, according to the Baha Mousa Inquiry Report by the Rt. Hon. Sir William Gage (2011). Gage reports how the previous day, he had been detained in the central area of the Temporary Detention Facility (TDF) at Battle Group Main (HQ of 1st Battalion The Queens Lancashire Regiment (1 QLR)) in Basra. He was transported to the Regimental Aid Post (RAP), where attempts were made to resuscitate him. These attempts, however, were futile, and at 22:05 he was pronounced dead. Gage's report notes that following his death, an autopsy revealed that he had had 93 distinct surface injuries. The cause of death recorded on the 22 September 2003 death certificate was cardiorespiratory arrest (pp. 1-12).

Gage (2011) highlighted in his report that, according to the military assessment, the mission of 1QLR in managing central Basra was extremely complicated and dangerous. The 1st QLR Battlegroup was formed by adding a small number of personnel from other branches of the British Army to the battalion. Gage also says that only 420 of the 620 soldiers in the battlegroup were Infantry. Basra is around 150 square kilometres in size and had over 1,300,000 inhabitants at the time. Gage's report describes how, upon arrival in Basra, 1 QLR found the city's infrastructure to be in disrepair. There was no working system of law enforcement or justice, theft and other forms of criminality were prevalent and there was a constant risk of insurgent activity. Gage continues to emphasise the rapid



deterioration of the situation into uncertainty and extreme danger. The mission required the battlegroup to operate 18 to 20 hours per day in suffocating heat, with daily temperatures ranging from 57°C to 59°C and night time temperatures ranging from 40°C to 43°C (p. 5).

During the Baha Mousa trial, the Judge Advocate, Mr. Justice McKinnon, declared unequivocally that certain soldiers who abused the detainees had not been charged with crimes due to a more or less blatant closing of ranks. According to Gibb (2006), at Corporal Payne's sentence, the judge advocate indicated that he would not have committed the inhuman treatment offence "but for the unusual circumstances he found himself in, being forced to condition the detainees under his supervision" (Gibb, 2006). According to a 2009 report on the treatment of detainees, the situation in Basra in 2003, when conditioning was standard procedure for the Queen's Lancashire Regiment, revealed "a severe failure in the chain of command up to Brigade level and beyond." Major Anthony Royce's testimony in this case that he understood that the use of "conditioning," including the use of hooding and stress positioning, had been approved by his brigade headquarters, and specifically by the Legal Officer, suggests that there is a need for clear direction at the senior level and throughout the ranks regarding the humane treatment of detainees (MoD, 2009, pp. Q2-Q7 Conditioning prisoners).

According to a 2011 BBC news report, Colonel Jorge Mendonca, the Commanding Officer of 1 QLR, testified before the inquiry that he never considered it excessive to hood a detainee. Despite the fact that, unrelated to Baha Mousa's death, an Iraqi had his wrists broken in detention and a 12-year-old was kicked in the head for throwing a stone, he denied that his unit had a "culture of casual violence." In their closing arguments on behalf of the accused, their barristers argued that moral responsibility should not be limited to those who actively participated in the mistreatment of the detainees but should also include

those who were content to observe, turn a blind eye, or avoid asking difficult questions. From the chain of command through the medical staff and even the padre, no one was willing to speak out for what was right or report what was wrong (Hawley, 2011).

The evidence from the deliberate abuse cases in the Aitken report (2013) reveals that not only the accused, but also some of the other persons involved in the investigations; and not just the soldiers, but also some of their superiors, did not uphold the Army's values and standards. Brigadier Aitken provided a particularly egregious example of this failure when he stated that the service police's lack of cooperation in conducting investigations, as well as what the court in the Baha Mousa case referred to as a "wall of silence" from certain witnesses, was not an uncommon occurrence in the military. Aitken observed that this behaviour may be exacerbated in an organisation that emphasises the significance of loyalty and mutual understanding. As a response, Brigadier Aitken advised instructing soldiers that lying to the Service Police or exhibiting "selective memory loss" in court to protect other members of their unit are not acts of loyalty, but rather lack of integrity. Respect for others necessitates regard for all people, especially potential adversaries, and courage is the moral fortitude to face undesirable behaviour anytime it is encountered (pp. 22-25).

### **3.3.2 Operation Enduring Freedom: Iraq war (Abu Ghraib – *Taguba Report 2005*)**

During the US military's tenure in Abu Ghraib, soldiers committed rape, sexual assault, physical abuse, torture, sodomy, and murder, according to the Taguba Report (2005). The investigation identifies multiple reports of US soldiers committing rapes against captives, as well as testimonies of other soldiers taking photographs of this abuse. There are

additional reports of sexual abuse using various implements and numerous stories of torture, including strappado hanging<sup>8</sup> (pp. 15-49). The New Yorker reported in 2008 that additional instances of abuse included urinating on detainees, jumping so violently on a detainee's already injured leg that it was unable to heal, pouring phosphoric acid on detainees, sodomising detainees with a baton, and tying rope to a detainee's legs or genitals and dragging them across the floor. 17 soldiers and officers have been relieved of duty, while 11 soldiers have been charged with offences such as violence, disobedience of duty, maltreatment, and serious assault. Other personnel were dishonourably discharged, incarcerated, punished for dereliction of duty, or demoted (Morris, 2008).

The Taguba report (2005) uncovered several failings, including the commanding officer's material misrepresentations to the investigating team, his leadership role at Abu Ghraib, reports of detainee abuse, escapes from confinement facilities, and accountability lapses, as well as systemic problems within the brigade and a lack of clear standards, proficiency, and leadership. In addition, the report emphasised that military police, despite being skilled at passive information collection within a facility, should not participate in interrogation sessions conducted by Military Intelligence. In addition, military police should not be involved in establishing "favourable conditions" for future interviews (pp. 15-20).

According to Dittmann (2004), Zimbardo was an expert witness at the Abu Ghraib trials, likely because of his participation in the Stanford Prison Experiment in 1971, which has

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<sup>8</sup> The strappado is a form of torture wherein the victim has his or her arms tied behind their back; a large rope is then tied to the wrists and passed over a pulley, beam, or a hook on the roof. The torturer pulls on this rope until the victim is hanging from the arms. Since the hands are tied behind the victim's back, this will cause a very intense pain and possible dislocation of the arms. The full weight of the subject's body is then supported by the extended and internally rotated shoulder sockets. While the technique shows no external injuries, it can cause long-term nerve, ligament, or tendon damage.

some parallels to the abuse of authority at Abu Ghraib Prison. According to Dittmann, Zimbardo contended that the same psychological dynamics at work in the Stanford experiment were also present at the Abu Ghraib jail, and that the results of the experiment should have served as a warning to the military about the dangers of power abuses (p. 68).

### **3.3.3 Operation Enduring Freedom: Iraq War (Sunni Triangle -101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division Report 2006)**

In Jim Fredricks' book *Black Hearts: One Platoon's Descent into Madness in Iraq's Triangle of Death* (Frederick, 2010), he describes the events preceding the Sunni Triangle tragedy of 2006. Fredricks describes how on March 12, 2006, five soldiers from the 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 502d Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division (101AD) deserted their posts and made their way to the village of Yusufiyah, which was located within their operational region in Iraq. There, the five soldiers mercilessly raped and murdered Abeer Qassim Hamza al-Janabi, a 14-year-old Iraqi girl, as well as her family members. Fakhriyah Taha Muhasen, age 34, her father, Qassim Hamza Raheem, age 45, and Hadeel Qassim Hamza Al-Janabi, age six, were all murdered. She had two brothers, Mohammed, 11, and Ahmed, 9, neither of whom were at home at the time of the rape and murder. The residence where this murder occurred was around 200 metres southwest of the village of Yusufiyah, which is located west of the larger municipality of Al-Mahmudiyah in a region of Iraq that coalition troops have dubbed the Triangle of Death (Frederick, 2010). Kaldor (2006) notes how the operating tempo in Iraq in 2006 was high for several units, such as Bravo Company, with similar missions, personnel needs, and materiel limitations. However, nearly all of these units and their

members served with distinction and valour, adhering to the laws of war and the Army's code of conduct in the face of immense adversity and physical danger (pp. 11-13).

In 2011, the 101AD Brigade Headquarters started an internal investigation into the crimes committed by the 1st platoon of the 502 Infantry Regiment. According to the investigation report, the unit was posted to a particularly violent and hazardous region southwest of Baghdad, where "daily injections of bloodshed" were the norm. The Battalion, consisting of roughly 700 personnel, was subjected to approximately 900 improvised explosive devices (IEDs), daily mortar and rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) shelling, and constant rifle and small arms fire. According to the investigation, prolonged exposure to combat operations led to a high rate of death and injury among officers and non-commissioned officers. During the first 90 days of operations, Bravo Company reportedly lost three platoon leaders, a first sergeant, a squad leader, and a team leader to death or injuries. 51 of the 135 men had been killed in action (KIA), wounded in action (WIA), or evacuated at the end of their mission (pp. 1-30).

The 101AD internal report (2011) provides an overview of the state of the Sunni triangle in 2006. Multiple internal and external variables worsened the arduous combat operations, negatively impacting unit morale and adding to soldiers' desensitisation. Several factors may have contributed to this moral desensitisation and the subsequent crimes: high casualty rates, significant leadership complications and discord, troop-to-task ratio mismatches resulting in increased dispersion and less supervision, materiel constraints, training and deployment preparation deficiencies, communication breakdowns, and degraded living conditions, especially after a fire in the platoon area resulted in a significant loss of soldiers. Bravo Company spent almost eleven months outside the wire on combat missions that necessitated a 24-hour presence. This further strained the already

tenuous relationship with Battalion Headquarters. In addition to the normal wear and tear of combat, there were numerous indications that something was amiss with the platoon, but these indications were more apparent in hindsight. Symptoms and indicators included deteriorating soldier discipline, a loss of trust and disruptive relationships, deteriorating unit cohesion and esprit-de-corps, a tribal mentality, a diminished sense of purpose and meaning, increased pessimism and cynicism, and an increase in feelings of dehumanisation toward oneself and the local population (pp. 1-50).

The commander of Headquarters Company of the Battalion noted that a lack of leadership was largely responsible for what transpired in Iraq. Fredricks was also referring to the company, battalion, and brigade levels. Fredricks notes that the 503rd had simply allowed typical levels of professionalism to deteriorate until they were unrecognisable (Fredericks, 2010). According to Fredricks (2006), the repeated exposure of certain Bravo Company members to fighting and other stressors exceeded their psychological capacity for endurance and resilience. Due to their prolonged exposure to combat activities with inadequate support, the company and platoon sustained an increase in casualties. The downward spiral that ensued, according to Fredricks, was aggravated by "fatigue, anxiety, and panic attacks, increased irritability, and obsessive-compulsive tendencies," as well as substance abuse involving illegally obtained alcohol and drugs. Fredricks also examines how the violence and deaths, worsened by the region's continuous sectarian and ethnic strife, increased the psychological challenges encountered by Bravo Company members (Fredricks, 2006).

In addition, Fredricks (2006) observes that repeated mission revisions and a continuous lack of faith and trust in the chain of command eroded the platoon's psychological and moral resilience, hence accelerating their decline into violent inclinations. According to the

101st Airborne's internal investigation, the violence was motivated by hatred for the Iraqi people, with the al-Janabi family, and Abeer in particular, serving as scapegoats for the soldiers' indignation and anger (101AD, 2011, pp. 1-50).

### **3.3.4 Operation Herrick: Afghanistan (*Telemeter Report 2011*)**

In November 2013, former Sgt Blackman was convicted of murdering an unidentified Taliban insurgent. In March 2014, Navy Command Headquarters instructed Royal Marines Brigadier Huntley to conduct an internal inquiry into the event in which former Sgt Blackman was convicted of murder. The 2014 Telemeter report by Brigadier Huntley evaluated J Company 42 Commando's operational tempo, command culture, and insurgent activity in the Nad-e Ali North region of Helmand Province. According to Huntley's assessment, Lieutenant Oliver Augustin and Marine Sam Alexander were killed by an IED during a 42 Commando mission in the Loy Mandeh region on May 27, 2014. During an earlier deployment to Afghanistan, Lieutenant Augustin earned the Military Cross. After Augustin's death, Huntley reports that Sgt Blackman gained command of the "multiple," or half-troop, operating at checkpoint Omar. Omar was shut off from other checks, making his safe approach impossible. Huntley noted that the multiple would patrol between five and ten hours per day in temperatures approaching 50 degrees Celsius while carrying at least 45 kilogrammes of equipment (pp. 1-11).

The 2015 Operation Herrick Campaign Study revealed the unit from which the patrol was drawn was located north of the Nad-e Ali district in the Helmand Province of southern Afghanistan. Their primary focus was Shazad, their forward operations base (FOB). Outside of Shazad were smaller outposts known as "checkpoints." These checkpoints include Talaanda and Omar. Huntley states that midway through 2009, when insurgent

IEDs became pervasive, transforming portions of Nad-e Ali into low-density minefields, casualties increased, and operational and strategic objectives halted. By July 2009, Afghanistan had accrued more casualties than Iraq (DLW, 2015, p. xxiv; MoD, 2015a). In his 2014 report, Huntley described how, following an attack on their base in the Helmand River valley in September, a patrol of British Royal Marines from J Company 42 Commando led by Sgt Blackman located a severely injured Taliban fighter. The Apache attack helicopters firepower rendered the fighter unable to protect himself and left him with a fatal chest wound. The Taliban fighter was transported to an area where neither the Apache's gun-mounted camera nor the base's ground-radar<sup>9</sup> could see him or the patrol. Sergeant Alexander Blackman, afterwards called "Marine A" in court, shot the wounded Taliban fighter in the chest (MoD, 2014, pp. 1-50).

J Company 42 Commando utilised a fundamentally different counterinsurgency strategy than other forces operating in Nad'e Ali, according to Huntley's report. Huntley makes it plain in his report that 42 Commando soldiers were not interested in fine-tuning tactics; rather, they wished to fight the Taliban head-on, to be aggressive, and to determine who would blink first. In 2011, a 45 Commando company commander reported that one of his 42 Commando counterparts defined their strategy as an attempt to "blunt" the insurgency. To strike him so hard that he never again desires to rise" (MoD, 2014, p. 2).

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<sup>9</sup> Ground Surveillance Radars (GSR) are high technology sensor systems that monitor activity surrounding or on critical infrastructure areas such as airports, military installations, borders, refineries and other critical industries. These radars are characterized by their ability to detect movement at ground level of targets such as an individual walking or crawling or different size of vehicles. GSR serve as the primary sensor for security operations and eliminates the need for continuous scanning by security personnel using cameras or binoculars, as field observation radars are capable of integrating with camera systems and other sensors.



According to Huntley (2014), 42 Commando soldiers made extensive use of their own weaponry and depended disproportionately on Apache assault helicopters. Huntley stated that a company commander in 42 Commando was spotted roaming around with a sniper rifle belonging to a deceased marine, indicating an obsessive fixation on retribution.

Brigadier Huntley interviewed a 45 Commando officer who reported seeing a senior NCO in charge of stabilisation projects carrying a 66mm rocket launcher inscribed with the words "F\*\*k COIN" (COunterINSurgency), as well as compensation notes given to locals allowing them to claim money for property damage with the words "F\*\*k off you gay c\*\*t" Whisky Company of 45 Commando, whose area of operations closely bordered Juliet Company of 42 Commando, the unit engaged in the Blackman incident, finished its seven-month tour without firing a single shot in anger, according to Huntley's report.

Compared to the previous deployment, 45 Commando witnessed a dramatic decrease in violent occurrences in the south. According to Huntley's report, the distinction between tactical regions was not based on terrain but on how soldiers were perceived. Afghans have their own code of behaviour and will treat other groups differently based on their level of respect. Where honour and fundamental decency are breached, Afghan locals will 'allow' or even promote certain actions within their enclaves (MoD, 2014, pp. 1-50).

Early in the 2011 tour, according to Huntley (2014), the Commanding Officer of 45 Commando indicated to the chain of command his concerns regarding the behaviour of 42 Commando beyond his northern boundary. On August 7, 2011, the Brigade Commander was informed that 42 Commando in Nad-e Ali North was "operating contrary to his intent and against the campaign's aims." The Brigadier was informed that the situation in Nad-e Ali North was dire. Similar concerns were also communicated with the Brigadier by 3 Commando Brigade staff members. The Brigadier informed the Commanding Officer of

45 Commando that he believed things were generally going well and that he would be closely monitoring the situation in Nad-e Ali North (MoD, 2014, pp. 2-3).

Sgt Blackman was convicted of murder in 2013 based on video captured by the helmet camera of another soldier. The video footage revealed a pre-shooting discussion about refusing to administer first aid, breaking the Geneva Convention, and pressuring other soldiers to concoct false circumstances to cover up the shooting. In 2017, the Court Martial Appeals Court (CMAC) lowered the conviction of Sgt Blackman to manslaughter on appeal. The appeal judge stated that Sgt Blackman's struggle to change from a worldview that forced him to kill an enemy to one that recognised the need to offer first aid to an enemy to save his life influenced his treatment of the insurgent (CMAC, 2017, pp. 1-17).

### **3.3.5 Operation Slipper: Afghanistan (*Brereton Report 2020*)**

In November 2020, Australia published the Inspector General Australian Defence Force (ADF) Afghanistan Inquiry report (ADF, 2020) Major General the Honourable Paul Brereton, an experienced and senior Army Infantry Officer and Judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, presided over the investigation. Major General Brereton was tasked with examining claims that the Australian Special Air Service (SAS) committed war crimes in Afghanistan. The report found credible evidence that Australian soldiers killed 39 Afghan civilians. In addition, other institutional failures were mentioned. The report indicated that there was "bleeding," (p. 29) in which patrol commanders instructed junior special forces members to execute detainees. There were "throwdowns," (p. 29) where weapons or radios were placed on bodies to justify a killing. The investigation claimed that there was a culture of secrecy and concealment. The report's most disturbing

conclusion was that the Australian SAS allegedly murdered 39 Afghans on 23 separate instances (p. 209). The report omits many specifics regarding the claimed incidents, although it is known that none of the alleged killings occurred during the heat of battle. The vast majority allegedly occurred while the Afghan victims were held or under the custody of Australian soldiers, and none of the claimed victims were combatants (p. 422).

General Brereton claimed in 2020 that, if accepted by a jury, the facts of each case would constitute murder as a war crime. In every case, the investigation determines that it "was or should have been evident that the victim was a civilian" (ADF, 2020, p. 470). The chief of the Australian Defence Force, Angus Campbell, stated that in each case, the perpetrator's intent cannot be disputed; none were alleged to have occurred in circumstances where the perpetrator's intent was unclear, confused, or mistaken; and every person interviewed by the inquiry demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the law of armed conflict and Australian law, making their conduct arguably the most heinous in Australian military history (Campbell, 2020). Brereton's report also detailed how operational summaries and other reports routinely embellished the facts of engagements, even when they were lawful and innocent, in order to proactively demonstrate apparent compliance with engagement rules and to avoid attracting the attention of higher headquarters (p. 39). According to Major General Brereton, the SAS considered themselves as above reproach; they viewed themselves as exceptional, entitled, and impervious to outside criticism. They were exempt from the generally applicable rules (p. 512).

The 2020 report also included images collected in August 2007 of an SAS vehicle operating with a swastika- flag flying from the vehicle's antenna. The Australian Ministry of Defence confirmed the validity of the pictures and emphasised their opposition to everything the flag represents (Campbell, 2020). Brereton concluded that younger soldiers

viewed patrol commanders as "demi-gods." It was believed that disregarding their directives could end their careers. The report makes it abundantly clear that Afghan people and local human rights organisations raised concerns about Australian behaviour, in particular however, they were apparently overlooked. According to the report, the charges were disregarded as propaganda from the Taliban or attempts to obtain reparations. In addition, there was a perception that the "collective sacrifice" of the SAS justified their extraordinary deviations from the norm (ADF, 2020, p. 495). David Wetham, assistant inspector general of the Australian Defence Force, stated, "It seems apparent that there were warning signs, but nothing was done about them" (Wetham, 2020).

According to Major General Brereton, the oversight procedures intended to detect and eradicate such behaviour failed, in part because commanders placed excessive trust in their subordinates. In addition, the report revealed that early complaint assessors considered their function as gathering evidence to refute a complaint, rather than performing a thorough and impartial investigation of the incident. Brereton's report determined that inquiry officers lacked the requisite level of professional curiosity and investigative skills to analyse allegations effectively (ADF, 2020, pp. 32-38). Following the release of the report, the Chief of the Australian Defence Force, General Angus Campbell (2020), stated: "It is my obligation and the responsibility of my colleagues' to right the injustice". I sincerely and unequivocally apologise on behalf of the Australian Defence Force to the Afghan people for any wrongdoing by Australian servicemen (Campbell, 2020).

### **3.3.6 The Deepcut Review 1995-2002: (*The Blake Report 2006*)**

It would be inaccurate to suggest that only military situations are capable of creating moral detachment and unethical behaviour. In 2006, Nicolas Blake QC delivered the Deepcut

Review to the House of Commons (Blake, 2006) which investigated the circumstances behind the deaths of four soldiers at Deepcut's Princess Royal Barracks between 1995 and 2002. While the report concluded that the Army was not culpable for any of the deaths, there were institutional failures to identify and address potential sources of risk, as determined by the inquiry's findings. Blake noted that as his inquiry obtained more information it became evident that these errors intensified while the risk factors remained undetected and, therefore, unchallenged (pp. 379-402). While Blake's report avoids attributing deaths to bullying or culture, Surrey Police's report reveals that, between 1995 and 2002, a number of trainees at Deepcut experienced or claimed to have experienced harassment, discrimination, sexual assault, and oppressive behaviour from NCOs and other trainees. In addition, the police investigation indicated that there was grounds to suspect that a number of people tasked with instructing and supervising trainees at Deepcut did not have the appropriate personal skills or training to perform their role effectively (p. 385).

According to Blake's report (2006), the procedure for selecting and vetting instructors and other permanent staff members for training roles, assessing their progress, and reporting concerns about their ability to perform such challenging work needs reform and improvement. Blake notes that the activities described in his report illustrate the varied branches of the Army's incapacity to unite and promote the values they share. Blake asserts that the Army must take an active part in the selection and training of its officers and non-commissioned officers and ensure that individuals responsible for their application understand the standards it establishes. Blake's report made recommendations that the Army must improve how it assesses what qualities make an instructor suitable or unsuitable, how they select instructors accordingly, and how Commanding Officers must provide honest feedback on the performance of those selected. Blake also notes that to

establish a culture of collective accountability and prevent future abuse, staff who fail to document or report any abuse they observe or are aware of should face disciplinary action (p. 271).

Blake's abridged statement describes how those in positions of authority in Deepcut failed to tackle abuses of authority and breaches of integrity to the point where they became normalised (Blake, 2006, p. 398). While the term "character" is not mentioned in the report, Blake makes repeated comparisons to the behaviour of the six soldiers in leadership positions that were not isolated incidents. The examination emphasises the six's extensive history of discipline and behaviour violations prior to and during their time as Deepcut instructors. Blake indicates that the conduct of the six soldiers and the failure of top leaders to address it contributed to an environment in which an escalating cycle of conduct between leaders and trainees was permitted to continue unchecked. Blake outlines how the actions of those in positions of authority may have led to trainees repeating the same behaviours (p. 121). The most egregious case was an SNCO with several allegations and convictions for sexual offences against young men was deployed to an environment in which he was given the unchallenged opportunity to conduct new offences, which he did. Regrettably for all parties engaged and affected by the case, Blake noted that it was evident that the SNCO's indecent activity was not an isolated, out-of-character episode (Blake, 2006, p. 224).

## **Chapter Four: Ethical and Character Development in the Military**

### **4.1 Ethics and the Military**

The unique role of the British Army and the regulations, governance, infrastructure, and equipment required to maintain an institution capable of implementing the United Kingdom's defence strategy produce a social structure that is partially isolated from the larger society they represent. Army Doctrine Publication Volume Ten (ADP10), released in 2017, discusses how the British Army's people are its distinguishing quality, as ground warfare is a human activity involving individuals and groups of people. Each of these group's views and interacts with its surroundings in a distinct manner. The vast majority of land forces are organised formations that can perform a variety of military and non-military duties with relative ease. Even when optimised for combat, ADP10 asserts that ground forces can be repurposed to assist stability and non-conflict missions such as humanitarian aid and disaster relief. Consequently, the British Army is a complicated organisation requiring moral and structural cohesion as well as strong command structures. Complex expeditionary operations can be difficult to command; hence, decentralised command systems are deployed regularly when necessary (pp. 1-6).

Considering Walker, de-Fries, Sauv , Aristotle, Moore, Beadle, and ADP 10 Land Operations (ADP10, 2017; Beadle, 2013; Beadle & Moore, 2006; de-Vries, 2013; Moore, 2002; Sauv , 2021; Walker, 2018), it is reasonable to suggest that the military is structured in such a way that it produces not only the institution and practice concept as defined by MacIntyre in *After Virtue* (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 181-204) but also the platform for

habituation as described by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* (II.I, 1093b). Institutional failures within the academic, clerical, and sporting systems revealed an institution's destructive power if absent from moral constraints. The subsequent literature reveals that the military as an institution has been and will continue to be vulnerable to ethical failures comparable to those that went undetected in the aforementioned organisations.

Walker (2018) notes that finding a balance between institutional or bureaucratic interests and professional ones is a challenge faced by many professions, but it is particularly difficult for the military because of its unique position and the specific limits placed on military personnel (pp. 1-2). Similarly, to ADP10, Walker contends the military is unique among occupations due to the permitted use of lethal techniques and the requirement that soldiers be willing to die while doing their duties. Moreover, the specific conditions of the military profession are highlighted by the supremacy of mission and group interests over individual ones, to the extent that institutional imperatives may frequently take precedence. In these conditions, Walker asserts that establishing an acceptable professional military character is a demanding task, complicated by the fact that members of the profession face some of the most challenging circumstances imaginable (pp. 1-3).

ADP Volume 5 states that serving in the British Army entails a reciprocal commitment to self-sacrifice, equitable training, and assistance in the public interest, referred to as the Military Covenant (ADP5, 2000). The Military Covenant specifies that in order to serve their country, soldiers will be compelled to make personal sacrifices, including the ultimate sacrifice. By prioritising the requirements of the nation and the Army over their own, soldiers forfeit a portion of the liberties enjoyed by citizens outside the military. The covenant stipulates that in exchange, soldiers shall always expect to be treated equally, to be valued and respected as individuals, and to be supported and rewarded through



equivalent terms and conditions of service. Similarly, due to the unique nature of military operations, the Army is unlike any other organisation and must have the appropriate national support. This reciprocal commitment culminates in the establishment of the Military Covenant between the nation, the Army, and each individual soldier; an unbreakable bond of identity, devotion, and duty that has sustained the Army and its soldiers throughout its history (ADP5, 2000, pp. 1-3).

With the role, structure, and unique activities of the British Army, it is reasonable to assert that there are similarities with how MacIntyre describes an institution. Consequently, we must return to MacIntyre (1999c), who, while generally arguing that social structures pose a threat to moral agency, also asserts that moral agency is not threatened by all social structures (pp. 321-327). MacIntyre (1999b) offers a nuanced analysis of the United States Marine Corps as an illustration of a social institution that promotes moral character development and safeguards their practice. MacIntyre describes how basic Marine Corps training instils in recruits of all backgrounds a culture of interdependence and responsibility that transcends self-interest. MacIntyre believes that by their very nature, Marines are accountable for the lives of others in addition to their own, and that the mission and requirements of the Marine Corps take precedence over their personal self-interest (pp. 111-129).

MacIntyre (1999b) argues that while the Marine Corps is capable of developing moral character, it lacks an emphasis on life outside the Marine Corps and, consequently, the narrative cohesion of a person with responsibilities other than those of a Marine Corps soldier. MacIntyre draws attention to a potential flaw in the Marine Corps' approach to character formation by highlighting the fact that it restricts moral inquiry to the Marine Corps' social framework (pp. 111-127). In 2015, he reiterates this point by arguing that the

military is a specialised organisation with a restricted narrative (MacIntyre, 2015, pp. 3-13). MacIntyre offers a concept of an institution that transcends the military's constrained discourse and embraces the narrative cohesiveness of an individual's life. In MacIntyre's (1999b) words:

An adequate moral education, then will have some of the features of Marine training, but it will unite these with education into a capacity for reflection upon goods that provides those engaged in the tasks of redirecting and transforming their desires with an additional resource. What kind of practice might provide this? Like Marine training, it will have to teach individuals to excel without making them value winning over others rather than excelling. It will have to do this while inculcating a strong sense of dependence on others, of having had to put your life into the hands of others, thus warranting in others an expectation that they'll be able to depend on you. And yet, unlike Marine training, it will not merely leave one open to reflect on how goods should be ordered, and upon whether they are ordered rightly within this kind of training, but will provide a stimulus for such reflection and, if possible, make such reflection inescapable (pp. 128-129).

Although MacIntyre offers a narrative on what ethics in the military could look like, Lucas (2015) contends that military ethics are commonly neglected when educating soldiers for military service. Lucas argues that military ethics is either empty exhortations by the profession's leaders in favour of "individual integrity," delivered within bureaucratic organisational settings where routine procedures, regulatory regimes, and prevalent reward systems conspire to undermine any attempts by willing practitioners to follow those exhortations; or reflections on declaring and waging war conducted by scholars, academics, and policymakers. Lucas argues that these perspectives produce at best a skewed and very abstract image of military organisations and their members (pp. xvi-xxiii). MacIntyre (2015) concisely explains why military ethics a difficult field is to change by stating:

the least likely context for us to learn what we most need to learn is through our interactions solely within such a restricted and narrowly specialized community of discourse. We may instead hope that, at some time in the future, reflection from an

academic distance on what has been learned in and from engagement in the practices of the armed conflicts of the recent past and the immediate future will once again become profitable. But the present crisis in military ethics is such that that time is still not quite at hand (p. 13).

## 4.2 New Wars

In a Mail Online piece citing an interview with General Dannatt, Sands (2006) stated that the British Army has been dealing with the moral compass metaphor for over a decade. During his encounter with General Dannatt, according to Sands, he expressed concern that the army could not support a set of beliefs that were not held by the rest of society. As an army entrusted with the use of lethal force, General Dannatt emphasised the need of the British Army upholding high moral and spiritual standards (Sands, 2006). On the other hand, Lucas says that Alasdair MacIntyre is a significant authority in this topic due to his moral ethics of the virtues inherent in particular forms of behaviour (Lucas, 2015, pp. xiv-xvi). General Dannatt's position is echoed by MacIntyre (2015), who argues that the social context in which a specific form of moral existence has existed may occasionally undergo significant change, regardless of how well-established or well-functioning that form of moral existence may be (MacIntyre, 2015, pp. 4-8).

New challenges arise, new issues are posed, and agents may be obliged to accept the need for new, difficult-to-provide resources. In addition, MacIntyre (2015) contends that the military is experiencing a severe crisis due to the disappearance of the problems and categories underlying conventional combat. MacIntyre asks if moral terminology is still applicable in the postmodern era of irregular warfare, since all conventional methods have been modified or abandoned (pp. 3-14). MacIntyre questions whether traditional concepts of military virtues such as courage and prudence continue to serve as helpful guidelines or goals in the setting of unconventional conflicts conducted against a drastically altered

historical and cultural backdrop. According to MacIntyre, as a result of the tremendous changes that have occurred, there is no longer an accurate conception of what war is, calling into doubt many long-held assumptions. MacIntyre argues that when soldiers exhibit bravery and knowledge, it is always within the context of a particular vision of war. It was understood that wars are waged between states with the active participation of their subjects or people, and that the primary purpose of ethics and law is to develop and enforce regulations governing the conduct of war. MacIntyre argues that when General Petraeus arrived on the scene and asked Colonel MacFarland if he had read the counterinsurgency manual, and the answer was "No," he was not implying that rules have no place in the exercise of political prudence, but rather that knowing which rules to apply and how to apply them is an exercise of political prudence and not rule-following (pp. 3-17).

MacIntyre (2015) proposes a particular set of virtues and rules always presupposes a specific historical and social context, a background agreement in ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that is usually taken for granted. Furthermore, he states that people become painfully aware of the need to reconsider some of the ways in which they have previously interpreted and used their evaluative and normative conceptions when this context is altered. MacIntyre argues that his historical, sociological, and theological statements require further elaboration, since they supply some of the grounds for his conclusion that it is now important to reevaluate our ideas of virtues and norms as they are applied in combat settings. The link between the exercise of prudence, particularly political prudence, and that of the other virtues, according to MacIntyre, is an issue that requires special consideration (pp. 11-12).

### 4.3 Moral Character in the Military

According to Wright and Goodstein, character definition has been a cause of disquiet for multiple generations of social science and organisational professionals (Wright & Goodstein, 2016, p. 929). Robinson (2007) argues that the British Army does not attempt to define individual character but rather takes a collective approach, with the Army's overall character serving as the guiding principle of action (p. 25) conforming to the guidelines contained in British Army doctrine publications (ADP10, 2017; ALD, 2016b, 2016c, 2021a; JDP5, 2015). Lucas (2015) notes that British soldiers no longer come from societies with generally shared foundations and perspectives based on traditional, typically Christian values and ideals. Traditional ethics have the reputation of being rigid and authoritarian. The contemporary morality plays a higher focus on individual rights than on societal responsibilities, according to Lucas. In terms of consideration for the rights of others, duty and obligation are somewhat less evident. The benefits that individuals anticipate in exchange for their labour are dominated by material compensation. The increasing importance of the individual in society and the corresponding emphasis on rights rather than accountability have significant implications for the military. The legitimacy of established institutions and ideas is questioned. Therefore, even individuals who voluntarily serve as soldiers may not share the same values and standards (pp. xvi-xxiii). According to the Military Covenant (2000), the Army is responsible for creating and articulating its ethical principles, modifying them in response to broader change, and instilling and sustaining them in its soldiers (ADP5, 2000, pp. 1-3).

The British Army published Land Operations in 2017 (ADP10, 2017) containing a Lord Moran passage emphasising the soldier's character. Lord Moran asserts that war has moral underpinnings, that selection is a process of character development, and that war itself is

but another test, the ultimate and final test of character. Lord Moran argues that bravery can only be evaluated independently of risk if we comprehend the social significance and meaning of courage, specifically that a person of character in peace cannot be self-centred in peace and selfless in war. As Aristotle taught, character is a habit, the daily choice between right and wrong; it is a moral quality that develops in peace and does not suddenly emerge with the outbreak of war. According to Lord Moran, war is incapable of transforming; it can only amplify the good and terrible elements within individuals to the point where they are evident to everybody. War cannot convert; it can only expose (p. 18).

Beard (2014) notes that using Sherman's concept from *The Untold War*, it also emphasises the difficult moral and psychological landscape of the modern soldier (p. 276). Sherman (2010) contends that soldiers go to war to confront external threats, but the vast majority also face internal struggles. The soldier of today is more than just a combatant; he or she is also a peacekeeper, diplomat, leader, sibling, and friend. When faced with such hurdles, officials in charge of army education have attempted to add a character-based training programme designed to cultivate values that will assist soldiers in fulfilling the numerous responsibilities expected of them, according to Sherman (pp. 10-59). In contrast, Carrick (2008) argues that soldiers' roles should be viewed in isolation from the rest of society and hence supports 'ring-fencing' soldiering inside the notion of professional role morality. Carrick argues that if educators incorporate virtue ethics, care ethics, and similar concepts into the pedagogical equation, they risk removing the soldier from his role and placing him in situations where he lacks a reliable moral compass to guide him; he may find himself dealing with people "simply" on the basis of common humanity, fellow feelings, and universal morality (pp. 187-198).

According to Carrick (2008), the moral severity of soldiering, which involves killing, demands substantial psychological protection for soldiers who are ordered to kill. Carrick argues further that in order to avoid a dangerous type of slippage, one must separate a soldier's activities from the rest of his or her moral existence by referring to the soldier's occupation; that is, by adopting a form of role morality (pp. 187-198). Sherman (2010) argues that if soldiers are encouraged to view soldiering as completely distinct from other spheres of life, there will inevitably be seepage where aspects of their soldiering become habitual or haunt them in the form of guilt, in part due to the stark moral divide between civilian and soldier life (pp. 157-180).

#### **4.4 Soldiers of Character Study: British Army**

In 2018, a research project studied the personality of British Army officers in an effort to obtain new insight into the challenges junior officers face in today's complex security environment. The study evaluated the moral framework produced by the basic values of the British Army and their effect on the behaviour of young leaders presented with difficult situations. The outcomes of the survey suggested that junior officers in general exhibited the British Army's stated values and standards, such as integrity, discipline, courage, selflessness commitment, loyalty, and respect for others. Participants performed "better" when faced with dilemmas that did not involve aggression toward prisoners or concealment of soldiers' failings under duress from higher command, compared to dilemmas that required participants to balance compassion for others with mission objectives and the proper application of the Army fraternisation policy. However, low-scoring action choices resulted from indecisiveness, excessively risky behaviour, and an emphasis on completing the task at any cost. In addition, these were decisions that failed to "go the extra mile" for another person, disregarded means in favour of an end, deployed

excessive force, were occasionally unintelligent, concealed the truth, or put soldiers ahead of the truth, and failed to act when action was essential (Arthur et al., 2018, pp. 18-28).

Similarly, low-scoring logic choices were indicative of an overemphasis on rules and/or authority, indifference, risk aversion, or acceptance of inadequate means to achieve desired goals. Collective cover-up, an overemphasis on being discovered, an excess of loyalty to soldiers, an overemphasis on career advancement, self-preservation, following others, putting soldiers before the truth, providing selective accounts of what transpired, prioritising other factors such as mission accomplishment over risk to life, and failing to show the enemy appropriate respect also influenced these decisions. The scores were lower for ethical problems, such as balancing compassion and mission and balancing personal relationships with military expectations and responsibilities (Arthur et al., 2018, pp. 18-28).

#### **4.5 Dishonesty in the Army Profession Study: US Army**

Similar to the British project, a 2015 US Army study revealed the prevalence of low-scoring categories. For the sake of their careers, officers are willing to sacrifice their ethical standards, according to the conclusions of research conducted in the United States. According to Bandura (2002), the first time Army officers sign a document verifying an erroneous counselling session or tick a box declaring "I have read the following guidelines" after skimming the 1,800-word permitted usage guideline, they may feel an ethical twinge. Bandura continues by stating that officers become ethically numb as a result of repeated exposure to rising expectations and the related need to put their honour at risk. Eventually, Bandura contends their signatures and words become navigational aids for the Army system, rather than emblems of integrity and honesty (pp. 101-119).



This desensitisation, according to Wong (2015), dilutes an officer's word and allows what should be an ethical decision to become just another way the Army conducts business. To further complicate matters, technological improvements, the changing nature of military operations and the cumulative effects of time, have presented modern Army officers with a substantially greater burden of responsibility than their ancestors did (p. 19). According to Ariely (2012), the psychological distance between a person and the point of dishonesty or deception also influences ethical fading. When there are more stages between an officer and dishonest behaviour, it becomes easier to lie, cheat, and steal. The greater the distance, the higher the probability of ethical deterioration (p. 59).

The results of both research indicate that when senior commanders employ pressure to exceed expectations, the likelihood of unethical behaviour to comply with potentially unreasonable requests may increase. While both studies offer in-depth evaluations of officer conduct, they share a common theme of dishonesty motivated by careerism. Officer career patterns minimise the amount of time spent in direct combat. Even when officers return to their command posts, many NCO command levels distance them from their soldiers (ADP10, 2010). This causes an officer to move away from the human interface of operations while simultaneously acquiring more power and responsibility for the space they are no longer in during the course of their career. Justifying a reasonable level of dishonesty provides support for less noble lying as well. According to Wong and Gerras (2015), the majority of officers are vividly aware that peer pressure effects their ethical decisions, which may be unsettling to acknowledge. According to one officer, you are a poor leader and have failed if you were unable to get everyone through the hour-long course on human trafficking, despite the fact that doing so was nearly impossible. The young officer remarked that truthful reporting makes you the only company commander in

the United States Army who did not complete their mission and leaves you open to the perception that you did not perform your duties adequately (p. 26).

If you plan to continue in the Army for an extended amount of time, according to a second honest officer who indicated that officers are various types of vultures, you must learn to appease the person in charge (Wong & Gerras, 2015, p. 27). Self-belief that the majority of dishonesty in the military is motivated by altruism helps to obscure the negative consequences of lying, cheating, or stealing for personal benefit. The US Army study reveals that, despite having established ethical frameworks inside their doctrine, MacIntyre's (2015) assertion that people do not become virtuous by attending lectures on ethics or, even worse, by attending ethics conferences remains relevant. The virtues of courage, temperance, and justice cannot exist without the kind of practical wisdom that Aristotle referred to as *phronesis*, according to MacIntyre, who contends that moral agency involves training in relevant habits of thought and behaviour in everyday life (p. 4). In addition, MacIntyre (2016) cautions that conformists who structure their activities around the pursuit of a successful career may never have a reason to consider whether their goals are compatible with those of a rational agent, and therefore misunderstand both what it means to be a rational agent and how their acceptance of a dominant social order prevents them from becoming moral agents (pp. 211-212).

#### **4.6 Ethics in the US Military**

According to Brinsfield (1998), the Vietnam War marked a turning point in the United States Army's development of military ethics doctrine and training. Rottman (2006) argues that the lack of ethical training during the war was problematic because the emphasis on small-scale operations inside local communities was greater than in previous wars. This

lack of ethical training was not the only factor that negatively affected the conduct of American soldiers (pp. 44-56). In 1970, Lieutenant General Peers of the United States Army conducted an official investigation into events that occurred between March 16-19, 1968, in My Lai, a sub-division of Son My Village, Quang Ngai Province, Republic of Vietnam. The Peers Inquiry determined that Task Force Barker personnel massacred a large number of Vietnamese in the village of Son My between 16-19 March 1968. The report also showed the extent to which senior staff officers and the commanders of Task Force Barker and 11th Brigade were aware of the incident. In addition, according to General Peers, efforts by the senior command of the American Division to conceal information regarding the probable deaths of 508 civilians led to the concealment of a war crime of far greater proportions. According to the investigation, when the commander of the 11th Brigade learned that a probable war crime had been committed, he took steps to conceal the information from the right authorities and deceive his superior about the situation. Detailed findings revealed that the American Division's investigation into the incident was shallow, dishonest, and not subject to a rigorous examination. The Peers investigation found that efforts were taken at all levels of command, from company to division, to conceal and suppress information on the Son My event (Peers, 1970, pp. 2.0-2.12).

The Peers Inquiry (1970) demonstrated how a powerful force with insufficient moral standards can cause considerable harm. Austin and Brunch (2000) argued that the United States military disproportionately assaulted its enemy, causing severe suffering to civilians and local property, as well as utilising weapons that caused long-term environmental harm (Austin & Brunch, 2000). Nelson (2008) argues American soldiers were accused of committing war crimes, including intentional civilian mistreatment (Nelson, 2008). Glover

(2001) Discusses the brutality of My Lai and explains the degradation of moral resources, emphasising that moral restrictions had been undermined by initially seemingly minor increments. According to Glover, there had been a gradual ethical drift in which the perceived irregularity of the soldiers' lived experience gave birth to the assumption that standard moral reference points no longer applied. Glover believes that in harsh situations, many regular reference points can begin to disappear or become obsolete for some individuals (p. 60).

Wattendorf (1986), contends the Vietnam War contributed to the initiation of a comprehensive examination of the US military's core beliefs, the US Army's ethical doctrine, and ethical development programmes (Wattendorf, 1986). According to Rogers (2006), when it comes to ethical doctrine and training programmes, the US Army is among the most self-aware and has been unusually forthright in admitting its failings and attempting to correct them (pp. 1-16). According to Hude (2008), ethics education in the U.S. military is vital in part because of the extensive training support they provide to a variety of international armed forces seeking modernization. In addition, the United States gives examples of army ethical standards that promote the development of these nations (pp. 35-77). Schulzke (2012) claims that the military ethics of the United States are somewhat centred on virtue ethics and code-based moral reasoning to govern the activities of its soldiers. The morality of the United States military is built on personal development and virtue education programmes (pp. 76-111).

#### **4.7 US Army Enlisted Ranks Ethical Training**

Schulzke (2012) asserts that prior to the Vietnam War, the only ethical instruction given to commanders was the West Point Duty, Honour, and Country booklet, which provided no

insight into wartime ethics (pp. 76-111). According to Robinson (2007a), embracing the military's traditions and principles was the ethical way to shape the character of an enlisted soldier. Robinson argues that historically, the subject has been treated as though by osmosis, with military institutions gradually altering the personality of its soldiers. Without official ethics training, the historical traditions, environment, and peer pressure of the institutions would shape the soldier's character into the desired form (pp. 26-30)

Historically, according to Yates, the US military has prioritised war (Yates, 2006) however in the 1990s, according to Scott (2009), the focus shifted to counterinsurgency and peacekeeping missions. From 1990 through 2003, according to Scott, the United States military conducted 106 overseas operations, of which 101 were evacuations, peacekeeping or humanitarian efforts, counterinsurgency positioning, or public demonstrations of force. In each of the five combat actions, quasi-military groups were eliminated (pp. 460-476). Schulzke (2012) indicates that the Army's moral doctrine and training evolved gradually in response to these responsibilities over this time frame (pp. 76-111).

In 1999, the United States Army changed its values to reflect the prior decade's events. In 2019, Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honour, Integrity, and Personal Courage were still in use (AFM, 2015, pp. 6-3). One of the most notable characteristics of these values, according to Schulzke (2012), is that they are defined in terms of individual choices and actions - a clear indication of virtue ethics' influence. In addition, the Army Field Manual emphasises that their primary objective is not to ensure that soldiers behave properly, but rather to ensure that they do the right thing for the right reason, with the right convictions and character (p. 76-111). Schulzke observes that this is specified in the manual:

Leaders employ character when all decisions, big or small, are analysed for ethical consequences. One must have the knowledge of how to address the consequences. This knowledge comes from the Army Ethic, personal experience, and others' guidance. Internalizing the moral principles of the Army Ethic as personal beliefs is essential for character development. An individual demonstrates character when they correctly identify the ethical implications of a decision, possesses knowledge to act, and acts accordingly (AFM, 2015, pp. 5-4).

According to the Field Manual, leaders assist the development of character in others by expressing clear ethical standards, showing appropriate behaviour, and upholding discipline in order to uphold the Army Ethic and exemplify Army Values. This has a profound impact on character formation since it embodies the essence of what it means to be an ethical leader. Character development guided by the Army Values rests on a foundation of discipline. To foster character in others, leaders must constantly demonstrate the Army Values. Leaders must transmit the expectation that others will demonstrate Army Values as well (AFM, 2015, pp. 5-5).

Schulzke (2012) argues that these issues are essential because they demonstrate that the Military's ethics education objective extends beyond teaching soldiers to execute instructions and avoid power abuse. It is obvious from the Army's training programmes that its purpose is character building (p. 76-111). According to Cohen (2007), since 2007, all US soldiers are required to complete initial ethics training within six months of basic training. This instruction covers broad military ethics as well as internal and external norms that soldiers must abide by. In addition, active-duty soldiers must complete additional ethics training within three months before entering a combat zone. Cohen adds that formal classroom teaching in military ethics for operations focuses on Army Values, with each value receiving an hour-long presentation. Occasionally, soldiers receive additional ethical instruction during deployments to reinforce previous training or in

response to emerging difficulties in their area of operations. Training materials for U.S. military ethics sometimes include a discussion of the guiding principles as well as illustrations of their application in actual situations (Cohen, 2007).

#### **4.8 Ethics and the British Army**

ADP10 Operations (2010) describes the integrity of purpose of the British Army and how, in a parliamentary democracy such as the United Kingdom, there must be a clear purpose coherence between the state, its armed services, and their missions. Due to the armed forces' legal monopoly on the use of collective lethal force, its application must be in line with the state's objectives. From the highest levels of national policy to the lowest levels of tactical engagements, the use of force must serve national objectives. Armed forces arise when nothing else can represent national interests. This imposes a fundamental commitment on soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines to act on behalf of the nation with unlimited liability, and a corresponding obligation on the nation to provide them with the aims, methods, and instruments necessary to fulfil this obligation. ADP10 also describes how the moral component of Fighting Power focuses on the aspect of conflict that is least predictable: the human dimension. The human aspect determines the outcome of battles, according to the narrative in ADP10. Nothing is impossible if time and effort are invested in the human element, but no amount of resources can compensate for its neglect. Three vital resources form the moral component: ethical foundations, moral coherence, and motivation. It allows the Army to inspire its soldiers to operate and engage in warfare (pp. 0106-0219).

The British Army asserts that armies learn in three ways: through direct participation in operations, through simulation-based training, and through professional study (ADP, 2011,

p. i). The narrative in the Army Doctrine Primer (ADP, 2011) demonstrates a growing dependence on operational experience:

In the past we have made the mistake of not writing down our experiences; you will search in vain for valuable insights from operations in Northern Ireland, for example'. As training opportunities become rarer, we must make the most of them and turn-up ready to apply our prior learning. Indeed, learning is key to transforming our Army (pp. i-ii).

The narrative inside the Doctrine Primer continues to argue that the British Army is proud to be a profession that, by definition, has a body of knowledge that it studies, develops via contact with, and modifies through application; "doctrine is our military body of knowledge" (ADP, 2011, pp. i-ii). However, the Doctrine Primer goes so far as to claim that the very mention of the word doctrine causes toxic shock in some individuals and that failure to study it is a badge of honour for some senior commanders. According to Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, "The British write some of the best doctrine in the world; it's a good thing their commanders don't read it" (p. 9). US Army General Petraeus recently praised the British Army Field Manual Volume 1 Part 10, Countering Insurgency (AFM10, 2009), describing it as a "superb product." General Petraeus says that certain doctrine has in the past been written in nonsense, thereby alienating its intended audience, namely officers and soldiers who must continually adapt, outsmart and outfight the opponent. AFM10 outlines how the British Army is committed to employing all available means to make doctrine accessible and practical (pp. i-ii).

Deakin (2008) states that training and ethical awareness in the United States Army present the question of why education cannot guarantee ethical behaviour. The British Army raises the paradoxical question of how an army with insufficient moral teaching and a fundamentally flawed ideology can be so effective (pp. 110-128). According to the British



Army Land Operations publication states their fighting strength is comprised of three components: mental, physical, and moral (ADP10, 2017, pp. 3-1). The first section consists of policies governing all levels of force, educational materials, and conflict sensitivity. The second section comprises the moral component, which comprises motivation, cohesion, and ethical foundations. ADP10 describes moral conflict as the "least predictable aspect of armed conflict" (pp. 3-9).

Schultzke (2012) claims that despite being included in ADP 10, the British Army's ethics continue to be notably anti-intellectual. Instead of depending on a theoretical definition of ethics, the British Army bases its ethics on organisational identity and shared values. In addition, Schultzke notes that the British Army defines moral standards as the capacity to behave in accordance with a consensus of what is right (ADP10, 2017, pp. 3.1-3.16).

Schultzke corroborates this by asserting that organisational morality is drawn from what is commonly recognised as right and wrong, thereby generating a professional code of conduct based on a political sensibility that supports the view that ethics are usually unwritten (pp. 111-134).

#### **4.9 The Values and Standards Approach**

Since 2000, the British Army's Values and Standards approach has emphasised the following six key values: Courage, Discipline, Respect for Others, Integrity, Loyalty, and Selfless Commitment (ADP, 2000). According to McCormack (2016), the most concise formal definitions of the British Army's ethics may be found in the British Army's Values and Standards handbook (pp. 5-9). The Values and Standards handbook demonstrates that the British Army's reputation is extremely high, and that its tradition of excellence and the public support it generates are largely dependent on the operational effectiveness of the

Army, which is the result of the professionalism, individual conduct, and self-discipline of the British soldier during and outside of operations. The handbook emphasises that these characteristics cannot be taken for granted and can only be attained if they are supported by a solid and easily comprehensible Values and Standards framework. All commanders, from the most senior to the most junior, must demonstrate decisive leadership. Respect for others, one of the manual's core values, is defined as follows:

Respect for others is a hallmark of the British Army: it comes from the duty to put others first and means that there is no place for prejudice or favouritism. Like loyalty, respect for others goes both up and down the chain of command and sideways among peers. The Army's recruiting motto 'Be the Best' can only have meaning if all members of it have equality of treatment and opportunity. Respect for others also extends to the treatment of all human beings, especially the victims of conflict, the dead, the wounded, prisoners and civilians, particularly those we have deployed to help (ADP, 2000, p. 7).

The Values and Standards booklet (2000) continues by stating that the Army requires a greater level of dedication and self-sacrifice from officers and soldiers than is normally required of other citizens. According to the booklet, all leaders and soldiers of the British Army are required to commit to achieving and preserving these values and standards which is presented as an essential commitment to Army culture and contributes directly to the maintenance of operational performance. All commanders are tasked with ensuring that these values and standards are accorded the utmost significance, effectively communicated to their personnel, and consistently applied (pp. 1-7). According to Mileham (1996), the Values and Standards booklet examines soldiers' commitments in depth, but does so without drawing on external sources of moral philosophy or revealing the doctrine's theoretical foundation (pp. 4-36).

Robinson (2007) argues that the handbook appeals to the soldiers' sense of tradition, emphasising the need of honouring the British Army's history as a justification for appropriate behaviour. By doing so, according to Robinson, the booklet reaffirms the British Army's traditional identity. It refers to entering the British Army as a form of exchange. According to Robinson the institutions' pure intensity, via their traditions and practices, surroundings, and peer pressure, would transform the soldier's character into the desired form. Robinson also asserts that the handbook is a conflicting blend of virtue ethics and utilitarianism, asking soldiers to employ a utilitarian service test. Army General Instruction 67 (AGAI 67) which covers soldier discipline clearly states, "have an individual's actions or behaviour had a detrimental effect on, or are they likely to have a detrimental effect on, the Service's efficiency or operational effectiveness?" (MoD, 2019, p. 67). Robinson states, "Consultation with a moral philosopher could have averted this inconsistency" (Robinson, 2007, pp. 23-36).

Robinson (2007a) also argues in this instance, the utilitarian service test clashes with the comprehensive morality of values-based virtue ethics because human behaviour is rarely simple and linear. In certain circumstances, values will vie for primacy or will even struggle against one another on their own axis. Loyalty to a comrade may conflict with unit loyalty to the organisation, courage can deteriorate into recklessness or cowardice (pp. 23-36). McCormack (2016) argues that conflicts between personal and collective morality are possible and that the British Army does not fully base its values and standards on an "ethical good" or adequately explicate the "ethical principles" from which those values can be formed, justified, or defended. McCormack draws attention to the introduction from the Chief of the General Staff, which reads:

Values and Standards are vital to operational effectiveness – they are the lifeblood that sustains the Army. They have to be more than words; we must believe in them and live by them'. 'They reflect, and are consistent,' the booklet contends, 'with the moral virtues and ethical principles that underpin any decent society (ADP, 2000, pp. i-ii).

According to McCormack (2016), this is the only attempt to "root" the values and standards in an external source from which an ethical good can be deduced or inferred. This, McCormack asserts, was and remains a serious conceptual problem. McCormack argues further that the Army's values and standards are ethically and conceptually relative since they are not based on an objective ethical good or ethical foundation (pp. 2-3). On the other hand, according to Schulzke (2012), this gives the impression that the British Army follows virtue ethics, but upon closer inspection, the principles bear only a passing resemblance to Aristotelian virtues. Schulzke notes that the majority are expressed as common ideals, and none provide clear assistance for resolving ethical challenges. Schulzke continues by arguing that values are established in abstract terms without elaborating on what they would entail in practice or how a soldier might apply them. In the definitions, the group is emphasised significantly more than the individual. It underlines that integrity is a group value, not an individual one (pp. 111-137). This, according to McCormack (2016), divides this approach from Aristotle's personal virtues and renders it difficult to categorise as virtue ethics (p. 16). McCormack notes that no attempt is made to define these "ethical criteria". There is a presumption that they exist and are understood by every soldier in the Army, including the relationship between these ethical principles and the Army's ideals; hence, further explanation is unnecessary (pp. 23-27). Hoban (2012) argues that our adversaries may have their own understanding of the values we defend (Hoban, 2012, p. 21).

As an example, McCormack (2015) cites the Schutzstaffel (SS) and its official slogan, "*Meine Ehre heißt Treue*" (My Honour Is Loyalty). Given the tenacity of their fighting spirit throughout the Second World War, McCormack argues that no one could refute their soldiers' loyalty to one another or their objective (pp. 6-9). Rasmussen (1991) emphasises further that the SS had a unified ethic in the death camps, according to which some lives were valued more than others. The SS did not value all human life or believe that every individual possesses inherent worth and dignity. Consequently, few would associate the SS with a group renowned for its moral conduct. In accordance with this concept, loyalty is ethically relative or subjective (p. 119). McCormack (2016) says that an alternative extreme form of this argument may be that the organisation known as Islamic State upholds five of the six key values mentioned in the British Army Values and Standards booklet (2000). McCormack argues that ISIS's interpretations of Islamic law and culture can be connected with a subjective set of values to support his position. McCormack demonstrates how around 800 Islamic State (IS) fighters attacked 30,000 Iraqi soldiers (trained and equipped by the US). In terms of moral fortitude, IS fighters maintained their mission despite being subjected to an air campaign by elements of the world's most advanced air forces. IS militants have organised themselves as a disciplined military force capable of functioning against numerical superiority. The brutal murder of prisoner soldiers and civilians was deliberate and calculated, designed to convey a very specific and violent message to their enemies. This displayed a callous disregard for human life, yet it was a deliberate act. IS fighters have demonstrated unflinching dedication to their mission (p. 28).

Moreover, according to McCormack (2016), the term "integrity" incorporates both the trait of being truthful and having strong moral values, as well as the state of being entire and

undivided. ISIS has been exceptionally upfront and forthright about its stated objective of re-establishing the early Islamic Caliphate. "It seeks to conquer, not merely destroy," in this regard. Islamic State adheres to its religious tenets, despite the fact that it is disagreeable to the great majority of non-IS believers. IS has a well-defined strategic objective toward which its adherents have displayed exceptional honesty. McCormack asserts that respect for others is the only one of the British Army's six core values that IS does not share. IS has displayed contempt and disgust for individuals who do not adhere to their radical beliefs. However, intellectual IS supporters may assert that IS ideals include respect for others, but only if "others" adhere to their ideology (p. 28).

#### **4.10 British Army Ethical Training**

The unphilosophical tone of official publications and the Army's traditionalism are reflected in the informality of its ethical teaching, according to Robinson (2007). Robinson argues further that the British Army provides minimal formal ethics training and does not base its instruction on the major ethical schools. The emphasis of Army training is on educating soldiers how to fight and fulfil the specialised roles assigned to them (pp. 24-29). Schulzke (2012) observes that the absence of philosophical discussion of ethics in training manuals and other official documents demonstrates the Army's anti-intellectual character, and the absence of formal ethics training appears to indicate an Army with limited ethical sensitivity, one that places little value on non-combatant protection or the use of proportionate force. However, Schulzke's research indicates that this is not the case (pp. 111-134).

According to ADP10 (2017), the British military places a high value on restraint, to the extent that its doctrine displays a willingness to forfeit military success or incur additional

casualties in order to minimise risk to non-combatants (pp. 3.1-3.16). Mileham (2008) poses the question of how an army with minimal ethics training and a theoretically undeveloped code of ethics may demonstrate a high level of restraint in its ideology and commit relatively few serious ethical violations in compared to other major military powers (pp. 201-215)

MacIntyre (1999b) contends that rules alone cannot guarantee ethical behaviour since the conditions to which they are applied change faster than the rules themselves, creating the question of when and how to apply rules. MacIntyre argues that while following rules is often crucial for knowing how to behave properly, no rule or set of rules can ever decide how to behave properly. This is due to the fact that rules that must always be followed, such as 'never take an innocent life,' are insufficient for determining how people should behave, whereas with other rules, it must always be determined whether they are applicable in the given situation and, if so, how they are to be applied (pp. 126-131). For MacIntyre, knowing how to behave morally includes more than simply abiding by the rules.

Keegan (2004) argues that the Iraq war afforded the chance to compare the behaviour of American and British soldiers, as well as the extent to which doctrine influences behaviour. Keegan notes that both armies were assigned to regions with diverse problems and adversaries, but their deployment circumstances were similar enough to permit comparisons of the nation's counterinsurgency strategies. Following the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the British Army was willing to forego material and technological advantages in order to earn local trust. Keegan asserts that whereas the United States Army remained dedicated to conventional combat, the British Army adopted unconventional warfare. According to Keegan, the British post-war transition began on April 8, 2003. They

dismounted their armoured vehicles and began socialising with residents in an effort to persuade the Shi'a populace that they would remain. The city centre was cleared of armoured vehicles, leaving soldiers to patrol on foot while being instructed to smile, speak, and act normally (p. 182).

According to Robinson (2007a), the ethical principles of the British Army appear to stem from a feeling of continuity and community. The British Army's strategy for altering a soldier's personality differs from the American Army's. Instead of placing the onus of moral conduct only on the shoulders of the individual, the British Army places a premium on the individual's position within a permanent society (pp. 23-37). This, according to Schulzke (2012), encourages them to behave in a manner that does not affect their character, and group membership dictates values. Each individual is responsible for upholding and protecting the group's beliefs, which do not require personality changes (pp. 248-271).

Torrance (2000) argues that MacIntyre contends morality is a social construction, inextricably linked to the lifestyles that generate it. In addition, Torrance contends that the British Army's military culture has produced a distinct moral community, which is supported by the British Army's emphasis on tradition preservation (p. 11). Given the British army's emphasis on tradition and group identification, Torrance's parallel to MacIntyre is acceptable. However, according to Schulzke (2012), this suggests that the British Army's ethics are based on virtue (pp. 248-271). Robinson (2007a) argues that despite the fact that the British Army frequently serves as a paradigm for how an army with no official emphasis on ethics may be ethical, it has a great deal of room for improvement. Therefore, it can benefit from continued focus on its ethical philosophy and the decision-making of its soldiers (pp. 23-36).



#### 4.11 Summary of the Key Literature

From the 1968 My Lai massacre in Vietnam and the subsequent efforts by senior leaders to cover it up, to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan where torture, abuse, and the murder of detainees occurred, the literature demonstrates that soldiers are still capable of committing heinous acts of violence against innocent people despite having a well-documented framework for military leadership with an emphasis on discipline, rules, and standards. Notwithstanding the large quantity of leadership resources created by both the British and American armies, they have not produced institutions free from ethical flaws. The fact that they occurred when leadership levels were reduced and adherence to professional norms depended on individual self-control and observance to known regulations and operational procedures, which failed, gives them significance despite their relatively small number. This was not unique to the British Army; the military inquiry reports in Chapter Four include examples of inappropriate behaviour by Australian and American soldiers when self-control was the primary defence against moral disengagement. The military investigation reports also contain justifications for unlawful behaviour based on higher military objectives, which, to varied degrees provided an image of the ends justifying the means.

In addition, the literature demonstrates how the character-situation argument calls into doubt the value of character when confronted with situational circumstances. This is the most significant situationist criticism of virtue ethics and personality trait function. The Milgram experiment fits within the situationist argument against character; however, there appears to be a case for the argument that the Milgram experiment provides a narrative that supports character, as the findings could also be interpreted to suggest that obedience was a more prominent trait than compassion in that particular scenario. Notable is that Milgram's

obedience experiment has parallels with the military inquiry reports in Chapter Four, in that a white lab coat, clipboard, and the removal of personal responsibility resulted in volunteers administering what they believed to be harmful electric shocks to another human despite knowing they were inflicting pain on an innocent person. In a military setting, the white lab coat and clipboard were replaced by individuals in positions of authority who either turned a blind eye to improper behaviour or approved it by being present during criminal conduct and failing to intervene. In either instance, the Milgram and Chapter Four investigation reports examine the dangers connected with a lack of character when established standards are absent, disregarded, or rendered ineffective by the elimination of individual accountability for actions.

Literature provides insight into the underlying principles of the British Army regarding the effects of leadership on character, as well as the reality that British Army leadership ethics are essentially anecdotal and lack a complete understanding of "why" Army leadership is effective. According to McCormack, the use of external literature on moral philosophy is non-existent. He says that British Army doctrine makes no attempt to describe how character is created and instead presume that soldiers intuitively understand what is right and wrong. In addition, British Army literature rarely examines how a soldier's personality impacts both the military and social environment. Despite the abundance of evidence demonstrating the significance of addressing new military challenges, British Army doctrine remains essentially unchanged and ambiguous as to how this could be accomplished. Moreover, while it is acknowledged that the military's role has expanded beyond warfighting, the current Values and Standards booklet provides little insight into how the British Army's core values and standards apply to the evolving nature of military operations in the twenty-first century.

Aristotelian virtue ethics, specifically the notions advocated by Aristotle and MacIntyre, provide a narrative that is strongly aligned with the military community and their role in serving society. Aristotle's concepts of virtue, friendship, habituation, practical wisdom (*phronesis*), purpose (*telos*), and function (*ergon*) combined with MacIntyre's concepts on goods, practices, institutions, and tradition constituted inquiry offer a philosophical alignment with the unique structure and operation of the military community within a person-centered, non-profit framework. The literature review has revealed not only a research gap regarding the lack of an ethical foundation in the British Army's approach to training soldiers to act in accordance with right and wrong, but also that ethical failures can and do occur, albeit on a small scale, regardless of how well-established rules, regulations, and leadership structures are. Aristotelian virtue ethics appears to give a philosophical alignment that tackles the soldier behaviour factor that is fundamental to the particular military issue facing the British Army in complicated military operations of the twenty-first century.

## Chapter Five: Methodology

### 5.1 Introduction

The goal of this research was to explore, via semi-structured qualitative interviews, Infantry soldiers' perspectives of lethal and significant non-lethal decisions. The justification for using a qualitative approach to answer the research question and objectives, as well as the sample strategy and procedures for data collection, analysis, and presentation, will be discussed throughout the chapter. In addition, methodological alternatives and their implications are addressed to aid in the explanation of the selected approach.

Since I, as the researcher, have first-hand experience with the events I am investigating, I recognise that this is an insider study and cannot claim complete neutrality about the research issue or the participants. My position in the study is comparable to that of Sasha Rosenail (1994), whose inside research in the women's peace camps during the 1983-1991 demonstrations against the presence of cruise missiles at the United States Airforce base Greenham Common demonstrated the usefulness of inside research for this study. In her doctoral dissertation Roseneil (1994) demonstrated how her insider status and experience facilitated the interviewing of multiple Greenham women. Rosenail writes that she was already 'observationally aware' about Greenham, allowing her to avoid the misrepresentations of the tourists and reporters who visited the camp during its height and were labelled by the women as outsiders (p. 26). Roseneil emphasises that, due to her relationship with Greenham, she had a wealth of background knowledge that aided her in her academic pursuits.

Rosenail cites benefits such as a more in-depth analysis of the social actors at the centre of the cultural phenomena, which makes accessing and selecting research participants easier and more informed. Furthermore, Rosenail reports a quicker establishment of rapport and trust between researcher and participants, which in her case resulted in genuine conversation between herself and the women, allowing her to develop deeper levels of understanding due to her prior knowledge; knowing the lingo or native speak of field participants and thus being 'empirically literate' (pp. 27-29). She contends that an external researcher would not have had access to a comparable sample or been able to obtain the same level of trust and candor in the interviews as she did. In addition, they shared a language and a set of symbolic meanings associated with Greenham, according to Rosenail. Many of the women claimed that they would not have agreed to be interviewed by an 'outsider,' while a few remarked that their shared experiences allowed them to address sensitive topics, such as internal tensions, that they would not have otherwise (p. 27).

In light of this, the importance of reflexivity in this study for the contribution to knowledge to be reliable cannot be overstated. My approach was similar to Gough (2003) who noted that reflexivity should focus on exposing 'hidden aims,' as these would have a direct impact not only on how research is performed, but also on the entire research process from beginning to end (pp. 21-35). I chose to utilise a theory-driven phenomenological method based on MacIntyre's tradition-constituted inquiry (MacIntyre, 1988, pp. 349-370) and Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1975) philosophical hermeneutics which supports my approach to identifying human comprehension through interpretation which is historically conditioned by the particular culture and language of the British Army. Aligned to Gadamer's argument that discussion and receptivity to others are indispensable to any living

philosophy (Gadamer, 1975). To investigate the phenomena of soldiers' decision-making during complicated operations in Afghanistan between 2006 and 2014, I chose for hermeneutic discussions, as outlined by Gadamer (pp. 293-294).

## **5.2 Epistemology**

MacIntyre's writings on epistemology and the conduct of enquiry have remained mostly unchanged which point to the centrality of considerations of intelligibility, narrative, social structure and agency (D'Andrea, 2006; MacIntyre, 1973; MacIntyre, 1979; MacIntyre, 1990; MacIntyre, 2004; MacIntyre, 2006; MacIntyre, 2007; Turner, 2003). MacIntyre (1988) proposes "there is no standing ground, no place for enquiry, no way to engage in the practices of advancing, evaluating, accepting and rejecting reasoned argument apart from that which is provided by some particular tradition or other" (p. 350). MacIntyre also argues that those outside a tradition lack sufficient rational, and indeed moral, resources for enquiry. MacIntyre rejects detached objectivity and asserts tradition is the form of rational enquiry, and progress only occurs via participation in the internal dialectic, or "conflict," of a tradition. MacIntyre encapsulates this, which he designates "tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive enquiry" (pp. 349-370).

Given his conception of reality, Gadamer (1975) was sceptical of the majority of contemporary philosophy, which attempted to defend or establish its "objective truth" using the rigorous techniques of the natural sciences. However, according to Gadamer, there is no bird's-eye view or "view from nowhere" from which one may objectively watch and comprehend the universe in its existence or as it truly is. Instead, human cognition depends on the viewer's historical, cultural, and linguistic context (pp. 267-298). Gadamer defends his viewpoint by saying that the realisation of historically conditioned perspectives

does not invalidate any concept of reality; rather, it merely denies that any perspective is ultimate. Gadamer asserts that one can grasp the truth not by attempting to transcend or rise above one's historical context, culture, and tradition, but rather by becoming more self-aware of one's background, culture, and tradition (Gadamer, 1975). Similarly, Grondin (2003) asserts that the hermeneutic tradition states that “understanding can never really be grounded because it is itself the ground, the floor on which we are always already standing” (p. 284).

Expanding upon Gadamer’s statement that human cognition depends on the viewer's historical, cultural, and linguistic context (1975), narrative with ADP5 illustrates the historical and cultural tradition that combat and other land-based military operations is shaped upon. Military effectiveness is contingent upon the establishment of strong professional and personal connections during peacetime that can endure the strains of battle and other operations. It asks soldiers to demonstrate devotion and self-sacrifice by putting the team, the mission, the unit, and the nation's interests ahead of their own. The Army's ethos and character spirit are founded on trust, commitment, and self-sacrifice (ADP5, 2000, pp. 3-6). ADP5 asserts that soldiering is a deadly serious endeavour, with the camaraderie formed during missions, training, and the Army's social life forming a strong bond via shared experiences. ADP5 specific states:

The knowledge of past adversities mastered by the family of which they are a part inspires soldiers to live up to the standards of their predecessors. The examples of regimental history focus the will to succeed in a way that augments the imperatives of loyalty and discipline. There is no better or compelling benchmark than the historic victories in battle of the soldiers own military family (ADP5, 2000, pp. 3-11).

Globally, the British Army enjoys a good reputation that is founded on trust. Soldiers are often deployed to perilous places where they must entrust their life in the hands of others

and assume responsibility for the lives of their teammates. The British Army is a professional, well-disciplined group with a long tradition of service to the nation, and it has widespread public support. The Army requires high standards of conduct from all of its soldiers at all times since its duties are frequently challenging, dangerous, and demanding. My military service has strengthened my position in this study, which reflects MacIntyre and Gadamer's understanding of truth as an intimate engagement between individuals, social structures, social roles, and the conceptual, linguistic, and cultural frameworks within which agency is understood. My experiences have led me to believe that soldiers acquire knowledge through everyday encounters with other soldiers as part of their distinctive soldiering position and accompanying activities. Due to these diverse environmental conditions, I situate my study within the tradition of military service to the nation, with this thesis providing a tradition-constituted inquiry into the British Army's adaptability to complicated expeditionary operations as part of service to the nation. Positioning the study within the perspective of this tradition will enable the findings, ensuing debate, and conclusions to be understood in the context of military service to the country. As part of this tradition-constituted inquiry, my research strategy, technique, and methodologies are based on MacIntyre's theory that those outside a tradition lack the intellectual and moral resources necessary for situated inquiry.

### **5.3 Research Strategy**

This study was based on two assumptions: first, that the methodology is influenced by MacIntyre's concept of tradition-constituted enquiry, which is diametrically opposed to detached neutrality; and second, that tradition-constituted enquiry is arguably a form of hermeneutics, which is Aristotelian in nature and adheres to Gadamer's (1975) hermeneutics.



The social and cultural framework in which a tradition develops rationally is critical according to MacIntyre who refers to this as a fundamental and organic interaction between "socially embodied traditions of rational inquiry" (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 151).

MacIntyre contends that a community's history determines its methods of inquiry and gives its language and conceptual framework. Thus, philosophical theories organise notions and theories that have already been integrated into forms of practice and community (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 390). My personal opinions about how individuals see and interpret behaviours in specific contexts intersect with MacIntyre's discussion in *After Virtue* (2007), in which he outlines his concept of the virtues, the unity of a human existence, and the concept of a tradition (p. 204-225).

MacIntyre (2007) says that any attempt to conceive of an individual's life as a whole runs into the social problem because modernity divides each person's existence into discrete sectors with their own laws and behaviours. Thus, according to MacIntyre, work and play, private and public life, and the professional and the personal are separated. Childhood and old age have therefore been segregated from the rest of human life and turned into distinct spheres. All of these separations, according to MacIntyre, have been achieved so that we are conditioned to think and feel in terms of the uniqueness of each individual rather than the oneness of his or her life (p. 204). This is illustrated by MacIntyre's use of a spouse digging in his garden in response to the inquiry, "What is he doing?" MacIntyre explains:

In the first place the episode has been situated in an annual cycle of domestic activity, and the behavior embodies an intention which presupposes a particular type of household-cum-garden setting with the peculiar narrative history of that setting in which this segment of behavior now becomes an episode. In the second instance the episode has been situated in the narrative history of a marriage, a very different, even if related, social setting. We cannot, that is to say, characterize behavior independently of intentions, and we cannot characterize intentions independently of the settings which make those intentions intelligible both to agents themselves and to others (p. 206).

My research strategy is predicated on the uniqueness of the military community and the dynamics within such a highly specialised and insular group of soldiers, combined with the narrative history of their setting, in which soldiers' behaviours and intentions cannot be translated without a thorough understanding of their culture, traditions, and language. Consequently, an outside researcher with no detailed knowledge of such a unique setting, which is not only off-limits to the general public during times of peace, but even more so when deployed to dangerous and unstable social structures, would be unable to fully comprehend the actions of a soldier at war, where violence and killing are normalised, rendering any data collected at best incomprehensible or superficial.

#### **5.4 Research Design**

My explicit philosophical presuppositions regarding the nature of knowledge required a design capable of not only aligning with but also protecting against my presuppositions. Considering my position within the study, the unique military environment, and the need to engage with participants who could provide detailed insights into their experiences, I determined that, to follow philosophical hermeneutics, I would need to engage in natural and authentic conversation to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. According to Gadamer (1975), the researcher must engage the other as a rational agent and co-creator of an understanding or agreement on a topic of mutual interest to the extent that it is practical (pp. 389-390).

This study involved two combat units with recent experience in both combat and peace support activities, from whom 14 volunteers with relevant expertise agreed to take part in semi-structured interviews conducted in a conversational hermeneutic manner. My goal was to have meaningful interactions with participants as peers in which they could describe

their lives in the military and experiences while deployed on combat or peace support missions in their own subjective words. Purposive sampling was used to ensure the selection of individuals who not only possessed the required experience but also possessed the capacity to convey it in a natural and authentic discourse between peers. It was essential for participants to be able to freely communicate because the conversations would comprise of open-ended inquiries designed to elicit participant narratives in a story-telling format. The interview data was analysed using thematic analysis and the hermeneutic circle of Heidegger (Gadamer, 1975, pp. 293-294) along with MacIntyre's concepts on goods, practices, and institutions (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 221-223) to help inform the research. This chapter will continue by discussing the study plan and its execution.

## **5.5 Research Methods**

Due to the distinctive characteristics of the Armed Forces community, the study required a methodology that could dive into the inner workings of a highly specialised and sometimes isolated organisation. *'Truth and Method'* outlines processes that are consistent with Gadamer's Aristotelian hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1975). To allow participants to tell their story from their perspective without limiting their ability to articulate their experiences or repeating the problems of my initial interview plan pilot (p. 163-167), I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews using Gadamer's concept of genuine conversation, which required breaking down any researcher and subject barriers. To do this, I used an insider approach, framing the interviews as much as possible as a natural dialogue between two soldiers from the same military group, in order to develop rapport and generate as much familiarity as feasible.

The data analysis was in accordance with Gadamer's (1975) hermeneutic circle and MacIntyre's tradition-constituted inquiry. Moore asserts that the impact of hermeneutic tradition on organisational ethics is undeniable (Moore, 2015, p. 101). This study interprets empirical work via the lens of MacIntyrean inquiry, which combines his thoughts on moral philosophy's methods with Gadamer's thoughts on hermeneutics. In response to MacIntyre's challenge to investigate how we can learn to form and protect such communities through tradition-constituted inquiry and hermeneutics, (Coe & Beadle, 2008, p. 9) I had to investigate MacIntyre's concepts of goods, practices, and institutions.

### **5.5.1 The Inside Researcher**

Commentary from MacIntyre (MacIntyre, 1999b, pp. 126-129) and Walker (2018, pp. 1-3) combined with information within ADP5 (ADP5, 2000, pp. 0207-0304) and the Values and Standards handbook (ADP, 2000, pp. 2-15) evidences how the study population differs from the larger society that it serves. In addition, MacIntyre (2015) argues that because the military community's discourse is so narrow, a unique viewpoint is required to examine it:

For if my central theses are correct, then the least likely context for us to learn what we most need to learn is through our interactions solely within such a restricted and narrowly specialized community of discourse. We may instead hope that, at some time in the future, reflection from an academic distance on what has been learned in and from engagement in the practices of the armed conflicts of the recent past and the immediate future will once again become profitable. But the present crisis in military ethics is such that that time is still not quite at hand (p. 13).

Soldiering is a way of life, not just a job, and as such, soldiers have their own ways of communicating and supporting one another through the use of soldier slang, acronyms, humour (including black humour), and an understanding that they are in a relationship with another person for which they would give their lives on the presumption of a shared understanding. Closely aligned to what Aristotle defines as 'good friendship' (VIII.III,

1156b) although in the military it is doctrinally defined as camaraderie or more commonly ‘Muckers’<sup>10</sup> by the soldiers themselves. Military camaraderie and the soldiers’ unique approaches to sustaining their community would be unintelligible to those outside of the military community who have not been exposed to a soldier’s way of life.

As a distinguished former Army officer who rose through the ranks, my prior experiences provided a strong contextual understanding of the traditions, culture, language, and historical background of the British Army, which not only provided a way back into the inner circle of the military community but also provided a methodological response to MacIntyre's (2015) statement regarding the difficulties inherent in studying the inner workings of a highly confined and narrowly specialised group. Not only was I able to elicit and express the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and beliefs of soldiers within a closed group, but I was also able, as MacIntyre mentioned, to provide academic commentary on what has been learned from engagement in the practices of previous armed conflicts (p. 13). Critical to the study was reflexivity, which will be described in detail in the chapter's section on addressing researcher bias.

Using personal experience to do research inside a hard-to-reach group is not a novel concept in the social sciences, even though the military community requires a specialised research strategy. Mills (1978) argued that personal experience profoundly shapes the social imagination and that academics must develop the ability to infuse their own experiences into their academic work. In this way, according to Mills, creativity is

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<sup>10</sup> A comrade, a friend, brother in arms, someone who will muck in beside you, putting his or her, shoulder to the wheel, nose to the grindstone & best foot forward with you. Brought back with the British Army from India and derived from an old Bengali family name “Mukerjee”.

fundamental to individual identity, researchers are personally invested in any intellectual endeavour on which they work, and experience is a crucial foundation for creative intellectual labour. Mills further argues that using the researcher's own personal experience is a sign of high-quality research since it not only allows common experiences to serve as a foundation for understanding specialised subject matter, but also demonstrates the ability to learn from it (p. 63). From the perspective of this study, "insider" refers to the ability to draw on my own personal experiences and background as a soldier, which is common among the research population, and to return to, as MacIntyre (2015) puts it, "a restricted and narrowly specialised community of discourse" (p.13) to conduct research within an otherwise hard-to-reach group. In accordance with my position within the study, Reimer (1977) asserts insider researchers know rather than do not know about their field of study and are intimately connected to the social world they investigate through their identification or group membership. Reimer notes that insiders study their own people within their own culture or group, blurring the distinction between the 'studying' and 'being studied' parties (pp. 467-477).

Like Rosenail (1994), Hobbs (1988) states that insider research has several substantial methodological benefits, most notably in terms of access and familiarity. Hobbs's research on working-class entrepreneurial activity in London's East End reveals a number of these benefits, which also influenced my methodology and techniques. Hobbs views his upbringing and his London accent as key benefits because he earned confidence in employing East End-specific aspects of style, language structures, and environment and culture prior to his introduction to academics (pp. 5-6). Hobbs argues further that his insider status gave him access to "settings, detailed conversations, and information" that an outside researcher would not have had access to owing to the illegal nature of the business

activity. Hobbs asserts that despite the numerous benefits of his insider perspective, it was impossible to convey that world to the academic community since there was always an interpretation occurring (pp. 5-15).

### **5.5.1a Addressing Researcher Influence**

Phenomenology requires an open mind or responsiveness to participants' life experiences as well as interaction with the investigated subject (Armour et al., 2009). Maso and Smaling (1995) concur that proximity to a phenomenon can cause it to lose its openness or close itself off to alternative perspectives (Maso, 1995; Smaling, 1995). Similarly, Greene (2014) argues that while pre-existing knowledge of the research setting may help to project a more accurate, authentic picture of the culture under study, as is the case with my insider approach and how Hobbs and Roseneil (Hobbs and Roseneil, 1988; Roseneil, 1994) approached the research population, it also runs the risk of being overly subjective and biased (Greene, 2014, pp. 3-6). Merriam et al. (2001) highlight that insider research is sometimes accused of inherent bias due to the perception that the researcher is too close to the culture being researched to ask provocative questions (pp. 405-416). Similarly, Van-Heutgen (2004b) argues that selecting a topic of personal interest and enlisting co-workers as subjects raises the spectre of 'insider bias's (pp. 203-219). Thus, according to Dahlberg, Drew, and Nystrom, phenomenology requires a reflective attitude, because "by detaching ourselves, we observe more accurately"(Dahlberg et al., 2001, p. 27).

### **5.5.1b Reflexivity**

While there are undeniable benefits to insider research, the criticism of bias and overfamiliarity with this method necessitates a methodological response to add rigour to my findings and subsequent discussion. Berger (2015) asserts that reflexivity "involves

refocusing the researcher's lens on oneself in order to acknowledge and accept responsibility for one's own situatedness within the research and its impact on the setting and people being studied, the questions being asked, the data being collected, and its interpretation" (p. 220). Creswell (2014) defines reflexivity as the researcher's evaluation of how their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status, impact the interpretations created throughout a study. In addition, Creswell argues that reflexivity is an essential element of qualitative research due to its interpretive nature and the researcher's need to participate in a prolonged and broad engagement with participants (Chapters 5-7). According to Paisley and Reeves (2001), insider research designs introduce a number of strategic, ethical, and personal considerations into the qualitative research procedure (pp. 481-498). The subject/object and researcher/researched dichotomies are viewed from a fresh standpoint, according to Hollway and Jefferson (2000). Instead of worrying about being too much of an insider or an outsider, they argue that researchers should strive to be both. There is much to be gained by retaining a connection to one's studies, as well as by maintaining a separation and acquiring an external perspective. "Ideally, the researcher should view the issue from both within and from a distance" (pp. 166-200).

### **5.5.1c Validity**

This study was undertaken during a time of transition in my life, when I left the Army after 28 years as a commissioned officer to become a director of probation. As a career soldier, my retirement evoked feelings of sorrow because I believed I was quitting a community for a different line of work. Since I left school at 16 years old, the Army has been my life, and I have experienced both the highs and lows of the military society. At this point, it is crucial to emphasise once more how those 28 years shaped my worldview, which was



thoroughly entrenched when the research began prior to my retirement. Such ingrained beliefs about how soldiers formed their reality within a society that was off-limits to outsiders led to a near-passive-aggressive attitude towards outside researchers and, to a lesser extent, academia itself. My worldview was and remains that it is impossible for an outsider to fully comprehend military culture. At the beginning of my investigation, I viewed myself as an insider intent on defending my community from what I termed intellectual trespassers.

After retiring in 2017, I spent the next year establishing myself in an entirely new setting, which entailed a near-complete hiatus from my PhD pursuit. Unbeknownst to me at the time, this period represented the beginning of a process that would ultimately place the study in a position where it could be defended against accusations of bias and overfamiliarity. In hindsight, it is evident what MacIntyre (2015) was suggesting when he stated that such a closed-off culture would be the least probable location to learn about the military and lessons from previous conflicts (pp. 3-13). In 2017, MacIntyre was just another academic with an opinion on something he couldn't possibly fathom, and paradoxically, six years later, my position couldn't be further from where I started. MacIntyre's (2015) argument for academic engagement from a distance is strengthened by comparing Walker, de-Vries, and Goffman's (de-Vries, 2013; Goffman, 1968; Walker, 2010, 2013) descriptions of the military environment to a setting in which a person experiences only opinions or perspectives that concur with their own, thereby reinforcing their preconceived opinions and excluding competing viewpoints.

After 18 months as a civilian and resuming my PhD studies, I realised my perspective had changed. Instead of policing academic intruders, I was suddenly peeking in through the eyes of a probation director and a rising academic, which I likened to the idiom

"gamekeeper turned poacher." I was now looking beyond what Merriam et al. and Van-Heutgen (Merriam et al., 2001; Van-Heutgen, 2004a) suggested was "marking my own homework" and became intent on extracting deeper meanings from the interview text and determining what was actually being communicated between two people having a conversation on a common ground. My perspective in the study shifted to that of an academic who happened to be a former soldier, peering through a refocused lens that revealed the bigger picture.

Between 2017 and 2021, I worked closely with Kay, my probation mentor, who is an ardent feminist with well-established egalitarian ideals. She urged me to engage with domestic abuse victims, who are typically overshadowed by their abusers. Through the lens of desistance theory, feminism, victim awareness, and Kay's experience as a probation officer and truly wonderful person, I learned the ability to switch perspectives in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of what was actually occurring under the surface. Kay was a critical friend who was willing to not only challenge my thinking but also encourage me to reflect on why I made certain interpretations, which was especially valuable because Kay lacked in-depth knowledge of the military community; therefore, her observations provided a valuable contribution towards any potential bias and overfamiliarity in my thinking. Kay's independent perspective within the study lent credibility to my findings and subsequent debate.

My doctoral committee provided the second set of impartial precautions against the dangers of insider research. My primary supervisor would monitor my thought processes and, if required, bring to my attention any unconscious bias. My secondary supervisor was purposely more distant and provided an outside perspective to balance me and my primary supervisor's perspectives, which I would categorise as more invested in the day-to-day

elements of the study. This final aspect presented me with a clear picture of what was in front of me, supplementing my initial perspective with those of two additional independent external observers. Three unique views contributed depth to my extensive research notes, which were primarily ramblings, empowered by my wandering thoughts and an almost uncanny connection to my pen. Examining these notes with new eyes transformed several of them from meaningless scribbles to useful information. What began as a collection of unrelated notes evolved into a resource for obtaining insight and fitting together the puzzle as part of a larger narrative.

Over the course of this study's six-year duration, I have matured as a researcher and am now able to move beyond superficial observations and interpretations to the point where the data expresses deeper meaning. This was made possible by the triangulation of vision, which was influenced by external components calibrating and focusing my vision in such a way that I could discern not only what was evident, but also what was concealed. At the conclusion of this dissertation, I present a conceptual basis for what I have referred to as triangulation of vision, more commonly known as Fusion of Horizons (Gadamer, 1975, pp. 301-305). I would argue that the data in the following chapter illustrates that the phenomena has been brought to light by combining many human perspectives on the text, so permitting the fusion of perspectives.

### **5.5.2 Access to Participants**

This study required a data gathering method that could pass the multiple safeguarding procedures of the MoD and Army Headquarters. The MoD Research Ethics Committee (MODREC) (Defence, 2014) served as the highest level of gatekeeper access, allowing approval to contact Army combat units for involvement in the research. Due to the

standards established by MODREC, submissions for research approval did not require full ethical approval; rather, MODREC sought a supporting ethical approval form from Northumbria university to grant authority to approach combat units and their soldiers.

The military is a vast, dispersed organisation with a stringent delegation of authority procedure. MODREC authorisation was obtained for the specific purpose of approaching individual units for additional gatekeeper approval. Due to the differences in organisational size between the MoD and specific combat units, I needed to improve the link between the study and the larger authorisation and justification narrative provided by the MoD. I addressed the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS), which is home to the Centre for Army Leadership (CAL), which is directed by a renowned general and proponent of leadership studies, to create a better link and promote a more personal narrative. This relationship and personal letter of support eased the way through multiple bureaucratic layers and gave permission to contact individual units with a credible and substantial sponsor, allowing for a seamless transition into gaining access to individual participants. I anticipated that a more personal narrative and a strong sponsor with a well-publicised dedication to research would generate a stronger understanding for the significance of the research than a signed application from a remote strategic headquarters with no personal link to the study population.

### **5.5.3 Piloting**

In 2019, both combat units chosen for purposeful sampling were at a high level of operational readiness, which included a rigorous training rotation and the potential for rapid deployment anywhere in the world. Having obtained gatekeeper consent for the study, I was aware that there would be only one opportunity to interview the soldiers

required to provide rich data. With no possibility of a second or third visit, it was imperative that the interviews be conducted correctly. Numerous researchers, according to Percy and Kostere (2015), have employed qualitative methodologies to collect information regarding the subjective experiences, attitudes, and beliefs of individuals that cannot be quantified objectively (pp. 76-85). According to Merriam, Johnson, Bailey, and Lee (2001), in all qualitative paradigms, data is often collected through interviews, allowing the researcher to gain a deeper knowledge of the phenomenon from the individual's perspective (pp. 405-416). Percy and Kostere say qualitative studies rely significantly on the researcher to give data, and that interview questions are at the centre of the interviewing process (Percy & Kostere, 2015, pp. 76-85). In addition, an in-person interview is widely acknowledged as an effective qualitative research method for eliciting viewpoints from individuals who have faced or are currently confronting the issue. Thus, doing pilot interviews is essential for validating the questions and gaining interviewing expertise (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008, pp. 389-395).

In January of 2019, pilot research was initiated to examine the experiences of soldiers in complex environments. The authorisation to approach the chain of command was granted by the commanding officer of a combat unit whose characteristics matched those of the combat units slated for the primary research later that year. To maximise the possibility of gathering valuable data, the pilot participant pool was restricted to non-commissioned officers with combat experience and the confidence to discuss their experiences with me. Three volunteers at the pilot location who met the predetermined criteria and were willing to engage in the study and semi-structured interviews.

I planned to utilise a list of predetermined questions as a guide for conducting interviews. Each of the three pilot interviews revealed almost immediately that the approach and

framework was overly restrictive, and that the responses of the participants lacked natural linkages to the predetermined list of questions. I continued to select questions from the list throughout the interviews, which gave the session an awkward and impersonal feel. I quickly realised that employing an excessive number of predetermined questions restricted the interview to a mere question-and-answer session, preventing me from reacting instinctively to the participants' responses. At the conclusion of each interview, participants expressed how much they had liked the session and how engaged they felt in answering my questions. While the participants may have intended their response to be complimentary, it became apparent that they were inadvertently implying that I had directed the interview throughout. This error was compatible with Gadamer's argument regarding genuine discourse. Gadamer (1975) believes that when a person is preoccupied with the individualism of another, such as during a therapy session or the interrogation of a criminal suspect, this is not a situation in which two persons are attempting to negotiate. (p.387). Taylor (2002) reflects this idea when he asserts that to attain a consensus with another person, researchers may have to compromise on some of their goals. Taylor argues that the project's conclusion must not be control; otherwise, researchers will engage in a charade geared at controlling the participant while ostensibly facilitating open dialogue. Taylor (2002).

Following each interview, I inadvertently shifted the dynamic of the interaction by engaging in a general conversation like how two soldiers might converse during their normal duties. Outside the researcher-subject relationship, informal interaction instantly removed what I can only describe as an unconscious aversion to interact with me as a fellow soldier. When participants engaged in a general chat without a researcher-participant vibe, I noted a distinction in their attitudes and responsiveness. When

discussing a broad topic as part of a conversation, participants were substantially more candid than when replying to a specific question. This was a significant discovery that needed an adjustment to the intended interview technique for the primary study.

The pilot helped improve the main study's interview procedure by generating a significant shift from a question-and-answer structure to a discussion format. As a result, the interview framework was updated, and instead of a list of questions, I developed a framework of general issues linked with the areas that generated rich data during the pilot participants post-interview dialogue. It was evident from a brief conversation outside of the interviewer-interviewee interaction that their motivation to engage with me was influenced by shared experiences and an understanding of social relationships within a unique military community. From this, the main study would include discussion points on internal goods to understand pertinent motivational factors for participants' actions, practical wisdom within an operational setting to determine if virtues played a role in their decision-making and action, and social structures to determine if the practice of soldiering and organisational activity influenced how participants' understanding of reality was contracted.

I created a large entry in my research log to caution against repeating this error and to describe how it would compromise my intended study approach and procedures. I also observed that I had almost strayed unwittingly into quantitative methods and that the individual in front of me was at best presenting impersonal and superficial information. My final submission for the day served as a reminder of how people's interpretations of their surroundings and the people inside them shape their perception of reality. Despite 28 years of shared combat experiences, common loyalties, values, and experiences within the military community, the transition to a clinical researcher with a white lab coat and clipboard was effortless from the minute the first question was asked. I noted:

Note to self – you cannot claim to be one of them and understand their experiences if you present as impersonal and something they cannot relate to. Don't forget how you felt about academics before you retired!!!! You have just done the very thing you tried so hard to avoid – pushed the soldier into a defensive stance against a clinical researcher who is trespassing on precious ground. You slept walked right into this but better now than with the main group. Don't do this again!!!!!!! (Redgwell, 2019, p.17).

Similar to how Jacob and Ferguson (2012) recommended conducting semi-structured interviews, I conducted my conversations with the participants using a non-intrusive digital recorder with discussions lasting between 35 and 45 minutes to avoid interfering with the participants' other duties (pp. 42-110).

#### **5.5.4 Selecting the Combat Units for the Main Study**

The fighting component of the Army, commonly known as the Infantry, consists of 52 battalions, each with approximately 700 soldiers (ADP10, 2017, pp. 1.0-3.0). Between 2001 and 2018, the Directorate of Land Warfare (DLW) recorded that Infantry battalions were deployed on several rotations, including Afghanistan and Iraq, and more recently on training assistance missions to aid nations experiencing insurgency warfare. Two of the 52 battalions were picked because they had both completed combat rotations in Afghanistan during the past decade (DLW, 2015, pp. xviii-xxiv). Prior to that, their history of rotational deployment includes repeated deployments to Iraq, as well as peace assistance and humanitarian missions in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, and the United Kingdom under MAG-D/P and MACA. In selecting these units, I ensured that those contacted to volunteer for interviews had relevant combat and peace support operational experience, placing them in the best position to contribute valuable data to the research.



**Table 1: Selected Combat Units**

Unit	Role	Deployments	When
1	Combat Infantry	Northern Ireland – Policing (MACA) Bosnia – UN post-war stabilisation Kosovo – NATO Peace support Fire strikes – government support (MAG-D) Foot & Mouth - government support (MAG-D) Anti-narcotics - government support Iraq- post-war & counterinsurgency Iraq – Training support Afghanistan war & counterinsurgency Afghanistan – training support London Olympics (MAG-P)	1990-1993-1995-2000-2003 1995 1997 2002 2003 2004 2004-2005-2007 2015-2017 2006-2009-2011 2007, 2016 2012
2	Combat Infantry	Northern Ireland – Policing (MACA) Bosnia – UN post-war stabilisation Kosovo – NATO Peace support Fire strikes – government support (MAG-D) Foot & Mouth - government support (MAG-D) Anti-narcotics - government support Iraq- post-war & counterinsurgency Iraq – Training support Afghanistan war & counterinsurgency Afghanistan – training support Ebola containment - government support (MAG-D)	1991-1994-1996-2001-2004 1996 1998 2002 2003 2009 2002-2004-2006 2016-2018 2005-2008-2010 2005, 2009, 2017 2016

To solicit participation in the study, individual commanding officers of combat units were written to personally. The initial contact contained documents outlining the purpose of the research and a letter of support from the CAL. The cover letter for the research included an offer to discuss additional information prior to deciding to sponsor the study, which was an

additional step in assuring them of the structure and oversight within my methods.

Considering recent media revelations on alleged war crimes committed during deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, this proved a valuable step in securing gatekeeper approval. Moreover, Operation Northmoor<sup>11</sup> (MoD, 2020b) was still a live investigation, and it was necessary to alleviate a natural level of concern regarding a research study involving soldiers on these deployments.

### **5.5.5 Selecting the Participants**

According to Quinney et al. (2016), Heideggerian phenomenology focuses on the human manner of "Being-in-the-World" and the ways in which individuals reflect on and make sense of this manner of being (pp. 3-6). This is referred to by Heidegger as "Dasein" (Heidegger, 1927, pp. 67-76). In contrast, according to Hycner (1999), "the phenomenon dictates the technique, including the participants" (pp. 143-164). Van-Manen (1990) argues that there are three non-negotiable selection criteria for who will be invited to join the participant group: the participant must have experienced the life event being researched, they must agree to share their experiences, and they must be able to commit to the time requirements of the research (van-Manen, 1990).

Purposive sampling, as described by Welman and Krueger, is characterised as a form on non-probability sampling in which the researcher uses personal judgement when selecting participants from the research population (1999) which was the case in this study.

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<sup>11</sup> The government closed down its investigation into alleged war crimes in Afghanistan, known as Operation Northmoor, before any soldier was prosecuted. But the BBC's Panorama has unearthed shocking evidence that Britain's special forces executed detainees and murdered unarmed people in cold blood in Afghanistan.

Gatekeepers were asked to advertise for volunteers who adhered to Manen's three selection principles, with additional safeguards (section 3.17, Ethical Considerations) added based on my opinion as an ethical researcher and a veteran soldier with extensive knowledge of the dangers of reliving traumatic events. For commanding officers, requesting people with relevant expertise and scheduling time for them to participate was relatively straightforward. However, in contrast to the pilot interviews, it was anticipated that the participants would engage in genuine conversations rather than a question-and-answer session. Genuine conversation, as defined by Gadamer (1975), is an interchange of opinions and comments between two people, as opposed to a more clinical researcher-participant encounter (pp. 185-190). It was essential for participants to have the self-awareness and confidence to discuss and, at times, debate their experiences in order for the dialogues to yield the rich in-depth information I needed. As a result, I concluded that narrowing the pool of possible volunteers, as proposed by Corbin and Strauss, (2008) was a necessary risk when evaluated against the study's objective and ability to obtain relevant data from a specialised area of experience.

#### **5.5.6 Data Gathering**

In order to prevent piloting errors, it was crucial that I was able to respond to participants with a degree of adaptability, as I could not predict how they would build their narrative during the discussion. Unstructured interviews were discounted because, as Patton and Adams point out, they could allow the participant to stray too far from the topic without direction, hence increasing the likelihood of not collecting the necessary data (Adams, 2015, pp. 492-505; Patton, 2002).

According to Groves (2002), semi-structured, in-depth interviews create accounts of past and present personal social life from the actor's perspective. Groves argues, as did Husserl, (1970) that the particular and the individual are essential elements of the social framework in which actors exist. The focus is on how the actor tells their own story, as opposed to how the researcher's limited questions may organise or filter that story (pp. 82-98). For this purpose, authentic dialogues facilitate the development of objective and subjective interpretations of human experiences (Walker, 1985). In addition, Holloway (1997) asserts that interviews and the resulting narratives are co-produced by the researcher and the respondent in the context of the interview interaction (Holloway, 1997). During the course of narrating a story, participants typically added "more than description" to the narrative, as discovered by McCormack (2004). In many cases, such anecdotes revealed crucial information and data throughout the interview process, in addition to developing rapport (pp. 3-6).

Gadamer (1975) argues that the principles of authentic dialogue are based on two people sharing their opinions without a formal researcher-subject relationship. Gadamer notes that it is unreasonable to assume that a researcher with a similar perspective will not have ideas regarding responses during a conversation, and that expressing these opinions when appropriate strengthens the concept of actual discourse. In addition, Gadamer warns that unconscious researcher coercion may occur if the views of researchers are not responsive to the argument and are instead selected from a predetermined list (pp. 185-190). To avoid the problems uncovered during piloting, it was crucial that participants felt as though they were engaged in a conversation, rather than responding to predetermined questions. The purpose of the conversational interviews with 14 participants was to introduce general subjects rather than specific questions and to create an environment in which the

participant did the majority of the talking. Due to the operational requirements of both combat units chosen to participate in the study, all 14 interviews were conducted across two population sites over the course of four months. Later in this chapter, under ethical issues, the impact of conducting highly sensitive interviews in such a short period of time as a lone researcher will be discussed.

While the intention was to have a general conversation with the participants, consent, ethics, purpose, and data protection procedures could not be bypassed. At the start of the conversations, I gave each participant a broad summary of my career, which included just enough information to establish rapport and appreciation for a shared language and understanding of the military community without reintroducing any hierarchical structure that would compromise the prospect of establishing a meaningful conversation. These boundaries would reassure the participant that what was about to occur was authorised, within their risk tolerance, and respectful of their right to anonymity. Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the interactions, their length was limited to fewer than 35-45 minutes to prevent what Rowley calls participant and researcher fatigue (Rowley, 2012, pp. 260-271). It was essential for participants to feel comfortable, therefore conversations took place in their usual workplaces, which allowed enough privacy for participants to converse without interruption.

Spradley (1979) argues that utilising what he terms "grand tour" questions places respondents in a position to provide a verbal tour of a familiar topic. The primary benefit of these questions is that they encourage targeted conversation from participants (p. 667). To support my conversational approach, I established some broad subjects related to the research area in preparation for the interviews. These themes were sufficiently broad to start conversation, with prompts used to encourage the participant to elaborate on specific

comments as the conversation progressed to prevent what Fox argued as leading the participant so far into a topic that it prevented them expressing what was most important to their experiences (Fox, 2009, pp. 7-11). During conversation I used broad subjects and prompts to ensure that the data collected was relevant to the research question, without leading the participant so far into a topic that the problems in piloting would be repeated. The emphasis was on providing sufficient structure without narrowing the flexibility for the participant to construct a personal narrative

To acclimatise participants to a conversational tone, a deliberate separation was made between the planned formality and the main conversation to reduce any researcher/participant preconceptions developed during the structured pre-conversation phase. This was accomplished by adopting a more recognisable vocabulary used within the Army, so reinforcing my status as an insider within the military community. To emphasise the conversational context, I utilised the following break-clean remark:

that's the box ticking bit done, so let's just have a chat as if we were in a pub putting the world to rights on a Saturday afternoon. No rights or wrongs or Walter Mitty verbal diarrhea, just us going over our own stories. (Conversation opener, participant interviews, 2018).

Concurrently, I went through the obvious motions of stuffing the paperwork into my bag as if it were inconsequential. This was done intentionally to reinforce the "two people chatting" environment, as non-commissioned officers despise paperwork and doctrinal language, or as General Petraeus described it, as "written nonsense", which unhelpfully isolated it from the intended audience (ADP, 2011, pp. i-ii). Within the limits of the military social system, soldiers communicate almost exclusively through human interaction. In addition, soldiers dislike exaggerated battle tales that they perceive to be disrespectful of the actual events. Combining the break-clean remark with the awkward

handling of the paperwork, as well as placing the participant in a common context where soldiers interact openly, established a level of trust thus creating a safe environment for candid discussion. Although this may appear to be theatrical or deceptive, it was essential in eliminating any notion that an outsider had infiltrated a highly guarded subculture as was the case with the pilot interviews.

During the planning phase of the on-site data collection, it became evident that there was a risk that participants could relive traumatic incidents or potentially incriminate themselves or others. I decided that it would be prudent to gradually ease participants into the conversation whilst observing for either signs of stress or anxiety or comments that would indicate potential incrimination. Conversations were structured in a manner similar to Fox's description of a three-phased approach (2009). To contextualise the participant's experiences, the initial phase of the discussion consisted of asking participants to share background information about themselves in relation to the study's topic. Questions such as "what motivated you to join the military?" and "Which aspect of the military do you appreciate the most?" were used to obtain as much background knowledge as possible while simultaneously encouraging the participants to tell their story without being led. The subsequent phase was intended to incorporate more sensitive aspects of the research, which would elicit specifics regarding participant experiences in the research topic area to construct their operational deployment experiences. The participants were tasked with simulating a stressful situation in which they were forced to make a difficult decision in an uncertain condition during an operation. This was done to elicit individual experiences, feelings, and perceptions regarding how participants developed their understanding and the basis for these beliefs. To obtain further information from participants, I employed probing queries such as "why did you feel that way?" and "What made the situation difficult for

you?". In this final part of the conversation, participants were asked to reflect on the significance of their experience. This was not about how enjoyable the event was, but rather the intellectual and emotional connections the participants had with the experiences that were the focus of the study.

The third phase integrated components from the previous two phases. According to Fox (2009), "knowing something about the respondent's life history and everyday experiences enables the interviewer to ask detailed, in-depth, and relevant questions on the significance of events for each respondent" (pp. 15-22). Throughout the conversations, prompting questions were utilised to promote greater knowledge of participant responses within the context of the participant's narrative on the introduced topic. This method allowed for some adaptable exploration of topics connected to the conversation's overarching theme. No physical notes were taken during interviews to retain a conversational tone and allow the subject to freely create their story without interrupting for notes to be taken. Taylor and Brogdan (1984) assert that this technique prevents participants from reacting to aspects of their comments that they believed were of interest to the researcher when notes were made on specific elements of their responses (Taylor & Brogdan, 1984). It was essential to build rapport and communicate the concept of an open discussion among like-minded individuals. My concern was that taking notes would be disruptive and impair the attitude of a general conversation, putting at risk the rapport established at the beginning of the conversation. In addition, note-taking may have given the participant the sense of a less intimate approach, stopping them from fully opening themselves up to free-flowing conversation. The conversational approach was essential to ensuring that each person felt heard and that their voice was integral to the debate, without any practical obstacles choking the thought process or conversation flow.



It was essential to establish that the conversation had not negatively affected the mental health of the participants. Due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, it was imperative that each participant left each interview in a positive mindset. In addition, they were encouraged to leave the room in a calm frame of mind, as recalling traumatic events can create mental trauma. I engaged each person in a dialogue about the need of self-care, how to recognise the warning signs of emotional stress, and what to do if they thought they were struggling. This was essential to ensure that the conversation did not negatively impact the mental health of the participants and was consistent with the way soldiers watch out for one another, exhibiting genuine concern for their well-being as valued members of a close-knit military community.

### **5.5.7 Data Analysis**

This study was conducted over a six-year span, with a 12-month break for other obligations. Two distinct methods of data analysis were employed: thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke and (Braun & Clarke, 2012, pp. 57-71) and the hermeneutic circle of Gadamer (Gadamer, 1975, pp. 267-273). Within two months of the final interview and prior to the 12-month pause in further research, stages 1–5 of the analytical procedure, as illustrated in Table 2, was completed using thematic analysis. The complete analysis required four years and several repetitions of phases 1–5 coding using the hermeneutic circle, which explores deeper into the meanings of the data each time. Although reflexivity was discussed earlier in this chapter, it is necessary to briefly review it now to provide context for the analysis procedure. The data was analysed multiple times over a four-year period during a transition from soldier to probation director, which widened the scope of the analysis. While the interviews were conducted in a short period of time, the subsequent analysis was a lengthy process involving multiple reflection periods influenced by

conversations with critical friends, which helped to develop a more detailed picture of what Heidegger (1927) would refer to as the phenomenon that, for the most part, does not manifest itself and is hidden in plain sight (p. 153).

Gadamer (2004) argues that time aids in the interpretation and objective evaluation of experiences via a phenomenon known as "temporal distance," in which the perceptions and phenomena associated with an experience become increasingly remote. Throughout the analytical period, temporal distance occurred, resulting in a more sophisticated and frequently unique grasp of the data offered by distance and time, devoid of emotional distraction. This is what Gadamer refers to as the hermeneutic significance of temporal remoteness (pp. 290-298). According to Gadamer's notion of intersubjectivity, other individuals do not limit one's understanding of life, as is evident when seeking advice, criticism, and ideas from others. Gadamer asserts, to begin with, that testing ideas on other people, such as during the research process, is essential to gaining a knowledge of the biases that shape our own judgments. Second, we acknowledge through debate that others have valid reasons to disagree with us, and we devise new ways to accommodate new perspectives (Gadamer, 1975, p. 183). As a result, a significant premise of Gadamer's work and the subsequent data analysis was to remain open to contact with others in order to assist in the development of the data's core as opposed to its superficial look.

#### **5.5.7a Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis was utilised since it allowed me to concentrate on a specific topic rather than a methodology, as Braun and Clarke proposed (2006, pp. 77-101). This means that, in contrast to many qualitative methods, it is not prescriptive of any particular

epistemological or theoretical perspective, making it a very adaptable method. The levels of theme analysis utilised in this study are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Six Stage Thematic Analysis**

1.Familiarisation with the data	2.Initial coding	3.Searching for themes
4.Reviewing themes	5.Defining and naming themes	6.Reporting the findings

Source: Braun and Clarke (2006)

### 5.5.7b Hermeneutic Circle

Each time the initial analysis was repeated, the hermeneutic circle described by German philosopher Martin Heidegger was applied (1927). The hermeneutic circle encourages interpreters to seek to comprehend what they read in the context of their own cultural, literary, and personal contexts. Heidegger describes a process that begins with an initial comprehension and evolves as the interpreter moves through the text, evaluating the original comprehension in light of the new information provided by the text. On the basis of this new information, the interpreter's personal context in terms of beliefs and expectations will change. In turn, the new context will affect how we read the content (pp. 267-273). Despite the fact that interpretations cannot be definite, Debesay et al. (2007) advise that when researchers interpret, they must assess the validity of their interpretation. This is particularly important if they are required to share this information with others (pp. 57-66). Gadamer (1977) asserts that interpretations occur within a process in which a first draft is modified as the interpreter has a greater grasp of the text, incompatible terms or meanings are contrasted, and only the most pertinent terms or meanings are selected (pp. 267-273)

### **5.5.7c Step 1: Familiarisation with the Data.**

Beginning with the transcription of participant interviews, the familiarisation phase involved a process of data immersion. A qualified medical and legal transcription company transcribed all digital recordings verbatim and in a format compatible with the Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) programme NVivo. Within two weeks of the conclusion of the final interview, digital transcripts were made available. The transcription service provided a report based on the sound quality of the audio and the number of unrecognisable words, both of which were assessed at 98 percent or higher. No unfamiliar terms or phrases were included in the report. Afterwards, all transcripts were printed and bound into two files titled Unit 1 and Unit 2 with the digital word files of the transcripts imported into NVivo in preparation for analysis. During transcription, sensitive information was anonymised.

After transcription, a bottom-up approach was utilised, with each interview transcript being reread without interruption or being examined in depth to determine what Braun and Clarke (2006) termed semantic comprehension. What broad ideas do the participants express? How would you describe the disposition of the ideas? How would you rate the information's breadth, credibility, and practicality? (pp. 77-101). At this stage I started a research journal in NVivo to capture my initial thoughts from which further analysis information would be added to provide deeper context as the analysis phases progressed.

### **5.5.7d Step 2: Initial Coding**

As a sole researcher with no additional support, it was important that analysis was conducted as efficiently as possible to avoid losing valuable time and data. To support my analysis, I chose to use the 2019 version of the Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis

Software (CAQDAS) application NVivo to code the 14 interview transcripts. While employing NVivo did not eliminate the requirement to review each line of text and apply codes, it did provide a multidimensional picture of the dataset, as opposed to a transcript's two-dimensional view. I found coding with NVivo was faster and more effective than manual coding, resulting in substantial time and effort savings.

Inductive analysis required open coding line-by-line, which allowed for the production and alteration of codes as coding progressed. Each transcript was viewed on the NVivo review screen, which enabled the identification and movement of key research-relevant material into an NVivo node on the analysis screen. Each transcript was analysed in its entirety, with data stored into nodes constructed from previously analysed transcripts or new nodes that did not emerge throughout the initial reading at step one. After initial open coding of all 14 transcripts, the analytic interface displayed a list of NVivo nodes containing participant data. Each node was inspected superficially to validate that its content was date/time/respondent-stamped, indicating clearly who contributed the data included in the data code. I made research journal entries at this stage which provided early insight into the divide between experienced and inexperienced soldiers

### **5.5.7e Step 3. Searching for Themes**

The purpose of this stage was to collect descriptive information on the setting or individuals, as well as categories or themes for analysis. During this phase, I analysed the nodes to discover whether or not they shared common themes or relationships. To do this, useful facts with similar qualities were organised into a single theme. NVivo was utilised to link this data using the create relationship option on the analysis page. To establish the

veracity of any discovery pertaining to a topic, significant information was organised into themes and supported by its relevance to the study's emphasis.

Chapter Six of this thesis sets out the main themes and sub-themes identified using Moira and Brid's (2017) assertion that themes reflect a variety of individual viewpoints and are supported by a number of quotations and specific facts. As stated previously, themes were selected based on the detection of a pattern that revealed something significant or intriguing about participant responses and their relationship to the research topic (pp. 3351-33514). NVivo code diagrams were constructed to help illustrate the connections between participant responses, the nodes I had placed them into and their relationship with the main themes. Early theme coding diagrams have been included in the abridged research journal appendix of this thesis to illustrate how several iterations of coding enabled the final coding diagrams to go beyond my initial and superficial findings.

#### **5.5.7f Step 4: Reviewing Themes**

This stage, according to Braun and Clarke (2012), improves the depiction of description and themes in qualitative narratives (pp. 57-69). During this phase, I revised and expanded the preliminary themes established in step three. The goal was to ensure that each of the chosen topics made sense. This necessitated rereading participant transcripts to ensure that themes were not only data-driven but also congruent with their narratives. Examining the emergence of potential themes inside and across participant viewpoints was an essential aspect of reviewing themes. Moreover, as proposed by Patton (2002, pp. 112-150), the internal and external homogeneity of potential themes was assessed to ensure that each theme contained nodes and categories that were consistent with one another yet distinct from one another.

### **5.5.7g Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes**

This was the penultimate stage of thematic refinement, and the purpose was to "discover the essence" of each subject, as indicated by Braun and Clarke (2012, pp. 57-71). Over the course of four years, the data were analysed numerous times to discover the following: the message conveyed by the theme, the existence of subthemes, how they interacted with and related to the primary themes, and the link between all of the themes. During a lengthy period of analysis, superficial themes evolved into something far more meaningful due to my ability to not only step back from the analysis process but also examine the themes from different perspectives to ensure that I extracted data that provided a deeper understanding of what the participants said during our conversations.

At this point, it was evident that motivations for action centred on respect for others, empathy, and compassion. There was a marked difference in how the participants justified their use of lethal force, with length of service and experience serving as the common denominator. The participants either described an objective thought process for lethal force using rules as points of reference in ambiguous situations, or they were able to place specific behaviours within the cultural context in which they were occurring, thereby providing a clearer picture of what was actually occurring in front of them.

### **5.5.7h Step 6: Writing Up**

Throughout the analytical phase of my research study, I kept a journal in which I noted prominent steps of the journey and my thoughts at each point. The journal had both crucial statistics and a narrative outlining my approach to each stage. In steps four and five, all handwritten notes and mind maps were digitised and transferred into NVivo. This ensured that the journal had as much data and ideas as possible for future consideration. The

journal was developed so that I could not only refer back to the organised results of the analysis, but also to my thoughts and emotions during this time. This was essential to ensure that a solid foundation of reasoning existed to refute any unexplained discoveries identified later in the study. The journal would help me describe my thought process when constructing findings, which would be essential for connecting each part of the research throughout the writing stage. In addition, it was essential for me to record my own experiences because they would later prove vital for elaborating my initial conclusions, which were based on situational and time-bound reasoning.

The conclusions offered in Chapter Eight are the result of a four-year period of analysis using the hermeneutic circle, which includes not just multiple revisits of the text and its original setting, but also reflections on my more complex personal situation. By critically rereading the interview transcripts and remaining attentive to the experiences and viewpoints of others, I was able to confront my own bias and broaden my first analysis far beyond the initial, superficial and at times naïve conclusions. Over the course of four years, my initial knowledge horizon, shaped by my own presuppositions and worldviews, was fused with the knowledge horizons of others, broadening my understanding of what motivated these 14 soldiers to act in accordance with right and wrong during a high-risk and complex military operation in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

## **5.6 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were incorporated into practically every stage of study planning and design from the outset. Throughout the recruitment process, I was cautious that participation in this research project could cause anxiety, especially during the interviews. The potential for participants to discuss incidents involving death and/or significant harm



constituted the primary study risk. During their prior tours, both selected units had a higher-than-average death and major injury rate (MoD, 2015a), which required consideration throughout data gathering procedures. I was responsible for determining any risk of harm between myself and any participant during the engagement process. This study's sample consisted of soldiers with operational combat experience, making them a vulnerable population susceptible to re-traumatisation, necessitating rigorous adherence to the ethical principle of protecting participants from psychological harm.

It was recognised that the nature of this research could re-traumatise the participants, leading to long-term distress, anxiety, or embarrassment. Priority was always given to the participants' safety over the objective of collecting data from a vulnerable group. The data gathering method prioritised providing just enough structure to spark a discourse, while allowing participants to negotiate difficult areas at their own pace. By structuring interviews so that sensitive topics were introduced in the middle of the conversation, I was able to use my professional judgement to determine whether it was appropriate to proceed to the next phase or to simply stay within safe areas of discussion to protect the participant from anticipated emotional distress.

The study was conducted in accordance with MOD research ethics protocols (JSP536, 2014). Both senior commanders responsible for their soldiers' emotional and physical well-being screened the larger sample group, with each unit's senior medical officer granting final consent for the smaller sample group. Before the ethical approval board at Northumbria University gave ethical approval, no fieldwork was undertaken. The ethical approval board at Northumbria deemed the ethical risk to be high due to considerable concerns involving emotional distress beyond the normal experience of participants or

researchers, sensitive themes like as trauma or loss, and information covered by the Official Secrets Act.

As a qualified Post Traumatic Incident Manager (TRIM) and Post Operational Stress Manager (POSM), I was able to reduce risk in areas one and two of the risk assessment for ethical approval when working with soldiers who had undergone traumatic events. TRIM and POSM training provided a mechanism for identifying signs of emotional discomfort during conversations and served as a guide for determining when it was safe to proceed with more sensitive areas of discussion or to return to areas where the participant felt comfortable and exhibited no anxiety or discomfort. While every effort was made to safeguard the participants, I overlooked my own safety. I realised that my health and resilience were failing as a result of the intense focus on completing the data collecting phase as a result of completing all 14 interviews in a relatively short amount of time across a broad geographical area. My position aligned with Dunn's (1991) assessment that "the qualitative researcher is frequently unprepared to deal with the stress, intense personal engagement, role conflicts, discomfort, and physical/mental strain associated with such research" (1991, pp. 388-392).

Drozdewski (2015) contends that distress connected with traumatic conversation may emerge differently in the bodies of different researchers (pp. 30-36). According to Dickson-Smith et al. (2008), researchers working on sensitive topics may endure physical and emotional issues like headaches, sleeplessness, and gastrointestinal issues (pp. 133-144). Additionally, Dunn (1991) reported that while conducting interviews with domestic abuse victims for her study, she frequently became "choked with emotion throughout the painful sessions." Additionally, she "felt rage and impotence, which manifested as sleep difficulties and other somatic issues" (pp. 388-392).

Two years after the interviews, in the middle of a global pandemic and the collapse of Afghanistan, my own personal experiences and those from an intense period of interviewing weighed heavily on me, prompting a brief period of voluntary withdrawal from the project. Reflecting back, I realised that I had experienced every symptom mentioned by Dunn, Drozdowski, and Dickson-Smith et al. (Dickson-Smith et al., 2008; Drozdowski, 2015; Dunn, 1991) and it became clear that I had slept-walked into a PTSD diagnosis.

At the beginning of each interview, participants were cautioned not to reveal anything that would incriminate them or a third party under military or criminal law. In addition, participants were cautioned that the conversation might be halted at any time if an individual appeared to be about to incriminate themselves or others. Participants were advised that I was compelled by law to disclose any criminal information to the Royal Military Police. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were provided with information on Combat Stress, an organisation that aids those who have suffered emotional trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder. Following the interview, a period was spent discussing irrelevant topics in an effort to deflect attention away from any potential negative reflections that may have resulted from the interaction.

Participants were treated with dignity and respect from the moment they were invited to participate until the conclusion of their involvement. This included protecting their privacy and keeping their information confidential, as well as allowing them to withdraw without penalty if they changed their minds or concluded that the research did not correspond with their interests. Participants were informed that they would be alerted if new information became available throughout the course of the study that impacted their assessment of the risks and benefits of participation.

## Chapter Six: Findings

### 6.1 Introduction

As described in Chapter One, the purpose of this study was to investigate the resources that Aristotelian ethics may provide for understanding good soldiering in the twenty-first century and, if so, which virtues are most important for this understanding. This chapter will therefore begin by outlining the most significant empirical findings, which will be presented in three primary themes: first, motivations for action; second, length of service; and third, core virtues. The chapter begins with a description of participant characteristics in terms of operational experience and roles within those deployments, followed by participants' recollections of their experiences in those positions and in larger social structures. As many of the participants' words as feasible are incorporated into this chapter. In the Findings chapter, there are minimal references to other sources, and little attempt is made to evaluate the participant narratives in light of any external history.

The terms "experienced" and "inexperienced" are used consistently throughout this chapter and are defined as follows: "experienced" refers to soldiers with over six years of service prior to 2009 and two deployments to Afghanistan, one of which was in a junior leadership role; "inexperienced" refers to soldiers with less than six years of service and only one deployment as a private soldier. These definitions are crucial because they are used to create narratives about specific topics. Pseudonyms are utilised throughout, with Appendix 1 clarifying the relationship between the pseudonym and experience and Appendix 2 providing the theoretical underpinning supporting the conversational technique developed expressly to inform this study.

In addition, the phrases "theoretical knowledge" and "practical wisdom" must be framed similarly to "experienced" and "inexperienced" throughout this chapter. In this chapter and throughout the thesis, I define practical wisdom as information learned via daily hands-on experience. In other words, practical wisdom is largely impacted by real-world endeavours and actions. In contrast, theoretical knowledge explains the logic, methods, and theories of knowledge. The remainder of this chapter addresses the characteristics of the participants and the key themes identified during the analysis phase.

## **6.2 The Participants**

All 14 volunteers<sup>12</sup> had frontline combat experience from two recent deployments to Afghanistan. Prior to Afghanistan, participants had a variety of experiences, with some having served in Iraq, Bosnia, and Northern Ireland, resulting in a sample that could offer unique perspectives on warfighting environments such as Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as peace support and humanitarian operations in Bosnia and Northern Ireland. Each participant received specialised training in several specialties, such as long-range sniper, combat medical technician, patrol commander, and patrol machine gunner. The ranks of volunteers ranged from Private (entry-level rank with limited command capabilities) to Sergeant (senior non-commissioned rank with expanded command responsibilities).

The 14 participants provided a sample that included roles and experiences that required individual decision-making from a range of perspectives, resulting in a balanced dataset of different moral judgement and decision-making experiences. This was essential for

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<sup>12</sup> Referencing system for direct quotes aligns to the pseudonym at appendix 2, and participant number e.g., Steven, participant 6 (Steven, P6).

ensuring that everyone's lived experience and subjectivity were unique and not dependent on generalisations or anecdotes from soldiers in more general roles. The skill sets of the participants were sufficiently distinctive regarding their experiences in combat and peace support activities, but not so distinctive that their responses could be identified as those of participants when the research was made public.

**Table 3: Participant Characteristics**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Service in years</b>	<b>Deployments</b>	<b>Role on deployments</b>
<b>P1</b> ( <i>Kenny</i> )	31	Private	3	Kosovo Afghanistan Africa	Patrol member Infantry Training Team
<b>P2</b> ( <i>Peter</i> )	32	Corporal	12	Afghanistan Mali	Patrol Commander Training Junior NCO
<b>P3</b> ( <i>Michael</i> )	25	Private	2	Afghanistan	Patrol member
<b>P4</b> ( <i>Danny</i> )	31	Private	3	Iraq Afghanistan	Patrol member Patrol medic
<b>P5</b> ( <i>Andy</i> )	27	Private	2	Afghanistan	Patrol member Acting Patrol second in command
<b>P6</b> ( <i>Steven</i> )	28	Corporal	14	Afghanistan Iraq	Patrol second in command Mortar fire controller
<b>P7</b> ( <i>Lee</i> )	30	Private	6	Afghanistan Iraq	Patrol Sniper & medic
<b>P8</b> ( <i>Roger</i> )	27	Corporal	9	Northern Ireland Kosovo Iraq Afghanistan	Patrol second in command Patrol member Intelligence gathering Combat signaller
<b>P9</b> ( <i>Ted</i> )	34	Sergeant	16	Northern Ireland Iraq Afghanistan Kosovo	Patrol commander Patrol member Combat planning Patrol medic
<b>P10</b> ( <i>Billy</i> )	24	Private	1	Afghanistan Iraq	Patrol member Patrol member
<b>P11</b> ( <i>Paul</i> )	31	Private	1	Afghanistan Saudi Arabia	Patrol member
<b>P12</b> ( <i>Terry</i> )	29	Lance corporal	3	Iraq Afghanistan	Patrol member
<b>P13</b> ( <i>Mark</i> )	24	Private	3	Afghanistan	Patrol member Patrol medic
<b>P14</b> ( <i>Jason</i> )	22	Private	1	Afghanistan	Patrol member

### **6.3 Main Themes**

The three primary themes of reasons for action, length of service, and core virtues, as well as their corresponding subthemes, were formed over the course of four years and innumerable rewrites. During this time period, analysis was undertaken from multiple perspectives, as indicated in the researcher and reflexivity sections of the chapter on methodology. Unlike other research methodologies, phenomenological analysis differentiates between appearance and substance and as argued by Gadamer, is possible via reflection to illuminate previously obscure parts of experiences that would be beyond our normal capacity to comprehend in daily life (Gadamer, 1975). Consequently, my interpretations are based on MacIntyre's concept of tradition-constituted inquiry and are derived from the soldiers' personal experiences within a unique military social structure, their relationships with others, and the situational factors typical of complex expeditionary operations. Each primary theme will be supported by a combination of my own interpretive narrative and participant voice.

#### **6.3.1 Theme One: Reasons for Action**

The primary influences on the actions of the soldiers in the study included a general belief that all people, regardless of culture, had the basic human right to be respected, their role as a soldier within a local and broader mission purpose, and an emotional capacity to not only comprehend the impact of physical and emotional harm as a result of their actions, but also act to prevent the unnecessary harm to anyone. The 14 soldiers' sentiments of self-worth and pride were based on their ability to reduce and/or prevent harm to others in both lethal and nonlethal scenarios. It is vital to emphasise that their actions were driven by a particular sense of pride and self-worth linked with their role as professional soldiers, their

unit, the army, their service to their country, and the overall mission to protect the vulnerable. The emotions and resulting behaviours of the soldiers were based on actions that could only be performed within the military community's specialised social structure. Soldiers also exhibited a particular type of camaraderie, mutual dependence, the exercise of courage and competence in the face of a lethal threat, and a certain type of pride as a result of their participation in these activities.

Using situational judgments based on experience to apply logic capable of going beyond the objective application of a rule that was not nuanced enough to make an educated conclusion was another crucial area. Soldiers were particularly proud to be entrusted with weapons and the protection of defenceless civilians amidst the everyday horrors of war. The execution of a specific set of actions, not only within the context of the use of force, but also in establishing trust and positive relationships with Afghan locals with whom they interacted, demonstrated that the motivation underlying the behaviour of the 14 soldiers extended beyond the soldiers within their own military social structure to include all individuals with whom they interacted. The fourteen soldiers reported engaging in actions that, while distinct from the practice of compassion on a hospital ward or in a nursing home, may be construed as compassionate.

In a manner consistent with the definition of camaraderie, the soldiers described the foundation of moral coherence as a fundamentally human action carried out by soldiers whose camaraderie provided the necessary companionship and mutual trust to endure and overcome danger, fear, and deprivation. It was also evident that their descriptions of military camaraderie were influenced by the teams they work with, train with, live with, and socialise with. Despite major environmental conditions symptomatic of moral disengagement, their camaraderie remained stable during their service in Afghanistan.



Personal emotions were also categorised as positive or negative, with each category corresponding to a factor that motivated their behaviour. The desire to avoid actions that result in negative emotions such as low self-esteem, regret, guilt, and shame prompted participants to consider how they should act to avoid generating emotions associated with unwarranted (physical and emotional) harm, thereby avoiding the negative emotional outcome. Roger remarked as follows:

At some point in the future, I will no doubt look back at my time in Afghanistan and more generally the Army and say to myself 'I did that' with an emphasis on being proud of what I contributed towards as opposed to looking back and saying 'I did that' with a sense of shame and regret. I want to make positive contributions in my life so I can say I did the right things which I'm sure will make me sleep well at night when my time in the Army is over (Roger, P8).

Roger's correlation of self-reproach with his ability to maintain the connection between his actions and their consequences reveals not only his self-awareness, but also his understanding that his actions serve a greater purpose. Roger's ability to connect his moral boundaries and self-awareness not only to his immediate environment but also to his entire existence is evident. Roger's views of the behavior-altering effects of emotional events were not unique. Other experienced soldiers stated a desire to base their actions on the predictability of reaching positive outcomes that resulted in positive emotions such as pride, self-worth, and satisfaction associated with doing the right thing, which was essential for being a professional soldier. Soldiers re-enacted scenarios in which they made judgements based on the immediate and long-term repercussions, as well as its chance of having a favourable or negative impact on the individuals affected by their decision. Soldiers indicated how they constantly recalled how they felt in the past after making both good and bad decisions, and how the possibility of experiencing those feelings again

influenced how they structured potential decisions. Billy cited a prior example to illustrate how his emotions influenced his behaviour. As Billy stated:

I think we have all been there at some stage where we say to ourselves 'probably not one of my best decisions' during a period of regret. Seemed like such a good idea at the time but looking back now going out drinking on a Thursday night with early morning battle PT the next day was never going to produce happy memories. I haven't been out on a Thursday night now for a long while, even when I'm on leave which seems strange thinking about it (Billy, P10).

Patterns reflecting both negative and positive emotions emerged, suggesting that they played a role in behavioural coordination by automatically triggering a set of reactions developed through earlier experiences and interactions in the military and broader social domains. These positive and negative experiences provided soldiers with reliable emotional reference points, enabling them to deal with complex situations without becoming entangled in policy or procedure when time was of the essence. Major predictors of soldiers' current and future behaviour were the feelings they predicted (both positive and negative) or had experienced as a result of previous decisions. As a result of the positive emotions such as pride and self-worth generated by performing professionally as a soldier whose mission is to defend vulnerable individuals, a strong propensity to respond compassionately was observable.

### **6.3.1a Purpose Guided Actions**

Experienced soldiers assessed how their tactical actions corresponded with not only the immediate objective, but also the long-term strategic objective, by evaluating previous personal experiences and practical wisdom against the anticipated impact of their actions. All decisions were directed by a sense of the soldiers' purpose inside a certain social order and their function within it. For instance, while all soldiers recognised that the tactical

purpose of their presence in Afghanistan was to eliminate the Taliban, only experienced soldiers could build on this understanding. Experienced soldiers also understood that more was required than the tactical employment of military power to reduce harm and create positive change. Experienced soldiers were able to position a purpose inside a sequential process, demonstrating how one action led to the next and so on. Only soldiers with past experience in the province of Helmand were able to comprehend how behaviour could impact tactical and strategic objectives.

In contrast, inexperienced soldiers were only able to identify the purpose of their actions within the immediate tactical environment, as opposed to the profession's greater strategic objective and purpose. Inexperienced soldiers defined the strategic objective of their activities in terms of a larger, person-centered moral ideal applicable to their lives in general, as opposed to a specific military objective. Inexperienced soldiers did not assess the consequences of their actions beyond their immediate tactical response in terms of military objectives and strategies. In the lack of this information, inexperienced soldiers had difficulty making effective decisions when confronted with contextually complicated dilemmas that could have far-reaching implications. When employing lethal force, it was evident that inexperienced soldiers were unaware of the relationship between their tactical actions, their unit's overarching purpose, and strategic military objectives..

### **6.3.1b Tactical Purpose**

Experienced soldiers were able to evaluate the impact of their decisions not just on the tactical situation at hand, but also on the strategic military mission in Afghanistan and the army's reputation as a profession. Ted declared:

I'm proud to call myself a professional soldier and professional soldiers don't just shoot from the hip like some hired gunslinger. We are supposed to make things

better for people who cannot protect themselves. I don't want to be held responsible for producing the next generation of insurgents or for making an already dangerous environment even worse for other units who deploy here after we leave (Ted, P9).

Additionally, Ted emphasised how his three tours in Afghanistan integrated purpose with decision-making. Ted noted that his explanation illustrates his ability to determine not only what was right or wrong in a given circumstance, but also how his actions linked to the greater purpose of a professional soldier and the contribution expected of a professional soldier within a professional army:

If you don't know what you're trying to achieve its difficult to know if what you're doing is adding value or making things worse. You must think things through quickly and for me it's about reaching a point where I can say my actions are necessary, proportionate, and aligned to not only what the immediate need is but what the long-term impact of my decision could be. It's easy to tell yourself the person digging on a track is an insurgent and use lethal force but get it wrong and you're responsible for generating increased hatred towards soldiers who are supposed to be making things better – not worse. I'm no genius but I'm sure shooting farmers isn't something that supports bringing peace to Afghanistan (Ted, P9).

According to experienced soldiers, their acts were motivated by a careful weighing of what was ethically and militarily correct. Extensive explanations illustrated how their interaction between tactical, strategic, and professional judgement and purpose functioned during operations in Afghanistan. During his second deployment, Peter reported an instance in which a pre-planned operation unfolded unexpectedly:

We were told to expect heavy Taliban resistance about 500 meters north of the river and to call in the Apache attack helicopters to clear our route to the river. It was important we got to the river otherwise B Company would be outflanked and potentially surrounded. Strangely we only faced light resistance so I decided I didn't need the Apaches because if I kept the forward momentum, I would reach the river anyway and if I ran into trouble, they were there. The plan changed and I made a gut decision based upon knowing my teams' purpose which was to get to

the river and protect B Company's flank which in my mind could be achieved without risking innocent casualties by calling in Apache attack helicopters. That would serve no purpose other than to strengthen hatred towards us and produce the next generation of insurgents (Peter, P2).

Peter's example demonstrates an understanding of the connection between applying practical wisdom in context and a broader comprehension of not only his team's mission, but also how his actions support or undermine a higher strategic purpose.

Steven presented an equally comprehensive explanation of how tactical intent and judgement were necessary to ensure that actions benefited, rather than harmed, not only the short-term, but also the long-term:

There's always a purpose to everything that happens – good and bad. Sometimes you just must see the bigger picture and associate what you are seeing locally into intentions regionally, nationally, and sometimes globally. Sometimes the Taliban shoot at us with the sole intention of encouraging us to respond disproportionately which feeds into the negative image they need to win the moral war. With pictures of wounded civilians going online globally within minutes you must consider the long-term damage caused by individual actions. The war in Afghanistan was only ever going to be lost through using inappropriate force – people don't tend to forget images of casualties quickly. Restraint is always a difficult sell with young soldiers who are scared and aren't experienced enough to know what's playing out in front of them (Steven, P6).

Ted illustrated the nuances of proportionality in regard to tactical intent:

You must trust your instincts as too much thinking is as bad as none. One response may be to use force and the same scenario the next day you don't. You often see the same events playing out in front of you but it's rare to respond the same way all the time. Sometimes its white, sometimes its black, but without a doubt if you're not looking for grey, you're in trouble. I suppose its situational and what is too much on one day could be too little on another – it's as difficult or easy as you want to make it. For me, I just get a sense for what to do (Ted, P9).

### 6.3.1c Strategic and Professional Purpose

In addition to the notion of self-defence, the focus was placed on the urgent preservation of life in the face of direct tactical threats. However, experienced soldiers were able to divide their actions into two distinct categories: the broad military strategic objective and their specialised function as British Army soldiers (p.199). Typically, the decisions and actions of experienced soldiers aligned with one of the outlined criteria (p.176). Although intent played a role in non-lethal force decision-making, it was most evident in narratives involving the use of life-threatening force in ambiguous situations requiring judgment to choose the appropriate tactical approach.

Purpose in ambiguous lethal force decision-making revealed the difference between experienced and inexperienced soldiers in terms of how their interpretation of purpose influenced their decision-making (p.176). Due to their prior awareness of the consequences of the inappropriate use of lethal force, experienced soldiers examined both the strategic military and professional aspects of their action. Roger made the following remark:

Try convincing the locals you're there to help after your guys have just fired half the world's supply of ammunition towards their compound because someone thought they saw something, and everyone just followed on. They probably look at us and think the Taliban are more professional than you cowboys. It's embarrassing to think a professional Army can become so cavalier so quickly (Roger, P8).

Past experiences were used to assess the most probable strategic and professional outcomes of tactical actions in terms of how they aided or hindered their strategic and professional aims in Afghanistan (p.199).

According to experienced soldiers, their purpose in Afghanistan was to create a safe environment by eliminating the Taliban with proportional and necessary force, without

causing physical or emotional harm to civilians (p.199). This required solid judgements, necessitating the synthesis of multiple pieces of information that, when combined provided a deeper understanding of the activity occurring in front of them, despite its resemblance to hostile actions. Soldiers reported that the satisfaction they derived from making rational decisions supportive of establishing positive relationships with those they interacted with reinforced their broader sense of belonging to a professional community they cared about enough to risk their lives for. Soldiers regarded this as the essence of what it meant to be a professional soldier and acting otherwise jeopardised this deeply held conviction (p. 194). Ted responded eloquently when asked why he remained in service despite the challenging conditions and high risks inherent to being an Infantry soldier during a period of escalating operational tours. Ted declared:

For the same reason you did – because it gives that intense inner feeling of doing something good with your life and belonging to something bigger than you. The good times, bad times, and really bad times only make you want to be a part of the family even more knowing they would give their life for you knowing you would do the same for them without hesitation. It gives me such a good feeling that I can't imagine you could get anywhere else and that's what gets me out of bed every morning knowing not everyone can do what I do or have been where I have been. I can look at what I have achieved and will achieve with a sense of pride strong enough to die for (Ted, P9).

### **6.3.2 Theme Two: Length of Service**

The participants separated into experienced soldiers who relied on their own discretion to make lethal decisions in light of both short and long-term risks to themselves, their comrades, and local civilians (who may or may not have been enemy combatants) and inexperienced soldiers who relied on a rules-based approach that lacked the flexibility provided by experience.

### 6.3.2a Subjective and Objective Approaches to Moral Ambiguity

Experienced soldiers used a person-centered, subjective analytical approach derived from earlier experiences, whereas inexperienced soldiers used an objective approach based on non-military experiences and PDT theoretical knowledge. Individual accounts of action were described, suggesting that practical wisdom acquired through experience and theoretical knowledge acquired through instruction were the two primary techniques for constructing an interpretation of reality and then acting upon it.

While theoretical knowledge aided in the comprehension of fundamental concepts of hostile behaviour and the ability to react legally within the context of lethal force rules of engagement, it was insufficient in translating situational context that could have provided a means of distinguishing between innocent and hostile activity when there was uncertainty. For inexperienced soldiers, a lack of past expertise in assessing situational circumstances in Helmand Province rendered it impossible for them to consider alternative explanations for the activity they were observing. In a situation demanding lethal force, it was evident that this had influenced the reliance on theoretical knowledge and rules of engagement. Billy (P10) indicated how he aligned himself with an orders and rules of engagement process when asked to describe how he perceived rules in uncertain situations:

My thoughts would be, have these people been warned? I would say it depends in what context really. If we've just got there and I don't know the atmospherics, I don't know what's going on there. This is serious. You're telling me to shoot anyone that's digging in the ground. I can kill anyone, and my blokes can kill anyone that's digging in the ground. Well, there must be a massive threat for that to come down. This can't be like a judging situation. This is shoot him, he's digging in the ground. So, I'd do as I'm told (Billy, P10).

Comparatively, experienced soldiers demonstrated that practical wisdom and experience distinguished aptitude from mere knowledge of how to perform an action, and their



practical wisdom enabled them to determine whether following a rule in a given context would support or undermine the mission's larger purpose in Afghanistan. In addition, it was evident that the difficulty in distinguishing insurgents from non-combatants was the key concern when addressing their behaviour in ambiguous situations. Soldiers reported that when evaluated objectively, peaceful agricultural activity and hostile IED placement appeared identical.

### **6.3.2b Practical Wisdom**

The voice of the experienced soldier was prevalent throughout discussions on the use of lethal force in ambiguous situations, with soldiers delivering lengthy narratives about their own experiences and perceptions. The use of practical wisdom in situations demanding the prediction of future effects while making decisions was facilitated by personal experiences. Steven (P6), who served in Helmand Province from 2007 to 2009, described how his contextual awareness impacted his decision-making. When asked to describe how difficult it was to operate in Helmand Province, Steven stated:

the locals don't move out when the fighting starts, they have lived there for generations and have learned to live with the fighting going on around them, you just have to deal with it (Steven, P6).

Peter (P11), who had comparable operational experiences to Steven was also asked to define what complicated operations in Helmand Province consisted of. Peter described how his prior military experience in Afghanistan enabled him to translate situational context, which aided in his approach to the difficulties of differentiating combatants from non-combatants. Peter drew attention to the nature of ambiguity by describing the process of separating farmers from insurgents:

not everyone who lives in Helmand Province is an insurgent, most of them are farmers and have to provide for their family, difficulty is they tend to look the same until you start to see the wider context (Peter, P11).

Several other experienced soldiers suggested that their prior experiences in Helmand Province enabled them to interpret situational context in order to understand that digging on a track could also be associated with a farmer redirecting water flow as part of an irrigation system; however, each pointed out that this could be easily misinterpreted as an insurgent laying an IED if only pre-deployment training was used to make decisions. Ted (P9), who served in Helmand Province during 2007 and 2009, presented another illustration of how translating situational context was essential to his interpretation of his surroundings. Ted declared:

it's not just a rifle pointing at you that can get you killed in this place, what can appear to be quite innocent in isolation can rapidly turn into something far more dangerous without warning (Ted, P9).

Lee (P7), a patrol medic during the same time period, demonstrated how his experience in Helmand Province enhanced his ability to interpret situational context, thereby superseding theoretical knowledge and a rule-based approach:

you just have to work this stuff out yourself as training structures your mind around a direct threat to life which isn't helpful when innocent activity can so easily be mistaken as hostile action or intention (Lee, P7).

Experiences gained through practical application allowed for a more nuanced understanding of challenging situations, allowing for the possibility of a different interpretation of the observed action. Intellect and deliberation were key components of the decision-making procedure. Steven (P6), who served twice in Afghanistan between 2007

and 2009, indicated that if pre-deployment training served as the basis for action, an inability to integrate current variables into actual knowledge could have disastrous consequences. Steven stated:

two people can see the same thing but come to a completely different decision, unfortunately for a farmer doing nothing more than working his land, some will see him as an IED layer which will have a catastrophic outcome (Steven, P6).

Ted (P9), a senior non-commissioned officer (SNCO) with 16 years of service, asserted that experience demonstrated how, in his opinion, situational context provides an element of awareness that must be considered when determining a course of action. He stated this in order to illustrate how soldiers arrived at different perspectives on the same activity.

Ted, when asked to describe his operational decision-making process, recalled a conversation he had with Jason (an inexperienced soldier) about their divergent perceptions on what might be reality while watching a person dig on a track at night:

it gets as hot as the hell in Afghanistan during the summer and even the locals do their manual labouring at night because its cooler. Perhaps when you look through night vision equipment you can see he's in his eighties and probably doesn't want to die of heat exhaustion by digging in the day's heat. Then again, if I had not offered that point of view to Jason, he would have probably shot him based upon an inexperienced perception it was clearly a hostile intention and act (Ted, P9).

Ted expressed that the chance to practice deliberating various possibilities in the context of a scenario allows for the development of contextual analysis, which, over time, prepares individuals with the capability to resist situational pressures that may influence their course of action. Ted described this method as "common sense":

the more you do it the more you can digest complex information quickly, even under pressure as it becomes natural to consider more than what's directly in front of you. It's about how you understand the implications of what you're seeing and how you react to them. It's just common sense really (Ted, P9).

Prior experiences and a cultural understanding of Helmand Province were crucial to the decision-making process pertaining to the use of lethal force. The flexibility of practical wisdom compared to the application of theoretical information may explain why two completely different courses of action with drastically different outcomes may occur from viewing the same event. Intriguingly, when Jason (P14) was asked if he could recollect a time when he was forced to make a life-or-death decision, he detailed the incident with the person digging on the track but did not identify Ted by name. Jason declared:

For me it was simple, he was digging on a track in the dark which is what IED layers do. His actions would lead to someone being seriously injured or killed and it was within the rules of engagement to shoot him. I didn't because I was on sentry with my patrol commander, and he told me not to, so I didn't – wrong call in my opinion (Jason, P14).

Ted (P9), when asked how he utilised his experience and practical wisdom in another challenging situation in Afghanistan, described an instance in which he felt that the orders he was given by a person with less situational context than himself would result in a response that was not conducive to protecting the vulnerable. Ted's notion of 'others' included other soldiers and Afghan people as those badly affected and needlessly harmed.

Ted declared:

This is about interpreting rules. So, on that day I interpreted that rule and decided that I wasn't going to do that. Because to tell that soldier that his father had died would impact you, it would impact that multiple, but more importantly you've got someone walking 1.5 kilometres through an IED belt not even on his B-game; on his C-game and the lives of those other 11 people were at risk. But it's off the basis of knowing the impact of what could happen and it's about weighing up all the factors around you. Because sometimes the factors around you make more sense than what's right in front of your face. It's that ability to make decisions where this whole thing is about there's other stuff to consider. There's something right in front of my face that's obvious, but the other stuff could be more important (Ted, P9).

Ted's comprehension of the environment and context, as well as his desire to minimise unnecessary injury to not just his soldiers but also those they would interact with, led him to reject a direct command from a senior officer he judged lacked adequate information to comprehend the consequences of what he was ordering him to do. Roger (P8) responded eloquently to the same issue, but he distinguished between innocent farming activity and aggressive insurgent IED behaviour by providing an example. Roger stated:

The first thought that engages in me is, we are living and operating within a farming community. There are going to be many, many people digging in the ground which does not make them a viable target, it doesn't mean you have to prosecute that target. You're at a crossroads of conflict between interpretation and rule. The rule is saying, shoot that person. You're conflicted by your interpretation of what you're seeing however experience and local knowledge translates that into the rule isn't saying shoot that person, the rule is saying, you're allowed to shoot that person if you think it is appropriate to do so. So, in that respect, it would be personal interpretation that decides (Roger, P8).

When asked to describe his definition of interpretation, Roger stated:

So, once again it then becomes an understanding of the environment and understanding of what you're perception of an individual is doing. So, let's say I can see someone near an irrigation channel digging. The likelihood is, they're digging to widen or clear that irrigation channel as opposed to laying an IED. That decision is made because they're next to an exceptionally wet area where the likelihood of an IED getting placed is minimal. They're away from a position where people may use it as a route because they're working within a field. Now, if someone was digging - let's say we've identified someone digging 200 metres off, next to a culvert, away from known agriculture areas on a route which is channelled with an evident use of ground forces, then once again the way you interpret that is completely different. At that point your far closer to pulling the trigger in the first scenario in the understanding that it definitely falls under the remit that you've been given. Equally, you wouldn't fire at the farmer widening his irrigation ditch even though he is still digging in the ground. So, I would say individual interpretation is an understanding of the atmospheric, the environment, of a situation that you're in based on the threat. So, as I used the example before, by understanding the environment as in where the enemy are most likely - understanding the environment of where we are using it. So, tracks et cetera, understand the enemy's capability of what are they most likely going to target? Understanding what we're allowed to do. Within that is my own interpretation. So, I would use the two examples again of the farmer digging in the field and on the vulnerable point. I

would just put that down to my own experience and interpretation of what I know (Roger, P8).

Roger was asked how soldiers could enhance their operational situational awareness without Afghanistan or Iraq from which to gain actual experience. Roger stated:

I think sadly they won't get that experience - they still do get an element of that experience through training, but it is in a simulated environment. Hopefully if we ever do - I say hopefully, I hope we don't, but if we ever did deploy somewhere like Afghanistan there is a basic understanding of principles of the contemporary operating environment. Understanding the culture of the locals and the environment enables you to see past the obvious and translate something into what it actually is as opposed to what it superficially looks like. So, whether we're doing the contemporary operating environment phase of Exercise Wessex Storm or whatever, there is still some form of simulation training that goes on which provides the opportunity to choose different courses of action (Roger, P8).

During a conversation, Peter (P2) was asked to elaborate on a remark about influencing others through his presence and behaviour. Peter mentioned a circumstance comparable to Ted and Jason's divergent perspectives, in which an inexperienced soldier with whom he was on sentry did not appreciate the importance of context. Peter stated:

He actually said to me, I don't know where you're coming from here because he's digging in the ground. I've been told I can shoot people digging in the ground, what's your problem? I think then the best I could do was try and educate him by talking him through the basic facts of what's happening. So, I said take a second and try and work this out. We're operating in a rural community, put yourself in his shoes. You are living in a rural community; you are going to dig in the ground in order to produce your livelihood. Is it anywhere near where we would get targeted? I explained the basic fundamentals of what was more likely to be going on and hopefully broadened his understanding and improved his decision-making process. I think he understood that just because he could didn't mean he needed to act on it. Not sure I would dress up as a farmer and test this though (Peter, P2).

### **6.3.2c Theoretical Knowledge**

Even inexperienced soldiers were capable of providing persuasive justifications for their use of lethal force. However, these arguments were restricted to theoretical knowledge

devoid of situational context and were affected by their experiences during simulated operations conducted during Pre-Deployment Training (PDT), which were governed by lethal force rules of engagement (RoE). Participants in the study all described how PDT was condensed and completed rapidly, with an emphasis on hostile action scenarios. There was an emerging narrative that PDT affected the decision-making of soldiers in difficult situations. According to the responses of soldiers with limited experience, hostile action training greatly influenced their tactical judgement regarding the use of lethal force during deployment. Terry (P12), who served as a patrol member in Afghanistan in 2009, called attention to PDT by stating:

virtually all PDT focuses on worst case scenarios, everyone shoots at you, so you shoot back, every training patrol has direct hostile action so when it happens for real, training kicks in and it's quick and easy to use lethal force because you have been pre-conditioned to react that way (Terry, P12).

Danny (P4), who served as a patrol member in Afghanistan in 2007, responded similarly when asked if his exposure to PDT had affected his perspective on the use of lethal force:

you do so much hostile action PDT it's instinct that reacts quicker than your brain. It's like touching something hot – you don't think it's hot before you stop touching it, you just instinctively stop touching it and think about how hot it was afterwards. Reacting to being shot at is the same (Danny, P4).

Numerous experienced soldiers expressed their concerns that the design of PDT could contribute to the disproportionate and inappropriate use of lethal force. In addition, experienced soldiers stated that PDT lacked a mechanism that permitted the consideration of multiple courses of action when presented with a situation that could be interpreted differently. Roger (P8), who twice participated in PDT in 2007 and 2009, stated:

no training is aligned to a normal pattern of life, no training patrol is incident free, and nobody prepares you to operate around civilians. It just feels like you're

conditioned to see everything as a threat which generates this instinct to see and act aggressively (Roger, P8).

Peter (P2), who did the same PDT as Roger, concurred that PDT was not designed to improve a soldier's capacity to interpret situational context, since it appeared to propose courses of action that ignored alternative potential scenarios:

I think there's a worry that if non-hostile training takes place and you end up shooting someone by mistake it could lead to all sorts of problems with confidence which could be a serious problem when that person must use lethal force in a live operation. Hostile action is easy; it's countered with a hostile reaction. Imagine the difficulty of training soldiers to constantly work out complex scenarios which initially present in the same form, but some are threats, but some aren't, strangely that's exactly what life is like when you operate amongst civilians and insurgents alike. Seems crazy in a way we are left to work it out ourselves (Peter, P2).

### **6.3.2d Professionalism and Judgement**

Judgments regarding the use of lethal force in ambiguous scenarios were influenced by an individual's beliefs of the situation's likelihood of posing a risk to life, based on similar prior experiences. The perspective formed by prior experiences and PDT acted as the basis for turning knowledge and rules into a decision. While all interviewees agreed that experience, expertise, and rules all had a role in the use of lethal force, there were notable differences between how experienced and inexperienced soldiers interpreted each factor. Those who had previously served in Afghanistan between 2007 and 2009 deployed lethal force against a person digging on a track with significantly more complexity and deliberation than those on their first deployment.

Roger (P8) provided an illustration to demonstrate how he connected his actions beyond the objective application of a skill using his PDT experience. Roger provides parallels between his opinion of what practical wisdom-based activities are, which he framed under



the concept of professionalism, and the impact unprofessional actions have on others, which he illustrates with a person-centered, empathic example. Roger stated:

There's nothing professional about shooting a farmer when it's obvious that's what he is – a farmer who more than likely has a family (Roger, P8).

Other experienced soldiers stated that the legitimate use of lethal force lies in between applying it solely on the basis of an objective application of the rule in isolation from any surrounding context and not using it when there is a clear risk of death from direct enemy action. The word 'common sense' and its impact on individuals featured heavily in the recollections of soldiers. According to Lee (P7):

Whilst it may initially appear to be a risk to life it doesn't mean it's right to jump straight to lethal force based upon an appearance alone. Sometimes a few seconds of common sense can save someone's life (Lee, P7).

Those with counterinsurgency experience in and around non-combatants also defined professionalism as the capacity to look past uncertainty and beyond the point where a situation was could easily be placed within a threat scenario based upon a superficial interpretation separated from situational awareness (p.177)<sup>13</sup>. While experienced judgement was predicated on the principle of analysing context and setting to identify alternative options, it was not founded on the principle of avoiding the use of lethal force. When practical wisdom precluded innocent behaviour, experienced soldiers were equally at ease with the use of lethal force. Experienced soldiers (Ted, P9, and Roger, P8) defined inappropriate use of lethal force as the practice of manipulating the rules of engagement to

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<sup>13</sup> Individual page numbers are used within chapters four, five, and six to signpost the reader back to relevant points within the thesis.

fit a given scenario without first considering the situational context, thereby satisfying the legal requirements for employing lethal force but not the perceived standards of professionalism (p.179).

Michael, P3, Jason, P14, and Danny, P4, on the other hand, had a clear grip on the notion that the rules of engagement enabled the use of lethal force against an IED layer. Jason, Michael, and Danny's earlier experiences in basic training and PDT influenced their decision-making when faced with ambiguity, as they were either hesitant or unable to proceed beyond the possibility of not applying the rule that authorised the use of lethal force as a first choice (p.178). On the basis of their earlier training experiences linking rules with actions, inexperienced soldiers exhibited a tendency for rule compliance that was easily correlated with their projected response to risk. Unlike experienced soldiers, inexperienced soldiers were motivated to act by the concept of applying rules objectively to permit lethal action without considering situational context.

Inexperienced soldiers had minimal exposure to the army as a social institution outside of training. For them, professionalism meant conforming to rules and being technically proficient in soldiering abilities such as marksmanship, fitness, and obeying orders, which contradicts the views of experienced soldiers. Inexperienced soldiers with fewer than three years of service, when asked to describe the qualities of a good soldier, emphasised physical appearances and abilities. Michael (P3) stated:

If you don't look the part, then how can you claim to be a good soldier. Good soldiers look like good soldiers, and you can't miss them. Smart as a carrot, super fit, and hit what they shoot at – not sure what else there is to it in my opinion (Michael, P3).

Billy (P10) explained that this was a generally held belief among some SNCOs when distinguishing between good and bad soldiers, noting that the phrase "you're not paid to think" is commonly used in the army. Steven (P6) stated, "If you are physically fit and obedient, you will rise rapidly in the military". Ted (P9), an experienced soldier, explained why their beliefs were not only disappointing but also inconsistent with what he regarded to be the definition of a good soldier. Ted draws parallels between technical capabilities, the usage of rewards matched with those talents, and personality attributes that not only motivate egocentric behaviour but also risk undermining the soldiering profession's reputation. Ted declared:

It's sad that you can get promoted because you look smart and can run fast whilst being a complete whopper. The army look for poster boys to present the image of 'look at what you could be if you joined up' problem is behind the poster boy is a career chaser who will throw anyone under the bus to get ahead (Ted, P9).

Through conversations with both experienced and inexperienced soldiers, it became evident that there are two divergent opinions on what constituted a good soldier and, consequently, professionalism. Inexperienced soldiers who had not been deeply engaged in the military social structure appeared incapable of generating associations with the wider aim of soldiering, which is to protect vulnerable individuals, and of matching their behaviours with this larger purpose. However, experienced soldiers demonstrated that prolonged exposure to the military social structure and its activities allowed them to establish connections between their actions and the purpose of soldiering, highlighting the significance of practical wisdom within the concept of protecting the vulnerable.

### **6.3.2e Compartmentalisation**

Personal experiences in the military impacted individual interpretations of events and dispositions to behave contrary to the tendency to align with those interpretations. Roger (p.179) displayed practical wisdom and a person-centered approach while Danny (p.178) applied theoretical information, simulated experience, and engagement norms objectively in a situation involving lethal force. These viewpoints formed due to exposure to particular activities and opportunities to engage in them (p.178). In addition, while separate decisions were influenced by different experiences, the decision-making process did not change while moving from one environment to another. In contrast, inexperienced soldiers adhered to their dependency on theoretical information and simulated experience, which bypassed analytical thought.

It was evident that when experienced soldiers employed lethal force in ambiguous situations, they relied on their situational awareness and what they had seen and experienced to build their own reality regarding what was occurring in front of them (p.175-179). Inexperienced soldiers, on the other hand, had never had the required experience that people digging on tracks could be anything but hostile (p.178), whereas experienced soldiers could relate to this as a reality. Each soldier's own experiences, opportunities, and ability to utilise them had produced dispositions capable of preventing compartmentalisation by remaining intact when transitioning between different operational contexts.

Despite the fact that ambiguous lethal force situations elicited a variety of responses, a consistent theme emerged suggesting that exposure to particular experiences and environments not only shaped how soldiers interpreted their surroundings to construct their

personal reality, but also conditioned them to reflect on and use these interpretations as the basis for future learning and decision-making (p.179). Experienced soldiers exhibited a well-established propensity to apply analytic reasoning to a range of criteria, which, when combined with their situational awareness offered a deeper contextual understanding supporting the ability to make appropriate decisions involving lethal force. Notably, despite undergoing a hostile-focused PDT, their tendency to apply practical wisdom and situational awareness as the basis for their judgement in conjunction with a person-centered approach exceeded the influence of obedience and to comply with the training delivered during PDT (p.180). During PDT, however, inexperienced soldiers demonstrated conformity to PDT by basing their actions on simulated experiences and theoretical knowledge imparted during PDT, which ultimately shaped a decision-making process that excluded additional situational and cultural factors that could have contributed to the presentation of a completely different picture. Despite their differing viewpoints on the events, experienced and inexperienced soldiers' interpretations remained centred on their prior experiences, which impacted their interpretations and subsequent perception of reality in the particular setting.

Discussions with both experienced and inexperienced soldiers revealed that their prior experiences were sufficiently established to not only remain intact when transitioning between different contexts but also to withstand the influence of competing forces inside those new environments.

### **6.3.2f The Influence of Social Structures**

Throughout discussions on the use of lethal force in uncertain situations, the connection between social structures and behaviour was evident. When debating non-lethal force

decision-making, interpretations were not framed by the military environment's overwhelmingly significant influence on practical or theoretical understanding. The percentage of inexperienced soldiers who identified non-military experiences as models of excellent behaviour was significantly higher than that of experienced soldiers. Inexperienced soldiers described how their relationships with friends, family, and positive role models prior to enlistment influenced their interactions with others throughout their relatively brief military duty. There was a focus on belonging to a social framework in which behaviours generated trust and respect regardless of individual differences. Each soldier addressed the origins of their use of non-lethal force in Afghanistan, offering examples from both military and non-military society structures that affected their decisions.

### **6.3.2g Non-military Social Structure**

Inexperienced soldiers valued non-military experiences, the links inside and between them, and the norms that governed these relationships as a means of acquiring knowledge and skills that strengthened their understanding of appropriate behavior. Conversations suggest this was associated with their ability to make decisions in conformity with the social norms of the societies in which they resided outside of the military. The overall premise was the influence of good social capital, namely how investing in proper practical wisdom and skills led to positive personal experiences that produced appropriate behaviour both individually and collectively within their society. The emphasis on relationships highlighted the relevance of social capital to the challenge of societal cohesion. Despite the fact that this did not demand a certain value system, it demonstrates that participants perceived trustworthy relationships as essential for social cohesiveness and the development of appropriate behaviours.

Kenny (P1), who had only three years of service, described his parents' effect on his behaviour and decision-making:

My parents had always stressed the importance of respecting people and to treat people as I would want to be treated. My dad would say things like 'how would you feel if someone did that to your brother or sister' or 'some people behave badly because it's all they have ever seen – doesn't mean it's right' Never in my life did I see my dad disrespect anyone and as a result he was well respected by others, including me (Kenny, P1).

Kenny was asked to explain how the impact of his parents affected his ability to make judgments in ambiguous situations when there was no clear direction for action. Kenny stated that, in his experience, it is essential to keep the individual at the centre of decision-making when circumstances are complex and multiple options are available. Kenny outlined a person-centered technique that, in his experience, has never failed him:

Doesn't generally matter how complex a situation is if you always maintain there is a person involved in it somewhere and your actions will in one way or another effect that person, or those associated with that person. Respecting a person as a human being regardless of how different they are enables you to consider if your actions will help or harm that person. Just because a rule allows me to search a female in Afghanistan doesn't mean it's the right thing to do. By respecting their cultural beliefs your motivated to avoid doing something that will cause harm (Kenny, P1).

Billy (P10) was sent to Afghanistan shortly after completing basic training, and he indicated that he placed a high value on his friendships prior to going. Billy stated that their closeness and genuine respect for one another enabled them to overcome difficulties. Billy stated that he would respect his friends' beliefs regardless of how they differed from his own, despite the fact that he did not often attend church. Furthermore, Billy stated:

Whilst religion isn't for me, I respect the fact that he places value in it and that's his choice and not mine to question. I've seen people bait him over his beliefs which caused a lot of issues and bad feelings which were unnecessary. Times that by one thousand and that's how strong cultural beliefs are in Afghanistan and not

something to brush over. Whilst I may be allowed to search a compound during prayer time it would not only be hugely disrespectful to do so but would cause emotional harm that may never be repaired and only contribute towards negative messaging around our presence in Afghanistan (Billy, P10).

Furthermore, strong social ties were represented as problematic, having both negative and good normative implications. When asked about his personal motives for joining the military, Ted (P9) stated:

Most of my friends growing up tended to get their kicks from mucking about and generally doing what they wanted regardless. What was harmless fun at first turned into something altogether different as we got older. Vandalising cars and smashing windows didn't make me feel good about myself so I stopped knocking about with that crowd. Funny in a way that when I go home on leave, they are still up to the same things and I thank my lucky stars I got out (Ted, P9).

Ted was asked to elaborate on his reasons for avoiding harmful influences, to which he responded:

Well, your instinct will be ultimately centred around the culture that you are in or have been brought up in. So is, your understanding of what is right and wrong, I'd have thought. I would like - I would say my initial moral compass once again comes from my family background. I think is just my upbringing, mainly from my mother and father, and my immediate family. Then that's probably developed or allowed to be developed since I've been in the army, but I certainly had a moral compass and an understanding of what was right or wrong before I joined the army (Ted, P9).

Similar to Ted, a number of experienced soldiers expressed a desire to join the Army as a response of negative peer pressure. While good ties were depicted as advantageous, negative relationships were used to explain undesirable behaviours. It is evident from conversations that both experienced and inexperienced soldiers valued community, which they reported as supporting their personal development.



### 6.3.2h The Military Social Structure

As indicated in the data collecting section of the methodology chapter, soldiers were engaged in conversation by discussing their motivations for joining the army. While the objective was to increase conversation flow, hermeneutic interpretations revealed a much deeper meaning based on evolving sentiments, which will be discussed in greater depth later in this chapter. Regardless of length of service, all soldiers cited excitement, pride, respect, self-worth, satisfaction, and a sense of belonging as their primary reasons for entering the Army. Kenny's explanation highlighted the significance of emotions in his decision to join the army. Kenny also makes an implicit reference to himself in terms of his life goals and how the military community could assist him in achieving them through true connections with other soldiers who care about his well-being. Kenny stated:

I wanted to make something of my life and being a soldier was something to be proud of. It looked exciting and dangerous, but everyone looked out for each other, and my school friends would always say that your Army mates will always have your back. Everyone I knew respected the Army and if you were a soldier, you gained a sense of respect because people would say the British Army is the best in the world and it made me feel good to be a part of that (Kevin, P1).

Paul also based his decision to join on how he would feel and emphasised how doing what others couldn't produces a sense of inner pride, which was a driving force for him. Paul, according to:

My geography teacher would always say to me I would never amount to much based upon my lack of interest in school. It wasn't school I wasn't interested in it was more a lack of interest in geography and being made to feel like a failure just because I had no interest in it. My geography teacher constantly put me down by reminding me of what I wasn't good at which in a way is why I joined the Army. I wanted to feel good about what I could do and be proud to do things others couldn't. Unlike my geography teacher, I thought the Army would respect me for who I was as a person and seven years on I can say that's exactly what I got when I joined (Paul, P11).

This is an important discovery since they were motivated solely by emotions and the need to feel good about themselves, despite having very little practical understanding of the army.

Experienced soldiers felt that the military atmosphere was critical to their moral development. These soldiers built a narrative in which they claimed that being a part of this community and adhering to its ideals shaped their sense of right and wrong. According to several experienced soldiers, they lived and breathed their community, and daily lessons were learned through the example of others. Numerous soldiers noted how they mimicked the behaviours of people they regarded as good soldiers and how simply being around them allowed them to study how they performed certain tasks. Role models were discussed during character development conversations, with Steven stating:

he was good, he cared about his blokes and always looked out for them even when it meant he went without. He wasn't a push over and could be firm when needed but he was always fair and treated people with respect. He was a decent bloke and a good soldier (Steven, P6).

Kenny previously discussed how his treatment reflected his perception of appropriate behaviour while interacting with other members of the military community, albeit divided by their respective duties and responsibilities, Kenny stated:

I knew I was late back from the weekend, but he listened to me when I told him what happened. I didn't lie because that would have been worse than the punishment for being late as he would lose respect for me, and I didn't want to disrespect him by lying. He knew I wasn't lying and chose not to punish me; I knew then I would do what he did when I was in his position (Kenny, P1).

In contrast to Michael's earlier assessment of a good soldier (p. 181), Steven and Kenny emphasise character over physical appearance. Steven and Kevin characterised a good

soldier by their interactions with other soldiers and their ability to demonstrate respect by making the right decision at the right time. Kenny's sense of belonging and self-worth were generated by his superior's actions, which demonstrates the pervasiveness of emotion-influenced behaviour. Rather than objectively implementing a disciplinary measure that would have been acceptable under the circumstances, Kenny's superior used practical wisdom and context of the issue with compassion. Kenny's superior had a more person-centered attitude to life in general, based on the notion of treating all people with respect and compassion, as opposed to punishing a subordinate for noncompliance with military laws without consideration of context.

### **6.3.2i Changes in Behavioural Reference Points**

Those with negative attitudes toward societal influences prior to military service made comparisons between their views and ideals after a stay in the military environment. These narratives were structured on the notion that military relationships and the norms that governed them had produced new benchmarks for acceptable conduct that were firmly ingrained in the military social system. Roger, who served twice in Afghanistan, presented a comprehensive explanation of the elements that drove his decision-making and outlined his own standards of conduct within the military's social system. Roger is remarkable for numerous reasons, not the least of which is his beginnings as a Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) from a small rural town with a substantial GRT community. Roger stated how he routinely fell afoul of the law and was frequently on the edge of police attention, which was thrilling at the time and encouraged him to continue along that path. Roger stated that he joined the military after watching Iraq and Afghanistan on television and deciding he wanted to be a part of the action, which he found fascinating and worthy of pride. Roger

summarised his nine years of duty, which included two deployments to Afghanistan, as follows:

It's been exiting that's for sure. I joined up thinking I would struggle due to my background however I couldn't have been more wrong. I was accepted as a person and gained respect for what I did and how I bonded with my teammates. I thought my gypsy friends were tight, but this was like being in a group within a group that had higher standards and values than anything I had ever seen, and I liked it. Over time my teammates became personal mates, and I was always proud and appreciative of being part of this group and wanted to contribute to keeping it that way (Roger, P8).

Roger presented an example of how his membership in this group influences his decision-making:

I thought nothing of the phrase 'you don't steal from your mates' before joining the army, now I know it's more about not stealing than who you steal from. I've been respected and treated as an equal since joining the army which allowed me to be the best I can. I know the value of respect and the impact of disrespect so when I'm making decisions that will impact upon people – respect is my starting point as I know it works – being respected gave me self-worth so it's how I treat people (Roger, P8).

In the case of Roger, habituation within a social structure governed by positive normative standards appeared to have not only shaped his perception of right and wrong over time, but also embedded it so that his experiences within the military social structure became more influential than his experiences within the social structure he was a part of prior to joining the military. Moreover, as a result of individuals' personal experiences and relationships, behavioural reference points changed from the military to larger social groups. Similar to Rogers's example of avoiding painful experiences and consequences, Jason presented a convincing story of how the military environment prompted him to leave the army shortly after joining:

I loved it at first because I got everything I was looking for, excitement, challenge, danger and being proud to be a professional soldier and be a part of something that I believed in and respected. Then Afghanistan ended and it was all taken away and replaced with mundane pointless jobs, I didn't join up to pack boxes in the Quartermasters department or constantly clean things just to give us something to do. For me it was disrespectful to treat a professional soldier that way. People changed – suddenly it wasn't about the blokes anymore and all everyone wanted was to get promoted and get more money and they started treating people as tools to get what they wanted. None of that went on with my friends and family and I wasn't going to become a jobsworth and start disrespecting the blokes just to get promoted. I knew then it was time for me to go (Jason, P14).

Jason's complaints about not being able to participate in the activities he joined the army for, and his emotions of mistreatment led him to leave the military and the social structure he once enjoyed. Jason's remark about disrespecting soldiers to advance their careers demonstrates that his sense of self-worth and personal pride was not only strong enough to prevent him from behaving in such a manner, but also strong enough to prevent him from associating with people and a community that rewards disrespectful, indifferent, and uncompassionate behaviour. Roger and Jason describe how the coexistence of contradictory values may be both beneficial and detrimental. Roger's selflessness, respect for others, and camaraderie inside the military culture gradually overcame the selfishness and criminal behaviour of his pre-service social group, which only benefited him and was destructive to others.

### **6.3.3 Theme Three: Core Virtues**

Compassion and practical wisdom were utilised to distil experience during the decision-making process. When describing events in which ambiguity played a role, soldiers' narratives exhibited a high level of empathy and compassion. Although not explicitly stated as acts of compassion, soldiers described a process of going beyond merely understanding the suffering or potential suffering of others to actually acting to alleviate

their own and others' physical, mental, or emotional pain. Soldiers portrayed themselves as emotionally sensitive to the suffering of others, which influenced their behavior. Soldiers understood that ambiguity was a practical issue and that compassionate actions motivated by empathy were far more effective than objectively following a rule that was legally justified. Soldiers demonstrated their ability to act compassionately at the right time, for the right reason, and in the right amount to foster positive relationships in light of the circumstances they faced.

During the decision-making process, every soldier demonstrated social awareness and a willingness to create or improve interpersonal relationships. Notably, soldiers acted based on their belief that compassion was offered to all people, regardless of whether they were fellow soldiers, local civilians, or members of any social organisation with different behavioural norms than their own. It was apparent that compassion was extended beyond the confines of the military's social system and its members to individuals who were, in essence, complete strangers. Ted described an event that occurred during a patrol in Afghanistan in which he and his soldiers came under heavy fire from insurgents, but the exact location was obscured by a cornfield. Ted explained how his ability to emotionally relate to people in the area influenced his decision-making and simplified a potentially complex problem:

I couldn't see where the firing was coming from but could see locals were within the rough area. In the end I chose not to fire as I couldn't be sure I wouldn't hit an innocent local. It's not right to risk taking life without being sure, I could have killed someone who had a family that are dependent on him and children who would grow up without a father. I know how I would feel if the police accidentally shot someone in my family and I wouldn't wish that on anyone (Ted, P9).

Ted elaborated on how the predictable emotions of regret, guilt, and shame influenced his decision to refrain from firing indiscriminately in the general direction of the Taliban,

stating that his actions were also motivated by a desire to generate feelings of pride, self-worth, and fulfilment by choosing to avoid unnecessarily harming others, which he framed as doing the right thing and shaped his understanding of professionalism. Ted observed that doing the right thing for the right reason gave him a sense of pride, satisfaction, and self-worth, all of which made him feel good about himself. Ted concluded his remarks with the following:

Being a professional soldier means doing the right thing which isn't always obvious or easy. You must trust your gut feeling and go with it and be able to live with your decision afterwards. I know I would rather feel I did the right thing than live with the thought of killing someone unnecessarily which would be a memory that can lead to some very dark places (Ted, P9).

Paul, who encountered a situation nearly identical to Ted's, replied similarly:

you just can't see more than three feet in front of you when you're in the corn so when you hear gunfire coming your way from a certain direction it's impossible to react safely. There's farmers and kids everywhere and bullets cut through corn and won't stop until they hit something hard, and that's just too much of a risk to take in my book (Paul, P11).

Paul, like Ted, demonstrated a sense of internal pride and self-worth in relation to his view that he was doing the right thing as a professional soldier by combining his practical wisdom with a desire to avoid causing needless harm to others. The view of professionalism held by Ted and Paul is compatible with Rogers' previous definition of what professionalism is not, which he characterised as the use of lethal force that is essentially justified by legal but not professional norms (p.180). Roger, Ted, and Paul evidence the notion that even if an action is legal and permitted, it is not always the best course of action when considering the situational context and anticipated consequences.

Roger also illustrated that awareness of one's own and others' emotions is a prerequisite for being a professional soldier capable of making informed decisions. Timing and the necessity to achieve a broader objective, according to Roger, are correlated with emotions and good judgement. Roger emphasised this idea by relating an instance in which the patrol he led in Afghanistan got an unanticipated message from the patrol base:

The patrol base radioed through to me that an urgent compassionate message needed relaying to one of my soldiers. His father had been killed in a motorcycle accident and needed to return to the UK. I chose not to pass the message on despite it being direction to do so because I felt it wasn't right to. The patrol base was two kilometres away and we would have to pass through a known Taliban stronghold to get there and I wanted everyone on their A game to prevent anyone getting hurt, there was no way I was delivering that message before we got back to base. For his sake and everyone else's I held on to it until we got back. It was his right to know but, in my judgement, then wasn't the time to tell him (Roger, P8).

Roger displayed not just the ability to understand the soldier's pain, suffering, and the expected consequences if he was informed as instructed, but also the ability to respond with empathy. Roger exhibited practical wisdom through his analysis of the situational context and his application of empathy, which motivated his compassionate actions. Both of these attributes were sufficiently established to withstand the conflicting pressure of obedience, which would have been a factor in complying with a superior officer's order. Roger's personal judgement, empathy, and compassion, coupled with his ability to interpret the context, were sufficient for him to disobey the order. Roger then elaborated on how his ability to anticipate negative feelings and consequences aided him in reaching this decision:

It was more than simply following an order from someone who was not close enough to this situation to understand the implications of delivering that message as intended. I chose not to follow the order because I could imagine how I would feel hearing it and needed to consider the implications of him being in that frame of mind with a loaded weapon moving around other people. I also had to think about the impact of someone getting hurt due to his frame of mind – lack of focus can get



someone killed as quick as a bullet would in Afghanistan. My gut instinct was on the balance of probability the right thing to do was to not follow the order (Roger, P8).

Peter provided the following example from his second tour as a junior commander in 2009 to demonstrate how predicted negative emotions impacted his decision-making. Peter's account also displays his ability to identify with another culture's customs and the importance of doing so in comparison to the emotional suffering that could ensue from not doing so. Peter demonstrates the ability to sidestep legal authority in order to gain access to the compound by contrasting the situational context with a desire to foster positive emotions through respectful conduct. According to Peter:

we had to search an Afghan compound for weapons, and we were all in position ready to go but I decided to wait for 10 minutes before we went in as it was prayer time. Afghans pray five times a day and I have great respect for their culture and saw no need to cause unnecessary suffering by walking all over a thousand-year-old tradition for something that could wait ten minutes (Peter, P2).

Peter also described a time when his negative and positive emotions influenced his decision-making following a fatality on the patrol he commanded:

It's all in the timing and knowing what frame of mind the guys are in. We came off a patrol where we had been hit quite hard from small arms fire and two guys were seriously injured. During the helicopter medical extraction, the guys gave it everything they had and were physically and mentally exhausted when we got back to base. I chose to skip the mandated weapon cleaning and patrol checks for an hour or so as they were not in the right headspace for that. I've been in their shoes before and won't forget how I felt when my patrol commander was banging on about rules, it did my head in. I decided that now wasn't the right time and pushing them to follow structure would not end well. I felt it was the right thing to do which was important for me (Peter, P2).

Peter's narrative describes a process of retracing his steps back to a time when he was exposed to an activity that aroused negative emotions, which served as the basis for

understanding how to prevent transmitting his negative experience to his soldiers. Peter felt pride, self-worth, and satisfaction in his view that he did the right thing for his team, exhibiting the influence of a certain type of camaraderie, which he also associated with professionalism. Peter emphasised the significance of empathically relating to another person and providing them with as much assistance as possible.

Steven was able to explain how his actions as a patrol medic on a previous tour in Afghanistan when confronted with treating a severe heat casualty aligned with a certain type of camaraderie and the ability to understand the emotional situation well enough to be moved to act but not so much as to prevent him from acting:

It was a matter of choice for me really, apply the rule and there's a risk of him dying, ignore the rule and there's still a risk of him dying. It came down to risk versus reward in the end. He was in shit state and would have probably died of heat exhaustion within the hour if I didn't take his body armour and helmet off. If I had stuck to the rule of never removing body armour or helmet whilst on patrol, I have no doubt he would have died of heat exhaustion. Ignoring the rule, which I understand the point of, exposed him to gunfire which would kill him. Both choices could result in death but in my opinion taking his equipment off presented the lower risk. All things considered; it was worth ignoring the rule as he survived and was back in action a few weeks later (Steven, P6).

Examining the emotional effects of their decisions on themselves and others was a crucial aspect of the decision-making procedure. Soldiers, regardless of their degree of expertise, demonstrated a method for resolving moral ambiguity by striving to interpret their inner emotions elicited by their prior experiences. While this tendency was only detected in experienced soldiers in uncertain lethal force circumstances, it was commonly observed in the decision-making surrounding non-lethal force. Not only did soldiers consider who would be affected by their decisions, but also how those choices would influence others in the future. This distinction was crucial because it demonstrated the capacity to go from a theoretical, linear, skills-based process to a more complex one needing an understanding of

their own and others' emotions. By addressing emotional challenges in advance, soldiers were able to use their perceptiveness in non-lethal force decision-making to prevent making decisions that could result in undesirable outcomes and feelings.

Conversations revealed that soldiers were simultaneously looking backwards and forwards, remembering past experiences through the lens of their impact and emotional reactions on themselves and others in order to determine their future actions (p.180). Positive feelings such as pride and self-worth were related with actions that reduced needless suffering and fostered positive, as opposed to negative, relationships with not only fellow soldiers, but with everyone they interacted with. All soldiers based their definition of professionalism in non-lethal force decision-making on the view that professional soldiers did the right thing, which was often linked with actions that benefited both individuals and wider relationships in a range of contexts.

Despite the fact that soldiers did not express respect as an emotion, respect was placed inside a value position that evoked feelings of empathy and compassion.

### **6.3.3a Respect for Others**

While 'Respect for Others' is an existing British Army core value (ADP, 2000, p. 7) soldiers did not cite the values and standards outlined in the booklet as the source of their understanding. Nevertheless, although not citing the Values and Standards booklet, they described respect for others as the value placed on others as fellow human beings, which, despite being presented differently, is generally compatible with the booklet's description. Soldiers' expressions of respect for others was to strike a balance between a negative attitude of contempt and dictatorial behaviour toward others, on the one hand, and a blind infatuation and exaggerated concern for any individual, on the other. Respect for others

was not confined to members of the same group; it extended to other soldiers, non-combatants, and even Taliban, who, according to the participants, were entitled to respectful treatment regardless of whether they posed a threat to life.

Respect for the Taliban was put to the test during combat situations, however soldiers stated they treated those assaulting them far more compassionately than they anticipated being treated themselves. Despite this, there was widespread agreement that it did not mitigate against acts of disrespect toward other human beings. Respect for all individuals, together with the capacity to empathise with the emotions of others, resulted in the formation of a stable compassionate character trait that protected against reciprocal unethical behaviour regardless of the danger involved. All soldiers agreed that replicating unethical behaviour would result in negative personal feelings and was viewed as a failure to act professionally as well as uphold the military community's common standards. It is clear that acts of compassion were derived from an established capacity to prioritise the welfare of others over their own, which was strong enough to withstand the competing emotion of anger. As Kenny put it:

Two wrongs don't make a right and we are supposed to be above losing our composure when shit gets real – that's amateur hour behaviour which doesn't go down well with the guys (Kenny, P1).

Replicating immoral behaviour, according to soldiers, is a failure not only for the individual, but also for the team, resulting in a disrespect for the values of the soldiering community. Paul neatly summed up his feelings towards the Taliban's human status by stating:

To shoot another human being is an act so un-natural that it takes a lot to cross the threshold into pulling the trigger. At the end of the day, it's someone's dad, brother, or son and that's what you tend to see first when you're pointing your rifle at them,

regardless of what they are doing. You don't see an insurgent anymore and you're faced with the dilemma of do I, or don't I, and must respect them as a human being first and foremost (Paul, P11).

Soldiers continued to demonstrate a desire to be respectful to others they interacted with in non-combat situations, which was supported by their ability to empathise with the probable emotions of those who would be affected by their actions. Conversations indicated that this dedication was strengthened by a desire to demonstrate compassion to all individuals. Notably, non-combatants were framed exclusively on the basis that they did not pose a threat to soldiers, despite the fact that several soldiers noted how difficult it was to identify combatants from non-combatants (p.170).

In contrast to lethal action in ambiguous situations, there was abundant evidence that inexperienced soldiers demonstrated compassionate, person-centered deliberative reasoning influenced by earlier experiences of being courteous to others. Inexperienced soldiers exhibited a propensity to correlate their actions with their level of respect for individuals, cultures, and life in general, with the overarching goal of always demonstrating respect. Jason, who began his military service in Afghanistan, stated:

doesn't matter where you come from nobody deserves to be treated badly just because they happen to look one way or another or do things differently. Everybody deserves to be respected to some degree and that doesn't change just because of the actions of insurgents who happen to be Afghans (Jason, P14).

Paul, who served in Afghanistan only once shortly after completing basic training, stated:

It's just about being a decent person and treating people as you would want to be treated. I have a job to do, and I don't need to disrespect someone to do it. You get far better results if you're just decent to people. It's not just about being nice to people as that's a bit shallow – it's more about knowing how people will behave towards you and others if you respect or disrespect them. My dad said to me once, you can choose to be either a positive or negative presence in someone's life and if

you want to get things done, how you treat the people around you makes all the difference (Paul, P11).

Empathy, compassion, respect, and non-military life experiences all played a role in the decision-making process regarding avoiding unnecessary suffering for all people. Soldiers characterised their moral conduct as the adoption of right and wrong principles that served as guides and deterrents for their activities. Soldiers engaged in actions that evoked sentiments of satisfaction, self-worth, and pride. Concerned with self-condemnation, they avoided engaging in behaviours that violated their moral principles. These positive and negative self-criticisms helped them maintain moral bounds in their conduct. They did it by refusing to dissociate potentially deadly, rage-fuelled behaviour from their own moral disapproval.

While the inexperienced were unable to apply previous practical wisdom to ambiguous serious risk situations, they were more than capable of using behavioural reference points derived from a more familiar society. In non-lethal settings, inexperienced soldiers used non-military experiences as behavioural reference points with more comfort because they were more familiar with these experiences. The actions of both experienced and inexperienced soldiers when faced with non-lethal force decision-making enabled previously developed normative standards, behaviours, and beliefs within a moral society, such as respect for others, empathy, and compassion, to protect against actions that result in unnecessary suffering and to serve as the basis for deliberative thought. Personal and practical experience, practical wisdom, person-centered thinking, and emotions were all present and adequately developed for the soldiers to withstand the situational stresses they experienced, regardless of their military experience.

## Chapter Seven: Discussion

*There is only one way to avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing, and be nothing*

(Aristotle, 350 B.C.E.)

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the empirical data presented in Chapter Six in the context of the theories, models, and concepts described in Chapters Two, Three, and Four. This will be accomplished by sequentially addressing the two research questions, with the first section examining whether Aristotelian virtue ethics can provide resources for understanding good soldiering in the context of the twenty-first century, and the second section examining, if so, which virtues are most crucial for this understanding. The chapter explores the significance of Chapter Six's major themes from an Aristotelian and, more specifically, a MacIntyrean perspective. The discussion focuses on the applicability of these themes to empirical evidence, how they may affect our understanding of key concepts in MacIntyre's writing, and how these notions may enable us to better comprehend the moral narratives of this group of Infantry soldiers.

### 7.2 Reasons for Action

The findings presented in Chapter Six provide an ideal foundation for analysing why the 14 soldiers in this study maintained their moral legitimacy when operating under similar conditions as those referenced in the military inquiry reports in Chapter Four who did not. Through the lens of MacIntyre's (2007) tradition-constituted inquiry, we are able to evaluate what goods were discovered and whether they are evidently goods in a

MacIntyrean sense. I have accepted soldier-reported goods and established how they fit into two categories: goods intrinsic to the practice of soldiering and goods of a well-lived life. My perspective is based on the unique MacIntyrean theory provided in *After Virtue* (MacIntyre, 2007), in which MacIntyre discusses the internal goods of a practice (pp. 187-203) and which I will employ to illustrate my own views. To establish the criteria for arguing the internal goods of soldiering, we must briefly return to MacIntyre's (2007) concept of a practice, in which he argues that internal goods are particular to the practice in the sense that you can only obtain them in a particular way in a particular practice, or in very similar practices, and they are not tradeable/transferable or accessible through shortcuts outside the practice. MacIntyre argues that people within the practice have a shared concept of internal goods and that they are non-rivalrous in the sense that everyone within the practice can enjoy them, although those not actively engaged in the practice may find it difficult to comprehend them (p. 187-192).

The analysis of the findings indicates that the practice of soldiering makes a number of MacIntyrean internal goods accessible. All are preceded with "a particular kind of," which is consistent with MacIntyre's method of description, which defines a specific context to make the narrative understandable within the larger discussion. I interpret the term 'camaraderie' as the close bond between soldiers forged through the shared hardships of combat and a certain type of mutual reliance' on each other when conducting complex and ambiguous military operations in which they routinely place their lives in the hands of another soldier. The nature of this interdependence illustrates the singularity of the military community's vulnerability and dependence. In addition, soldiers expressed a particular type of pride and self-respect that I argue is unique to soldiering because it is derived from the exercise of courage and competence in the face of lethal threats through the exercise of



good judgement in the use, or non-use, of lethal force that can only be obtained within the practice of soldiering. Moreover, being entrusted with weapons and protecting the vulnerable from violence through the execution of a particular set of responsibilities not only in the context of the use of lethal force, but also in fostering trust and healthy relationships with the communities they serve to protect underpins not only the uniqueness of the practice of soldiering, but the definitions of self-worth and pride from the actions associated with the practice.

My findings imply that there is a cluster of internal goods associated with the practice of soldiering. Being entrusted with lethal capability presents unique challenges and rewards; however, the exercise of lethal force is not a good in the MacIntyrean sense, with experienced soldiers arguing that the use of lethal force objectively without taking context and setting into account, while legal, was entirely unethical, unprofessional, and an act that did not generate self-worth and pride. Possessing the positive emotions of pride and self-worth required the application of sound judgement based upon a solid contextual awareness of the environment and the emotions of others within it, as well as the desire to avert unnecessary harm. Pride and self-worth necessitated going beyond an awareness of possible suffering to being moved to act compassionately to alleviate or eliminate that harm. The following discussion on the British Army as an institution and the virtues of practical wisdom and compassion is based on my interpretation of MacIntyrean inner goods associated with the practice of soldiering.

### **7.3 The British Army as an Institution**

The findings in Chapter Six address the significant topic of how an organisation recognises the likely outcomes of its acts and direction, or, as Aristotle says, how people are

habituated from their earliest years being crucial, "in fact, it makes all the difference" (II.I, 1103b). In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle's ideas on habituation (II, II, 1140a) and friendship (VIII, I, 1155a) are compared with MacIntyre's practices, goods, and institutions (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 187-196) which now return to the discussion by referencing their arguments regarding activities that make the difference and how legislators differentiate between good and bad communities. Given Jason's prior experience with PDT and the situation's compliance with the rules of engagement governing the use of lethal force, it is plausible to believe that he would have shot the farmer digging on the track that evening. Jason's actions may have been objectively correct and legal, but Ted's interpretation and subsequent decision not to use lethal force indicate how Jason's actions without a knowledge of the purpose and his function could be considered unprofessional and unethical, while being within the legal framework for employing lethal force. This is crucial because an authorised rule supporting the use of lethal force without regard to the setting, context, and likely impact of mistakenly killing an innocent farmer would have not only resulted in the loss of an innocent life, but also jeopardised the British Army's mission in Afghanistan and moral legitimacy as a protector of the vulnerable. Again, Aristotle's *phronesis* (practical wisdom), *ergon* (function), and *telos* (purpose) principles are applicable when viewed through the lens of Ted's reaction to an innocent farmer.

The possibility of institutions misinterpreting individual behaviour is emphasised by placing Ted and Jason's discussion of digging on a track (p. 195) in the context of MacIntyre's (2016) debate on careerism and MacIntyre's (1999c) assertion that a moral agent should not be considered disobedient if they apply broader moral principles over their role standards (p. 315). MacIntyre emphasises that the rational agent who makes informed decisions must be acknowledged as rational and not disobedient or rebellious to

role standards when they believe they should act differently (p. 316). Steven's dialogue (p. 198) in the identical circumstance as Jason and Ted indicates unequivocally that adopting wider moral principles, was in that particular case, perceived as a challenge to role expectations. In addition, if the British Army deemed Ted and Steven to have disobeyed role standards by failing to shoot what resembled an insurgent, the issue of blind obedience to orders poses a major threat to the moral agency of soldiers. Interestingly, *Soldiering the Military Covenant* utilises the phrase 'legal right to kill on orders' (ADP5, 2000, p. 0101).

By applying Jason's interpretation to Aristotle's definition of friendship, we gain essential insight into the fragmentation of a community when a shared appreciation for something meaningful is lost. Jason believed he was no longer surrounded by likeminded soldiers, and his perception of an increase in utility friendship causing a shift in behaviour among those more concerned with promotions and money contradicted his belief that the military community thrived on a specific type of camaraderie, mutual dependence and dependability, personal pride and self-worth (p. 220). Considering the British Army as an institution, MacIntyre's warning against institutional corruption (2007, p. 194) is much more applicable. In stating that a person's character is ultimately decided by the culture in which he or she was raised, Ted provides insight into his conception of the relationship between social institutions and their influence on moral agency (p. 192). Moreover, Ted's observation regarding the institutional promotion of soldiers based on superficial skills, similar to Jason's perspective in that they were rewarding, consciously or unconsciously, soldiers who lacked empathy and compassion for their fellow soldiers (p. 211) and his understanding of character development (p. 192) are troubling in light of Aristotle's statement regarding the impact of good and bad legislators on a community.

Returning to Aristotle, we can see that the important interaction between individuals and communities drives the process of habituation. The act of organising suitable activities from which virtue might be developed through habit transcends the individual. According to Aristotle, this is corroborated by the fact that legislators mould citizens into good citizens by habituation, which is precisely what every legislator seeks. Those who do it poorly miss the mark, according to Aristotle, and this is how a good political system is separated from a bad one (II.I, 1103b). Remaining with Aristotle's theory of habituation we must now bring forward MacIntyre's (1999b) definition of a practice that not only integrates components of US Marine Corps training through habituation in teamwork and duty beyond self-interest, but also moral reflection throughout a person's life outside of the Marine Corps. MacIntyre argues that an acceptable moral education will contain some of the qualities of Marine Corps training, but will combine them with education to develop the capacity to reflect on goods that assist individuals in redirecting and modifying their desires by teaching them to achieve without emphasising victory over others. For MacIntyre, this must be accomplished while cultivating a strong sense of dependency on others, of having placed one's life in the hands of others in order for them to rely on you. In contrast to Marine Corps training, this initiative will encourage such consideration and, if possible, make it mandatory (MacIntyre, 1999b, pp. 111-135). I argue that through habituation in a military community where a certain type of camaraderie, respect for others, mutual reliance, and dependability were dominant influences, an emotionally aware, compassionate soldier was produced who was not only capable of relating to the emotions of complete strangers, but also capable of making sound compassionate judgments for the welfare of all regardless of their culture or social standing. I also contend that through experience and length of service, Ted, Roger, Steven, and Peter demonstrated

a stable character trait of compassion that not only remained intact when transitioning between roles, responsibilities, and social structures with differing normative standards, but also resisted the competing influence of obedience to rules and procedures distilled via PDT and an established military chain of command.

Combining MacIntyre's warning against careerism with Beadle and Moore's (2011) assertion that without agents who possess and practice the virtues at the institutional level, the practice would cease to be fostered internally through the pursuit of excellence (p. 13), with MacIntyrean practices, inner goods, institutions, and Aristotle's idea of habituation, we begin to see how Aristotelian virtue ethics could provide resources for comprehending good soldiering in the twenty-first century context. Free from the pressures of financial competition, the person-centred approach focuses on the general well-being and happiness of the communities served by the British Army and is consistent with Beadle and Moore's (2011) description of the requirement of a virtuous institute, namely: a virtuous organisation, according to Aristotelian teleology, would be that there is a good purpose for the particular practice-institution combination that it comprises (p. 11).

#### **7.4 Compassion in twenty-first century Soldiering**

While Aristotle does discuss pity in his book *Rhetoric*, compassion in the context of my interpretation appears closer to a Christian/Thomistic virtue than Aristotle's description of pity. This supports MacIntyre's claim that Thomas Aquinas achieved a superior version of Aristotelianism than Aristotle himself. By combining Aquinas's (1991) definition of mercy as the "compassionate heart for another's unhappiness" with Aristotle's description of pity as the capacity to connect destructive acts against undeserving people to one's own emotions, and MacIntyre's (1999) assertion that mercy must transcend the boundaries of a

close community, I argue that compassion is the point of convergence. By compassion, I mean a certain form of compassion that is founded not only on the capacity to relate to the emotional pain and suffering of people living among the everyday horrors of war, but also on the capacity to move beyond that awareness and into action targeted at relieving another person's pain and suffering. According to how Ted, Paul, Roger, and Steven's actions were perceived, Aristotle and Aquinas' descriptions of pity and the virtue of mercy are comparable to my conception of compassion. This study presented compassion primarily as a response stemming from an emotional comprehension of others' suffering. It reflected the soldiers' personalities and a fundamental relationship built upon humanity, not their PDT or application of technical skills.

MacIntyre (1999) defines a moral agent as a person who believes they are accountable not only in their roles, but also as rational beings. Even if it is universally understood in a certain social structure that a function requires a person to act in a particular way, a rational agent who understands wider moral principles than those expected of their role may choose to act otherwise. This study provides evidence that, when confronted with what appeared to be a life-threatening circumstance, experienced soldiers decided to act according to their broader moral convictions rather than the standards expected of a soldier. Ted, Roger, and Peter, who were all experienced soldiers, demonstrated the capacity to think beyond the social standards and rules that governed their role as soldiers and to apply the principles that they applied across their lifetime. In context to how MacIntyre (1999) points out that a person cannot be a moral agent without first comprehending themselves as a moral agent on a daily basis, they demonstrated a capability to comprehend themselves as legitimately accountable for the ability to use those powers (p. 314). It is also important to recognise that they all acted compassionately over extended periods of time and in multiple incidents

in Afghanistan, demonstrating that they had a stable compassionate state and were moved by the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person, which I argue was a result of their exposure to a military community based on a particular type of mutual respect and camaraderie.

According to Paul (p.195), when he was in a situation where he could have been looking at either a farmer or an IED layer, his actions were conducive to minimising or preventing harm to others. Paul proved that, despite not being a member of the farmer's social structure, he was driven to respond with compassion because he respected human life and was aware of the mental anguish that may ensue from needlessly shooting someone. Paul displayed a willingness to do the right thing by increasing the likelihood of removing the threat of bodily or emotional harm to others insofar as he acted on these intentions. By observing the farmer, father, husband, and human being through the rifle sight of a wise and compassionate soldier, Paul was able to see a hard-working farmer providing for his family. This disparity, which may seem insignificant, eventually constituted the difference between life and death for the soldiers and their socially created relationships with the Afghans they engaged with.

Ted (p. 201) demonstrated empathy for the suffering that could occur from firing randomly across cornfields at an unseen Taliban insurgent. Despite the risk to his own life, his emotional commitment to the farmers and children as fellow human beings despite the fact that they were total strangers was strong enough for him to act compassionately, despite the influence of competing pressures such as obedience to the rules of engagement and the emotions of fear and anger. Respect for others required striking a balance between a negative attitude of hostility and dictatorial behaviour on the one hand, and a blind infatuation and exaggerated concern for any individual on the other (p. 188), similar to

Aristotle's idea of the mean. Aristotle characterises states as entities towards which we experience positive or negative emotions. If, for example, we experience excessive or insufficient anger, we are ill-disposed; if, however, we experience anger between the extremes, we are well-disposed, and so on for the other cases (II.IV, 1105b). In addition, Ted's statement (p. 196) that he frequently views comparable situations but rarely responds in the same way provides additional background for establishing the similarities to an Aristotelian mean. Ted's assertion that what is excessive one day may be insufficient the next demonstrates his understanding of virtue in relation to excess and deficiency and its fluid application in a variety of situations, as well as the reality that there is no all-or-nothing solution to moral ambiguity.

Roger (p. 201) demonstrated a comparable emotional connection to the soldiers who would be impacted by the choice to inform a soldier that his father had died. Roger determined that the soldier's emotional state in the context of being deep in Taliban-controlled area would put Afghan civilians and other soldiers at danger, and his respect and concern for them as human beings compelled him to make a compassionate judgement that minimised harm to all parties despite the competing influence of obedience. Steven's (p. 202) example of removing a soldier's body armour and helmet during a live combat engagement with the Taliban due to heat exhaustion demonstrates emotional awareness and the capacity to apply practical wisdom and compassion despite the competing influence of established rules regarding the removal of protective equipment when under attack. Peter's reluctance to employ an Apache assault helicopter in a heavily populated area, despite being authorised to do so and would have lowered the risk to him and his soldiers, is more evidence that he acted as a wise and compassionate soldier with an emotional connection to the feelings of people beyond the military community who may be affected. These



events illustrate compassion as an empathetic relationship, as identification with another's suffering that stems from a deep regard for others.

Unconsciously, these soldiers applied practical wisdom and compassion to the given situation. Each behaviour demonstrates a middle ground between being apathetic or unconcerned about another person's emotions and being so overly sensitive to their emotions that rational reason becomes overwhelmed. Each soldier responded compassionately at the mean of excess and deficiency, allowing emotions and logical cognition to work in tandem to choose the best course of action. This study indicates that Ted and Paul's comments on common sense were not, in fact, common sense, but rather the actions of a practically wise and compassionate soldier.

### **7.5 Practical Wisdom in twenty-first century Soldiering**

Notable is that soldiers claimed to be capable of analysing ambiguous situations and determining the applicability of an established standard in a particular context using practical wisdom and compassion (p.201-202). This is essential because Ted and Jason demonstrate how their compassionate personality and established practical judgement prevented the unnecessary use of lethal force in a situation where a rules-based objective approach would have been legally permissible. In addition, the practical wisdom and compassion acquired outside of Afghanistan's hostile and unfamiliar social framework stayed intact as they transitioned between roles within these social structures. Not only did these traits provide a solid foundation for their moral judgments, but they also protected them from conflicting forces such as obedience and anger that may have influenced unethical behaviour. This gives an empirical rebuttal to the situationist claim that circumstances, not personality, govern behaviour (p.189).

Experienced soldiers used critical thinking to perceive, analyse, and assess events requiring lethal force in order to validate the context upon which their judgement was based. In addition, experienced soldiers displayed intellect by evaluating uncertain risk situations from an uncommon or unconventional perspective. Ted (A1-9) exhibited both critical thinking and originality when he encouraged Jason to evaluate an unclear problem from a different perspective and to explore alternative solutions. Through a grasp of the setting's historical, geographical, and political context, experienced soldiers refined their behaviour to align with the greater objective of the Army's mission in Afghanistan.

Ted exhibited his ability to differentiate between farmers and Taliban IED layers when serving alongside an inexperienced Jason on his first deployment. Both soldiers were faced with the question, "Should I shoot him?" According to MacIntyre (2007), there is no such thing as "behaviour" that can be isolated from intentions, beliefs, and contexts (p. 208).

Ted's comprehension of the setting, context, and larger purpose influenced his interpretation as "digging an irrigation ditch," which provided the internal response to "should I shoot him?," which was "no," thus supporting the purpose of protecting human life and contributing to human well-being through the application of practical wisdom. Due to Jason's inability to translate the behaviour he was observing against situational and cultural context and a higher purpose he did not know or comprehend; he could only refer to the setting and context from his PDT, which narrowed his perception to only see a hostile act and thus shaping behaviour that only served to undermine the purpose of protecting the vulnerable. This affected Jason's answer to the question, "Should I shoot him?" Jason believed he was observing a Taliban IED layer and was unable to comprehend how shooting the individual digging on the track, something he considered as perfectly legal, would defeat the purpose of soldiering. MacIntyre (2007) argues that it is a

conceptual commonplace, both for philosophers and for ordinary agents, that one and the same segment of human behaviour may be correctly characterised in a number of different ways (p. 206), which in the case of Ted and Jason helps to explain how two soldiers witnessed an identical act but came to two very different conclusions about the intent of the person digging on the track. Ted translated the activity against his cultural understanding of traditional Afghan farming practices whereas Jason used his experiences from PDT to determine the intention of the person digging on the track.

In terms of common sense, Ted and Paul's (p. 188, p. 191) remarks create an intriguing contrast between their decisions and the results of this study. This study argues that despite the fact that both soldiers referenced common sense as the basis for their judgments, it was not, in fact, common sense. Common would imply that practical wisdom is possessed by the majority of individuals and needs minimal effort to apply in complex situations. The inability of inexperienced soldiers to distinguish between a farmer and an insurgent suggests that Ted and Paul's ability to do so is not common. Via habituation within social systems that fostered respect for others and the capacity to learn through actions, both soldiers were able to correlate their individual acts with the purpose of soldiering and how those actions would either help or hinder the mission. Additionally, emotional association with the people likely to be affected by their decisions, regardless of whether they were soldiers, combatants, or non-combatants, provides a narrative that is not typical and, consequently, suggests that their actions were not those of a soldier with common sense or simply clever, but rather those of a soldier who was practically wise and compassionate. The moral agent, according to MacIntyre, must have confidence in her or his own moral judgments (1999c, p. 316).

It could also be argued that applying practical wisdom at the institutional level of the British Army could have identified the potential repercussions of conditioning inexperienced soldiers to view anyone digging on a track as a Taliban IED layer in an environment where more than one-third of the rural population is engaged in poppy cultivation.<sup>14</sup> as the main source of income (Hudak & Baez, 2010, p. 7). This study suggests that when dispersion and self-regulation of behaviour in high-pressure situations are part of the operational environment, practical wisdom and compassion are ethical defences against moral disengagement through anger or unthinking obedience to the rules that are not nuanced enough to offer practical solutions to complex problems. The ability to act independently of a role's standards and rules, according to MacIntyre (1999), implies that individuals test their judgments with trusted members of their social structure (MacIntyre, 1999c, p. 326). In this study, I argue that the uniqueness of the military community and the internal benefit of camaraderie based on shared vulnerability and dependability facilitate practical learning and the development of wisdom in an environment where observations between good friends foster respect for others, from which empathy and compassion grow.

## **7.6 Summary of Discussion**

Recent ethical failures in the military have demonstrated that moderation of behaviour is not always straightforward or entirely effective. While it is suggested that situational pressure influences behaviour this study presents a unique perspective of how character

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<sup>14</sup> The vast majority of the land in Helmand Province supports agriculture with only a few pockets of traditional urban infrastructure. Approximately 94% of people in Helmand live in rural areas. Most occupations are agricultural and tied to poppy cultivation, to include poppy growing, transportation, and security.

can resist these pressures if established and stable enough. Milgram's (1960) experiment permitted participants to treat other persons inhumanely by promoting obedience through responsibility detachment. It can be argued that promoting a separation of responsibility created an environment in which the only defence between shocking someone and not shocking them was their willingness to obey or not based on their understanding of what was being asked of them and their personal beliefs about what is right and wrong.

According to MacIntyre (1995), moral agents must recognise that they are accountable not only to the standards of their role, but also to the moral principles that apply to a person throughout his or her life, during which he or she will assume a variety of roles within different social institutions. As a moral agent, the ability to step outside of one's role and evaluate behaviour against broader principles is essential for moral conduct when responsibility for actions has been abdicated, is uncertain, or has been institutionally endorsed, overtly or not, but is in conflict with broader moral standards. It is reasonable to assume that a moral agent would not have participated in the experiment if he or she had known the expectations were incompatible with broader moral conduct. It may also be argued that a moral agent would disobey a command to shock someone, even if doing so was perfectly normal and had no negative consequences.

This study contends that Aristotelian virtue ethics provides resources that match the behaviours exhibited by the 14 soldiers in their approach to moral agency in challenging situations. My interpretations describe how the soldier's practical wisdom and compassion were stable enough to resist the competing demand of obedience to rule, across multiple scenarios and over an extended time period, even when conformity was expected, and the soldier bore no personal responsibility for his conduct. In uncertain situations, practical wisdom and compassion were significantly more effective than objectively adhering to

established rules that were not nuanced enough to provide appropriate responses that would not undermine either the soldiers' broader moral principles associated with them as a person who brings more than technical ability to their role as a soldier, or the larger purpose of the British Army in Afghanistan.

According to MacIntyre (2009), moral agency is not achieved by attending lectures on ethics, which is corroborated by the findings of this study, which indicate that the soldier's practical wisdom and compassion evolved through exposure to social institutions involving activities with a good purpose. I argue that the 14 soldiers were exposed not only to the tradition of military service to the nation enabled by the institution of the British Army and their supported practise of soldiering, but also to engagement in wider society with established moral principles that applied across the narrative unity of a person's life. By absorbing the relevant experiences at the right time and for the right reason, practical wisdom and compassion were strengthened to the point where they could withstand the competing influence of obedience in an alien environment, in which obedience offered a far simpler and in part safer behavioural reference point. The soldiers' application of practical wisdom and compassion revealed that, despite having a simpler and safer option, they followed their wise and compassionate character through a series of activities that transcended the boundaries of their own military social structure and included local Afghans as if they were members of their community despite being total strangers. As a result, feelings of pride and self-worth arose.

## Chapter Eight: Conclusion and Contributions

*"we are what we continually do, thus, excellence is not an act but a habit"*

Will Durrant (1885–1981).

### 8.1 Summary of the Argument

The literature, findings, and discussion in this study suggest that while it may be difficult for the British Army to avoid unethical activities or shameful conduct, the reported positive behaviours of the 14 soldiers in this study were shaped by their membership in a community where daily interaction was based on a profound respect for others galvanised by a shared purpose of promoting positive relationships. Their exposure to the correct environment, context, and examples of what good looked like gave them real experiences through doing rather than knowing and the chance to test their beliefs on trusted others.

Through camaraderie, mutual reliance, and a shared community goal of protecting the vulnerable from physical and emotional harm, the social structure of the military community enabled these soldiers to develop practical wisdom and compassion. They portrayed themselves not just as soldiers with certain duties, but also as individuals capable of judging technical proficiency and local norms in light of higher moral principles as part of a well-lived life. These soldiers expressed moderation, restraint, emotional awareness, respect for others, empathy, selflessness, compassion, and practical wisdom. In earlier military operations of a comparable sort, the absence of these behaviours has also contributed to a decrease in soldier morale and professional standards, making them extremely significant.

My findings indicate that soldiering provides a wide range of MacIntyrean internal goods, such as camaraderie, mutual reliance and dependability, the responsibility to protect people from violence, and the use of courage and competence in the face of lethal threats through the use of lethal force or the refusal to use it. As a result of these goods, soldiers developed a profound sense of pride and self-respect. Lethal capability presents distinct challenges and benefits, but the use of lethal force is not, in the MacIntyrean sense, a good.

Experienced soldiers claimed that while it may be legal to use lethal force objectively without regard to context and environment, they believe it is unethical and unprofessional to do so.

Chapter One set the historical and theoretical scene for the study with Aristotelian virtue ethics being presented as suitable for a theory-driven study given Aristotle's ideas on habituation, friendship, and practical wisdom and their similarity with the structure of the British Army. MacIntyre (2007) provides the model for applying Aristotle through his schema on practice, goods, tradition, and institution, all of which bear a close resemblance to how ADP5 described internal military structures and soldier activities (ADP5, 2000).

The second, third, and fourth chapters reviewed relevant philosophical and military material to establish an understanding of what was known and where research gaps coincided with literature gaps. The lack of philosophical grounding of the British Army's existing values and standards approach, as recognised in the literature, was the research gap I intended to address with Aristotelian virtue ethics. Chapter Five justifies the research methodology and the relationship between Gadamer's hermeneutics and MacIntyre's tradition-constituted enquiry, which was deemed appropriate in light of the unique nature of the military community and the need to comprehend the traditions and narrative of a highly specialised community existing in partial isolation to the broader society. These



approaches lend credibility to my conclusions, which, when viewed via a quantitative lens, could be criticised for being inflexible, superficial, and devoid of deeper meaning in relation to empirical discoveries. However, MacIntyre's (2007) tradition-constituted inquiry was useful in not only defending my insider approach, but also against my belief that quantitative data analysis methods that could not provide a true translation of a sequence of actions within a wider specialised community, or in MacIntyre's words, a contextually correct answer to the question - *what is he doing?* (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 207). Chapter Six contains 14 soldiers' recollections in their own words, with minimal explicit philosophy to bring the soldier voice to the forefront of the research focus and serves as the foundation of my interpretations and argument.

The same material is interpreted through the lens of Aristotelian ethics in Chapter Seven. The discussion followed MacIntyre's notions of tradition, practice, goods, virtue, and institution, as well as Aristotle's conceptions of habituation, community activities, and the cultivation of virtue. This chapter concludes my thesis with a discussion of the study's theoretical and practical contributions, including positioning this study as an event within the military tradition of service to the nation which I defined as complex expeditionary operations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **8.2 Original Contribution to Knowledge**

I argue, based on the outcomes of my research, that empirical evidence demonstrates the presence of the character trait of compassion among the interviewed soldiers, even under intense situational challenges. Then, I provide a theory of moral improvement that respects the empirical findings, while remaining true to the classic Aristotelian idea of character. My research questions and subsequent objectives have served to highlight the significance

of character in complex expeditionary military operations for these soldiers, to suggest Aristotelian virtue ethics as an empirically informed programme of moral education, and to present individual and institutional responsibility for appropriate character development.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge by joining the continuing discussion on military ethics and the role Aristotelian virtue ethics can play in preparing soldiers for the complex and challenging environment of twenty-first century soldiering. While the use of Aristotle and MacIntyre in organisational studies on character and virtue is not novel, and there are numerous academic papers on the military environment written by historians, non-military experts, and military commentators, this study presents empirical findings from within a warfighting environment based on interviews with those who were actually there. This thesis communicates this to the broader academic audience by someone who understands what it's like to look at another person down the barrel of a rifle and face the internal battle of whether or not to shoot this person, knowing that once the trigger is pulled, there is no turning back. This study offers something that other commentators on ethics in the British Army cannot: first-hand experience of close quarter battle in Afghanistan distilled through the lens of MacIntyre's tradition constituted inquiry, which offers valuable intelligible data that is not only difficult to extract and analyse by non-military commentators, but also limited in its availability to the academic community as a whole.

My research intended to make Aristotelian-based theoretical and practical contributions to ethics inside the British Army and to strengthen MacIntyrean inquiry in general. Although commissioned officers were involved in the approval and logistical phases of this study the fact that this research focused on only interviewing non-commissioned officers is a

distinguishing characteristic.<sup>15</sup> Through a study designed, conducted, analysed, and discussed by a former enlisted soldier to express a highly specialised discourse from the ground up and beyond the military community, I intended to provide an insider's perspective on why these 14 soldiers remained morally upright when others did not.

### **8.3 MacIntyrean Empirical Inquiry**

This study has contributed to MacIntyrean inquiry in three ways: first, by taking up MacIntyre's (2015) own challenge, in which he states that "at some point in the future, reflection from an academic distance on what has been learned in and from engagement in the practices of the armed conflicts of the recent past and the immediate future will once again become profitable" (p. 13), second, by providing an insider's academic perspective by establishing a novel link that can contribute to the growth of knowledge in Aristotelian virtue ethics, the study's findings provide the basis for bridging the gap between external academia and internal British Army perspectives on moral agency. Having recognised a lack of ethical foundation in the British Army's approach to values and standards (McCormack, 2015 2016), I argue that my academic study from a distance with insider knowledge not only contributes to the continuing academic conversation on what can be learned from past military operations, but also that Aristotelian virtue ethics has earned a position in these discussions.

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<sup>15</sup> A military term relating to the horizontal "ranks" (rows) and vertical "files" (columns) of individual foot-soldiers, exclusive of the officers and used to refer to enlisted rank soldiers, as opposed to the officers.

#### 8.4 Tradition Constituted Inquiry

Additionally, I argue that this study contributes towards the knowledge on MacIntyre's tradition constituted inquiry by demonstrating how it can be used to untangle the dilemma of multiple correct answers to the question of '*what is he doing?*' when actions are placed within a particular tradition and setting. MacIntyre (2007) contends that when an event appears to be the result of human intent but cannot identify it as such people become practically perplexed and they do not know how to answer, explain, or even how to characterise minimally as an action that is intelligible. This is a regular occurrence, according to MacIntyre, when individuals enter alien cultures or even alien social structures inside their own culture (p. 209). This study argues that new adversaries and operational environments necessitate a greater emphasis on cultural knowledge specific to the operational setting. This lack of knowledge can have devastating consequences as would have been the case if Jason's interpretation of digging on a track was the basis for using lethal force.

Strategically, operationally, and tactically, it is advantageous to comprehend the culture of the operating environment, as this enables not only a more accurate understanding of the intentions of local actors, but also a deeper comprehension of sequential actions in terms of how they combine to produce predictable outcomes. Recent military campaign history has demonstrated that combat power alone is insufficient for winning wars, campaigns, or defeating insurgencies; capturing enemy territory is a military success, but winning the hearts and minds of the people who live there is a far greater achievement that requires engagement at the human level (AFM10, 2009; DLW, 2015; HOC, 2011; MoD, 2006b). Future expeditionary operations may depend on cultural understanding, but the British Army lacks the requisite programmes, methods, models, personnel, and organisations to

confront either the existing threat or the changing environment. Institutional action is required to incorporate cultural and social knowledge of foreign environments into training, education, planning, intelligence, and operations. Preparing soldiers to operate in foreign situations necessitates an anthropology-infused strategy that enables soldiers to comprehend and contextualise human behaviour within the tradition and society from whence it originates.

In this study, the experienced soldiers described insight and practical wisdom of the customs of Afghan people in the context of Afghanistan being largely rural and dependent on agriculture, whether legal or illegal, for subsistence and money. In contrast to inexperienced soldiers, who seemed unaware of this, experienced soldiers were able to position digging on a track within the practice of farming, with the person's aim being to provide waterflow for a crop that perpetuated the tradition of Afghan village communal living. At this juncture, I emphasise the overlap between MacIntyre's (2007) tradition-constituted inquiry and the narratives from Operation Banner, Operation Herrick, and the British Army Counterinsurgency manual, which suggest that the human landscape is essential for explaining local behaviour (DLW, 2015; MoD, 2006b). I argue that while understanding the activity is important, it is arguably more important to be able to place that activity within a sequence of events relevant to the setting's tradition, so that what is observed becomes comprehensible within the context and setting, allowing for the appropriate response to what is actually occurring. This study contributes to the debate around MacIntyre's tradition-constituted inquiry by demonstrating its utility in a military setting.

## 8.5 Practice, Goods, and Institutions

This study also contributes to the understanding of MacIntyre's practice, goods, and institutions schema by defining Infantry soldiering as a MacIntyrean practice with practice-specific goods that can be maintained by the British Army. This provides additional perspective on MacIntyre's concept in that it can also be used in organisations that eschew a profit-driven management philosophy. While MacIntyre is generally critical of institutions and their corrupting power over practises, this study offers a narrative that expands upon MacIntyre's (1999) discussion on the US Marine Corps as a positive example of an institution by illustrating how the soldiers in this study were habituated within a military community that developed practical wisdom and compassion that, as proposed by MacIntyre as a development area for the US Marine Corps, extended beyond the military community.

Using the British Army literature in Chapter Three and the findings and discussion in Chapters Six and Seven, I suggest that Infantry soldiering in the British Army can be categorised as a MacIntyrean practice with the British Army serving as its supporting institution within the tradition of military service to the nation. This is intended to contribute to the discussion on how the British Army and moral philosophy can coexist by illustrating how there are several commonalities that present an argument that wholesale change is not necessary to adopt Aristotelian virtue ethics within British Army values and standards approach to moral agency. This thesis contributes to the discussion on the applicability of MacIntyre's concept of internal goods to a range of occupational and professional settings by presenting findings from the interviewed soldiers who were carrying out roles within a highly specialised community that has similarities to how MacIntyre (2007) describes institutions, practices and the role of internal goods within

them. Furthermore, evidence within this thesis would suggest the interviewed soldiers described a specific form of pride and self-respect earned from employing excellent judgement in the use of lethal force and the responsibility of protecting the vulnerable from harm are presented as fundamental to the practice of soldiering because they can only be obtained within the military. Experienced soldiers reported pride and a sense of self-worth while evaluating the use of lethal force for the aim of reducing unnecessary harm. In addition, experienced soldiers also suggested the use of judgement in selecting alternatives to lethal force was professional, whereas absolute adherence to the rules of engagement, even when legal, without a wider situational awareness was described as unprofessional and counterproductive to the purpose of soldiering and the mission in Afghanistan. The comments of Ted, Roger, and Paul begin to highlight how standards are perceived differently, with experience serving as the key dividing line.

In addition, pride and self-respect are characterised as goods of a narrative human existence because they can be obtained beyond the context of military service.

Compassionate deeds were derived from an attitude of respect for all individuals, with examples drawn from beyond the military community. The concept of role models influenced the soldier's behaviour, albeit stemming from an entirely different social structure. Both experienced and inexperienced soldiers demonstrated compassion based on respect for others and a desire not to be disrespectful to a person of any origin or culture.

On the basis of the diversity of the military community, camaraderie and mutual respect are also believed to be internal military goods. Even though it is possible to achieve camaraderie and mutual respect elsewhere, it is impossible to do so under the conditions generated by complex, high-risk military operations. It may be argued that armed police provide a rebuttal to the preceding statement, however police officers do not reside and

socialise together within a partially isolated and self-contained community whereby services normally associated with mainstream society such as medical, recreational, and catering amenities exist within the restricted confines of the military community as a matter of normality. In addition, police officers do not generally deploy for six to nine months on high-risk, complex missions conducted in unstable foreign environments. The Cambridge Dictionary defines camaraderie as a partner with whom one has participated in arduous or dangerous, generally military acts (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). This description links to Aristotle's definition of genuine friendship in *Nicomachean ethics*. Despite Aristotle's claim that true friendship is exceedingly rare, this study contributes to our understanding of Aristotelian friendship by providing empirical evidence that camaraderie provided the foundation for habituating true friendships based on unique bonding activities unavailable to those outside the military community. Using Aristotle's words, naturally, such friendships are rare because people of this kind are few. Besides, they require time and familiarity. As the saying goes, they cannot know each other until they have eaten the proverbial salt together (VIII, III, 1156b).

### **8.6 Responding to the Situationist Critique of Virtue Ethics**

In addition, this study contributes to the broader academic debate between virtue ethics and the situationist argument that Milgram's obedience experiments prove compassion does not exist as a character trait. My findings contribute to the rebuttal of the situationist argument by offering empirical evidence that compassion was visible among the 14 soldiers who were subjected to a persistent environment of situational pressures and the influence of military obedience. This study reveals that compassion was able to overcome the influence of obedience while being confronted with life-or-death choices, including a risk to their own lives. Obedience is easily attributable to the military because of its structure and



control; therefore, for compassion to oppose obedience in an ambiguous high-pressure risk to life setting where obedience to rules would offer a far simpler route to decision making not only provides a credible rebuttal to the situationists' critique of global character traits, but also casts doubt on Harman and Doris' argument (Doris, 1998; Harman, 2001) by suggesting that their interpretation and subsequent application to the situationists argument is not a threat to Aristotelian virtue ethics.

MacIntyre (2007) argues that a genuine holder of a virtue should display it in a variety of contexts (p. 205). Experienced soldiers demonstrated compassion in dangerous and non-lethal situations when interacting with Afghan villagers who were total strangers, just as they did when interacting with their own unit's soldiers with whom they had formed bonds. Ted acted compassionately when he did not inform a soldier on patrol that his father had died despite being instructed to do so by a superior, and again when he exercised restraint when under fire from the Taliban while surrounded by non-combatants who were complete strangers. It is reasonable to argue that these behaviours are consistent not only across different contexts and settings, but also when weighed against the risk of being perceived as defying role standards and the risk to his own life by not firing back when it would have been legal and in accordance with role standards. Ted had the legal and tactical authority associated with his position to shoot back at the Taliban and inform a soldier that his father had died, yet he opted to act in accordance with the broader concept of respect for others and the personal trait of compassion.

### **8.7 Practical Wisdom and Compassion as Military Virtues**

Practical wisdom is Aristotle's most important virtue. In ambiguous expeditionary operations with strategic and global repercussions connected with individual actions,

soldiers must display prudence by making informed decisions based on their practical wisdom. A soldier's wisdom will be shaped more by experience and comprehension than by intelligence separating a clever soldier from a wise soldier. The wisdom of soldiers will enable them to evaluate difficult situations and act ethically, whether on or off duty.

Practical wisdom and compassion offers a response as to why the soldiers in this study chose not to obey the rules of engagement for employing lethal force when under fire from the Taliban in close proximity to non-combatants, despite being authorised to do so.

Practical Wisdom and compassion presents an alternative to objectively implementing regulations or directives, which in complex settings may compound the problem, as in Roger's decision not to inform the soldier that his father had died despite being ordered to do so (p. 201) or Steven's hesitation to use an Apache attack helicopter disproportionately (p. 176) even when it would have lowered the risk to him personally and the soldiers he commanded that day. The application of practical wisdom and compassion saved the killing of an elderly farmer avoiding the day's oppressive heat (p. 198). MacIntyre (2015) says that practical wisdom is a prerequisite for complicated operations that extend beyond the battlefield requiring an awareness of the political, strategic, and operational consequences of individual acts (MacIntyre, 2015, pp. 4-17).

In their interviews, these soldiers exhibited respect for others and selflessness, which are two of the Army's key values: "Selfless Commitment" and "Respect for Others." The interaction between soldiers and Afghans seemed to be predicated on the Afghans' fundamental right to life and liberty. Nevertheless, Walker contends that despite the abundance of literature on virtue ethics, the literature on virtues in a military setting is remarkably scant (Walker, 2010). In addition, the existing literature concentrates almost solely on a single virtue, such as courage or integrity. In addition, changes in the military

profession, such as the shift from traditional to more complex duties, have generated fresh concerns: have some values lost their significance? Have others also achieved prominence? As a result of diversifying military operations, are new virtues emerging? This study contributes to the debate over what virtues are appropriate for certain professions by proposing practical wisdom and compassion as relevant military virtues for twenty-first century soldiering.

### **8.8 Emotions and Moral Agency**

This study makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of the connection between emotions and moral agency, which might inform the British Army's approach to character development. When rules and policies appear to be out of step with accepted behaviour, the results of this study indicate that emotions had a significant impact on complex decision-making for the interviewed soldiers. Positive feelings such as pride and self-respect increased the probability of making a decision that aroused those sentiments whereas negative feelings such as hatred, disrespect, and betrayal functioned as behavioural safeguards against behaviours that duplicated such sentiments. Soldiers illustrated how both positive and negative emotions evoked by earlier experiences were incorporated into real-time reasoning.

### **8.9 Practical Implications**

According to Joint Doctrine Note 4/13 (JDN 4/13), it is expected that future operations will be conducted in close proximity to or near population centres. This will create an operational environment that is densely populated and potentially encircled with disgruntled and/or disadvantaged people, some of whom may be armed and/or organised (JDN, 2013, p. 215). This study provides a comprehensive grasp of the importance of

cultural understanding for the interviewed soldiers within military operations in unfamiliar social structures. This study provides a comprehensive grasp of the importance of cultural understanding for the interviewed soldiers within military operations in unfamiliar social structures. It would be unwise to recommend institutional policy changes based upon the findings of a small qualitative study and this study's findings would need to be tested across a wider population before any institutional policy change could be implemented. Nevertheless, it provides a narrative that has potential to contribute to broader military policy and training targeted at enhancing cultural competency in complicated expeditionary operations.

Understanding the human components of conflict is crucial for preventing conflict, changing it, and influencing its actors. It adds to strategic awareness, the capacity to organise and execute military operations, the manner in which soldiers approach risk analysis, and the identification of risks and opportunities. According to the JDN cultural awareness enables soldiers to strengthen ties with our current allies, friends, and strategic partners, as well as cultivating new partnerships (JDN, 2013, pp. 201-223). The need for cultural understanding is gaining recognition however putting theory into practice is more challenging. This study proposes that the British Army could benefit by nurturing specialists who have lived in close proximity to the actors in specific cultures and have a thorough understanding of their language, customs, beliefs, and narratives. This specialised expertise will direct cultural risk and requirements planning, which offers the basis for assessing human terrain and contributes to the collective effort to prepare the working environment by promoting general comprehension. When soldiers misinterpret the behaviour of others or fail to account for cultural nuances, cultural misunderstandings can arise. These cultural differences may result in friction, which may lead to mistrust,

heightened tensions, or support for attacks on soldiers who disregard cultural norms and values as was the case in 2011 with J Company 42 Commando in Afghanistan.

MacIntyre's tradition-constituted inquiry provides a foundation for enhancing the situational awareness, cultural understanding, and ability to contextualise individual actions of people within alien environments. By incorporating cultural awareness into mission-specific training, soldiers will be able to not only comprehend their environment, but also have an awareness of traditions and cultures that, if disregarded, as was the case with J Company 42 Commando in Afghanistan in 2011, could result in damaging relationships, alienating the very people they are tasked with protecting, and possibly driving them into the ranks of the insurgency.

This study has identified specific MacIntyrean goods aligned to the practice of soldiering which were readily available for these soldiers within the combat mission in Afghanistan. These goods are connected to actions that surpassed the pressure of obedience to rule and were powerful enough to remain intact even when acting in accordance with those goods placed the soldier's life at risk. With the removal of the platform of Afghanistan the British Army would benefit from identifying how these goods can be replicated without the setting of a combat environment. The combat mission in Afghanistan afforded the soldiers interviewed opportunities to protect the vulnerable, exercise sound judgement in ambiguous situations, and experience a unique form of camaraderie, mutual reliance, and self-respect; however, it would be fruitful to identify other activities that would replicate these benefits. Activities such as rock climbing where mutual reliance and good judgement can be exercised as well as community charity work where a certain type of pride and self-worth can be drawn from protecting the vulnerable from harm. Whilst these goods are available outside of the practice of soldiering they can be aligned to activities that are not,

such as situational live firing ranges, military support to government departments/agencies, and secondments to foreign armies who are engaged in complex expeditionary operations. Combining peacetime unarmed activities with armed activities that share the same goods, soldiers will be able to access activities that are linked to motivational factors that drive their behaviours and subsequent character development.

This study may also have implications beyond the British Army. Similar to the British Army, the Police, Fire and Ambulance Services are not subject to the same profit and loss pressures as financial corporations. Each of these organisations has a public role with a person-centred purpose based on achieving a higher good. Reflective of the British Army, they must translate situational context into practical judgments that may have far-reaching repercussions and are subject to public, governmental, and media scrutiny and assessment.

### **8.10 Researching the Hard to Reach**

It is hoped that the research methods and my own personal experiences during the study may contribute to knowledge not only of the benefits of insider research but also of the very real hazards faced by the researcher when immersed in traumatic interviews. Ethical approval for high-risk studies must include safeguards for the researcher, with a clear plan outlining how the researcher's emotional wellbeing will be maintained. Researchers are exposed to the risk of re-traumatisation numerous times during interviews and data processing, whereas participants are only exposed once. Although it was never my objective from the outset, my experience contributes significantly to our understanding of the risk of researcher re-traumatisation. If this thesis serves as a warning to future insider researchers that the dangers of conducting several interviews on sensitive topics in a short period of time are quite real, then I can rest assured that my PhD path will yield something

positive. In my relentless pursuit to reveal the unseen, the lack of a system to safeguard me from myself constituted a crucial methodological flaw and error.

Infantry soldiers are typically the human link between strategic direction and operational effectiveness in the Armed Forces and are subjected to tremendous physical and emotional strains in this setting, which are absorbed through shared experiences and camaraderie within a small military unit. As evidenced by the fact that none of the soldiers who gave informed consent chose to withdraw from the study, participants regarded the methodology to be acceptable. This is an important finding since it suggests that such strategies may prove useful for this demographic in the future. In addition, this study intends to contribute to the development of research methodology for other activities, such as law enforcement, emergency services, and gangs that work within an inner community bound by experiences unavailable to the outside world.

Returning to MacIntyre's (2015) article on military ethics as a field in crisis, this study contributes to the debate on how the British Army can benefit from a broader academic engagement by proposing a mutually beneficial relationship in which both the British Army and moral philosophy require the other. Together, they may supply the map and compass necessary for the evolution of moral ethics and consequent agency. This study makes a unique and significant contribution to the understanding of moral agency by combining the knowledge of Aristotle and MacIntyre with the internal knowledge of the British Army and the experiences of their soldiers during the war in Afghanistan and arguing that Aristotelian virtue ethics and the virtues of practical wisdom and compassion provide a response to the significant challenges that lie ahead. In response to MacIntyre's observation that followed:

reflection from an academic distance on what has been learned in and from engagement in the practices of the armed conflicts of the recent past and the immediate future will once again become profitable. But the present crisis in military ethics is such that that time is still not quite at hand (MacIntyre, 2015, p. 13).

This study addresses the military ethical dilemma as the British Army prepares for its largest downsizing and reorganisation since 1714, resulting in a combined strength of 72,500 regular soldiers (Wallace, 2021).

### **8.11 Limitations of the Study**

This research has limitations, and the reader should keep the following in mind when applying the findings. The criteria for interviewees were limited to individuals with operational experience in front-facing Infantry roles in order to extract relevant data on ethical decision-making that could be related with the situational challenges resulting from front-facing expeditionary operations. The use of lethal force is one of the most challenging ethical dilemmas a soldier may face; as a result, only personnel with experience in this area were invited to participate. By intention, my research excludes other Infantry departments in which soldiers face ethical challenges on a lower scale and in a different context than in lethal force decision-making.

Additionally, officers were purposefully omitted from this research in order to draw out empirical data that was not influenced by either officer careerism as identified in the US Army Officer study (Wong & Gerras, 2015, p. 27) or organisational leadership doctrine and messaging provided by the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS). There is a view that officers lead and soldiers follow (ALD, 2006, p. 4), and without officers, the data may look limited on the premise it was not collected from individuals with a more comprehensive theoretical understanding of leadership and moral agency. In addition, the



sample size was restricted to a maximum of 14 participants to allow for thematic analysis given the available time and resources. The sample size must be considered while analysing the results due to the sample's low proportionality to the population from which it was drawn. Due to the sample's proportionality to the population, the findings cannot be generalised to the entire population because they are restricted to the geographical location in which data was collected. As the absence of large-scale statistical data restricts the research to a local context and a field of research approaches, proportionality and the qualitative component of this study must also be considered.

Lastly, I conducted this research as an insider, which necessitated involvement with a research population and environment to which I had consistent exposure for 28 years. This increases the probability of unintended bias in favour of data analysis that supports my perspective on the issue. Although precautions against unconscious bias were taken in this study, and there is no indication that the results are not representative of the sample, the relationship between me, the population, and the research problem should not be overlooked when using the results of this study to conduct further research.

### **8.12 Indications for Future Research**

This study found that the capacity to interpret context and setting within the decision-making process was a crucial factor for these soldiers in determining whether the adoption of a rule would help or impede the larger objective. The British Army produced the Operation Banner Analysis of Military Operations in Northern Ireland in 2006, which outlined various legal issues associated with armed operations amongst civilians. The first concern was the legal authority given to security personnel and soldiers in general. The primary concern for the soldier, according to the study, was the "Yellow Card" instructions

for opening fire. It was envisioned that as long as soldiers conformed to the Yellow Card's guidance, they would be behaving lawfully in the majority of operational situations. The Yellow Card sought to interpret the law of self-defence so as to provide soldiers with unambiguous direction regarding the instances in which they may use potentially lethal force. As revealed by the review, what may be regarded "reasonable under the circumstances" is not categorical. According to the review, there was a conflict between the need for simple, clear directions and the concept of appropriate behaviour, which was less obvious. This conflict does not appear to have been definitively settled. Its resolution appears to be a matter of education rather than training (MoD, 2006b, pp. 4-12). Returning to the lessons learnt in Northern Ireland could yield a wealth of information regarding the significance of situational awareness and the value of practical wisdom. From the standpoint of this study, it would be fruitful for academics to investigate an Army operating in a populated environment where warfighting skills offered little in the way of translating behaviours in a complex and culturally sensitive environment prone to immense outbursts of violence in response to cultural insensitivities. In Northern Ireland Human Terrain Analysis (HTA) offered a far more nuanced response than the application of force or military rule.

In addition, the Telemeter Report included in the literature review and partially discussed in Chapter Seven draws attention to the discrepancy in the conduct of soldiers who completed the same PDT under identical conditions, at the same time, within the same operating area in Afghanistan. The report finds parallels between 42 and 45 Commando, referring to the notion that respect for others was a factor in why the insurgents and non-combatants reacted differently to the two formations. Particularly, the issue of instilling

adequate constraint must be recognised, and 45 Commando's strategy to achieving this should be studied in depth (MoD, 2014, p. 1).

### **8.13 Areas of Contention**

Due to the intricacy of not only the army as an organisation but also my own personal circumstances, this study was not without difficulty. As with any large, regulated organisation, the British Army has multiple levels of regulations, guidance, policies, operating manuals, and process routes to ensure the institution's function and mission are carried out securely. There is a natural reluctance to allow access to sites where institutional messages may contradict.

### **8.14 Institutional Authorisation for Research**

As demonstrated by the establishment of the Centre for Army Leadership (CAL) at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS), which trains commissioned officers, the British Army functions as a learning institution. While this is a great development, it raises the question of whether moral agency research should be presented within a leadership framework and supported by the commissioned officer learning environment. This research avoided both areas, resulting in an unconscious bias among those responsible for authorising access to research participants.

During the beginning of this study, the British Army was engaged in 52 distinct operations spanning four continents, making it impossible to acquire access to a population and sample that needed to be purposefully selected. This required securing the support of a senior army General who was not only well-respected within the broader military community, but also possessed the influence and authority to progress the study approval process while encouraging gatekeeper buy-in. Access to the Two-Star General in command

of both the RMAS and the CAL was facilitated through non-official means; without this, institutional mechanisms would have delayed the study. The procedure took 18 months, during which no field research could be undertaken, despite a personal meeting with a Two-Star General initiated by an inspirational special forces officer who shall remain anonymous.

### **8.15 Operation Northmoor**

The vast majority of army personnel deployed to Afghanistan exhibited professionalism and the greatest personal standards of discipline and bravery. In 2014, the RMP initiated Operation Northmoor, a vast inquiry into more than 600 alleged offences committed by British personnel in Afghanistan, including a number of alleged illegal killings by an SAS squadron. 2017 marked the end of Operation Northmoor, and the mission was formally ended in 2019.

Throughout the research access phase of this project, ongoing inquiries into the United Kingdom's role in Afghanistan forced the implementation of an extra access mechanism. Additional delays were caused by the MoD's examination of active Operation Northmoor cases, and while the research approval process was lengthy and complex, I would like to personally thank the MoD for granting study clearance at a time when access denial would have been entirely understandable.

### **8.16 Qualitative Data Analysis**

The research design and methods were developed in order to elicit detailed information as the participants narrate their personal experience of military operations. Pilot interviews were clumsy and focused on a pattern of asking questions and recording responses that produced the opposite of the expected results. After the recorder was turned off and I

engaged in post-interview chat, it became clear that 5 minutes had yielded more information than an hour had. Switching to a conversational style technique for the primary interviews resulted in a plethora of meaningful data, which presented the initial challenge of accurately identifying themes. The study had progressed from too little to possibly too much data and had become overwhelming. With a personal and professional stake in the findings, I got absorbed by the challenge of not missing critical information. This resulted in a reluctance to separate from the hermeneutic circle analysis approach due to self-doubt about my ability to weed out the nice-to-haves and get to the essential facts necessary to answer the research question. While this phase was initially troublesome, it would eventually be shown to be a critical component of my learning process and the capacity to recognise that while deviating from the research focus area may yield intriguing data, the research topic should always remain in focus.

## Afterward

Six years have passed since the beginning of this research project, and on the eve of presenting the key thesis, it is crucial to provide a perspective on the contemporary world in order to give this study greater meaning. While the SDSR (2015) and the British Army's interpretation of their role within the review (JDP5, 2015) predicted a shift in the types of operations in which soldiers would be deployed, it is reasonable to assert that the period between 2020 and early 2022 surpassed the expectations of the central government and the MoD. On 19 March 2020, the government announced the formation of a new COVID Support Force (CSF) consisting of up to 20,000 military personnel which at the height of the pandemic, saw senior military officials join Prime Minister Boris Johnson in delivering live briefings to the entire nation (MoD, 2020a).

Under the MoD Resilience Act, the CSF was entrusted with providing a variety of support to other government departments (JDP2, 2007) with the United Kingdom Armed Forces deploying dozens of military planners across the nation to help the government in expanding national testing capability. CSF operations included educating testing staff in partnership with Boots Pharmacists experts, providing military testers to regional testing centres, and sending essential testing equipment to national testing centres. The 6<sup>th</sup> Scots regiment conducted mobile coronavirus testing at Prestwick Airport and Motherwell with soldiers from 4<sup>th</sup> Close Support Squadron delivering Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to Epsom General Hospital along with a team from the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Royal Logistics Corps assisting the United Kingdom Police with the distribution of PPE and planning assistance. Nearly 400 soldiers were mobilised to support the British ambulance service (MoD, 2020a).

The British Armed Forces aided the National Health Service in creating new hospitals across the country by providing infrastructure, logistics, and project management support. In Cumbria, the military helped create five temporary patient rehabilitation centres that acted as halfway houses for patients who were discharged from the hospital but not fit enough to return home. As a result of these measures, the military contributed to the addition of about 1,000 beds. Additionally, the CSF worked with the Department of Health and Social Care to facilitate testing in English-speaking care homes (MoD, 2020a, Supporting the NHS).

As a further example of the diversity of how soldiers were used, with the fall of Afghanistan occurring at pace in August 2021, British forces were promptly dispatched from the United Kingdom to undertake humanitarian and national extraction operations amongst a highly agitated Taliban and ISIS offshoot intent on committing extreme violence. British soldiers encountered women trying to throw children over barbed wire fences, infants being thrown in the arms of soldiers, and desperate people clinging to aeroplanes attempting to take flight in a situation unlike anything they had ever encountered or witnessed. British soldiers were deployed with less than 24 hours' notice into a highly emotional, culturally and politically sensitive environment rapidly descending into chaos where they found themselves surrounded by women, children, non-combatants, combatants, suicide bombers, and western contractors. A relatively small number of lightly armed soldiers who were dangerously isolated from immediate support found themselves having to make decisions at the individual soldier level that could have sparked a catastrophic sequence of events capable of drawing the United Kingdom back into a war that was close to ending.

The unforeseen nature of both missions necessitated the deployment of hundreds of soldiers into foreign regions with little or no warning and minimal intelligence. The case for Aristotelian virtue ethics providing resources for an approach based on practical wisdom and compassion that extends beyond the boundaries of the military community to all people regardless of race, culture, or religion gains additional traction in the British Army's broader discussion about moral agency in light of these operations. This case is strengthened by the 2022 broadcast of the BBC Panorama programme, which alleged that the British Special Air Service unjustly killed 54 civilians in 2011 under dubious circumstances. The BBC argued that dispersed forces with reduced leadership structures dependent on self-regulation of conduct contributed to a culture in which established rules and standards had eroded, resulting in soldiers drifting toward unethical conduct without effective safeguards to prevent moral disengagement (O'Grady & Gunter, 2022). It is important to note that these allegations mirror the same allegations against the Australian Special Air Service within the Brereton report (ADF, 2020).

Between 2020 and 2022, the British Army downsized in preparation for smaller expeditionary operations, but in February 2022, the reduction was reversed, and the army began training for a European war. Russian forces' invasion of Ukraine destabilised global security to the point where NATO membership was extended to Finland and Sweden and NATO drew up plans to boost its High Readiness Force (HRF) from 40,000 to over 300,000. General Sir Patrick Saunders, Chief of the General Staff of the British Army, announced at the Royal United Services Institute Land Warfare Conference that the British Army would immediately shift back to preparing for war under Operation Mobilise, which would see a return to a dedicated focus on preparing for war (MoD, 2022, para 6-14).



The nature of armed conflict and the use of the military in a variety of capacities is unquestionably expanding as the world's exceptional problems persist and show no sign of diminishing. These situations give more relevance to character development, which produces consistent character traits regardless of how unfamiliar the social systems are. This thesis contends that since there is no time for an infusion of character during deployment, a continual character development programme integrated in the daily operations of the British Army will offer the moral foundation necessary to prevent moral disengagement.

A post-war scenario in which the deployment of soldiers and a humanitarian response overlap is not inconceivable. As previous post-war environments in Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan have shown, there is a characteristic element of unpredictability and ambiguity such that rules and legal frameworks will not be sufficiently nuanced to fit the complex and fast-paced environment, leaving the practically wise and compassionate soldier as the last line of defence in maintaining moral legitimacy.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Glossary of Military Terms

**Counterinsurgency:** A complex form of indirect armed confrontation with forces opposed to government powers and authority

**Doctrine:** A codification of beliefs or a body of teachings or instructions, taught principles or positions, as the essence of teachings in a given branch of knowledge or in a belief system. The etymological Greek analogue is "catechism".

**Expeditionary mission:** The deployment of a state's military to fight abroad, especially away from established bases. Expeditionary forces were in part the antecedent of the modern concept of quick reaction-rapid deployment forces

**Experienced soldiers:** More than three years service with previous experience on operational deployment in Afghanistan

**Helmand Province:** One of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan, in the south of the country. It is the largest province by area, covering 58,584 square kilometres

**IED:** Improvised Explosive Device. Buried close to the surface of known patrols routes. Contains 2-5 kilogrammes of plastic explosives activated via a pressure plate. Responsible for a significant amount of triple amputee injuries and in some cases death

**Inexperienced soldiers:** Less than three years service and no operational deployments

**Infantry:** Specialisation whose personnel engage in military combat on foot, distinguished from cavalry, artillery, and armoured forces. Also known as foot soldiers or infantrymen,

**Non-combatants:** Non-combatant is a term of art in the law of war and international humanitarian law to refer to civilians who are not taking a direct part in hostilities

**Non-commissioned officers:** A soldier who has not earned a commission. Non-commissioned officers usually obtain their position of authority by promotion through the enlisted ranks.

**Operation Herrick:** Codename under which all British operations in the War in Afghanistan were conducted from 2002 to the end of combat operations in 2014

**Patrol commander:** Responsible for 15 - 20 Infantry soldiers on operations

**Pre-deployment training (PDT):** Army pre-deployment training consists of physical exercise, tactical planning and technical training designed to prepare soldiers for the rigors of a specific deployment. The majority of Army pre-deployment training takes place at a soldier's home duty station.

**Private:** Entry level rank within the British Army. Characteristically with less than three years service

**Taliban:** Sunni Islamic fundamentalist political movement and military organisation in Afghanistan currently waging war within that country

## Appendix 2: Interview Pseudonyms

Pseudonym	Rank	Role	Experience	Period	Length of service at point of tour
Kenny	Private	Rifleman	One tour of Afghanistan	2007	3 years
Peter	Corporal	JNCO	Three tours of Afghanistan	2007-2009	12 years
Michael	Private	Rifleman	One tour of Afghanistan	2009	2 years
Danny	Private	Rifleman	One tour of Afghanistan	2007	3 years
Andy	Private	Rifleman	One tour of Afghanistan	2007	2 years
Steven	Corporal	JNCO	Three tours of Afghanistan	2007-2009	14 years
Lee	Private	Sniper	One tour of Afghanistan	2009	6 years
Roger	Lance Corporal	JNCO	Two tours of Afghanistan	2007-2009	9 years
Ted	Sergeant	SNCO	Three tours of Afghanistan	2007-2009	16 years
Billy	Private	Rifleman	One tour of Afghanistan	2009	1 year
Paul	Private	Rifleman	One tour of Afghanistan	2007	1 year
Terry	Private	Rifleman	One tour of Afghanistan	2009	3 years
Mark	Private	Medic	One tour of Afghanistan	2009	3 years
Jason	Private	Rifleman	One tour of Afghanistan	2007	1 year

### Appendix 3: Interview Questions and Theoretical Rationale

Question	Probing questions	Rationale	Literature
<p><b>Can you tell me about yourself and why you joined the Infantry?</b></p>	<p>Can you recall what you were looking for when you joined?</p> <p>Did you find what you were looking for?</p> <p>Is there anything you looked for but didn't find?</p> <p>Did you find things you hadn't looked for?</p> <p>What is it precisely that you enjoy your work for?</p> <p>Are these things Important to you and why?</p> <p>Did your satisfaction increase or decrease when you deployed operationally?</p>	<p><b>Are activities within the Army sufficient to promote character traits (virtues)</b></p> <p><b>Internal goods - practice</b></p> <p>The first question refers to <b>internal goods</b>. This question and subsequent probing questions aim at identifying relevant internal goods and is factual. These questions further aim to <b>establish whether and which internal goods are related to military practice</b>. Furthermore, this first question and probes conform to the requirements of setting the general scope of the research interests and addressing an issue with which all respondents would be familiar.</p>	<p><b>Internal goods – practice</b></p> <p>MacIntyre, A. (2007). <i>After Virtue 3rd edition</i><sup>16</sup>. Notre dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame.</p> <p>Knight, K. (2008). Practices: The Aristotelian Concept. <i>Analyse &amp; Kritik</i> (30), 319-329.</p> <p>Crisp, R. (2000). <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i><sup>17</sup> (R. Crisp, Trans.). St Anne's College, Oxford: Cambridge University Press.</p> <p><i>British Army Values<sup>18</sup> and Standards</i>. (2008). Army Headquarters Andover</p>
<p><b>Has your service so far made you reconsider your desires and values?</b></p>	<p>Have you experienced any serious operational incidents?</p> <p>Can you describe what happened and what you were facing?</p> <p>Did this experience result in a change of attitude towards the things you value?</p>	<p><b>Moral agency and social structures</b></p> <p><b>(Virtues vs rules/policy/environment)</b></p> <p>Questions pertain to the operational experience, specifically to combat action and <b>deliberation in problematical situations</b>. These questions aim at creating a focus on operational actions <b>and which considerations or</b></p>	<p><b>Moral agency and social structures</b></p> <p>MacIntyre, A. (1999, February 24). <i>Social Structures and Their Threats to Moral Agency</i>.</p> <p><i>British Army Values and Standards</i>. (2008). Army Headquarters Andover.</p>

<sup>16</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* is used as a seminal text for its discussions around **practices, goods and rules** and his concept that virtues are aligned to specific cultures and activities

<sup>17</sup> Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is used as a seminal text due to its discussions around habituation and activities undertaken whilst **developing character traits**. Discussions around decision-making (**practical wisdom – Phronesis**) are also included within *Nicomachean Ethics*.

<sup>18</sup> *The Army Leadership Code (ALC)*, *The Values and Standards booklet (V&S)* and *British Army Field Manual – The Moral Component for Land Operations*, are the sole underpinning doctrine sources for moral agency within the British Army and promote **values** as the guiding principle for activities displayed both on and off duty. These publications discuss the use of **values and rules** required for the promotion of military standards and effectiveness.

	Can you tell me which attitudes changed and why?	<b>virtues play a role in decision making and action</b>	<i>British Army Field Manual: Countering Insurgency.</i> (2009). Warminster: Land Warfare Centre
<b>How do you make decisions when faced with unfamiliar situations?</b>	<p>Can you describe a situation where you were faced with having to use lethal force?</p> <p>Can you describe what was going through your mind as the situation was unfolding?</p> <p>What determined your decision?</p> <p>How did this make you feel?</p> <p>Why did you have those feelings?</p> <p>How do you approach complex situations where rules are not sufficient to base a decision from?</p> <p>Where did you develop that approach from?</p>	<p><b>Practical Wisdom</b></p> <p><b>(Virtues vs rules/policy/environment)</b></p> <p><b>Understand the thought process</b></p> <p>Question designed to draw out drivers for action such as: character trait (<b>virtue</b>), obeying orders, following process (<b>rules</b>), acting with a natural inclination or simply applying a skill.</p>	<p><b>Practical Wisdom</b></p> <p>Crisp, R. (2000). <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (R. Crisp, Trans.). St Anne's College, Oxford: Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>MacIntyre, A. (2007). <i>After Virtue 3rd edition</i>. Notre dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame.</p> <p>Milgram, S. (1963). Behavioral Study of Obedience. <i>Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology</i>, 64(4), 371-378.</p> <p><i>British Army Values and Standards.</i> (2008). Army Headquarters Andover.</p> <p><i>The Army Leadership Code.</i> (2016). Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.</p>
<b>Which 'values' do you consider important in others?</b>	<p>Are there people with whom you work together who you admire or respect?</p> <p>What is this admiration or respect based on?</p> <p>Are there people with whom you work together who you do not admire or respect?</p> <p>On which grounds?</p>	<p><b>Character development – role models as change agents. Understanding the impact of individual and organisational behaviour.</b></p> <p>This question aims at <b>identifying which characteristics (virtues) are thought to be desirable within the practice.</b> The questions are of an evaluative nature.</p>	<p><b>Character development – Individual/organisational behaviour.</b></p> <p>Moore, G., &amp; Beadle, R. (2006). In Search of Organizational Virtue in Business: Agents, Goods, Practices, Institutions and Environments. <i>Organization Studies</i>, 27(3), 369-389.</p> <p>Crisp, R. (2000). <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (R. Crisp, Trans.). St Anne's College, Oxford: Cambridge University Press.</p>



			<p><i>The Army Leadership Code</i><sup>19</sup>. (2016). Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.</p> <p><i>British Army Values and Standards</i>. (2008). Army Headquarters Andover.</p>
<p><b>Which ‘values’ do you consider important, and can these be conveyed to others?</b></p>	<p>Which characteristics make you a good member of your organisation?</p> <p>Did you already possess these characteristics before you joined?</p> <p>How did you acquire these characteristics?</p> <p>Which characteristics should all soldiers possess?</p> <p>Is it possible to impart these characteristics to others?</p> <p>What would we have to do to impart these characteristics to others?</p>	<p><b>Is the practice and organisational activity consistent with developing character traits that will support moral agency and further develop and enhance the practice over time.</b></p> <p>Evaluative questions focus on the <b>character development and disposition of the respondent</b> and which virtues are desirable in general, as well as whether it <b>is possible to acquire these virtues.</b></p>	<p><b>Habituation – practice/Virtue link character development.</b></p> <p><i>British Army Values and Standards</i>. (2008). Army Headquarters Andover.</p> <p>Crisp, R. (2000). <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (R. Crisp, Trans.). St Anne's College, Oxford: Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>MacIntyre, A. (2007). <i>After Virtue 3rd edition</i>. Notre dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame.</p> <p><i>British Army Values and Standards</i>. (2008). Army Headquarters Andover</p> <p><i>The Army Leadership Code</i>. (2016). Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.</p>
<p><b>To what extent are wider values of the Army or society important?</b></p>	<p>Are there any wider values that are important for you in your job?</p> <p>To what extent do these values play a role?</p> <p>What can you tell me about the current list of values in the values and Standards booklet?</p> <p>What can you tell me about how these values are displayed by your unit?</p>	<p>This question aims at addressing <b>‘external’ goods</b> and whether these played any role in their general outlook and operational decision making. These questions aim at establishing if there are any other evaluative factors than situational circumstances or <b>organisational behaviour</b> that play a role in operational decision making and action. Whether they thought the current list of military virtues to be relevant or not, whether the list was complete or not and <b>whether the virtues were only relevant under operational circumstances.</b></p>	<p><b>External goods – organisational behaviour</b></p> <p><i>British Army Values and Standards</i>. (2008). Army Headquarters Andover</p> <p><i>The Army Leadership Code</i>. (2016). Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.</p> <p>MacIntyre, A. (2007). <i>After Virtue 3rd edition</i>. Notre dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame.</p> <p>Beadle, R., &amp; Moore, G. (2006). MacIntyre on virtue and organization. <i>Organization Studies</i>, 27(3),</p>

<sup>19</sup> ALC promotes values as central to all decision-making

## Appendix 4: Sample Interview Transcript

### Interviewee 6:

This isn't about being a leader; it's all about you. Well for me, it is all about me. If you can't do anything - it's just like my character. I wouldn't put my personal gain above everybody else. Of course, I do want to promote, and I've had to work hard to get where I've got to, but I would never trade all that in.

### Facilitator:

So go back to what you just said there, you used the word character. Where does your character come from?

### Interviewee 6:

I think my character has developed since I joined the Army at 16 years old. I'm a very different person to what I was when I joined the Army, I've been moulded by the Army. I just always try and do the right thing by my people. I like to [unclear] people think if they get a problem and they do, they'd come to me and talk to me without any judgement. When I look back to my time, from the rank of private soldier all the way through to at times corporal, I couldn't go to my chain of command with a problem because I'd be viewed as a hindrance, a pain in the arse, which gives them a problem. I think I've seen the Army develop into much better people. I like the way it's gone and that's what I try and emulate.

### Facilitator:

Can you describe that moulding process? You said there that the Army has changed since you joined to now and your character has changed along that journey. Can you generalise that process, how it happened?

### Interviewee 6:

I think with the change of cap badge to the regiment, the regiment ethos. It was difficult back when I was a young soldier to look at what the chain of command were going through. I think we've just developed, all of us within ourselves and the youth as well, when they come through you've got to manage them differently or you get nothing out of them, you get nothing back. The days of okay, you're doing that and not listening for a reason why someone can't do it or being faced with a problem and not trying to figure out a solution. No, you're doing that because of that.

### Facilitator:

Can you describe what you said there, the reason behind why you're doing it? Why do you think that's important?

### Interviewee 6:

It's all about management of people. If you've got a soldier that says he can't do duty at the weekend because he has something coming up, when I was younger you wouldn't dare ask, you would just do it or get your friend to cover for you. Whereas now people come to me, sir, my apologies but can I have a chat? What's it about? This. However, I always say to them if you come to me with a problem that's fine, try coming to me with a solution as well and normally we can work it out and they do. I just think it makes sense, it makes them happier, it makes them feel that they're valued. Because there have been many times when I've felt that I'm not valued, I'm just a quantity rather than a rifleman as such. It's the right thing to do and I think my - going back to the character, me being a parent, I'm a better man manager of soldiers being a father than I was say when I was a young sergeant, and I wasn't.

### Facilitator:

Can you talk about what changed in you, what part of that journey of becoming a father crossed over this? So, saying by becoming a father I became a better soldier.

### Interviewee :6

I understood more. When you have kids there's so much more that comes with it and I was quite - my arrogance when I was younger, I didn't realise how difficult it is on relationships and partners and how

important it is to support our soldiers with their wives. Because you can give the smallest bit out and get so much in return. Letting someone go for a scan, what is the harm in that on a weekday? I get it if we've on ops or something major's coming up, but it's just how you manage the people. That's what you'll be remembered for. I can always remember a sergeant major from my past when I was a young, young soldier, awful. That sticks in my head and...

**Facilitator:**

Define awful.

**Interviewee 6:**

Didn't speak to people with respect, didn't value them, looked down on his own men. We forget, without our riflemen we're nothing. It's the riflemen that pretty much [unclear] attack, there's one NCO there, there's one lance corporal and there's this rifleman doing an attack, no one else. So, he didn't respect people, I feel. He treated people awfully, bullying. I think that's the way the Army was and the generation it was, it was awful. I'm quite proud of the fact that riflemen can come to my door, ask me sir, I've been to my [team sergeant], he's happy for me to speak to you, can I [unclear] and me having a problem when one of my grandparents died.

.....**New Interview**.....

**Interviewee 9:**

At first, I was shit, that's my company. Then I was going to, funnily enough, speak to you to say look, it's not that I didn't want to do it. The individual - it was that marine, wasn't it?

**Facilitator:**

Yes.

**Interviewee 9:**

When you work in an isolated CP you get to know people. One of my lads was very gobby and I was always jealous of him because he used to talk about his relationship with his father, what they do, and I envied that. So, when I realised that a lot of the stuff he spoke about at the CP, that man, his dad was dead, I said shit. We were going through a tough time, as you know, we were going through a tough time down south, we had a recent loss and a large number of injuries. The morale was fragile, and he was a good guy, he was a key personality in that multiple which maintained morale. To see him shatter on that news could affect not just him but the guys.

**Facilitator:**

How did you get to that decision?

**Interviewee 9:**

At first, I was shit, that's my company. Then I was going to, funnily enough, speak [to you] to say look, it's not that I didn't want to do it. The individual - it was [that marine], wasn't it?

**Facilitator:**

Yes.

**Interviewee 9:**

When you work in an isolated CP you get to know people. One of my lads was never short of something to say. I was always jealous of him because he used to talk about his relationship with his father, what they do, and I envied that. So, when I realised that a lot of the stuff he spoke about at the CP, that man, his dad was dead, I said shit. We were going through a tough time, as you know, we were going through a tough time down south, we had a loss and a large number of injuries. The morale was fragile, and he was a good guy, he was a key personality in that multiple which maintained morale. To see him shatter on that news could affect not just him but the guys. This is about interpreting rules. So, on that day I interpreted that rule and decided

that I wasn't going to do that. Because to tell that soldier that his father had died would impact you, it would impact that multiple, but more importantly you've got someone walking 1.5 kilometres through an IED belt not even on his B-game; on his C-game and the lives of those other 11 people were at risk. But it's off the basis of knowing the impact of what could happen and it's about weighing up all the factors around you. Because sometimes the factors around you make more sense than what's right in front of your face. It's that ability to make decisions where this whole thing is about there's other stuff to consider. There's something right in front of my face that's obvious, but the other stuff could be more important.

.....**New Interview**.....

**Facilitator:**

One of your soldiers you clearly see they don't have that quality, but they're yours for five years. How would you deal with that?

**Interviewee 2:**

It depends what they're doing in that five years. If they're doing a mundane boring part of the job which we have, I'd find it quite hard to teach that loyalty and instil that into that person. But I would use references from tours and people looking after you and even going through divorces and stuff like that. The loyalty that a lot of my friends and colleagues in this job have had taught me myself as well as the basic training that I can do it that way. But if it's a guy that's clearly not interested and not given an opportunity to show him how to be loyal, you can't teach it I don't think.

**Facilitator:**

Have you got any examples where you've been told to do something, and you know it's wrong? Someone's basically saying to you, you can do this if you want...

**Interviewee 2:**

Probably yeah when I stole the armoured vehicle. Yeah. I was with a Lance Corporal at the time. I was a rifleman. He was like, go on, drive it. I was like, no no no. He was like, there's no one here, you won't get caught. Let's just take it for a spin. I done it. The consequences of that, I don't have a [unclear] so yeah that was when I was told - I knew something was wrong and I done it, but I was influenced because he was a junior NCO - and because when I was a rifleman, I liked to be quite loud, I liked to be the centre of the party. I thought I'd go down as a legend, but it just cost me a lot of money sort of thing and [unclear] but yeah - yeah, that was where I got told and I made a decision to do something.

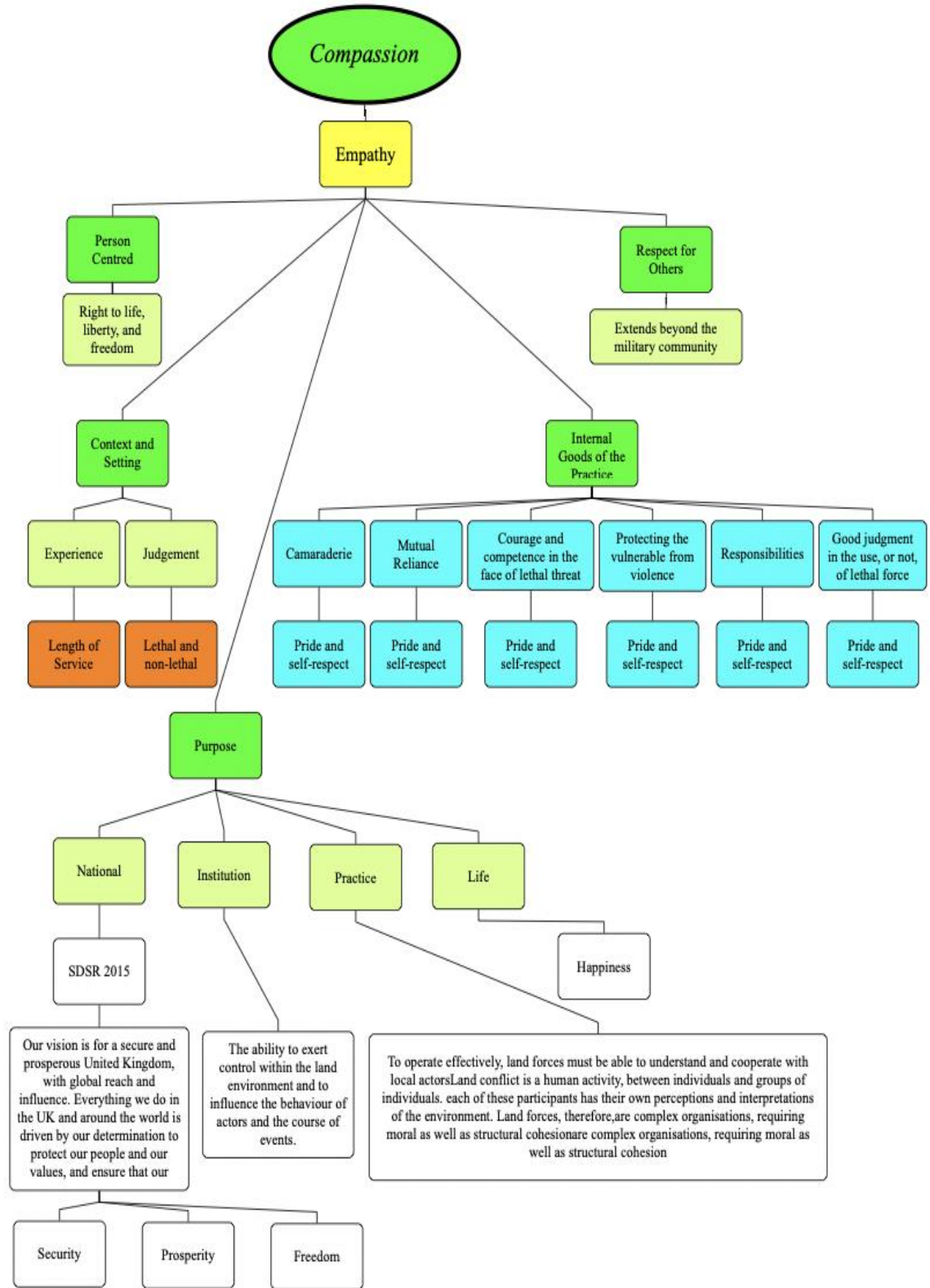
**Facilitator:**

What's your thoughts on that?

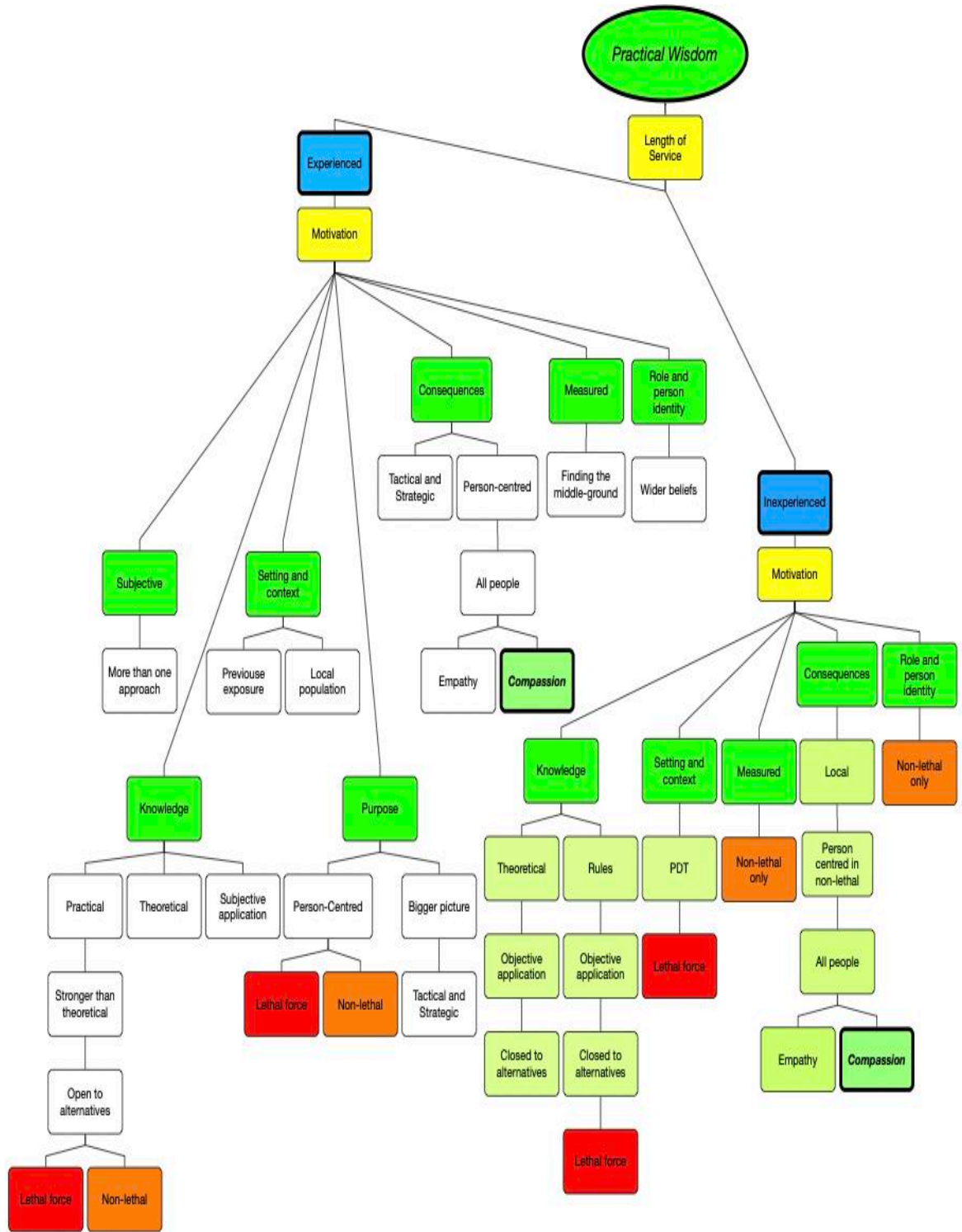
**Interviewee:**

My thoughts would be, have these people been warned? I would say it depends in what context really. If we're in a [PB] and there's nothing but rural around us, and we know who the farmers are, or if we've just got there and you're telling me that, well straight away I don't know the atmospherics, I don't know what's going on there. This is serious. You're telling me to shoot anyone that's digging in the ground. I can kill anyone, and my blokes can kill anyone that's digging in the ground. Well, there must be a massive threat for that to come down. This can't be like a judging situation. This is shoot him, he's digging in the ground. So, I'd do as I'm told.

**Appendix 5: Compassion Coding Diagram**


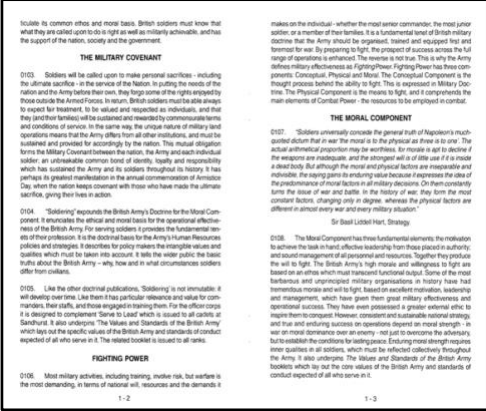


**Appendix 6: Practical Wisdom Coding Diagram**

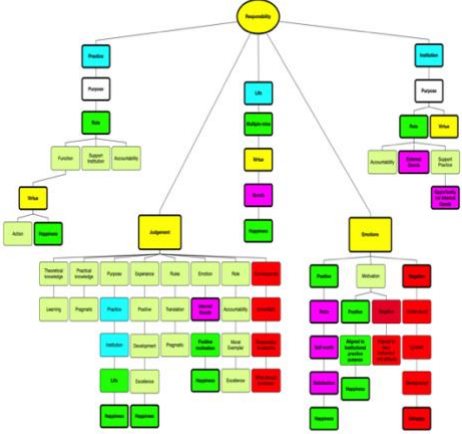
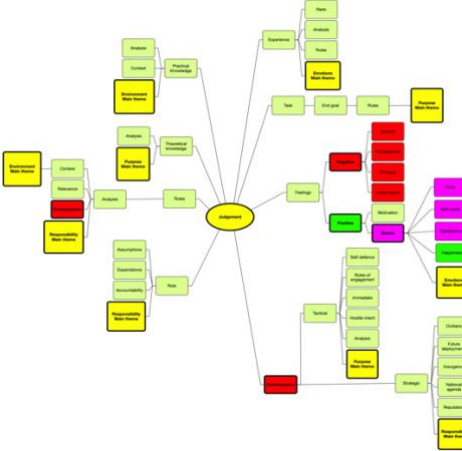



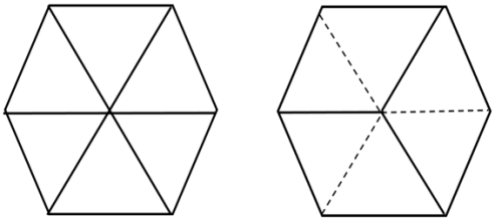
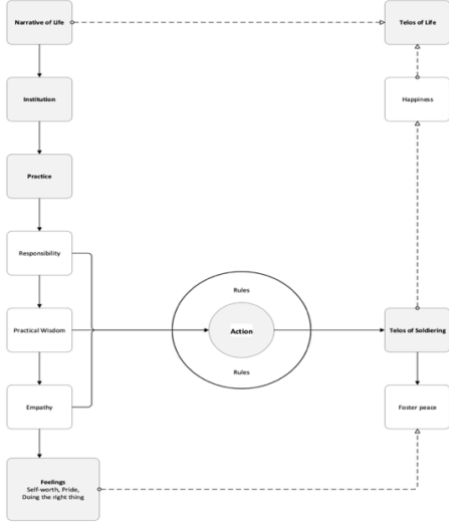
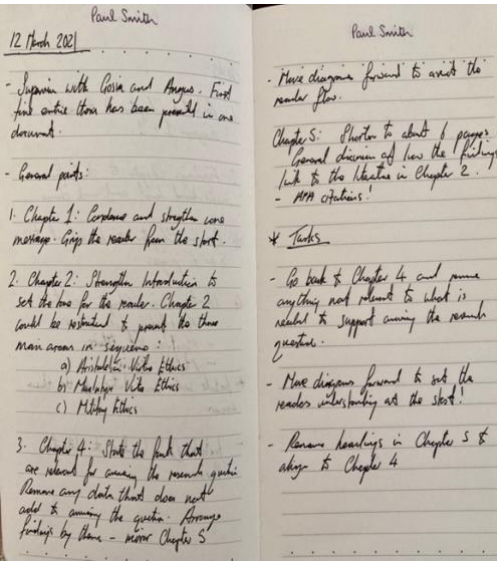
## Appendix 7: Abridged Research log






10/08/2017	<p>The only formal ethics training that can be identified is the yearly Values and Standards presentation with the Military Annual Training Tests (MATT). <b>MATT 6</b> (Values and Standards) is delivered by either the Commanding Officer or a military chaplain. To investigate why as this suggests following a duty to deliver as opposed to a desire to implement. Include into literature review.</p> <p>Investigate key terminology highlighted in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wider academic literature</li> <li>• participant interviews</li> <li>• Army Field Manual</li> <li>• Land Operations</li> </ul>	<p><b>JSP 898: Mandatory Training</b> describes military ethos as: “the characteristic spirit of an organisation generated by a sense of community, the people within that community and the way in which they operate. The British Armed Forces’ ethos centres on 4 tenets: vision (how we see ourselves and our purpose); the desire to achieve operational excellence (professionalism); our values (what we stand for); and our traditions (character). Internalising these factors and communicating them effectively not only influences how we see ourselves, but also how others perceive us. This underpins our credibility on the global stage. We communicate our ethos in our philosophy, more often referred to as the moral component of fighting power.”</p>
22/08/2017	<p>MATT 7 (Operational Law) seems to concentrate on legal obligations and avoids the subject of complexity and analysis. Rules based approach to teaching the use of lethal force</p> <p>Investigate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Humanity</b> forbids the infliction of suffering, injury, or destruction not actually necessary for the accomplishment of <b>legitimate military purposes</b>.</li> <li>• The principle of <b>distinction</b>, sometimes referred to as the principle of discrimination or identification, separates <b>combatants from non-combatants</b> and legitimate military targets from civilian objects.</li> <li>• The principle of <b>proportionality</b> requires that the losses resulting from a military action should not be excessive in relation to the expected military advantage.</li> <li>• <b>JSP 398 Rules of Engagement (Restricted)</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>JSP 383: Manual of the Law of Armed Conflict</b> describes the legal obligations regarding LOAC apply to all those involved in the conduct of armed conflict including all regular and reserve forces. All SP are therefore required to be trained to achieve and maintain a common baseline of knowledge about LOAC. LOAC training is to be included as part of Initial (Phase 1 and 2) Training and thereafter annual refresher and additional training will be required to supplement the common baseline (e.g., prior to a mission specific deployment and at certain key stages as SP progress through their career).</p>
04/10/2017	<p>Identified two key seminal texts offering a non-military perspective on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose</li> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Traditions</li> <li>• Excellence</li> <li>• Knowledge</li> </ul> <p>Read both texts and discuss at next supervision</p>	<p>Aristotle: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i></p> <p>Translated by Crisp, R (2000)</p> <p>Alasdair MacIntyre: <i>After Virtue</i> (3<sup>rd</sup> edition,2007) original publication 1981</p>
11/10/2017	<p>Discussed both seminal texts with Angus as I feel they are relevant to my research inquiry in terms of character development and practical judgements.</p> <p>Areas for further reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutions</li> <li>• Practices</li> <li>• Rules</li> <li>• Goods</li> <li>• Character development</li> <li>• Making moral judgements</li> </ul>	<p>Supervision</p> <p>Aristotle: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i></p> <p>Translated by Crisp, R (2000)</p> <p>Alasdair MacIntyre: <i>After Virtue</i> (3<sup>rd</sup> edition,2007) original publication 1981</p>
5/12/2017	<p>Early indications show there is a relationship between the two seminal texts and military publications in terms of character development. Key terminology within JSP’s 989 &amp; 383 is framed within both academic texts. Most of the components suggested by Aristotle and MacIntyre are already present within the Infantry. Character development</p>	<p>Aristotle: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i></p> <p>Translated by Crisp, R (2000)</p> <p>Alasdair MacIntyre: <i>After Virtue</i> (3<sup>rd</sup> edition,2007) original publication 1981</p>






	<p>within the army occurs by chance as opposed to structured intentions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose</li> <li>• Character</li> <li>• Virtue (Values in military language)</li> <li>• Rules</li> <li>• Traditions</li> <li>• Community</li> </ul>	<p>Robinson: <i>Ethics Training and Development in the Military</i> (2007)</p> 
<p>10/01/2018</p>	<p><b>The Moral Component of Fighting Power</b></p> <p>Key concepts to factor into inquiry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Motivation</b> to achieve the task at hand. Links to what MacIntyre and Aristotle are arguing about <b>Goods, Virtue and Purpose</b>. Needs to factor into participant interviews. Is the motivational element present in terms of what both commentators are suggesting?</li> <li>• <b>Effective leadership</b> exploring within interviews if it is associated with the moral component. Behaviours and how they influence soldiers to conduct tasks. Two levels of leadership:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Institution (MacIntyre)</li> <li>2. Practice (MacIntyre)</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p>How are they interacting?</p>	<p><b>Army Doctrine Publication, V5 Soldiering: The Military Covenant (200)</b></p> 
<p>17/02/2019</p>	<p><b>Pilot interviews didn't go as expected.</b> Having a set of questions just generated an almost Q&amp;A session and there's the risk valuable information is going undetected because the questions are not focused enough to drill into specific areas of inquiry.</p> <p><b>Significant note:</b> conversations post-interview generated a significantly different response from participants. They felt more at ease and felt like they were being engaged in conversation between two soldiers with a shared understanding of soldiering and less being questioned by a researcher. <b>Note to self:</b> You cannot claim to be one of them and understand their experiences if you present as impersonal and something they cannot relate to. Don't forget how you felt about academics before you retired!!!! You have just done the very thing you tried so hard to avoid – pushed the soldier into a defensive stance against a clinical researcher who is trespassing on precious ground. You slept walked right into this but better now than with the main group. <b>Don't do this again!!!!!!!</b></p> <p>Need to investigate the <b>insider researcher methodology</b> and speak to Angus during next supervision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot process with participants and pilot interview questions</li> <li>• Walker – Putting insiderness to work</li> <li>• Phenomenology – Husserl/Heidegger</li> <li>• Bias safeguards?</li> </ul>
<p>27/11/2019</p>	<p>Initial coding is going to take some time as interview transcripts are lengthy and detailed. Need to conduct some NVivo training to help pull of the detail together. After conducting step 1 familiarisation of interview transcripts has identified some general alignment with Aristotle and MacIntyre's theories of character development and moral agency.</p>	<p>NVivo 12 – University library NVivo course</p> <p>utube – using NVivo</p> <p>Researcher Development Process (RDP)</p>
<p>04/05/2020</p>	<p>First round of coding complete. Keep thinking I'm missing something and need to go back over transcripts. Going to speak to Angus about getting stuck in data analysis stage.</p>	<p>Supervision</p>



<p>10/6/2020</p>	<p>Second round of coding after rereading seminal texts, key themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility</li> <li>• Judgement</li> <li>• Emotions</li> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Purpose</li> </ul> <p><b>How these themes connect with each other?</b></p> <p>Need to speak to Angus as to when I leave this alone and start structuring Chapter 4 Findings as it seems likely that there's the potential to keep mining this data before saturation occurs.</p> <p>May need a glossary of terms as some of the interview narrative is bespoke military acronyms and abbreviations</p>	<p>NVivo 12</p> 
<p>23/7/2020</p>	<p>Theme association coding has identified that all main themes are connected via detailed coding. Gives an indication that coding is likely to be accurate. Need to ensure that main themes are present in academic literature.</p> <p>Looking at identifying the main findings in chapter 4.</p> <p>Lethal force is appearing via several themes giving an indication it is present as a consistent influencer.</p> <p>Motivation is being linked to goods/purpose/decision-making</p> <p>Going to discuss coding map with Angus at next supervision</p> <p>Responsibility doesn't appear to be an Aristotelian theme and presents as more of a military theme. Not sure how I will address this in terms of arguing an Aristotelian ethical framework for the British Army. Will raise it at the next supervision.</p>	
<p>10/8/2020</p>	<p>Have associated themes and codes to academic literature to assure myself that Chapter 5 Discussion can be structured with credible academic underpinnings. All themes can be matched however Responsibility seems to be associated with military literature. Need to discuss with Angus at next supervision.</p> <p>Army Doctrine Publication Volume 5 (ADP 5) The Military Covenant illustrates components which match to both seminal texts.</p> <p>Confident themes are established and can be defended</p>	

<p>24/01/2021</p>	<p>Chapter 4&amp;5 completed as first draft. Sending to Angus for comment as style is bespoke to what I'm comfortable with. Interesting that initial opinion on Institution irresponsibility towards providing opportunity to obtain internal goods has changed. Initially it was perceived the Army was not taking their responsibility to ensure their soldiers were positively motivated however it looks like it's more of a case of not knowing what those goods are. MacIntyre argues Institutions cannot comment of internal goods without experience of being within the practice. This is suggestive that the Army may not even know what those goods are.</p> <p>Note: Not sure I agree with MacIntyre's point on this as in one hand the Institution must support the practice but if there is no understanding how can that happen? I have crossed over from Institution to Institution and took the time to understand probation practice and the goods associated with them even though I have not been a practitioner. Current performance is good, and the team are bounded with a strong relationship between probation institution and practice.</p>	<p>Chapter 4&amp;5 draft as at 24/01/2021</p> <p>Alasdair MacIntyre: <i>After Virtue</i> (3<sup>rd</sup> edition,2007) original publication 1981</p> <p>Cube description of objective and subjective thinking. Use this to describe how two things can be seen differently even when they present the same. The farmer and the IED layer as an example. Practical Wisdom allows people to see both the hexagon and triangle's along with the cube which takes deliberative thinking to see.</p> 
<p>10/02/2021</p>	<p>Possible framework when pulling findings and the current V&amp;S together. Responsibility is the foundation virtue from which judgement is instinctively triggered which in-turn instinctively selects the correct virtue aligned to the situation and the purpose. Examples from findings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SNCO who decided not to inform one of his soldiers of his fathers' death at a particular time. RESPONSIBILITY to the soldier, other soldiers' safety and for his own actions and likely outcomes of his actions. JUDGEMENT based upon responsibility and EMPATHY for the soldier and his feelings. PURPOSE to get back to the patrol base safely = <i>Inform soldier on return to base (practical Wisdom + responsibility and empathy)</i></li> <li>2.</li> </ol>	
<p>24/2/2021</p> <p>12/3/2021</p>	<p>Completed Chapter 1 and submitted to Angus and Gosia for comment. Was good to finally pull everything together and see the narrative from Chapter 1 to the end. Full thesis now in draft HOWEVER 16,000 words short but work to do yet.</p> <p>Future re-work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Methodology to expand to justify Heidegger's Interpretive phenomenological research design</li> <li>• Literature review to expand the section on rules</li> <li>• Empathy or Respect to be framed</li> <li>• Military ethics expanded</li> <li>• Narrative of a life to be expanded</li> <li>• Aristotle on Happiness to be included</li> </ul> <p>Feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove data not supporting RQ</li> <li>• Restructure Chapter 2</li> <li>• Recent commentators on Aristotle</li> <li>• Shorten Chapter 5</li> <li>• Move diagrams forward</li> <li>• Citations in Chapter 5 updated</li> </ul>	<p>Feedback (12/3/2021):</p> 

<p>10/07/2021</p>	<p>***Seeing the text differently*** after looking at it from different perspectives over time. Deeper meanings coming out and my initial analysis was superficial in areas. Main components coming through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Compassion</li> <li>2. Experience</li> <li>3. Purpose</li> <li>4. Emotions</li> </ol> <p>Social structures and the military</p> <p>The issue is the proper mindset of those who are on occasion called on to kill in their line of duty. Adopting such a mindset is the soldier's challenge.</p> <p>It is important not just while the soldier is soldiering, but in life after the military too. The community has become increasingly aware of the traumas suffered by former veterans, which take multiple forms. Among these can be the "moral wounds of war" - keeping a strict ethical framework around the use of lethal force may help in preventing some of those.</p> <p><i>War justifies – more importantly, demands - what, in peacetime, would be unjustifiable: the destruction of the lives and happiness of others. Those who fight live this paradox day in and day out.</i></p> <p><a href="https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/8341449/sas-bannes-skull-badge-nazi/">https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/8341449/sas-bannes-skull-badge-nazi/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-06-14/photo-shows-nazi-flag-flown-over-australian-army-vehicle/9859618">https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-06-14/photo-shows-nazi-flag-flown-over-australian-army-vehicle/9859618</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.smh.com.au/world/us-troops-pose-with-nazi-ss-flag-20120211-1sy01.html">https://www.smh.com.au/world/us-troops-pose-with-nazi-ss-flag-20120211-1sy01.html</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional responsibility</li> <li>• Ignorance of culture</li> <li>• Internal goods with negative outcomes</li> <li>• Lack of respect/compassion</li> <li>• Poor judgement</li> <li>• Deficiency of temperance</li> <li>• Deficiency of Justice</li> <li>• Negative operational purpose</li> <li>• Negative strategic purpose</li> <li>• Contributing to negative social structures</li> <li>• Role modelling future unethical behaviours</li> <li>• Loss of credibility with public</li> <li>• Destruction of the practice</li> <li>• Encourages unprofessionalism</li> </ul>	    
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19/8/2021	<p>Practical demonstration of the value of compassion and practical judgement. Can be aligned to Temperance, Justice, and courage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aligns to thesis argument – character</li> <li>• No time to prepare – 24-hour lead time</li> <li>• Unprecedented situation</li> <li>• No state authority in place</li> <li>• Desperate human behaviour</li> <li>• Taliban present (restraint)</li> <li>• Enemy of UK (restraint)</li> <li>• Responsible for UK deaths (restraint)</li> <li>• Compassion</li> <li>• Emotions of others</li> <li>• Desire to reduce suffering</li> </ul> <p>Apply Aristotle’s cardinal virtues and compassion to this situation:</p> <p>The British soldiers present in Kabul having the character traits of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical Wisdom</li> <li>• Courage</li> <li>• Justice</li> <li>• Temperance</li> <li>• Compassion</li> </ul> <p>Compare to current Values and Standards model:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courage</li> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Respect for others</li> <li>• Integrity</li> <li>• Loyalty</li> <li>• Selfless commitment</li> </ul> <p>Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional???? What does this mean? No explanation offered that can translate the Kabul situation!</li> </ul> <p>Further reading:</p> <p><a href="https://www.the-sun.com/news/3506411/paras-tears-afghan-mums-babies-over-razor-wire-fences/">https://www.the-sun.com/news/3506411/paras-tears-afghan-mums-babies-over-razor-wire-fences/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2021/08/21/us-sends-helicopter-rescue-169-americans-trapped-kabul-hotel/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2021/08/21/us-sends-helicopter-rescue-169-americans-trapped-kabul-hotel/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.foreigner.fi/articulo/world/seven-afghans-killed-in-kabul-airport-chaos-says-british-ministry/20210822120342013498.html">https://www.foreigner.fi/articulo/world/seven-afghans-killed-in-kabul-airport-chaos-says-british-ministry/20210822120342013498.html</a></p>	    
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## Appendix 8: Institutional Research Consent



**Brigadier WSCW Wright**  
**Commander**  
**Sandhurst Group**  
**The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst**  
**CAMBERLEY, Surrey GU15 4PQ**

Telephone 01276 412208 Military 94261 2208  
 E-Mail [RMAS-Gp-HQ-Comd@mod.gov.uk](mailto:RMAS-Gp-HQ-Comd@mod.gov.uk)



10 July 2018

*Dear Commanding Officers*

I am writing to ask your support for an external PhD research project titled 'Calibrating the Moral Compass'.

The research focuses on our soldier's moral character development and ethical decision-making in complex and demanding environments. It is a topic that has a central place within our ongoing leadership development.

The research is being conducted by Darren Redgwell, a former RIFLES Late Entry Captain who was involved in writing the Army Leadership Code. Before his retirement in February 2018, he was also a Leadership Activist for the Centre for Army Leadership.

Darren's research will involve interviewing soldiers during late 2018 through to early 2020. He will write to you personally to ensure you are fully aware of the research requirements and will offer you the opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

Darren's research has been approved by Northumbria University research ethics committee and the Centre for Army Leadership is supporting his research.

This research offers an exciting opportunity to gain an insight into how our leaders approach ethical complexities in the ever-changing operational environment we find ourselves operating in. I personally look forward to seeing the results and hope you can support this worthwhile research.

Yours sincerely,

WSCW



## Appendix 9: Student Research Ethical Issues Form

Faculty of Business and Law

Student Name:	Darren Redgwell
Programme of Study	Part-Time PhD
Title of Research Project:	<i>'Calibrating the Moral Compass – A Virtue Ethics Approach to British Army Soldiers Moral Agency during Complex Contingency Operations.</i>
Start Date of Research Project:	17 October 2016
Supervisor	Dr Angus Robson

Risk Status (please mark one box):

Red

Amber

Green

Please refer to the Ethics Diagnostic Tool for advice on Risk Status (available in Blackboard – NB034BC: B and L Research).

	Comments
Brief description of the proposed research methods including (if relevant) how human participants will be selected and involved	Qualitative research using an inductive phenomenology approach. Interviews will be the method for primary data collection with subjects selected on their status within the junior command structure of the Army and on the basis, they will have sufficient experience and time served to allow for relevant data to be obtained.
How will informed consent of research participants be acquired? (If appropriate attach draft informed consent form)	Individual consent form attached – letter to research participants attached
Will the research involve an organization(s)? (If appropriate attach draft organisational consent form)	Yes – organisational consent form attached
How will research data be collected, securely stored and anonymity protected (where this is required)	Confidentiality will be maintained in terms of storing data securely on computers and ensuring hard copies of transcripts and field notes are stored in a locked cupboard. All data will be stored securely either electronically on computers or in hard copy version in a locked cupboard. As part of the data analysis process, hard copies of the anonymised transcripts (raw data) may be given to the PhD supervision team and a small number of other research supervisors to review to ensure that the researcher's analysis has resonance. Hard copies will be returned to the researcher and will not remain in the possession of the research participants. Data will be used and reproduced as case studies in a variety of research publications.
How will data be destroyed after the end of the project? (Where data is not to be destroyed, please give reasons)	Destroyed using electronic data file shredder with electronic receipt of destruction.
Any other ethical issues anticipated?	See attached ethical approval form

<p><b>Supervisor:</b></p> <p>I confirm that I have read this form and I believe the proposed research will not breach University policies.</p> <p><b>Date:</b> .....</p>	<p><b>Supervisor Signature:</b></p>
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Student Signature (indicating that the research will be conducted in conformity with the above and agreeing that any significant change in the research project will be notified and a further "Project Amendment" Form submitted).

**Date:** 31 August 2021

**Student Signature:**

**Please Note:**

**The appropriate completion of this form is a critical component of the University Policy on Ethical Issues in Research and Consultancy. If further advice is required, please contact the Faculty Research Ethics Committee through [ethicssupport@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:ethicssupport@northumbria.ac.uk) in the first instance.**



## Appendix 10: Organisational Research Consent Form

### Organisational Research Consent Form

**Title of Research project:** *Calibrating the Moral Compass – A Virtue Ethics Approach to British Army Soldiers Moral Agency during Complex Contingency Operations*

**Name of Researcher and School/Faculty**

Mr Darren Redgwell – Business and law Post graduate research Northumbria University

**Organisational consent**

As the head of your organisation, you must be satisfied that any research conducted with your soldiers is both relevant and ethical. This form is designed to make you aware of what you will be agreeing to within your organisation. Consent is required in two parts – part one is consent as a gatekeeper to allow interviews with your soldiers within your organisation. Part two provides oversight of the individual consent requirements and assurances which will be offered to those selected for interview.

**Rationale for research**

Counterinsurgency operations are complex, dangerous and demanding - both physically and mentally and require soldiers to make moral judgements, possibly in environments where the distinction between combatant and civilian appears unclear and operate with the responsibility to use lethal force. Away from massed formations and linear tactics, the British Army has begun focusing on reshaping a soldier's character to make them capable of independent ethical action. It has become increasingly important for soldiers to think and act ethically in recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, as insurgents targeted smaller formations and encouraged soldiers to engage in horrific and unethical actions. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan highlighted the need for military ethics as a way of disseminating virtues as the basis for ethical decision-making in environments where detailed rules and procedures offer no handrail for ethical thought and action.

The unique nature of counterinsurgency operations in the past highlights a need to prepare British soldiers for future counterinsurgency operations, either as forces of the primary government actor or in a supporting/mentoring role to another state actor facing a counterinsurgency. Developing soldier's ability to think and act ethically will not only help formulate the appropriate action to support mission success but prevent moral scarring and psychological effects of unethical action post conflict.

This research will focus on how to develop soldier's approaches to complex ethical problems and how to determine the right course of action using emotion, moral reasoning and situational awareness, all of which may take place within social structures and roles soldier's may be unfamiliar with.

**Your role as the Commanding Officer**

Any research within your organisation must be with your approval and you will only be conducted once you are sure all safeguards are in place to prevent any risk to those taking part in individual interviews. You are asked to provide access to individual soldiers who fit the criteria for interview and assure that they are afforded the time to complete the interview. All interviews will take place at a time and place that is convenient to the organisation.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate without consequence. Neither the researcher nor the University has a conflict of interest with the results.

**Access to soldiers for interviews**

Your soldiers will be selected purposively from non-commissioned officers (NCO's) which allows the research to draw from people for whom the research problem has relevance and personal significance thus producing data that is relevant to, and supportive of answering the research question. The sample size will be kept relatively small, 5-7 from within your organisation.

For this research, NCO's who have conducted counterinsurgency operations such as Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan will be the selected sample. Further, those selected would not previously have been exposed to any higher-level academic teachings relating specifically to moral/ethical leadership theories unlike officers who, in contrast, attend both university and an extended period of higher-level military leadership training at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. This has the added benefit that answers given during interviews are from actual feelings and perceptions rather than constructed around known leadership theories from previous teachings. Additionally, participants will be selected to develop an understanding on how character development in the military environment can occur in people who come from a range of backgrounds where the habituation of moral/ethical behaviour may have been absent or not supportive of noble actions.



## Interviews

Your soldiers will be invited by letter to take part in a single interview lasting up to one hour based around the subject of moral and ethical decision-making and actions whilst on counterinsurgency operations. Interviewees will be asked to provide basic information relating to their military careers and will be asked open questions on their experiences allowing them to explore specific incidents if they wish. Interviews will be conducted using a semi-structured approach allowing the researcher to keep interviewees within the context of the research area whilst allowing interviewees room to manoeuvre with their answers. At no stage will participants be asked to breach operational security or the official secrets act.

Interviews will focus on the below questions:

1. The concept of social structures and behaviour
2. Character traits in context to behaviours on operations
3. Levels of understanding around the British Army's Values and Standards
4. The British Army as an institution and its effect on practice-based activities at soldier level
5. Current underpinning of ethical decision-making
6. Relationship between Military Ethics and Virtue Ethics

## Safeguarding

Interviews will only be conducted with soldiers who have been cleared by their military chain of command for posing no known risk to any emotional distress from previous counterinsurgency operations. Whilst the research aims to interview those with operational experience the questions will be formulated around general conceptions allowing the interviewee to expand into specific areas of personal experiences. The researcher is both a fully qualified military Traumatic Incident Management (TrIM) practitioner/unit coordinator and Post Operational Stress Management (POSM) practitioner and able to recognise signs of stress or rhetoric that would suggest the interview should be stopped or changed direction.

At the start of interviews participants will be advised that they can withdraw or reschedule at any stage should they feel uncomfortable proceeding. Should a participant become stressed or appear to be focusing on a negative experience then the interviewee will be offered the opportunity to take a short break. If the interviewee becomes distressed beyond what the researcher feels comfortable with then the interview will be halted, and a judgement will be made as to whether the interview should resume later, or the interviewee should be withdrawn from the process. Regardless of the interviewee being rescheduled or withdrawn the interviewee will have their confidentiality respected and be signposted to all the military help and support groups available such as:

1. Unit Chaplain
2. Unit Medical officer
3. Unit TrIM practitioner
4. Unit POSM practitioner
5. Army Welfare service
6. Royal British Legion
7. Combat Stress confidential support line

## Anonymising data

Participants will be informed of any potential risks from participating in the research and that their interview will be confidential, and their anonymity assured. All notes taken during interviews will have an individual code identifier that in no way identifies the participant by either name, rank, number, sex, age, or department. Additionally, any electronic notes will be saved using a unique code identifier that matches the same criteria used to ensure anonymity using paper notes. No other researcher or respondent to additional interviews will know of other participants participation in any way.

Hard copies of field notes will remain in the possession of the researcher post interview. Once available anonymised transcribed field notes will be shown to the participant to confirm accuracy of their answers and to confirm there has been no deliberate misrepresentation of their opinions and answers.

## Data storage

Confidentiality will be maintained in terms of only storing data securely on password protected computers and ensuring hard copies of transcripts and field notes are stored in a locked cupboard only assessable by the researcher. Data will also be stored within the researcher's personal area of the Northumbria University cloud drive protected by an external agency. Exact cloud protection measures are available from Northumbria University if requested. Should an external drive USB stick be required to transport data then only a securely encrypted stick will be used.

To electronically share anonymised information via e-mail links to secured cloud drives will be used.

As part of the data analysis process, hard copies of the anonymised transcripts (raw data) may be given to the PhD supervision team and to review to ensure that the researcher's analysis has resonance.

## Ethical Considerations

Your soldiers will be treated with respect from the time they are approached for possible participation, throughout their participation, and after their involvement ended. This will include respecting their privacy and keeping their information confidential; respecting their right to change their mind, to decide that the research does not match their interests, and to withdraw without a penalty; informing them of new information that might emerge during research, which might change their assessment of the risks and benefits of participating; and informing them about what was concluded from the research. Participants will be advised that they are not to discuss anything

which potentially incriminates either the participant or a third party in terms of either internal army protocol or the law. Participants will also be advised that the researcher may stop the interview at any stage if it looks like the interviewee either has or is about to incriminate either himself or others. Any information supplied during interview that appears to be of a criminal nature will be supplied to the service police for consideration.

**Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee (MODREC) approval**

MODREC approval is not required for this research as it does not go beyond the threshold set within Joint Service Publication 536 (JSP356) which covers the policy for research involving human participants. The ethical threshold set for MODREC approval is attached to this proposal and available via:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-ethical-approval-for-mod-research-involving-humans#decide-if-research-requires-ethical-approval>

Should you have any comments or questions regarding this research, you may contact the researchers: *Darren Redgwell* - [darren.redgwell@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:darren.redgwell@northumbria.ac.uk)

*Dr Angus Robson* - [angus2.robson@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:angus2.robson@northumbria.ac.uk)

**This study has received ethical approval from Northumbria University Research Ethics Committee**  
*Northumbria University ethical approval form attached.*

DA Redgwell



## Appendix 11: Organisational Research Consent Form

**Title of Project:** *Calibrating the Moral Compass – A Virtue Ethics Approach to British Army Soldiers Moral Agency during Complex Expeditionary Operations*

**Name of Researchers:** Mr Darren Redgwell

Please tick to confirm your understanding of the study and that you are happy for your organisation to take part and your facilities to be used to host parts of the project.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that participation of my organisation and soldiers in the research is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and that this will not affect legal rights.
3. I understand that any personal information collected during the study will be anonymised and remain confidential.
4. I agree for my organisation and soldiers to take part in the above study.
5. I agree to conform to the data protection act

Name of Commanding Officer:

Date:

Signature:

Name of Researcher: **DA Redgwell**

Date:

Signature:

Name of Person taking consent:

Date:

Signature:

(If different from researcher)



## Appendix 12: Participant Engagement Letter

Dear Participant:

My name is Captain Darren Redgwell; I am a PhD student at Northumbria University currently under the supervision of Dr Angus Robson.

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: '*Calibrating the Moral Compass*' – *A Virtue Ethics Approach to British Army Soldiers Moral Agency during Complex Contingency Operations*.

The purpose of your interview is to gain your understanding on:

1. The relationship between character traits of soldiers and decision-making
2. How the Army's values are being communicated and translated by soldiers
3. How soldiers understand virtue and vice in context to operations
4. The effects of operational contextual influences on decision-making

Northumbria University's Research Review Board has approved this study. Your interview has been developed to ask questions regarding opinions on current moral and ethical issues whilst on operations. It is my hope that this information can lead to recommendations for further development of leaders within the Army that will ensure future operations are led in a way to add to overall operational efficiency.

There are no identified risks from participating in this research. Your interview is confidential, and your anonymity is assured. All notes taken during your interview will have an individual code identifier that in no way identifies you by either name, rank, number, sex, age, or department. Additionally, any electronic notes will be saved using a unique code identifier that matches the same criteria used to ensure anonymity using paper notes. No other researcher or respondent to additional interviews will know of your participation in any way.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate without consequence. Your interview will take approximately 60 minutes to complete with your responses converted into an interview transcript which you will see before any analysis is started. Neither the researcher nor the University has a conflict of interest with the results. The data collected from this study will be kept in a locked cabinet for three years.

To insure safe and proper research procedures, auditors of the Northumbria University Research Review Board and regulatory authority will be granted direct access to the research data without violating the confidentiality of the participants.

Further information regarding the research can be obtained from the principal researcher, Mr DA Redgwell via e-mail [darren.redgwell@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:darren.redgwell@northumbria.ac.uk) or my research supervisor Dr Angus Robson of Northumbria University via e-mail [angus2.robson@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:angus2.robson@northumbria.ac.uk)

If you would like to know the results of this research, contact Mr DA Redgwell via e-mail [darren.redgwell@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:darren.redgwell@northumbria.ac.uk)

Thank you for your consideration. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Regards

DA Redgwell



## Appendix 13: Participant Consent Form

**Title of Project:** *Calibrating the Moral Compass – A Virtue Ethics Approach to British Army Soldiers Moral Agency during Complex Contingency Operations*

**Name of Researchers:** Mr Darren Redgwell

Please tick to confirm your understanding of the study and that you are happy for to take part. Please ensure you retain a copy of this form for your records:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily
2. I understand that my participation in the research is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and that this will not affect legal rights
3. I understand that any personal information collected during the study will be anonymised and remain confidential
4. I agree to take part in the above study
5. I confirm I am aware of the support I can receive if required: 
  - a. Chain of command
  - b. Unit Chaplin
  - c. Unit Medical officer
  - d. Unit Traumatic Incident Management (TRIM) practitioner
  - e. Unit Post Operational Stress Management (POSM) practitioner
  - f. Army Welfare service
  - g. Royal British Legion
  - h. Combat Stress - Call: **08001381619**  
Text: **07537404719**  
Email: [helpline@combatstress.org.uk](mailto:helpline@combatstress.org.uk)

Name of participant:	Date:	Signature:
Name of Researcher: <b>DA Redgwell</b>	Date:	Signature:
Name of Person taking consent: <b>DA Redgwell</b>	Date:	Signature: