A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING HOW MORAL INJURY MIGHT AFFECT THE FUNCTIONING OF THE MORAL CONSCIENCE IN UK MILITARY VETERANS FORMED BY A VIRTUE APPROACH TO MILITARY ETHICS EDUCATION.

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigates how UK army veterans of recent Iraq and Afghanistan Campaigns (2001 – 2014) experienced the effect of Moral Injury on their ability to form moral judgments. Sparked by a critical incident in Afghanistan in 2010 where UK soldier *Marine A* violated the Geneva Conventions, the study considers how UK military ethical education develops a soldier's moral conscience by using a virtue approach to form character. It inquires whether the current educational approach offers the 'best fit' for preparing the conscience to function soundly when confronted with moral attrition.

MI is the deleterious effect on a person, including possible suicide ideation, in reaction to a Potential Morally Injurious Experience that challenges deeply held beliefs of right and wrong, as judged by the moral conscience. Moral Injury's root cause is an affront to the moral conscience, not fear-based trauma. It is not considered a mental illness. Hallmark characteristics of Moral Injury are shame, guilt and self-loathing that appear to resist current psychiatric interventions. Religious and community-based rituals have been reported as helpful in offering peace of mind and healing to those affected by Moral Injury.

An interpretivist approach interrogated the data using multiple theoretical lenses to encourage the data to 'glow'. Bourdieu's Social Field theory situated the data within a strategic framework exploring the intersection of an education/ training / praxis dynamic that forms a UK Soldier's approach to military ethics. 10 UK army veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan Campaigns were recruited, all of whom reported a Potential Morally Injurious Experience. An innovative synergistic combination of face-to-face and self-interviews generated uniquely rich data that was analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis - an interpretivist method that places the researcher at the centre of enquiry.

The study found that a virtue approach to military character formation in developing the soldier's moral conscience helped it to withstand moral attrition. It was found that the moral conscience needed constant nourishment and education within a military ethos to function soundly in alignment with agreed ethical principles such as the Geneva Conventions. The findings have conceptual and practical implications for recognising and

strengthening the role of the moral conscience in demarcating personal, professional and societal areas of responsibility in multiple social domains where a deficit between ethical theory and moral practice is reported.

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Table of Abbreviations

ACT	Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
ADT	Adaptive Disclosure Therapy
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
AFC	Armed Forces Covenant
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BPSS	Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
cGT	Constructivist Grounded Theory
CMS	Common Military Syllabus
CoC	Chain of Command
CoP	Community of Practice
CPT	Cognitive Processing Therapy
cPTSD	Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
EMDR	Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing
F2F	Face to Face Interview [via MS Teams]
F&C	Foreign and Commonwealth [soldiers]
FOB	Forward Operating Base
HTF	Healing through Forgiveness
ICMI	International Centre for Moral Injury
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IoK	Impact of Killing
Marine A	Sgt Alexander Blackman RM
MHP	Mental Health Professional
MI	Moral Injury
MIES	Moral Injury Events Scale
MIRO	On-line collaborative whiteboard platform
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoDREC	MoD Research Ethics Committee
MST	Microsoft Teams
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NI	Narrative Inquiry
NHS	National Health Service
Op HERRICK	UK Afghanistan Campaign 2001 - 2014
Op PINNICK	UK Evacuation mission from Kabul 2022
Op TELIC	UK Iraq Campaign 2003 - 2012
PET	Prolonged Exposure Therapy
PMIE	Potentially Morally Injurious Event
PND	Pastoral Narrative Disclosure
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment

PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RAChD	Royal Army Chaplains' Department
REC	Research Ethics Committee
RoE	Rules of Engagement
RQ	Research Question
RSM	Regimental Sergeant Major
RTA	Reflexive Thematic Analysis
SAS	UK Special Air Service
SI	Self-Interview
SNCO	Senior Non-commissioned Officer
SSI	Semi Structured Interview
TA	Thematic Analysis
V&S	Values and Standards of the British Army

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Chapter One: Introduction and Positionality

1.0   Introduction

Moral Injury (MI) is an emerging concept that seeks to explore the effect on the human person when they experience an event that challenges their deeply held ethical world view as arbitrated by the moral conscience (Litz et al., 2009: 1060; Shay, 2014). It does not have an agreed conceptual definition. Although presenting in similar ways to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) with a range of deleterious physical, mental and spiritual symptoms, its root cause is moral affront or disturbance, not physical trauma. In this thesis I use the term PTSD in the wider sense indicated by its complex variant (cPTSD), characterized by "more persistent long-term problems in affective, self and relational functioning" (Bisson et al., 2020: 56). MI is not considered a mental pathology and it appears resistant to established psychiatric interventions for PTSD (Bica, 2018). MI was first studied in Viet Nam war veterans who experienced violations of ethical behaviours (Shay, 1995; 2002). More recently, however, research has looked to diverse groups such as healthcare and business workers who experience ethical disruption in their professional praxis (Bussman, 2022; Dean and Talbot, 2023; Haight et al., 2016; Murray and Gidwani, 2018). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic added urgency to the study of MI in diverse domains such as veterinarians (Williamson et al., 2023b) and teachers (Santoro, 2019).

The research problem arises from my professional experience as an operationally seasoned army chaplain, resting on two pillars: an exploration of how UK soldiers learn about military ethics and how they apply this learning in ethically conflicted situations. As a teacher, I have a role in helping soldiers to understand why ethical behaviour is professionally critical. As a chaplain-at-war, I have a unique opportunity for observing and assessing how moral decisions are made and taken. The critical gap between ethics and morals (theory and practice) is bridged by the moral conscience that I understand as the sentinel, guide and witness for personal behaviour that is proper to the human person (Chalmers, 2014; Hine, 2007). The study explores how MI may disrupt the anticipated synergistic relationship between ethical education and its professional expression by soldiers in war and beyond.

This chapter introduces the study. I will begin by discussing its context, situating the research problem, aim, objectives and questions within an overview of its scope and significance. I will explain the epistemological position that scaffolds the research and outline significant philosophical terms that I use in a precise way throughout the thesis.

1.1   Background / Context

My interest in MI was piqued by reflection on a critical incident - the case of a UK soldier in Afghanistan (*Marine A*) who violated International Humanitarian Law (IHL) by killing an unarmed, mortally wounded enemy prisoner.[1] I was curious to understand whether MI could have been a contributing factor. From an educational perspective, I was interested to explore the *moral synapse* between ethical theory and practice in war. As a teacher of military ethics, I was interested to inquire whether the virtue approach to character formation / transformation to which a UK soldier's education and training is ordered was sufficiently resilient in practice to lessen the chances of illegal and immoral behaviour in a conflict situation. In other words, to probe the alignment of agential moral acts with the external ethical referents such as the 10 Commandments that western moral philosophy proposes as a normative foundation for IHL (Koterski, 2002). I use the term *immoral* to mean an agentic action that is at variance with these established external ethical referents. The role of the moral conscience in linking theory and practice is critical to this query; its formation by educative processes and its potential deformation by MI is at the heart of the study and undergirds the research question. Put another way, my RQ inquires whether MI may damage or skew the functioning of the moral conscience, compromising the agentic relationship between ethics (a belief system) and morals (the belief system in action) that the *Marine A* incident highlighted. The findings have philosophical and practical implications for educational approaches to military ethics and ask: is there a better way to teach and learn ethical behaviour than the current virtue approach to character formation that blends safety-related behaviourist strategies with an aspiration to personal transformation (Hand, 2017; Illeris, 2018; Mezirow and Associates, 2000)?

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[1] Video of the incident is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KjtzgWzh9fk&t=1s [Accessed 16 March 2024].

Although the study considers the experiences of military personnel, its findings have interest more generally for academics, professionals, policy makers and sections of society where research is developing the MI construct (Kelle, 2020). My focus on the role of the moral conscience contributes to the growth of a non-medical pathology paradigm that is attracting inter-disciplinary research initiatives. It is my distinctive offering to the construct's development and application.

1.2   Research Problem

Discrete conceptual development of the MI construct requires critical distance from psychiatry. In the academic literature, numerous studies have been carried out by clinical psychologists whose theoretical assumptions and tools of inquiry sit within a positivist, medical paradigm. Most studies are US based. Current approaches privilege scientific knowledge over an interpretivist epistemology (Maguen and Griffin (2022) offer an integrated review of available literature) and do not satisfactorily address the root cause of MI that arises in the intersection of the ethical / moral / praxis arena. Consequently, the spiritual domain of the human person demands a hearing - a point made by Molendijk (2018) who notes the lack of in-depth exploration of the specifically *moral* aspect of the phenomenon that is beyond the sole competence of psychology calling for further inter-disciplinary research. My study sits within this research space.

1.3   Research aim, objectives and questions

The aim of the study – "to explore the interrelationship between Military Ethics Education and the Moral Conscience in British army veterans to deepen understanding of the emerging concept of Moral Injury" - was to explore the interrelation of MI and the moral conscience in UK army veterans, positioning the exploration within the military ethics educational process and offering a distinctive contribution to conceptual development of the MI construct. The interpretivist approach I adopted 'backlit' or illumined my interviewees' stories, constructed by lived experience in war and homecoming, framed in themes of moral philosophy. It found natural methodological expression in my innovative *Synergistic Interview* suggesting a synoptic view of data, coalescing in the mind of the

researcher, yielding another way of apprehending data that sits comfortably within an interpretivist paradigm.

The research objectives sought to explore how a soldier's moral conscience is formed and nourished by UK ethical education, allowing the data generated to reflect on how the conscience operates in a context where it experiences moral attrition caused by a Potentially Morally Injurious Event (PMIE) that potentially ripens into a Moral Injury. Educational and practical areas of interest were identified that enabled the research aim in three specific objectives:

- to identify veterans who have experienced an ethically conflicted situation known as a PMIE.
- to observe how military ethics education is experienced and practiced by UK combat soldiers.
- to explore the functioning of the moral conscience in an ethically challenging situation such as war.

Driven by my professional praxis, for reasons explained in the Methodology Chapter, the study did not explore the experiences of Royal Navy and Royal Airforce, non-UK veterans or currently serving personnel.

The Research Question (RQ) - *how might Moral Injury affect the functioning of the moral conscience in UK military veterans formed by a Virtue approach to military ethics education?* - focussed the research aim in ways that keep the educational element of the research to the fore in terms of exploring how the moral conscience is formed within UK military ethics education and inquiring how it might be affected by MI. The RQ inquires whether a better understanding of ethical principles explored in ethics education enabled better critical decisions in practice and whether this could lead to a 'quieter' conscience on reflection (Fiala, 2017).

1.4   Research Philosophy and Positionality

Positionality is a convenient umbrella-term that captures key elements of a world view, touching on themes of ontology, epistemology and ethics (Terry and Hayfield, 2021). It is helpful to unpack the overarching theoretical assumptions that I bring to the study.

I use an interpretivist approach to explore and gain deeper understanding of my RQ that best fits an inductive view of data. It was important for my research design to choose approaches that align not only with the golden thread of the aims and objectives that facilitate the RQ but that also mesh with my own positionality. This search for internal coherence of approach and methods of inquiry seeks a good fit for the interplay of data and its interpreted significance.

Figure 1 Bernini's Fountain of the Four Rivers (Rome, 1651)

Bernini's grand fountain in the Roman Piazza Navona "presents culture as massive and the mighty river of classics monumental yet at the same time in perpetual flux" (Paglia, 2001: 106). It is a helpful representation of my own approach to this study, humbly seeking a confluence of multiple disciplines in pursuit of wisdom. Located firmly within a qualitative approach to research, I view a mature articulation of *science* in ancient costume - eager to

garner and distil insights about the world and human experience from myriad sources, loosened from a positivist approach to epistemology. Its Latin root (*scientia*, the Greek is *episteme*) carries a much broader sense of knowing, experiencing and learning about things in general, than in its modern empirical scientific incarnation suggests (Heilbron, 2003). Such was Aristotle's (c.384-322BC) approach for observing and commenting on both the natural world and the workings of human society, situating his inquiry under a metaphysical canopy of meaning (Aristotle, 2016). Aristotle's learning approach to understanding the world and human action within it, it seems to me, is transferable to the development of human lived experience generally. Aristotelian thinking travels well. It has the potential to reach beyond the *epistemic hiccough* of the European Enlightenment mind that sought to cauterise the wider, ancient ambitions of science with tools of Scientific Positivism, unafraid to look forward to more recent philosophical lenses to engage with the human condition. Post-Modern philosophers for example, in this epistemological skyline, can bring refreshing perspectives of description and poetry to ancient and enduring themes (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988; Lyotard and Benjamin, 1989).

Aristotle's most recent advocate of this approach is the moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre (MacIntyre, 2013) who frames the Enlightenment approach to ethics as a failed project that shoehorns the human mind into a sterile epistemic *cul de sac* of rationalism. It is a position that early phenomenologists like Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and, from a different stable St John Henry Newman, tried in the court of human experience and found it wanting, unable to apprehend humanity in its fullness of body, mind and spirit (Merleau-Ponty, 2002; Strange, 2009). It is a position that finds many resonances with mine.

1.5   Theoretical framework

The study sits firmly within the interpretivist domain and harnesses my unique professional ontology. This approach to knowledge is socially constructivist, its roots reaching into Hellenism yet unafraid to synthesise insights of Mediaeval, Enlightenment and Post-Modern minds in search of what might be termed wisdom. The two pillars undergirding the investigation of the RQ - education and praxis - invited multiple theoretical lenses to help understand the data generated. Aristotle (2013) and Newman (2016) gave strategic insight

into how the UK military moral conscience is formed with their thinking on how virtue habituation and intellectual assent or acceptance of ethical propositions such as those located in the Hague and Geneva Conventions can come alive (or fail to thrive) in the military mind. Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1996b) with his Habitus / Capitals / Cultural Field dynamic and his thinking on Symbolic Power / Violence (Bourdieu, 1998) offered a way of apprehending diverse influences (such as military ethos seen through a Hidden Curriculum lens ordered to Cultural Replication) that shapes military moral behaviours. A persistent educational thread orchestrated 'zooming in and out' of the data to create original insights and connections in the mind of interviewee and researcher (Jackson and Mazzei, 2013; Nicolini, 2013). My unique position as an insider researcher allowed me to co-inhabit the Social Field and to comment on the ways in which meaning was made by the interviewees as the study's themes were born. From the data, themes were co-generated by interviewee and researcher in a dynamic partnership with no definitive resolution, as anticipated in less reflexive qualitative approaches (Boyatzis, 1998), thereby offering a springboard for other researchers to develop further the MI construct.

The methodological scaffolding of the study favoured a reflexive approach to the data that was critical for meaning making. As I explain in the Methodology Chapter of the thesis, sitting very firmly within an interpretivist research paradigm, the aspiration of the study was to generate thick, rich data to give insight into how the interview participants made meaning of their experience of military ethics and moral praxis in a combat context and how they reflected on a PMIE / MI as experienced by their moral conscience. My innovative method of data collection, *Synergistic Interviews*, sought to add depth and richness to the quality of data generated in the sense of "glowing data" (MacLure, 2010; 2013) that I also describe in the Methodology Chapter (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). The synergistic combination of a face to face (F2F) and a Self-Interview (SI) was a practical example of how reflective practice emerged as a key enabling framework to facilitate a link in the mind between ethics education, the moral conscience and its experience of attrition by MI. This unique contribution to the methodological toolbox of qualitative research sits comfortably with the epistemological assumptions of the study's theoretical framework. Braun and Clarke's (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) method, a theoretically flexible form of Thematic Analysis (TA) that places the subjective

position of the researcher at the heart of the process of data generation and analysis, offered a creative nest for the data. RTA invited a collaborative approach to data analysis, facilitating synthesis of multiple theoretical connections in the mind of the researcher that gave birth to embryonic themes in my data analysis. I discuss the thinking behind my co-constructive approach in the Methodology Chapter with worked examples given in the data analysis section of the thesis.

1.6   Some precise terms used in the thesis: an explanation

Throughout the thesis I use the term 'external referents' when setting out ethical parameters that inform the individual's moral conscience to make judgements of practical reason. I view ethical thinking through a western, Judaeo-Christian lens since this is the world view that has informed my professional praxis; there are other optics that could be applied in another study. Here, ethics is concerned with right and wrong in human conduct ordered teleologically towards what Aristotle termed *eudaimonia* - human happiness or flourishing arising from considerations of justice. It begs the question of *who* or *what* sets the standard by which human actions are evaluated or judged (Aristotle, 2013; Bourke, 1966). The Judaeo-Christian 10 Commandments are the most familiar and pithy formulation of a widely accepted ethical framework that develops more ancient ideas of the power of human reasoning to draw together ethical threads from the world around us to create strategies for justice or giving each person their due. The rational basis for this account of ethics is the Natural Law whose origins theists see in terms of participation in the mind of God (Augustine, 2002), though other interpretations are possible. The unwritten Natural Law was seen from ancient times as a good and necessary foundation on which to build just societal laws. In his *Republic*, the ancient Roman philosopher Cicero (106 - 43 BC) notes:

> "For there is a true law: right reason. It is in conformity with nature, as diffused among all men and is immutable and eternal; its orders summon to duty; its prohibitions turn away from offence…To replace it with a contrary law is a sacrilege; failure to apply even one of its provisions is forbidden; no one can abrogate it entirely" (Cicero, 1998: 22, 33).

The Natural Law provides a foundation for divinely revealed laws like the 10 Commandments and societal positive laws that draw conclusions from its principles. It is the basis of ethical external referents that can be acknowledged as universally morally obliging for humanity, not only those of Judaeo-Christian affiliation. The genius of the 10 Commandments as an enduring and universally binding formula of ethical principle or strategy is their transferable nature. Hence, even the most clearly 'religious' commandment may be interpreted and applied to society in a way that does not require a theistic world view. The Commandments are not written as explicit laws or rules - rather they give principles that protect society against injury to a human person, to family bonds, to commerce and law, to truthfulness, and to property (Huffmon, 2004). The third Commandment ("keep holy the Sabbath day") for example, although clothed in Jewish theology concerning the privileged place of Saturday, can also be understood as offering the broader principle that every human being needs rest from work and requires protected leisure and family time together.

Other positive laws flowing from this understanding of the Natural Law, such as the Geneva Conventions, are examples of its application ordered, ultimately, to justice that leads to human flourishing. This common ethical foundation, as understood in western thought, is tied naturally to an Aristotelian framework embodying their practice within a virtue approach to character formation, that I discuss in relation to military ethical education. Natural Law thinking developed in various directions arising from the Enlightenment period, exploring ideas of reason, power, equality and natural rights (Hobbes, 1962; Locke, 1690) often expressed in contractual and jurisprudential terms found in English Common Law. Tensions between contemporary proponents of New Natural Law with its concern for the protection of basic and self-evident human goods (Finnis, 2011; Grisez, 1975) and its opponents in legal positivism following Mill (1871) and Bentham (2000) persist - while both approaches seek a degree of reformulation as the corpus of international law develops. Philosophical approaches such as utilitarianism, often scaffolding legal positivism, sit uncomfortably alongside Natural Law and revealed law ethical theories, challenging their teleological assumptions of justice linked to individual happiness (*eudaimonia*). Indeed, given utilitarianism's assertion that the rights of society may on occasion trump the rights of the individual that finds expression in various forms of moral consequentialism (Singer,

2011), this view could only be morally true if the *telos* of mankind were the happiness of society. Moral happiness results from individual action, and without resorting to a kind of *moral totalitarianism* that anthropomorphises 'society', it is difficult to find utilitarian approaches to ethics persuasive as a basis for human happiness or flourishing.

In the thesis I use the term "immoral" in a precise sense to describe an agentic action or omission at variance with accepted standards of ethical behaviour. Linguistically, it makes no comment on the degree of divergence - as if immoral were comparatively worse than wrong.

Later in the thesis I use the term *Fog of War*, a term associated with the Prussian military strategist Carl Von Clausewitz, which carries the idea of uncertainty or a lack of clarity / situational awareness in war (Von Clausewitz, 1976). In the thesis, I use the term figuratively, in the sense of moral uncertainty in a confused or conflicted ethical theatre of operations such as a battlefield, where a judgement of practical reason (*phronesis*), guided by the conscience, must be made by the moral agent. By inference, I attribute a quality of "fog" to the (battle)-Field of Practice that Bourdieu proposes in his Cultural Field thinking, created by the metaphorical crashing together of competing elements that can produce "munitions smoke" - hence my use of the adjective "foggy".

1.7   Significance of the study

The RQ explores the experience of the moral conscience when assaulted by unethical behaviours, and whether the educational processes for formation of the conscience received by UK soldiers is sufficiently resilient in practice to withstand moral attrition known as a PMIE that may lead to MI (Bonson et al., 2023). An example of a PMIE might be a soldier receiving an illegal order by a commander holding legitimate authority. To some extent, it looks to deconstruct and reframe a constituent element of a PMIE, recognising that although conceptual development of the MI construct is attracting research interest, exploration of the role of the moral conscience within it appears poorly understood. Arising from a military context, the study's findings have interest and relevance to diverse academic and professional domains where PMIEs have been reported such as in healthcare and

veterinarians (Dean and Talbot, 2023; Lesley, 2021; Williamson et al., 2023b). The educational aspect of how the moral conscience is formed in a military context, and strategies to develop and nourish it in relation to professional codes of practice, has utility for strengthening professional identities through the targeting of resources and development of educational approaches. The exploration of the nature of a relationship between moral attrition experienced through a PMIE leading to MI will have strategic implications for government funding and policy decision makers when seeking ethical alignment and moral behaviours required by legislation. For example, if insufficient resourcing of public services such as the National Health Service (NHS) with no concurrent reduction in output by its staff is the tinder for a PMIE that blunts the moral conscience, how might this affect the quality of future moral decision making that will inevitably influence professional practice and the service received by its users? If "cutting corners" becomes routine due to lack of resources, and sub-optimal delivery of care becomes accepted practice for the same reasons, what effect might this situation have on the ability of professional codes of conduct to protect its adherents and advocate for support for the maintenance of professional conduct by government? This question finds expression conceptually in the societal-turn of MI that I discuss in Chapter Two. For the morally injured, poor mental health outcomes are unlikely to improve without an understanding of the causes of MI and an awareness of effective repair strategies that an inter-disciplinary approach to future research offers.

1.8   Scope of the study

The study sought to gain in-depth exploration of the data using an interpretivist approach born of my insider-researcher identity. There were other, complementary voices that I could have heard if, for example, the study had been open to volunteers from military communities other than UK army veterans. While not seeking to compare alternative philosophical approaches to ethical education found in, for example, the US and Israeli military (Schulzke, 2019), differences of approach were alluded to in the data generated. A future study could look at these differences in a systematic way that did not align with the research aim for this study. The chosen rank-profile for inclusion into the study, for reasons discussed in the Methodology Chapter, did not consider the experiences of PMIEs occurring

in senior officers. Similarly, due to Ministry of Defence (MoD) requirements, I was unable to include any serving UK military personnel in the study whose data would have enriched the analysis and its findings.

1.9 Structural outline of the thesis

Looking ahead to the layout of the thesis, in Chapter One I introduce the emerging concept of Moral Injury and its relation to my professional experience as a serving UK army chaplain of 22 years, piqued by Mezirow's 'epochal' critical incident involving *Marine A* (Illeris, 2018: 118). I set out the research problem and how the aim and objectives of the study seek to explore it. Having discussed the significance of the research and its scope, the introduction sets the scene for Chapter Two, the Literature Review. Building on the foundation of the Literature Review, the rationale for the study's interpretivist methodology is justified in Chapter Three that crafts the framework in Chapter Four for the data generation and analysis process whose findings are discussed in Chapter Five. The thesis concludes in Chapter Six with a recapitulation of how the RQ was addressed with an acknowledgement of its limitations, suggesting recommendations for future areas of research.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review

2.0   Introduction

MI is a recently developed term for describing the damaging effect on the human person when their ethical world view or moral code is transgressed as the moral conscience is violated. Presenting in similar ways to PTSD (APA, 2013), those affected by MI can become psychologically disturbed, physically unwell, and sometimes suicidal (Jamieson et al., 2023; Williamson et al., 2020b). MI's hallmark features are guilt, shame and condemnation of self, arising from a deep interior conflict that touches the whole person: body; mind and spirit (Litz et al., 2009; Shay, 2014). MI is in a process of inter-disciplinary theoretical formation. The interest of diverse professionals offers a rewarding area of investigation for Professional Doctorate students whose research aims to deepen and share understanding of their professional practice (Jones et al., 2022).

The chapter begins by tracing the emerging nature of the MI construct, locating its medical origins in PTSD treatments for Viet Nam veterans. I then explore early definitions of MI and the search for theoretical and practical distinctions of characteristics proper to PTSD and MI, generating screening tools to aid diagnosis of MI. The ongoing conceptual development of MI is presented thematically, coalescing around the 'societal-turn' (locating MI within socio-ethical considerations such as the politics of *ius ad bellum* (Fiala, 2017)) and the 'spiritual-turn' (considering the meaning-making capacity of the human person (Brémault-Phillips et al., 2015)). The chapter then considers in more depth some under-explored moral philosophical conceptual perspectives and the particular role of the moral conscience as a sentinel of practical reasoning. The Armed Forces Covenant (MoD, 2011) frames the ethical context for UK military service; an exploration of its underlying theoretical assumptions sets the scene for a review of the foundations of UK military ethical education. The chapter then moves to consider the contribution of inter-disciplinary lenses to chart possible ways forward arising from a simple definition of MI, such as the one hinted at in my advert for the study ('feeling uneasy about your actions or those of others'), to an expanded, holistic definition of MI that I use as a reference throughout the thesis, namely: *"Moral Trauma - the existential, psychological, emotional and or spiritual trauma arising from a conflict, violation or betrayal, either by omission or commission, of or within one's moral beliefs or*

code(s)" (Jamieson et al., 2020: 1060). The Literature Review concludes by exploring recent initiatives that offer repair / healing strategies arising from a holistic, inter-disciplinary approach, with particular consideration of the contribution of military chaplains and the role of secular and religious ritual.

2.1   Accessing the literature: initial directions

MI is an emerging phenomenon. Due to similarities of presentation, it is often confused with PTSD. This was reflected from the beginning of my doctoral journey in 2017 in initial data base trawls (such as PsycINFO, Google Scholar, EBSCO, CINAHL and SocINDEX) for key words such as 'Moral Injury' and 'conscience' that returned mainly medical pathology items. Although much of the available academic literature sits within a positivist research paradigm conducted by psychologists (Currier et al., 2015) there is a growing corpus of literature located within a qualitative framework that holds contributions from researchers of a wider academic provenance. Nieuwsma et al. (2022) chart the increasing interest in MI found in academic literature since its emergence as a discrete conceptual phenomenon (Appendix 1). I position my own research within this developmental space, as the Methodology Chapter will explain. Starting my doctoral journey, I cross-referenced scholarly work from journal articles and the scant number of books published on MI. Contacting academics directly for advice and attending academic conferences such as those run by the UK's International Centre for Moral Injury (ICMI) yielded interesting avenues for exploration of the extant literature. This was also true for positioning my methodological interest in the emerging SI within the academic literature (Holder, 2023; Keightley et al., 2012) where there was scant published work available.

Areas for exploration of the MI construct coalesced around themes of the need for an agreed theoretical definition of MI that is not based on a medical pathology model to offer practical ways of identifying MI to develop healing or repair strategies for those affected by it. While there is growing interest in MI internationally from inter-disciplinary perspectives, the hegemony of psychology (with its dominant positivist theoretical provenance) may be an initial barrier to wider acceptance of a non-medical theoretical framework for definition

and healing strategies. My own contribution to the construct adds balance and nuance to the process as MI gains wider conceptual recognition.

The educational core of my research, sparked by reflection on *Marine A's* action, invited exploration of how ethical formation is taught and learned within a military context. In particular, the quality of the dynamic between education, training and individual moral agency in the mind of a soldier faced with a practical moral dilemma in a conflict scenario grounds my study. This necessarily invites exploration of how a range of educational philosophical approaches to military formation foregrounds and nourishes a British soldier's identity. A complex and sometimes uneasy educational tension exists between transformational and behaviourist approaches to a UK soldier's ethical formation. This tension could be reframed in terms of what Gert Biesta terms educational risk or weakness, inhabiting the space or synapse between what is desired and what is desirable (Biesta, 2013). In these terms, weakness in education is not some kind of failing but rather an opportunity for transformation. The training element of military formation bolsters classroom learning in the soldier's living and working environment where there is an expectation by the Chain of Command (CoC) that behaviour on and off duty will align with the army's Values and Standards (V&S) (MoD, 2015) - the army's ethical code.[2] Revisiting, for example, the ancient Roman philosopher Plutarch (c.46 – 120AD), the technique of imitation is commonly used in the military environment to show how great heroes demonstrated virtue and shunned vice in their lives. Good habits, Plutarch argued, start with the little things in life and are then used as a firm foundation for making moral choices involving weightier matters (Titchener and Zadorojnyi, 2023). Jesus Christ in the New Testament expands the same point in one of his parables exploring the incremental nature of responsibility of stewardship (Mt.25: 14-30). Successful approaches to the inculcation of virtue via imitation have recently been advocated in contemporary UK pedagogical strategies within primary and secondary education sectors (Arthur et al., 2022; Han et al., 2017). Aristotle's strategic ethical approach expressed in character formation and Plutarch's artifice of imitation offer a firm philosophical base to military ethos. Imitation is a theme

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[2] The British Army's core values are: Courage; Discipline; Respect for others; Integrity; Loyalty and Selfless commitment. The Standards of behaviour are stated thematically: Loyalty; Appropriate behaviour; Total professionalism (MoD, 2018).

picked up by modern educational theorists such as Illeris (2018), Biesta (2013) and Hand (2017) in restoring the central role of the teacher to the educational process or experience.

My study looks to the working of the moral conscience as a sentinel and sponsor of virtuous behaviour. In this chapter, I use a thematic approach to review the origins and conceptual development of MI in the academic literature and its relation to military ethics education.

2.2   What is Moral Injury?

2.2.1   Origins: a medical model

MI was first referenced in connection with ethical dilemmas in nursing (Jameton, 1984). It developed later from psychology while treating PTSD in Vietnam combat veterans. Litz *et al*, psychologists by discipline, offered an early working definition of Moral Injury that sought to identify key differences from PTSD:

> "Perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations may be deleterious in the long term, emotionally, psychologically, behaviourally, spiritually, and socially" (Litz et al., 2009: 695).

Litz's working definition was augmented by Shay (2014) recognising communitarian themes of betrayal of what is right and perpetration of wrong in high-stakes situations, capable of reaching into institutional and policy domains. An expanded description of MI captures the essence of the MI construct and anticipates subsequent refinement and organic development along holistic, inter-disciplinary pathways such as contained in a Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual model (BPSS) of MI (Carey and Hodgson, 2018b). This enriched approach offers a pathway for conceptual commonalities that move beyond MI's military psychiatric origins into other high-stakes contexts involving life and death situations, such as those reported in healthcare during the Covid-19 pandemic (Lesley, 2021). The literature indicates growing conceptual agreement emerging from holistic, inter disciplinary collaboration (Koenig and Al Zaben, 2021a).

Unlike PTSD that is recognised in the psychologists' Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) (APA, 2013), MI is not considered a mental illness and does not appear to respond in the same way to established therapies for PTSD such as medication and talking-therapies. MI has gained wider traction internationally because of its association with self-harm and suicidal ideation in military populations (Jamieson et al., 2023; Kelley et al., 2019). More recently, damaging experiences of civilian healthcare practitioners such as nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic have been linked to MI in emerging academic literature (Greene et al., 2023; Rushton et al., 2021). Reaching further afield, MI has been suggested as an aggravating factor to burnout in business environments (Bussman, 2022), though Molenjik sounds a note of caution about casting the conceptual net too widely warning of concept creep (Fiala, 2017; Molendijk, 2022).

Historically, military psychiatry through a medical pathology lens considered effects of combat-damaged soldiers that reached into the whole person's wellbeing. Couched in terms of the *Soldier's Heart* (Sullivan, 2013), *War Neurosis* and *Shell Shock* (Jones and Wessely, 2005), early psychological insights were also reflected in contemporary literature. The *War Poets* of the Great War era (Owen, 1918) sought to capture the damage done to an individual's humanity and to wider society by combat as they highlighted the futility and waste of war. In more recent times, combat-soldiers involved in the Viet Nam conflict began to reflect in philosophical and poetic terms on their experiences of psychological wounds that would not heal with current psychiatric strategies (Bica, 2018; Boudreau, 2011). In the UK, Iraq and Afghanistan veterans reflected and ruminated on the personal and societal cost of "moral dislocation" experienced through combat experiences (Eide and Gibler, 2018). My own very recent professional experience of assisting with military personnel and Afghan civilians evacuated from Kabul in August 2021 (Op PINNICK) gave me a renewed experience of the ethical world view / praxis clash affecting UK personnel that I first encountered in 2003 during my first operational tour of Iraq (Op TELIC). Familiar aligning themes of moral distress arose in the data that I explore in the Discussion Chapter.

2.2.2 Broadening conceptual developments

Unsatisfied with a purely medical view of a phenomenon that failed to distinguish between medical pathology and the human response of a healthy moral conscience to perceived moral wrongdoing, military physician Jonathan Shay (1995; 2002) looked to Greek epic poetry to explore and update the ancient idea of 'moral undoing' of character (Homer, 1967). Here, the warrior Achilles displays core hallmarks of MI arising from his transgression of the Greek warrior code and the Natural Law. Similar themes occur in Euripides' tragedy *Herakles* (c.461 BC) in which the protagonist reflects on *miasma*, a sense of moral pollution arising from transgression of the moral order (Koenig and Al Zaben, 2021b). For Shay, MI is thus not a new phenomenon but an ancient theme in modern costume - intimately bound up with the human constitution. This is an ancient and timeless poetic insight into a mysterious, tense juxtaposition in the human psyche restating the inevitability of human conflict in societies and the need for honour during and post-conflict. Later attempts by philosophers and legislators in Western thought would attempt to place moral limits on the pursuit of war and its out-workings. Theories of a "Just War" (*ius ad bellum*) and "Rules of War" (*ius in bello*) and more recently "Rules for Peace" (*ius post bellum*) would eventually find their way into current International Law under the auspices of the United Nations and its organs such as the Security Council (Guthrie and Quinlan, 2007; ICRC, 2014). I retain Latin for these concepts throughout the thesis since these are internationally acknowledged working terms. Poetry - as Homer showed – can offer another way to understand the vagaries of the human person and motives for behaviour that resist reduction to reason alone. This ancient insight is helpful when recognising the limits and barriers that a positivist approach to developing a conceptual framework for MI pose. I discuss this difficulty later in the Discussion Chapter of the thesis when I argue for an inter-disciplinary collaborative approach that starts from a personalist and arts-based / interpretivist understanding of the phenomenon rather than a medical model. My chosen method of data collection and analysis for the study, RTA (Braun and Clarke, 2022), is an attempt to moor my ontology and epistemology to this conviction; I discuss the implications of this theoretical approach in the Methodology Chapter of the thesis.

Shay viewed the contemporary medical understanding of MI as a manifestation of PTSD as only a part of the emerging MI story (Shay, 2014). Through his contribution to a provisional definition of MI (Litz et al., 2009; Shay, 2014) there emerged a complimentary lens for its

future conceptual development, capturing the various constituent domains that form a human person: physical, emotional, psychological, behavioural, spiritual and social (Carey and Hodgson, 2018b). In educational theory, this holistic and personalist approach to MI opened the way for alternative epistemological insights arising from Socratic dialectic that engaged the entire human person with transformative potential or, as King and Kitchener (1994: 12) put it, "the process an individual evokes to monitor the epistemological nature of problems and the truth value of an alternative solution". It is a recurring trope that surfaces in the data explored in the Discussion Chapter of the thesis.

2.2.3   Theoretical distinction: loosening conceptual ties with PTSD

Military trauma research has traditionally focused on PTSD, especially in relation to self-harm and suicide ideation, its most destructive expression (Jamieson et al., 2023). Overlapping presenting symptoms of MI and PTSD (such as self-medication with alcohol) are classified by the current edition of DSM-5 as indicators of PTSD and its variant, cPTSD (Bisson et al., 2020; Cloitre, 2021). There is no mention of MI in DSM-5 (APA, 2013), though MI was referenced and then removed in an earlier edition, DSM-3 (APA, 1989). Many clinicians, the gatekeepers of medical diagnostic and treatment pathways, are poorly informed about the MI phenomenon. A crucial distinction may therefore be overlooked when PTSD is presented in DSM-5 terms as a fear-based pathological reaction to a traumatic incident (such as an explosion) unaware of the parallel healthy reaction of a sound moral conscience to an immoral situation, such as witnessing the killing of innocent civilians (Brock, cited in Kelle (2020)). A different, complementary approach to repair or restore the damaged human person may be required. Research suggests that there is evidence to support the need to identify and disentangle shared and distinct aspects of PTSD and MI, contributing to the development of MI as a discrete construct (Barnes et al., 2019; Carey and Hodgson, 2018b; Jinkerson, 2016). Figure 2 (below) presents shared and hallmark symptoms of PTSD and MI illustrating the complexity of identifying distinction between the two concepts. It suggests areas for further investigation and research using arts-based approaches. My own contribution to its conceptual development sits in the category of "Religious / Spiritual Struggles" as it seeks to add nuance to this domain of the developing

construct. I use the term spiritual in the thesis following Puchalski's wider sense of "that which gives meaning and purpose to one's life and connectedness to the significant or sacred" (Brémault-Phillips et al., 2015: 477). It is a definition echoed by the World Health Organization's *Spiritual Intervention Codings* that offer a framework for screening and guiding spiritual repair strategies in a wider context of holistic health (Carey and Hodgson, 2018b).

PTSD/MORAL INJURY OVERLAP

MORAL INJURY

Guilt

Shame

Moral Concerns

Betrayal

Loss of Trust

Difficulty Forgiving

Loss of Meaning

Self-Condemnation

Religious/Spiritual Struggles

Loss of Religious Faith/Hope

Cognitions/ Mood Negative thoughts or feelings related to the trauma, such as being unable to recall key features of the trauma, having overly negative thoughts and assumptions about oneself or the world, engaging in exaggerated blame of self or others, negative affect, difficulty experiencing positive affect, decreased interest in activities, and feeling isolated.

DSM-5 PTSD Symptom Clusters

Intrusions
Intrusive, unwanted upsetting memories, nightmares, flashbacks, emotional distress and physical reactions after exposure to traumatic reminders.

Avoidance
Avoidance of trauma-related thoughts, feelings, or external reminders of the trauma.

Hypervigilance
Increased arousal or reactivity, such as feeling irritable or aggressive, engagement in risky or destructive behaviour, hypervigilance, heightened startle reaction, difficulty concentrating, and difficulty sleeping.

Figure 2 Differentiating Moral Injury from PTSD (Koenig et al., 2020)

2.2.4   Searching for a holistic definition of MI

A significant challenge for establishing MI as a discrete concept is the lack of an agreed definition of MI. Patients presenting with overlapping symptoms of PTSD and MI are routinely diagnosed with PTSD (as guided by the DSM-5 referent) by psychiatrists who may be unaware or unconvinced of an alternative possible cause of their distress. Even among MI theorists, some medical terminology is habitually used to describe aspects of MI, unintentionally perhaps looking to a medical pathology lens to review the developing

concept (Kinghorn, 2020). Suggestions to re-name MI in a more holistic way have been offered to overcome this perceived barrier such as Moral Trauma (Jamieson et al., 2020) and Moral Distress (Powers, 2019). Such nuance is important in acknowledging complexity as the search for an agreed definition of MI continues; my own original contribution to the theoretical framework that explores the role of the moral conscience and its formation by educative processes may find resonances in further definitional developments in the academic literature.

Identification of exposure to PMIEs (Litz et al., 2009) offers a starting point for functional distinction between overlapping presenting symptoms of PTSD and MI (Carey and Hodgson, 2018b; Farnsworth et al., 2017; Shay, 2014) where the root cause of lasting psychosocial and spiritual damage is different. An example of a PMIE might be witnessing the extra-judicial killing of civilians. While acknowledging some overlapping symptoms such as depression, studies in the USA with serving military personnel have suggested a clear distinction between the aetiology of presenting symptoms proper to PTSD such as flashbacks and nightmares and those attributed to MI such as shame and guilt (Litz et al., 2018), reflected in Figure 2.

Further distinction within PTSD is the recognition that MI may be a constituting factor that adds complexity to the relationship between PTSD and MI. Preserving the distinction between medically based PTSD and morally based MI, it is thought more likely that MI may be an aggravating factor of PTSD than vice versa (Koenig et al., 2020). Barnes et al. (2019) suggest that there may be a neurophysiological element involved in discrete causal mechanisms between MI and PTSD, though this suggestion is under researched.

2.2.5 Screening / Assessment tools

To arrive at a 'diagnosis' of MI, the question arises of assessment or screening for presenting symptoms. Psychologists have developed several psychometric tools arising from research into PTSD that focus on clinical symptoms (such as depression) and the use of diagnostic and repair interventions arising from psychotherapy, as in the UK Rebuild and

Repair study (Williamson et al., 2023a). Such approaches are generally aligned with a positivist medical paradigm to situate and develop tools to measure the extent and effectiveness of therapeutic interventions (Walker and Avant, 2011). Kinghorn suggests that the dominant psychological approach to screening focuses on the symptom rather than the person – a live debate within developing psychological research itself that I discuss later in this chapter (Johnstone, 2018; 2019; Kinghorn, 2020).

Atuel et al. (2020) capture an old epistemic conundrum that yearns for the illuminating devices of poetry and philosophy: how can medical approaches alone adequately capture the workings of the entire human person? They suggest an inter-disciplinary, collaborative approach that is capable of harnessing qualitative perspectives of data to add richness to understanding of a deeply human phenomenon that is situated within the realm of lived experience requiring tools of investigation that escape the grasp of scientific empiricism alone, noting:

> "there is a richness to the moral injury construct that cannot be adequately captured through a series of closed-ended questions... the rich descriptions gained from this [qualitative] type of research can help to refine the content of quantitative measures" (Atuel et al., 2020: 5).

To address this concern, some chaplaincy initiatives have developed MI spiritual screening instruments such as the Spiritual Injury Scale, focussing on questions of 'why' rather than 'how' typically used in psychology-based tools (Berg, 1992). There is a lack of consensus surrounding the efficacy of such instruments, remaining under-researched for reasons explored later in this chapter. The developers of the Pastoral Narrative Disclosure (PND) intervention programme advocate the Moral Injury Events Scale (MIES) as the most appropriate screening tool that captures all elements of a BPSS understanding of MI (Carey and Hodgson, 2018b). Figure 3 (below) tables the 11 questions of the MIES that scope the likely experience of a PMIE leading to MI.

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) I saw things that were morally wrong	1	2	3	4	5	6
(2) I am troubled by having witnessed others' immoral acts	1	2	3	4	5	6
(3) I acted in ways that violated my own moral code or values	1	2	3	4	5	6
(4) I am troubled by having acted in ways that violated my own morals or values	1	2	3	4	5	6
(5) I violated my own morals by failing to do something that I felt I should have done	1	2	3	4	5	6
(6) I am troubled because I violated my morals by failing to do something that I felt I should have done	1	2	3	4	5	6
(7) I feel betrayed by leaders who I once trusted	1	2	3	4	5	6
(8) I feel betrayed by fellow service members who I once trusted	1	2	3	4	5	6
(9) I feel betrayed by others outside the U.S. military who I once trusted	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I trust my leaders and fellow service members to always live up to their core values	1	2	3	4	5	6
(11) I trust myself to always live up to my own moral code	1	2	3	4	5	6

Figure 3 Moral Injury Events Scale (Nash et al., 2013: 651).

My interpretivist approach to data, set out in the Methodology Chapter, seeks to offer a rich and glowing account of data through a narrative lens (MacLure, 2006; 2010; 2013), enabled by my innovative design of the *Synergistic Interview* method of data generation and RTA (Braun and Clarke, 2022; Braun et al., 2022). It has potential to contribute deeper context or finesse to non-medical attempts to screen or 'diagnose' MI, enhancing the above instruments by probing hallmark concepts such as shame or self-disgust.

2.2.6 Exploring the social context of MI: the social turn.

The notion of "betrayal of trust" (by an individual carrying authority or by a structure, such as by a military commander or a politician) is a key development in the MI construct, significant because it chimes with a broader, non-military aetiology (Shay, 2014). It contextualizes and references societal or structural conditions in which MI can occur and scopes the ways in which those affected can make meaning of their experiences. Studies have suggested that a medical lens through which MI is viewed, focusing on the private emotional damage to the individual, can deflect scrutiny from political and military leaders who ordered soldiers to war and from the society on whose behalf soldiers fight (Fiala, 2017; Hautzinger and Scandlyn, 2017). This insight strengthens homology with non-military contexts such as healthcare workers and police who have reported symptoms of MI through poor resourcing decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic (Lesley, 2021). Molendijk (2019: 263) argues that the addition of a "social suffering lens" is necessary when situating MI

within a wider socio-political context and resonates with a complementary theological lens that Powers (2019) employs when considering the intersection of personal experiences with societal ramifications of evil or immoral behaviours that can give rise to MI. Through this lens, the educated moral conscience can ignite a dialectic exchange – what Sheen (2019: 10) calls an "unbearable repartee" in the mind of the soldier – between moral agency and its socio-ethical context offering developmental and even transformational possibilities. This dialectical dance commandeers the role of education as a catalyst "mediating between man as a biologically and genetically developed species and the societal structures developed by man" (Illeris, 2017: 248).

Recent research linked to ideas of betrayal of trust that contribute to the societal-turn of the MI construct reports the theme of perpetrated or witnessed retribution in Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel in both combat and peacekeeping contexts (Hodgson et al., 2022). Although there is currently little wider research of this aspect of MI, there are thematic resonances with the *Marine A* incident and epic tropes found in Homeric and other ancient literature that Jonathan Shay offers as a scoping context for the understanding the MI phenomenon (Shay, 1995). Further research in this area in other militaries, particularly those involved in historic combat operations such as Afghanistan, is an avenue for deeper investigation that could shed further light on this emerging aspect of the MI construct.

2.2.7   The UK Armed Forces Covenant: an ethical context

A soldier participates in a social and moral covenant with the State. The societal context of MI is backlit by the hidden theoretical assumptions in which the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) (MoD, 2011) is framed, which I explore below. Political failures of leadership that lead to experiences of MI may not be causal - but they do shape the context that gives rise to the possibility of MI by influencing military veterans' (and others') world view (Das, 2007).

In a military context, use of the term "covenant" to describe a two-way relationship between the individual and the State is significant; it holds transcendental and religious overtones of a sacred and inviolable promise. Covenant is a richer concept than contract.

The biblical Covenant between the ancient Jewish people and their God, dignified by divine favour and sealed in the blood of animal sacrifice, is arguably the best-known example of this arrangement. It contains themes of promise of reward, the duty of agreed moral conduct positioned ethically within the principles of the 10 Commandments expressed by a sacred obligation to persevere until death in the face of adversity (Ex.24). Inculturation into army ethos via recruits' initial education and training - sustained over time by the military's 'total institution' environment - is a powerful medium for mysterious non-verbal, semiotic assimilation. Reflecting the transformation / behaviorism education dynamic earlier referenced, a Hidden Curriculum lurks (Bauer and Borg, 1986 [1976]; Martin, 1983), underpinned by military law. A Hidden Curriculum is unwritten and plays a compelling role in socialization through daily repetition. There is an interesting link with Aristotle's schema of the cultivation of personal excellences or virtues – *arete* – ordered to an ethical framework that, in time, become 'second nature' to the individual in community. This learning arrangement demands a high degree of conformity to the community ethos which may be "completely foreign to the pupil's own life context [and be] ready to ignore his or her own needs from family and leisure time" (Bauer and Borg, 1986 [1976]: 29, cited in Illeris, 2017).

Erving Goffman (1991) unpacked some of these "total" themes (such as 360 degree observation of asylum (*sic*) inmates by their custodians in his seminal sociological work investigating the workings of North American mental institutions in the 1950s. Parallels with the military environment are easily intimated and given striking visual expression by summoning Jeremy Bentham's design of the all-seeing Panopticon - a device for observing and controlling prison inmates' behaviour via architecture (Bentham, 2000; Milne, 2017), at Figure 4. Military architecture, at Figure 5, appears similarly ordered towards the observation and control of its inhabitants with classic open squares surrounded on every side by watching eyes and ritualized ways of movement (military bearing) and hierarchical interactions such as saluting senior officers
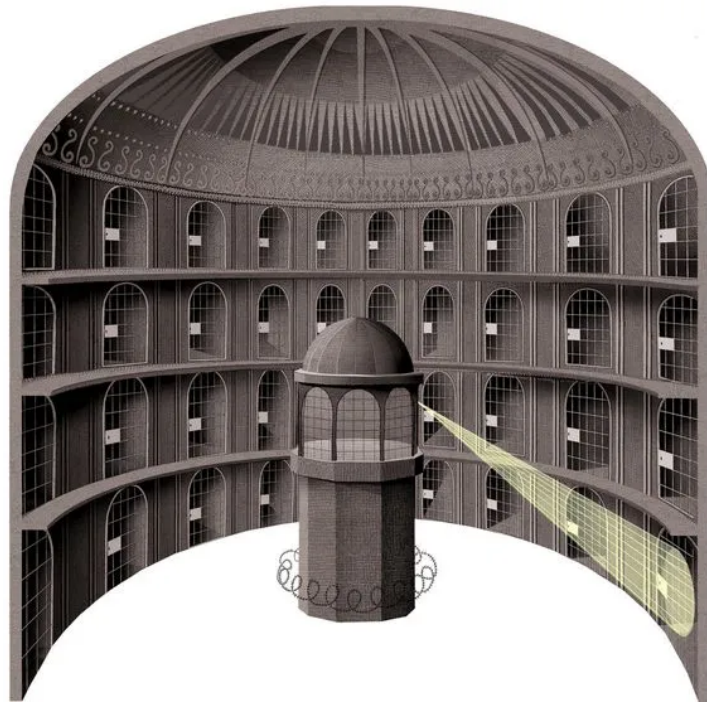
Figure 4 Panopticon design.

Figure 5 Fort George, Inverness. The Barracks architecture.

A clear moral focus underpinned Bentham's Panopticon design project, namely the belief that people usually behave better when they believe that they are being watched. That constant surveillance can control behaviour in a hidden way was explored further by

Foucault's influential thinking on how a State uses devices of surveillance to exert control over its citizens (Foucault, 1991; Orwell, 1984). There is, however, another parallel with Foucault's thinking in the military approach to total observation within its community, namely the dynamic relationship between self-discipline and imposed discipline which could also be framed in Foucauldian terms of *sovereign power* (such as obeying commands during drill) and *disciplinary power* (such as getting out of bed on time for a parade) (Rabinow, 1991). I discuss this power relationship in connection with a behaviourist / self-discipline dynamic that also feeds into a discussion on the dynamic relationship between behaviourist and transformative approaches to military education and training in the Discussion Chapter of the thesis.

Semple (2009) makes an important distinction between Bentham's (2022) and Foucault's (1991) moral purview in assessing the purpose of the Panopticon device that is relevant to how surveillance is understood in a military education and training context:

> "Foucault writes of the technologies of subjection as though they have a life of their own, as though it does not matter for what they are used" (Semple, 2009: 119).

Semple's criticism of Foucault's use of Bentham's Panopticon as a shibboleth of power wielded by the political establishment is not that there is no truth in the assertion (as suggested in his 1985 work on penology (Foucault, 1991)), but that Foucault in some way overlooks or is unfamiliar with Bentham's other work on the wider context for prison reform that assumes a clear moral purpose to improve delinquency in society. Foucault's lens of power, in this context, tells only part of the societal story intended by Bentham's offering of the *Panopticon* and is the poorer for it (Bentham, 2022). It is interesting to speculate how a virtue approach to military moral conscience formation could form an educative strand in civilian prisoner rehabilitation or transformative strategies, incorporating teleological elements of Bentham's architectural vision as a diminishing behaviourist safety net that I explore in the final chapter of the thesis.

Within a military context, however, the personal surveillance signified by the Panopticon is voluntarily accepted as a necessary part of the soldier's educative ethos; it is not perceived

as oppressive or even detrimental to individual moral agency. It sits uneasily with Foucault's lens of unwitting participation in a hidden power-game by the soldier who, by willing inculturation into military ethos, is explicitly educated into both sides of the covenant of military service. The delicate and complex balance of voluntary surrender to behaviorist forces of the Panopticon in the military context may be better captured by Bourdieu's (2001) thinking on Symbolic Violence, by which the subtle influences of a cultural field subsume, tame and shape the individual soldier - part of the process of forming military identity as the military ethos replicates itself for its own benefit that is ultimately at the service of society. Bourdieu positions Symbolic Violence as a form of power that is "exerted for the most part … through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition … recognition or even feeling" (Bourdieu, 2001: 2). His description aligns well with military ethos and the semiotic character of much of military life. At the beginning of military service, a recruit is required to make the Attestation or promise of loyalty to the monarch, couched in covenantal language.[3] It is sometimes performed in the Garrison Church to emphasize its dignity in the service of a higher authority. Wearing a uniform with colourful military insignia (the grandest of which are surmounted by a cross, the sign of the Christian religion) reinforces the unique, quasi-sacramental nature of service to the crowned and anointed Christian monarch who embodies the State. The Attestation is a modern restatement of the Athenian Ephebic Oath (Casey, 2013), an ancient Hellenistic covenantal agreement between the *polis* and its soldier-citizen protector on which the Greek city-state rested.[4] Bourdieu's notion of the cultural consecration of certain artefacts, activities and positions within this 'Battlefield of Practice' emerges as a helpful lens to tie together elements of military inculturation or ethos by making agential connections with wider

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[3] "*I swear by almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King Charles III, his heirs and successors and that I will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, his heirs and successors in person, crown and dignity against all enemies and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, his heirs and successors and of the generals and officers set over me*".

[4] "*I will never bring reproach upon my hallowed arms, nor will I desert the comrade at whose side I stand, but I will defend our altars and our hearths, single-handed or supported by many. My native land I will not leave a diminished heritage but greater and better than when I received it. I will obey whoever is in authority and submit to the established laws and all others which the people shall harmoniously enact. If anyone tries to overthrow the constitution or disobeys it, I will not permit him, but will come to its defence, single-handed or with the support of all. I will honour the religion of my fathers. Let the gods be my witness*".

humanitarian and societal contexts that I explore further in the Discussion Chapter of the thesis (Bourdieu, 1993; Medvetz and Sallaz, 2018).

Unpacking the nature of the AFC further, the State covenants to provide for the soldier in every way, body mind and soul, so that when the time comes to exercise potentially lethal force in its service, the soldier's loyalty to the mission will be relied upon and supported. Its ethical framework seeks to justify whatever military action may be deemed necessary by its leaders or politicians by appealing to international law. Some freedoms enjoyed by civilians, such as freedom of movement, are voluntarily surrendered by the soldier in the military environment that is ordered towards operational success. Fracture of the covenant is viewed in quasi-religious terms of *apostacy* resulting in guilt, shame and peer pressure to make amends (penance) for the offence committed. An example of this might be failure of a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) to carry out the necessary safety checks on a weapons system that subsequently fails and puts the lives of his subordinates in danger during a "contact" with the enemy. The relatively unexplored area of the state's failure to honour its side of the covenant, such as the poor quality of personal protection equipment provided to combat troops in the early phases of the Iraq War (2003 - 2012), may be framed as a societal PMIE. It was referenced as such in the study data by Soldier 03 and chimes with the societal-turn of the MI construct that I explore in the Discussion Chapter (Fiala, 2017).

A tightly packed overview of the strategic understanding of this relationship with the military is to be found in the AFC where the relationship is framed in terms of:

> "An Enduring Covenant Between The People of the United Kingdom, Her Majesty's Government– and –All those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown And their Families" (MoD, 2011).

When the Covenant is degraded or broken, exploration of this potential contributing factor to MI appears under researched in the academic literature. This too has implications for the refinement of the MI construct in social and political directions - not least in scrutinizing some of the hidden assumptions that underlie the State's covenantal relationship with its Armed Forces and other public servants.

2.2.8   Military Ethics education

Western Military Ethics emerged in a codified way during the 19ᵗʰ Century from earlier Just War thinking in response to modern developments in warfare and humanitarian concerns. Increasing military professionalisation required greater awareness and education of its ethical moorings that distinguish it from conscript armies and mercenaries. Military ethical thinking broadly aligned with three existing ethical theories: Virtue; Deontology and Consequentialism, though as the nature of warfare continues to shift, so does the way in which the main ethical theories are used and adapted today. The development of various 'hybrid' military ethical theories attempts to update ethical theory and moral practice with varying degrees of accomplishment (Schulzk, 2019; Robinson et al., 2008).

UK Military Ethics education sits within the domain of Virtue Ethics that is the dominant western approach, aspiring to form a soldier's character in line with broadly Judaeo-Christian principles and vocabulary that I outlined in the Introductory Chapter of the thesis (Robinson et al 2008). Although virtue habituation aims to create the framework to equip individual soldiers with the instinctive tools to act in accordance with external ethical referents, trusting them to behave properly, this approach is coloured with a certain pragmatism in practice that arises from corporate experiences in a variety of historical operational theatres. The LOAC and RoE introduce elements of deontology or rules-based thinking that, to some degree, loosen the ties to Natural Justice and Natural Law that virtue theory rests upon. A tension can arise, presenting as a PMIE, when demands of justice are cauterised by awkwardly applied RoE, as noticed by Soldier 04 in the Discussion Chapter when he described being forbidden by local RoE to intervene when he witnessed cultural paedophilia in Afghanistan.

Some military ethicists have expressed scepticism about the efficacy of the virtue approach to ethics to form and develop character, suggesting a more modest aspiration of developing professional military identity within liberal principles that draw on the moral development thinking of Lawrence Kohlberg (Olsthoorn and Kasher in Robinson, 2008; Kohlberg, 1981).

The origins of the UK approach to Military Ethics are grounded in Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics that aim at the habitually cultivated mean of freely chosen personal moral excellences (*arete*), ordered to justice – its clear *telos*. Aristotelian principles are expressed in policy documents that draw on and collate earlier and disparate sources of ethical thinking by UK military strategists such as Field-Marshalls Slim, Montgomery and Wavell (MoD, 2000). The first codified treatment of UK Military Ethics was *Army Doctrine Publication 5* (ADP5) better known as "Soldiering: the Military Covenant" in which the British Army's ethical principles and moral behaviours were set out and explained within the overarching political framework of the "Military Covenant" (MoD, 2000). ADP5 situated the army's ethical code – the Core Values and Standards of Behaviour (MoD, 2018) – within a comprehensive, interconnected network of the three components of the Fighting Power: physical, conceptual and moral. Issues of ethics, professional identity, military ethos, the law and leadership set the scene for future developments of the army's sense of being an accountable force for good in a rules-based world order. In a tightly packed account, ADP5 summarised the UK's understanding of the theoretical framework underpinning military service: "All British Soldiers share the legal right and duty to fight and if necessary, kill, according to their orders, and an unlimited liability to give their lives in doing so. This is the unique nature of soldiering" (MoD, 2000: 1-1).

The Army Leadership Code (MoD, 2015) developed and restated the principles found in ADP5, using a leadership lens that firmly locates professional leadership within the Moral Component of the Fighting Power. It codified elements of good leadership practiced by instinct or reason over the centuries. Here, the principle of "Mission Command" is privileged (that is, where a commander states an intent but entrusts its manner of execution to subordinates), being predicated on every soldier understanding and abiding by the army's ethical code (Krulak, 1997). Mission Command is a concept that is also understood as a developmental activity. It sits well with coaching techniques that develop and nourish future leaders at every level when underpinned by a sound understanding of the ethics located in the *Armed Forces Covenant* (MoD, 2011), the successor to the *Military Covenant*.

Aristotle's teaching that personal excellences (*arete*) fall naturally into intellectual virtues and moral virtues is reflected in the UK approach to Military Ethics education in practice. Theoretically, the Common Military Syllabus (MoD, 2023) aims to introduce and cultivate a military worldview in the minds of recruits in basic training – turning civilians into soldiers, so to speak – and maps the three components of the Fighting Power to an Aristotelian ethical taxonomy: intellectual virtues are developed in the physical and conceptual space; moral virtues are cultivated in the moral space. For officers, the Commissioning Course over 44 weeks at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst works in partnership with the Open University, the University of Reading and the Defence Academy of the UK offering an educationally blended approach of classroom activities (such as an introduction to ethical thinking) supported by practical activities that aim at habituation of best practice (such as exercising operational behaviour in line with International Humanitarian Law). For soldiers, Initial Military Training takes place over a period of 13 weeks, followed by up to 26 weeks of specialist trade training, at one of the three UK training establishments. The military approach to ethical education of both officers and soldiers relies on slow-drip character formation activities driven by Aristotelian ethical themes. It aspires to personal transformation in the sense that transformational learning theorists such as Mezirow (2000) and Biesta (2013) could advocate. Formation continues throughout military service in an educationally blended, dialectical manner through a combination of intellectual and practical activities as part of Continuous Professional Development programmes, supported by military ethos that I discuss in more detail later in this chapter.

Other western militaries such as the US follow the same focus on character formation via virtue, located thematically in *Warrior Ethos* whose values are described in *Army Field Manual FM-22-100*, the equivalent of the UK's ethical code containing the V&S (MoD, 2015). Fisher (2011) makes a case for "virtuous consequentialism" favoured by the US approach to military ethics that relies on a soldier's sound judgement formed and habituated in virtuous approaches to ethical education but evaluating moral rectitude by considering their effects (Schulzke, 2019). Fisher's hybrid approach recognises the fast-developing nature of asymmetric warfare, such as counterinsurgency and the increasing use of drones and AI and offers a way for the ethics to catch up with the praxis of modern warfare. This "hybrid" approach to ethical theory, while offering a certain pragmatism to

making moral choices, nevertheless has its theoretical drawbacks that risk inconsistency and can be susceptible to partisan manipulation as witnessed by several high-profile contraventions of IHL such as at Abu Ghraib in Iraq (Lewis, 2005).

A different approach is taken by the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) that takes a pragmatic stance to ethics, combining a deontological or rules-based general approaches using pragmatism, guided by consequentialist assessments of outcome, to identify when such rules can be dispensed. The IDF looks to its own formal ethical code, produced by committee, as a benchmark for ethics education for its military personnel – *The Spirit of the IDF* (2001). The ongoing war in Palestine has highlighted varying understandings of IHL between the IDF and the UN when these two different approaches to military ethics are seen together (Khalidi, 2010).

Evaluation of the main approaches to military ethics education is complex. A deontological or consequentialist metric is more straightforward to apply than virtue. Arising from cognitive education, It is easier to determine to what extent rules and outcomes of action have been met than to evaluate where Aristotle's *Happy Virtuous Mean* falls when deconstructing a moral act. By the former methods, Marine A's action is fairly straightforward to evaluate, he knew and broke multiple rules; the consequence of his action was disastrous for IHL compliance and for national reputation. For the UK's virtue approach to character formation that takes place under the total gaze of Bentham's *Panopticon* that aspires to character transformation, safety-ordered behaviourist elements of a soldier's ethical education could be evaluated from deontological or consequentialist perspectives (did the soldier display accurate time keeping, for example), but not so easily the anticipated transformational developments in virtuous ontology that happen over time. Alasdair MacIntyre (2013) notes that in the Aristotelian virtue schema, virtues do not exist in abstract but are related to a group or society's way of living and that it is the group that bestows meaning and value on virtues. This is true of the UK approach to military ethics with its deeply contextualised way of assimilating virtue with ethos and professional behaviours. It is the army's professionalism, its culture and its sense of virtue that feed and support each other, resulting in the possibility of a changed identity necessary for military service.

2.2.9   An inter-disciplinary search for theoretic distinction

As the MI construct evolves, Litz et al's (2009) and Shay's (2014) working definition of MI invite inter-disciplinary contributions to enrich and refine it. Jamieson et al. (2020) identify two broad enabling approaches that seek to refine and focus the conceptual development of MI along these lines: *Philosophical* (encompassing humanitarian, societal, spiritual and theological domains) and *Diagneutic* (encompassing multiple diagnostic and therapeutic domains). Each approach brings its own proper disciplinary tools to enhance the evolving concept of MI. The philosophical lens takes an interest in the "why" issues surrounding MI and seeks to understand and comment on what Sherman (2015: 1) calls "a sense of shattered moral identity" (for example, "why did our mission-specific RoE prevent medical assistance to a sick child?"). This approach uses the language of *affront* to a sound moral conscience (Drescher et al., 2011; Molendijk, 2018) that even Prince Hamlet bewails (Shakespeare, 1987). I use the adjective "sound" to indicate a moral conscience that has been adequately "formed" or "shaped" by the influences discussed in the introduction and is therefore able to function in ways aligned to justice in the way that society demands. In some ways, a "sound" moral conscience is one that has absorbed Habermas's distinction of learning occurring in both instrumental ways (arising from a context that seeks to improve performance using hypothetical and deductive means such as a cognitive understanding of IHL and in communicative ways (arising from a dialogic approach to conversation that seeks to deepen understanding of the "other" so as to form the best judgement of a situation and its actors). Mezirow looked to Habermas's philosophy to outline "an epistemological foundation defining optimal conditions for adult learning and education" on which his Transformational Learning Theory rests and becomes a driver for action (Illeris, 2018: 115). Moral attrition (such as experiencing PMIEs over a period of time) may degrade the ability of the moral conscience to function in this way, potentially "creating a level of depravity among servicemen that is never understood by the public" (Anderson, 2011: 491).

A diagneutic lens deals in the language of psychology, tied to a medical paradigm. Here, the morally injured *patient* is assigned a diagnosis as directed by the DSM-5 taxonomy: a

wounded, mentally damaged patient, who needs psychiatric intervention. An aspiration for psychologists seeking wider acknowledgement of the MI concept along mainly diagneutic lines is to restore MI to the next iteration of the DSM reference for clinicians after its removal post DSM-3 (Williamson et al., 2022b).

Acknowledgment of the problematic nature of the dominant positivist approach to clinical psychology is referenced in the *Power Threat Meaning Framework*, a discussion paper published by the British Psychological Society. Post-positivist in approach, it is not without opposition from within the profession. Dissatisfaction is expressed with a medicalized understanding of mental distress that

> "is limited to the separation of mind from body, thought from feeling, the individual from the social group, and human beings from the natural world; the privileging of 'rationality' over emotion; and a belief in objectivity, or the possibility of partialling out values, ethics and power interests from theory and practice in human systems" (Johnstone, 2018: 5).

Future directions for research have identified the desirability of inter-disciplinary collaboration to develop a conceptual framework that takes a holistic view of psychological distress, seeking non-medical strategies for those affected. The parallels with MI are clear and offer hope for the future evolution of understanding the complexities involved in the human mind and its healing after moral anguish.

It is unclear, however, how these two approaches will work together while clinicians remain *de facto* gatekeepers of perceived MI since both approaches arise from what appear to be different epistemologies, reflecting a range of research paradigms (Johnstone, 2019). An inter-disciplinary mixed-methods approach may offer lines of exploration for the continuing refinement of the MI construct via multi-factorial lenses (Litz, 2016). Still in its infancy, researchers at King's College London have developed the "Restore and Rebuild" programme - an on-line psychologist-led intervention for MI that combines elements of psychotherapy and social /personalist contexts (Williamson et al., 2022). Initial responses have been positive and further work is underway to refine and improve their approach. Non-psychology-led ways forward have been developed by chaplaincy-led research such as the Australian BPSS model and its associated PND programme (Carey et al., 2023a). PND has

received positive review both within the inter-disciplinary academic literature (Koenig and Al Zaben, 2021b) and as a basis for international chaplaincy MI intervention initiatives such as the UK's Royal Army Chaplains' Department (RAChD) Moral Injury CoP of which I am a member. There is a clear role for mutual education of the diverse professional actors seeking to advance theoretical understanding of MI without imprisoning themselves within academic and professional silos.

2.3. Under-explored theoretical aspects: the moral

The academic literature raises several tantalizing theoretical loose threads as the MI construct evolves and more research is conducted. Some of these are directly related to my study such as experience of MI among drone operators in relation to tele-intimate violence (Enemark, 2023; Lee, 2019). This study adds an inter-disciplinary contribution to the theory arising from insights of my own academic discipline and professional practice such as conceptual approaches to military education and conscience formation. The cultivation of a military CoP with distinctive and diverse learning elements arising from the use of semiotics and imitation of role models, scaffolded by distinct UK military ethos (MoD, 2015) may offer an enabling context that valorizes the interactive emphasis of learning (Wenger, 1999). Evolving connections with rehabilitative approaches to civilian offenders may also benefit from educational approaches utilized by military CoPs, as I suggest in the Concluding Chapter of the thesis.

Philosophical approaches to developing the MI construct naturally involve consideration of the *moral* element of the phenomenon. Yet as Litz et al. (2009) note, perhaps in view of the dominance of research carried out by psychologists using a medical *diagneutic* lens, a detailed consideration of the practice of morality in the theoretical framework is under-represented. Hallmark concepts such as *shame* and *guilt* are referenced in the MI academic literature (Aldridge, 2018; Lloyd et al., 2021; Serfioti et al., 2022) – often from a psychological or social anthropological perspective - but seldom unpacked in any philosophical depth, their theoretical assumptions being all but unacknowledged (Molendijk et al., 2018). This is problematic since these hallmark concepts are the building blocks of the

MI construct that distinguish it from PTSD. They need philosophical expansion and scrutiny to offer trustworthiness and wider acceptance of what is still a provisional concept. It matters to the development of the concept and to how those affected may be supported, whether guilt, for example, is understood as "false assumptions and faulty logic" (Kubany, 1994: 5) and irrational (Kubany, 2012) or whether it is seen as the natural consequence of a poor moral choice often made with clouded judgement (Boudreau, 2011). Kubany's (1994, 2012) view, while characteristic of a non-judgmental, rationalist approach in psychology that sees a moral framework as something irrelevant or possibly harmful to its practice, sits uneasily with veterans who seek peace of mind through atonement and forgiveness rather than cheap release from a guilty moral conscience offered by a clinician (Bica, 2018; Boudreau, 2011; Lifton, 2005).

The term *morality* is a complex concept that no single definition captures; it is contested territory (Hitlin and Vaisey, 2013). There are, however, certain broad themes that find resonance in widely accepted western ethical codes such as the 10 Commandments and The Golden Rule. A dictionary definition of 'morality' offers a thematic springboard and contains ideas of "a personal or social set of standards for good or bad behavior and character, or the quality of being right and honest" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). Character education and formation inevitably involves taking risks (Biesta, 2013) as transformation of the human person develops. In the military context the stakes can be higher than in others, yet as Knud Illeris reflects, for the learner it is "a very demanding process that changes the very personality or identity and occurs only in very special situations of profound significance" (Illeris, 2018: 8). This is less clearly expressed in US approaches to military ethics that see character formation via virtue assimilation as but one of four useful moral philosophical lenses (utility; teleology; virtue and consequence) that carry varying ethical weighting depending on the moral context (DDA, 2020). Consequentialist in practice, this philosophical approach introduces ethical disinterest to the soldier's moral decision-making process; it becomes problematic when appealing to the external ethical referents that I identified above. How, for example, can the Just War principle of proportionate military response be persuasively taught to soldiers whose ethical world-view is influenced by moral consequentialism that sees an 'ends justify means' rationale as acceptable moral collateral damage rather than instinctively favouring judicious restraint that a virtue approach

commends? Arguably, the former may have been *Marine A's* moral framework that made possible the critical incident that lies at the heart of my study. In the data analysis section, I noted how one of my interviewees (the young guardsman, soldier 06 F2F) described his feeling of 'ontological revulsion' (arising from his own identity of "ontological security" (Giddens, 1991: 5) developed through education in ideas of natural justice that underlie virtue ethical thinking) when witnessing the disrespecting of an enemy corpse incident, justified by what appeared to be consequentialist thinking. 'Ontological revulsion' could be another term to describe moral dissonance sparked by an assault on the conscience when witnessing an immoral act – a PMIE leading potentially to a MI.

Akram (2021) notes a similar philosophical disconnect arising in healthcare professionals' experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. Medical staff formed ethically in virtue, schooled by Kantian deontology, conflicted with organizational utilitarian ethics of necessity and maximum benefit arising from insufficient resources to provide equal access to medical services. The resulting ethical deficit – attrition of the moral conscience, as I position it – is seen in terms of a *slow-drip PMIE* that chimes with some of the experiences of military veterans emerging in the study's data.

UK military recruits enlist with certain enduring ethical assumptions about society (such as those that shape UK civilian law) that military education seeks to build on and refine rather than to replace. This is a key understanding for how military ethics are taught in the UK, which do not follow their own lights but rather are subordinated to existing universal ethical principles (such as the prohibition of murder in the 10 Commandments) in a military context. The UK approach to the inculturation of military ethics by educationally constructivist means seeks not only dialectically formed educational outcomes but also peace of mind for the human person. This transformative approach (Mezirow and Associates, 2000) exercised through virtue habituation, seeks a harmonious and voluntary internalization of an ethical framework that lacks the coercive nature of a process of indoctrination found in other belief systems such as Soviet-style communism that George Orwell explores in his 1945 novel *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 2018). Hence, a critical outcome of military ethics education is to give the soldier (who may be required to use lethal force as a last resort) understanding that leads to confidence in both the legality and moral rectitude

of their actions. A soldier who instinctively follows the RoE in an encounter with the enemy, with understanding of their ethical alignment to wider, externally agreed referents exercised in good faith, is considered to have a better chance of 'sleeping peacefully at night' because of a quieter conscience born of justifiable ethical behaviour. This was a persistent theme explored in the Discussion Chapter and it returns to the critical incident of *Marine A* that piqued the study asking "what went wrong and why"? Developing this understanding of the wider purpose of military ethics formation, a moral philosopher or theologian could seek to clarify the parameters of personal and social agency and the workings of the moral conscience in judging personal guilt and culpability, adding further complexity to the dialectical process (Pope John Paul II, 1993; Fiala, 2017).

2.3.1   Under-explored theoretical aspects: the moral conscience

Not merely an expression of individual taste, the moral conscience is a constitutive element of the human person, arising from reason, that drives practical agentic judgements for the best and away from the worst actions (Hine, 2007). Moral conscience is metaphorically known as a *Moral Compass*, conveying the idea that it instinctively points the moral agent towards the best course of action in a morally equivocal situation. The case of *Marine A* who was filmed shooting an enemy prisoner of war rather than giving him basic first aid in contravention of the Geneva Conventions is an example of the exercise of agency: he chose the "bad" course of action rather than the "good". Whether the moral agency was a "free" choice or in some way "pressured" (for example by uncontrollable external influences) is debatable. *Marine A's* legal defence argued that he did not commit a "free" act since he was suffering from PTSD that lessened culpability. The sentence was reduced from murder to manslaughter on appeal as a result of this accepted distinction.

Alleged *ius in bello* violations by UK Special Air Service "death squads" (*sic*) in Afghanistan in 2010 highlighted the damaged moral conscience of some military personnel, allegedly killing unarmed civilians with disregard for their alleged victims' humanity and protected status under international law (Panorama, 2022). It appeared that the Units involved lacked meaningful leadership for an extended period (the usual length of a deployment to

Afghanistan in 2010 was almost 7 months) and considered themselves free to operate with impunity, without reference to the ethical formation received in military education. In an interesting and deadly paradigm shift, virtue appears to have been hijacked by utilitarianism as the preferred ethical framework for making moral decisions. There are parallels with the case of *Marine A* whose Unit was not adequately supported or well led and went "native", detached from established ethical and moral referents. Over a prolonged time, with a moral conscience damaged by attrition, the human mind has been shown to accommodate the most egregious wrongdoing, for example the Nazi Holocaust, without triggering the usual 'moral brakes' (Gellately, 2001; Rommen, 1959). The German philosopher Von Hildebrand reflected on the idea of a blunted moral conscience, and the need to protect and develop it, when considering the fatalistic response of many Germans to the moral atrocities of National Socialism in the 1930s:

> "Our consciences become numbed all too easily, not only when we ourselves sin repeatedly without truly repenting of the sin each time, but also when we put up with the injustices of others and so accustom ourselves to a morally poisoned atmosphere" (Von Hildebrand and Crosby, 2014: 260).

Von Hildebrand's insight is reframed by William Alexander who, drawing on ancient Greek themes, suggests that a blunted moral conscience is one that "fragments into its component parts of moral intuition and moral reasoning" and that restoration of a damaged conscience will involve re-activation of the capacity for moral intuition that re-connects with moral reasoning (Papadopoulos, 2020: 145). This distinction is put in similar terms of "moral formation" and "moral inquiry" by Hand (2017: 40). MI may provide impetus for further research into conscience formation and deformation, especially from a longitudinal perspective, that could deepen understanding of its ramifications and propose mitigating strategies. Educational programmes in prisons, for example, could seek to develop the quality of a person's moral conscience as part of an inmate's rehabilitation using the military blended approach to virtue assimilation that I explore in the Concluding Chapter, though significant structural challenges remain (Braggins, 2005; Kirkwood, 2023; Reform, 2022; Schinkel and Whyte, 2012).

Although bearing witness to the Natural Law (Cicero, 1998), the origins of moral conscience are mysterious - particularly when one departs from the idea of a divine source (Hoose, 1999). In the ancient mind (Sophocles, 1984) subsequently developed by Christian Scholastic Theology (Bonaventure, cited in Chalmers (2014); Aquinas (1952)), moral conscience carried the idea of sharing knowledge with oneself to identify and avoid wrongdoing, acting as a custodian or sentinel to guide how to apply this reflection to future situations. In the modern era, Enlightenment philosophy developed the theme of a split personality or interior voice advising and accusing oneself about moral judgements to be made (Sorabji, 2014). Modern moral psychology seems unconcerned to identify the precise origins of a pre-existent moral conscience, content to acknowledge societal influences on its formation (Greer, 2002). The insights of moral theology, however, insist that the moral conscience is a divinely gifted capacity that requires life-long formation for its healthy functioning in alignment with Natural and revealed Positive Law themes such as the near-universal prohibition on the taking of innocent human life (John-Paul II, 1993). Sheen (2019: 10) characterises moral conscience as the interior orchestrator of an "unbearable repartee" that "makes you feel good after" [listening and acting in accord with it]. Newman argues that the existence of conscience in the human mind invites belief in God from whom it originates and who gives ultimate reference to our understanding of the source of an ethical system (Strange, 2009). It is a demonstration of how human beings use their natural, innate personal faculties to form judgements about the world around them. Newman would later, in his *Grammar of Assent,* term this ability the "Illative Sense", in Newman's own words "a grand word for a common thing" (Dessain and Gornall, 1973: 375). Yet even without a theistic world view, Newman places the moral conscience thematically within Natural Law thinking that the ancient mind would have immediately recognised. In one of his early sermons, Newman wrote:

> "There is a voice within us, which assures us that there is something higher than earth. We cannot analyse, define, contemplate what it is that thus whispers to us. It has no shape or material form. There is that in our hearts which prompts us to religion, and which condemns and chastises sin" (Strange, 2009: 130).

The idea of reflecting on actions past and anticipating future moral scenarios is key to how military ethical education develops practical tools of distinction in the mind of a soldier. The

bridge between ethical theory and moral practice may be understood in terms of the moral conscience that operates as an unchosen ethical sentinel. An element of military education for combat soldiers known as 'Judgemental Training' is an example of how this idea works in practice. Dialectical in form, the soldiers are given a classroom lesson in the RoE that references Just War theory, International Law and the "Morality of Killing", essentially a philosophical discussion around the difference between murder and killing. There then follows a practical session in which the soldiers are given a combat scenario where they must make a moral decision on whether or not to engage the enemy both legally and morally. The 'judgements' are then scrutinised by the other soldiers and the educators with reference to the grounds on which the decisions were made. Socratic in nature, this approach resonates with a 'Frame Based' feedback mechanism proposed by Goffman's Frame Analysis approach (Goffman, 1979; 1981) used in other disciplines such as medicine, where "instead of focusing primarily on correcting actions, diagnosing trainees' 'frames' – the thought processes that drive their actions" - seeks professional development and protection of society (Rudolph et al., 2013a). A Reflective Model, the Frame Based approach provides a natural safe space for senior military personnel to pass on professional insights to the next generation of soldiers in a non-threatening environment, sufficiently flexible to accommodate the broad range of philosophical strands referenced in this chapter that underpin UK military education and training.

Conducted in a supportive and learner centred blended environment ordered towards military ethical education and character formation, this genre of activity is not only an excellent form of Formative Assessment of learning but also acts as a developmental safety net to identify, through simulation, areas of concern for future real-life high stakes combat situations. Conscious of the critical role of the teacher that can be minimised in some constructivist approaches to learning, contributing to what Gert Biesta terms the "Learnification" of educational discourse (Biesta, 2016: 246), Judgemental Training assesses a soldier's ability to understand, apply and draw practical conclusions from theory. Areas for mentorship and coaching may be discreetly identified to support the quality assurance assessment mechanism that attempts to educate and form soldiers in the service of the nation. In this way, Judgemental Training offers a learning arena where the transformative / behaviourist dynamic can be assessed and developed as the forming moral conscience acts

as a catalyst for a soldier's agentic progress. A similar educative approach is used in other professional contexts such as emergency medicine where students are 'war-gamed' through critical scenarios, sometimes assisted by Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology, to deconstruct reasoning and techniques for interventions or non-intervention with positive outcomes for both learners and educators (Patterson et al., 2013). Imitation of best practices chimes with Aristotle's idea that the *telos* or endpoint of ethical formation is to reach a habituated, 'golden mean' in the mind and practice of the ethical agent that leads to *eudaimonia* or happiness by practice of the virtues and avoidance of their opposite vices (Aristotle, 2013). It gives not only practical expression but also, at its best, offers a reflective approach to ethical education that can be an expression of transformational learning for both the individual soldier and wider society (Mezirow and Associates, 2000).

The table at Figure 6 (below) was developed by a chaplain-colleague to assist NCOs when explaining the purpose of the Army's V&S during soldier education and character formation. It uses Aristotle's idea of aiming for a golden or happy mean when aligning or assessing military behaviour with the virtuous behaviour expected by army V&S. A visually striking colour-coded traffic light arrangement of excessive and insufficient degrees of a virtue are offered (*Loyalty*, for example, could be virtuous or vicious, depending on its moral context - as in an aspect of the *Marine A* video footage where the loyalty of subordinates was demanded by a commander to hide his immoral action of killing an enemy prisoner). Educationally, the table's format was easy for all ranks to grasp its content - especially those who found a visual approach to learning helpful - and followed a common and well-tried military framework for learning where soldiers are practiced in processing other genres of content in this format. In the table, the green column states the mean ethical value in action. The red columns give an example of an excess or deficit of the value and the amber column identifies a developmental "good enough" area of practice where the soldier's moral conscience guides moral agency to remain within its parameters. Here, the moral conscience is deployed to "fill the gap" between ethics and an exercise of moral agency (Newman, 2016). Like Aristotle's collection of Virtues[5] that reference Greek political, social and theological thinking, the army's V&S, of themselves, are morally neutral. They assume

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[5] Aristotle's main (cardinal) Moral Virtues: Prudence; Justice; Temperance and Fortitude.

(and require) reference to external ethical foundations that inform the moral conscience to be useful guides (as the 10 Commandments or The Golden Rule shape IHL). My experience in teaching moral understanding to soldiers, echoed in the data generated and discussed in Chapter Five, suggests that if soldiers give intellectual and emotional assent to a connection between the ethical themes that guide western society and their military expression in the V&S, personal agentic transformation is possible and the repetition of another *Marine A* type incident is less likely.

Cowardice		Courage		Recklessness
Careless Neglect		Discipline		Pernickety Overcritical
Ignorance Disrespect		Respect for Others		Uncritical Acceptance
Deceit		Integrity		Holier-than-thou Sanctimonious
Treachery		Loyalty		Blind Obedience
Selfishness		Selfless Commitment		Personal Indifference Martyr

Figure 6 A visual representation of the "ethical mean" of Army Values and Standards (McCormack, 2015)

2.4   Complementary perspectives

Former US Airforce Officer Brian Powers (2019) proposes a theological lens to explore MI that reaches into cosmic, ancient descriptions of Original Sin, a theological / allegorical concept seeking to give an account of the root cause of internal contradictions within the human person inclining us towards selfish thought and action. It offers conceptual nuance

to MI via a theological lexicon by exposing moral violence and its tentacles, capturing its corrupt tendril-like effects on both individuals and societies. Powers builds on the personal and societal-turn of the emerging MI construct referenced in Shay's and Litz's (2009; 2014) working definitions by offering a way of understanding why there is evil in the world - and why otherwise good people sometimes commit bad acts. The ancient Roman poet Virgil also offered this insight into the capricious roots of human nature and its sometimes-destructive expression when, in his epic poem *Aeneid*, he sighs over the human devastation caused by the Trojan War and plangently reflects "there are tears for things, and mortal things touch the heart" (Virgil, 2008). Or, as Forrest Gump might put it: "(sh)it happens" (Gump, 1994).

A "thesaurus of sin" (my term for an enriched descriptive lexicon arising from theological insights) has the potential capacity not only to name wrongdoing and its metastases or tendrils but also to re-position the MI construct into the spiritual domain of the human person, rescuing it from psychiatry. In pricking belligerent narratives by laying bare their links to power (Pius XI, 1939), a theological lens can help wounded minds re-position their own lived experiences of violence and trauma within a wider picture of humanity - offering a possible pathway to healing and wholeness. Conceptually, this spiritual-turn offers another way to connect individual moral agency with a social and eternal context - exploring the personal and societal nature of blame for example (Brock and Lettini, 2012). It offers unique and valuable conceptual enrichment of the developing holistic paradigm of MI by positioning the phenomenon under the gaze of eternity (Wittgenstein, 1916), resonating with an ancient narrative of human experience that connects the personal with the past, present and eternal. In this sense, wisdom is a helpful term since it captures gently dynamic and endlessly osmotic ideas of knowledge pictured by Bernini's Fountain (figure 3) that contribute to human happiness by making sense of the world, deprived of the epistemic rupture that Enlightenment Rationalism can engender.

2.5   Repair / Healing initiatives

Interventions to repair or heal people affected by MI have so far evolved mainly from existing therapies for PTSD, with varying degrees of success. Interventions include *Adaptive*

Disclosure Therapy (ADT) which aims, through a series of six treatment sessions with a therapist, to re-frame troubling combat experiences and to propose alternative strategies for change within a military ethos (Litz et al., 2017; Gray et al., 2021)). *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy* (ACT) aims to improve a sufferer's inner peace of mind by coming to terms with their actions through meditative techniques such as mindfulness, seeking adaptive and flexible approaches to moral wrongdoing by searching for better values in life. ACT can be undertaken individually with a therapist or as part of a group and it has been reported as helping individuals find renewed purpose after moral trauma (Kopacz et al., 2016).

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) principles, broadly defined as talking therapy, underlie several repair approaches including elements of ADT and ACT. The Impact of Killing programme (IOK) in combat repair strategy uses a one-to-one format that looks to assuage feelings of guilt and shame experienced by combat soldiers reflecting on their taking of life. There is an element of restitution and self-forgiveness in this approach that aims to confront dysfunctional cognitions that arise from feeling guilty or culpable for the deaths of others. Individual therapy sessions may direct the individual towards a spiritual community that offer opportunities for purgation through making amends or penance (Maguen and Burkman, 2013; Maguen et al., 2017).

Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PET) are the most common approaches to treating PTSD among military personnel. Both involve revisiting and confronting negative trauma-related thoughts to reframe and channel them by adaptive thinking into more positive actions. Resick et al. (2017: 285-287) note recent interest in CPT that addresses hallmark symptoms of MI such as guilt, shame and self-condemnation. PET, where a troublesome memory is repeatedly re-visited by imagining a similar situation, has been used with MI treatments - though with limited reports of success (Paul et al., 2014). One study, however, reported that 60 - 72% of veterans still fulfilled diagnostic criteria for PTSD post-CPT or PET interventions, with associated issues of functional degradation (Steenkamp et al., 2015). Some research has suggested that some PTSD exposure therapies such as AD and PET (where the traumatic incident and its effects are repeatedly re-lived)

may do more harm than good for people with symptoms of MI (Maguen and Burkman, 2013; Steenkamp et al., 2015).

Healing through Forgiveness (HTF) is a repair intervention for both PTSD and MI that focusses on the veteran and their families over a 12-session schedule (Grimsley, 2017). It uses elements of CBT and PET to re-integrate the veteran back into family life using forgiveness as a tool to deal with issues of anger, fear, shame and guilt with a six-monthly review scheduled into the programme.

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing therapy (EMDR) – where a therapist asks the patient to move their eyes as they track an object, aiming to associate cognitive recognition of a traumatic incident with memories of being safe - has also been reported as having some benefit in sufferers with combination PTSD / MI symptoms (Hurley, 2018).

2.5.1   Other disciplines, other restorative tools

Arts-based academic disciplines such as education and theology offer a different perspective to explore ways ahead aligned with an alternative theoretical framework. The baton of investigation could be more fruitfully passed to other approaches with their own restorative tools for MI (Papadopoulos, 2020). Koenig et al. (2019) note that every world faith community has grappled with MI related issues over the years. Internationally, interventions arising from spiritual and religious domains have been developed and positively evaluated by inter-disciplinary researchers working with military veterans and other affected groups such as law enforcement personnel (VOA, 2024). Most religious-based practices, such as the Catholic Church's Sacrament of Penance, pre-date the modern concept of evidence-based trials. There are, however, a number of modern spiritual focussed interventions that can be examined using some tools found in clinical trials. Koenig et al. (2017) provide an overview of such interventions.

This future direction for development of the MI construct is implicitly suggested by the first critical review of the British Psychological Association's Power-Threat-Meaning framework,

referenced above (Johnstone, 2018; 2019), where frustration with psychology's positivist hegemony is expressed. Hollis also captures the dilemma, noting that "attempts to define MI as an emergent psychiatric diagnosis based on re-purposed DSM criteria for PTSD risk prematurely foreclosing on understandings of what MI actually encompasses" (Hollis et al., 2023: 219). Put another way, is current psychology so tightly tied to a positivist approach that it has exhausted its tools of inquiry to add fresh insights to the development of the MI construct? This appears to be an epistemological frontier for inter-disciplinary research to explore.

Returning to Jamieson et al. (2020)'s distinction between two broad orientations to the MI construct - *philosophical* and *diagneutic* - it is in the philosophical domain that promising repair-interventions are emerging. Using inter-disciplinary insights, a comprehensive analysis of ways in which MI can disturb a person's life in the holistic sense is offered. Their survey of academic literature makes a convincing case for an updated version of Litz and Shay's (2009, 2014) earlier working definition of MI that captures more clearly themes of betrayal and the extent of inner conflict experienced by veterans experiencing MI. It returns the expanded focus of the definition to the moral anchor of the construct and suggests a pithy change in nomenclature that moves away from a medical model:

> "Moral Trauma - the existential, psychological, emotional and or spiritual trauma arising from a conflict, violation or betrayal, either by omission or commission, of or within one's moral beliefs or code(s)" (Jamieson et al., 2020: 1060).

2.5.2 Military chaplains

Military chaplains have a specialist role in developing non-medical repair strategies, having a "pivotal position to help those affected by Moral Injury" (Kopacz, 2014: 722). This echoes my own professional experience of 22 years as a British army chaplain in which as privileged insiders we are ideally placed to help soldiers explore and reframe their experiences of MI through the proper tools of Pastoral Theology. Koenig et al. (2017) note the wide extent of professional activities undertaken by military chaplains (eg. pastoral care, educational / teaching role, ritual and sacramental services).

Military chaplains have an educational role in helping both commanders and soldiers to understand MI, not only intellectually through classroom work but also in practical terms through their pastoral contribution to the CoC. PTSD awareness has grown and entered the operational deployment and recovery cycle since the late last century (Greenberg et al., 2011) with time and resources dedicated to its prevention, diagnosis and treatment / aftercare. MI's time for similar recognition appears to be approaching. Military chaplains have a key role to play in promoting awareness of the phenomenon in wider society where homologous links can be made between the military experience of MI and other public service groups that might encounter similar experiences. The military chaplain's role straddles conceptual and practical aspects of MI. My research adds to the wider understanding of MI and its effect on the human person, walking alongside those whose role exposes them to the possibility of MI and offering a way of recognising, understanding and reframing challenges to their moral conscience. The military chaplain moves easily between the unfamiliar world of the military community and wider society by virtue of their clerical role and, as Rita Brock observes (Papadopoulos, 2020: 45), clergy "do not carry the stigma of therapy" and therefore may be considered more approachable by those suffering MI who are reluctant to engage with mental health services.

Jones et al. (2022) offer an overview of ways that Mental Health Professionals (MHPs) and chaplains have begun to work together to offer alternative and complimentary interventions to mainly PTSD therapies approaches such as PET. Some of these approaches are adjunctive to established therapies that seek to highlight the PMIE aspects of shared PTSD / MI presenting symptoms like shame in the *IOK* Program (Maguen et al., 2017). Others such as the *Structured Chaplain Intervention Program* take a more autonomous spirituality-led approach that seek to put more conceptual and practical distance between clinicians and clergy, while remaining cognisant of professional boundaries that remain (Jones et al., 2022). There are few published examples of exclusively chaplain-led initiatives to date. The *Warrior's Journey Program* (Fleming, 2020) offers a narrative approach for making meaning of MI dealing in themes of hope, guilt and meaning making as a way of scaffolding motivation to seek further spiritual help in veterans suffering from PTSD. The study was based on one case study which, although reporting positive motivation to seek

further help and improving symptom relief, is of limited significance due to its solitary nature. Further limitations emerging from Jones *et al's* (2022) scoping review of MHP / chaplain collaborations have their roots in the vocabulary and theoretical assumptions that psychology brings to a separate academic discipline: theology. Connected with my earlier observation that psychologists are the *de facto* gate keepers of the conceptual development of MI (with a largely positivist world view), some of the spiritual terminology employed has been denuded of its richer, metaphysical significance. The previous discussion regarding use of the term *guilt* by psychologists is indicative of such appropriation. This observation is significant for chaplain-generated initiatives to address PMIEs in a non-medical way using concepts and tools proper to their own discipline and practice refined over many years by religious bodies. An additional difficulty in identifying and publicising authentic spiritual approaches to helping those who have experienced PMIEs is due to professional considerations of confidentiality, especially in relation to sacramental confession where a priest is canonically bound to secrecy under pain of censure not to disclose the contents of a confession. Confession is one of the main approaches for solace and inner peace that a spiritual approach can offer a distressed conscience. It may be a contributing reason why so few chaplain-generated initiatives have been reported.

To date, the most developed intervention programme for MI that incorporates the holistic insights of a BPSS paradigm is PND - a chaplain-led, inter disciplinary approach, that places MI firmly within the spiritual / ethical domain. Using the MIES screening tool (Figure 3) to identify PMIEs, any underlying mental health pathology is identified and a referral is made to a psychologist colleague for medical treatment. An example of this might be persistent flashbacks or clinical depression. If there is no indication of medical pathology, the chaplain proceeds with an eight-stage programme using conventional pastoral / counselling techniques. PND seeks to help those experiencing MI move from their PMIE to personal renewal and reconnection with society by a reflective and re-framing process. This approach resonates with a sparking process that Mezirow notes in Transformative Learning Theory where a PMIE could be seen in terms of an epochal critical incident requiring "sudden, major re-orientation in habit of mind, often associated with life crises" (Illeris, 2018: 118). The PND intervention process is an audacious attempt to re-position MI from the domain of

medicine to that of humanity, "transform[ing] 'patients' back into citizens and 'diagnoses' into dialogue" (Antal et al., 2022; Boudreau, 2011: 750).

Figure 7 Pastoral Narrative Disclosure (Carey et al., 2023a)

Feedback received by the developers of PND from ADF personnel who have completed the PND programme is encouraging with high levels of user-satisfaction reported (Carey et al., 2023a). The use of ritual (religious or secular) as a restorative tool constitutes one of the stages of PND, resonating with an experience from my own professional practice that I describe below.

2.5.3   An encounter with mystery

Drawing on a wide range of spiritual approaches refined over the centuries by the Church and other religious bodies, military chaplains operate in a sometimes liminal and theologically speculative space, pushing the boundaries of professional practice situated in

an unfamiliar environment, responding to pastoral need and are able to find fresh expressions of traditional theological approaches using ritual, as in the following vignette.

In 2011, I was a Regimental Chaplain in Afghanistan when six soldiers were killed by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). As the bodies were recovered to the Forward Operating Base (FOB) where we were based, the sense of grief and anger among their comrades swelled. The CoC did its best to support the survivors in its own terms, acknowledging the bravery and sacrifice of the dead. While true, it was not enough to comfort the soldiers experiencing the raw effects of loss and grief who needed to *do something now* to express their love for their dead comrades. There was a spiritual need for hope - that this life need not be seen as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes, 1962: 9) but that there was the possibility of something better in a time when "all manner of things shall be well" (Norwich, 1961: 99). Such visceral themes are common to the human condition. To offer pastoral care to all affected, religiously inclined or not, I held a series of small, intimate Field Services that allowed the soldiers to nurse their feelings about dead comrades in a safe space, and to focus this with ritual. Some wanted to light a candle in remembrance, others wanted to raise a glass to their friends, some wrote a letter to a dead comrade or his family expressing how much their friendship meant. Military and football insignia were important in this ritual leave-taking of the dead, connecting the past with its happier memories and shared experiences to present grief while looking ahead in hope to a better time. We seemed caught in a liminal space with its own architecture and conventions in the Afghan desert, somewhere between memory and expectation, "clinking glasses with the dead" (Bourdieu, 1996a: xvi) as our military forebears had done centuries before. I offered a traditional Requiem Mass for the dead the next day. For most soldiers, it was the first time they had been to a Catholic Mass and many of them asked me quietly "is it ok for me to come, Father, I'm not religious?" The Requiem Mass was mostly in Latin with lots of silence, punctuated by the ancient language of the Church and an occasional tinkle of a bell. This created an atmosphere of transcendence that bestowed its own way of piercing the great mystery of death with the lance of hope. Ritual was able to make meaning of this extraordinary situation in a way denied to mere words and reason: there was no embarrassment or shame as 20 soldiers sobbed and wept together in a common outpouring of grief. For me, it was a spine-tingling incarnation of Bourdieu's striking phrase about a

storyteller constructing a narrative to "summon and prepare the reader to 'clink glasses' with the dead" (Bourdieu, 1996a: xvi). The ancient rituals of religion constructed a narrative that provided an effortless membrane connecting the present, the past and eternity. It was a privileged moment of deliverance and transformation from Virgil's *lacrimae rerum* (*the tears of things* at the fall of Troy) that I will never forget (Virgil, 2008).

I offer the above story as an example of the different and complementary approaches to practical interventions in caring for the morally injured that disciplines other than psychology can offer. Similar initiatives have been described in the academic literature, mainly with groups of military veterans. Some are accounts of approaches by lone-working military chaplains others are collaborative, inter-disciplinary endeavours forming elements of programmes of intervention over a period of time such as PND that I referenced earlier (Carey and Hodgson, 2018b).

2.6   Summary

Interest in my research was sparked by the shocking moral lapse by *Marine A*. It was an epochal learning experience, Mezirow's "disorienting dilemma" (Taylor and Cranton, 2012: 73-95), that invited me to consider the possibility of MI as a contributing factor to his behaviour. Had the soldier's experience of multiple operational tours without the expected degree of leadership and support blunted and caused attrition to his moral conscience (Von Hildebrand and Crosby, 2014)? My research interest necessarily drew me into the educational domain of Military Ethics and how these are experienced by UK Armed Forces. There is an increasing level of international interest in inter-disciplinary, qualitative approaches researching MI that my study will contribute to (Kelle, 2020; Papadopoulos, 2020). Shay (2002), pivoting over the dreary monochrome epistemological certainties of European Enlightenment thought, brought insights into the human condition found in Greek epic poetry to bear on what would be known as MI. From this starting point, Litz *et al* (2009) and Shay (2014) offered the first working definitions of MI - or rather they constructed a modern-day thematic Trojan Horse for others to develop and refine in inter-disciplinary domains across the Academy. This approach offered a situated way of looking at the human person and its interaction with the world that is at once ancient and new, eschewing

epistemic rupture and celebrating the repository of human wisdom that is the patrimony of the human person.

Conceptual development of MI, from a medical starting point, has undergone a series of 'turns of the wheel' that have contributed to deepening understanding of the phenomenon - and offered fresh ways of engaging with those affected to bring some degree of repair or healing that is beyond the competence of medicine alone. The Social Turn sought to position MI within a wider societal context, acknowledging the shared responsibility of the State and its officials for placing its public servants such as its Armed Forces and Health Care workers in harm's way (Fiala, 2017). The Spiritual Turn seeks to explore the effect of MI on the person's soul. It engages with some of the big philosophical and theological "why questions" associated with MI to bring about a degree of peace of mind for those affected. A spiritual approach attempts to offer the received wisdom of philosophy and theology to those affected. Interventions range from the purely cerebral (such as a guided journey through the comforts of Stoic philosophy) to more traditional religious resources - rituals offered by ancient religious bodies such as the Church with its teaching and practices involving the opportunities for encounter with a higher power and the formal experience of contrition, forgiveness, and penance in sacramental confession. The culmination of these conceptual turns finds expression in Carey and Hodgson's BPSS model (Carey et al., 2023a).

One of the pillars scaffolding my RQ is a consideration of the interrelationship between ethics education and how soldiers practice their learning in training and professional practice. This *Bourdieusian Battlefield* is at the heart of my inquiry and raises interesting questions not only about the military educational approach contained in character formation via virtue ethics, but also to inquire about the curation and workings of the moral conscience, its sentinel. Hence, I ask, what does it take to maintain an intact and functioning moral conscience after moral attrition in battle? Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu and Johnson, 1992) offers a lens to explore the interaction of people and structures in a conflict environment where the moral conscience may be seen as one of the significant constituents of the soldier's habitus, explored in the Discussion Chapter. To ask the question differently, what care and support does the conscience need to "work" soundly - and what degrades its capability? Is the virtue approach fit for purpose against moral assault - or do we need to

find alternative approaches to lessen the chances of another *Marine A* incident? The Societal Turn of the MI construct is poorly finessed. As some of my interviewees commented, if the soldiers feel that their mission is resourced "on the cheap" (for example, not having the necessary and proper kit) and seen as being for the benefit of self-serving politicians rather than something more principled, why should they abide by international humanitarian rules of war that put their lives at risk on the battlefield? Andrew Fiala, a moral philosopher, repositioned this dilemma in terms of the soldier's need for better education in the principles of Just War Theory, arguing that unless a moral agent is intellectually persuaded that the *ius ad bellum* arguments advanced by politicians are sound, MI is almost inevitable since "there is no way to justify or rationalise morally problematic deeds committed in defence of an unjust cause" (Fiala, 2017: 282). To reframe this question again, how can a formed moral conscience in a virtuous character protect a moral agent against organisational utilitarianism that shapes a Field of Practice (Akram, 2021)? I revisit this question in one of the recommendations at the end of the thesis.

Having positioned the RQ within the academic literature, I now explain and justify the interpretivist methodological choices I made to encourage the data generated by my innovative combination of interviews to "glow" with meaning (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; MacLure, 2010; 2011; 2013).

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.0   Introduction

Arising from the *Marine A* critical incident, the study seeks to explore issues around a dynamic relationship of the education and practice of Military Ethics mediated via the moral conscience. I sought to understand better the question of whether previous exposure to a PMIE (Farnsworth et al., 2017; Litz et al., 2009) might affect the functioning of a soldier's moral conscience formed by a virtue approach to military ethics. My inquiry led to the formulation of the following Research Aim, Objectives and Question(s), the "Golden Thread" of the study:

- **Research Aim**: To explore the interrelationship between Military Ethics Education and the Moral Conscience in British army veterans to deepen understanding of the emerging concept of Moral Injury.
- **Research Objectives**: to identify veterans who have experienced a PMIE; to observe how military ethics education is experienced and practised by combat soldiers; to explore the functioning of the moral conscience in an ethically conflicted situation.
- **Research Question:** How might MI affect the functioning of the moral conscience in UK military veterans formed by a virtue approach to military ethics education?

Building on the foundations of my research philosophy and epistemic position discussed in the Introduction Chapter, I now explain why I chose the research type and strategy for my study. A discussion of the theoretical reasons governing my decision to use RTA (Braun and Clarke, 2022) follows, explaining how this aligns with my interpretivist research philosophy, offering a 'good fit' for unpacking the research Golden Thread, providing a natural bridge to the next section of the chapter, the study's design and an explanation of how I managed the practicalities of the study's design as I sought to map the Golden Thread to an actionable matrix. Establishing this 'tactical-matrix' required insider knowledge of the intended population for investigation and how best to recruit volunteers for participation in the study. Issues of sample size and volunteer profile were important for issues of academic

rigour that I believed would lend trustworthiness and credibility to the research. Likewise, issues of ethics (arguably the most important of all the design elements) demanded ongoing review throughout the study. I offer an account of the data collection and analysis processes with a detailed explanation of my approach to data familiarisation, coding and theme generation aligned with a reflexive, interpretivist understanding of situated data. The chapter then moves forward to recognise the methodological limitations of the study and details the mitigations put in place.

3.1   Methodological 'best fit': a justification

3.1.1   Qualitative framework

My epistemic position inevitably requires reflection on the problematic use of terms more often found in quantitative research methodology (such as truth, bias, validity and reliability) than in interpretivist approaches. I say problematic since these terms are sometimes coupled with approaches that critique qualitative approaches to research design without unpacking the theoretical assumptions that they carry. The result can be a classic non-consummate "mash-up" of words and ideas that can mean different things to those using them, in a Humpty Dumpty-like way (Carroll, 2017; Terry and Hayfield, 2021). I noted an example of this in section 3.5 when describing the initial response to my research proposal from the MoD Research Ethics Committee (MoDREC) (Appendix 8). My epistemological position calls for a blurred, nuanced understanding of such terms, resisting incarceration in rigid taxonomies, seeking confluence and synthesis in a way to work together in the service of knowledge, as Bernini carved in his elegantly fluid Roman limestone fountain (Figure 3). Perhaps in a similar way, observed in the Literature Review when noticing attempts to loosen the phenomenon of MI from the theoretical grasp of psychiatry, so it may be the time for qualitative research philosophy to add its own distinctive understanding of concepts such as *truth* and *validity*. Some earlier attempts at this epistemic reset, while qualifying or nuancing such terms, nevertheless still appear loosely tied to positivist theoretical assumptions concerned with ideas of validity needing to demonstrate rigour that is expressed in terms of generalisability and transferability of findings in data (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). This approach to data sits awkwardly with a

reflexive analytical method that my chosen interpretivist research paradigm advocated by Braun and Clarke commends; a practical example is the discussion around concerns of thematic saturation and sample size in qualitative research practice (Braun and Clarke, 2019). It may be that a longer look back into antiquity, with a reconsideration of the thematically richer Greek and Latin roots of these contested research shibboleths, could help to reclaim their place within the wider academy rather than confining them to the School of Natural Sciences.

I chose RTA as 'best fit' for my data analysis. Constructivist Grounded Theory (cGT) (Charmaz, 2014) was also a possible choice as I wanted to tell a story of how soldiers deal with the complexities of making moral choices between the Scylla of ethical education and the Charybdis of the realities of battle. I settled on RTA because of its intensely reflexive approach that fitted my professional provenance and identity more comfortably. RTA is sufficiently flexible theoretically to accommodate multiple methodological insights while retaining its focus on "construction, interpretation and reporting of themes" (Terry, cited in Braun and Clarke (2022: 255)). RTA offered a "closeness to the data" that a cGT approach, for example, might overlook while looking for pre-existing structural shapes and themes in a story.

The soldier's identity and behaviour (framed in terms of habitus and capitals) may be situated within multiple spaces of the Bordieusian field of practice that I offer as a strategic philosophical framework for observing the actors in situ (Bourdieu, 1996b). An example of this creative tension is the dynamic interplay of the need for loyalty to comrades, one of the Army's Core Values (MoD, 2015) and the need to abide by IHL, a central component of military ethical education; it underlies the critical incident that frames the RQ. Bourdieu's strategic approach to human interactive affairs meshes comfortably with the Aristotelian tradition, re-purposing terms like *doxa* and *habitus* that have their epistemic roots in antiquity, connecting with earlier learning yet saying something differently to the modern era. This approach chimes with MacIntyre's (2013) neo-Aristotelian ethical theory that underpins much of my own positionality. Bourdieu can offer fresh insight into the process of how military character formation and moral conscience are ordered towards the cultivation of *arete* / excellence / virtue in a way that earlier moral thinkers like Aquinas left

underdeveloped. Bourdieu's social field thinking can also parse the complex interrelationship of education and instruction in military ethics training where instruction lays the foundations for transformative education until internal assimilation along Aristotelian lines develops as conscience and character are "formed" over time. An interpretivist approach to data allows rich layers of meaning to develop and *glow* (MacLure, 2010; 2013) in the mind of the researcher as the data analysis unfolds. It does not originate with an idea seeking confirmation such as might be proposed in an hypothesis. Neither does it claim wider generalizability, for the reasons that I discuss in the sampling strategy section, below. Hence, my RQ enters an exploration of its topic by using personalist insights rather than seeking causal connections governed by rationalism that a quantitative or mixed-methods approach might use (Boyatzis, 1998).

The question of *best fit* in research design is not merely a practical consideration. Internal coherence demands an alignment of a wider worldview and the means taken to apprehend its workings. The Research Aim and Objectives that scaffold the RQ aimed to ground this concern, offering accommodation of my epistemic position: a dialectical approach that offers a potential way to slacken paradigmatic ties arising solely from both rationalist and interpretivist world views. In the Aristotelian Tradition it seems entirely possible that observant Aristotle who started his work as an inquisitive biologist would, in theory at least, have been open to some Enlightenment tools of inquiry, using insights of the Natural Sciences to comment on the world around him though, importantly, not to the exclusion or detriment of sources of learning found in other academic disciplines. Leaping forward to contemporary thinking on best fit, Charmaz chimes that "in research practice, theorizing means being eclectic, drawing on what works, defining what fits" (Charmaz, 2014; Wuest, 2000).

Socrates (c.469-399BC) advocated a dialectic style of education in what is often termed the Socratic method of learning by "ping-pong" question and answer sessions to distil and clarify an issue in the minds of his students (Plato, 1903). Socrates used the device of a resulting *aporia* or cognitive impasse in his students' minds as a fertile seedbed for the growth of fresh ideas and connections in their minds; *aporia* was therefore not something to be avoided or glossed over but seen as a developmental technique. It is an approach that

I use in my military ethics lessons with soldiers, especially when "bouncing off" students external referents such as IHL, challenging them to apply these considerations to their developing thinking on what might constitute "the right thing" to do in an ethically conflicted situation. I found the Socratic method a helpful format for an ethical debrief in the field after a challenging incident such as described in my account of the Warrior tank incident in Chapter Two. A Socratic approach worked as well with the junior ranks in the FOBs as with more senior officers in headquarter contexts. One of the most common questions arising from asymmetrical warfare that we experienced in Afghanistan, referenced in Soldier 06's F2F interview, was "why should we play by the rules of International Law when the enemy doesn't?" Inevitably, there followed an *aporia* as the soldiers reflected on their ethical education in Just War theory with the raw emotions present when a comrade had been injured or killed by a suicide bomber or an IED. The Socratic method was able to help soldiers make the connection between a higher standard of behaviour required by, for example, the Hague and Geneva Conventions and the personal cost of military service that I named as Theme #3 in the data analysis and discussion sections: a "moral mortgage". This connection is an example of how a golden thread in the data generated by the research aim ("*to explore the interrelationship between Military Ethics Education and the Moral Conscience in British army veterans to deepen understanding of the emerging concept of Moral Injury*)" resonated and coalesced into a mature theme around a central organising concept (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Hence, by following the sound, educated moral conscience, a price-to pay or a debt owed could be incurred in combat. The thread, taken forward, then caught-up loose ends of other threads – such as the need for deeper ethical education to offer peace of mind (re-paying the "mortgage") when lethal force is exercised as a lesser of two evils, that Soldier 06 identified as a gap in current approaches to military ethics education. This insight forms one of the recommendations of the study.

Flexible in application, Socratic educational utility was confirmed in some of the data offered by my participants in the study. It is important to acknowledge a key educational difference between the thinking of Socrates and his student Aristotle in relation to ethics: for Socrates, educational development was enough to change ethical behaviours, an assumption made by some modern utilitarian approaches to ethics (Singer, 2011). Hence, it

could be said that the Socratic approach to ethics education willed the end (*telos*), but not the means. Aristotle's account of ethics found his old teacher's optimism about human nature unsatisfactory as it equated knowledge with virtue; he offered his virtue habituation method to bridge an epistemological gap between theory and practice (Koterski, 2001). This ancient development is significant for modern military ethics education since it philosophically grounds current UK practice of a blended approach to a soldier's character formation along virtue lines that roots virtue habituation theory into its exercise by using elements of safety-ordered behaviourism. I explore this dynamic relationship further in the Discussion Chapter.

3.1.2 Insider research identity

My professional identity as a military chaplain gave me a certain cultural capital that distinguishes me from other researchers. It brings its own reflexive insights and perspectives to the data generated in the study that reach into a debate about researcher identity. While positioning myself as an insider researcher, looking for privileged access to, understanding of and rapport with my participants, it is helpful to acknowledge the contested nature of the continuing debate concerning the wider context of research identity and how it impacts on my approach to data generation and analysis.

Research identity has historically been framed in a binary choice between insiders and outsiders in relation to membership of a group or context. Merton (1972) calls this the *insider / outsider doctrine*. For the outsider position, only a neutral observer is able to arrive at an objective account of human interaction that requires distance and detachment between researcher and researched (Simmel, 1950). According to this earlier view, an insider researcher could easily be over-influenced by the traditions of their own group – military ethos is a good example of this – and in a parochial way, "mistake error for truth" (Merton, 1972: 15). For the insider position, an outsider researcher is unable to call on their direct, intuitive sensitivity that engenders understanding (Merton, 1972). An appreciation of the role of semiotics that I consider in the Discussion Chapter gives an example of this. Merton proceeds by suggesting that the binary position he identifies above is essentially

fallacious, offering instead the idea that research identity exists on a spectrum or continuum that has an unstable, permeable or osmotic quality that depends on topic, time, place, and participants. Gair (2012) considers research identity to be determined by the degree to which a researcher is located inside and outside the group being researched. Thompson and Gunter (2011) suggest that a researcher could belong to a group in one facet but not in others and that a researcher's personal characteristics could position them outside the group in certain respects: my own identity as an Army Chaplain, for example, positioned me on a continuum that gave me insider status by virtue of wearing the King's uniform but outsider status by virtue of my non-combatant role (Beoku-Betts, 1994; Labaree, 2002).

Although common to all researchers, there are particular ethical considerations for those identifying as insiders. Issues of role conflict, familiarity, consent, confidentiality and informant bias are especially relevant for my study's design (Mercer, 2007; Toy-Cronin, 2018). The researcher role has its own covenantal deontology – for example, to avoid causing harm to participants, to respect autonomy and to report findings accurately. In return, the researcher is permitted to ask questions and raise issues that might otherwise violate their insider identity as part of a group. Nevertheless, there could arise a situation where role obligations might clash, such as a clash of research principles and professional ethical codes leading to a conflict of interest. This was a situation envisaged by the University REC, and possibly MoDREC, when considering ethical approval for my study and for which I was required to show what mitigating measures I put in place in the event of a clash such as the disclosure of an illegal act. The participant information sheet at Appendix 10 demonstrates how I did this by making it clear that I was undertaking this research as an academic research and not as a therapist / priest. I also made it clear that, in the event of a disclosure of a war crime, the interview would need to be stopped and the information referred to a third party such as the Royal Military Police.

Familiarity was also a potential issue for my approach to the data collection process. As an insider, Griffiths (1985) notes that a researcher is better placed, at least initially, to understand subtle contextual resonances between situations and events – and that the implications of following particular lines of inquiry are more easily grasped. In this way, privileged data can be better exploited. Mercer (2007), who is undecided about whether an

insider position is better for generating thicker, richer data (what I understand as *Glowing Data*) than an outsider position, nevertheless suggests that credibility and rapport with participants could engender greater openness and candour with an insider researcher, though there is also the possibility that a participant may tell the researcher what they think they want to hear. In the Discussion Chapter, I quoted Soldier 03 as an example of candour who used the phrase "give some encouragement" that I immediately recognised as military slang for using physical force. Potential limitations of an insider position, and one that I was aware of when designing my interview schedule (Appendix 4) included concerns that obvious and sensitive topics and questions might not be raised and commonly held assumptions (for example that the combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan failed to meet *ius ad bellum* criteria) might be left unchallenged. Likewise, there could be the danger that shared prior experiences would not be explained, as to an outsider researcher. For the reflexive researcher, there could also be the assumption that my own perspective is more widespread than it actually is. Issues connected with Familiarity reached into the area of the quality of consent, where participants may still see the insider researcher in their professional role, possibly, as McDermid et al. (2014) note, being viewed as in some way exploiting their position in the power-hierarchy. For me, this was a live concern since I juggled the identities of an army officer holding and wearing military rank, a chaplain who stood outside the CoC, and a researcher. My mitigation of this conundrum was to speak to each volunteer by telephone to break the ice, to explain the study and to build a friendly sense of rapport that made it clear that I was conducting the research as an academic researcher. This approach not only signalled my separation and distance from my professional roles but it also gave a face-saving opportunity for the volunteer to change his mind about joining the study. None did!

Similar to the issue of Familiarity is that of Informant Bias, where expected or assumed loyalties influence the way in which a researcher is perceived by the participant in an interview (Powney and Watts, 1987). There is some debate as to whether an insider or an outsider position is more vulnerable to Informant Bias, much of it exploring the extent to which an interview should be a conversation rather than merely answering questions. This debate is linked to questions about the research paradigm and methodology that the researcher uses. It functions on a continuum, Holstein and Gubrium (2003: 13), for example,

recommending that interviewers should aim for "neutrality" by keeping themselves out of the interview process, an approach that is aligned to a more positivist view that seeks to avoid charges of data contamination. Griffin (1985) and Ellis and Berger (2003: 471) argue for a reciprocal, conversational approach to interviews aligning more closely with my own reflexive stance that seeks "a sea swell of meaning-making in which researchers connect their own experiences to those of others and provide stories that open up conversations about how we live and cope". As with issues of Familiarity, above, Ball (1994: 181) identifies the possibility that a conversational interview style could manipulate participants into "letting slip" things that they never intended to say. This consideration influences the choice of interview style. For my own reflexive approach, although a conversational type of interview aligned with the RTA method, I was careful to avoid follow ups or probes that were not couched in open question format to avoid the opportunity of "putting words into my interviewees' mouths" that would weaken the trustworthiness and authenticity of my research.

The issue of confidentiality was a key consideration for the ethics of my study. I was concerned to protect my participants' identity, acutely aware that other members of the group that I was researching (UK army veterans) could recognise each other not only by their name but also by the details contained in the data, such as the location of their regiments or other military personnel. Tolich (2004) identifies confidentiality issues in both internal and external circumstances when conducting in-person interviews. Externally, inviting interviewees into a public site (such as a military base) where they could be recognised by others could compromise confidentiality. For my interviews, this was not a consideration since they were conducted via MS Teams from the interviewees' own private space. It was more difficult to protect internal confidentiality. I followed the usual University REC data storage requirements by anonymising names and immediately uploading raw data (in audio-visual format) to the University's secure server and not storing any data locally. Due to the deeply contextual nature of the soldiers' stories, the challenge for me in presenting the data was to think laterally about whether there was any possibility of identifying the interviewees from incidental details such as job role or rank related responsibilities. If there was any possibility of confidentiality compromise, I did not quote the data verbatim but rather spoke in generalities since, as Tolich (2004: 1) observes "the

ability of participants within any group to identify or mis-identify each other – as the source of a certain quote – has potential to harm both participants and researcher". I was critically aware of this last point as a result of the early-experience I described in the methodology section when a comment on social media in connection with my appeal for volunteers suggested that the study may have been a MoD trawl for war criminals to be prosecuted.

The debate over insider / outsider research identity continues in the academic literature. Each position has its advantages and disadvantages, though these will have slightly different weighting depending on the context and purpose of the research. Hockey (1993: 206) reflects that what the insider researcher gains in terms of "their extensive and intimate knowledge of the culture and taken-for-granted understandings of the actors" may be lost in terms of "their myopia and their inability to make the familiar strange". A non-binary understanding of insider / outsider researcher identity that Merton (1972) advocates may aid the qualitative researcher in disentangling the ethical complexity of their research projects.

The professional identity of the British Army Padre chimes with Bourdieu's observation that within a Field of Cultural Practice, some identities and modes of operation acquire the status of *consecration* - things to be valorised and nourished on account of their significance and utility for the whole Field. As explored in the Discussion Chapter, my professional identity gave privileged access and insights into how soldiers assimilated and applied their ethical education free of the usual anxieties of disclosure within a power-based professional relationship of patient and therapist. Soldier 09 referred to this dynamic in his F2F interview. It is a reason to develop an idea for further critical investigation that I raised in the Literature Review: that the investigative and therapeutic tools proper to psychology may be approaching the limits of their insights into the phenomenon of Moral Injury and that other disciplines may be better placed to develop the concept along holistic lines. I return to my earlier reflection in Chapter Two that, arising from its close ties to a rationalist starting point, there are areas of the human person in its totality (body, mind, and spirit) that psychology is unable to access. Ethics and their moral workings in the human mind operate in an internal forum that, as McIntyre observes, are impervious in any meaningful way to the implements of psychology (MacIntyre, 2013).

3.2　Research design

I chose an inductive view of the data, positioned within a reflexive interpretivist landscape. My Research Objectives were crafted to provide an actionable, investigative framework to encourage rumination on the conversations shared. Interviews allowed the participants to tell their story to someone who shared many of their experiences and was empathetic to their concerns. A strong insider researcher identity gave me privileged access and insight into a tight, closed world of high-stakes ethical dilemmas, knowing instinctively what questions and follow-up probes to ask to elicit richer, better-quality data than an outsider-researcher such as a psychologist might be able to achieve as easily. As an example, I recall discussing with the interviewed soldiers the lessons in enemy prisoner handling (such as in the *Marine A* case) that I taught in their ethics education, bringing elements of the lesson to bear on how they reflected that they had acted in a real-life scenario. This was a vivid, personal way to observe the sometimes-unbearable collision of ethical principles and moral agency in real time action (Sheen, 2019). A unique approach allowed me to enter their world in an easy and non-threatening way, further contributing to deeper reflection and forthright story telling. Semiotically, that I made the decision to wear military uniform during the interviews clearly identifying me as an Army Padre added to the sense of non-threatening connection between us, at once dispelling any concerns of trust or confidentiality, as Soldier 09 mentioned in his interview. This intellectual exercise built on the lived, practical experiences that I shared with the soldiers during our deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, when I lived and worked alongside them in the same austere and dangerous environments of war. I personally was shot at and mortared alongside them. I myself held the hands of the wounded and dying during and after a fire fight. Because it was our world, the protected and even *consecrated* space (Cattani et al., 2014) of the interview generated a deeper degree of trust and honesty in their conversations with me - an issue that became significant for the process of recruitment and care of the volunteers that I describe in the ethical considerations section below. In this field of practice, my own cultural capital was unmasked.

3.2.1 Sampling Strategy

One of my research objectives was to *identify veterans who have experienced a PMIE.* This objective acknowledges the emerging nature of the MI construct in that an accepted definition of MI is not yet available in the literature but the working assumption is that a PMIE may be the tinder for a MI (Bonson et al., 2023). To reach out to veterans who had experienced a PMIE, I crafted the study advert (Appendix 8) that used themes of moral dissonance to spark interest and generate an inquiry about the study. The phrase "something on Ops that made you feel uneasy" was a way of referring to the role of the moral conscience in connection with MI that the study would explore.

All of the areas of moral unease mentioned in the advert map to elements in the two provisional definitions of MI that I discussed in the Literature Review (Litz et al., 2009; Jamieson et al., 2020). In this way, I hoped best to recruit veterans who could have a MI.

The population I wanted to sample was also referred to in the advert in terms of entry criteria for the study. Entry criteria were tightly defined as I wanted to explore my RQ in depth, a reason for my reflexive approach to a qualitative research project. I therefore sought:

- British Army Veterans

The study was confined to veterans due to policy restrictions by the MoD that denied permission to recruit serving military personnel, as I described in Section 3.1.2. It was important to confine the appeal for volunteers to UK veterans since they would all have received the same ethical education and formation in basic training and regular CPD prior to deploying on operational duty. While not suggesting like-with-like comparisons of the interviewees as in a positivist paradigm, I understood that a common UK approach to military ethical education, described in the Literature Review, offered a thematic framework in which moral judgements could be made and observed. This understanding resonates with the ongoing and contested issue of generalizability in qualitative research that I discuss below.

- Operational experience

I wanted to recruit veterans who had completed at least one operational tour of either Iraq or Afghanistan during the period of 2003 – 2014 (the war fighting phases of these campaigns). I also wanted the volunteers to have Infantry experience in a specific rank-range profile of Sergeant, Corporal, Lance-Corporal and Private Soldier. This was my strategy for an in-depth study of moral actors who were personally positioned in morally equivocal circumstances that required a judgement of practical reason, arbitrated by their moral conscience. The lower ranks specified would have on the ground fighting experience in ways that more senior ranks would not. They were also the ranks with whom as the Padre I would have the most in-person contact and where I could observe and discuss their moral choices most freely.

The advert for volunteers was circulated by a variety of non-probability convenience means (Miles and Huberman, 1997). Veterans' organisations such as Combat Stress, Forces-in-Mind and the Royal British Legion promoted the advert on their websites and also on their social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. I sent the advert to every British Army Infantry Association for publication among veterans. The advert was also publicised by chaplain colleagues in their infantry units.

The advert generated 10 volunteers who contacted me directly, all of whom met the study's entry criteria (Figure 8). In preparation for the study, I tailored the University's templated Consent Form (Appendix 7) and created a companion Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 10) for volunteers to learn more about the study. I emailed these documents to each volunteer. I was concerned about the necessarily formal sounding language used and tried to keep any technical terms to a minimum since the average reading age of my target sample profile (Army Infantry) is approximately 11 years old (Sellgren, 2013). In mitigation, I personally spoke to every potential participant by telephone and explained in depth both the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form before inviting them to join the study. This was a good way of assessing the quality of the PMIE reported – in other words, that it contained elements of the MI definitions that I was using for the study and not something different such as PTSD. It also allowed me to assess the quality of the consent

given. It was an excellent introduction to the volunteer that broke the ice, allowed for any questions about the study and facilitated a good rapport in preparation for the interview. I asked each volunteer to wait 48 hours before signing and returning via email the consent form to me. This was to allow for reflection after our telephone conversation to be sure that the volunteer was content to join the study; it provided a face-saving way to decline a place on the study in recognition of any issues of power imbalance identified in the insider researcher section 3.1.2, above.

The question of the *generalizability* of findings / results of a qualitative study is frequently raised. To what extent, it may be asked, are my 10 participants typical or representative of any group other than themselves? To give a satisfactory response, I need to unpack and explore some of the philosophical assumptions that are contained in the term *generalizability* and to comment on their relationship to my study.

Broadly, the term *generalizability* in a research context refers to items or qualities that have been identified in a particular sample that have application or relevance to a wider context or population. Generalizability is often spoken of in the same breath as *transferability*, a term arising from qualitative research that is richly contextual or positioned in such a way that allows the reader of the research to take a view on whether, and to what extent, they can confidently transfer the researcher's analysis into their own context or understanding. Ideas associated with generalizability are often scaffolded by (post) positive theoretical assumptions or paradigms. Braun and Clarke (2022) make the point that data collected from people in interactive ways, for example in an interview, is by definition subjective and situational. Interview questions, particularly in a conversational approach, are seldom asked identically and neither are answers given in this way. Hence, it follows that each data item is not directly comparable to another in a way that data generated using scientific-positivist methods can be. For the reflexive researcher like me, then, the method chosen for my study "embraces partiality [subjectivity] and refuses to nail down a final, absolute analysis" (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 142). Other less reflexive approaches are possible within the TA family (Boyatzis, 2010), often where a mixed-methods paradigm is used, that "seem to be deeply embedded in an ideology of statistical or empirical generalizability", betraying a certain epistemological diffidence (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 143; cf. Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014). This

reticence to loosen ties with post-positivist approaches to qualitative research is commonly seen in the 'limitations section' of a piece of qualitative research where a lack of generalizability is mentioned as a limiting factor or weakness of the research (for example, due to a small sample size, cf. Ford et al., 2016). Varpiro et al. (2021) make the point that even using the term 'sample size' is a nod in the direction of positivism that privileges statistically generalizable research approaches, conveying the subliminal assumption that what our data sample is looking at is a sub-set of a larger whole seeking applicability to a larger population. To put it differently, the concept of generalizability is often used to "define quantitative research in positive ways" (Smith, 2018: 137).

The above discussion draws us back to a consideration of the ontological and epistemological assumptions that ground qualitative research that I discussed in the positionality section of the thesis in Chapter One. Qualitative research is about studying people's lives in rich and deeply contextualised ways that is most fruitfully done in small groups of people who are selected through purposive or purposeful sampling strategies. This is a unique strength of qualitative research that aims to reveal and understand the depth and nature of the phenomenon being studied (Lewis et al., 2014) – this is why I considered my group of 10 interview participants, recruited in a purposive way, to be an appropriate sample size for the study.

Some theorists have adopted a "let it go" approach, arguing that statistical generalizability is not relevant to qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 143). Others have sought different criteria to comment on research inferences wider than one particular data set or group of participants and have looked for wider understandings of a phenomenon with the desire to connect their data to something broader, looking to existing theory and conceptualisations that are expressions of generalizability in a different way. This approach is similar to the medieval Scholastic method of dialectical inference that I noted in the discussion section. Freed from positivist assumptions that shape attitudes to generalizability found in quantitative research practice, is there a different and more authentically qualitative understanding of how qualitative research findings can be generalizable but just not in the same way as quantitative results are (Braun and Clarke, 2013)?

How is it possible to chart a way forward that engages with the concept of generalizability in qualitative research and yet is not swallowed by its widely accepted epistemological and ontological moorings in post-positivism? Qualitative researchers have dealt with the issue of generalizability in a number of ways. Carminati (2018) offers a critical review of approaches, aiming to chart a way forward that, while acknowledging the contested and controversial nature of the discourse, asks whether it is possible to retain the term while also retaining philosophical authenticity within a qualitative research paradigm when it is asserted that different ways of understanding generalizability are not necessarily tied to probability sampling theory (Collingridge and Grant, 2008)?

Complementary approaches to a qualitative use of the term *generalizability* offer a wider vision of the generalization process that shifts the meaning-making focus of the research towards the reader in terms of a partnership or joint enterprise between researcher and reader (Stake, 1978, 1995; Tracy, 2010; Lewis et al., 2014; Chenail, 2010; Simons, 2014; Sandelowski, 2014; Fine et al., 2008). The way in which each approach can speak to the reader is an example of Newman's Illative Sense (Strange, 2009) that I discussed in the methodology section – where the innate and intuitive faculty of the human mind is used to convince or persuade a person of the authenticity or veracity of a proposition to connect with broader and widespread meta-themes such as justice expressed in Natural Law thinking. This approach offers another way of speaking about or understanding *generalizability* and resonates with Flyvbjerg's (2001: 110) "empowering" of Aristotle's approach of harnessing *phronesis* or practical wisdom to guide or enable the process of authenticity.

There are practical as well as philosophical reasons for qualitative researchers to engage with ideas of generalizability, not least since it is the *lingua franca* of dominant attitudes to mainstream research projects – policed by sources of funding and publishing. Greenhalgh et al. (2016) note that many journal reviewers and editors appear to believe that lack of generalizability is a limitation to qualitative research, used to degrade or reject the findings of its research projects. Green and Thoroughgood (2009) consider lack of engagement of qualitative researchers with issues of generalizability to have potentially harmful policy

implications arising from a certain unwillingness to take qualitative research seriously, repeating the common accusation that qualitative findings are not generalizable

Returning to the question with which I began this discussion on generalizability - *to what extent are my 10 participants typical or representative of any group other than themselves* – I argue that my intention was to pursue an in-depth study with a small sample to illuminate some of the underlying issues in the emerging field of Moral Injury. Future directions in exploring the identity of generalizability themes in qualitative research offer the possibility of rich inter-disciplinary insights for emerging areas such as MI.

The table at Figure 8, below, details my study participants.

NAME ID	RANK	CAP BADGE	AGE AT DEPLOYMENT	TOTAL YEARS SERVICE	OP TOURS	SELF - INTERVIEW RETURNED	NATURE OF PMIE
01LCP Bravo	LCpl	INFANTRY	24yrs	22yrs	Telic	Yes	Witnessed abuse of civilians
02LCP Charlie	LCpl	ROYAL ARMOURED CORPS	21yrs	12yrs	Telic / Herrick	Yes	Witnessed potential war crime
03CPL Charlie2	Cpl	INFANTRY	23yrs	15yrs	Telic / Herrick	Yes	Inability to assist wounded child
04PTE Delta	Pte	INFANTRY	20yrs	8yrs	Herrick	Yes	Witnessed abuse of civilians
05CPL Foxtrot	Cpl	INFANTRY	21yrs	22yrs	Telic / Herrick	Yes	Witnessed potentially illegal order
06PTE Oscar	Pte	ROYAL ARMOURED CORPS	19yrs	7yrs	Herrick	Yes	Witnessed potential war crime
07PTE Sierra	Pte	INFANTRY	18yrs	14yrs	Herrick	No	Bullying by senior
08LCP Sierra2	LCpl	INFANTRY	21yrs	12yrs	Herrick	No	Witnessed abuse of civilians

09SGT Whisky	Sgt	INFANTRY	32yrs	21yrs	Telic / Herrick	Yes	Witnessed potentially illegal order
10PTE Zulu	Pte	INFANTRY	22yrs	23yrs	Telic / Herrick	No	Witnessed potential war crime

Figure 8 Table of study participants

The manageable cohort of volunteers enabled me to devote sufficient time to the preparatory phases of the interviews to be thorough. I felt confident that the university REC's concerns regarding the potential generation of toxic data (such as distressing flashbacks or disclosure of a war crime) could be securely addressed in my conversation with the volunteers prior to receiving their consent in the most informed manner possible.

3.3 Glowing Data

The experimental combination of a Semi Structured Interview and a Self-Interview (a *Synergistic Interview* as I term it) was an attempt to generate a deeper quality of rich data by reflection. Maggie MacLure calls it *glowing* data carrying the sense that all data are situated and contextualised, needing unpacking to appreciate their complexity of meaning (MacLure, 2006; 2010; 2011; 2013). For the researcher working within an interpretivist paradigm, "connections [in the data] start to fire up: the conversation gets faster and more animated as we begin to recall other incidents and details" (MacLure, 2010: 252). This insight sits well with my reflexive, interactive approach to data where "data glows; we glow back" (Marn and Wolgemuth, 2021: 2097), seeking wider theoretical resonances and analytic possibilities. In an earlier paper, MacLure observes that in art from the Baroque and Rococo periods, paintings often have a very simple theme at first glance (eg. a bowl of fruit) but look more closely and there is more happening in the background that is interesting and significant. In this realistic *Trompe-l'œil* technique of painting there is a riot of busyness

betraying the artist's eye for detail (Figure 9). In a similar way, Renaissance altarpieces are often carved using a related technique (Appendix 9). Here, the artist's intention, by focussing the eye of faith, is that such artefacts are not intended to be comprehended fully upon one viewing. These intensely dynamic artefacts bear the repeated reflection that happens naturally during the silence of the Catholic Mass when attention is focussed on the altarpiece, connecting spiritually with the sacred action taking place on the altar below it. Sacred acts are dynamically apprehended and born afresh in the minds of the faithful through the medium of the altarpiece that then return to connect with the action taking place on the altar. There are agreeable resonances in Argyris's Double Loop learning theory with this activity that I noted earlier in the Literature Review; repeated encounters with a dynamic learning space and context generate construction of meaning that is ordered to the spiritually transformative potential of mystery and ritual (Argyris and Schön, 1996). In a similar way the other four senses are also commandeered at the service of deepening participation of the body and the human mind in the commingled mystical and sacred: the ancient, hieratic smell of frankincense; the sound of chant or polyphony sung by the choir; the taste of the Host in Holy Communion and the sprinkling of Holy Water during the *Asperges* ceremony before High Mass. Taken together, here is made possible a deeply human connection into the human person that offers a different, glowing complementary optic for apprehending qualitative data.

Figure 9 Oculus on the ceiling of the Spouses Chamber, castle of San Giorgio in Mantua, Italy, by Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506).

Bourdieu's social field thinking offers a rooted and situated forum that can hold iconic themes and insights, connecting the present with the past and the future. There is a comfortable resonance with the ancient Greek idea of *anamnesis* (summoning the past into the present while looking ahead to the future) that is poorly rendered by its English translation – *remembrance* - that has the sense of only a past-event. Semiotics lend themselves well to education of the soldier in this concept (Illeris, 2017). Military insignia (eg. flags, medals) convey ancient resonances well, hence their power to inspire. Semiotics also disrupt the limits of a rationalist understanding of the human person. Bourdieu invokes this idea in his striking phrase about human narrative making it possible to "clink glasses with the dead" that I explored in the Literature Review (Bourdieu, 1996a: xvi).

A richly situated understanding of data aligns with the RTA method advocated by Braun and Clarke (2022) that recommends repeated, recursive and leisurely encounter with the data to allow it to mature and coalesce in the mind of the reflexive researcher as codes and themes are generated. I describe how I used this approach to my data and how it fitted into Bourdieu's Cultural Field thinking in the data analysis and Discussion Chapter.

3.3.1 Interview design

The interview design process flowed naturally from considerations of how to investigate a phenomenon that was still emerging conceptually. At its most basic, how could I know that I was dealing with MI in my participants data since there was no agreed definition of MI available in the literature? My approach was to deconstruct thematically the Jamieson (2020) working definition of MI that I considered to be the most conceptually developed available, that I use as my guiding definition throughout the thesis, using it as the scaffold for the interview questions. This was the same approach I used for crafting the study's advert for volunteers (Appendix 8) where I used general terms such as feeling uneasy about personal actions or the actions of others (acts of commission, omission and betrayal) that resonated with Jamieson's definition of MI:

"Moral Trauma - the existential, psychological, emotional and or spiritual trauma arising from a conflict, violation or betrayal, either by omission or commission, of or within one's moral beliefs or code(s)" (Jamieson et al., 2020: 1060).

The role of the moral conscience that was a particular interest for the study found resonance in the Advert's phrase "the way in which moral judgements are made"; this inevitably explored the process of how the conscience is educated (Appendix 8). The main interview questions were crafted on the same basis with the possible follow-ups and probes allowing further detail (or glow) to emerge as the conversation proceeded. There were seven main questions for both the F2F and SIs (Appendices 4 & 5):

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1. What do you remember about the Values and Standards (V&S) education you received in Basic Training and also in your ongoing professional training in Battalion.

2. During your military service, did you ever experience an event that made you question who you are, your sense of the world, or your sense of right and wrong? If so, please tell me about it.

3. Please tell me how this experience affected you?

4. How do you think the military Chain of Command viewed this incident?

5. How has your life has changed as a result of this experience.

6. Would you say this event has affected the way you make sense of life and its meaning?

7. Do you think your military experience has affected your view of the Law?

The questions were crafted in an open style that used a conversational approach to probe not only the possibility of the participant manifesting signs of MI but also to explore the educational focus of the study: the ethics education / conscience formation / MI dynamic contained in the research aim. The use of the SI combining with the F2F interview in the Synergistic approach sought to elicit the richer, glowing data that is the hallmark of

qualitative research that I explore in the methodology section. The interview questions were designed to mesh with my research aim *"to explore the interrelationship between Military Ethics Education and the Moral Conscience in British army veterans to deepen understanding of the emerging concept of Moral Injury"* and the research objectives:

- *to identify veterans who have experienced an ethically conflicted situation known as a PMIE*
- *to observe how military ethics education is experienced and practiced by UK combat soldiers*
- *to explore the functioning of the moral conscience in an ethically challenging situation such as war.*

As an example of the 'golden thread' linking research aim, research objectives and the method used to elicit the data to explore the issue, consider question #7, above. I asked this of Soldier 04 in his SI. The answer was mature and reflective:

> "We can't meet justice - and that's hard…I've seen times where we just can't administer justice through the law. So not only has this affected me when I see there are unjust laws, and although I think that everyone should obey the law, I don't think we should have to submit to every law, especially when it is unjust and wrong-footed" Soldier 04 SI.

The third objective was to explore the functioning of the moral conscience in ethically conflicted contexts – the interview data suggested a clear distinction in the mind of the soldier between an unjust law and a just law. His educated conscience told him that justice trumps law and individual moral agency inclines towards the pull of conscience rather than the letter of the law. This reflection, it seems, arises from a mature experience of military ethical education (grounded in Aristotle's Ethics, ordered to the pursuit of justice) and the ability to apply his ethical formation to real-life experiences in combat situations and beyond (assisted by Newman's Illative Sense thinking) in a reflective, morally agential way. It is an example of how I hoped that the interview questions would "cross-pollinate" each other and refer back to the research aim, flowing into the elements of the Research Question.

3.3.2 Face-to-face interviews

An interview can accommodate shifting allegiances of power, righteousness, guilt and shame (Frosh, 2007), a stimulating insight to the developing conceptual framework of Moral Injury. Institutional narratives, for example, may *glow* through their associated artefacts such as insignia of military rank (Holstein and Gubrium, 2012). It is sometimes in the *aporia* (Socratic *impasses* or developmental *pauses* in the flow of dialogue) that the richest data may be found and explored (Laforest, 2009). I considered: how I should deal with silence or a lack of coherence in the story offered? Not every narrator presents a coherent story in a sequential way. This is seen in the Gospel stories where the life of Jesus is presented by the evangelists in a fragmented and often non-sequential way. That the Gospel of St Mark begins with the appearance of the adult Jesus and has no account of his early life (there is no nativity or post-resurrection narrative, for example) is not considered problematic by scriptural scholars since these "gaps" are addressed by other New Testament writers. The complementary, augmenting function of the other evangelists and the Acts of the Apostles serves to shed light on the totality of the picture that emerges from the sacred data in a way that chimes with MacLure's advocacy of the idea of *glowing* data. The hermeneutical insights of theology and MacLure's approach to qualitative data offer a helpful contribution to the toolbox of the qualitative researcher; it is an interesting example of the Professional Doctorate approach to the theoretical and practical intersection of what shapes our understanding of knowledge.

Stories seem to have a natural order - but they may sometimes be expressed in awkward and disjointed ways that present a challenge to the researcher trying to make meaning of the various elements of the narrative. When the French film director J-L Godard was asked about whether every story has a beginning, middle and end, harking back to Aristotle's ancient pattern for a story found in his *Poetics* (Aristotle, 2020), Godard replied "yes, but not necessarily in that order" (Copeland, 1969). A "gap" or silence in the conversation may be an example of a developmental *aporia* that feeds my *Synergistic Interview* method, or it could be indicative of deep hurt or an expression of fragmentation in a participant's life.

Either way, *aporia* can shape the data, coalescing into a 'Golden Thread' that touches and shapes the rest of the story. Making a judgement on whether to press on with the interview - or whether the silence may be a warning not to get too close - called for my pastoral experience in assessing the atmospherics of the interviews, underpinned by the assurance of a robust actions-on protocol for safety of both parties (Appendix 12). This crucial ethical consideration was made easier by use of MS Teams for recording the F2F interviews. Issues of non-verbal signs such as tearfulness or looking into the distance at certain points in the conversation (as I noted with Soldier 02) could be seen and heard in real-time, any mitigations started and their effects observed immediately.

For my purpose of collecting rich data comprising not only words but also non-verbal cues and signs, aligned with an interpretivist, reflexive paradigm for analysis, a F2F interview was the best method available to me (Braun and Clarke, 2022). It sat comfortably with the SI and led naturally into the experimental *Synergistic interview* that I describe below.

3.3.3   Self-interviews

The SI method of data collection, in which someone speaks freely into a voice recorder entirely alone with only written prompts, has a light footprint in the academic literature (Holder, 2023; Keightley et al., 2012). Experimental, it appears to have been used in reminiscence therapeutic research typically using a guided-autobiography technique, (de Vries and Thornton, 2018) and in researching everyday remembering (Keightley et al., 2012). It is tangentially referenced in feminist autoethnography (Crawley, 2012). An advantage of the SI for my study was that it was able to accommodate any embarrassing or toxic data generated. This consideration was important for the study design given the vulnerable nature of my participants. It was a concern for the University REC that required a clear and robust protocol for how I intended to conduct the interviews in the event of a participant becoming excessively distressed during the interviews or even disclosing a war crime (Appendix 11). It may be, however, that as a method of data collection the SI is not a strong enough standalone method for in-depth qualitative research interviews. Comparing the length of both interview formats, I noticed that the SIs were much briefer - some 25% of

the F2F length. Why? My suspicion is that even though the interviewee for SI has written questions in front of them, the conversational nature of the F2F interview with its follow up questions and probes, keeps momentum flowing and avoids the answers evaporating quickly. Soldier 06 identified this issue after he had submitted his SI recording. The natural rhythm and dialogic quality of a conversation between two people (as opposed to with oneself) gives rise to a certain re-framing of comments on reflection analogous to Schön's (2017) distinction between *in* and *on* reflection advocated for professional practitioners. Control of a SI is largely surrendered to the participant: the recording can be paused while thoughts are clarified; there are fewer time constraints and no pressure to give an immediate response to the question (Keightley et al., 2012). Epistemologically, I viewed the SI method as offering a synoptic and complementary version of generated data that added further depth and glow to the story being shared.

3.3.4 Synergistic Interview

The experimental *Synergistic Interview* method of data collection is my term for a F2F interview followed by a SI after a reflective gap of 5 - 7 days to facilitate rumination. I designed the synergistic method as type of constructivist learning where earlier understandings are built upon to enrich and deepen current insights into a situation, analogous to the various steps or stages in Bloom's Taxonomy that indicate the mind's reflexive sophistication (Anderson et al., 2001) at figure 14. It resonates with Habermas's thinking on communicative learning as, with the help of a prior conversation with the interviewer, the mind engages afresh with itself to reframe earlier thoughts. The earlier conversation with the interviewer is still reasonably fresh in the mind of the volunteer, intuitively giving rise to reflection to provide fuller, richer answers than a SI alone. Although in its methodological infancy, my study offered some evidence of the desired reflection developing in the *aporia* between the two types of interviews. A comparison of one participant's deeper reflective remarks after the F2F interview and during the SI is noted in the data analysis section and illustrated using colour coded MIRO electronic post-it notes at Figure 11. The interviewee's reflection coalesced into a prototype theme in my mind as I reflected further on the participant's thinking. This 'reflection in a mirror' is an example of

intuitive reflexivity in action, envisioned by Braun and Clarke's RTA method, finding resonances in Transformational Learning Theory (King and Kitchener, 1994). For the data analysis, limited by time and space considerations, I treated the data as a single item - not distinguishing between both types of interviews. I saw the SI's purpose in augmenting and fanning the embers of data generated by the F2F interview rather than creating separately identified codes and themes from each type of interview. As this method develops, future study designs could contrast and compare the data proper to each type of interview using a systematic, synoptic comparison of data generated by the two elements, perhaps undertaking a longitudinal approach to identify developments in thinking as the reflective process advanced. The *Synergistic Interview* can generate data that glows more brightly than a single format of interview; my synergistic approach makes an original methodological contribution to Qualitative Research by developing the range of data collection methods available to researchers. It sits comfortably within the range of reflexive approaches envisioned by Braun and Clarke's RTA method (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

3.4   Research Design: the implementation

Once University Research Ethics Committee (REC) approval had been granted in full (Appendix 6), I was able to concentrate on the practical aspects of preparing a Pilot Study to test the study's design. The pre COVID-19 study design set out what I thought would be the best way to access potentially morally injured veterans for interview via an in-person meeting on MoD premises. I reasoned that re-entry into the military environment for veteran volunteers would give some of the benefits of a Walking Interview in terms of sensory stimulus to generate good quality data during our conversation (Emmel and Clark, 2009). COVID-19 restrictions meant that I had to re-think the practicalities of this idea. The amended strategy was to use MS Teams as the vehicle for the F2F interviews, as earlier described, with the follow up SIs using the volunteer's own Smartphone rather than a university supplied encrypted voice recorder, following revised university REC guidance. I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the MS Teams format for the F2F interviews, with little loss of non-verbal cues and the bonus of a video recording of the interview. All the volunteers gave permission for the interviews to be recorded in this way.

The SI was designed as follows: I gave the volunteers an electronic list of the same six F2F interview questions, without the follow-up probes prepared for the F2F interview (Appendix 5). My rationale for this design was to allow the intervening period of 5 -7 days post-F2F interview to "brew" further rumination and reflections in their minds, hoping to exploit residual *aporia* from the earlier interview. I was anxious not to be directive about the direction of travel that their reflections should take, preferring to observe any connections arising in their own minds during the reflexive 'synapse' that I hoped would arise. This reflective approach resonated with Argyris's Double Loop learning thinking where a person re-examines and challenges their own assumptions and thought processes to arrive at fresh insights as a prelude to changing ways of behaving or operating (Argyris and Schön, 1996). I was mindful of Laforest's (2009) comment about the value of silence in the interviewing process where an *aporia* can function as a metaphorical 'womb' for reflection and should not be prematurely interrupted. A longer reflexive-gap could be further explored in a longitudinal study to develop its utility in qualitative research methods.

I used a Purposive Sampling method (Crabtree and Miller, 2023; Morse, 1990; Pope et al., 2002) to recruit a cohort of soldiers who were operationally experienced, of diverse military rank, to capture a wide range of front-line experiences (Figure 8). The advert for volunteers asked for combat infantry[6] veterans of the Iraq and / or Afghanistan Campaigns (2003 - 2014) who deployed in the rank of sergeant or below (Appendix 8). All volunteers would inevitably be male since females were not permitted in combat infantry roles until after the end of the Afghanistan Campaign in 2014. The Infantry of the British Army is well represented in terms of international and UK ethnic mix. I was content that my advert for volunteers would attract a representative proportion of veterans from diverse ethnic backgrounds since British soldiers are recruited from a diverse pool of cultural backgrounds, race and gender reflecting not only contemporary UK society, but also historical links of empire. 9.1% of UK soldiers are recruited from Commonwealth countries like Fiji or the

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[6] I included Royal Armoured Corps veterans in this category (eg. Light Cavalry) as they have similar opportunities for applying their ethical education to praxis as infanteers.

West Indies (Gov.UK, 2023). I interviewed one non-Caucasian volunteer, representing 10% of the sample (Soldier 07).

The age range of volunteers reflected accurately the average age of a deployable infantry battalion (Gov.UK, 2023). Together, these design factors aligned with my research objectives and added authenticity to the findings of the study (Bailey, 1996). The rationale for restricting the study's entry criteria to the more junior ranks was an attempt to recreate the constituency of a ground-fighting infantry Section comprising these ranks. These relatively junior ranks, my professional experience indicated, would have the most vivid and memorable opportunities for putting their ethical education into action (such as in the handling of enemy prisoners) by making conscience-guided moral choices. They were also the soldiers whom, I thought, would be most likely to have the ethical education received in basic training (and mandatory pre-deployment ethical revision presentations) most fresh in their minds. They would be the ranks that I encountered most in my role in the field as a military chaplain. I reasoned that this combination of factors would give me the best opportunity to observe the soldiers dealing with real life ethical situations and to discuss their moral choices after the event by way of Socratic dialectic. The incident involving the death of several soldiers when their tank was destroyed by an IED in Afghanistan, described in the Literature Review, gave me a chilling opportunity for an informal discussion of ethics as part of a military lessons-learned exercise after we had said "stand easy" to the dead. I was asked by the chain of command to spend some time with the affected troops to encourage moral reflection on the events that led up to the incident. I reflected that it was a spine-tingling, privileged opportunity to be part of a real-time collision of ethical principles and moral agency by educators and practitioners together to understand the decision-making process in the minds of combat soldiers. It was also, perhaps, the most vivid experience of Mezirow's epochal event that could spark transformational learning.

I was conflicted in choosing the above entry criteria for the study but practical considerations of recruiting a different, more diverse group of volunteers necessarily trumped my wider aspiration to include members of the Officer Corps who could tell a different story, from a commander's perspective. From pastoral conversations with officers, I believe that the experience of an artillery Forward Air Controller, for example, making

decisions on the deployment of a Hellfire Missile from the safety of a remote command post would give rise to different moral challenges than my ground-fighting infanteers (Chamayou and Lloyd, 2015; Enemark, 2023; Lee, 2019). The smell of exploding ordnance and charred human bodies is qualitatively different from viewing an exploding missile on a vast computer screen in a control room that resembles a video game on a PlayStation. Nevertheless, it can be just as devastating to an individual's conscience as a junior soldier who has been given an illegal order by a superior and who is too frightened of authority to stand his ground against wrongdoing. Moral Injury experienced by senior officers in such circumstances would make an interesting study - and one that could map to similar ethical dilemmas experienced by politicians who give the orders to the MoD to use lethal force strategically, a key area for development in the societal-turn of the Moral Injury construct identified in the Literature Review.

3.4.1 Unanticipated challenges

Volunteers for interview were invited via veterans' social media groups. Some were connected to established websites such as *Combat Stress* and *Forces in Mind,* others were accessed via academics working in this field. The latter route was interesting as it gave access via a snowballing strategy (Miles and Huberman, 1997) that reached veterans in closed or private social media groups like Twitter and Facebook that may not have accessed any of the veterans' organisations. A disturbing reaction to my advert for volunteers on one of the closed veterans' sites was a comment by a veteran, suggesting that my study was a trawl by the MoD for evidence for war crimes. My reflection on this incident was that perhaps some combat veterans had experienced MI because of how they were treated by the military CoC after a difficult incident and this had left a scar of suspicion and antagonism towards authority in their minds. It was an issue that several of my interviewees alluded to in the data generated. This incident appeared to slow the number of volunteers inquiring about the study and I wondered whether the comment had made potential volunteers nervous of coming forward due to fear of entrapment by the MoD police and potential accusations of war crimes, despite assurances of confidentiality that were key to the study's design, reiterated in both the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form.

Another incident during the recruitment of volunteers phase caused me to reflect further on paradigmatic tensions between a medical positivist approach to MI among psychologists, noted in the Literature Review, and other theoretical lenses. I was contacted by an unknown psychologist who objected to the fact that I was not psychologically trained yet I was conducting research into MI. She offered to "educate" me and informed me that she had tried to have my study stopped by a contact in the MoD. Taken aback by this unwelcome intervention, I discussed the matter with my supervisor and with an experienced researcher working in this field (also a psychologist by background). I was encouraged to have confidence in the university's REC approval of the study and not to be deflected from it. The incident placed my doctoral journey on a steep learning curve, leading me to reflect on the potentially disruptive nature of an interpretative approach to the conceptual development of the Moral Injury construct, challenging the dominant positivist paradigm that claims the discourse around the phenomenon.

3.4.2 Adapt and overcome

In 2019, I conducted a Pilot Study in which I interviewed two volunteers using the synergistic method prior to the main data collection phase. The first COVID-19 pandemic lockdown happened in March 2020. This unforeseen situation had an immediate and lasting effect on the study design that forced me to reconsider the data collection process. My reflection on the process was surprisingly positive. I was initially concerned that any move away from a physical interview format would adversely affect the quality of data generated. Non-verbal cues, I assumed, would be very difficult to observe using solely electronic means of interview. The silver lining to the COVID-19 restrictions cloud for my study, however, was that necessarily using MS Teams for the interviews not only meant that I could interview volunteers remotely but that the interview could be audio and video recorded rather than only voice recorded, as in my earlier design. In addition, using the University's secure server to store the data safely meant that I could return to view the video recordings repeatedly and observe again much of the participant's body language while transcribing the interview. This was very helpful during the critical recursive data familiarisation phase of the RTA

method (Braun and Clarke, 2022). As a limitation, I may have missed some of the possible nonverbal cues that I could have noticed in a physical interview but the trade-off was, I reflected, not as damaging to the process as I had feared. There was one modification necessary for the data collection protocol of the SI following the pilot study: the interviewees could use their personal Smart Phones to voice record the SI and then email the voice file to my university account for immediate upload on to the secure server. This small modification had a practical benefit to me and the interviewees, dispensing with the need to physically borrow and explain the use of the university's complex encrypted voice recorders. It also saved much time, effort and expense since the SI could be recorded and submitted easily and safely by the participant at home by using their own familiar equipment.

3.4.3   Managing the data

I transcribed the raw data personally rather than using a transcription service or computer software. Although very time consuming for the large quantity of raw data generated, this decision aligned better with the RTA approach that recommends deep familiarity with the data before proceeding to later stages of the analysis (Braun et al., 2022). On reflection, I think this long and slow process of data familiarisation by viewing the video recordings alongside the transcriptions, set good foundations for the next phase of the RTA method - the coding of the data and the generation and naming of themes. The university required anonymisation of the data as part of the data preparation phase. I was conscious of the need to avoid any possibility of identification of the volunteers not only by name but also by association with location, time and military Unit. My insider-knowledge of military sensitivities made this key consideration easier to manage.

Braun and Clarke's RTA method recommends an iterative, recursive approach to the data to pick up complexity and nuance in what the participants are saying, prior to coding. RTA's hallmark characteristic is the subjective role of the researcher. This is the reflexive nature of the method that fits well with my niche provenance as an insider researcher. Key to RTA is the constant use of memos as a concurrent tool for reflection running throughout the data

analysis process. Clarke (2005: 85) sees these as "intellectual capital in the bank" as well as a written record of developing thinking. I used the Review Panel in MS Word to note connections and reflections as I transcribed and reviewed the data in the familiarization phase of the RTA (Appendix 14). My reflections ranged from personal observations (for example, "why did soldier X feel uneasy about the orders he was given"?) to methodological questions (for example, "is there a link between habitus, semiotic theory and this soldier's deep loyalty to his mates"?). I colour coded the type of reflection, making it easy to return to these comments in the margins of the page to identify codes or chunks of meaning (Charmaz, 2014) that would evolve into themes. I also used them in my reflective journal to demonstrate how my thinking – especially the practice of plugging data to theory advocated by Jackson and Mazzei (2013) - was developing throughout the research journey in greater depth. The memos served as a springboard for discussion with my supervisors and fellow researchers during seminars and conferences. As an aide-memoir during the data analysis process, I copied the RQ into the page header of the transcriptions; this was a good way of frequently returning to the aim of the study and focusing my thinking on how the data related to the RQ.

I reviewed the transcription of the interviews and the video recordings at least six times. Each time I made some new connections within the interviews and between them (MacLure, 2010). This demonstrated the benefit of not rushing the data familiarization process and made the identification of codes a more coherent process. I was also able to recognize when the same or similar codes coalesced and to begin to think about connecting or grouping them together. I used MIRO computer software to cluster together similar codes in each interview separately. For example, "I was bored with a chalk-and-talk lesson format" clustered together with "I liked it when the corporals told us their experiences in Afghan" that may have connected with "I prefer practical lessons" and "I enjoy learning to shoot on the ranges" to become a tentative or prototype theme "soldiers enjoy a blended-learning approach to learning about ethics" (Figure 10). A recursive, iterative approach to coding and theme generation was made easier by use of the website-based MIRO software - not because it suggested themes by some automatic process of connecting words and sentences (an essentially AI or rationalist approach), but because it allowed me to copy the codes onto electronic post-it notes that could then be manipulated by me to form the

beginnings of themes in my mind. I found the software surprisingly intuitive to use. It made handling large quantities of data easier than using loose post-it notes that would be physically manipulated into associated groups or piles on the dining-room table! The MIRO notes were colour coded for each type of interview data collected. I mixed them all together for analysis and theme generation and this approach made it easy to see any differences in the quality of data associated with each type of interview. I used the SI data to enrich the F2F Interview data to help it *glow*; a different approach could have performed a separate TA on each type of interview-data and to have compared the two. Limitations of time and space made this unfeasible for this study - though for a future study this could provide further evidence of the benefit of the SI and / or the *Synergistic Interview* as the methods are developed.

Multiple sweeps of the coding process eventually allowed me to name three themes that I brought forward for the discussion of findings section of the thesis. I found that the process of 'boiling-down' or 'evaporation' of the prototype themes was not easy. The challenge was to synthesize multiple ideas into a short and meaningful phrase that was not so general that it became difficult to recognize its constituent elements. The ability to synthesize data in this way is framed by Braun and Clarke as the hallmark of a well-developed RTA that moves beyond description into the search for a unifying and central organizing concept in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2022). I explain how I went about this process in the data analysis section.

3.5   Ethical considerations

A research proposal involving serving MoD personnel necessarily involves review by the Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee (MoDREC) prior to data collection. The cautious response to my research proposal by the MoDREC advisors, part of which I quote at Appendix 11, was unexpected and it appeared to sit uneasily with the University REC's response that I explain below. Concerns arising from elements of my Interpretivist methodological approach (for example, not having a control group in my volunteers) suggested a positional anxiety with a research proposal that did not align with other

scientific research projects. I appreciated that MoDREC had concerns about the safety elements of my research proposal, such as those concerning the disclosure of toxic data expressed by the University REC but given the University REC's approval and the prospect of a potential very lengthy delay to the data collection phase (a colleague waited two years for MoDREC approval for ethical approval to be granted for her mixed-methods study) this was, I felt, unrealistic for my timeline. While disappointed that my application for MoDREC approval was rejected, the experience gave me important feedback for reflection that veterans would potentially have a deeper degree of rumination on their experiences than younger, serving soldiers, that I wanted to explore with them. This developmental experience led to a modification of the study design to collect data from army veterans only.

Other ethical concerns were raised by the University REC. The most significant was the possible disclosure of actions that strayed close to the boundaries of illegality under International Law (as in the *Marine A* case). In mitigation, on a balance of probabilities, I judged it reasonable to expect that any egregious breaches of International Law would have already been investigated by both military and civil authorities, such as noted in the *Baha Mousa* inquiry (Gage, 2011). Nevertheless, I would make it clear to interviewees via the consent process that a disclosure of undisclosed and clearly illegal acts under International Law could not be treated in complete confidence and the interview would need to be stopped and possibly referred to a third party such as the Royal Military Police. My professional judgement regarding when to stop the interview in such a case served as the mitigation I put in place.

Discussing the study design with professional colleagues in my well established and supportive CoP (Lave and Wenger, 1991), it was considered possible that since the interviewees would be self-selected volunteers, an individual who felt disgruntled by their experiences (such as lack of correct kit or poor leadership) could embroider the data to reflect adversely on decisions made by his commanders. This could result in reputational damage for the Army and even an attempt to identify the source of the data by the MoD. In mitigation, I considered that my professional experience as an Army Padre of 20+ years would make such offerings not only less likely but also would give me a good insight as to the broadly feasible nature of the data offered. The measures described below concerning

data security and confidentiality would protect the identity of the interviewee. It was also possible that a participant, pricked by his conscience, could be seeking peace of mind or some sort of atonement to society via an opportunity to disclose involvement in a morally equivocal or illegal act. Full knowledge that referral to a third-party would result may even be the desired outcome of the interview. Although professionally challenging, I judged that the administrative action envisaged in the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form would ensure that the matter would be properly actioned in justice and confidence.

Wrestling with these knotty design issues caused me to reflect on the value of a CoP for military chaplains. Jesus called the 12 disciples into what could be termed a CoP developing via social learning (Wenger, 2000); Mk.3:13-19). CoPs provide an ideal learning environment for the pastoral clergy - who seek not only to deepen their knowledge of a subject but also of understanding how reflection guides professional practice. A CoP is a dynamic arena where ontology, epistemology and ethics can meet with the aim of improving professional practice. As Wenger (2000: 227) notes, learning in this way "combines personal transformation with the evolution of social structures". It is also an example of how *habitus* evolves when impacted by practice, a key insight of Bourdieu's thinking that is important for me when considering the dynamic nature of a (Battle) Field of Practice (Bourdieu, 1998; Foster, 1986). Illeris (2017) conceptualises this relational nature of internal and external conditions of learning in a similar way while noting the issue of a 'transfer problem' in the desired osmotic process connecting different learning spaces.

The University REC raised a potential ethical concern arising from my professional identity as a Catholic priest. Was I conducting the study as a researcher or as a priest / therapist? Would my professional identity encourage potential interviewees to unburden themselves to me in what could be seen as a quasi-confessional way requiring a different response than that of an academic researcher? In mitigation, my extensive pastoral experience of caring for combat experienced soldiers would allow me to recognise the atmospherics of when the interview might be approaching damaged areas that would require the interview to be halted and appropriate pastoral care to be signposted via veterans' welfare agencies such as *Combat Stress*. I emphasised in the Participant Information Sheet, the signed Consent Form

and the informal conversation that I conducted with every potential interviewee that it would not be my role, personally, to provide any necessary pastoral or therapeutic care.

Recognising the potential for damage to me as a researcher due to the possibility of encountering toxic data, the University REC required me to detail the protective measures I put in place. The Pilot Study provided an opportunity for this exercise where it emerged that the most significant risk to me (as the sole researcher) was that data offered by the interviewee could trigger some difficult memory of my own experiences on operational duty that I have sub-consciously been unable to resolve. In mitigation of the risk, as part of the Army's post-operational care for chaplains I receive regular spiritual direction, counselling and, if appropriate, targeted psychological support. I would expect any risks borne out of my research activities to be identified and managed as part of this process.

At the end of the application process, the University REC was content with the safeguards and mitigations in my research design to approve the study (Appendix 6).

3.6   Methodological limitations

Data collection took place during Covid-19 restrictions that made physical interviews impossible, limiting the potential for non-verbal cues that are an important element of interviewing. However, the mitigations I put in place - using audio-video recordings of the interviews - yielded surprisingly rich data such as facial expressions and posture that changed when talking about toxic data.

Entry criteria for the study were intentionally tight. The rank-range recruited (sergeant and below) focussed on a deliberately narrow experience of ethics in action since I wanted to explore in depth how junior soldiers made moral decisions in close combat. Though important, the experiences of sailors and aviators were not considered as their roles in war are not consummate with a soldier's educational formation and operational experience. Together with senior officers and drone operators, discussed in the Literature Review, these subject groups would make interesting studies, having their own stories to tell. The study

was limited to male infanteers, because close-combat roles were not open to females until after the end of Op HERRICK in 2014. A future study involving female combat medic participants would add an enriching complexity to the relationship between ethical education and its moral expression in dealing with the wounded of both sides. MoD policy refused the study's access to serving soldiers, thereby restricting the pool of participants available for interview.

Other limitations of the study arose from my own situation as a lone, novice researcher, undertaking doctoral study part-time with the usual time availability issues and limited access to equipment such as encrypted voice recording hardware. Lack of research experience and personal interaction with other researchers at conferences during the pandemic limited opportunities for exploring different approaches to data generation and analysis - it also impacted in-person opportunities for me to disseminate my research to a wider audience.

3.7   Concluding Summary

The methodology for my research scaffolded the RQ by situating it at the centre of a coherent and philosophically congruent interpretivist matrix of investigation. My ontological position as an insider researcher drove the methodological choices for the 'best fit' of research design: data collection using *Synergistic Interview*s; analysis of the data using RTA and discussion of findings using multiple theoretical lenses. These strategies sought to allow the data to glow and form patterns of meaning in my mind to understand how soldiers assimilated their ethics education and the processes by which theory translated into practice in war and beyond.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

4.0   Introduction

Braun and Clarke (2022: 45) situate their reflexive form of data analysis as "a process of meaning-making, at the intersection of the researcher, the dataset, and data contexts". There are other approaches to TA tied to different research paradigms, for example Coding Reliability TA (O'Connor and Joffe, 2020). Theirs, however, aligns with my own epistemological approach to data as outlined in the positionality section in the introduction to this thesis. RTA's firmly interpretivist method not only offered a realistic device for grounding my research aim that sought to inspect or apprehend the strategic interrelationship of ethics, conscience and MI within the data generated, but also to view them through Bourdieu's social field thinking that I explore below.

Integral to a reflexive process is the activity of transforming *voice* into *words* through the activities of transcription and concomitant coding. There is an interesting theological parallel: St Augustine sees Christ as the Divine Word (*logos)* of the Holy Trinity, heralded and given voice by St John the Baptist (Augustine, 1994). In a similar way, the voice of the interviewee is enriched and to some extent made present to the reader in the sense that it glows through a process of 'theoretical embroidery' and rumination by the interpreted word in the reflective interview process (Marn and Wolgemuth, 2021). Braun and Clarke further contend that "understandings and meanings will also be developed *through* the discipline of coding" (2022: 49). This distinction sits comfortably with an interpretivist understanding of situated data where data analysis begins immediately on transcription (Miles and Huberman, 1997). Here is an account of the process I used.

4.1   Exploring Bourdieu's Social Field

In RTA, themes "do not emerge" but they do need to have their story told (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 8). Themes therefore require comment by the analyst on how they interrelate in the data. They need context to speak to the reader and to suggest wider theoretical connections (Jackson and Mazzei, 2013). This is how, broadly, I see Bourdieu's contribution to the analysis and the reason why I think his Social Field Theory with its enmeshed

residents of Habitus and Capitals is helpful to understand aspects of situated moral agency that my study seeks to interrogate. Bourdieu offers a complementary, strategic theoretical lens that Roy Nash positions as an adaptive *methodological device* offering insight into "the close investigations of definitive habitus, as states of mind or effective dispositions" (Nash, 2002: 46). Bourdieu's social field acts as a thematic conductor - holding together the diverse theoretical lenses used to allow the data to glow. Bourdieu's conceptual lens chimes with the thematic epistemology that I identified in the remarks on my own philosophical positionality in the introduction to the thesis; it sits well with the UK approach to virtue education and military character formation rooted in Aristotelian ethics.

Perhaps the most interesting Bourdieusian insight for my data analysis is his thinking on the osmotic nature of habitus in its relation to the social world. In *Practical Reason* Bourdieu notes that habitus is

> "a socialised body. A structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world - a field - and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world" (Bourdieu, 1998: 81).

Habitus therefore embodies not only internal dispositions (as in Aristotelian *hexis* forming *arete*) but also an internal forum where habitus meets external influences and structures that shape particular moral choices (Bourdieu, 1985).

Bourdieu's thinking finds resonances with later learning theories that explore the dynamic relationship between the individual and external structures in terms of 'identity' that Illeris advocates as a "more holistic concept that expressly ranges over both the individual and the social level" (Illeris, 2017: 129). Attempts to distinguish personal and societal elements that contribute towards a person's identity involve a degree of reflexivity leading to biographical / ontological development. Erikson (1968) sees this relationship involving necessary life crises or turning points that spark reframing of experiences, most significantly and enduringly occurring in adolescence. From a character formation perspective that underpins the UK practice of military ethics, it is significant that many infantry recruits begin their military education around this sensitive developmental period in their lives – perhaps

intimating a greater susceptibility to enduring pedagogical influences experienced in the army's ethical ethos. Soldier 10's remarks quoted later in this chapter suggests that this may be the case. Erikson's 'stages theory' has been criticised, however, as a modified 'adjustment theory' that notes how the individual conforms to groups and society – in a way that resonates with Bourdieu's Symbolic Violence thinking (Bourdieu et al., 1977) – yet it lays the ground for later transformative learning thinking that teleologically undergirds military ethical education and praxis. Giddens (1991: 5) develops this transformative reflexive thread, suggesting that self-identity emerges via a developmental path of "reflexively organised endeavour" leading to a changed perception of the individual and their place in the world. Giddens coins the term "ontological security" in the sense of 'fundamental identity', that in military ethical terms could be expressed in terms of the moral courage needed to act in accordance with Geneva Conventions even when the enemy does not (Illeris, 2017: 135). Gergen (1991), identifying barriers to a holistic and integrated perception of self-identity in the post-Modern era, notes that the individual's sense of self may become saturated with multiple competing self-seeking influences that overwhelm it. This was identified in the Introduction Chapter when I discussed the reasons why agreed ethical external referents were an essential framework for military ethos. To this end, military ethics education uses a blended and dialectical approach that aspires to challenge, filter and re-frame the recruit's saturated self, using personalist tools and processes that are found to be reasonable and persuasive in ways that Aristotle and Newman would recognise.

Bourdieu's notion of "cultured habitus" is dynamic. Arising from his early Algerian fieldwork, Bourdieu noticed that schooling reflected social position in its influence on the habitus (Bourdieu et al., 1962). Although education apparently influenced habitus societally inclining to social replication it did not necessarily contain it, being capable of synthesising responses to multiple and diverse stimuli to create fresh creative, agentic approaches (Bourdieu, 2000). Bourdieu in this way unintentionally describes the teleological aspirations of UK military ethics education that I noted in the Literature Review, namely character formation in alignment with moral norms located in IHL - such as the absolute prohibition of extra-judicial killing.

Reay (2004) offers an overview of Bourdieu's developing thinking on the moving parts of habitus, approaching his vast corpus of writing through four lenses: embodiment; agency; collective / individual trajectories and individual history. These aspects of Bourdieu's thinking on his Social Field Theory (where habitus and cultural capital meet in an external forum) are referenced in the data that the study generated that I discuss below. Together, they bring about the Logic of Practice (Bourdieu, 1990) that can help understand the complexity of situated moral agency. Bourdieu offered further reflection on how the social field operates, outlining "a space of play which exists as such only to the extent that players enter into it who believe in and actively pursue the prizes it offers" and so he suggests, "the theory of habitus is incomplete without a notion of structure that makes room for the organized improvisation of agents" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 19). Within a military context, there is ample scope for a Bourdieusian exploration of such concepts, enabling structures and individual agency to shed light on the internal motivations and external influences that shape the moral choices of a soldier at war.

Students of Bourdieu are familiar with his observation that:

> "Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside social agents. And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a 'fish in water': it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127).

Remove habitus from this comfortable watery environment and it naturally adapts to its new circumstances at an instinctive level via a feel for the game (Bourdieu, 1977). This view could be reframed through the lens of the functioning of the moral conscience in the mind of the soldier on the battlefield. The 'fish out of water' image is transferable, for instance by commenting ethically on asymmetrical warfare (Enemark, 2023; Lee, 2019) where not everyone plays by the same *doxa* or rules of the game. UK military ethics education seeks to claim the higher moral ground that is concerned not with winning at any cost, a utilitarian approach, but winning well and with honour, as referenced in ancient epic poetry (Virgil, 2008) and noticed in several of my interviewees' data. Observing international law, even though the enemy doesn't, is a key theme in this narrative. The reason why *Marine A* caused such concern – and the inspiration for this study - was that his ethical education (obliging him to treat the wounded with humanity) was not acted on. The anticipated moral

aporia did not develop. The assumption of military educationalists was that virtue assimilation education and practice should have been enough to prevent the "fish out of water" from drowning morally. Several of my interviewees referenced this moral contradiction. My RQ asks what role MI may have played in this breakdown of theory and practice? Could it be said that humanity on which *ius in bello* is predicated never completely evaporates, even in the fog of war, though it may be clouded over by events? The losing / winning dynamic balances a complex paradox that can unravel - but even in a "fish out of water" situation, it is assumed that there are remains or memory traces of humanity, formed by education, attracting cultural capital that can adapt to the 'new game' with integrity. There are stories of great humanity and compassion in war, for example where enemy soldiers have been saved from death for no other reason than shared humanity and self-sacrifice. The film *1917* (2020) contains an example of this theme where a German wounded pilot is instinctively given first aid, only to attack his British helper in return. In some respects, this is a moral application of Piaget's thinking on elements of learning that nourish processes of thinking and learning by using memory – an idea that resonates with David Ausubel's understanding of the process of linking a new experience with what is already there in the mind (Ausubel, 1968; Furth, 1981).

Bourdieu does not speak in terms of the moral conscience and it is not clear what mechanism is available to the habitus to 'bridge the gap' between a judgement of cognition and an instinctive or reflexive judgement. This is an interesting, under-developed ethical dimension to Bourdieu's thinking on the way he suggests that habitus adapts to unfamiliar contexts. Some aspects are explored by Crossley (2001) who suggests that habitus seeks a dialogic conversation with itself (Kant and Paton, 1964) and Sayer (1999) who sees a role for 'moral sentiments' within the constitution of habitus. It is a loss to Bourdieu's offering of Social Field Theory to the wider academy that he died before considering these ethical questions in a fuller manner than *Distinction* (1984) and *State Nobility* (1996b) allowed.

In summary, Bourdieu's thinking on the phenomenon of the Social Field offers a way of facilitating connections between the rich and glowing data that the *Synergistic Interviews* generated and the theoretical lenses that I have brought to bear on them using the interpretivist insights of RTA.

4.2   Reflexive Thematic Analysis: how it worked for me

Having transcribed the data as described in the Methodology Chapter, I considered how best to use Braun and Clarke's six phases of RTA (data familiarisation; code generation; prototype theme construction; reviewing potential themes; defining and naming themes and producing the report). Although distinct, the phases are not linear or sequential and an iterative or recursive tack is recommended across the dataset (Terry and Hayfield, 2021). I considered the first stage, familiarity with the data, to contain the building blocks of the RTA method from which the other phases flowed back and forth. It was the most time-consuming phase, yet a worthwhile investment for what I hoped would become a mature and well-developed TA. Reflection began immediately with data familiarisation and initial coding using the MS Word Review function. I was then able to make wider theoretical and professional connections that were transferred into more formal reflexive memo format for development, maintained for each interview and for the entire dataset. An example of this initial *familiarity-begets-codes* process is in Appendix 14.

Proceeding through the transcribed interview data, I returned multiple times to the raw data having reflected on previous data sweeps, refining the initial codes. One of the most fruitful benefits of an audio-visual recording of the interviews arose from reading and annotating the transcripts while watching and listening to the recordings. It was possible to use the same method to read and listen to the SI data immediately following the F2F interview, question by question, noting any signs of reflective glow in the 5 - 7 days *aporia* that is a key element of my synergistic method. Taken together, my own reflective connections offered a firm base for theoretical exploration that continued in the reflective memos, growing into prototype themes (Figure 11). I felt a sense of ownership of the study, an 'active agent' in the partnership of knowledge generation (Trainor and Bundon, 2021). This was how phase three of the Braun and Clarke RTA method (prototype theme construction) came about in my analysis.

I then used MIRO software to create electronic post-it notes of codes that could be colour coded and visually clustered as I generated the prototype themes. MIRO is an online

collaborative whiteboard platform that uses visual electronic post-it notes. It is a simple data management tool that works well in conjunction with MS Word's reviewing tab. MIRO differs from Qualitative Data Analysis Software such as NVivo in that it does not *suggest* connections for clustering between chunks of data via 'nodes' that could perhaps lead to a premature closure of analysis, at odds with an RTA approach (Terry, quoted in Braun and Clarke (2022: 67)). I found electronic thematic mapping helpful to explore in visual terms the developing relationship between codes and themes; I could see where codes naturally grouped and where they did not. I clustered codes that shared a central idea, such as how ethics needed contextualisation and nuance in their application. Cluster 6 (in Figure 10), for example, suggested awareness of how ethics could be manipulated by various actors (personal and societal) for purposes of power and self-interest while recognising that people sometimes get it 'wrong' when applying ethical principles to real life situations. Further reflection suggested that these could be worked into a prototype theme: "ethics need wise application". The thematic mapping and use of reflective memos offered a way of focussing the research aim and its supporting objectives on the data generated. Each code and cluster of codes was sparked or ignited by a resonance in the research aim that invited further reflexive development into a final theme, as at Figure 11. For an example, the constituent elements of one of the conclusions of the study – *Law and Ethics need transparent integration for a just outcome* – draw on ideas expressed in the data that although the law aims to be guided by ethical considerations, there needs to be an acknowledged or transparent meta-framework of natural justice that can be appealed to when sometimes the law alone cannot "meet justice" (Soldier 05 SI). I discuss the generation of the constituent or sub-themes and their relevance to the research aim and objectives in more detail in the next chapter of the thesis.

4.3   Glowing synergy grows themes

I reflected on why I clustered certain codes together and how (or not) these patterns suggested centrally organized meanings. Where was the internal coherence of the cluster? What was missing? Did I need further refinement of the codes and better more nuanced language to capture the theme? Figure 10 shows how I used my synergistic approach to

expand and fan the generation of codes into prototype themes as I looked across the whole dataset for connections that could indicate a central organizing idea (for example, around the concept of military service as a *force for good*). The themes generated by the F2F interview (the yellow stickers) were developed by the SI themes (the green stickers) and then 'boiled down' to arrive at the three final, named themes. So, for example, prototype themes #4 (*conscience needs support to function reliably*) and #9 (*army V&S form the conscience*) aligned (the black linking-line) and fed the construction of the named theme *(a sound moral conscience requires ethical education / formation).* Discussion of the themes in Chapter Five used multiple theoretical lenses to tease out and reframe the codes in this reflexive process, plugging them into wider theory (Jackson and Mazzei, 2013; MacLure, 2010) and avoiding premature closure or under-development of the themes (Braun and Clarke, 2022). I used the red sticker to tag any codes that I was struggling to assign into a wider cluster - potential candidates for re-working or discarding at the next phase of the analysis. Figure 10 gives an example of how I looked for strategic connections across the whole dataset as themes coalesced in my mind.
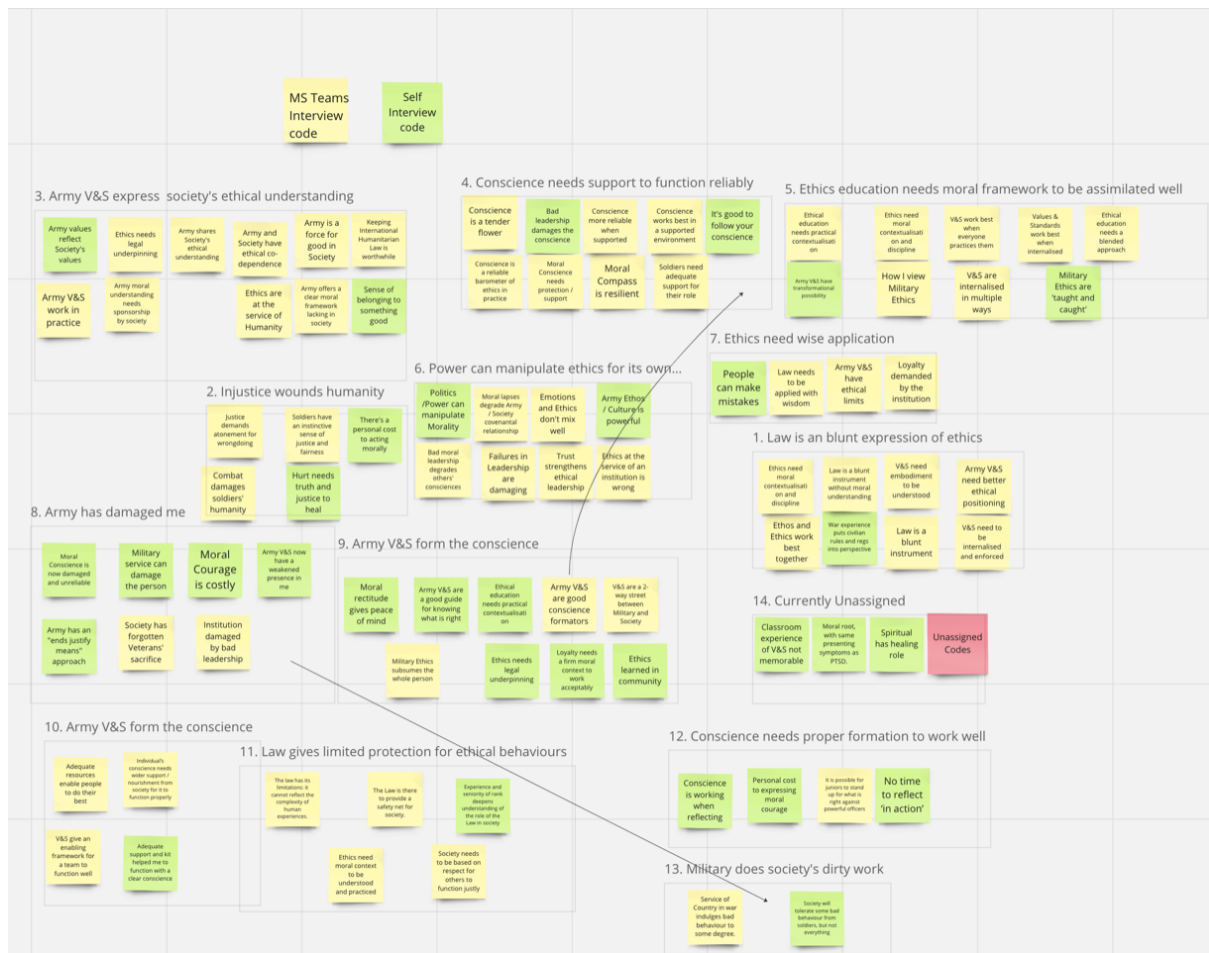
Figure 10 Looking for strategic connections in the data

Reflecting on the SI, could this format give deeper or more focussed insight into the effects of MI than a F2F interview? From the data generated, it does not appear so; I think the value of the synergistic combination is that it adds another dimension to the story that fits with the glowing nature of the data generated by it. Methodologically, it would be tempting (and speculative) to equate F2F interviews with *semantic codes* and SIs with *latent codes* (Braun and Clarke, 2022). However, without further research, the reality seems more complex, reflected by my assertion that the synergistic approach can offer a richer quality of data generated. Nicolini's (2013) concept of using multiple theoretical lenses to *zoom-in* and *zoom-out* of reflected data enabled Bourdieu's strategic Field of Practice, with its whiff of Symbolic Violence, to position the individual agent within societal and political abuses of power (Bourdieu, 1990; 2001). This rich analytical insight is an example of how RTA seeks to cast a light on some of the elements that may constitute a *latent* code (with a deeper or somewhat hidden meaning) that is ripe for consideration as a prototype theme since it

contains the seeds of a central organizing concept, a key idea in RTA to be explored in the discussion section of the analysis (Terry and Hayfield, 2021). I found that Nicolini and Bourdieu made good 'midwives' for different ways of clustering the codes generated from the data. Travelling vertically and horizontally through the data gave rise to differing patterns of clusters on the MIRO electronic pin board. Together with the Reflective Memo, it was also an opportunity to connect my interpretive analysis to wider net of scholarly work and literature of MI and educational theory identified in the Literature Review. A challenge for a strong RTA is avoiding the temptation to be satisfied with an under-developed analysis that bears the characteristics of a descriptive topic or domain summary that is aligned with other, less reflexive and interpretivist approaches to TA such Codebook or Template Analysis (King, 2012). Similarly, Coding Reliability approaches that seek to identify a pre-determined set of codes to evidence themes are usually aligned with at least some positivist theoretical assumptions that facilitate the analysis that sit uncomfortably with the interpretivist nature of RTA (Boyatzis, 1998).

Returning repeatedly to the raw data through other theoretical lenses such as Goffman (1991) and Newman (2016), developing and reviewing nascent themes through continual reflective memoing gave me confidence in the RTA method as a 'good fit' for making wider philosophical, epistemological and educational links with how military ethics are taught and assimilated into professional practice by soldiers. Newman's *Illative Sense* explores the influences that the human mind considers when deciding whether to give intellectual assent to any proposal (Newman, 2016). This is important for a soldier who must decide, often in a split second, whether the principles encountered in their ethical education convince them to behave morally. Newman argues that the moral conscience plays a part in this process of assent by exercising a particular act of practical reason (Strange, 2009). Both Newman's idea of *Illation* and the correct functioning of the moral conscience are predicated on the assumption that the soldier's moral conscience has been educated and formed in alignment with the external referents discussed in the Literature Review Chapter. How might MI impact this balance in the mind of a human person after experiencing moral attrition? Was *Marine A's* moral conscience so blunted by attrition that it ceased to operate in the expected way when he shot the enemy prisoner (Von Hildebrand and Crosby, 2014)?

The most challenging part of the RTA process was the naming and defining of themes. Although clustering and developing groups of codes with a uniting, central concept across the dataset was easier to manipulate using MIRO software (on account of the large volume of data involved), it was difficult to achieve in my mind a balance between the Scylla of a single gerund (for example, "hurting") and the Charybdis of a whole sentence (for example, "I felt hurt that the politicians took my military service for granted and abused it just because I took the Queen's shilling as an 18yr old"). This process of refinement led eventually, through further reflection, to a tighter and pithier prototype theme of "politicians don't care what happens to us" or "We do society's dirty work without complaint". Here is an example of how individual agency (in the soldier's agreement to serve their country through military service) can suffer attrition when the AFC that I discussed in the Literature Review is not honoured by one side and may impact the future functioning of the moral conscience. This theme chimes with the social turn of the MI construct (Molendijk, 2019). Its development is an exercise in synthesis that Braun and Clarke think should be "informative, concise and catchy", adverting to a theme's "meaning and analytic direction" (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 111). One of the analytical traps for the novice RTA researcher is to identify of one of the interview questions with what becomes a theme later in the analysis process. This view is a topic-based or categorical approach - a domain summary that adopts a scatter gun view of a search for ideas or concepts, broad in scope, suggesting they could be found lurking in the data awaiting excavation by the researcher. Avoiding this approach was one of the reasons that I crafted my interview questions in deliberately 'open' style, to encourage the volunteer to talk freely and not to be pulled back to the original question too readily (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015).

It is difficult to know when to stop refining and developing themes. In RTA there are no hard and fast rules but I found Terry and Hayfield's advice helpful in making a judgement on when the theme refinement was *good enough* for a quality TA: could I "write a coherent paragraph about a theme, exploring its boundaries and central organising concept [*where*] their titles are also detailed and capture the core meaning of the theme" (Terry and Hayfield, 2021: 50)? I found the use of reflective memoing invaluable for this process and I offer an example of how I used a memo as an enabler for theme generation and naming in Appendix 15 (phases 4 and 5 of Braun and Clarke's RTA method). The illustration in Figure

11 (below) shows how the prototype themes became the three named themes generated by the data.
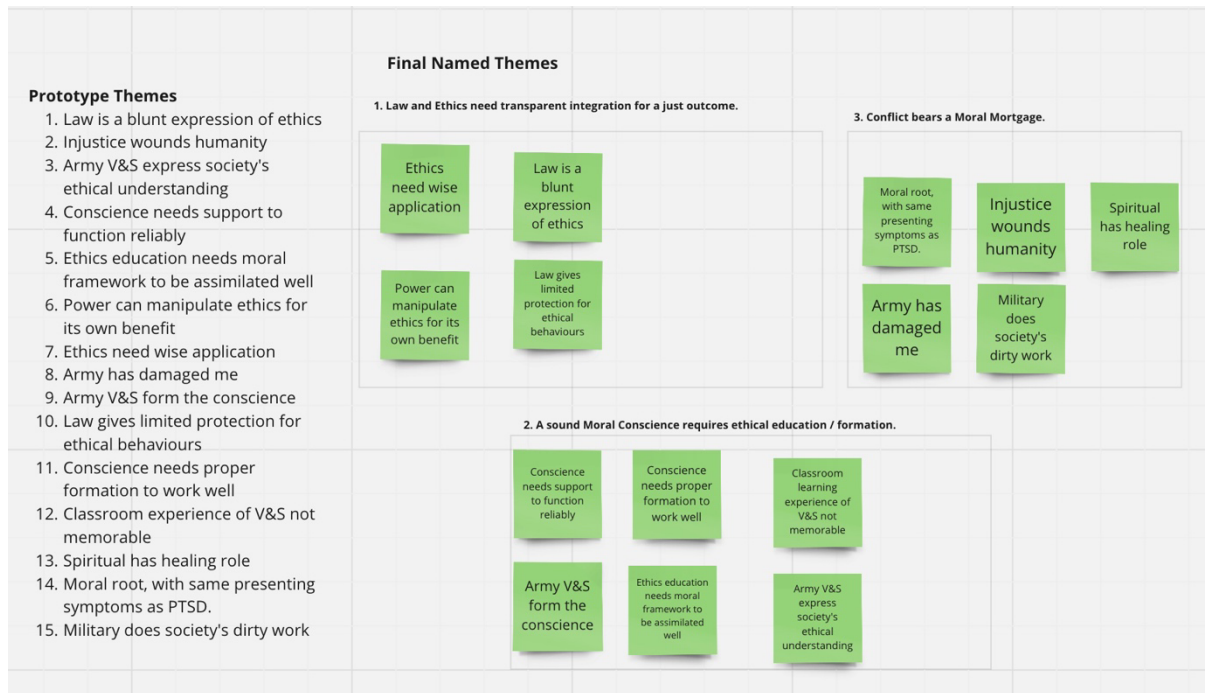
Figure 11 A MIRO board: Prototype Themes to Final Themes.

The themes

I have explained how I used Braun and Clarke's RTA method to interpret the data generated in my study. The process of theme definition and naming led to the following three themes taken forward into the discussion section that now follows:

1. Law and Ethics need transparent alignment for a just outcome.

2. A sound Moral Conscience requires ethical education / formation.

3. Military service carries a moral mortgage.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.0   Introduction

There was an unexpected serendipity of the Professional Doctorate's timeline for completion and the intensely reflexive nature of the methodology I have chosen for data analysis that needed time to 'ripen'. The resulting analysis offers the possibility of a mature TA that can tell a story of the interaction of a soldier's ethical education and moral practice in an ethically conflicted context. This approach offered a 'good fit' for unpacking and exploring the dynamics of my research aim that was to explore in-depth the veteran-volunteers' experience of MI and its formative themes or drivers.

In the data analysis section of the thesis I described the process used for generation of themes from my data. Arising from the clustering and re-clustering of codes grew the tinder for proto-type themes; in other forms of TA such as Template Analysis (King, 2012) they could be considered sub-themes that shed light on how a more developed theme took shape. Braun and Clarke (2022: 230n) warn against the dangers of too many "sub-themes" that could tempt the researcher to be satisfied with a topic summary or "bucket" theme that misses the hallmark central organising concept of RTA and places everything said about a topic into a metaphorical "bucket". My own approach is to identify concentrated or 'boiled-down' clusters of codes using multiple theoretical lenses that feed the generation of the main themes around central organising concepts of the RTA (MacLure, 2010; Jackson and Mazzei, 2013). The depth and parameters of the main themes are co-constructed with the interviewee and explored as the story of the data unfolds in the mind of the reflexive analyst. The RTA method is sufficiently theoretically flexible to accommodate this understanding and it is a reason why I chose it for my study.

5.1   Main Theme#1. Law and Ethics need transparent integration for a just outcome.

Military ethics, as understood in the UK context, look to broad alignment with IHL that itself seeks alignment with principles of Natural Justice, as I discussed in the Literature Review. Positive laws such as those contained in shifting Rules of Engagement are necessarily

thematic summaries or extractions of IHL that the individual soldier must apply to an often ethically conflicted situation quickly and in accord with their moral conscience. A bad decision made on, for example, whether to engage the enemy when there is a danger to innocent civilians – or whether restraint is the most appropriate action – can remain with a soldier for life leading to crises of conscience that could be understood in terms of MI. My research aim sought to explore this ethics / justice / conscience / moral injury tangle that combat soldiers found themselves involved in. The data suggested that unless there was a clear direction of travel arising from and pointing to concerns of justice, articulated in moral philosophy and expressed in legal terms but not exhausted by them, conditions for an assaulted moral conscience and possible MI were present. This dilemma foregrounded my first main theme.

5.1.1 Law is a blunt expression of ethics

One of the main themes generated from the data explored the relationship between ethics and their legal expression. There was an understanding that while UK military personnel are accountable to military, civilian and international law, law alone necessarily expressed ethical principles bluntly or imperfectly. Moral understanding or contextualisation in ethico-legal principles was thought critical if the law aspired to more than a utilitarian expression of ethics. The moral conscience demanded a fair hearing too. This applied to the architects of law as well as for moral agents seeking to remain withing its moral parameters. Soldier 04 commented on the tension:

> "On one hand, I think it's important to keep the law but I also baulk at when civil liberties start to get eroded, but I know that keeping the letter of the Law (not the spirit) could be very detrimental". [04 F2F]

The limits of legislation in containing or capturing ethical principles are clearly drawn in this soldier's comments. He identified and expressed confidence in his ability to apply distinction in identifying the proper parameters of both law and ethics, connecting to my earlier comments in this chapter about Newman's thinking on the *Illative Sense,* and how the human mind uses its innate personalist tools to synthesise learning, experience and conscience when making a cognitive assessment of the degree and quality of intellectual

assent to be given in a particular situation (Strange, 2009). For Newman, who had confidence in the ability of the human person to use it instinctively, *Illation* equips the human mind to examine evidence and notice patterns in aligning probabilities that eventually convince of certitude; this was Aristotle's approach centuries earlier. Newman's *Illative Sense* echoes Bourdieu's sense of an actor osmotically acquiring a 'feel for the rules of the game' - *doxa* - as he negotiates the field of practice and shapes his actions to fit in (Deer, 2008). The moral conscience was considered a personal sentry when juggling with and making sense of an unclear or unworkable ethics / legal relationship, especially if there is an awkward 'fit' between them. Soldier 01 extolls the virtue of restraint due to his moral conscience even though, under the RoE, he could have legally used greater force:

> "I have this Moral Compass in my head, it's like an email, it goes 'ping! I need to do this'. I just have to do it. Was that right? Yes. Did I risk killing him - probably - but at the end of the day I was right. And I can hand on heart say that every decision I made in Iraq, Afghanistan, Balkans, I was right. When it comes to those situations, we've done well in accordance with International Law etc. We are better than them". [01 F2F]

The soldier's comment demonstrated not only mature reflection on the relationship between intersecting concepts of structure (ethics at the service of justice) and moral agency but also gave an example of military character formation in action. His moral conscience or "moral compass" acted as a trusted guide or bridge which, aligning to IHL, situated violence and killing instinctively within ethical and legal constraints and offered the agent the possibility of a 'quietened conscience' afterwards. Moreover, this ethical schema applies even when the soldier contemplates the possibility of 'losing' rather than 'winning' in battle. It is an example of where a virtue approach to character formation offers wider ethical alignment with accepted ethical norms (such as the Geneva Conventions) than a consequentialist approach that, ultimately, could seek victory at any cost and could easily lead to unlimited war where the ends justify the means and where humanitarian considerations take second place to tactical triumph. Consider how the bloodiest revolutions and conflicts of the Modern Era with greatest loss of life and barbaric behaviour are examples of this moral thinking (for example, the French and Russian Revolutions). Foregrounded in Natural Justice, virtue not utility, it seems, has a greater chance of instilling moral 'brakes' on conduct in war; this soldier's reflection offers an eloquent and grounded

rationale for its role in military character formation. Soldier 01's comment resonated with others who took pride in their understanding that the army's V&S gave them some chance of claiming the 'moral high ground' by virtue of their alignment with IHL. This understanding, linked to ancient themes of the 'warrior habitus', is formed by the military ethos required by the British Army of its soldiers and officers (MoD, 2015).

Several of the soldiers identified a link between ethics and integrity, one of the army's core values. This resonates with my earlier observation in Chapter Two that integrity was probably the most important of the V&S since it acted like a conductor, coordinating the others. Soldier 03, reflecting on his understanding of "doing the right thing", was clear about the enabling role of integrity to give meaning to it, even taking into consideration the reality of human nature:

> "If you haven't got the integrity - potentially there is a gap for people to fall through. If you want someone to do the right thing, you have to train and support them to do what is right and certainly not set them up to fail. Equally, however that is, they still have to have that integrity to follow it through. But it is human nature to take the shortest path". [03 F2F]

"Doing the right thing" was a recurrent phrase in the data generated and, significantly, not identified with merely remaining within the law by the soldiers, though the law was seen as a useful guide or handrail for determining what was "the right thing". His comment about the necessity of training and supporting people to do the right thing is, perhaps, another way of speaking of the need for the moral conscience to be educated and nourished if it is to function soundly. Like soldier 03, Soldier 04 linked the role of integrity aligning with the moral conscience when he reflected:

> "When we talk about Integrity we mean our Moral Compass, this is *right* (not just what is lawful) in that situation. I always think of Ann Frank and others who, you know, show that what is lawful may not be 'right' and what is 'right' on paper may not be right in that moment" [04 F2F].

Taken together, there is a teleological framework underlying the ethics / law distinction: the pursuit of *justice*, one of Aristotle's Cardinal Virtues. In the Aristotelian ethical schema, overarching justice fosters *eudaimonia* or human happiness / flourishing. That justice is seen

as a worthwhile and noble end should not surprise us given the educational philosophy contained in the British Army's approach to military ethics. It is a sign of the intended character formation by soldiers formed in a virtue approach to ethics that a concern for justice forms an important element of a soldier's ontology. As noted, Aristotle's teleology for his virtue ethics schema, developed by Augustine (2002), Aquinas (1952) and recently by Anscombe (1958), MacIntyre (2013) and Nussbaum (2001), that shapes the virtue approach on which UK military ethics rest, is rooted in the concept of justice - defined, classically by Aquinas, in terms of giving each person what is their due (Aquinas, 1952). When there is a conflict of interest or a barrier to behaving in ways that justice demands, for example due to restrictive RoE, the moral conscience has a role in evaluating the situation, potentially alerting to a PMIE that I earlier framed in terms of moral attrition. One of my interviewees reflected:

> "[Combat] has just confirmed that the ideals of justice and truth are laudable and what we should do and expect it from everyone. But sometimes we're put in positions where we can't do it. We can't meet justice - and that's hard…I've seen times where we just can't administer justice through the law. So not only has this affected me when I see there are unjust laws, and although I think that everyone should obey the law, I don't think we should have to submit to every law, especially when it is unjust and wrong-footed." [05 SI]

As above where I noted the concept of *justice* scoping virtue's teleology in the Aristotelian schema (*eudaimonia* or happiness via peace of mind arising from habitually chosen moral excellences), so the military approach to ethics education sets its sights on honourable conduct both in peacetime and in combat, expressed in terms of V&S facilitating *ius in bello*. Soldier 05's frustration at a lack of moral agency due to structural restraints (he witnessed social paedophilia in Afghanistan but he was ordered not to intervene by his commanders due to cultural sensitivities) could be expressed in Bourdieusian terms of being a 'fish out of water' with little chance of getting back in the swim. Here, the soldier's habitus clashes and rebels against more powerful actors in the field of practice resulting in a PMIE as his wounded conscience cannot be calmed by the perceived immoral but legal direction received by superior officers - more powerful elements in the *battlefield* seeking to shape the habitus. This clash could be framed in philosophical terms as a struggle between offensive utilitarian forces mimicking deontology (military law seeking to oblige obedience

via a sense of duty) and defensive virtuous forces of internal dispositions (Aristotle's *hexis* feeding *arete*) as the habitus revolts against other elements in the Bourdieusian Field. It is one of the tensions formed in the data that led me to name "law is a blunt expression of ethics" as a (sub) theme.

The data above suggest that an educated moral conscience can continue to function as a reliable compass for ethical behaviours even in situations of extreme stress. Soldier 05 SI offered a valuable insight into the interrelationship of the research aim's constituent elements: an exploration of the demands of justice, the telos of military ethics education, experienced by a sound moral conscience when ambushed by personal and societal challenges that cause individual moral dissonance or Moral Injury.

5.1.2   Power can manipulate ethics for its own advantage

Bourdieu's vision of a social field of practice, a *battlefield* here, opens the possibility of reframing one of the constituent themes contributing to my discussion of the justice / ethics / law relationship. All my interviewees made some comment on the way in which they felt that 'power' could manipulate or skew the practice of ethics for its own ends. Soldier 03, for example, referred to the distorting power of peer pressure when he noted the tension between ethical behaviour and barriers to it:

> "You have to do what you think is right (that was an uncomfortable experience) but peer pressure is such that it isn't easy to turn away into what you believe is right even in normal circumstances. So when it is the other [*combat etc*] then it's physically dangerous and the consequences can be dire or even severe injury, that could turn your opinion. Follow this guy behind that wall and give this kid a shoeing and at least I'm not going to get a brick in my face. I follow the charismatic, safe leader that I have" [03 F2F].

This could be expressed in terms of Symbolic Violence clashing with habituses or, more prosaically, a hierarchy flexing its 'ethical muscles' for its own replication, as Bourdieu noted in his thinking on how social fields are nourished, regulated and reproduced for their own benefit (Bourdieu, 1968). Soldier 02 put this in terms of people looking for promotion or

preferment being willing to manipulate or bend the V&S to gain power in a tightly-knit hierarchical field of practice:

> "In a regimental system, everyone's after the RSM's job, after the CO's job if you're an officer, and often it can be twisted to what suits them. The thing with the SUPER-SIX [*V&S acronym*] is that it's very easy to lord them over people when you're in charge and they're very easy to manipulate or negate or forget when you choose to" [02 F2F].

The picture is complex but there are several related strands of thought that the data generated. As discussed earlier with reference to a problematic utilitarian teleological approach to military ethics, military culture and ethos can take on totalitarian characteristics if external ethical referents or brakes such as the 10 Commandments are ignored or manipulated. This was evident in *Marine A's* dismissive view of the Geneva Conventions' requirement not to harm enemy prisoners who posed no threat. Soldier 06 speculated, above, that *Marine A's* immoral action may not have been a naïve incident: "I'm pretty confident that that particular line was crossed on more than that occasion" [06 F2F]. I reframed the incident as, possibly, the result of involuntary vice habituation due to multiple PMIEs during his extensive operational experience. *Marine A* had apparently 'gone feral' and detached himself from the usual external ethical referents, a point noted at the appeal hearing (Regina v Blackman, 2017). Moreover, *Marine A*, the superior NCO, exercised power via his military rank when instructing his subordinates to keep the incident secret. Bourdieu's (1998) Symbolic Violence thinking sheds light on how power or force may have skewed the expected functioning of the moral conscience by placing it at the service of military ethos articulated as 'loyalty' as the subordinate's habitus may have been violently assaulted by an illegal order. In all of the above examples, law and ethics are in anything but transparent alignment at the service of justice; that a MI could arise from them seems entirely plausible.

I will return to the role of loyalty in military ethos later in the chapter when I discuss main theme #3 but for now I want to let my interviewees reflect on their stories of how power has disrupted the expression of military ethics.

5.1.3 Power, trust and responsibility

Emerging from what in the Literature Review I termed the 'societal' turn of the MI construct (Hautzinger and Scandlyn, 2017; Fiala, 2017), several of my interviewees made a distinction between their own personal moral conduct and that of those in positions of power and influence such as politicians who ordered them into ethically dubious situations and roles. The complex interrelationship of a military educated and formed habitus / conscience and external power relationships, clashing within the Bourdieusian battlefield, suggested subtle connections in the data generated by my research aim, enriching understanding of the societal turn of the MI construct. Underlying such themes lay a nagging anxiety with what we term *ius ad bellum* - the conditions under which going to war is considered morally justifiable in terms of Just War Theory, now endorsed by the international community and policed by the Security Council of the United Nations. Soldier 06 reflected:

> "the failure was at the political level. Politicians knew it [invasion of Iraq] was based on a fiction based on soft intelligence at best. But now, the lads that took the worst of it and have come back and are struggling - you've got to be willing to help them out. If you can't afford to look after blokes [veterans] you shouldn't be sending them in the first place". [06 F2F]

Political expediency and ineptitude demand a personal price tag paid for by those charged with carrying out flawed strategy and creates fertile conditions for the development of what could be termed a 'slow-drip PMIE', as awareness of its ramifications dawns. The above soldier's conscience-guided sense of what was right, arising from considerations of Natural Justice, is still intact, though later in the interview he offers the reflection that he is morally damaged by his sense of betrayal by those in charge who directed his combat experience and he thinks that he is unlikely to recover fully. Soldier 01 F2F (p.125, below) puts the same feeling more viscerally. Here is an example of what Powers (2019) terms the tendrils or "metastases" of wrongdoing or sin, at a societal level. It points to a further distinction made possible by Bourdieu's social field thinking where lesser and more discrete fields (for example the dynamic relationship between the individual soldier's habitus and the hierarchy of the CoC) find themselves impacted by larger, societal and international fields. The outcome is not always agreeable for the individual moral agent and it could be framed

in terms of the struggling fish out of water being swallowed alive - or at least badly nibbled - by a voracious shark! To mix a metaphor, the balance of power in this playing field is far from even. It is an abusive dynamic that is reflected in the societal or political turn of the conceptual development of the MI construct (Molendijk, 2019) that finds expression in the holistic PND intervention programme pioneered in the ADF (Carey and Hodgson, 2018b). It chimes with Loic Wacquant's characterisation in *Punishing the Poor* of the hypocritical "Centaur State", referencing the mythological creature comprising two separate body parts of man and horse

> "that presents a radically different profile at the two ends of the scale of classes and places, in violation of the democratic norm mandating that all citizens be treated in the same manner" (Wacquant, 2014: 286).

Wacquant's observation is apposite given the social demography of the Army Infantry, noted in the Literature Review. There is, however, an additional stressor at work in the above picture: the seemingly elusive appeal to a sense of decency, trust, accountability and justice embodied in the warrior code embedded in army V&S. A sense of injustice was palpable in some of my interviews, much of it directed personally towards politicians considered culpable for moral lapses in sending soldiers to war (*ius ad bellum*), not supporting soldiers during war (*ius in bello*) and failures in rebuilding the country after war (*ius post bellum*) (Guthrie and Quinlan, 2007). Soldier 01 put this smouldering sense of moral affront so:

> "I hate them (politicians), I hate them with a passion. [*looks pained*] I despise Tony Blair. If they could string him up - I'd string him up … He might have wrote his memoirs and donated the money to the British Legion - but when they pay their Chief Executive £230,000 a year, and you know …Tony Blair's done nothing. He still meddles now." (01 F2F)

Other interviewees perceived a destructive broken link between private and personal moral behaviours by public figures in a way that highlighted the difference in philosophy between military and civilian approaches to character formation that could be framed in terms of virtue and utility. Reflecting on moral lapses during the COVID-19 restrictions on movement and association, Soldier 09 commented:

"you can liken it to the man during the Covid lockdown [*Dominic Cummings*] and the whole trip to Barnard Castle thing, it was wholly unacceptable - and you can look at Kay Burleigh the newscaster: she broke the Covid rules, was suspended and has now been taken back. It is just laughable. I look at those kind of situations and I'd like think that the Army wouldn't accept that … Specifically, it damages the trust that I have in them. So that is the problem. If you don't have trust, then you're kind of "goosed". It's a massive thing for me". [09 F2F]

The issue of trust in those charged with leadership roles - in society and in the military - maps to one of the army's core values – Integrity, arguably the most essential since it coordinates the others. Ripples of betrayal of trust by leaders / commanders was seen by my interviewees as damaging more than just the actors proximally involved. This surfaced in the *Marine A* incident where the video recording of his actions went viral across the internet giving opportunities for enemy propaganda abroad, causing scandal closer to home, degrading military capability and weakening the sense of ethical alignment with IHL. Soldier 07 made this link clearly when he said:

"we have to demonstrate that internationally we are going to play be the rules - whether that's Geneva Conventions or something else - and we should be transparent in what we do". [07 F2F].

Integrity is one of the building blocks of army ethical education and character formation. It is reflected in the valorisation of the practice of imitating 'good' examples of virtuous behaviours and avoiding 'bad' ones, as the moral conscience seeks to guide judgements of practical reasoning in specific moral situations. It highlights the importance of appointing trustworthy people as leaders who are ethically aligned to the army's V&S, essential in military education and training, when an instinctively similar response to a moral dilemma is demanded in combat. Soldier 02, reflecting on his own experience of 'looking up' to his immediate commander noted:

"he was easy to follow and of course that's the point of training. In normal, everyday life in battalion - you build that working relationship, almost like doing weapon handling drill - so that in combat, when your moral code is stretched a bit, you do it automatically like drill. So, if I've followed this guy for as many years as I've been in his platoon or whatever, I'm going to follow him now because he's my leader, he trained me all the way to be here at this point. So why would I now stop doing it?" [02 F2F].

The soldier's comments on his disposition to be led demonstrates the habituated outworking of the military approach to character formation. It positions safety-related behaviourist approaches within a broader teleology. In doing so, Soldier 02 demonstrates that his thinking, though initially grounded by behaviourist themes, nevertheless has developed along transformational lines, evidenced by the tingling moral unease that prefaces the above comment with which he tells his story. In particular, his phrase "when your moral code is stretched a bit" reaches into a wider strategic methodology for assimilation of moral understanding and cultivating practical ways of dealing with difficult and morally ambiguous situations that a soldier needs to navigate in battle. The Achilles Heel in this scheme is a weakness that *Marine A* exploited by his poor-quality leadership that resulted in the death of his prisoner; those charged with such roles must be trustworthy and reliable in their ethical decision making. In short, the moral consciences of military leaders must also be "sound" and aligned instinctively and consistently with the external ethical referents that I reference throughout the thesis. In this way, the interdependent balance of the various educational and training practices in military ethics formation is made clear. Habituation in the practice of virtue (or transformative education approaches) is supported by military discipline as its backstop at the service of safety, containing elements of behaviourism - ultimately to minimise the replication of *Marine A*-type behaviour. It reaches into earlier discussion in Chapter Two and anticipates the discussion in the next theme regarding the Transformation versus Behaviourism tension in military education and training. The reflexive 'gap' between ethics and morals that a virtue approach seeks to instil depends for its efficacy on a sound moral conscience working in both leaders and those led. Newman's *Illative Sense* proposes a process by which an individual instinctively weighs up the merits of a case or proposition that requires intellectual and personal assent (Newman, 2016). My RQ asks whether the moral conscience can rise to the "stretch" demanded by Soldier 02, above, and stand a good chance of being shielded from the damaging effects of moral attrition that I framed as a PMIE. This was one of the reasons for exploring the wider interrelationship between ethics and conscience in the soldiers' data generated in response to the study's research aim. This approach aligned with the study's inductive and reflexive methodology by allowing the tinder of connections to coalesce around the disruptive possibility of a Moral Injury arising from a conscience-sparked PMIE.

5.2   Theme #2: A sound moral conscience requires ethical education / formation

The research aim was to create an inquisitive context to explore how military ethical thinking aspires to educate a soldier's conscience, preparing the ground for the RQ to ponder to what degree can the moral conscience bear attrition / injury and still function reliably. In the data, all the soldiers were confident that the military ethical framework that they were taught and tried to live out (the army V&S) was a force for good – personally, professionally and societally. In this sense, their experience of ethics education and conscience formation sat comfortably with their expectation that, guided by the law, they would feel confident in making acceptable moral choices. The data offered insight into how disruption of this alignment, for example by power tussles, could disturb or destabilise their moral conscience.

5.2.1   Ethical values have their own provenance

There was a strong connection in the data between societal moral expectations expressed in terms of the law and their thematic expression in a military context. As noted in the Literature Review, educational constructivism is the established enabling method for the UK ethical vision that situates its philosophical position within broadly Judaeo-Christian strategic moorings, which is the both the focus of my study and the sample from which the primary data for the thesis draws. This observation is significant since, located within a western worldview, it establishes a teleology for practice, enriching, developing and, in the Bourdieusian understanding of valorisation that suggests the need for replication, *consecrating* previously understood rationale for behaviours that society deems desirable (Cattani et al., 2014). Soldier 04, reflecting on his 'ethical transition' from home into the army, felt that "there wasn't a great difference from what I knew as rights and wrongs. The difference was in how I'd live and apply those" [02 F2F]. Another soldier put it like this:

> "my V&S from home were probably a bit different from those in the Army. But, you know, they were transferrable from one to the other. Did I realise how important they were at the time? Probably not, of course I see that now, but I think it was probably rolled up into 'being a good soldier' that meant 'being a good citizen' and behaving yourself. I see and value it now - but maybe not so much then" [10 F2F].

Both of the above interviewees make an unspoken connection with the themes of societal covenant located in the AFC (2011) that I explored in the Literature Review, adverting to a sense of thematic continuity with UK civilian and military ethico-legal practice. Soldier 04 put it strategically when he reflected on his military service:

> "Now that's the duty and job of the soldier - we have social contract with the state. The Army looked after me, it paid me, it gave me a world. You can join the Army as a job - but you can't stay in the Army as a job. It's not a job. It is a vocation" [04 F2F].

Another soldier expressed this ethical alignment in terms of the military environment having a societally beneficial role in correcting poor moral understanding learned in childhood:

> "People need to be taught, because people might come from households where it's acceptable to nick the next-door neighbour's milk and they think it's perfectly acceptable because their mum and dad said it was. That's why the basic training is as it is". [01 F2F]

From my professional experience of teaching basic military ethics to 16–18-year-old recruits from diverse backgrounds, it was sometimes difficult to help recruits understand *why* it was important for both military and wider society to apply, for example, the Seventh Commandment universally ("thou shalt not steal") and not to consider it applicable only to friends and family. There are also potential ethical educational implications for army recruitment from some Foreign & Commonwealth (F&C) countries (eg. Nepal) with different philosophical / ethical assumptions about what is "right" making it harder to identify a common starting point for discussion. The above comment from my interviewee puts in succinct conceptual terms the desired synergy between education and training at the heart of the UK approach to military ethical education. It recognises that although the V&S originate in wider society's ethical context, people's understanding and assimilation of ethics vary and opportunities to deepen understanding through education, while operating initially within a behaviourist safety net provided by military discipline, are how military ethical formation does its business. Hence, my research aim sought to explore how the constituent elements of a soldier's ethical education and praxis worked together in the service of justice, and what might disrupt or degrade their expected functioning, within the parameters of IHL.

As I witnessed in my nine years within the army training environment, the raw material of moral understanding brought to military training by recruits varies in its quality of formation. Some recruits have a well-developed 'gut-feeling' for what is ethical arising from their family upbringing. Others start from a much lower base. This observation chimes with Erikson's thinking on stages of identity development that I referenced earlier in this chapter, noting the significance of the adolescent stage (Erikson, 1968). "Moral identity" may be considered an element of the wider self. Taking a strategic view, Bourdieu (1977) could frame this observation in terms of *doxa* – understanding and learning the rules of the game - that actors need a feeling for to negotiate their way around the military Field of Practice. It is an example of how ethical sensibility, or absence of it, here feeds the *habitus* of the actor mediated via the moral conscience and ordered towards the cultivation of individual excellences or virtues (*arete* in Aristotelian terms). This is explored in terms of *synderesis* by the mediaeval Scholastics - a mysterious, internal movement of being instinctively 'drawn' to good moral behaviour that I noted in the Literature Review (Chalmers, 2014).

One of my interviewees put it like this:

> *"*Nobody teaches you V&S or moral code in detail! I was raised a Roman Catholic so we learned through the Bible etc - potentially that way - but as a teenager in the late 1970s it was more about being a street kid [04 F2F]*"*.

The same soldier's SI comment on the same question is interesting and suggests a greater degree of reflection and insight borne of 25 years of military service when he thematically noted: "the words and the format [of the V&S] may have changed but the ethos of it never really changed at all" [04 SI]. It appears that the soldier has been able to take a more strategic view of ethics which is a fruit of mature and transformational reflection. The F2F comment was descriptive (semantic) of his childhood experience of how he learned ethics - the SI comment offers a latent (deeper) insight into the enduring nature of the ethical themes he encountered during military service. Both examples illustrate the distinction between types of codes potentially generated in RTA (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The descriptive (semantic) codes offer utility for illustration of context while latent codes (deeper, often plugging into existing discourses such as Foucault's lens of power (Jackson

and Mazzei, 2013) feed the construction of mature themes formed by a zooming-out approach to the data (Nicolini, 2013). Both approaches are necessary in RTA and play a part in the generation of rich and glowing data in the analysis (MacLure, 2010; 2013).

5.2.2   Ethics and utility: an uneasy dynamic

Army V&S were universally considered valuable guides by my interviewees for decent and moral behaviour in civilian society and within the military environment. One soldier, however, reflected on the need for a clear ethical rationale for their application, noting that as the V&S are constructed, all but one (*Respect for Others*) could be ordered towards what would be considered immoral by the standards of IHL. This observation links to the discussion in the Literature Review where I positioned the understanding and practice of the V&S firmly within the Judaeo-Christian tradition in order for them to "work" as intended as a useful framework for moral behaviours:

> "They [V&S] are utilitarian - any fanatic or extremist could claim them: If the EDL [English Defence League] were to write a manifesto and say 'these are our core values', the wording may change but actually, I would question how they would be out-worked in different ways." [03 F2F]

The soldier's comment reaches perceptively into ambiguous and contested ontological territory that seems in conflict with the rationale for a teleological approach to character formation via virtue habituation that is at the heart of military ethical education. How so? In the Army Leadership Code (MoD, 2015) where the current doctrine of moral understanding is set out, the V&S are placed at the service of "efficiency or operational effectiveness*"* to be evaluated by commanders through application of the Service Test ("Have the actions or behaviour of an individual adversely impacted or are they likely to impact on the efficiency or operational effectiveness of the Service?" (MoD, 2015: 30))*.* Teleologically, the V&S appear ordered towards utility - while their formation is born of virtue habituation. An internal contradiction emerges in the non-consummate arrangement or teleology of strategy and tactic. How, for example, is it possible to demand character formation via virtue when utility could demand its overthrow for "efficiency or operational effectiveness" required by the Service Test? Or, put another way, how could utility be an appropriate

artifice for critiquing virtue? A utilitarian approach could easily frame *Marine A's* vicious

moral act as committed in the service of operational effectiveness and therefore morally

justifiable - one less prisoner to be guarded using precious resources of food and medical

supplies. Such an approach leads seamlessly to versions of utilitarianism like

consequentialism or 'ends justify the means' that could undermine IHL. This approach links

also to a problematic view of human behaviour that suggests over-reliance on a single optic,

for example Foucault's lens of power, to critique the lack of a moral dimension or agency

(via conscience) innate to the human person. I discussed this issue more fully in the

Methodology Chapter in connection with Foucault's exploration of the ideas for its

invention underlying the *Panopticon* without reference to Bentham's underlying moral

teleology (Bentham, 2022; Foucault, 1991). Utility, perhaps, would fit Foucault's lens of

power and control better if it were explicitly teleological - but not so the virtue approach

rooted in Natural Justice which depends on a sound moral conscience to make it function

appropriately.

5.2.3   Army V&S have transformative, magisterial benefit for society

Although situated within society's understanding of what is deemed ethically 'right',

underpinned by UK and international legal frameworks, army V&S were not seen as passive

or morally malleable in the data. They do more than reflect the mores of contemporary

society. In other words, could it be said that character formed by army V&S changed the

soldiers' ontology and so held them to a higher standard of moral behaviour than many

civilians demonstrated? This question was referenced in the research aim's interest in army

veterans – those who had finished their military service and transitioned back into society,

taking with them their ethical formation received in the army and practised in combat.

What was their experience of a potential clash of values that the military educated moral

conscience encountered in civic society?

I explored an aspect of this question earlier in this chapter when considering the public /

private moral dynamic of public servants. This disconnect was especially noticed on leaving

military service and re-joining civil society where some veterans encountered different attitudes to ethics – particularly in areas of integrity and honesty:

> "I've friends who have left the Army and gone into civilian employment and have been basically threatened by employees saying 'you need to calm down mate – you're showing us all up and you may have a nasty accident one day'. He wanted to do an honest day's work for an honest day's pay, and unfortunately his new-found civilian friends just wanted to do as little as possible and still get paid for it. He had that inbred standard that 'if you're paying me, I need to do that work'." [10 F2F]

Although denuded of the behaviourist safety net created by military ethos and discipline, the military-formed mindset or character, ethically speaking, has something useful to say to society about how to function and flourish better within it. It has a prophetic (or teaching) quality that takes on an element of rebuke and disruption in a morally correcting or re-calibrating way to civil society and its actors, resisting a neoliberal reductionist attitude to measurement of society's 'goods' in terms of productivity and material reward. Military ethos has an educative aspect that recalls one of the mainstays of military ethical education philosophy: imitation and valorisation of good behaviour demonstrated in the actions of leaders and gallantry award winners. The UK military approach to ethics education aspires to character transformation, though there are limits to this device. Gallantry award winners are rarely consistently imitable on every level even though otherwise flawed human beings occasionally rise to dizzyingly noble heights. A weakness is that 'moral modalism' may be mistaken for virtue arising from character formation if this device is relied on too much without reference to other expressions of virtuous behaviour. An integrated moral ethos is necessary for the V&S to avoid becoming opportunistic virtue-signalling.

Advocates of a transformational learning teleology acknowledge the benefits of the above approach to individuals and to society in the opportunities provided by education to form *good citizens* from *good characters*, with a mature understanding of the ethical context in which society best flourishes. Transformation, underpinned by critical self-reflection, often arises from Mezirow's "disorienting dilemma" (Taylor and Cranton, 2012: 86). It finds its resolution in a series of reframing-lenses that moderate and cluster meaning schemes (such as socio-linguistics, aesthetics, epistemology, theology and ethics) to enable a person to make sense of their world and find peace of mind.

Returning to another Field of Practice related to the military context, the veteran's *habitus* has changed through its reflexive encounter with military ethos and it will adapt to the new field in a way that shapes the field in some way (Bourdieu, 1998). Soldier 10 put it like this:

> "You've got to have a standard, haven't you. You've got to set the standard. I mean, if we don't have that we've become non-effective, we've become feral, I think you've got to have that. We teach them [civilians] Moral Courage – if you see something is wrong, you need to call it out and say 'it shouldn't happen'. So, if it's ingrained in you it makes you think twice." [10 F2F]

The military approach to understanding the constituent elements of the V&S (such as the legal and philosophical basis of the RoE) appeared to lend confidence and clarity to the soldier's exercise of the moral conscience in non-military contexts (Fiala, 2017). Educationally constructivist in character, a common thread arose regarding how operational experience in war moderated a black and white approach to the civilian law. How much autonomy or agentic freedom was permissible when interpreting the law while remaining aligned to the mind of the legislator? It could be said that this a pragmatic rather than a behaviourist approach to law and that a soldier's military moral formation and practice is developed through experience of interpreting and following legal orders in combat (Schulzke, 2019). Taking from the letter of the law what is necessary to remain within it is second nature to soldiers where difficult moral choices must be made, sometimes in an instant when under fire. This pragmatic process is an example of what David Ausubel, drawing on Piaget's developmental thinking around the role of memory traces in the human brain that nourish thinking, considers "the most important single factor influencing learning: [what] the learner already knows" (Ausubel, 1968: vi). It chimes with the human mind's natural *Illative Sense* (Newman, 2016) where, in an internal forum, the influences of lived-experience, learning, instinct and conscience mesh together when considering an intellectual proposition that demands assent of the will. I discuss the role of conscience in Newman's schema when considering the next theme, but for now I suggest that Newman makes interesting parallels with Aristotle's idea of *hexis* (stable internal dispositions) and anticipates Bourdieu's concept of *capitals* and *habitus* by deconstructing what constitutes the human person's decision-making process. Bourdieu uses many ideas from classical philosophy and enriches them via thematic development, not rupture, dovetailing neatly

with later philosophical insights and thereby offering a hermeneutic of thematic continuity to my methodological framework for the study. Likewise, Aquinas develops *habitus* from *hexis* in the sense of a cultivated and stable habit or disposition for good or ill – similar to Aristotle's use (Aquinas, 1952). Bourdieu's *habitus* is used more broadly in sociology to indicate the way that people perceive and respond to the social world they inhabit, by way of their personal habits, skills, and dispositions. Bourdieu enriches the philosophical currency and anticipates its next iteration.

In a follow-up question to Soldier 04 about whether his combat experience in Afghanistan should give a little more "wriggle room" when being expected to keep the civilian law at home, he commented:

> "I'd say yes but, in a bending, not a breaking way. If you take a piece of legislation and it seems very black and white, if you haven't had those experiences, it's almost like there are three levels: the letter, the spirit and how much room is there to move within it. That's why it's important to write laws really precisely." [04 F2F]

Soldier 04 uses Newman's *Illative Sense* to re-frame his combat experience in Afghanistan to prioritise and evaluate international law in its application to concrete moral situations, for example in deciding whether an order is within established legal parameters and therefore should be obeyed. Meaningful and transformative moral agency is possible, according to Newman, because it is not mediated via a rationalist lens; it arises from a personalist starting point that can encompass rational insights but is not bound by them. For Newman, the human mind is at the service of the entire human person, not the servant of logic or even of ideas arising from the Renaissance Enlightenment that we might call scientific positivism. Another interviewee commented:

> "I'm very blasé about the law: so where the V&S come in, that I was taught, I'm still very aware that they are about right and wrong. But it's now down to my interpretation of them – so if I think it's pointless now, it's bred a degree of arrogance in me because I've been sat there thinking ok, so you're happy to let paedophiles go who've been bumming children all night in a checkpoint but you're whinging at me about a parking ticket? [pulls a cross face]." [01 F2F]

Both soldiers [01 / 04], through a process of *illation*, were able to 'fill the gaps' or 'join the dots' between head and heart to make a good judgement of practical reason (*phronesis*) in

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a moral dilemma. Another of Aristotle's Cardinal Virtues – Prudence – assists the moral conscience in making a judgement about the best course of action to follow. Soldier 04 put prudence in terms of "interpretation" or coordinating the relevant intellectual and practical virtues for a good practical moral outcome (Aquinas, 1952; Chalmers, 2014). Soldier 01's distinction between awareness of external moral referents and aligning his behaviour with them – at least as far as the law is concerned – may be reframed as the effect of a slow-drip or chronic PMIE that I referenced in the earlier discussion about the societal turn of the MI construct. If, as I assert in this thesis, moral attrition can blunt the moral conscience's sound functioning, the soldier's comments are not a surprise. He clearly links his "arrogance" in the way he interprets the law to a PMIE involving witnessing paedophilia in Afghanistan. It appears also the case that although dulled, his moral conscience still retains the ethical "memory traces" that Piaget's developmental thinking references (Furth, 1981) and that his military ethical education and conscience formation instilled.

The ethical mean table I referenced in the Literature Review (Figure 6) is a practical illustration of how the conscience and *phronesis* work together in military ethics education, with its examples of what the excess and deficiency of a moral value might look like in practice. The soldiers above were able to recognise structural elements in a field of practice (the civilian legal framework) while retaining sufficient confidence in the ability of their own habituses to engage them with agency and poise, aiming for moral agentic action that trod a path between excess and deficiency. This art was positioned succinctly when commenting:

> "I've seen times where we just can't administer justice through the law. So not only has this affected me when I see there are unjust laws, and although I think that everyone should obey the law, I don't think we should have to submit to every law, especially when it is unjust and wrong-footed." (05 SI)

The process is transferrable to a civilian context and is an example of how a military habitus has something inspirational to offer civilian society. It fits with a Scholastic approach[7] to epistemology: parsing the application of theory to practice and suggesting how a principle's

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[7] Scholasticism is a mediaeval approach to learning that relies on dialectical reasoning and application of the process by inference to extend knowledge. It was an approach that grew out of Aristotelian thinking and although it was prevalent in the great monastic centres of Europe from about 1100 – 1700AD, it engaged critically with Judaeo-Islamic philosophies.

intellectual worth might be affected by opposition or unfamiliar contexts by Socratic

dialectic. Scholasticism's epistemological method develops a classical personalist approach,

seeking to give the moral agent the intellectual and personal tools to deconstruct ethical

dilemmas that military ethics education seeks to develop in soldiers. In broader educational

terms, not only for the teaching of ethics, a Scholastic approach underpinning modern ways

of expression could offer investigative tools of inquiry that side-step the charge of subjective

emotivism and still offer a richer clarity of thought that does not depend on ideas of

'science' and 'knowledge' that emerge from a narrow, positivist stable.

5.2.4 Ethics education inevitably informs conscience

The research aim of the study looked to explore and unpack in a military context the

osmotic dynamism of education and conscience in order to explore the disruptive influence

of a PMIE / Moral Injury on its anticipated praxis. The data generated suggested that,

building on a soldier's understanding of what society considers acceptable and desirable

moral behaviour, his judgemental tool - the moral conscience - is dynamic and requires

nourishment and exercise for application to a military context.

Conscience formation in military education and training is caught up in a powerful Hidden

Curriculum (Bauer and Borg, 1976; Martin, 1983) underpinned and encouraged by both

classroom learning of V&S and an enabling environment of military ethos and surveillance

(Goffman, 1991). This insight was not lost on the following soldier:

> "[V&S assimilation] does take time and maturity. Doing the right thing is constantly
> being re-enforced ... I can think of occasions in basic training or promotional courses
> where the ethics, the right and wrong, are re-enforced through V&S, Law of Armed
> Conflict, military necessity (what we do and what we don't do, restraint)." [06 SI]

Though 'veiled', the military curriculum is articulated using an educationally constructivist

approach. Building on the foundations of ethical formation that Western society instils, at

least in law, seeking habituation in virtuous behaviours supported and animated by military

ethos, the moral conscience is developed and nourished as part of the character formation

process of military service. It is, perhaps, this ontologically ordered teleology of military

ethical education that to some degree protects its use of a Hidden Curriculum from aspects of neoliberal or performance-ordered outcomes that have been criticised by educational philosophers as creating a barrier to workplace learning (Illeris, 2017). The moral capital that a recruit brings to the army is ordered towards an unfamiliar social field where they may feel like a "fish out of water" for a time. Habitus adapts to ethos. It bleeds, absorbs and changes in its new environment over time; likewise the moral conscience. One of my interviewees reflected that:

> "In your Army training you aren't just taught things like how to march, holding a rifle etc, but on a deeper, subconscious level that maybe people don't notice, you're actually being taught a culture and history. And though that may very rarely be formally acknowledged, you are trained by the people you look up to and therefore you aim to take on their morals V&S." [02 SI]

A Hidden Curriculum is clearly acknowledged in this soldier's SI data and he gives a succinct understanding of its expression in terms of military ethos and its main constituent elements – its culture, history and people. Inculturation into military ethos takes place on different levels over time. Some is by formal lectures or briefings on regimental history and personalities considered worthy of mention (such as humanitarian award winners), others take place on an informal or subconscious level (such as wearing military uniform). A complementary semiotic element to learning is possible within the framework of assimilating military ethos during a recruit's initial and ongoing formation. Non-verbal artefacts have the ability to make meaning by embroidering previous experiences, especially when woven into the fabric of everyday life, exemplified by those in positions of authority such as senior officers. As an example, like the *fasces* carried by magistrates of the Roman Republic signifying *imperium* or power (Figure 12), the Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM), a senior soldier tasked with maintaining discipline and good order among the soldiers, carries a dual-ended staff of office that signifies encouragement at its blunt, ornate end and chastisement at the pointed end. Both approaches are used to maintain military ethos via education and discipline, offering an example of the exercise of Bourdieu's Symbolic Power. Moral lapses in behaviour among the soldiery such as displaying a "lack of integrity" by dishonesty are framed in terms of dishonouring the uniform. Valorisation of everyday military role models, as noted by Soldier 02, is a key Aristotelian tool in the process of

character formation; ethical alignment is considered an essential element of becoming a soldier that also brings its own challenges of compliance to those in such exalted roles. The Hidden Curriculum reaches into all areas of the military Social Field, shaping and evaluating interactions of its actors within a niche or professional CoP (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Figure 12 The Fasces carried by Roman magistrates and an RSM's staff of office.

Formation of conscience in a military context requires careful nurturing if it is to bear authentic witness to its ethical moorings, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Hence the importance of the training side of military formation that I earlier characterised as a *safety net* that underpins a soldier's ethical education and ongoing military development. I use the term safety net because most of the restrictive activities in military law pertain to maintaining a safe environment - such as a didactic or behaviourist approach to weapons handling or navigation drills - which are necessary to prevent loss and injury. The further away from safety-critical activities, such as enemy prisoner handling, the less restrictive they become and the greater the role of moral agency. It would be to misrepresent military formation in terms of unsophisticated behaviourism - or at least, not to recognise that as a soldier's understanding of ethical principles and their practical outworking develops, the need for imposed discipline (as opposed to self-discipline) diminishes or "tapers off". Soldier 10 reflected on the long-term benefit of military character formation for both veterans and society when he remembered:

> "some General once said 'you may leave the Army, but the Army never leaves you'. I'm about to leave the Army soon and I'd like to think that I've taught the same [*Army*] V&S to my own children. And I think that's a good thing and that people who leave the Army, by and large, will continue to do that. They may have come from a

horrible background (vagabonds, thieves etc!) but I like to think that whyever they leave, they've become better people for it " [10 F2F].

The above soldier's reflection resonates with one of the four main modes of how we learn that Illeris identifies: a *Cumulative* approach, also known as behaviourism that "has the character of dressage, a certain impulse or stimulus that triggers a certain reaction or response" (Illeris, 2017: 38); an *Assimilative* approach that arises from ordinary quotidian activities; an *Accommodative* approach, drawing on Piaget's thinking, that facilitates reframing or restructuring of what is already known (Furth, 1981: 4), that can naturally lend itself to reflective and critical thinking. A *Transformative* learning approach, which touches the identity and self-understanding of the learner sets its sights on the realm of ontology and "implies a change in the identity of the learner" (Illeris, 2014: 40). Illeris notes that this approach has its roots in psychotherapy (Rogers, 1969), more recently attracting attention from an educational perspective by way of theories of boundary expansion (Engeström, 1987), biographical learning (Alheit, 1994) and Mezirow's Transformative Learning theory (Mezirow and Associates, 2000). Behaviourism remains suspect in some educational circles, framed as Pavlovian-style unquestioning pedagogical obedience to be avoided by educators. This, however, paints an unsophisticated and reductionist picture of the role of behaviourist approaches to military training that seek a judicious blend of moral understanding and safety concerns, given the complex high-stakes situations that combat soldiers are deployed into. The military approach is more nuanced. It offers an example of Illeris's assertion that all the approaches to learning that he identifies above have their place - and that the more advanced or developed learning styles are not always 'better' when denuded of context, seeking rather a complexity and agility of approaches to learning that "alternate between the learning types and activate the type of learning that is relevant in a given situation" (Illeris, 2017: 46). Writing from a pedagogical perspective, Hand's Moral Education Theory calls for the same complexity and nuance of approach that reflects the educative potential of diverse learning spaces and activities (Hand, 2017). There is an easy resonance with the 16-18 years age group starting basic military training, noted earlier, that needs a variety of educational approaches as the military character begins its formation. Hand holds the paradox of the necessity of both "moral formation" and "moral inquiry" in delicate balance when commenting on differing approaches to teaching ethics and morals that comprise

moral education. Answering criticism of "indoctrination" fostered by his pedagogical approach (Hand, 2019), echoing Aristotle and chiming with the military approach to character formation, Hand notes that:

> "to teach didactically is to tell pupils how things are, to instruct, inform, expound or explain; to teach non-didactically is to provide opportunities for pupils to work out for themselves how things are, through exploration, investigation, discussion or play" (Hand, 2017: 38).

Military conscience formation that I have explored in this section draws on a variety of educational artifices. Through a judicious combination of cognitive and contextual tools such as those found in a Hidden Curriculum, necessary elements of didacticism and behaviourism are practiced in the service of safety, not indoctrination, and resist reduction to mere tools of control. Reflecting further on the critical incident that inspired this study, if *Marine A* had followed the arguably behaviourist protocol for enemy prisoner handling found in army doctrine, the outcome may have been different, and I would be exploring a different RQ.

5.2.5   Attrition and the moral conscience

In the Literature Review, I characterised the encounter of a PMIE as a 'combat indicator' for MI, a military term for expected hostile activity. The moral conscience is intimately involved in raising awareness of a PMIE since it has the capacity to name the hallmark characteristics of MI indicated in the academic literature, typically feelings of shame, guilt and self-loathing noted in Figure 2 (Jamieson et al., 2020). My RQ seeks to explore the movements of the moral conscience within this process and to ask whether the conscience (formed by a virtue approach to military ethics) can remain *sound* or *functioning* having suffered a degree of attrition – ambushed even - by a PMIE. I offer this series of quotations from one of my interviewees, a guardsman who was troubled by his experience of witnessing American soldiers disrespecting the corpse of an enemy fighter in Afghanistan. It tracks a personal and institutional trajectory of habitus (Anastario et al., 2013; Reay, 2004), revealing in cameo shots how this soldier's conscience functioned during and after the incident in question:

"So we called the Americans over - and they were like, well you know what Americans are like, a bit arrogant, thought they were better than us. They were like it [the corpse] was a bag of mince or something, and they were all giggling and back-slapping and the like, and I just thought for me, in that moment my career was over. I knew it instantly…I'm not saying they're all like that but that day - they might even have been National Guard [Reservists] and giving it that machismo thing - but personally, you have to treat them [the bodies of the dead] with respect. His debt has been paid. He's cleaned the house now. It's a dead body, a human being like, you can't go … there's a line…but that day, it was like there was something really sinister about it, something really like errm it became political in a way, and I've never been a political kind of guy, do you know, up until that point." [06 F2F]

The smouldering sense of moral affront experienced by this soldier appears to suggest a PMIE. His moral conscience functioned reliably as a sentinel, highlighting a danger-zone of immoral behaviour. I noticed from his F2F interview recording how disturbed and anguished his voice and body language became as his story unfolded. The guardsman's reflection on how this critical incident spurred him to take an interest in politics paints a picture of personal habitus clashing and colliding with a collective habitus (the US soldiers') in a political landscape that Bourdieu might term a Field. It is as though his personal habitus assimilated military ethos in opposition to his political masters who he perceives have acted in a dishonest way; he takes the moral high ground by proudly "doing the right thing" in terms of personal behaviour. Consider how the experience changed the soldier's habitus and shaped the Field. An alliance was created and character transformation was enabled in a Bourdieusian "battlefield" of practice with its raw edges, fault lines and bloody borders (Mezirow and Associates, 2000).

What about his conscience? How did this fare as a result of the incident? The guardsman held together a paradox. His conscience was strong enough to act as a moral compass in a strategic capacity: "I felt like we were acting in a professional manner - not just tit for tat violence" [06 F2F] yet he recognised that, because of his combat experiences, his conscience was wounded and would take time to repair:

"So it's [combat] definitely changed me for the better but there was work I had to do on myself. I can't stress that enough. It was never just given to me. I had to take accountability for myself and the decisions I made in my life that led to certain points. The guilt and shame side of it - it's not really me: your mind is not always acting in your best interests". [06 F2F]

The guardsman above gave an example of a robustly formed moral conscience that remained sentinel through the experience of several PMIEs. He spoke eloquently of the interrelationship of ethics, conscience and MI that my research aim and its enabling objectives hoped to explore.

Another interviewee told a different story of a damaged conscience that he witnessed in Iraq:

> "I remember one thing that disturbed me, I remember distinctly - this was a gentleman who had done multiple tours, by no means a junior soldier, saying as we were on patrol one day walking through the most dangerous part of Basrah at the time, 'I've only got about 10 days left [before going home], I need to shoot someone' [laughs nervously] - and it didn't feel at the time that it was said in jest. It wasn't a time where you'd want a person of that calibre and seniority to be joking." [02 SI]

The SNCO above adverts to a disruption in the *moral synapse*, similar to that seen in *Marine A's* actions. The soldier's moral conscience was affronted ("disturbed") by what he witnessed – a lingering PMIE that still troubled him many years later and that could be framed in terms of a MI. It is also referenced by another interviewee, Soldier 03, who stressed the importance of morally sound leadership in the military approach to the education and assimilation of ethics; this is the practice of imitation of good leaders, referenced in the Literature Review. It is worth revisiting it here in a potential link with MI in the light of the above interviewee's comment that witnessing the SNCO's remarks made him feel disturbed as it was not said, he felt, "in jest". The remark did not strike me as *hubris* or warrior *modalism.* It is significant that the quote above arose in the soldier's SI, a method noted in the literature as potentially creating a permissive environment for greater honesty and frankness when dealing with toxic data (Keightley et al., 2012). When I compared the soldier's answer to the same question in the F2F interview format ("did you ever experience an event that made you question who you are, your sense of the world, or your sense of right and wrong?") the incident I alluded to is referenced in more circumspect terms, as though the reflexive 'boost' of the dialectical process that can occur in the *aporia* between the two interview formats had not yet developed. Did the SI facilitate a journey from the general to the specific, from the public to the private, where the descriptive currency attracts a higher rate of interest for the reflexive analyst? Consider how "2 or 3 of my

soldiers went into that Iraqi check-point and gave them a bit of a physical 'motivation'" (02 F2F) became "I need to shoot someone" (02 SI). Although the *Synergistic Interview* is in its infancy as a data generation method, I think this spontaneous comparison of data offers developmental potential that could be exploited by qualitative researchers in the future. Exploration of what is happening 'in the gap' in terms of reflection could be an interesting area for further study.

5.2.6   PMIE reframed: moral conscience attrition

For the analyst, it is difficult to understand the thinking behind the above comment. It may have been *hubris* or bravado, though my mind returns to the similarities with the *Marine A* incident, in particular that both soldiers had experienced multiple combat tours. Here was a senior soldier in a leadership role, with junior inexperienced soldiers looking up to him to give a good example of moral behaviour that they could imitate. Could his extensive combat experience - with the inevitable opportunities for encountering PMIEs - have ground down his moral conscience rendering it of limited use in making a judgement of practical reasoning, detached from critical external ethical referents? Could experiencing a PMIE be re-framed as moral attrition that buffets the conscience? In Bourdieusian terms, had the "battlefield" of practice acquired another casualty with damaged cultural capital - a wounded habitus that needed the ethical field hospital? It is tempting to speculate how this soldier re-integrated into civil society on leaving the army. One of the other interviewees spoke very frankly about his own experience of moral attrition:

> "My Moral Compass has been totally destroyed [by combat experience]. So, for example, I've lost everything now. My uncle (he's ex-Scots Guards) and me - we said we could very easily kill people now, given the right circumstances: say if there was a burglar in my house, I'd have no qualms about going downstairs and stabbing him in the face. And - [smiles] I dunno, I'd make an awesome angel! The one who's the enforcer of God against the devil". [01 F2F]

Although the soldier says that his moral compass has been "totally destroyed", it is interesting to note that he qualifies the statement with context ("given the right circumstances") and appeals to a higher moral authority that situates his remarks within an accepted ethico-legal framework where self-defence is considered a lesser evil. This

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perceptive insight is not amoral thinking. It perhaps indicates that, even after significant moral attrition, not all is morally lost, echoing Piaget's thinking on enduring memory traces (Ausubel, 1968; Furth, 1981) and pointing to a certain robust quality of a formed moral conscience. This soldier's justification for his putative treatment of an intruder in his home (though expressed in vivid 'squaddie' terms) may be an example of Newman's *illation* discussed above: the footprint of the conscience is identifiable but smudged to some degree by attrition and so unable, perhaps temporarily, to function in an integral way expected by society. It is as though his moral wires have become crossed or short-circuited by emotion - a possibility anticipated by Soldier 06 [F2F] below who suggested effects of an "emotion and adrenaline chemical change in the body" (Bartz et al., 2011). The soldier's appeal is positioned within a stark framework of justice. In Newman's understanding, intellectual assent of the will could be compromised due to the damaged moral conscience - in the same way that a malformed or neglected conscience would degrade its capacity to function soundly. Soldier 01, above, sheds valuable light on the lingering and disrupted connections between themes of military ethics, law, conscience and MI that I explored in the data and that offer something of a starting point for repair and restoration initiatives I survey in the next chapter of the thesis.

Another perspective on the potential effect of a PMIE on the moral conscience was alluded to by Soldier 06 who reflected:

> "[Marine A] crossed that line for me. There was no longer a threat to his life or to his men. For me, I'm pretty confident that that particular line was crossed on more than that occasion. Maybe he'd done it before. We don't know - but I think, you know, to do it and not feel that morally or ethically you're doing something wrong, you've lost sight of those principles whether its law or V&S or as a Marine that they clearly state their values are … you have to be able to justify that." [06 F2F]

The comment that he believed *Marine A* had "crossed that line" is telling and it looks to Aristotle's thinking on virtue habituation on which the UK approach to military ethics formation is based. I have re-framed PMIEs as moral conscience attrition and my RQ interrogates whether the moral conscience can withstand repeated attrition in this way and still function soundly. The classical tradition valued the literary device of illustrating "contrasting opposites" in a binary and intentionally pedagogical manner. Aristotle

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contrasted virtues with their opposite vices, Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* contrasted figures from history that were worth imitating with those who were not (Aristotle, 2013; Titchener and Zadorojnji, 2023). In this approach to moral understanding and character formation, where the conscience is the mind's moral sentinel, it is possible to habituate (or at least become comfortable with) vicious behaviour. An interesting comparison could be drawn with parts of the defence offered by Nazi war criminals - that they were only following orders in a quasi-behaviourist way - and that this mitigated culpability for their actions. Although the power of conditioned behaviour to influence moral actions is not unknown to social psychologists (Haney, 1973; Milgram, 1963), the Nazi war crimes tribunal considered that it did not convincingly explain or excuse immoral actions in contravention of the Natural Law (Rommen, 1959). Although perhaps a factor in the criminal actions of many accused Nazis, 'just following orders' was unable to account for the failures of the criminals' moral consciences and hence it returned a guilty verdict for many of them. If PMIEs create moral conscience attrition (asserted in my thesis), perhaps the innate human capacity for making moral judgements, the moral conscience, is so wounded or ground-down by PMIEs that it blunts distinction between good and evil and therefore reduces moral culpability. It is interesting to speculate whether, in the light of growing awareness of MI, the same verdicts would prevail today if MI were accepted in mitigation.

Ethical teleology (for virtue or vice) needs an enabling context (a Field), as well as moral agency (capitals and habitus), to flourish - be it examples of good ethical leadership on the one hand or, on the other, being sent into combat unprepared and unsupported by the government in terms of having proper military kit. The latter was *Marine A's* experience in the period leading up to the critical incident being studied. The Appeal hearing noted, for example, that his Section was under resourced and poorly led to the extent of going 'feral' (Regina v Blackman, 2017). My RQ ponders to what extent *Marine A's* operating context, with multiple experiences of PMIE, may have created a situation that enabled some degree of vice-habituation that had the effect of blunting his moral conscience? Soldier 06, continuing his reflection on *Marine A's* action notes:

> "He would not normally, perhaps, behave that way but the emotion and adrenaline chemical change in the body take over and would drive someone absolutely to go against what we would preach or want people to buy in to when they're in that kind

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of situation… but if you can cross that line, what else could you do? And that's a very dangerous area because your moral compass to do the right thing has gone and you will do something illegal. And if you can break one law, could you break ten? And that's not an area that you want to get into!" [06 F2F].

The need for repair or healing after MI is a significant theme in the academic literature (Brock and Lettini, 2012; Kelle, 2020), resonating with the data generated in this study. The green shoots of the healing process often surface soon after a PMIE, such as the one described in the Literature Review when I was involved in the critical incident involving loss of life after an IED explosion in Afghanistan. Chaplaincy-led interventions have a unique spiritual focus that can contribute to a holistic approach to "soul repair" (Carey and Hodgson, 2018a; Kelle, 2020; Sherman, 2015). Moving forward, as the conceptual framework for MI develops, healing and repair initiatives will be an important output from the theory that I hope my study will influence. It is a theme I will return to later in this chapter.

5.2.7   Developing a military moral conscience: a blended approach

Instilling the V&S into the minds of soldiers via an ethics education programme is viewed as part of a "blended" approach to learning. Conscience formation is an integral strand. The educational focus of both the wider research aim and the RQ begged the question of how this aspiration was experienced by soldiers. A frequent theme in the data was that very little was remembered about ethics lessons via classroom teaching (Soldier 08, below, remembered as best he could the events of many years ago), though he remembered that the Padre had a role in teaching them: "I remember that the training was always delivered by the Padre" [02 SI]. Another interviewee articulated a clearly behaviourist recollection:

> "I can't remember at all! It was nearly 22yrs ago. It was different back then - you were shouted at and stuff like that! It was scream first, ask questions later. It was more like discipline led. Broadly. You've got Respect for Others in the V&S now - I don't think we had it back then. It was led by discipline and fear and not spelt out". [08 F2F].

Individual habitus's collision and eventual accommodation with the mind of the state is nursed by the dynamic of the Social Field, animated by its conventions of capitals, doxa and

symbolic power; it is a heady, all-consuming mix. This arrangement mirrors Bourdieu's thinking, as set out by Wacquant, on how the habitus both shapes, and is shaped by, a Social Field – here the holistic military context, but one that is nevertheless subordinated to the rules of the state in whose service the soldier functions:

> "Habitus propels the lines of action that reaffirm or alter the structures of social space, and the collective meshing of those lines in turn reinforces or challenges the perimeter, programmes and priorities of the state and its categorisations" (Wacquant, 2014: 284).

There are three educational domains contained in the Common Military Syllabus (CMS) (MoD, 2023) for initial recruit training: physical (eg. personal fitness); conceptual (eg. how weapons work) and moral (eg. V&S). The proportion of classroom based to practical learning formats is dynamic. While some classroom-based sessions are mandated by the CMS in basic army training, other approaches to learning are considered more useful, at least in the early stages of a soldier's formation. In the Literature Review, I commented on practical approaches to ethical education in partnership with formal classroom-based lessons. Practising moral scenarios through mentoring / coaching activities like Judgemental Training and Frame-based feedback sessions, often in the field during exercise, stuck in the soldiers' minds more easily than a lecture. Opportunities for formative assessment and sharing of real-life experiences by senior soldiers are possible and expected in the military environment - effectively a CoP (Lave and Wenger, 1991) - in which the moral conscience can be nurtured 'on the job', so to speak.

One interviewee put his experience of the blended approach like this:

> "Briefings are a base line. But in the same way you practice CASEVAC drills [Casualty Evacuation], doing it in a Platoon or Section level is better. Better situational awareness and emphasis on doing the morally right thing would save us a lot of bad press…especially if you're being continually told things like 'if you have a prisoner of war and they resist, make them a casualty of war' or 'plasti-cuff him and if he resists, make sure he won't resist next time' [*looks uncomfortable and awkward*]." [02 F2F].

Semiotics can play a greater role in practical sessions than words in a lecture, where even something as simple as ensuring that uniform is correctly worn can make a subliminal

contribution to assimilating correct moral behaviours that reinforce the ethical vocation of a British Soldier. One of my interviewees contrasted his experience of working with other militaries on operational duty:

> "they [civilian populations] see our uniform, they see the flag on our arm, they automatically know that as a British Soldier we're not going to rape them, we're not going to murder or rob them, we're pretty ethical, we're uncorruptible in most respects". [01 SI]

Later in a soldier's military career, it seems as though there is an intellectual hunger for a more cognitive approach to ethical education. Possibly because the soldier's reflective experience has developed and provoked different and more strategic ethical questions, or perhaps because they are more comfortable with military identity and their place in the organisation, a more classroom-based format is favoured. Now, a dialectical Socratic approach to ethics (rather than a mainly didactic approach) is desirable, adopting an educationally constructivist tack to foster discussion based on lived experience and reference to more of the external ethical frameworks such as international law that UK Armed Forces inhabit. One of my soldiers reflected in his SI:

> "I think as you get older you get more understanding of the law anyway. Perhaps a greater view / understanding of what the law protects and what it has to offer us in terms of where it navigates society and where it navigated the military. Say the LOAC [Law of Armed Conflict] - and what is allowed or permitted to do under a set of circumstances. It's a difficult one to answer!" [07 SI].

The legacy of the military educational process and continuing development that unfolded as this soldier ruminated on his experience suggests a possible synergy between Newman's *Illative Sense* and Bloom's Revised Taxonomy of Higher Order Thinking, at Figure 13 below. It links to elements of a Socratic application to advancing moral understanding that could be enriched and developed by a deeper interaction of Bloom and Newman to expand the tools available for Formative Assessment in multiple disciplines. Newman's *Illative Sense* could be tailored to 'fill the gaps' between each of Bloom's stages of Higher Order Thinking by offering a framework to populate answers or make suggestions for the who, how, what, why and where questions of the taxonomy. In this way, the student's experience could 'own' each stage of thinking by offering concrete, personal examples of assimilation.

Perhaps in conjunction with a reflexive account, this theoretical synergistic approach could also add value to the palette of methods available to teachers to carry out formative assessment, offering comment on the rungs of the student's 'ladder' between the stages of cognition. It resonates with the rationality I offered in the Methodology Chapter when explaining my *Synergistic Interview*.
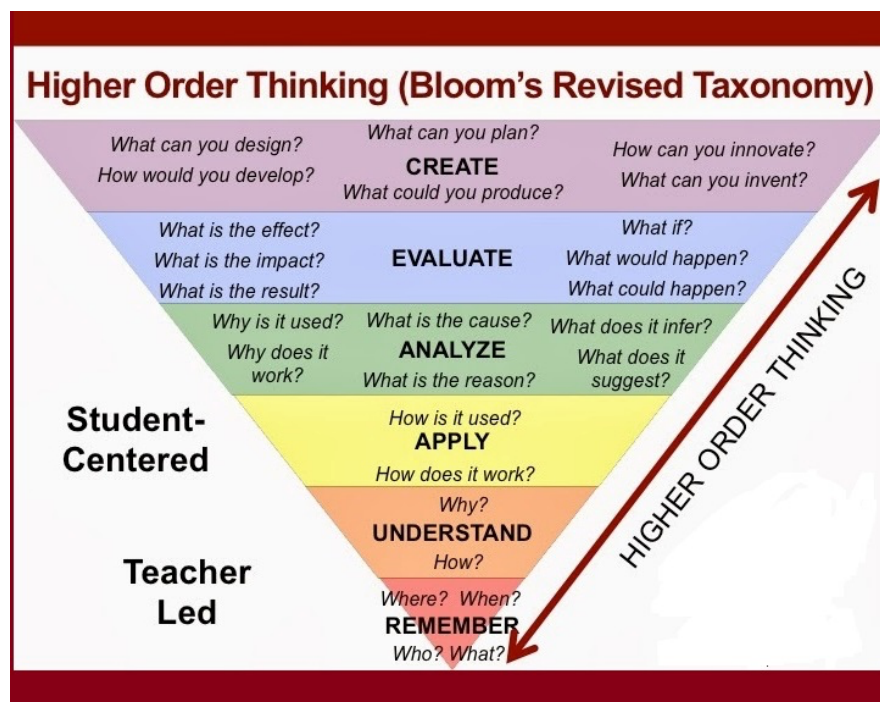

Figure 13 Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (Anderson et al, 2001).

It would be difficult to envisage a junior soldier having this degree of mature reflection and insight into the strategic role of a British Soldier - and that may be why, initially, a more practical and blended approach to learning works best with opportunities for more experienced soldiers to coach the juniors. It creates a safe and fertile environment for the practically focussed moral conscience to flourish and develop. The formation of a military conscience can follow a similar trajectory and be framed in these terms, looking ahead to the teleological harbour of a life well lived through the assimilation of virtuous choices. Hence, Aristotle's sense of *eudaimonia* is achieved through the practice of virtue that leads to human flourishing and happiness by resting on a mature and soundly functioning moral conscience.

5.3 Main Theme #3: Combat carries a Moral Mortgage.

The first two themes discussed above situate the formation of a British Soldier's moral character within thematic referents of IHL, personally assimilated by an educational and training framework along broadly virtue approaches to military ethics. I discussed the role of the moral conscience as a personal guide or sentinel in the practical application of behaviour to ethics and queried its reaction to PMIEs framed as moral attrition that this next theme seeks to explore: the personal moral price-tag that military service carries that I call a "Moral Mortgage". The research aim of the study was to explore the interrelationship between ethics, the moral conscience and MI; this theme catches some of the longer-term price or cost to a sound moral conscience when placed in the service of an ethically equivocal situation such as war (*ius in bello*) and the reasons for it (*ius ad bellum*).

5.3.1 Society's dirty work

Each of my interviewees positioned military service in terms that found broad strategic expression in the AFC (MoD, 2000), first enshrined in UK law in 2011 (MoD, 2011). Soldiering was seen unlike other jobs that demanded a higher moral code of behaviour necessary to act on behalf of the nation, bestowed with the nation's moral authority and support. As such, the soldier's *vocation* is ordered to a noble ontology at the service of humanity, comprising more than a professional identity. This point was referenced by Soldier 04 F2F, in section 5.2.1, above. The cultural 'wrapper' surrounding military service, noted in the Literature Review, is articulated in quasi-religious language and iconography (or semiotics). This arrangement unveils cultural capital, immediately enhancing dignity and social status to its practitioners - with a clear understanding via the V&S of the parameters and context of expected behaviours. One of my interviewees put it like this:

> "As a nation we've always stood up for the weak against tyranny and that stuff. People seem to forget that 70yrs ago we were the only people with the lights on [in Europe] saying 'we're not having this'". [01 F2F]

The altruistic and self-sacrificing nature of military service was also the subject of similar reflection by another soldier who commented: "when I think about my time in the Army,

that's why it's there, that's what protects the rest" [06 F2F]. There is an understanding in both comments that not only is the army the historical 'backstop' of a society (and what keeps a regime in power) but that in a western democratic country like the UK, a national army may be deployed expeditionally at the service of a higher, rules-based global order under the aegis of the United Nations. There is an accepted expectation in military doctrine that one of the army's functions is, to some extent, to do wider society's 'dirty work' by exercising force, sometimes lethal, within internationally agreed legal parameters. The possibility of a high personal cost in military service is implicitly accepted as part of the soldiers' side of the AFC. One of the interviewees framed this risk strategically, in the sense of being part of a continuum of military service that stretched across centuries and between nations. I asked whether he thought that our comrades' deaths in Afghanistan were "worth the price" paid in blood. His response was statesmanlike and it chimes with Soldier 01, above:

> [if not] "then you don't acknowledge the sacrifice made. Politically, you can think differently and say 'no' but I think it has to be an absolute 'yes'. What would the 'no' look like if in history, no one had ever done that? We have what we have today because someone in the past made that sacrifice. I always think of the National Memorial Arboretum, on that wall at the top there's the names of all who have died in recent conflicts: there a big space after the last name and I'd love to return in 50yrs time and see no more names on it." [07 F2F]

The two comments above suggest that soldiers do not see their role as pure utility. There is a sense of a higher calling to a nobler cause ordered towards justice, born of service and self-sacrifice - one that acknowledges that 'someone' has to get their hands dirty to protect the nation and its values. As George Orwell allegedly observed wryly, "we sleep safely in our beds because rough men are willing to visit violence on those who would do us harm" (attrib. Orwell). Disrupted by an alignment of a PMIE arising from a sense of injustice, particularly by misgivings over *ius ad bellum* justifications by politicians such as those referenced by Soldier 02 earlier, the attrition inflicted on the moral conscience that damages a soldier's sense of serving a noble cause could easily develop into a MI that manifests in feelings of betrayal and damaged trust in authority eloquently laid bare by Tyler Boudreau (2011) and offered by the data that formed the next sub-theme.

5.3.2 Poor leadership

As discussed in the Literature Review, a covenant is a dynamic agreement between two parties, here it is between the soldier and the State known as the Armed Forces Covenant. A conceptual framework for the relationship is offered is at Figure 14, below:

Figure 14 The Armed Forces Covenant (2011)

Some of the interviewees commented on how the State (Government) was considered, despite the fine words of its politicians, to have held back or failed to live up to its side of the agreement, leaving soldiers to 'stand the gap' between promise and reality. This was experienced on numerous levels, some philosophical and others practical: both had a wearing effect on the individual soldier's moral conscience. Soldier 06, the guardsman I quoted earlier, located moral culpability for failures in the adequate resourcing of war firmly with the governing elite and its abusive, cowardly exercise of power, resonating with Wacquant's image of the hypocritical *Centaur State,* "liberal at the top and primitive at the bottom" (Wacquant, 2014: 275)

> "I think the people who are making these decisions to send lads from council estates to get their limbs blown off in war with life-changing injuries are the people who

would never let their own children join the armed forces. In my eyes, this is the worst kind of evil. It's reckless beyond any kind of rational conversation". [06 F2F]

Another interviewee highlighted the sense of betrayal he felt by the government's failure to resource UK military action in Iraq in terms of sufficient quality kit, pointing to a sense of hypocrisy in politicians who expected others to do their dirty work 'on the cheap':

> "Everyone will say "just crack on". They'll complain and say it's shit - but they'll still crack on. It's the Army way! It's still abusive though - you could say to the politician: 'right, let's send your son to war with crap kit and see how you like it!'" [08 F2F].

Another soldier who was involved in the ethical and political fallout from the Baha Mousa incident in 2004 (Gage, 2011) offered a more reflexive and strategic assessment of the contexts that can foster MI when political leadership fails and the ethical 'gap' must be stood:

> "It's completely unfair to send 1000 young men from Lancashire who have not really seen much sun before, a load of working-class lads, to go to Basrah and operate, you know, radios that weren't even new in WW2 and kit that breaks all the time. No, of course it's not fair, but it's the standard mentality of the working-class British soldier that you kind of put your head down and get on with it! It's the kind of mentality and moral compass of the standard British soldier that makes the difference up between the incompetent leadership at times and the under-resourced nature of the operation that you often find yourselves in". [02 F2F]

Soldier 08's comment that "it's still abusive" chimes with the above comment, points to a PMIE and maps to the societal turn of the MI construct that I noted in the Literature Review (Fiala, 2017; Owen, 1918). In Bourdieusian terms, despite confronting much more powerful actors with their own institutional habitus (politicians wielding the apparatus of state), the 'fish out of water' (the morally disconcerted soldier) adapts a morally wounded habitus, with its unrealised expectation of adequate resourcing, to do the job required of him. He is able to re-calibrate his habitus ("just crack on…it's the army way" / "put your head down and get on with it") and adjusts to the newly drawn field of practice with its changing *doxa* as the mission proceeds. But there is a moral cost, a price-tag or injury attached to this situation that sooner or later must be paid - and not with money.

Failures of political leadership were only part of the soldiers' story regarding a high price paid in MI by military service, especially on operational duty. Failures of military leadership were viewed by the interviewees through a moral lens that linked poor professional leadership to weak moral leadership rooted in a deficit of integrity. The broken link that led to a PMIE was framed as a breakdown in the army's own V&S that some senior officers in the CoC thought they could side-step on occasion:

> "I think there's no mechanism to ensure that people continually obey the rules of the V&S. If you're a high enough rank, you're getting away with it for the rest of your career" (09 F2F).

This soldier's perceptive observation about a lack of moral accountability for senior actors in an institutional hierarchy not only comments on individual moral weakness but also on the delicate balance in military culture involving an inverse power relationship of rank-related trust and elements of behaviourism that are grounded in military law. The assumption underlying varying degrees of trust and freedom that increase with seniority as a behaviourist approach 'tapers off' is based to some degree on the belief that integrity deepens with education and responsibility: the longer a soldier spends in the military environment and the higher the rank achieved, the more deeply the V&S are assimilated in practice. This is the best, ideal view of Illeris's account of alternating between different learning types (Illeris, 2017). However, while this may be the aspiration of military ethical education that I outlined in my discussion of the first of my themes, the uncomfortable reality will never escape the morally unpredictable and mysterious workings of human nature. Education without a clear moral framework is vulnerable to a shifting utilitarian telos that loses the emancipative ambition and transformational potential sought by educational philosophers since Aristotle.

Powers (2017) uses a theological lens to harness the insights of Greek epic themes such as the *hubris / nemesis* dynamic,[8] positioning them with St Augustine's thinking on Original Sin and its effects on human nature to offer a complementary way of understanding why people sometimes behave in unexpected and unreliable ways. Augustine notes a deep

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[8] In Greek thought, *hubris* is the tragic character flaw of overweening pride that gets its come-uppance with *nemesis* - revenge or retribution, sometimes personified as a goddess.

internal contradiction in the human mind and soul, inexplicable without reference to the Divine, that requires constant care and attention for the moral conscience to function soundly as a personal moral compass. Senior officers betraying the unguarded trust that their rank bestows was mentioned as problematic by my interviewees. It was seen as a worked example of the authentic functioning of a *hubris / nemesis* dynamic in a hierarchical organisation such as the army by my final interviewee when we discussed recent high-profile moral lapses by very senior officers involving fraud. I asked whether such incidents weakened or damaged how junior ranks viewed the law:

> "No, it shows us that the Law is there for all. No one is above the Law. And I was really pleased to hear that that chap [General X] went to Colchester [military prison]. If that had been me, I would have had the book thrown at me too. It showed me that the Army is equal and is seen to be equal. I'm disappointed that he felt that he could get away with it because of his rank or position. You'd like to think that people in these positions wouldn't do these things - but we have this in our own politicians, extra-marital affairs etc - I was saddened but not shocked by it. I thought 'good on you, the Law is for everyone'. And it reinforces who we are". [10 F2F]

The soldier's comments chime with the teleology of justice to which the V&S are ordered. He speaks of resolution and satisfaction of the outcome (punishment / *nemesis*). Soldier 10 also notes a positive outcome of the incident for others in military service in which just application of the law strengthens military ontology, *what* we are, not just *how* we do our job. Resonating with the role of the Law as a moral authority and tutor that Plato envisions in his *Republic* (Badiou, 2015; Plato and Saunders, 1975), this is a key objective of a virtue approach to military ethical education - a transformational approach that changes individuals for the better (Mezirow and Associates, 2000) rather than merely helping them to be more efficient or obedient. It sits uneasily with the philosophical contradictions noticed earlier in the non-consummate virtue / utility tension noted earlier when using the "Service Test" to critique lapses of moral agency.

5.3.3   The forgotten veteran

All interviewees were veterans of at least one recent military campaign; most of them had experienced several tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan and several had sustained serious

battle injuries, physical and mental (Figure 8). There was a common belief among the veterans that Society - government in particular - was failing in its moral responsibility to care for veterans who often felt abandoned in terms of understanding their traumatic experiences or available practical support. One of the interviewees, medically discharged from the army after Afghanistan, felt that the army had been too quick to get rid of him without making proper provision for his welfare as a civilian:

> "some days I have a bad day. I don't wish I was dead but I can't wait to die sometimes. I just sit here and think I'm fucking done, I'm fed up with this - working so hard and having given so much to this organisation - and I just get fucking thrown on the scrap pile. They booted me out for being broken. And they broke me! I'm still pretty bitter about it. I hate them so much. And you go back into the real world - and there's just nothing out there for you. All you've been is a soldier - and you go back into that world after what you've been through and try to make sense of it all". [01 SI]

The soldier's comments claw at unfulfilled expectations of the AFC (MoD, 2000; 2011) and expose a cynical attitude towards those who send soldiers to war, also referenced by Soldier 02 above. It is such a powerful reflection on the reality of some veterans' post-army experiences that it spurs me to help tell their stories as best I can through this study. Unfortunately, history seems to be repeating itself. As discussed in the Literature Review, there are vivid parallels with veterans of the Great War (1914-18) whose experiences in and after war are told by the War Poets (Owen, 1918). Shell-shocked heroes for a season - but soon forgotten when the eyes of the world have turned to something new. Jonathan Shay's *Odysseus in America* (Shay, 2002) offers a more recent account of returning American soldiers, viewed through the lens of Greek epic poetry that Shay terms a "moral undoing of character", as the emerging concept of MI links to veterans' experiences of social isolation, destructive behaviours and suicide ideation that appear in many soldiers' post-combat experiences (Jamieson et al., 2023; Jinkerson, 2016; Kelley et al., 2019; Sherman, 2015).

A common thread running through the data, arising from the Natural Law, was the importance for soldiers of fairness and justice in battle, military training and society. My research aim sought to give a broad framework of inquiry to probe the interaction of these themes and to observe the workings of the moral conscience in highlighting a disconnect or misalignment of them resulting in a PMIE or MI.

Soldier 10 expressed how he felt that the law should be applied equally, regardless of rank, not surprising given the teleological framework of justice that the army's V&S serve. Neither is it surprising that some veterans feel that society fails to live up to the same principles of justice and fairness in its treatment of them. There is a philosophical as well as a practical deficit in society according to this view. It goes along the lines that 'society has formed my ontology / character for military service and when it has finished with my service it casts me aside in an act of utility and leaves me to fend for myself'. In other words, there is a perceived culpable moral disconnect between the process of 'breaking' soldiers in battle and 'wriggling out' of supporting them adequately post-discharge into a society that no longer cares about those who have sacrificed much to protect it (Kipling, 1890). It may be that these societal experiences of veterans keep the wounds of MI fresh and impede healing or repair. It is another reason why the pathway to wholeness and healing cannot be left to the resources of psychiatry alone but requires a wider, richer and inter-disciplinary approach (Kinghorn, 2020; Kelle, 2020).

5.3.4 Moral betrayal is complex and festering

Themes of poor leadership and the military's role in engaging with wider society's 'dirty work', discussed above, feed a sense of betrayal that is destructive to the human person's moral integrity and forms a hallmark element of MI. Soldier 06 referenced its effect on him, reflecting on the moral failures of politicians inadequately resourcing combat troops in Iraq:

> "And to me, when Gordon Brown told that bare-faced lie [*about the kit*] my family who are strictly Labour [*Party*] it withdraws you further from Society because engaging in politics is engaging is something that you can never change. And for Veterans especially, you've seen it at that level of betrayal that is unforgivable. There'd be times when I'd go into intense periods of paranoia - like down rabbit holes - because through documentaries [*on TV*] I knew that they'd lied to us. What else have they lied to us about?" [06 F2F].

The chart at Figure 2 sought to disentangle presenting symptoms proper to both PTSD and MI, noting those shared by both phenomena. The literature explores how hallmark themes such as shame and guilt are experienced by veterans afflicted by MI and how, if

unrecognised and un-addressed, serious long-term mental health issues may develop. Self-harm and suicide ideation are among the most damaging manifestations associated (Carey et al., 2023b; Jamieson et al., 2023). The data generated in this study resonated with many of the themes referenced in the academic literature and offer further insight into contributing elements of PMIEs from a UK veterans' perspective. This consideration is significant since most of the research to date has been carried out with US veterans whose combat experiences and moral formation are different from UK veterans in certain key aspects (Schulzke, 2019; DDA, 2020; Hollis et al., 2023). This difference in approach was evident in the primary data, in particular in the vignette offered by the guardsman (Soldier 06) who spoke of witnessing US personnel disrespecting a Taliban corpse in Afghanistan. The role of the moral conscience in alerting to a veteran's sense of a PMIE, the focus of my study, is intimately bound to the assimilation and practice of V&S. I have framed PMIEs as attrition of the moral conscience, a thread that runs throughout the data in the study that finds resonances with developing scholarly literature on MI (Kelle, 2020; Papadopoulos, 2020).

Betrayal of V&S, either personally or witnessing of others', is a key element in the unfolding conceptual framework of MI (Kelle, 2020). It was commented on by most of my interviewees who linked it to a feeling of being morally tainted by association, even when the incident took place at another location and by allies bound by similar RoE:

> "I've never come across anyone who's never been disgusted at something bad that's happened, whether that be Camp Breadbasket [*a detention facility for Iraqi enemy prisoners*] - I didn't meet anybody who said that was the right thing to do: everyone was like OMG, what dick-heads". [01 F2F]

Moral taint besmirches the individual's ethical world view in a personal way that endures and festers, causing a reconsideration of how one interacts with it morally. In this context, the moral conscience has a dual role in making meaning of such experiences: it confirms moral agency for the 'good' and indicts it for the 'bad' using as a guide the external referents that military ethical education valorises (such as the Golden Rule). The personal effects of moral taint were framed by my study participants in terms of damaged trust, assaulted humanity and being brutalised by combat. Ancient Greek insights into the

atomised human condition persist into modern times; a modern understanding of what Euripides termed *miasma* (moral pollution) in his play *Herakles* that I noted in the Literature Review surfaces, unbidden. One soldier referenced Julius Caesar's Gallic War observation in his SI data that "war brutalises the man - and I've been brutalised" [01 SI]. Giddens (1991) could frame this experience as an assault on an individual's "ontological security" where personal identity is destabilised beyond a tipping point and where, as Illeris notes, "total emptiness or the lack of authenticity also involve total incapacity and, in the last instance, mental breakdown" (Illeris, 2017: 135). Mental illness can be a presenting symptom of a MI (Koenig et al., 2020) and, as such, finds ancient resonance with this chaotic sense of self-destruction following moral affront or taint found in Homer's account of Achilles who goes 'berserk' after betraying the moral law and the warrior code (that we might term *ius in bello*) on the death in war of his friend, Patroclus. It is a theme explored by Shay in his pivotal text for the development of the MI construct (Shay, 1995).

In developing Theme#2 (A sound Moral Conscience requires ethical education / formation), one of my interviewees reflected:

> "How can we bring our Western way of thinking to those people? It's complicated, and it's a fight that's been happening for thousands of years and I try not to think about it - and it's hard because working in the Middle East does question your moral integrity and sometimes you have to do a bad thing in order to do the right thing because it's the way they do business and it doesn't sit very well with you". [01 F2F]

The soldier's remarks point not only to a clash of cultures or civilisations arising from western cultural and political hegemony that Samuel Huntingdon explored following the First Gulf War in 1990, identifying an ancient east / west cultural fault-line, but also comments on the western understanding of ethics in which he was schooled by UK society and military ethical education (Huntington, 1993). The betrayal was moral as well as political in the sense that the soldier felt that not only should he not have been placed in an ethically equivocal situation in the first place (*ius ad bellum*, Fiala, 2017) but that the tools for making sound conscience-guided moral choices – the RoE - were sub-optimal in practice. Both assaulted his moral conscience ("it doesn't sit very well with you") and may have led to a MI.

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This is also a good example of Braun and Clarke's (2022) analytical distinction between semantic and latent codes, explored in the Methodology Chapter. The soldier describes a moral decision-making process he witnessed that jars with his moral conscience - a PMIE - yet it appears acceptable within the guiding lights of a different culture. A latent analytical lens prods me to explore how this soldier's moral formation has equipped him to make sound moral choices in the context he describes - and how his moral conscience could be shielded to some degree from further moral attrition. Hence, my thesis inquires: is the virtue approach to character formation the most appropriate, as has been suggested, or would a different moral philosophical framework like Deontology or Behaviourism not only produce morally acceptable outputs, but also protect the individual warrior's mental health? My study situates the moral conscience within entirely western Judaeo-Christian ethical referents; a further study could explore a similar RQ with reference to Eastern (such as Confucian or Hindi) or Islamic ethical traditions.

Following Soldier 01's moral discomfort with an unfamiliar ethical landscape, moral taint arose from a sense of collusion with an unjust exercise of power by western coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. I discussed the manipulation of ethics by powerful state-actors in relation to *ius ad bellum* earlier in this chapter but here was another, subtler manifestation of the same theme in the process of nation-building (*ius post bellum*) noted by veterans of Op HERRICK. Several interviewees referenced their mentoring role with the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP), institutions manufactured by interim regime politicians installed by western forces after the Taliban were expelled from Afghanistan, a tribal society. The Afghan post-war regime populated the ANA and ANP with personnel from non-local tribes, attempting to avoid favouritism by imposing western ideas of impartiality and meritocracy. The policy failed spectacularly, not least because it was based on non-Afghan cultural principles that disregarded the complexities of tribal loyalty. The price of this strategic failure was paid in corruption and brutality where the state-appointed security forces favoured tribal alliances that western soldiers were directed to 'turn a blind eye' to. Morally, this approach engendered a feeling of taint, collusion and powerlessness in some of my participants:

"I suppose I harbour some anger and some resentment of being put in that position - not being able to deal with that, not being able to interact and administer justice which, after all, was what ISAF really stood for and what the UK contingent wanted to do. Not being able to do that is very very difficult". [04 SI]

The same soldier spoke powerfully about his experience of being ordered to disregard social paedophilia in a culture with different moral referents to his own:

"the ANP [Afghan National Police] had a certain policeman I witnessed taking some young children into a tunnel and when the young children came out they were shocked. And I have very little doubt that they were sexually abused… the experience was terrible and not being able to do anything about it. Not being able to stop it. I had a rifle and there are very few things that I might point it at and pull the trigger - but I thought this would be one reason why I would - and not being able to do that because of the political situation and the tensions it would cause. [04 SI].

It is interesting to note that this soldier's very frank reflection on a PMIE was disclosed within the safety of a SI format. As with other interviews previously mentioned, the candour with which such toxic data is volunteered (he did not mention this incident during the F2F interview) appears to be linked with the reflective *aporia* that feeds the synergistic approach I have developed. The sense of powerlessness that I heard from this soldier resonated with the political philosopher Edmund Burke (1729-97) who is famously said to have remarked: "the only thing necessary for evil to flourish is for good men to do nothing". In Bourdieusian terms, the above quotations speak of habitus that has been *mugged* rather than merely challenged - and in a (battle) Field redolent of the Passchendaele trenches! How is repair and healing possible under such circumstances? And using what means?

5.3.5   Loyalty: Good Cop / Bad Cop

Revisiting the Literature Review where I considered the importance of loyalty as a key enabling military core value, I noted that the uneven interplay between individual moral conscience and the power of peer pressure to moderate it- especially where there is a conflict of loyalty to the group - was a recurring motif in the data. Bourdieu's thinking on the meeting of competing habituses and social field can reframe the clash: in the battle of wills, can a soundly functioning moral conscience strengthen the individual's habitus against a powerful collective habitus (Reay, 2004) that threatens to absorb it by peer pressure? One

of my interviewees, reflecting on *Marine A's* manipulation of peer pressure to hide his immoral action, commented:

> "It's one of those things where this *esprit de corps*, this team thing is so tight that you're willing to lie for your colleagues in order to protect them. It's got to be wrong - but you need to understand 'why do we do that'? Is it that we don't see that as something that's wrong - that it's just part of the 'war package'? People cutting ears of Argentinians down in the Falklands that we heard about, all these horrors even going back to Viet Nam and what went on there, and what we do to other human beings, do we just see that as part and parcel of the thing [war]? [10 F2F]

The soldier captures the complexity of the tension, recognising the reality of a relationship between theory and practice - ethics and morals - that has its own brutalising *doxa* noted by Caesar and other ancient writers like Virgil (2008). The front lines of unavoidable barbaric behaviour in battle (the euphemistically termed 'Fog of War' after von Clausewitz (1976)) and recent advances in tempering such behaviour with humanitarian restraint advocated by Henri Dunant (the founder of the International Red Cross), finding tentative legal expression in the Hague Convention and the Geneva Conventions of War, appear as entrenched as ever. It may be that the "war thing" is such a chaotic part of the human constitution, as Powers (2019) notes, that the untamed foggy *aporia* between ethics and morals resists education and civility. Loyalty, perhaps, is the most difficult of the V&S to order satisfactorily towards justice where self-interest and self-preservation from harm rules in battle. Soldier 02 commented:

> "especially since going back to things like the Geneva Convention, on a grander scale not everybody plays fair. And I would always take the side of "my people" - I mean those you feel a sense of moral obligation to" [02 F2F].

Recent high-profile examples of misplaced loyalty - or unthinking loyalty towards a group identity such as a platoon or a regiment - throw the tension into sharp relief (Chilcot, 2016; Gage, 2011). Disheartening though it seems, it may be that in war, loyalty to one's fellow warriors inevitably trumps modern western ideals of *ius in bello* that UK military ethics education attempts to instil via virtue habituation. The research aim sought to provoke data generated from a wide, strategic consideration of the dynamic interrelationship between ethics, moral conscience and MI, setting the scene for my RQ to explore the role of the moral conscience in identifying such limits to inform ways of closing the gap between theory

and practice. Misplaced loyalty appeared to be a persistent 'speed bump' in finding a clear way forward.

Bourdieu's approach to the dynamic contents of the Social Field by tagging or commenting on the interaction of the various actors in it is helpful - but his schema has its limits for this study. As noted earlier in this chapter when considering Foucault's (1991) deconstruction of structure and agency relationships via lenses of power and coercion in reviewing Bentham's *Panopticon* device, Bourdieu's account of the Social Field is presented without reference to a clearly articulated ethical framework. Perhaps this should not surprise us since Bourdieu's early thinking was shaped by his education in sociology with some positivist theoretical assumptions about the world he sought to interrogate; indeed, Bourdieu's landmark educational study of the Algerian working classes in 1962 that set out his philosophical stall was based on a mixed-methods approach to research methodology with little explicit reference to an ethical framework that would be recognised by a moral philosopher (Bourdieu et al., 1962).

Bourdieu's long-term colleague, Loic Wacquant, implicitly looks to expand or make clearer an ethical application of Bourdieu's main conceptual terms such as *doxa* and symbolic power – though seen through the eyes of a sociologist rather than an ethicist. His study on impoverished African American New York boxers (Wacquant, 2004) and his writings on how poverty appears to attract unjust disciplinary and penal attention in neoliberal societies (Wacquant, 2014) refers to aspects of Natural Law thinking – yet without developing into a worked ethical framework that would explain another dynamic within Bourdieu's social field thinking.

5.3.6   Survival: time to move forward

My interviewees spoke of a desire to move forward through the debilitating effects of MI into a new normality, a full return to civilian society. In some ways this seems a similar process of transition found in stages of grief and bereavement strategies that are grounded in an understanding that bereavement is not a mental illness but part of a human being's

normal reaction to a stressful part of life (Kübler-Ross, 1993). Like a bereavement process, the emerging path to restoration in MI appears complex and non-linear in its pathway, chiming with developments in the academic literature that recognise the limits of a medical paradigm to offer healing of the root causes of MI (Koenig and Al Zaben, 2021b). Veterans with MI speak of a recursive pattern in terms of how they feel able to function in daily life, similar to Kübler-Ross's pattern of moving forwards and backward through the various stages of grief until a 'new normal' is arrived at (Ramsay, 2019). My study could advance understanding of how the wounded moral conscience's road to healing and restoration forms an anchor that can offer hope and healing to the diverse elements that constitute the human person. As I noticed in the Literature Review, the origins of the moral conscience may be mysterious but it is the unique quality proper to the human person that touches all other domains, however tentatively. It is reasonable to assume, I suggest, that this insight can offer a direction of travel capable of reaching into inter-disciplinary areas of research as the conceptual framework of MI continues to develop along these lines of inquiry (Kelle, 2020; Koenig and Al Zaben, 2021b; Papadopoulos, 2020).

One participant framed his dislocated-survivor feelings strategically, making a conceptual distinction between resolved fear-based trauma (PTSD) and ethics-based damage (MI) that resists closure. The soldier's comments resonate with one of, perhaps even the most, major theoretical distinctions as the MI construct develops:

> "I think when I returned from Iraq I became very disenfranchised towards the Army. My life certainly was changed because of that tour and seeing and taking part in some of that stuff - you'd have to question someone psychologically if they said it didn't. I think war is Hell, it's trauma isn't it, I don't think it's one of those things that God intended us experience so it does change people and affect them negatively, and I still have nightmares sometimes - I have had some treatment for PTSD (I wouldn't say that I suffer from that now) but at the same time, there are still lingering effects of that, errm, that are still there [*looks tearful and distant*]". [02 F2F]

Hallmark conceptual elements of MI such as shame and guilt arise from reflective insights on PMIEs over time. There is a growing awareness of the damage done by a PMIE both to oneself and also to others through a deep sense of dislocation and unease that gnaws at the soul. Feelings of shame and culpability can disable and disorient a morally injured person's

ontology in society (Giddens, 1991) as the moral conscience engages in what Sheen (2019: 10) terms an "unbearable repartee" with its host. Reframed in terms of Socratic dialectic, it suggests ancient themes of personal restoration to society via purification strategies post-combat: confession; atonement; contrition; penance and absolution that I discussed in the Literature Review section (Verkamp, 2005). As one of my participants commented:

> "I know I'm never going to get better. Relationships-wise, maybe one day having a family and relationships that I've had that I've ruined through drinks, drugs and stuff. I've ruined things, a lot of things, through no real fault of my own - faults yes, but like it changes you in a way that not only you wish you could just snap out of it, it taints you. You'll never be the same again." [06 F2F].

Finding a pathway to the 'new normality' after MI is elusive. I discussed the conceptual limits of a medical paradigm in the Literature Review and highlighted alternative ways forward via inter-disciplinary routes (Kelle, 2020; Papadopoulos, 2020). Although mentioned explicitly by only three of my participants (02, 04 and 07 who, interestingly, were among the most operationally experienced soldiers in the group) the idea of a spiritual element of help was referenced latently in some of the prototype themes generated by the data. One interviewee identified the role of military chaplains and their spiritual / religious activities as having value in giving pastoral expression to the spiritual roots of the V&S:

> "Caring for the Carers: You'll know on Tour that there is only one Padre per battalion.[9] Why not more? Why not ten? Because dealing with the complexities of situations and supporting our people - you [chaplains] are integral to what we do. You provide an escape from the CoC and a way of decompressing the day-to-day stress and challenges. You need more of the people who provide more of the support to the fighting troops. All this enables the CoC to function better, without a shadow of a doubt, pastoral support is crucial. Because ultimately, resources is not just about equipment, it's also about people. Moral decision making through the Mandatory Annual Training Tests training [moral understanding CPD], V&S, the LOAC and also there will be opportunity for more spiritual / religious time: because in that training environment it's interwoven into what you do. Church Services etc - the opportunity is there to re-enforce the message about moral decision making that may face us when we are overseas or on Ops" [07 SI]

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[9] A British Army infantry battalion comprises approximately 650 soldiers and officers.

Education alone is not enough to help someone come to terms with MI, though it can form an enabling strand of a repair strategy in partnership with pastoral approaches both during and after military service. As an individual's awareness of their response to a PMIE grows over time, repair intervention strategies such as PND can harness educationally transformative approaches discussed in this chapter, offering a humanitarian framework to re-frame PMIEs in a holistic way that allows meaning-making of such experiences, beginning a journey to personal restoration and a new normal. The 'spiritual turn' of the MI construct aims to offer understanding together with an alternative focus for healing that addresses the whole person: mind, body and soul. AD studies such as PND (Carey and Hodgson, 2018a; 2023b) have found that reference to a benign higher moral authority such as God can help. How this works out in practice is still being developed but its tools of inquiry will involve complementary disciplines to psychology and education. Moral Theology has something distinctive to offer competing philosophical options. Theology differs from other disciplines since it locates its analytical and restorative tools in the Divine such as in sacraments and prayer, not in Rationalism (Kinghorn, 2020; Kelle, 2020; Papadopoulos, 2020).

Soldier 07 was comfortable with the presence and professional ability of his chaplain in the life of the battalion and it is reasonable to assume that this natural pastoral relationship could continue for military veterans. I noted in the methodology section that my niche role as an army chaplain offered unique opportunities to observe and support soldiers experiencing MI in a way that other professionals are unable to access due to our historic relationship with soldiers and their families. Soldier 09's referenced the degree of trust that he placed in his unit Padre:

> "Like I trust you as a Padre. I've assessed you and your integrity is more so than anyone in the army. I could tell you anything and I know that if I said 'Padre, this is between me and you', then your integrity is absolutely, fully bullet-proof". [09 F2F]

The soldier had served a full career in the Infantry (I personally knew him from an Afghanistan Tour when he was a Colour-Sergeant) and he would leave the army in the most senior soldier-rank possible, Warrant Officer Class 1 (WO1). The comments of both above soldiers, now very senior, gave encouragement to my belief that the role of military chaplains could bring something unique to the conceptual development of the MI construct

and to healing strategies for those affected by MI (Carey et al., 2023a; Carey et al., 2023b; Carey and Hodgson, 2018b; Moon, 2019). In the Literature Review I referenced work by military chaplains in traditional religious interventions such as confession and prayer, particularly the sacraments, where I described the Incident when a Latin Mass focussed grief and sought to bring comfort for a spiritually diverse cohort of young men. Theologically speculative approaches such as lament liturgies are also possible by constructing rites in which themes of sorrow and regret are given voice and spiritual encounter with the Divine as healing and resolution are sought in the lives of those affected by MI (Ramsay, 2019; Ward, 2020). Military chaplains' unique provenance ideally places them to offer complementary spiritual and religious expressions as part of an inter-disciplinary approach to healing as the MI construct develops. Our professional pastoral experience towards soldiers of all religious persuasions, and of none, equips military chaplains for this offering. Nicolini (2013) might recognise the approach as *zooming* in and out of an encounter with a morally injured veteran, instinctively tailoring moral, spiritual and pastoral interventions to the individual within a framework of trust and shared experiences, thereby connecting the individual to a wider, transcendent metaphysical domain.

Chapter Six: Concluding Chapter

6.0   Introduction

The study was piqued by a critical incident sparking reflection in my mind as I sought to unpack the *Marine A* incident through the optics of MI. It provided a vivid educational peg on which to hang my doctoral journey. My insider researcher provenance as a pastor and teacher of military ethics drew me to explore how UK soldiers learn their ethical craft. Through the research aim, it scoped whether the current educational approach of virtue assimilation can be relied upon to educate and form the moral conscience in broad alignment with IHL and to shelter it from 'ethical ambush' in conflict that I have framed 'moral attrition'.

Bourdieu's Social Field theory offered a strategic arena to animate the main actors and ideas in the data in relation to each other, fanning the data to glow from multiple theoretical lenses (Jackson and Mazzei, 2013; MacLure, 2010; 2013; Nicolini, 2013) offering fresh conceptual insights to advance the development of the MI construct. An interpretative approach to the data fostered co-creation of meaning-making of the interviewees' stories as the analysis took shape in the Discussion Chapter of the thesis (Braun and Clarke, 2022; Terry and Hayfield, 2021).

6.1.   Findings / Aims / RQs

The data analysis considered:

- The overarching **Research Aim** - *To explore the interrelationship between Military Ethics Education and the Moral Conscience in British army veterans to deepen understanding of the emerging concept of Moral Injury;*

- The enabling **Research Objectives** - *to identify veterans who have experienced a PMIE; to observe how military ethics education is experienced and practiced by combat soldiers and to explore the functioning of the moral conscience in an ethically conflicted situation.* These led to the articulation of:

- The **Research Question**: *how might Moral Injury affect the functioning of the moral conscience in UK military veterans formed by a Virtue approach to military ethics education?*

Using interviews, the study generated data from 10 operationally experienced UK veterans by means of a combination of F2F and SIs, analysed using RTA (Braun and Clarke, 2022). I termed this innovative method a *Synergistic Interview* as it uses reflection as a tool to co-create a richer way of viewing qualitative data than a single interview.

6.2   Justice, ethics and education

In the Literature Review I noted the lack of an agreed definition of the MI concept and its fast-moving theoretical development (Jamieson et al., 2020; Kelle, 2020; Papadopoulos, 2020). My research aim was to explore the interrelationship of constituent elements of the working definition of MI that I used in the thesis (Jamieson et al., 2020). The aim allowed me to inquire how military ethical education formed and developed the soldier's moral conscience and how MI might disrupt its anticipated praxis in an ethically conflicted situation, as in the *Marine A* critical incident that framed my study. The broad aspirational framework of the research aim invited inter-disciplinary optics such as Bourdieu (1998), Newman (2016) and MacLure (2010) to add richness and depth to my reflexive approach to the data analysis process and the possibility of conceptual development to the emerging MI construct. It also gave scope to position the moral conscience prominently within the developmental process and to stake a claim for its exploration as an element of future theoretical progression and practical restorative initiatives. The reflexive approach reframed my interviewees' stories, constructed by lived experience in war and outlined in themes of moral philosophy (Fiala, 2017). Positioned in these terms, the first major finding generated by the data - ***Law and Ethics need transparent integration for a just outcome*** - suggested a practical role for the moral conscience in providing an enabling bond between ethics and individual moral agency at the service of justice. Put another way, the moral conscience bore witness, illuminating an authentic harmony or alignment of ethics and morals that

could not be fully expressed in legal or deontological frameworks. This insight is important since the human mind's reliance on the law alone to make meaning of the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" of conflict (Shakespeare, 1987) was considered insufficient when seeking to 'do the right thing'. The research objectives interrogated the underlying theoretical assumptions of UK military educational philosophy and their practical outworking in a soldier's military formation. The relationship between a virtue approach to moral character formation, with reference to ethical parameters found in the Natural Law, proposed by revealed Positive Law and codified in IHL, and its resilience in practice, was explored. The research objectives sought to comment on how a soldier's moral conscience was formed and strengthened and to identify barriers to its sound practice because of moral attrition caused by a PMIE.

Education of the moral conscience using a blended approach of cognitive and practical devices such as judgemental Frame-Based serials (Rudolph et al., 2013b), supported by the practice of imitation of appropriate role models and safely undergirded by military discipline and ethos, contextualised this dynamic process. My professional teaching identity and pastoral role as a military chaplain offered unique insight by simultaneous observation of how soldiers acquired ethical understanding in their military formation and how they practiced it on operational duty. The data suggested that the UK virtue approach to moral character formation has a good chance of aligning with Just War theory, in particular its *ius in bello* themes. Soldier 01 mentioned this explicitly when he reflected that "when it comes to those situations [combat], we've done well in accordance with International Law etc. We are better than them [the enemy]". [01 F2F]. Put differently, if a military conscience has been shaped by the external ethical referents that I outlined in the Literature Review and virtuous behaviour is assumed as a natural outcome of this process of character formation, are violations of *ius in bello* evidenced by *Marine A* less likely to occur? The above finding has significant implications for strengthening and enriching the ethical foundations on which a virtue approach to UK military education sits as a dependable way to build strength of character that is resilient to the impact of a PMIE on the moral conscience of a soldier.

The research objectives of the study focussed on the role of education in its broadest sense to form a soldier's ethical world view, the moral conscience functioning as a sentinel of its

practical alignment with the external ethical referents that I explored in the Discussion Chapter. In my first finding, ethical education gave a shaping and strengthening function for the moral conscience, creating a resilient bridge or conduit between ethical theory and its moral practice in a conflict situation.

6.3   Praxis

My second finding - ***a sound moral conscience requires ethical education / formation*** - positions the educative process as an ethical wrap-around to a constructivist approach to military ethics education that is only partially reliant on formal cognitive learning techniques found in classroom learning, such as a lecture (Hand, 2017; Illeris, 2017). In this ethical context, I positioned 'education' as a personally transformative process that offers a way to connect the individual with a greater, pre-existing body of human thought such as the 10 Commandments. As an example, Soldier 10 alluded to this transformative effect when he spoke about the necessity to "have a standard" of good ethical behaviour - even if it brought conflict with those in society holding a weaker moral framework. The warrior code and military ethos, to some extent parsing the education / formation dynamic, builds on quotidian activities such as sport and military drill that aim to develop group cohesion and mutual trust (Fang et al., 2011). Aristotle's schema of ethical character formation via the pursuit and development of moral excellences or virtues (*arete*) is thereby embodied in a CoP that has a clear ethical framework ordered toward justice. In this context, Gert Biesta's assertion that teaching is "something that radically comes from the outside" can be realised, rather like a midwife assisting at the birth of a child, capturing a certain transcendence that nourishes the learner as fresh ideas are introduced into the learning space (Biesta, 2013: 8).

A blended approach to military ethics education and praxis equips the military learner not to rely on a cognitive or rationalist mechanism alone for moral character formation but harnesses personalist insights by what Newman called the *Illative Sense* (Newman, 2016; Strange, 2009). Educationally, this blended method builds on a key difference between Socrates and his student Aristotle that I discussed in the Methodology Chapter – namely that education needs a clear ethical framework to form the human person in the practice of

virtue or moral excellences. Flowing from this critical distinction, consider how cheating in a game of football, for example, may provide an opportunity for an educational development event that, if not addressed in a supportive CoP by appropriate role models, could potentially manifest in safety-critical ways in war that might endanger the lives of comrades in battle. This approach illustrates the reason why acknowledging the external ethical referents that I discussed earlier is important. Consider also how there is an internal unity in the philosophical assumptions that underlie UK military ethical education and practice. In the Natural Law, for example, justice demands giving each person their due. In revealed or Positive Law such as the 10 Commandments, this forms an injunction not to steal and not to lie. Aristotelian practical wisdom (*phronesis*) guided by the moral conscience bears witness to the wisdom and utility of aligning moral behaviours with them. In a context of war or other high-stakes ethical situations such as those seen in healthcare during the Covid-19 pandemic, fracturing of this philosophical unity is implied in the classic definitions of MI found in the academic literature (Litz, 2009; Shay, 2014; Jamieson et al, 2020). Teasing out such philosophical rupture may contribute to the conceptual understanding of the mechanism of a PMIE. The literature describes the effects of a PMIE (such as shame or self-loathing) but its foundations appear relatively unexplored in philosophical terms of what constitutes "what I believe is right" or "my ethical world view". A deeper exploration of the "mechanics" of moral conscience formation may prove an interesting line of inquiry as the concept progresses. The implication of the data found in the *Marine A* incident, together with my own personal experience of teaching and observing the military ethical formative process, suggests that a virtue approach to ethical practice is strong as a methodology but that it requires careful curation in educative and supportive ways by a blended approach to allow the moral conscience to flourish soundly and reliably in practice. Alignment of professional and legal codes with wider ethical principles such as those found in Natural Law theory and IHL would strengthen this link that I build on in the future recommendations section of this chapter.

6.4   Fog of war: trying to make some sense

The third finding - **combat carries a moral mortgage** - speaks of the price of soldiering in the *fog of war*. It lays open the battlefield of practice in which Bourdieu's moral actors are situated by virtue of their military service. I used 'moral' in the sense of an agentic decision made by an actor in the field - where everything is morally situated and subordinated to shared external ethical referents such as Law. I noted in the Discussion Chapter that Bourdieu does not offer a clear strategic ethical schema in which his Social Field arises. It may be that Bourdieu tacitly accepted a western Judaeo-Christian ethical lens that he did not think was problematic for his Social Field Theory or perhaps, simply, that he was more interested in its sociology. It is a loss to his theory that he died before considering this question in detail, though some of his key ideas are given implicit ethical context by Wacquant, discussed in the methodology section (Wacquant, 2004, 2014).

The third finding comments on the limits of moral agency and how moral decision making may be perceived by both individual and societal actors; it adds significant development of the MI construct in the social and political arena (Lesley, 2021; Molendijk, 2019), one of the research aim's exploratory aspirations. Bourdieu's (1998) thinking on symbolic power offers insight into ways in which moral agency is voluntarily diminished or surrendered, perhaps unwittingly, in the service of social replication that military ethos demands of its players. The moral conscience has a sentinel role in identifying the limits of agential collusion and culpability; MI, it seems, may limit or degrade it to some extent by blunting its critical capacity.

That conflict has a personal cost for the soldier is not in doubt - and when framed in terms of the price of being a force for good, the "moral mortgage" may be considered not too burdensome to repay. Mistakes happen in war. Arising from the research aim's intended exploration of the interrelationship of ethics, conscience and MI, the data generated suggested that when soldiers have a clear grasp of the basic ethical principles that UK military formation attempts to instil, they can make informed and instinctive critical ethical distinctions such as the function of intention when things have 'gone wrong'. Soldier 03 F2F adverted to this in his interview data when suggesting that more ethical education would be helpful for combat soldiers for whom involuntary lapses of *ius in bello* due to a lack of personal moral agency (consider a frightened officer ordering excessive force in self-

defence) are more easily understood and forgiven. The way in which UK military ethics are learned, and conscience formed, seeks to give soldiers critical skills such as understanding of the moral parameters of "lesser of two evils" thinking or how to distinguish in practical situations between concepts of "guilt" and "culpability". This approach facilitates a necessary critical distinction between describing and evaluating situations that transformative learning theorists identify in the practice of reflective judgement (King and Kitchener, 1994; Mezirow and Mezirow, 1990). As an example, Soldier 03 (quoted in the discussion and referenced for action in the recommendations) commented that a dispassionate and clear understanding of moral concepts acquired in his ethical education helped his conscience to remain peaceful and assure him that he had done his best in hostile ethical territory. It may be that in these circumstances a PMIE or MI is easier to repair through deeper moral contextualisation over time (Fiala, 2017).

A more problematic effect of a PMIE may be when an actor feels that he has no excuse or mitigation for an immoral act of commission or omission. In these circumstances, it seems, the medical restorative tools available in disciplines of psychology (talking therapies and medication) and moral philosophy (rational thinking) are limited. Contextualising *why* hallmark feelings in MI of guilt, shame and self-loathing arise from moral taint or *miasma* (such as witnessing an illegal order to target civilians) may be a useful exercise in lessons-learned but it does little to mitigate their effect on the moral agent. Restorative pathways explored in inter-disciplinary humanitarian and spiritual initiatives may offer a complementary way forward to wholeness for those affected my MI. Some experimental chaplaincy initiatives involving ritual (Ramsay, 2019) emerge from an understanding of the societal aspects of the MI construct that Powers (2019) views through a theological lens of sin and its tendrils running through society, expressed in a Foucauldian discourse of power-relationships. Arising from the spiritual domain of the human person, ritual has the power to change people without them having to change themselves, contrasted with psychology-based interventions such as CBT. As such, ritual offers a way to regulate experiences that might otherwise overwhelm us by constructing a meaning-making narrative within a liminal space with its own internal conventions. Here, the "unbearable repartee" (Sheen, 2019: 10) of a sound moral conscience bounces to and from the licit and illicit, honourable and shameful, speakable and unspeakable experiences of a PMIE. The human person may in this

way be changed or restored by a process that subordinates individual experiences to a greater and wiser meta-narrative that supports recovery from MI (Brock, cited in Papadopoulos (2020)).

6.5   Get me home

Themes of personal and societal restoration find expression in elements of mediaeval penitential practice (Verkamp, 2005) whose utility is not confined to those with a religious world view (Carey et al., 2023a). The concept of penance (a need to make up for the damage that our actions have caused to others) appears to be an intrinsic activity of the human person arising from an awareness of injustice, indicted by the moral conscience and experienced by people of all religions or none. There is value in deconstructing the theoretical themes constituting penance since they chart a restorative pathway between exoneration and retribution that honours considerations of justice, referenced in the first theme the data generated. Penance offers a way to accept that, especially in situations of conflict where a free act may be agentially constrained by hostile factors, fundamentally good and decent human beings sometimes make poor moral choices that need to be acknowledged. Some acts are objectively morally reprehensible and guilty - such as homicide - but not considered culpable due to diminished moral agency. Moral Theology can offer a vocabulary to root basic philosophical distinctions in the analysis of equivocal moral acts in ways that do not destroy an agent's sense of humanity: it is possible for a moral act to be objectively wrong and guilty without it being culpable, due to mitigating elements that make the decision to act in a certain way. This is a significant insight in the search for restoration and repair of a morally injured person. The data suggested that education in these basic moral philosophical distinctions (for example the ethical distinction between killing and murder) was helpful for soldiers when put in a morally equivocal situation. Penance offers a practical way of addressing these distinctions and is an element of the socio-spiritual turn of the MI construct focussing some chaplain-led restorative initiatives. When woven into a community-based ritual of penance, receiving back into society post-MI, a transformative community learning opportunity presents that can catch some of the disparate and disruptive elements of the MI construct and potentially lead to

restoration as a soldier shares feelings of guilt and shame with the equally morally tainted community on whose behalf they acted (Antal et al., 2022). Penance offers a particular type of Learning Space within a liminality that challenges Bourdieu's notion of Symbolic Violence, where constructed power structures are acknowledged and then set aside as humanity's shared wounds are dressed and spiritual repair and healing is sought. Penance offers the possibility, in the words of the Lenten hymn, to "re-clothe us in our rightful minds" (English Hymnal, 2023) as the morally injured soul reaches out for a spiritual reset and restoration of damaged humanity, seeking peace of conscience through ancient tools of forgiveness and restitution of wrongdoing.

6.6   Mind your conscience

Reframing a PMIE as conscience-attrition opens another line of inquiry going forward to deepen understanding of the mechanism that ripens a PMIE into MI. This is an important issue since although the scholarly literature appears to assume a causal connection between the two ideas it does not offer much detail on why or how this should be the case (Williamson et al., 2020a; Williamson et al., 2021). My original contribution expands or finesses this fundamental thread as the MI construct develops.

Education and formation of the moral conscience within a UK military context was explored as a central, enabling predicate for its practice. The RQ investigated the interviewees' experience of a virtue approach to ethics, habitually assimilated via military ethos in formation and exercised in real combat situations at the prompting of the moral conscience. Aristotle's *telos* of his virtue ethics schema is *eudaimonia* - human flourishing or happiness that could be reframed in terms of a 'quiet conscience' when required to exercise violence under the law. I inquired of the data whether a virtue approach remained fit for purpose as an educational strategy for character and conscience formation that could resist or survive moral attrition encountered in a PMIE and lessen the likelihood of *ius in bello* violations. The data suggested that the virtue approach to character formation used in UK military ethics education was a 'good fit' that aligned with the moral philosophy underlying agreed external ethical referents, with a reasonable chance of giving pause to moral actions that

strayed into ethically equivocal situations. Critical to the reliable and enduring functioning of the moral conscience is the ongoing process of conscience curation or nourishing that forms a key implication of the study for individuals, educational philosophers and policy strategists.

6.7   Conscience enables virtue: blended educational approaches work best

UK military education uses a blended approach of classroom activities and a much wider palette of practical approaches that can be called upon in the service of virtue assimilation via military ethos. The role of semiotics is central to this. With a judicious mix of theory and practice, undergirded by a safety net of military discipline, the soldiers learn their craft through subconscious learning opportunities undertaken in a supportive CoP, made possible within the ethos of the military. In this arrangement, the dynamic relationship between ethics (theory) and morals (practice) is experienced through the activities of military life. Soldier 02 F2F referred to this blended approach to learning when he described his own experience of subliminal assimilation into military ethos and inculturation during his military training and ongoing professional formation.

Team activities, sport, shared leisure activities and self-discipline, for example, feed a Hidden Curriculum that seeks to feed military character formation (Martin, 1983). Education forms a bridge or a transformative catalyst between ethical theory and moral practice that helps the student to develop their thinking through a dialectical process (Illeris, 2017: 248). I say a 'judicious mix' since, as discussed in Chapter Five, some elements of behaviourism necessary for safety considerations may sit awkwardly with other educational theories unless they are clearly contextualised and their practical purpose understood. One size does not fit all learning opportunities. The art and challenge for the military educator is to identify opportunities within behaviourist elements of military formation that can be exploited for wider educational aims in learning opportunities, teaching critical skills and content simultaneously. Theoretical synthesis, in the hands of a trusted military role model, could offer deeper reflection within a CoP as behaviourist approaches cede to profounder, transformative agentic insights as military character forms. Clearer educative alignment

between military educators and Senior Soldiers' CoPs (such as the *Army RSM Network*) could be developed and bear fruit in informing future policy directions.

The data suggested that there was a long-term benefit to society resulting from the military approach to character formation that values the agentic guidance of the moral conscience once the soldier leaves the military environment and returns to civil society. I earlier framed this theme as 'prophetic' or 'magisterial', in the sense of speaking out and leading by example, discussed in relation to Soldier 10 F2F who reflected on the way in which his conscience formation in the military had "stuck" - and how this could cause personal friction when working with civilians who had a different moral understanding of "doing the right thing". It was interesting to note that, despite experiencing a PMIE or MI, this soldier's moral conscience appeared to be functioning soundly and that he was able to articulate morally acceptable and questionable courses of action for himself and others, arising from his military-educated understanding of ethical principles.

The military approach to conscience formation also offers something beneficial to other educational environments like schools where a more pedagogical or coaching approach is found. Work undertaken by the Jubilee Centre for Character Formation (Arthur et al., 2018) used some military themes in its educational programmes where closer ethical formal cooperation between veterans and primary / secondary education sectors could offer another pathway to exploit the military ethical approach for the benefit of young people and wider society. Further research, from a longitudinal perspective, could deepen understanding of some of the wider ramifications of conscience attrition and propose mitigating strategies, for example educational rehabilitation programmes in prisons that seek to develop the quality of a person's moral conscience, perhaps using the military blended approach to facilitate virtue assimilation. A prison is perhaps the closest environment to a military setting where total, 360 degrees observation of people is possible (Goffman, 1991; Semple, 2009). It offers a niche Learning Space. Qualitative research exploring influences on conscience formation and deformation in criminals could contribute to developing complementary strategies in prison education that sought to transform moral character via a virtue approach. This could potentially offer an escape from a largely behaviourist framework for prisoner rehabilitation and restoration. Existing research

proposing a further shift in emphasis from punishment to rehabilitation has identified Leviathan cultural challenges to the UK prison system that are unlikely to take place quickly (Braggins, 2005; Kirkwood, 2023; Reform, 2022; Schinkel and Whyte, 2012). At the political, policy making level, the tried and tested UK military approach to character formation that my research supports could gain traction for consideration within a wider criminal justice context, reaching into educational approaches for the training of a range of associated professions such as police, probation and the judiciary. In these circumstances, the inclusion of a virtue / conscience developmental strand to existing coaching initiatives (Meek, 2018) could enrich a prisoner's return to society at the end of their sentence and moderate the culture of penal institutions by developing a more enlightened and humane approach to the purpose of incarceration (Wacquant, 2014). An unexpected theoretical idea arising from my broadly placed research aim, this approach chimes with research looking at the concept of penance as a repair strategy for MI where the idea of payback to society is explored (ICMI, 2022; Verkamp, 2005). Sensitivity to the guidance of the moral conscience, developed in an educative medium, could form an element of unlocking a self-absorbed criminal mindset that becomes more aware of others in society in preparation for release from prison.

6.8   Contribution to knowledge

My research contributes to knowledge – my doctoral claim – in two areas: the conceptual and the methodological.

Conceptually, the RQ - *how might Moral Injury affect the functioning of the moral conscience in UK military veterans formed by a Virtue approach to military ethics education* - sought to contribute to the conceptual development of the MI construct in two under explored areas: the functioning of the moral conscience in soldiers and its education / curation in a military context. I positioned the moral conscience as a personal sentinel bearing witness to and guiding a soldier's moral choices in alignment with its formation and ethical *telos* grounded in a western understanding of the Natural Law refined by revealed Positive Law. Data generated by the study offers insight into how the moral conscience operated and fared in post-combat UK veterans who had experienced a PMIE leading to MI.

The study adds to the available literature exploring MI in UK military personnel, currently a modest collection.

Methodologically, the research sought to offer a distinctive contribution to data generation by expanding the toolbox available to the qualitative researcher. Closely aligned to my choice of RTA as a data analysis method, the reflexive combination of a F2F and a SI to generate richer, glowing data offered another view of the data that could be an interesting choice for reflexive researchers (Jackson and Mazzei, 2013; MacLure, 2010; 2013; Nicolini, 2013). I called the combination *synergistic* as this gives the sense of multiple views of the data working together, coalescing in the mind of the researcher to yield richer ways of analysing data, sitting comfortably within an interpretivist paradigm. Although the SI method has a light footprint in the academic literature (Holder, 2023; Keightley et al., 2012; Crawley, 2012), there is some research to suggest that it has a niche role in interrogating embarrassing or toxic data that a F2F interviewee might hesitate to disclose. My rationale for using it in synergistic combination was supported by several of my interviewees whose SI was franker and more open when talking about distressing incidents than in their F2F interview. There are several pathways along which my synergistic combination could be developed:

- A closer, synoptic comparison could be made between data generated by the two types of interview rather than combining the data to allow it to "glow" as a single artefact - this would perhaps allow the researcher to explore more closely the effect of the reflexive *aporia* and to comment on its utility as a method;

- A longitudinal study could be developed with the aim of exploring and comparing a much longer reflexive gap between the two forms of interview. This could take place over months or even years and would potentially yield rich reflexive and retrospective data 'slow-cooked' as its flavours matured, seasoned with life experience.

6.9   Boundaries of the study

Data collection took place during the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions (2020-21) necessitating the use of video recordings of the interviews, with a loss of some non-verbal data that a physical F2F interview would have allowed. In future studies it would be possible to harness this experience positively, to design a hybrid interview that would combine the best of both approaches and have the benefit of a secure video recording that could be used to enhance the data familiarisation phase of the RTA method (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

Entry criteria for the study were tight by design. Some, like the all-male sample profile, were determined historically - female soldiers were not permitted in close-combat infantry roles until after the end of the Afghanistan Campaign in 2014. A future study could revisit the RQ from a more diverse gender cap badge sample such as the Army Medical Services. Recruitment of relatively junior soldiers who deployed in the rank of sergeant or below excluded the entire Commissioned Officer Corps whose experiences of MI in command roles would have been shaped by different influences at a strategic level. My rationale for the choice aligned with the rich and glowing quality of data that I hoped the study would generate, aided by my privileged insider-researcher identity that positioned me as part of the military hierarchy as a Commissioned Officer yet sitting apart from direct command roles as a pastor and teacher of ethics. A future study could reframe the RQ in strategic agential terms of MI in senior military officers and politicians responsible for creating policies to exercise lethal force.

The RQ did not consider the role of drones and their operators, an emerging area in relation to MI and an unexplored landscape of how the moral conscience engages with the morally hard labour of tele-intimate violence (Enemark, 2023; Lee, 2019). Increasing use of AI in warfare makes this a fertile area for future exploration as the MI construct develops in the human / robot interface space, where the parameters of Just War theory gasp for moral oxygen in unfamiliar ethical terrain (Schulzke, 2019). A moral philosopher or theologian might query the wisdom of removing of the human element from AI based warfare - if for

no other reason that morally we are not dealing with disposable robots whose frame of reference arises from a pre-programmed utilitarian approach. Humanity has always played a moderating factor in war – seen in ancient texts like Homer or the Bible - and it is sometimes the human, personal element that finds unexpected solutions to conflict that defy harsh AI-based logic or crisp deontology (Grossman, 2014). There is surely room for 'grace' in the ethical frame that AI cannot supply. Virtue-based approaches sometimes can inject this - as shown in Mozart's gracious account of the triumph of humanity in *La Clemenza di Tito*, his last opera, where mercy eclipses law by forgiveness after moral lapse.

6.10   Recommendations for future research and action

Recommendations for future research and action fall into three interconnected areas touching on individual development (micro), the interface of the individual and the structural (meso) and strategic planning (macro). All have implications for policy, planning and funding.

For the individual

- Within military ethics education, there should be deeper engagement with key moral philosophical concepts on which Just War theory rests to give increased confidence to the soldier's moral decision making in alignment with *ius in bello* requirements (Fiala, 2017). Development of critical skills through exposure to practical-based moral scenarios exploring the parameters of moral responsibility, with specific key learning points such as intention, guilt, culpability, were identified in the data as helpful in deconstructing moral decisions into learning opportunities.

- The development of the individual's moral conscience should be scrutinised with specific learning opportunities for its nourishment identified and crafted within existing education and training pathways. Military ethos underpinned by the army's V&S offer a firm foundation for coaching approaches; using morally appropriate military role models could scaffold a deeper developmental context for the conscience to flourish.

At the individual / structural interface

- The study data highlighted a deficit between organisational or structural expectations expressed in terms of a professional code of conduct such as NMC (2015) and lived experience in its praxis that could become tinder for a PMIE. Some of this is an expectation management issue but scrutiny should be applied to the level of theoretical and practical support given to practitioners to minimise a policy / process / praxis deficit. Responsibility should be taken by the architects of professional policy for its realistic implementation when critical support is compromised or where political will is equivocal. An example of this was the lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- The recent case in the UK of baby killer Nurse Lucy Letby in 2023 raised themes of MI arising from structural failures to detect and prevent wrongdoing by trusted professionals. There should be better education about MI and how it can manifest in those who feel morally and professionally tainted by association.

At the strategic level

- There is an opportunity for inter-disciplinary collaboration in exploring repair initiatives for MI. The contribution of military chaplains was identified as significant in developing strategic pathways involving ritual and aspects of penance (Carey et al., 2023a). Further collaboration between MHPs is identified as a potentially fruitful strand of holistic repair that is not framed in medical pathology terms. As inter-disciplinary understanding and trust develops, it would be beneficial to pilot a UK study where those with MI are able to self-refer or be cross-referred by a MHP to a chaplain, and vice versa, involving the tools of psychiatry only where clinically indicated (eg. for clinical depression or psychosis).

- Greater awareness of MI and possible repair interventions should be included in CPD programmes within veterans' support organisations such as the Royal British Legion. The use of the *Synergistic Interview* could be developed as a research tool in exploring the quality of a reported PMIE. This would act as a useful signposting

process for veterans who have experienced a PMIE and may need further support from specialist mental health agencies such as Combat Stress. Military chaplains working with veterans' support organisations would be a helpful resource in advising staff about the relationship between PTSD and MI and appropriate referral for specialist help.

6.11   Closing summary

Moral Injury is a rapidly developing construct that has the potential to touch diverse domains. The critical incident that drove my interest and led to the study – *Marine A* – reached into areas of military ethics education and pastoral care of UK Soldiers that has been part of my professional life for the last 22 years.

My unique conceptual contribution offers further development and complexity to the emerging body of scholarly literature, particularly within the under-researched UK context. The professional doctorate format offered an artifice to explore the enigmatic role of the moral conscience in MI. This approach drew me into the educational domain of how a UK Soldier's moral conscience is formed and sustained using a virtue ethics technique arising from the Classical Tradition. My operational experience offered a particular insight into how what was learned in theory worked out in practice, a niche reflexive-position from which the study's data was generated and analysed.

The impact of the research arises from authentic engagement with often disenfranchised voices in the veterans' space, seeking to understand and make meaning from their experiences of moral dislocation and its consequences for body and soul. Significant opportunities have emerged for closer collaboration with veterans' support organisations such as the Royal British Legion and Regimental Associations that have noticed high levels of suicide ideation in veterans reporting a PMIE (Jamieson et al., 2023). Recapitulating the research aim to explore the strategic interrelationship of ethics / conscience and MI in UK army veterans, this study will contribute to the wider understanding of MI's effect on the human person, and the development of repair and restoration strategies, by raising awareness of the role of the moral conscience in ethically equivocal situations. Thematic

resonances with other professional domains are clear, especially in healthcare and education where there is a growing body of literature arising from experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Methodologically, I am excited to have developed an unexplored, experimental method of data collection and analysis to qualitative researchers by the *Synergistic Interview*. I look forward to exploring ways this original contribution to reflexive arts-based research could be used more widely.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Moral Injury: available literature 1990 – 2021.
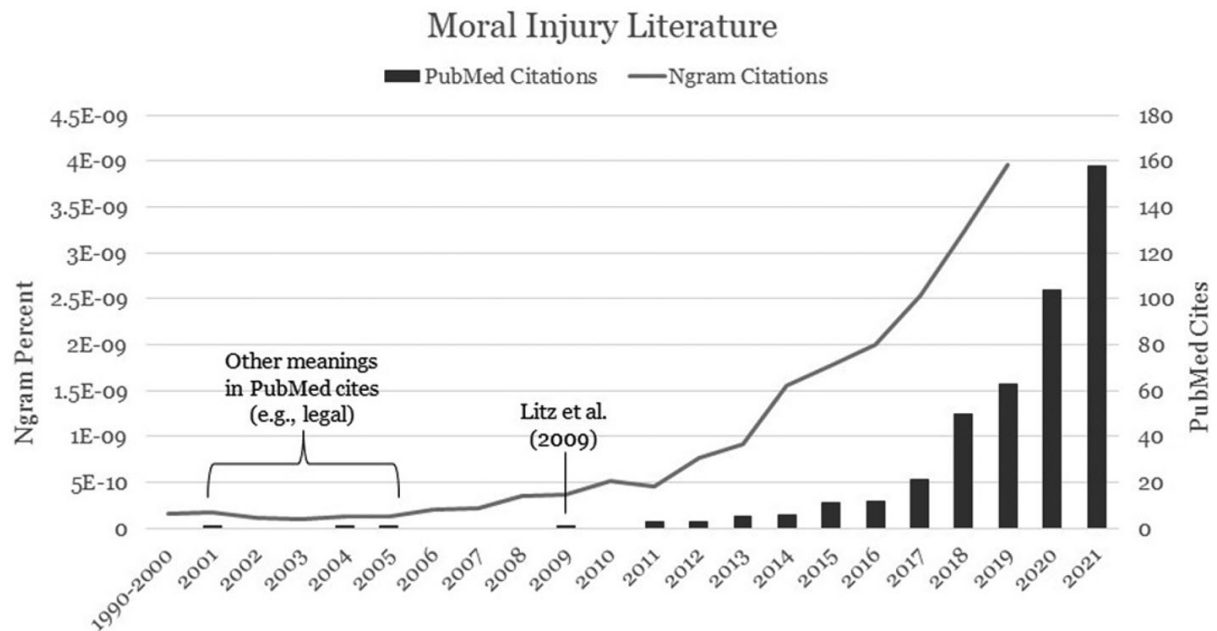
Volume of moral injury literature over time.

PubMed citations (bars) indicate the total number of citations on "moral injury" for each year indicated. Google Ngram (line) displays frequency with which the term "moral injury" appeared as a percentage of all catalogued words from printed sources between 1990 and 2019 (latest year available)" (Nieuwsma et al, 2022: S4).

Appendix 2: Moral injury: Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual (BPSS) symptoms

Biological/ physical injury	Psychological/ emotional injury	Social/ familial injury	Spiritual injury
• Insomnia	• Anger & Betrayal	• Spousal/Partner Disconnection	• Anger & Betrayal
• "Startle-reflex"	• Shame, Guilt, Sorrow	• Child-Parent Disconnection	• Shame, Guilt, Sorrow
• Alcohol abuse	• Loss of trust in self	• Family Disconnection	• Loss of trust in self
• Drug addiction	• Loss of trust in others	• Collegial Disconnection	• Loss of trust in others
• Loss of memory	• Fear and Anxiety	• Occupational dysfunction	• Loss of faith/ belief
• Self-sabotage /	• Re-experiencing the moral	• Professional Disconnection	• Moral pain /dissonance
• Self-harm	conflict/Flashbacks	• Legal and disciplinary issues	• Questioning morality
• Suicide	• Nightmares	• Community/Cultural Disconnection	• Self-condemnation
	• Gambling addition	• Social Alienation	• Spiritual/existential crisis
	• Sexual/Porn Addiction		• Loss of purpose in life
	• Self-deprecation		• Fatalism
	• Loss of self-worth		• Loss of caring
	• Depression		• Ontological loss of meaning.
	• Suicidal ideation		• Feeling "haunted"

Moral injury: Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual (BPSS) symptoms (Carey and Hodgson, 2018).

Appendix 3: A review of MI screening tools.

Instrument	Key focus		Specialty
Spiritual injury scale/index (24)	• Guilt • Anger or resentment • Grief or sadness • Lack of meaning or purpose • Despair or hopelessness	• Feeling that God/life abandoned • Religious doubt or disbelief • Fear of death	• Mental Health • Spiritual Injury • Moral Injury
Impact of Event Scale—Revised (IES-R) (25)	• Traumatic Events • Intrusion into life	• Hyper-arousal • Avoidance	• Mental health • Military & veterans • PTSD/Moral injury • Health & emergency service personnel
Moral Injury Events Scale (MIES) (26)	• Betrayal • Morality	• Immorality • Ethics	• Mental health • Military & veterans • PTSD/Moral injury
Spiritual Distress Scale (19)(a)	• Guilt • Sadness/grief • Resentment	• Anger/ • Despair/hopelessness	• Mental Health • Military & Veterans • PTSD/Moral Injury • Suicide
Moral Injury Questionnaire—Military (MIQM) (27)	• Betrayal • Guilt • Retribution • Humanization	• Violence • Destruction • Death	• Mental Health • Military & Veterans • PTSD/Moral Injury
Modified Military Moral Injury Questionnaire (M3IQ) (11)(b)	• Immoral acts (witnessed and/or perpetrated) • Death/injury (civilians, military, enemy) • Betrayal (self & others)	• Ethical dilemmas (decision-making, humanization) • Disproportional violence/retribution • Grief, shame and unresolved issues	• Moral injury • Existential/spiritual • Ethics/morality • Military & veterans
Moral Injury Symptoms Scale—Military (MISS-M) (28)	• Betrayal • Guilt • Shame • Moral concerns • Religious struggles	• Trust • Meaning/purpose • Forgiveness • Self-condemnation	• Mental Health • PTSD • Moral Injury • Military & Veterans

(a)Instruments presented in chronological order (a)(29) developed from (24) Spiritual Injury Scale; (b)M3IQ: Based on the MIES (26) and the MIQM (27).

A review of MI screening tools (Carey and Hodgson, 2018).

Appendix 4: F2F Interview Schedule.

Key:
Main Questions.
Possible follow-ups / probes.

1. What do you remember about the Values and Standards (V&S) education you received in Basic Training and also in your ongoing professional training in Battalion.

- *Do you think it affected the way you thought about right and wrong in general?*
- *Was it a difference from how you were brought up to think about right and wrong?*
- *Did you understand then why V&S education was considered necessary / important for soldiers?*
- *Would you say that your mates took the V&S seriously? What about your Officers?*
- *Do you think V&S education changed your behaviour off-duty?*
- *Did you see V&S compliance as something good in itself - or just another part of Army Discipline (Rules of the Club)?*
- *Do you think the V&S are useful guides to doing the right thing? Have they shaped the way you think about right and wrong? Did they change you?*

2. During your military service, did you ever experience an event that made you question who you are, your sense of the world, or your sense of right and wrong? If so, please tell me about it.

- *Failure to fulfil a responsibility or duty?*
- *Still troubles you now that you've had time to reflect on it?*
- *Would you talk about it to non-mates / colleagues?*

3. Tell me how this affected you?

- *Do you feel ashamed or guilty about what you did / witnessed?*
- *How does it affect you now?*
- *Do you still think about it?*

4. How do you think the military Chain of Command viewed this incident?

- *A breach of the Rules of Engagement?*
- *Letting the side down?*
- *Acceptable collateral damage if you're not caught / no publicity?*
- *Looking to blame the Tom while letting the Officers off the hook?*

5. How has your life has changed as a result of this experience.

- *How do you feel now when you think about this experience?*
- *Has this experience changed the way you see yourself now?*
- *Has this event changed the way others view you? Relationships?*
- *Has it impacted your attitude to authority figures? Do you see them as more or less human?*
- *Has it changed the way you trust authority?*
- *Has it impacted your beliefs on where we get our values from?*
- *Are the Army's V&S a good guide for living a "good" life in Civvy Street?*
- *Has it changed the principles that guide your life now? Eg. Altruism / Hedonism / Nihilism?*

6. Would you say this event has affected the way you make sense of life and its meaning?

- *If you have such beliefs, how has this event affected your spirituality or religious beliefs?*
- *Has this event changed your sense of what is right and wrong now? Has it affected your conscience? How?*
- *Tell me about what the Army taught you in your training about doing "the right thing". What do you think about the Army's Values and Standards on Ops? Did they prepare or help you?*
- *Do you think your experiences have changed the way you make decisions about things generally as being right or wrong?*
- *Do you see moral choices in life as more black and white - or more grey now?*

7. Has your view of the civilian law changed during your military experience?

Appendix 5: Self Interview questions.

Please record your answers to the following questions, waiting 5 – 7 days after your in-person interview

1. What do you remember about the Values and Standards (V&S) education you received in Basic Training and also in your ongoing professional training in Battalion.

2. During your military service, did you ever experience an event that made you question who you are, your sense of the world, or your sense of right and wrong? If so, please tell me about it.

3. Please tell me how this experience affected you?

4. How do you think the military Chain of Command viewed this incident?

5. How has your life has changed as a result of this experience.

6. Would you say this event has affected the way you make sense of life and its meaning?

7. Do you think your military experience has affected your view of the Law?

Appendix 6: University Research Ethics Committee Approval.

BIRMINGHAM CITY University

Faculty of Health, Education & Life Sciences Research Office
Seacole Building, 8 Westbourne Road
Birmingham
B15 3TN

HELS_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk

13/Nov/2018

Mr David Smith

david.smith12@mail.bcu.ac.uk

Dear David ,

Re: Smith /1856 /R(C) /2018 /Oct /HELS FAEC - The conscience ambushed? A qualitative study to investigate morally injurious effects of operational deployment on UK troops.

Thank you for your application and documentation regarding the above study. I am pleased to confirm that Birmingham City University has agreed to take on the role of Sponsor.

However, a serious concern remains regarding your role and the potential ethical conflicts that may ensue. This issue relates to your role. For this project, are you a researcher OR a priest? The roles are very different. It is foreseeable that a conflict of interest may arise as do you present to the troops as a priest OR a researcher and this conflict of interest may have repercussions on yourself and/or the study participants. Please note that as a researcher, it is inappropriate to offer support. As your work is highly likely to uncover contentious information/behaviour, as a researcher you have the duty to report such behaviour. Could this conflict with your duty of confidentiality as a priest?

Your work is clearly of great significance to the military and wider audiences. I wish you well in your endeavours.

Birmingham City University can confirm that our insurance indemnity cover includes the actions of researchers working in suitable premises and under appropriate supervision. Our policy cover will not apply to liability that is more specifically insured under any policy covering medical negligence, malpractice or indemnity, professional errors, omissions or negligence.

A copy of BCU's insurance details is available at:
https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/Finance/Procurement-and-Insurance/Insurance

If you wish to make any changes to your proposed study (by request or otherwise), then you must submit an Amendment application to us. Examples of changes include (but are not limited to) adding a new study site, a new method of participant recruitment, adding a new method of data collection and/or change of Project Lead.

Please also note that the Committee should be notified of any serious adverse effects arising as a result of this activity.

Keep a copy of this letter along with the corresponding application for your records as evidence of approval.

If you have any queries, please contact HELS_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk

I wish you every success with your study.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. Tony Barlow

On behalf of the Health, Education & Life Sciences Faculty Academic Ethics Committee

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM   BIRMINGHAM CITY University

Study Title: The conscience ambushed? A qualitative study to investigate Moral Injury in UK Veterans.

Name of Researcher: Fr David Smith RAChD.
Smith /1856 /R(C) /2018 /Oct /HELS FAEC

Project Code: *Participant identification number:*

Initial

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet [14 March 2020; Version 1.0] for this study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.	
3. I understand that relevant sections of my data collected during the study may be looked at by individuals from Birmingham City University and from regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.	
4. I understand that personal data about me will be collected for the purposes of the research study including name, address, date of birth, and that these will be processed in accordance with the information sheet [14 March 2020; Version 1.0].	
5. I agree to audio recording and the use of anonymised quotes in research reports and publications. I also consent to allow my self-recorded voice files to be sent to BCU by email and stored securely by Fr Smith on the University's secure server.	
6. I agree to take part in this study.	

	Yes	No
7. I agree for my anonymised data to be used for teaching purposes.		

_____   _____   _____
__   __   __
Name of Participant   *Date*   *Signature*

_____   _____   _____
__   __   __
Name of Person taking   *Date*   *Signature*
Consent

*1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher site file;

ARE YOU A BRITISH ARMY VETERAN?

Ex-Infantry Cap-Badge?

Operational Tour deployment during OP TELIC or HERRICK (2003 - 2014)?

Deployed in any rank up to (and including) Sergeant?

Did you experience something on Ops that made you feel uneasy about:
- **YOUR ACTIONS?**
- **THE ACTIONS OF OTHERS?**
- **THE KIND OF PERSON YOU HAVE BECOME OR THE KIND OF WORLD WE LIVE IN?**
- **THE WAY IN WHICH MORAL JUDGEMENTS ARE MADE?**

If so, we are running a research study looking at how these types of experiences may impact military veterans - and need **YOUR HELP.**

Taking part involves agreeing to an in-depth face to face interview with a serving, operationally experienced Army Padre who is researching *Moral Injury* (where your beliefs about what is right and wrong are damaged by experiences in a combat environment). Participation is anonymous and completely confidential. The study has received ethical approval from Birmingham City University.

The aim of the study is to understand better the personal effect that war fighting has on soldiers and, ultimately, to improve the support available to those who have been affected.

For more information on the study and how to participate:
Fr David Smith RAChD, Padre 2nd Infantry Battalion, Catterick Garrison,
North Yorkshire DL9 4HH.
Tel: 01748 873849.   E-mail: david.smith12@mail.bcu.ac.uk

Appendix 9: A Renaissance altarpiece example.

Rogier van der Weyden, Seven Sacraments Altarpiece, 1445–50.

Appendix 10: Participant Information Sheet.

Reference: Smith /1856 /R(C) /2018 /Oct /HELS FAEC
Date: 06 November 2020.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Study title: *The conscience ambushed? A qualitative study to investigate Moral Injury in UK Veterans.*

Invitation to take part

Thank you for responding to my appeal for volunteers. To help you decide whether you still wish to take part in the study, I would like to explain in more detail why the research is being done and what it would involve for you.

What is the purpose of the research?

I am conducting this study as part of a Professional Doctorate programme at Birmingham City University to find out how military combat situations can affect Army Veterans. I am interested in hearing about experiences on Ops that may have caused you to question the kind of person you are or the kind of world we live in. These are things that you feel you may have done or failed to do, or things that others did or failed to do. I am especially interested in how these experiences may have affected the way you **now** think about what is right and wrong. All of these are aspects of an emerging concept known as *Moral Injury*[10] that I am researching. I hope that my study will contribute to our understanding of *Moral Injury* by hearing your stories and experiences.

It is hoped that the things you tell me will help us better understand how serving personnel and veterans alike may have been affected by a wide variety of military and warzone experiences, which will help us find improved ways of meeting the needs of those who serve.

Who is doing this research?

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[10] Moral Injury is the term given to the effect on a person when he / she has either done or witnessed actions that go against their ethical World View concerning what is right and wrong. It can often present in a similar way to PTSD - but its cause is different.

The Rev'd Fr David Smith RAChD
Padre, 2nd Infantry Battalion,
Catterick Garrison,
North Yorkshire
DL9 4HH.
Tel: 01748 873849.
E-mail: david.smith12@mail.bcu.ac.uk

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to participate in the study because you are an Army Veteran who deployed on OP TELIC and / or OP HERRICK in an Infantry / RAC role, within the rank-profile required by the study.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide that you would like to take part in this study, I will send you a consent form that I would like you to return to me within 7 days via email. Your support of the study is very much appreciated. If your name fits all the entry criteria for the study, you will be informed by email and invited to participate in a telephone conversation with me at a time that is convenient to you. This will give you a chance to ask any questions about the study and for us to arrange a date for the interview. You will need to have MS TEAMS installed on your computer for the interview (free to download).

Those who are not selected for inclusion in the study (due to not meeting entry criteria) will be informed by email or telephone.

The interviews will be in two parts:
The first part, via Microsoft TEAMS[11], will be a series of questions face to face with me about your thoughts, feelings and beliefs since your operational experiences - and how events may have affected you. The interview is likely to take approximately one hour but there will be no upper time limit, so you can talk about your experiences in as much detail as you wish.

You will be asked to give written consent, electronically. With your agreement, I will audio / video record the interview, so I can carry out a detailed examination of responses to the interview questions. I will not ask you for any personal information which could identify you at all. I will never aim to identify you from your answers.

The second part will follow a "Self-Interview" format. You will be given a question sheet to take home and, at your convenience, to record your thoughts using your own Smartphone prompted by the questions on the sheet that accompanies it. These questions will allow you to reflect on the answers given in the face to face interview in your own time and over whatever period of time you need, not exceeding 7 days. You will then be asked to email the voice files to me. I will transcribe your words from both interviews anonymously for analysis. All data will be stored safely on the University's secure server in accordance with GDPR regulations and the University's Research Ethics policies. I will need to request your (electronic) consent to be entrusted with the voice files that you will send to me for storage.

---

[11] This is the University-preferred secure platform for recording interviews. It works in a similar way to Zoom or Skype.

What are the benefits of taking part?

It is hoped that this study will produce valuable data to shed light on the effect of combat on an individual's ability to form moral judgements. The interview process will be capable of providing a secure and confidential context with an operationally experienced Army Padre in which you may be able to reflect on the longer-term personal effects of your operational experiences.

It is also hoped that the study will provide evidence for the better training and support of Armed Forces Personnel and others (eg. Prison / Police Officers) whom the country routinely puts in harm's way during the course of their role. The experiences of some NHS Staff during the COVID-19 pandemic have raised similar themes of Moral Injury; your experiences may help to shape a wider strategic picture of protection and support for other public service personnel.

What would be the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Please note: the study is a piece of academic research and not intended as therapy.

It is not anticipated that any disadvantages or significant risks will present. If, during the course of the interviews, you find that disturbing memories are awakened, please rest assured that I am a very operationally experienced Padre who is aware of, and used to working with, a range of support agencies both inside and outside the military environment. I will signpost you to an appropriate source of help, if needed.

Can I withdraw from the research and what will happen if I don't want to carry on?

You may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. If you ever require any further explanation, please do not hesitate to ask me.

Are there any expenses and payments I will get?

There are no other expenses or payments available to participants.

Whom do I contact if I have any questions or a complaint?

I will be available as a point of contact.

Will my records be kept confidential?

I know these are sensitive topics, and I want to assure you that the interviews are 100% confidential. Your responses will never be connected to you personally. Your data will be kept securely by the University for 10-years following completion of the study and then will be destroyed. Your data will be stored under an anonymous ID number and will be kept on secure servers at Birmingham City University. The results of this study may be published to help others who have experienced potentially upsetting experiences, but I will not publish

any details that might identify you. I may also make some anonymous study data available to other researchers working in this academic field. I will not share your personal details or other information that is likely to identify you.

You need to be aware that in the unlikely event of a significantly illegal act (eg. a War Crime) being disclosed during the course of the interview, I will be required to terminate the interview and possibly refer the matter to a third-party for investigation.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being organised and funded jointly through the Royal Army Chaplains' Department and Birmingham City University.

Has this research been approved by an Ethics Committee?

The study has received Ethical Approval from Birmingham City University's Research Ethics Committee (Reference: Smith /1856 /R(C) /2018 /Oct /HELS FAEC).

Further information and contact details.

The Rev'd Fr David Smith RAChD
Padre, 2nd Infantry Battalion,
Catterick Garrison,
North Yorkshire
DL9 4HH.

Tel: 01748 873849.
E-mail: david.smith12@mail.bcu.ac.uk

Thank you again for your generous response to my appeal for volunteers for this study. With every good wish,

Fr David Smith RAChD.

10	Research design:	*Was the design appropriate (for study on treatment, diagnosis, screening, prognosis, causation, etc)?*
		Is the theoretical framework and methods used explicitly stated at every stage of the research?
		Are validated and reliable tools used?
		This section requires significant improvement: there is a lack of detail and clarity in the narrative which suggests an unfocused and speculative approach to the topics under enquiry. No reference is made to a theoretical framework or hypothesis under investigation. This section contains references to qualitative research methodology but does not cover basic considerations such as sample size, question selection, control for bias etc. No consideration is given to the value of including a comparison or control group to understand the 'Moral Conscience' of the combat-naïve. The rationale for the exclusion criteria is unclear.
		Sample interview questions give cause for concern: explicit mention of the 'Marine A' case could be viewed as 'leading' the interviewees' responses. No rationale given for the choice of question or how it relates to the topic under investigation.

An example of a review using Quantitative Research criteria to measure a Qualitative Research Proposal.

Appendix 12: MoD Distressed Person Protocol.

All CRE Courses are to commence with the acknowledgement to the attendees that the subject matter may cause individuals to reflect on their own circumstances or that of others which may cause them distress and that there is a support network present to support them with any issues raised.

CRE Courses are now being delivered online via Zoom. When a course is delivered online, follow the guidance comments in blue.

Should a participant of a CRE become distressed during, or immediately following the course then the following process is to be followed without exception:

Step 1: During the delivery of a sensitive lesson.
- CRE Cse deliverer acknowledges on commencement of the lesson that the material may cause an emotional reaction.
- If an individual becomes distressed during delivery of a session, then another PRC team member should offer immediate emotional support. This will usually be the WWO but can be any member of the team who is available.
- If it becomes apparent during online delivery that an individual becomes distressed, the CRE deliverer, should privately message the individual at the earliest opportunity to offer emotional support. The instr should then contact the WWO (or alternative PRC team member as appropriate) to make contact with the individual. This will usually be via a phone call to the individual's private number.
- If the CRE team member is offering immediate emotional support, he/she should ask the individual if they would like to speak to the PRC WWO or someone in their unit, i.e. Padre, Unit Welfare Officer or CoC.
- If they do not want to speak to the WWO or someone from their unit, they should be provided with information on unit support and external supporting agencies.

Step 2: Determine the distress level of the individual.
- If you believe that there is a significant risk of harm to the individual or others, do not leave the individual alone but ask for immediate assistance from the medical chain, Unit Padre, Unit Welfare team or CoC and continue this protocol at **Step 3**.
- If you believe there is a significant risk of harm to the individual, either you or other appropriate PRC team member should contact the individual's medical chain, Unit Padre, Unit Welfare team or CoC and continue this protocol at **Step 3**.
- If not considered an immediate risk, ask the individual if there is anyone you can contact to explain that they have become distressed, to support them, ideally to come and meet them now.
- When the individual is ready to leave, remind them of the internal unit and external support networks available to them.
- Discuss the incident with PRC Team Leader and the CoC.
- Inform PRC Trg Offr if the distress appears to have been specifically related to information in the presentation. The Trg Offr will then pass this back to RC team as part of their post-course report.

Step 3:

- Follow **Suicide AID**: **A**SK - **INTERVENE** - **D**ISCLOSE
- Try to discern if the individual has a PLAN and the MEANS to harm themselves.
- You must accurately document the information disclosed, having gained consent from the individual to share this information and clearly recorded with whom and for what purpose.

Step 4:

- PRC WWO or other appropriate staff member to contact the CoC, Padre or Unit Welfare team to discuss the necessary course of action.
- PRC Team Member to speak to the OC PRC to discuss the incident and the most appropriate course of action.
- This action must be completed as a priority and completed at the soonest available opportunity.
- The PRC team must keep a clear written record of the concern and all steps taken to deal with the matter, including with whom the concern has been raised, the time line of activity and handover of responsibility.
- A short summary of any incident should be placed on to WISMIS according to GDPR and Caldicott guidance.

Should a participant behave in a way (e.g. violent) that poses a risk to the PRC team or other participants during the briefing then the following steps are to be taken:

Step 5:

- The PRC Team <u>must</u> immediately gain support from the CoC or Unit Welfare team.
- If the risk is serious and imminent, the PRC Team <u>must</u> immediately call the police.

Step 6:

- The PRC Team Member <u>must</u> discuss the incident with the PRC OC and whether any further action needs to be taken.
- The PRC Team Member <u>must</u> accurately document the incident and subsequent actions.

Follow Up Action Required by PRC Team:

- **For those deemed to be at significant risk follow up directly with the Unit.**
- **For individuals who presented with a Personal Disclosure, and only if they consent, follow up with a courtesy call or email the following day encouraging the individual to use the Unit Padre and/or Unit Welfare Team and/or the provided sources of support.**
- **Record all details of these incidents, occurrences and follow-up on the PRC Attendees Master spreadsheet and occurrence book as appropriate with the usual GDRP restrictions in place.**

Follow Up Action Required by CALLS Team:

- **For those deemed to be at significant risk follow up directly with the Unit the next day.**
- **For individuals who presented with a Personal Disclosure, and only if they consent, follow up with a courtesy call or email the following day encouraging the individual to use the Unit Padre and/or Unit Welfare Team and/or the provided sources of support given in the *"Maintaining Your Mental Fitness"* Leaflet.**
- **Record all details of these incidents, occurrences and follow-up on the CALLS Attendees Master spreadsheet with the usual GDRP restrictions in place.**

Appendix 13: A post-transcription early reflective memo.

Semi Structured Interview Transcript (PIN: 01Charlie)

I thought it important to re-familiarize myself with the interview – not only by reading the transcript but also by looking again at the recorded video of the interview on MS Teams before attempting initial coding. I was surprised at how much non-verbal data was contained in my participant's body language: the pauses; the rolling of eyes; the shifting about in the chair; the animated and often colourful [sic] language that was used when describing an incident; the smiles and the obvious emotion in the voice. These were all elements adding richness to the data that could not be easily captured by reading the transcript alone. I think this is a type of synergy that will be useful and interesting to the qualitative researcher when using interviews as a form of data collection. Brinkmann (2014) explores aspects of theoretical assumptions about what constitutes "data" and offers a way forward that sidesteps the familiar divide between data-driven (inductive) and hypothesis-driven (deductive) approaches to data. The concept of encountering data as "astonishment, mystery, and breakdowns in one's understanding (abduction)" (Brinkmann, 2014: 720) is proposed as a different and fruitful way of looking at data that aligns with many of the theoretical assumptions on which RTA rests. It sits comfortably as another lens to interpret the synergistically-generated data in my study, resonating with my epistemological position outlined in the Methodology Chapter that valorises enduring thematic continuity. In many ways, Brinkmann's proposal of "abduction" as an approach harks back to the etymology of the word "datum / data" (Latin for something *given*) "albeit in a new and invigorated sense" (Brinkmann, 2014: 720; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011).

For an insider-researcher looking to co-generate themes, as in Braun and Clarke's (2013, 2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach, a combined visual / transcription method offers insights that go beyond in vivo expressions of meaning that align well with this approach to making-meaning of complex data. I found that the visual perspective on the transcription added another view of the data that will be deepened further by the Self Interview that I have yet to code. I am taken back to Maggie MacLure's (2006) image of the possibility of data as being like a baroque painting (in Trompe l'oeil style) that almost leaps out of the screen at the researcher and demands attention. This is one way of viewing the complexity of my data that begins to glow through the process. It chimes harmoniously with Brinkmann's abductive approach outlined above.

This synergistic approach also offers another possibility of moving beyond what Reflexive Thematic Analysts term Semantic Codes (surface level summaries) to Latent Codes (deeper, more hidden ideas requiring more interpretation) (Terry and Hayfield, 2021). As an example, my participant noted that in Army training "you break people down and then treat everyone as an equal and build them up as a team together." I coded this phrase latently as "military training is a total character thing" because it goes beyond pure description and chimes with the theoretical Virtue Ethics approach to military character formation (MoD, 2015). Looking at my participant's face during this comment, I noticed that he nodded his head approvingly, as though he felt the benefit of internalized eudaimonia (human flourishing)

that is key to Aristotle's teleological framework for his Ethics and reflected in the British Army's approach to virtue habituation via education and training.

My experience of the familiarization and initial coding phase was harder than I imagined to confine and to restrain. I instinctively wanted to race ahead and make the next move to the theme generation stage of RTA! Taking a painstaking, line-by-line coding approach needs patience in order to lessen the chance of missing or overlooking something so obvious (to me) that it might appear trivial or unremarkable, yet significant when taken as part of a diverse and complex data set. A further challenge for the lone-researcher, typical of the RTA approach, where subjectivity is valued without the need for positivist concerns for *reliability.*

One of the challenges I have felt in the initial coding phase has been finding the best descriptors for codes that are "short but meaningful so that they tell you something specific about the content without you needing to see the data" (Terry and Hayfield, 2021). My suspicion at this very early stage of initial coding is that the data would benefit from further sweeps of coding once I have considered the entire data set, reflecting on my initial ideas and observing developments in my thinking. Even at this initial stage of coding, making connections (zooming out, Nicolini (2013)) within the Bourdieusian Field of Practice begin to form in my mind. My participant's comment that "When I joined the Army, Values wasn't really taught - it was sort of, it was sub-consciously taught, so you know the saying 'no PAD shagging [ie. adultery], no touching kids, don't steal from the individual" I initially coded as 'subliminal learning via culture / ethos'. Reflecting further, I made a connection with Goffman's (1961) thinking on Total Institutions in the sense that Army inculturation requires adherence to a kind of 'group-think' that is intolerant of actions that have the potential to disrupt or challenge accepted ways of doing business. The culture of the institution is enforced by 360-degree observation (similar to Bentham's panopticon / Goffman, 1961) and scrutiny of conformity by hierarchical structures where the distinction between public and private behaviour is intentionally minimised: a quasi-totalitarian approach that is freely (if temporarily) accepted. An interesting question for my study is to explore to what extent the military inculturation endures on leaving the Army: put another way, on contact with civilian life does the Virtue approach to character formation 'stick' in an observable way?

6. Would you say this event has affected the way you make sense of life and its meaning?

Yeah, most definitely. Because it shows that the world is not on the same standard as you. And if you don't know someone who has the same values as yourself, then you don't trust them. I found that out the hard way. That's why I liked working in the Training Wing in the end - it was a very small group of people and I was my own boss. I didn't have to rely on anybody. The Army is getting worse and worse for snekking [sic] and people arse-licking and they'll walk over people just to get promoted. It does make me laugh, now I'm a civilian, look at these people (cos you see them on Facebook or whatever, and you're like 'mate, no one liked you in the Army so why should I even entertain you now?' That's the beauty of being a Veteran now - I don't even have to talk to these people. I can walk away and stick my finger up into their face and go 'you made my life a misery in the military' and, yeah, some days I have a bad day. I don't wish I was dead but I can't wait to die sometimes. I just sit here and think 'I'm f*****g done, I'm fed up with this - working so hard and having given so much to this organisation - and I just get f*****g thrown on the scrap pile. The MoD didn't accuse me of lying, but they said my medical problems were a result of something else and they said basically I don't have any of these medical problems any more. And I'm very aware that I do have these medical problems, that's why I'm still going to the hospital and doing all this stuff; and it's rather upsetting that the MoD do this to other people. It just makes me hate them even more. I'd rather sit down with the Taliban and have dinner - because at least we share a mutual hatred (maybe of each other) - but the MoD will always be nice to your face then stab you in the back. I tell all people in the Army this: the Army will rod you over as soon as they can. It's hard, I wish I was a civvy sometimes. All these people - they get their pensions, they've got their careers, they get good jobs. Because they're a little bit poorly, they get a job down at Bobbington (*Army Camp*) where they can sit in an office and do the rest of their time in the Army. Not me. They booted me out for being broken. And they broke me. I'm still pretty bitter about it. I hate them so much. And you go back into the real world - and there's just nothing out there for you. All you've been is a soldier - and you go back into that world after what you've been through and try to make sense of it all … so you end up with a very warped sense of the world. Where you'd happily kill someone if they've done you wrong *[shudders with laughter…]* … me and my uncle (ex Scots Gds) were talking about this and he said 'I'm scared that if I get into a fight again I will not be able to stop because I have no qualms in just killing somebody'. And it's not because he *wants* to kill somebody, it's just the mechanism within your body. I've thought about it often - what happens if I did get into a fight? Because I stopped that drug dealer in London. He pulled a knife on me. What if I'd grabbed him and stabbed him? Truth is I wouldn't care - I did the right thing. He tried to kill me so I killed him. Most people would be traumatised because they'd got in a fight in the first place - but I thought about it afterwards. When I hit him with the care it was like I didn't care: he's a scum bag. So it's destroyed not some sense of right and wrong, but some sense of doing and not doing that is technically bad but for the right reasons, you have to do it. And that's what the Army teaches you to do. You have to kill somebody but it's for the right reasons. And that's sort of stuck with me now I've left the Army. It sits uncomfortably with me sometimes, but I try not to think about it because it's just, I don't know, it's affected me. What the QDG did to me has affected me in so many ways. It's really wierd about this UK law thing. When I'm in extreme circumstances, I abide by the law: you don't go shooting prisoners, that's just wrong. You treat them well. You treat injured people, you do the best you can for people. But maybe I just miss war. Maybe I just miss it.

David Smith · · · 👍
Distasteful to see colleagues climbing over people just to get promoted

@mention or reply

David Smith · · · 👍
You can't trust people in authority

@mention or reply

David Smith · · · 👍
Moral responsibility dodged

@mention or reply

David Smith · · · 👍
Conscience damaged and not working properly

@mention or reply

David Smith · · · 👍
Conditioned reactions arising from combat can't be turned off / moderated

@mention or reply

David Smith · · · 👍
Moral framework still there but edges blurred

@mention or reply

David Smith · · · 👍
Internalised V&S remain

@mention or reply

David Smith · · · 👍
Moral Conscience still works in high-stakes situations

@mention or reply

David Smith · · · 👍
War gives security in expectations of behaviour: black and white easier to process than grey

Appendix 15: Memo extract for theme generation: a revising paragraph.

Prototype theme
Law is a blunt expression of ethics

This prototype theme captures some of the complexity of the relationship between Law and Ethics. It might be better (though more clumsily) put as "ethics cannot be translated completely satisfactorily into a legal framework" as this would convey the inevitable gap between theory and practice that is present in the mind of every legislator and requires a certain degree of contextualisation and interpretation by a competent authority (eg. the judiciary). It also captures the practical reasoning process of using the moral conscience by an individual soldier to apply external referents (eg. the Geneva Conventions embodied in the Rules of Engagement) to an ethically conflicted situation in war. This prototype theme does not capture the *skewing* influence of ways in which power (for example, seeking national or personal influence) can sour the relationship between ethics and their application - this was something referred to in some of the codes generated in the data where the pursuit of justice was a concern for a quiet conscience. I thought that "transparent alignment" may be a better phrase to capture this concern. This element of the theme resonated with another of the themes generated: "Military Service has a price-tag". It spoke to me of cross-data coherence, recognising that poorly crafted or clumsily applied law (eg. by an inexperienced commander) could cause moral damage to a subordinate.

Through my reflective memo, I revised the prototype theme to read:
Law and Ethics need transparent alignment for a just outcome.

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