

**Researching the experiences of children and young
people from armed forces families**

Evelyn Ruth Bowes

2329917

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Stirling, Faculty of Social Sciences

August 2018

Copyright

The copyright of this thesis belongs to the author under the terms of the United Kingdom Copyright Acts as qualified by the University of Stirling Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research. Due acknowledgement must always be made of the use of any material contained in, or derived from, this thesis.

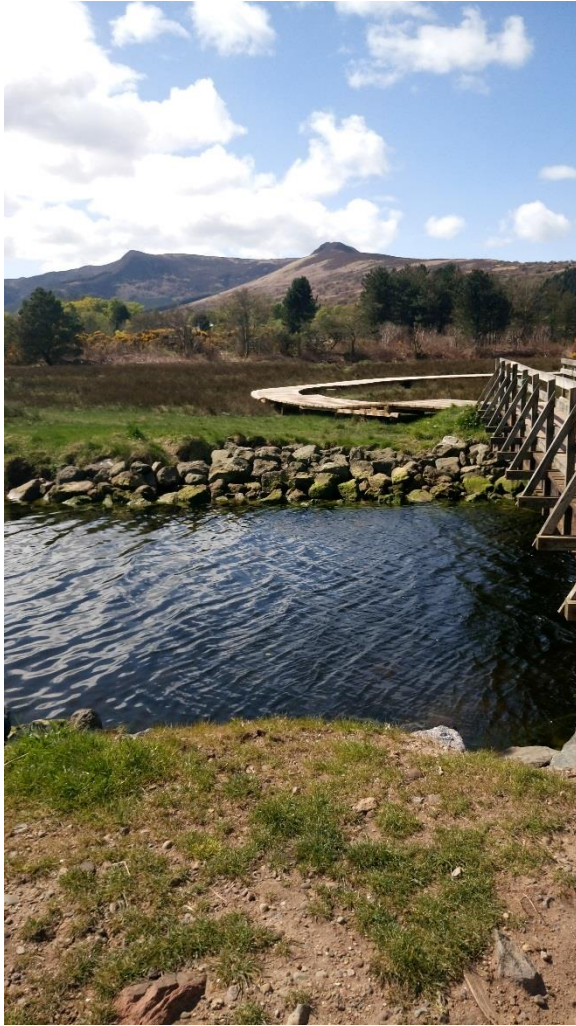
Declaration

I declare that I have composed this thesis myself and that it embodies the results of my own research. Where appropriate, I have acknowledged the nature and extent of work carried out in collaboration with others included in the thesis.

Evelyn Ruth Bowes

Acknowledgements

To my willing participants, my patient supervisors, my loving family, my supportive husband and my loyal friends – A thesis is never an individual act. Thank you for helping to make this possible.



Read wildly and widely

This is really hard thinking

Are you gonna get a real job?

What's for you won't go past you

You're so smart Dr Cock!

You is kind, You is smart, You
is important

She said the book will be as big as
Harry Potter!

How's the studying going?

In the end, the race is only with
yourself

Are you still a student?

You're Ace!

My door is always open

This is really good stuff

Is anyone deid?

You are all over this.

Just keep swimming.

Follow the cracks in the pavement.

It ends! Even if the end is artificial.

Abstract

Children from armed forces families are identified internationally as a group facing challenging situations, circumstances which can have a negative impact on their educational experiences. The main focus in existing research has been on measuring children's outcomes, but these studies generate little insight into how children themselves make sense of their experiences. There are only a few in-depth qualitative studies, mostly conducted outside the UK, exploring the lived experiences of children from armed forces families. This study explores how children of armed forces personnel from schools across Scotland expressed their experiences. It aims to better understand approaches to the provision of inclusive educational support. A suite of methods – object elicitation, video diaries, peer interviewing, drawing, and vignettes – was employed, to generate expressions from a total of 41 children and young people aged eight to 14 years, from three primary and two secondary Scottish schools. A post-qualitative orientation supported the inquiry to look beyond children's voices in isolation. An assemblage approach was taken to the analysis of the audio/video recordings, transcripts, artefacts, and field notes from the research encounters. The analysis showed how the different and shifting conditions of the research led to the creation of ongoing productive encounters. A key insight was that schools have much unrealised capacity to positively contribute to the experiences of these children. Methodological insights alongside empirical findings are used to generate signposts for the provision of improved educational support. The thesis argues that, ultimately, any improvement will involve entering into reciprocal, experimental, and socio-materially mediated dialogues with children in ways that both align with children's lived experience of armed forces life but also allow for the exploration of change and becoming-different as outcomes of those dialogues.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Personal and professional background	1
1.2 A collaborative PhD: Royal Caledonian Education Trust.....	3
1.3 Educating children from forces families: A brief introduction.....	4
1.4 Research context and rationale	6
1.5 Research questions and methodology	8
1.6 Significance of the study.....	9
1.7 Thesis structure	10
1.8 A note on terminology.....	11
Chapter 2: Literature Review	13
2.1 Literature review approach	14
2.2 Policy context: Recognising the needs of children from forces families	16
2.3 Armed forces families: Research literature	22
2.4 School mobility.....	24
2.5 Parental absence	32
2.6 Reducing the negative impact of mobility and parental absence.....	41
2.7 Conclusions.....	46
Chapter 3: Methodology & Methods	49
3.1 Post-qualitative orientation.....	49
3.2 Conceptualising children & “their” voices: Critiques and debates.....	54
3.4 Ethical concerns.....	56
3.5 Recruitment of schools and participants	60
3.6 Research process.....	73
3.7 Methods	76
3.8 Analysis Process	92

3.9 Ethics.....	101
3.10 Research quality.....	106
3.11 Summary.....	107
Chapter 4: Children’s accounts of having a parent in the forces.....	110
4.1 Parental absence.....	111
4.2 Moving school.....	135
4.3 Methodological reflections.....	150
4.4 Conclusions.....	152
Chapter 5: Becoming-armed-forces-children.....	156
5.1 Subjectivity as a form of becoming.....	157
5.2 Difference line activity.....	158
5.3 Becoming-different.....	159
5.4 Becoming-similar.....	162
5.5 Being normal.....	166
5.6 Becoming-lucky.....	169
5.7 Becoming-curious.....	170
5.8 Summary analysis.....	172
5.9 Discussion and conclusions.....	175
Chapter 6: School-based support for children from forces families.....	178
6.1 Children’s perspectives on school-based support.....	179
6.2 Opportunity to express.....	193
6.3 Conditions for recognition and expression.....	199
6.4 Overall discussion and conclusions.....	204
Chapter 7: Conclusions and Implications.....	208
7.1 Overview of study and contributions.....	208
7.2 Summary of main findings.....	210
7.3 Methodology matters.....	214

7.4 Implications for educational practice	216
7.5 Limitations.....	221
7.6 Suggestions for future research	225
7.7 Final Reflections	227
References.....	229
Appendices	256
Appendix 1: Information Sheets.....	256
Appendix 2: Vignettes.....	264
Appendix 3: Evidence of Ethical Approval	266

List of Figures

Figure 1: Indication of desire to participate form	67
Figure 2: Email communication to school	68
Figure 3: Difference Line	88
Figure 4: Diamond-Ranking Activity	89
Figure 5: Example of Phase 1 in action (drawing conversations data)	96
Figure 6: Consent form.....	102
Figure 7: Drawing by Oscar, primary 5, School 4	116
Figure 8: Drawing by William, School 4, primary 4, Navy connection	126
Figure 9: Drawing by Daniel, aged 15, School 3, Army connection	130
Figure 10: School 4 boys difference line	163
Figure 11: Possible identity positions in the research encounters.....	175
Figure 12: School-forces-support assemblage.....	192
Figure 13: Excerpts of feedback forms from School 5	197

List of Tables

Table 1: Literature on children from forces families included in review.....	16
Table 2: List of participating schools.....	63
Table 3: Participating Schools and Pupils.....	70
Table 4: Research Phases	73
Table 5: Summary of data generated.....	90
Table 6: Research questions and key findings	210

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis explores the experiences of children and young people from armed forces families attending schools in Scotland. It addresses a gap in qualitatively driven empirical research on the perspectives of children and young people from armed forces families and seeks to contribute towards an improved understanding of how we might support children from forces families in school.

This introductory chapter describes how my personal and professional background led me to take on a PhD exploring the experiences of children from forces families. In order to situate the current study, this chapter provides some background information about armed forces families in the UK, specifically in relation to the educational provisions and supports in place to support children from these families. A brief introduction to the research landscape on children from forces families is also provided. The chapter then moves on to describe the research questions and provide an overview of the methodological approach, before detailing the significance of this study for the field of education. An outline of the thesis structure and a brief note on terminology used throughout the thesis closes this chapter.

1.1 Personal and professional background

As will become apparent throughout this thesis, I recognise the importance of being reflexive about my role in the research and the many influences I bring to the research process (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). In that spirit, in this opening section, I discuss how I came to do a PhD exploring the experiences of children from armed forces families.

My interest in this study grew initially from my experiences as a Research Assistant working with schools educating large numbers of children from armed forces families. I took up this appointment within a local authority Educational Psychology team after completing my Master's Degree in Psychological Research Methods. My remit was to evaluate educational provision for children from armed forces families. The Research Assistant post was part of a package of support for

which the local authority had been successful in attaining funding through the Ministry of Defence Education Support Fund. This was an annual fund, made available from 2011 to 2017, and aimed at helping schools improve practices to support the educational experiences of children from forces families. The fund is described in further detail in Chapter 2. With no prior background or personal connections to armed forces life, I found the limited existing research literature describing the experiences of armed forces families particularly frustrating. There was also little external evidence of school practices that had positively contributed to the experiences of children from forces families. The schools I visited and the teachers I spoke to were grappling with understanding how the demands of armed forces life raised issues and implications for children's education. There was a need to develop a shared understanding of the lives of armed forces families that could facilitate ideas about current and new educational supports for these children. The Professional Learning Community that arose from this identified need was something I continued to participate in throughout the three years of the PhD. It had considerable influence on many of the decisions I made during the research, and it also provided me with the opportunity to continually reflect on how emerging findings related to educational concerns.

The Professional Learning Community (PLC) brought together expertise from military personnel, armed forces family support services, community groups, parents of children from forces families and others working with armed forces families. It allowed us to map existing support for children from forces families, as well as consider how their experiences as part of an armed forces family may influence their education or experiences of school. Most importantly, it offered the space for practitioners to reflect critically and openly on their practice in a supportive space. My involvement in the PLC helped me to appreciate the context in which teachers were working and to understand the challenges they experienced as practitioners endeavouring to create educational environments for all the children in their class. I admired those teachers and remained committed to providing research evidence that would support their practice.

In addition, during that post, I undertook small-scale qualitative research with spouses of serving personnel, their children, and teachers working in schools

closely connected to the military. This work helped me to appreciate the significance of being part of a forces family. Coming from a largely quantitative background in research, it also worked to enhance my understanding of the value of qualitative research. What I discovered through undertaking this work solidified my belief that this was a topic worthy of further exploration. Whilst my remit in that post was largely to evaluate the work that schools were currently doing, I was keen to explore, in further detail, the nuances of the everyday lives of armed forces families.

Towards the end of that post, I applied and was successfully awarded a studentship on 'Understanding and Supporting the Educational Experiences of Children from Armed Services Families'. At the point of embarking on the PhD, I had moved quite considerably from being an experimental, cognition-focused and largely quantitative researcher. My Master's degree had left me feeling confident in: determining different threats to validity; the implications of the overuse of *p*-values and underuse of effect size; acknowledging sample size; and controlling my own influence on the research. However, my appreciation of qualitative research methods and more naturalistic evaluation approaches had been enhanced by my applied post. I was keen to take this latter approach forward with the PhD. My experience of working with educational practitioners also meant that I was keen to ensure that the research I undertook had relevance and applicability for practitioners. The collaborative nature of the PhD enhanced the overall sense of responsibility I felt to ensure that the research spoke to audiences outside of academia.

1.2 A collaborative PhD: Royal Caledonian Education Trust

This PhD is the result of a collaborative studentship funded by both the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Royal Caledonian Education Trust (RCET). RCET are a Scottish-based charity who seek to support the needs of children of the Scottish Armed Forces community. They do this by working in partnership with individuals and groups, providing financial assistance to families, and raising awareness of the needs of armed forces families. Through their Educational Programme, they provide training, resources and advice to educational practitioners. RCET had identified a paucity of research on the

experiences of children from forces families, particularly with respect to their educational experiences. They were seeking contextually relevant evidence to inform the development of their educational programme. I have reflected extensively on the process of undertaking a collaboratively funded doctoral study, contributing, for example, to the UK Council for Graduate Education Symposium on Collaborative Doctorates. Overall, the collaborative nature of the PhD research, alongside my previous relationships and work with educational practitioners, has remained an important influence on the decisions I have made throughout the research study. I have been guided by my responsibility to address both the practices of research and the practices of educational professionals. These principles are reflected in my research questions and methodological choices.

1.3 Educating children from forces families: A brief introduction

The UK armed forces include the Army, the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the Royal Navy/Royal Marines. Children from forces families are generally considered to be those who have at least one parent serving in the Regular armed forces, however, at times, this definition is broadened to include children with parents who serve as Reserves, or those who have served previously, that is to say, veterans. This inconsistency creates difficulty in determining the exact number of children in the UK from armed forces families (House of Commons Defence Committee (HoCDC), 2006). It is estimated that around half of all service personnel are married with children, equating to around 70,000 service families (Ministry of Defence (MoD), 2017a).

Approximately 5% of forces families reside in Scotland (HoCDC, 2006). The Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) report that 1% of the Scottish school population comprises children from armed forces families (ADES, 2017). Local authorities and schools near armed forces bases have significant numbers of children from forces families, but all local authorities in Scotland have forces families living within their communities (ibid.). The majority of children from armed forces families are educated in state schools across the UK (HoC, 2006; MoD, 2017a), however, a small proportion attend schools supported by the MoD. There are two schools connected to the military in the UK: Queen Victoria School in Dunblane and the Duke of York's Royal Military School in Dover. Queen Victoria

School is funded by the MoD and has a school roll of around 280 pupils. The Duke of York's Royal Military School is no longer funded by the MoD, but the school population continues to consist largely of children from military families. Other children from forces families are educated in Service Children Education (SCE) schools. These schools provide education to children whose parents are serving outside the UK. Around 8% of parents from forces families report having a child enrolled in a SCE school (MoD, 2017a). Finally, armed forces families sometimes choose to enrol their children in state or independent boarding schools, most often in order for the serving personnel's spouse to accompany them on new postings. Around 12% of families with children receive Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA), which is provided by the MoD to help families meet the costs of independent boarding schools (MoD, 2017a; UK Government, 2012).

A number of governmental departments and associated groups have a responsibility to support the experiences of children from forces families. The Directorate of Children and Young People (DCYP) forms part of the MoD and is responsible for policy and strategy relating to children from forces families. The Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) (UK Government, 2012) is part of the DCYP and provides advice and support to armed forces families regarding all aspects of their children's education in the UK and abroad, such as school admissions and continuity of education. CEAS have convened the Service Children in State Schools Working Group (MoD & Department for Education (DfE), 2009). This group provides advice to government and local authorities on the education and well-being of service children in English state schools and disseminates information on the issues facing schools and local authorities supporting children from forces families. In addition, since 2011, two targeted education funds have been made available by the UK Government to support schools and local authorities in providing additional support to children from forces families (HoCDC, 2013; MoD, 2017b).

These initiatives exist within the context that, in recent years, there has been increasing emphasis within government policy and documentation on the unique demands that service life creates for armed forces families, and the implications of these for children's educational experiences (MoD, 2017b). In this context,

mobility and deployment are the two most commonly discussed features of being part of a forces family (MoD & DfE, 2009). In 2013, a Government inquiry indicated that the circumstances of military life, particularly relocation and parental deployment, could give rise to interrupted education and social and emotional challenges (HoCDC, 2013). High mobility can cause disruptions to schooling and friendships, and there is often a concern that children develop gaps in their learning (MoD, 2016a). The educational implications around parental absence are often discussed in terms of the potential impact on children's wellbeing (MoD, 2016a). In a recent survey of military spouses, 49% of those with children reported feeling negative about the effect that service life has on their child (MoD, 2017a). With regards to education, some of the most common difficulties reported by parents with school-age children include: getting a place at the school of their choice; differences in syllabus; and the quality of education provided by their local school (National Audit Office, 2013).

Furthermore, there are a number of recent developments within the UK that are likely to have an impact on the experiences of armed forces families and have consequences for these children's experiences of school and education. Over the past few years, a significant number of children have been transitioning back to the UK following the commitment to withdraw all armed forces personnel from garrisons in Germany (HoCDC, 2013). In addition, the New Employment Model is an approach that seeks to change patterns of service mobility, in part to support retention and recruitment within the MoD (MoD & DfE, 2009). Whilst in the long term this strategy may decrease mobility for service families, in the short term, it may create greater turbulence than normal, and perhaps lead to an increase in situations where service personnel are stationed away from their families (ibid.). In this context, mobility and deployment are likely to remain key concerns.

1.4 Research context and rationale

Since about 2000, there has been a growing body of research seeking to look beyond the impact that armed forces life has on serving personnel and consider the situations faced by their families and children (e.g., White et al., 2011). According to some studies, the demands of armed forces life can have a negative impact on children's educational and psycho-social outcomes (Pexton, Farrants, &

Yule, 2018; Bradshaw et al., 2010). For example, some research argues that children's educational attainment is affected by both frequently moving schools (MoD, 2017b) and the stress of parental deployment (Engel, Gallagher, & Lyle, 2010). Beyond educational attainment, other researchers posit that mobility and deployment are associated with changes in how children engage with school, for example, in relation to how much they enjoy school, participate in school activities, and have supportive in-school relationships (Robson et al., 2013). In relation to parental absence, some studies argue that this can lead to emotional and behavioural difficulties (Barker & Berry, 2009; Chandra et al., 2010a), which may have implications for supporting these children in school (Eodonable & Lauchlan, 2012; Pexton et al., 2018).

However, although less commonly reported, there is also some research that suggests that being part of a forces family can make a positive contribution to children's lived experiences. Armed forces life can create opportunities for experiencing new cultures and meeting new people (Bullock & Skomorovsky, 2016), and can promote a sense of independence (Knobloch et al., 2012). Indeed, when children and young people were invited to share their experiences as part of the House of Commons Defence Committee Inquiry, they expressed a belief that they could confidently adapt to new environments (HoCDC, 2013).

Existing research on how children experience and respond to features of armed forces life is dominated by studies in the US. This research typically employs a deficit framing and looks to evidence of the association between the demands of armed forces life and children's measurable psychosocial, behavioural or academic outcomes (White et al., 2011). In addition, whilst there is growing recognition of the importance of gathering reports from children themselves (Pexton et al., 2018; Baptist et al., 2015), there continues to be a reliance on parent or teacher ratings of children's outcomes. Added to this the evidence that suggests that children and adults often reflect differently on their experiences of being part of a forces family (Crow & Seybold, 2013), suggests that there is a need to gather reports of armed forces life from children themselves.

As will be detailed in Chapter 2, the research base on the experiences of children from forces families is limited, due to the following key gaps:

1. Limited empirical evidence on the perspectives of children from armed forces families
2. Only a small number of qualitative research studies on the experiences of children from forces families
3. Limited research that explores the potentially positive effects of being part of a forces family
4. Few research studies addressing the demands of armed forces life within the context of school

Whilst this thesis responds to all of these gaps, it focuses primarily on addressing the first gap identified above. There currently exist few studies, particularly within the UK, which directly solicit the views of children and young people with respect to being part of an armed forces family. The research described in this thesis explores the accounts of children from five schools across Scotland. It seeks to contribute to an improved understanding of how educational practitioners may support children's experiences within their everyday school lives.

1.5 Research questions and methodology

The broad research aims designed initially to guide my study were:

- To engage children and young people in an exploration about how they perceive their experiences of being part of a forces family; and
- To suggest ways of responding to these experiences in school.

The aims that I developed early on therefore foregrounded two aspects of the research that were critically important: my engagement with children participating in the research, and the sense of responsibility I felt to highlight what this means for educational practice. As the research progressed, I developed more specific research questions:

1. What are the most significant features of children's descriptions of their experiences of having a parent in the armed forces?

2. Understanding subjectivity as a form of becoming, how do children describe themselves in relation to being part of an armed forces family?
3. What do children's accounts suggest about school-based support for children from forces families?

The empirical research that addresses these questions took place over the course of the school year 2015/16. It involved a total of 41 children and young people aged eight to 14 years, from three primary and two secondary schools in Scotland. Given that this is a largely hidden population, the schools that were invited to take part in the study were those that had already identified themselves as supporting pupils from armed forces families. Over the course of spending four-to-five weeks in each school, I invited children to explore their experiences with me, using a suite of qualitative methods. The methods – object elicitation, video diaries, peer interviewing, drawing and vignettes – were used to help generate a range of responses from the children. As I acknowledge throughout this thesis, these methods and myself as the researcher were implicated in the children's accounts.

This inquiry is supported by a post-qualitative orientation and draws on concepts from the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1988) and those who employ their ideas within empirical research (e.g., Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; Fox & Alldred, 2017). Assemblage is a key concept that I use to support many of my methodological decisions and to guide the overall research process. It acknowledges the contingent relationality of the social, material and discursive elements through which children's experiences of being part of a forces family emerge. As I hope to show, this perspective offers a more nuanced understanding of how the features of armed forces life come to matter in children's everyday lives.

1.6 Significance of the study

First and foremost, my thesis contributes to the paucity of research that directly engages with children and young people from armed forces families. Whilst previous literature is dominated by studies in the US, this study makes an important contribution by engaging with children attending primary and secondary schools in Scotland. If we are to support children from forces families in schools, it is necessary to have an understanding of how children experience being

part of a forces family. The significance of this study lies crucially, therefore, in its empirical contribution to UK research literature on children from forces families.

This study provides empirical evidence about how children account for their experiences of being part of a forces family. The research was conducted in schools and seeks to inform school-based response-making; however, the research sought to capture a broad understanding of children's experiences of being from an armed forces family, both inside and outside of school. Through an analysis of the empirical evidence and methodology employed, the research generates key signposts for teachers and schools seeking to provide an educational environment that is responsive to the experiences of children from forces families. It seeks to provide new ways of thinking about how educational practices could better support children from forces families. Beyond the immediate concerns of children from forces families, this research contributes insights which will be helpful in the consideration of approaches that enhance the provision of inclusive education.

The thesis also contributes to the growing field of post-qualitative research and the similarly focussed fields of new materialism or post-humanism. It uses concepts from Deleuze and Guattari (1988) that are now regular features of research in education and sociology (e.g., Fox & Alldred, 2017; Coleman & Ringrose, 2013) to respond to debates being had within the field of childhood studies. In particular, this study shows how an assemblage conceptualisation of children's 'voices' can create new possibilities for research. In a small way, the research therefore provides an example of how a post-qualitative orientation can be employed within an empirical study and the benefits thereof.

1.7 Thesis structure

Chapter two reviews existing literature on the experiences of children and young people from forces families. It situates the rationale for the study within the current policy context and provides a critical review of the research literature. This review also points to literature on children facing similar situations, particularly those relating to parental absence/separation and mobility.

Chapter three outlines the methodological approach. It begins by describing the post-qualitative orientation of this thesis, and key critiques within childhood

studies on gathering the perspectives of children. The chapter shows how this thesis positions children's voices as relational, contingent and shifting. Detail is provided on: the approach to recruitment; the children who took part in the study; the suite of qualitative methods employed; and the analytical process. Ethical issues are considered in detail and reflections on my research decisions are discussed throughout this chapter.

Chapter four, five and six provide the analysis which represents an assemblage of empirical data, theoretical concepts and existing literature on the experiences of children from forces families. Each of the chapters takes one of the research questions as the focus. Chapter four considers the significance of children's accounts about being part of an armed forces family, drawing on data from across the data corpus. Chapter five understands children's identities as forms of becoming and looks to map the shifting identities that emerged in the research encounters. As will be seen, data from 'the difference line' activity was particularly helpful for encouraging the children's processes of becoming-armed-forces-child. Finally, chapter six provides an analysis of the data generated in this study relating to schools' current and potential role in supporting children from forces families.

Chapter seven summarises the key findings from the preceding chapters, provides associated implications for educational practice, proposes suggestions for future research and offers some final reflections on the impact of the research.

1.8 A note on terminology

This thesis describes research that has been carried out with children and young people aged eight to 14 years. Whilst the term 'children' is commonly used to refer to all people under the age of 18 years (Alderson & Morrow, 2004), those working with people in their teenage years and older typically use the term 'young people'. In order to avoid the cumbersome use of 'children and young people' throughout the thesis, I have made the following choices. Firstly, I use the term 'children' when referring to all the participants who took part in the research. Secondly, to use the term 'young people' when referring exclusively to those who took part from the secondary schools (see also Skelton, 2008).

The terminology used to refer to armed forces families across the UK and international contexts varies considerably. In the US, it seems most common for researchers to use the terms 'military families' or 'military-connected' children or young people. In England, policy documents refer to 'service families' and 'service children' (e.g., DfE, 2010). 'Armed forces families' is the term most consistently used across Scotland and is the preferred term employed within the thesis. In the spirit of being concise, this is at times shortened to 'forces families' or 'children from forces families'. An exception is within the literature review, where I match the author's terminology.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In recent years, children with parents serving in the armed forces have been increasingly recognized as a group who may face particular, potentially challenging, and stressful life circumstances (HoCDC, 2013). Whilst for many years now there has been attention directed towards the challenges faced by serving personnel, there has also been repeated calls for consideration of the issues that service life creates for families and children (Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009). This chapter seeks to explore how the experiences of children from armed forces families have been approached and described in both policy and research. It presents a critical review of the literature, highlighting the key gaps and limitations of existing research on the experiences of children from forces families and provides the context and rationale for my study.

Arising from the analysis of extant literature, my main argument in this chapter is that there needs to be increased recognition of the perspectives of children from forces families. As I will outline, there are few studies, both internationally and within the UK, that directly solicit the views of children and young people from forces families. I argue that, if we are to support children from forces families in school, there is a need for research on how children perceive and account for this aspect of their lives. The research described in this thesis seeks to address this gap by engaging directly with children's own reports and interpretations of their experiences.

After describing my approach for searching and reviewing the existing literature, the chapter begins by exploring recent developments in UK and Scottish policy pertaining to the experiences of children with parents in the armed forces and, in particular, the concern that such experiences will have a negative impact on their education. As will be seen, most of this work attributes this concern to either frequent movement between schools or the extended separation from a parent due to deployment. The chapter then moves on to review what the research literature suggests about being part of a forces family, focussing on the impact and experience of, firstly, residential and school mobility, and, secondly, parental

absence. The final section describes research on various interventions designed to mitigate the impact of these experiences on children's educational outcomes or wellbeing. The methodological limitations of extant literature are discussed throughout and summarised in the concluding section.

2.1 Literature review approach

This chapter provides an analysis of how the experiences of children from armed forces families have been considered, both theoretically and empirically. Relevant studies were identified by searching the databases of ERIC, PsychINFO, Education Search Complete, and the British Education Index. Two substantive sweeps of the literature were carried out; the first in October 2014, and the second in May 2018. Search terms included: "armed forces children" OR "military connected" OR "army children" OR "navy children" OR "naval children" OR "service children" OR "naval pupils" OR "army pupils" OR "military children" OR "armed forces families" OR "military youth". Restricting the results to those published since 2000 had little effect on the number of studies returned, suggesting that most research has been conducted in the previous two decades. The following inclusion criteria were used:

- Article was published in English;
- Studies published between 2000 and 2018; and
- Focus was on children that were school-age (e.g., I excluded studies with babies or those in higher or further education).

The focus of the review was on identifying how the experiences of children from forces families have been approached in the literature, with a view to understanding implications for educational practitioners. Articles that focussed only on service personnel or the experience of spouses with no mention of children were excluded. Many of the papers were accounts from psychiatrists and/or studies in medical journals. These studies typically focussed on: the treatment of clinical conditions or developmental disorders; discussed the prevalence of alcoholism, domestic abuse or child maltreatment within armed forces families; or reported on use of mental health services. These issues were beyond the scope of this study. Unless I could ascertain that they contained detail relevant to the focus of the review, I excluded this literature. Finally, whilst I included both UK and

international research literature, in order to situate the research within the UK context, I excluded policy papers from the US and other countries.

I complemented this search strategy by following up interesting references cited in the resultant articles. In addition, my previous experience of working with armed forces families had made me aware of educational resources, books and grey literature (e.g., policy papers, local authority/third sector reports and unpublished dissertations) relevant to understanding the experiences of children from forces families. The search strategy uncovered a number of existing reviews of literature on the experiences of children from forces families, and these studies, in part, provided the foundation for the review (e.g., Alfano et al., 2016, Brendel et al., 2014; Card et al., 2011; Moeller et al., 2015 and White et al., 2011).

The literature that is discussed in this chapter pertaining to the experiences of children from forces families is quantified in Table 1. The review draws on the broad principles of configurative reviews (Levinsson & Prøitz, 2017). It was interpretive in the sense that I was attempting to understand how the experiences of children from forces families had been approached and described in extant literature (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). It was iterative in that I returned to refine my literature review at different stages of the research (Gough, Thomas & Oliver, 2012). Through my initial review of the literature, it was evident that papers primarily focussed on discussing the experiences of children from forces families with respect to either parental deployment or relocation. Consequently, these broad themes were used as the organising principle of the review. Further focussed searches were carried out at this point to supplement the review with literature relating to the experience of parental absence or moving home and school more generally. The findings from this comprehensive literature review are provided in the remainder of this chapter. Selected literature is used to provide the rationale for this study, which seeks to contribute to an improved understanding of how we might support the experiences of children from forces families in school.

Table 1: Literature on children from forces families included in review

Source	Quantity
Academic peer-review articles	72
Government reports	18
Unpublished dissertations	1
Not peer-reviewed third sector, local authority or independent reports	7

2.2 Policy context: Recognising the needs of children from forces families

In order to appreciate the need for the current study, it is helpful to consider how the wider policy context considers the experiences of armed forces families. In recent years, there has been increasing recognition by both the UK and Scottish Government of the commitment and sacrifices that armed forces personnel and their families make in the course of duty. A 2008 report, '*The Nation's Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their families and Veterans*' (MoD, 2008), stated that the absolute requirement to follow orders, including those that involve risking injury or death, and deploy whenever necessary, place unique demands on not only those who serve but their families too. For example, this report recognised that, due to the obligation to move frequently to places not within their choosing, armed forces families can face disadvantages in important areas, including education.

Since the publication of that report, there has emerged a body of policy documentation highlighting the need to support pupils from armed forces families (e.g., Scottish Government 2012, 2016a). In May 2011, the Armed Forces Covenant was introduced; this is an agreement between the nation, government and armed forces that service personnel and their families should face no disadvantage compared to their civilian counterparts in accessing public and commercial services (MoD, 2011). The Covenant is also underpinned by the agreement that special consideration may be required in order to achieve equitable experiences. Each year, the Armed Forces Act 2011 requires the Secretary of State for Defence to report on progress across important areas, including the education of children from forces families (MoD, 2017b). The Covenant states:

Children of members of the Armed Forces should have the same standard of, and access to, education (including early years services) as any other UK citizen in the area in which they live [...] In certain cases assistance will be available to support Service children's continuity of education, given the requirement for mobility.

(MoD, 2011, p. 7)

A government inquiry in 2013 argued that the educational continuity of children from armed forces families should be a key concern, and should be addressed collectively by the UK government, devolved administrations, and local authorities. This has led to a number of national initiatives. These are discussed and critiqued in the following sections and include: identification of armed forces children within the English school census, enabling linkage to attainment data; Service Pupil Premium in England; and the Education Support Fund (2011–2017) for schools across the UK with pupils affected by mobility or deployment (MoD, 2011, 2013).

There has been a particular concern with the impact of armed forces life on children's educational attainment (DfE, 2010; HoCDC, 2013). However, one of the difficulties that the UK government faced initially when attempting to determine whether children from forces families underachieve in comparison to their civilian peers was being able to accurately identify these children (HoCDC, 2006). In 2008, an armed forces family indicator was introduced in England's school census (DfE, 2010). This information links to datasets in the National Pupil Database and now makes it possible for the DfE to compare levels of educational attainment for pupils from armed forces families to the general school population. A similar system is now in place in Scotland, where schools can use the local authority management information systems to identify children with parents in the forces (MoD, 2016b). However, it is not clear whether all families wish to be identified through national databases in this way; there is evidence that some parents have been reluctant to disclose this information to schools (DfE, 2010; MoD, 2016b). This could be for a number of reasons: fear of stigmatisation, concern over safety (e.g., O'Neill, 2011), or lack of awareness about the armed forces family indicator. A similar issue has been found with Gypsy/Traveller families who do not wish to self-identify as Gypsies (Myers, 2018). Whilst the service child indicator on national census

databases forms a necessary part of the government's commitment to monitor educational attainment, it highlights the need for schools to broach associated conversations with families sensitively, recognising that not all families may feel comfortable disclosing information about their armed forces status. For my study, it highlighted the need to be aware of variation in how children may identify and associate themselves as part of a forces family.

The government has stated that it is committed to continually monitoring any disadvantage that children from forces families experience with respect to education. Each annual report of the Armed Forces Covenant details education performance metrics for armed forces pupils (e.g., MoD, 2016b; 2017b). A detailed evaluation of the outputs of this analysis and related research is outlined later in the chapter. At this point, I want to argue that the statistical information on the educational attainment of armed forces children provides us with only some of the information needed to support these children in school. It is undoubtedly important to know whether children from forces families underachieve, but, firstly, education is not simply about attainment. Secondly, other evidence suggests that there is often a disconnect between the statistical reporting of children's outcomes, and the complex, situated nature of children's experiences (e.g., Holligan et al., 2014). Statistical associations between children's attainment and military lifestyle factors, such as mobility, can only tell us part of the story. In order to understand whether and how children from forces families might experience educational-related disadvantage, there is need to look beyond the attainment data and combine it with other research to help us understand how children experience and respond to mobility, and the other demands of armed forces life.

In recent years, targeted funds have been made available to local authorities and schools to help them develop practices that attend to the academic, but also the social and emotional, challenges of armed forces life. In England, schools receive a Service Pupil Premium (SPP), which provides each school with an extra £300 per pupil registered as having a serving parent at any point since 2011. The fund is designed to "provide additional pastoral support to service families" (MoD, 2016c). The SPP is not available in Scotland due to differences in how education funding is distributed to local authorities (MOD, 2013). In addition to the SPP in England, all

devolved administrations had access until last year to the MoD's Education Support Fund. This was an annual fund, available from 2011 until 2017, distributed to publicly funded schools across the UK to help them address the challenges caused by having a parent in the armed forces (MoD, 2016a). Originally set at £3 million per year, the fund was increased to £6 million in 2014–15 and in total, this meant that over £30m was allocated to schools across the UK to meet the needs of children from forces families. The application guidelines stated that funding should be used to mitigate the effects of, specifically, exceptional deployment and/or mobility (MoD, 2016a). In the guidelines, deployment was defined as “the Service Person being away from home, either on an operation or a long term training exercise. It does NOT have to mean to a conflict zone.” (ibid.). Mobility was defined as “the whole family moving from one location to another resulting in a move of school for the child” (ibid.). Whilst these funds no doubt help to raise awareness of children from forces families in UK schools, there are some important points to consider.

Firstly, doubts have been raised about the efficacy of these additional funding initiatives. In a governmental inquiry in 2013, a concern was raised about schools' use of the SPP to replace other forms of funding previously provided by local authorities (House of Commons, 2013). Following recommendations from this inquiry, the DfE now publish examples of how this money has been used, thus attempting to ensure it is “value for money for the taxpayer” (HoCDC, 2013, p. 6). A best practice document is now available and reveals that primary and secondary schools have used SPP in a variety of ways, including:

- Employing additional teaching staff to provide targeted learning support to pupils from forces families
- Developing moving packs to help children settle into their new school
- A dedicated member of staff to support the academic and pastoral needs of children from forces families, and act as a link between the school and armed forces community
- Buying in resources (e.g., world map) to help children discuss and share their experiences

- Implementing changes to the school environment to provide more nurturing areas for children who are feeling worried
- Creating peer support groups, such as HMS Heroes groups which also support children to communicate with their absent parent

(MoD, 2016c)

The case study schools anecdotally report that these practices have led to improved attendance and attainment, alongside increased positive wellbeing (MoD, 2016c). Unfortunately, there has been little to no systematic evaluation of these practices, and how they influence the educational experiences of children from forces families. The inquiry in 2013 also recommended that the government publish details of the how the Support Fund was spent to support service children. However, to date there is very little information about how the fund has changed school practices. Guidance published alongside the application pack suggests the fund has been used to implement similar practices and resources to those described above for the SPP (MoD, 2016a). However, again there exists no published evaluation of these practices. It is therefore difficult to determine whether and how they have contributed to improved positive experiences for children from forces families in state schools.

In Scotland, efforts to address educational provision and issues for children from forces families are overseen by the Scottish Service Children Strategy Group (SSCSG), chaired by the Scottish Government. This group supports the work of the ADES National Transitions Officer (NTO) to work alongside local authorities in raising awareness of issues facing this group and to lead on initiatives designed to support them (Scottish Government, 2016a). A number of resources are now available to help local authorities and schools understand and respond to the needs of children from forces families (Scottish Government, 2017). This has included the development of a film, *'Getting it Right for Forces Families'*, and accompanying support material to be used with practitioners for inset training (ADES, 2017). The film features children and representatives from education and military organisations discussing the challenges that armed forces families face, and providing advice on how to best support them. Given that it aims to raise

awareness of the needs of armed forces children, it perhaps understandably focusses on the hardships associated with military life, particularly the difficulties of moving and the resulting interrupted learning. There is little discussion about the potential benefits associated with being part of a forces family. Most importantly, what is missing are children's own perceptions and experiences of what schools have done, and could do, to support them. The NTO has also worked with local authorities and the Scottish Government to develop guidance for schools on the admission of children from forces families, and resources for parents to help them understand and navigate the education system in Scotland (ADES, 2017). All this work aims to improve the quality of educational experiences for children from forces families. However, further work is needed to understand how these developments are contributing to the educational and school experiences of children.

Whilst these national UK and Scottish initiatives recognise the particular circumstances and specific needs of children of armed forces families, the experiences of all children, regardless of their circumstances, should, in principle, already be addressed within Scottish educational policy more generally. The new National Improvement Framework for Scottish education states that the government "are committed to a Scotland in which **all** children and young people can realise their potential" (Scottish Government, 2016b, p. 2, original emphasis). Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence's central tenet is the development of four capacities: confident individuals, successful learners, responsible citizens and effective contributors (Scottish Executive, 2004) and, although this approach is not without critique (e.g., Biesta, 2010), it typifies worldwide movement towards placing children at the centre of their learning experiences. Education is now considered to play an important role in enhancing children and young people's wellbeing (Humes, 2011) and is supported through the 'Getting it Right for Every Child' framework for supporting the wellbeing of all children. Further, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 places a statutory requirement on schools to identify and respond to any barriers that children may experience with regard to accessing the curriculum. The Act goes beyond a focus on long-term learning difficulties or disabilities to recognising that children and

young people may require additional support at different times in their life, for a variety of different reasons. In 2017, the Scottish Government added an explicit reference to children from forces families in the accompanying statutory guidance for Education Authorities (Scottish Government, 2017). Teachers and schools across Scotland have an obligation to be aware of any difficulties being part of an armed forces family may create for children in their educational experiences (Education Scotland, 2014).

Despite these policies, there is widespread acknowledgment that there often exists a discrepancy between policy intentions and how this is experienced by the children themselves (Edwards, Miller & Priestley, 2009; Thjis & van den Akker, 2009). The policy review above raises important questions about how we support yet do not homogenise or stigmatise the experiences of forces families. Moreover, I have argued that understanding the educational implications of armed forces life needs to look beyond children's attainment. Whilst the UK and Scottish policy provides the foundation for including and responding to the experiences of children from forces families, there is a need to attend to how children and young people experience these targeted interventions, as well as the everyday environment of school.

2.3 Armed forces families: Research literature

Since the early 2000s, there has been a growing body of literature on the experiences of children and young people from armed forces families. This research recognises that being part of a forces family can create a number of unique stressors for children. In his early US-based work, Segal (1986) argued that it is the combination of four military lifestyle demands that make the experiences of armed forces families distinct. Characteristics of armed forces life include: risk of injury or death of service member; high mobility; separations between service member and family; and the need to live in foreign countries. Segal (1986) argued that children may not experience these demands all at once, but are likely to face them at some point during the military parent's career. Other more recent work within the UK has similarly shown that common issues encountered by children from forces families involve: periods of parental absence; the threat of injury or death of a parent; disruptions to schooling and friendships due to frequent

relocation; and dealing with living in a one-parent family (O'Neill, 2011; Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009).

As I outline below, the most common approach to understanding the lives of children from armed forces families is to attempt to identify the association between typical military life demands and children's quantifiable psychosocial or academic outcomes. For example, the academic performance of armed forces children who have moved school has been compared to the academic performance of non-mobile children (DfE, 2010). Or, alternatively, children's anxiety levels during parental separation have been compared to their anxiety levels when their parent was at home (White et al., 2011). The purpose of these studies was to determine the measurable impact of military lifestyle factors on children's outcomes. Far less research has gathered qualitative in-depth data that might help us to understand why there might exist differences within and between children.

In addition, most studies tend to adopt a deficit approach to children's experiences, seeking to determine the negative impact of armed forces life. Whilst it is important to recognise the challenges caused as a result of their parents' service in the armed forces, a smaller body of work also highlights some of the positive influences of being part of a forces family. Empirical research has shown that armed forces life can promote independence through greater responsibility during parental deployment (Knobloch et al., 2012). Bullock and Skomorovsky (2016) conducted focus groups with 85 children aged eight to 13 years from families in the Canadian armed forces. Whilst the children struggled to identify positive aspects of parental deployment or relocation, they still believed it was good to be part of a forces family. The majority of children felt proud about their parent's service, and identified special, financial and other benefits associated with military life. Similarly, in a recent survey-based study in the UK asking young people to list the best thing about having a parent in the armed forces, a sense of pride and financial benefits were the two most common responses. In that same study, 18% of young people felt there was nothing bad about their situation (Jain, Stevelink, & Fear, 2016). We must not forget, therefore, that whilst armed forces life may present some challenges to children and their education, not all children will

perceive their experiences as negative. Armed forces life may provide opportunities for positive outcomes.

Most of the research literature comes from the US and considers the experiences of children from forces families through focusing on two overarching features of armed forces life: frequent residential mobility, and parental deployment. This research is reviewed below.

2.4 School mobility

Moving home and school is one frequently mentioned characteristic of armed forces life. Whilst all children experience transitions in their education – from nursery to primary, from primary to secondary, etc. – children from armed forces families may face changes in their educational experience more frequently as a direct consequence of their parents' career. The term 'pupil mobility' is often used when discussing children who experience school moves outside these predictable transitions (Demie, 2002; Dobson & Henthorne, 1999). In 2017, nearly a quarter (23%) of armed forces families reported having moved in the past year for Service reasons (MoD, 2017a). The level of mobility experienced by children may differ, depending on whether their parent serves in the Army, Navy, or RAF. For example, Royal Navy families tend to relocate less often than the other armed forces families, but they are also more likely to have experienced separation and are more likely to live apart from the serving personnel during the working week (ibid.). Research also suggests that mobility rates are higher for primary school children than for secondary school pupils, a finding consistent across forces and non-forces children (DfE, 2010; Dobson & Pooley, 2004). Other groups of children who have been identified as experiencing high mobility include: refugees and asylum seekers; immigrants; children from Gypsy/Traveller communities; and others who frequently move due to their parents' careers, including those attending international schools and so-called 'Third Culture Kids' (TCKs) (Dobson & Henthorne, 1999; Lijadi & Schalkwyk, 2017).

Armed forces families and children encounter a number of educational-related challenges associated with moving, including: transfer of academic records; differences in school curricula; adapting to a new school and making friends; and

access to extracurricular activities (Ruff & Keim, 2014). Armed forces parents in the UK with experience of high mobility were more likely than those with less experience of moving to report that moving has a detrimental effect on their children's education (National Audit Office, 2013). The inquiry by the House of Commons Defence Committee in 2013 reported that mobility can impact children's education in a number of ways (HoCDC, 2013). For example, lack of sufficient notice of a move can impact on securing a place in families' preferred school. In addition, the disruption to children's educational experience is compounded by inconsistencies and delays in the transfer of the pupil's educational records when they move school (e.g., Mulderrigg, n. d.). Other difficulties frequently experienced by mobile children from forces families include repeating topics and/or missing aspects of the curriculum (O'Neill, 2011). Differences across the UK between the age at which children begin statutory education and move between phases of education (e.g., from primary to secondary) can also cause concern for families and their children. For families and children with additional support needs, mobility can mean delays in assessment and provision of support, alongside inconsistencies in processes for responding to children with additional support needs (Jagger & Lederer, 2014; HoCDC, 2013). However, it is also notable that, within the context of all of these reported challenges, some armed forces families still reflect that relocation can create opportunities for young people, including the chance to learn additional languages, meet new people, and experience different cultures (HoCDC, 2013; Weber & Weber, 2005).

In general, the research suggests that relocation is associated with a number of negative consequences for children. For example, children who experience high mobility often exhibit more difficulties in school, both academically and socially (Hutchings et al., 2013; Pribesh & Downey, 1999). In what follows, I firstly discuss previous research on the quantifiable association between residential and school mobility and children's educational and wellbeing outcomes. I highlight the complexity in deciphering the impact of mobility for children from armed forces families and argue that more in-depth qualitative research is needed to help us understand how mobility impacts on children's lives.

Consequences for educational outcomes

Most research on the association between mobility and educational outcomes has focussed on school mobility. Research into the effects of frequent school moves suggests that such experiences are linked to poorer educational attainment (Hutchings et al., 2013; Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). Demie (2002) compared the educational attainment of mobile and stable pupils at primary and secondary schools in one local authority in inner London, finding that, in most schools, stable pupils consistently outperformed mobile pupils. However, in this sample, mobile pupils were also more likely to be receiving free school meals and have English as an additional language, and these factors were also shown to have a negative effect on academic achievement. Research shows that mobile pupils are more likely to be from low-income families (Dobson et al., 2000; Pribesh & Downey, 1999). Strand and colleagues (2007) argue that it can be misleading to simply compare the performance of mobile and non-mobile groups without taking other factors into account. Their research showed, after controlling for the background factors of prior attainment, sex, socio-economic status, fluency of English, and severity of special educational need, mobility ceased to have any effect on the attainment of primary school children (Strand & Demie, 2007) and remained significant, although it did have a reduced effect at secondary school (Strand & Demie, 2007). Others argue that whilst mobility does matter for educational attainment, differences between mobile and non-mobile groups are largely accounted for by pre-existing factors known to have an impact on educational attainment, such as socio-economic status (Pribesh & Downey, 1999).

It is important, therefore, to consider that any relationship found between high mobility and negative educational outcomes may be spurious, reflecting instead the impact of other variables, such as socioeconomic status or other family background variables (Pribesh & Downey, 1999). In this regard, it is necessary to consider the characteristics of armed forces families that may differentiate them from other populations experiencing high mobility. The DfE (2010) in England reports that armed forces families are less likely to be deprived and to have special educational needs. In a case study exploration of 6 schools with high mobility, Dobson et al. (2000) reported that the school with a high proportion of children

from forces families was more likely to have a learner community that was fluent in English, achieving as expected, and supported by a stable family. In schools where mobility was associated with armed forces families, overall performance was found to be relatively high (Dobson & Henthorne, 1999). Mehana & Reynolds' (2004) meta-analysis also suggested that the size of the association between mobility and attainment may vary for civilian and armed forces families.

The UK government has made various attempts to compare the educational progress of armed forces connected children to their civilian counterparts. In 2007, the Children's Education Advisory Service (set up by the MoD to support forces families) commissioned research to investigate the school performance of mobile service children (Schagen, 2007). The performance of schools near military bases was compared with the performance of other schools and this proxy measure was used to argue that, despite high mobility, children of armed forces families have educational outcomes that are in line with expectations. Noret et al. (2014) compared the performance between Army and non-Army secondary school pupils and found little difference in mathematics and science grades, and some difference in English attainment. However, this analysis failed to consider other demographic information known to impact on attainment. In 2010, the DfE in England reported that, after controlling for high mobility, armed forces children actually performed better than their non-military-connected peers (DfE, 2010). The UK Government provide education statistics on the educational attainment of children from forces families every year as part of the annual Armed Forces Covenant Report; these figures indeed suggest that children perform similarly or better in comparison to their non-military mobile peers (MoD, 2017b). However, the figures also indicate that mobility does disadvantage pupils: non-mobile pupils perform better than mobile pupils.

Thus, it seems that, whilst frequent school moves, particularly at secondary school, may have a negative effect on children's educational attainment (Hutchings et al., 2013), children from forces families, as a group, may fare better than other mobile children. Nevertheless, other research looking beyond educational attainment notes that mobility can have a disruptive effect on children's educational experiences due to increased stress (Eodonable & Lauchlan, 2012).

Impact of moving on children's social and emotional outcomes

Most of the literature on the impact of mobility on children has focussed on determining the link between frequent school moves and educational attainment. The emotional impact of mobility, alongside the challenges of making friends and adapting to a new school environment, is widely recognised (House of Commons, 2006; Ruff & Keim, 2014), but the evidence showing that mobility has a direct effect on children's social and emotional outcomes is limited and inconclusive (Norford & Medway, 2002).

Some research suggests that military lifestyle demands, such as mobility, have little impact on children's wellbeing. A US cross-sectional study looked at the relationship between a number of military-related factors (e.g., experience of parental absence; number of school transitions) and social or emotional outcomes (e.g., depressive symptoms; perceived level of social support) in a large sample of young people aged 11 to 18 with parents in the US Army (Lucier-Greer et al., 2016). Multiple school changes had little impact on young people's wellbeing. Other military lifestyle demands, such as parental absence, were also not associated with poorer well-being, leading the authors to conclude that the influence of armed forces life on young people remains unclear.

However, both residential and school moves usually disrupt children's social networks. Pribesh and Downey (1999) argued that the negative association between mobility and educational attainment was actually due to a loss in social capital, defined as connections with school, community, peers and parents. A US study considered the relationship between rate of mobility and children's scores on self-completed questionnaires measuring a range of social and emotional outcomes (Finkel, Kelley & Ashby, 2003). The number of moves experienced by children (aged 11–13 years) had no impact on their psychosocial wellbeing. However, a slightly different measure of mobility – the length of time they had stayed in the one place – did significantly predict their loneliness, peer relationship, and self-esteem scores. This may suggest that, as children settle in, their concerns about the move start to dissipate. It points to the importance of looking beyond the number of moves that children have experienced and shows that mobility can have an impact on perceived levels of social support.

Analysis of cross-sectional data from US Army families pointed towards the importance of relationships in promoting positive outcomes for young people aged 11–18 years (Mancini et al., 2015). This study found that, overall, military lifestyle demands had little impact on young people's outcomes, however, family mobility (measured by total number of family relocations) was positively related to reports of depressive symptoms. Furthermore, a consistent finding in this study was the positive association between measures of 'relationship provision' and well-being outcomes. Young people who believed they had more social support, were also less likely to be depressed or anxious, and more likely to report positive academic performance. Therefore, this study suggests that, firstly, mobility is associated with children's well-being outcomes, and secondly, relationships could be important in promoting positive outcomes for young people.

Eodanable & Lauchlan (2011) argue that, whilst the evidence on the psychosocial impact of moving is limited, children from armed forces families face other stressors, such as parental absence, which could contribute to difficulties in making a successful transition to a new school. Relocation seems to be a difficult experience for most children and may be even more challenging for those also facing other stressors (Aronson et al., 2011). Overall, the evidence suggests that a more nuanced understanding of how mobility interacts with other dimensions of the lives of children from forces families is needed. In-depth qualitative studies would perhaps be a first step towards understanding which aspects of the mobility experience (e.g., frequency, total number of moves, timing, etc.) affect wellbeing, and this would in turn allow researchers to design more informed, appropriately focussed quantitative studies.

Children's experiences and views on moving school

The research reviewed thus far has considered the measurable relationship between mobility and children's educational, social and emotional outcomes, and largely shows an inconsistent pattern of results. A qualitative approach may help provide greater insight into the process of moving schools, and how this is experienced by children from forces families. However, this is a significant gap in current research, particularly in relation to children's own perspective. My literature search discovered only four studies on the views of children from forces

families in relation to moving school (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clifton, 2007; Mmari et al., 2009, 2010) and therefore this section supplements these with studies exploring the views of children more generally (Messiou & Jones, 2015; Topping, 2011).

A key concern consistently raised by children and young people is the impact of moving on peer relationships; children report feeling worried about making new friends and leaving behind old friends (HoCDC, 2006; Messiou & Jones, 2015). Bradshaw et al. (2010) conducted focus groups with young people (aged 12–18 years) from US forces families, their parents and school staff to explore the school transition experience. Young people reported feeling concerned about leaving long-term friendships and anticipated challenges in making new friends. Clifton (2007) carried out ethnographic case studies of four secondary school pupils from Army families attending a school in England. Interviews and observations of the young people were combined with interviews with their parents and teachers, to conclude that moving had a negative effect on children's educational experiences. Reports from the young people indicated that their emotional difficulties came largely from their sadness at leaving friends and having to make new ones. Mmari et al. (2010) specifically considered the role of social connectedness, defined as perceived nature of social support, in supporting children's move to a new school. Focus groups with young people revealed that, whilst making new friends was the most significant stressor associated with moving, having connections with other military youth could buffer some of the negative effects.

The timing of the school move can affect children's experiences of moving. Children who move outwith routine transitions may experience difficulties in joining established friendship groups (Messiou & Jones, 2015). Young people report that moving during the school year can be particularly challenging, and that they prefer to move at the start of the school year (Mmari et al., 2010).

Relationships with school staff also seem to feature in children's mobility experiences. Clifton (2007) argued that her observations of classroom interactions revealed that children from forces families were less likely to ask for help from their teacher. Findings from focus groups with young people from forces families

suggested that teacher relationships could play an important part in how children responded to the stress of moving school (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

Children, particularly those at secondary school, also report on the impact that moving has had on their learning experiences. Educational concerns include repeated learning, adapting to new curricula, and adapting to school-level differences, including the structure of the school day (Messiou & Jones, 2015; Bradshaw et al., 2010). Young people from forces families have reported feeling self-conscious about gaps in their learning and annoyance at having to repeat topics (Bradshaw et al., 2010). They also reported concerns at being able to attain necessary qualifications, and the impact that this could have on their attitudes towards school (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

Yet, for some children, a move to a new school can be perceived as a “fresh start” – an opportunity to review their attitude and behaviour with regard to learning (Messiou & Jones, 2015). The young people from forces families who participated in Mmari et al.’s (2010) study believed that their experience of moving had made them more mature and increased their ability to make friends. Similarly, when children and young people were invited to share their experiences as part of the House of Commons Defence Committee Inquiry, they expressed a belief that they could confidently adapt to new environments (HoCDC, 2013).

Previous research on educational transitions has highlighted that teachers and children are often concerned about different aspects of the move (Topping, 2011). Whilst teachers focus on academic issues, children are more worried about the social implications of the move, a finding consistent across both children from forces (Clifton, 2007) and non-forces families (Topping, 2011). Additionally, whilst teachers may believe their efforts to support children cope with the move are successful, children sometimes experience these efforts as unhelpful or inadequate (Messiou & Jones, 2015). It therefore seems critical that schools engage directly with the views of children from forces families to inform their understanding of how to support them during a school move.

The studies reviewed in this section show that a qualitative approach can provide insights about *how* school mobility affects children’s experiences, thus providing

information on possible actions to improve children's outcomes. However, current understanding is predicated on evidence from a small number of studies. More research is needed to enable a more comprehensive picture of the experiences of children from forces families.

Conclusions: Residential and school mobility

The above review suggests that there is sufficient evidence to argue that frequent school moves have at least a small effect on children's educational attainment. Whilst the negative effect of moving impacts all children, the educational attainment of mobile children from forces families tends to be better than the attainment of other mobile children. Although there is limited evidence about the association between mobility and social or emotional outcomes, what there is suggests that relationships form a key aspect of the experience. Similarly, children with experience of moving, both forces and non-forces, consistently report that one of their biggest concerns is making new friends and leaving old ones behind. Whilst not all children will hold a negative view of moving, relationships within the school may be important in promoting positive experiences. Secondary school children may experience more educational-related difficulties than younger children. However, there is currently limited evidence from children from forces families about how they experience and respond to the challenges associated with moving. More qualitative research on the perspectives of children from mobile forces families is needed.

2.5 Parental absence

Children from armed forces families experience periods of parental absence as a result of military deployment. Deployment involves the service personnel being posted temporarily to another location to carry out a specific task related to either training or combat operations (O'Neill, 2011). It means being away from home, unaccompanied by families, for several months (MoD & DfE, 2009). Other occupations, such as those in the oil or gas industry, also require parents to be absent from home, and this work pattern of cyclical periods of absence and presence has been referred to as fly-in-fly-out (FIFO; Lester et al., 2015). In addition, children with parents in prison also experience the impact of temporary parental absence, though it should be noted that the underlying reasons for the

absence are also likely to have an impact on children's experiences (Andres & Moelker, 2011). Some argue that the risk of injury or death makes parental absence as a result of military deployment relatively distinct (Segal, 1986; Andres & Moelker, 2011). When young people in the UK were asked to report on the best and worst things about having a parent in the military, a significant number reported lack of contact with their parent as the most negative consequence of armed forces life (Jain et al., 2016). Similarly, when spouses were asked to indicate which features of armed forces life they felt most negative about, the amount of time they were separated from their partner was the most frequently reported negative aspect. The same survey reported that half of spouses felt that operational tours were too long (MoD, 2017a).

Parental absence due to deployment can lead to a number of challenges for families and children, but it is less clear how this impacts children's schooling or educational experiences. Educational concerns are often framed in relation to the strain that deployment puts on family life, and the associated emotional demands (Moeller et al., 2015). The experience of deployment for families has been theorised as a cyclical process, involving pre-deployment, deployment and post-deployment, with each stage being associated with different kinds of emotional and practical demands for children (Pincus et al., 2001; Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009; O'Neill, 2011). For example, before the deployment, children may start to anticipate the loss of their parent (Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009). The deployment stage itself involves a change to a one-parent household, and children can experience changes in responsibilities and routines (Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017). Post-deployment can be difficult, as families need to renegotiate relationships (Huebner et al., 2007). The emotional cycle of deployment has been endorsed by professionals working with armed forces families (Chandra et al., 2010b; O'Neill, 2011), yet, to date there has been little empirical exploration of the different stages. Most research focusses on the period when the parent is absent (Alfano et al., 2016).

As with the mobility literature, most research exploring parental absence in armed forces families has focussed on determining the impact of deployment by examining its statistical association with children's outcomes. This research is

therefore reviewed first, focussing on social and emotional outcomes before describing the evidence for how deployment affects academic performance. A critique of research exploring children's lived experiences of deployment concludes this section.

Impact on social and emotional outcomes

Most research has focussed on the impact of parental deployment on children's psychosocial development. There exist a number of comprehensive reviews (Alfano et al., 2016, Moeller et al., 2015; White et al., 2011) and a meta-analysis (Card et al., 2011) examining the association between parental deployment and children's outcomes. In general, this body of research argues that parental absence due to deployment is associated with increased anxiety and/or behavioural difficulties (e.g., Pexton et al., 2018). A number of factors are likely to have an impact on how well children cope with parental absence. For example, longer deployments are reported to exacerbate children's difficulties (Chandra et al., 2010a), whilst effective coping skills in the at-home parent appear to reduce any association (Andres & Moelker, 2011). However, not only do these studies typically come from the US, where there are important cultural and institutional differences (Fossey, 2012), there remain significant methodological problems limiting what can ultimately be said about the impact of deployment.

Most of the studies conducted to date are cross-sectional and thus do little to help advance our understanding of how children's outcomes change over time or indeed speak to issues of causality (White et al., 2011). Without longitudinal research, it is difficult to determine what impact potential confounding variables (e.g., parental mental health, additional support needs) could have on the association between parental deployment and children's outcomes. In addition, whilst many researchers assume that the experience of deployment can be understood as a cyclical process (Pincus et al., 2001), the research focusses on children's outcomes during one point in time, most typically the deployment stage (Alfano et al., 2016). The absence of research into children's experiences over time means we do not yet know whether the cycle of deployment is a useful framing for the interpretation of children's experiences.

In order to better understand the effects of deployment on children of service personnel, reviewers have recommended that researchers carefully consider the recruiting procedure, and characteristics of sample and comparison group (White et al., 2011; Moeller et al., 2015). In their meta-analysis, Card et al., (2011) noted that the design of the study can have an impact on the strength of the association between deployment and wellbeing outcomes. Specifically, studies which compare children with deployed parents to civilian children detect changes in children's adjustment. However, those studies which instead compare children from forces families with deployed parents to military children without deployed parents (or compare their outcomes before and during deployment) actually find little evidence of the effects of deployment. Further limitations of the research design come from the use of convenience samples, as participants were often recruited from US military bases (White et al., 2011). Research on UK armed forces populations, and children attending UK schools, would enhance our understanding of the implications for school staff looking to support children from forces families in school (Paley et al., 2013).

The research has overwhelmingly focussed on identifying the problems associated with deployment and few studies have explored the potential for positive outcomes of such experiences. Researchers commonly employ standardised measures of psychosocial functioning, such as the Child Behaviour Checklist (Kelley et al., 2001), the strength and difficulties questionnaire (Chartrand et al., 2008), or the Paediatric Symptom checklist (Flake et al., 2009). These measures are typically completed by the non-deployed parent and are used to identify children 'at risk'. I would argue that these negatively directed standardised measures can obscure the complexity involved in how children negotiate their lived experience of parental absence. For a more complete understanding of the effects of deployment, a more holistic approach is needed, where both positive and negative effects are considered through reports obtained from multi-informants (Alfano et al., 2016; White et al., 2011).

And this is perhaps one of the most significant limitations of current research: the lack of direct information from children and young people. Much of the existing research focuses on gathering data from parents or teachers to ascertain children's

psychosocial development. However, the research also shows that parents and children can give different accounts of their deployment experiences (Crow & Seybold, 2013; Chandra et al., 2010a). It seems important to know what factors give rise to these discrepancies, and this will involve more research with children from forces families. Card et al. (2011) argues that, going forward, it will be necessary to distinguish between children's perceptions of coping and those of adults.

Pexton et al.'s (2018) research is one of the few studies that directly addresses some of the limitations noted above. This study employed a longitudinal design and assessed children's mental health at three time points throughout the deployment cycle. The children (aged 8–11 years) had fathers who were either deployed to Afghanistan or were on a training exercise. They were attending schools in the UK, and data were collected directly from the children as well as from their parents and teacher. No significant changes were observed throughout the deployment cycle or between the different groups of children, and their scores on measures of depression, behavioural difficulties and self-esteem were within clinically normal ranges. However, the study did report that the children, from both groups, had clinically higher levels of anxiety, and the authors argue that there are important implications for school staff, and other professionals working with these children.

Two things are worth mentioning about these findings. Firstly, whilst the *average* score for children taking part was at the level considered to meet the criteria for anxiety disorder, not *all* children scored above this clinical cut-off. Secondly, the researchers note that high scores were largely on two sub-scales of the anxiety measure: separation anxiety, and somatic symptoms. The separation anxiety subscale contains items such as: "I follow my mother or father wherever they go"; "I have nightmares about something bad happening to my parent"; and "I don't like to be away from my family". Whilst the authors report that this is a validated measure for detecting anxiety in the general population, these concerns may be relatively understandable in the context of children with deployed parents. Furthermore, consideration of the content of the items that children thought they experienced a lot is perhaps more interesting or useful to teachers looking to

support children from military families. Understanding the degree and focus of children's worries – for example, being worried about their parents during deployment – is arguably more useful than knowing that children reported clinically high levels of anxiety.

Consequences for school engagement and educational outcomes

Whilst moving schools may seem the most obvious way in which military life can impact on children's educational outcomes, some researchers have argued that parental absence can have important educational implications. In two studies from the US, the researchers used academic records and administrative data to show that children who had experienced a deployment attained less on their end-of-year school exam than children who had not experienced a deployment that year (Engel et al., 2010; Lyle, 2006). Engel et al. (2010) reported that deployments which are longer or occur at the time of testing are likely to cause the most disruption. However, the statistical effect size of this association was not particularly large. Specifically, Engel and colleagues estimated that the test scores of children whose parents deployed during the month of their exam were between 0.51% and 0.92% lower, depending on the subject (Engel et al., 2010). Two recent reviews confirmed that existing research shows the association between deployment and educational attainment to be small, perhaps negligible, and that our current understanding of this relationship is limited due to lack of robust research (Card et al., 2011; Alfano et al., 2016).

Other researchers have looked beyond educational attainment to consider wider school-related outcomes. Robson et al. (2013) found that the experience of deployment was positively related to school attachment and school attitude; young people who had experienced a deployment had higher school attachment and more positive attitudes towards school. The authors speculated that a combination of individual factors (e.g., personal resilience) and school-related factors may have helped children from forces families to respond positively to the deployment.

However, other research has found that deployment is associated with difficulties in school. Chandra et al. (2010b) found that children with deployed parents reported that teachers understood little about their situation, and some reported

difficulty with their school work as a result of deployment. Other research has found that, within armed forces families, children aged 11 to 16 years with a deployed parent report more school-related problems than those without a deployed parent (Aranda et al., 2011). School-related problems were assessed using a standardised self-report questionnaire of emotional and behavioural symptoms. However, no further detail is provided about the nature of the questions on the school issue subscale. As Moeller et al. (2015) report in their review of studies on the effects of parental absence, these inconsistencies in findings make it difficult to come to any definitive conclusions about the relationship between parental absence and school-related outcomes.

Children's experiences and views of parental absence

There now exists a small but growing body of research exploring how children describe their experience of parental absence due to deployment. Research from both the US and Canada has captured the views of children and young people from forces families through mainly focus groups or interviews (e.g., Baptist et al., 2015; Knobloch et al., 2012; Huebner et al., 2007; Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017). These studies consistently find that deployment is an intensely emotional time, associated with feelings of sadness, loneliness, and uncertainty (Baptist et al., 2015). Children report feeling worried about their deployed parent's safety (Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017) and uncertain about when and whether their parent will return home (Houston et al., 2009). Using focus groups with 107 young people aged 12–18 years attending a camp for those with deployed parents, Huebner et al. (2007) found that young people experienced a range of emotions in response to the news that their parent was going to be deployed, some of which resulted in behavioural changes, such as withdrawal or lack of interest in usual activities. In general, children are unlikely to describe positive outcomes of parental absence (Houston et al., 2009; Huebner et al., 2007; Knobloch et al., 2012).

In addition to experiencing a sense of loss, children report that deployment involves changes to family routines and dynamics. Knobloch and colleagues explored how young people, aged 10–13 years, experience family life during deployment (Knobloch et al., 2012). Young people reported increased

responsibility at home, for example, helping with household chores, as well as difficulties in participating in the same extracurricular activities due to the shift to a one-parent household. These practical changes to home life are consistently reported by young people in other research (e.g., Baptist et al., 2015; Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017). In addition, young people described how deployment affects not only them but also their family members, and alters overall family dynamics (Knobloch et al., 2012). Whilst young people find these shifts in roles and routines difficult, some also report that it leads to increased maturity or opportunities for independence, alongside improved family cohesion (Baptist et al., 2015; Knobloch et al., 2012).

Some research has also explored how children cope with the emotional and practical demands of deployment. Skomorovsky and Bullock (2017) described how children aged eight to 13 years from Canadian armed forces families respond to parental absence due to deployment. In relation to coping with the deployment experience, some children reported seeking support from family or friends, others found it useful to distract themselves by engaging in activities, and still others found it useful to distance themselves from other people. Children described spending more time with their at-home parent. There were mixed views on whether it was helpful to communicate with the deployed parent. The researchers argued that the children attempted to maintain the psychological presence of the deployed parent. Others felt it was helpful to attend support groups with others experiencing deployment.

Given the concerns that the emotional demands of parental deployment may have important educational implications, little research has considered what these experiences might mean for children in school. Some of the children participating in Skomorovsky and Bullock's (2017) research indicated that the stress of deployment could reduce their enjoyment and motivation at school, and lead to lower academic performance.

Research on the experiences of armed forces families is beginning to recognise the importance of including children's perspectives. However, there still exists a limited amount of empirical research to date. The studies reviewed above are often

missing important detail about the research process. For example, whilst the researchers allude to the types of questions asked, there is a lack of detail about how the focus groups or interviews were conducted. The information that is provided often warrants doubt about the in-depth nature of the discussions. For example, Knobloch et al. (2012) reports that the average duration of interviews with the 33 young people was 17.5 minutes. It is unclear how the researchers were able to gather demographic details and discuss potentially sensitive topics within this timeframe. It is well established that rapport building takes time and is essential for the reciprocal sharing process qualitative researchers seek to create (Dickson-Swift et al., 2007). There is little reflection by the researchers on how the research process interacted with the resulting responses, and often the researcher's own voice in the interviews is noticeably absent (Spyrou, 2011). In response to the evidence gap in the literature, the methodological approach that informed the research in this thesis recognises that children's voices cannot be disentangled from the context in which they were produced. This approach is described more fully in the next chapter.

Conclusions: Parental absence

The above review reveals a largely inconsistent pattern of results. Whilst there is some evidence to suggest that deployment is associated with increased anxiety and/or behavioural difficulties (e.g., Chandra et al., 2010a; Lester et al., 2010), this research is limited by features of the research design. Research on the links between deployment and educational outcomes is mixed and reveals little about how parental deployment interacts with children's experiences in and of school. Despite the small number of studies, qualitative reports from children have been particularly helpful in revealing how parental absence comes to matter in children's lives. This body of research highlights that the deployment experience is intensely emotional and often involves changes and challenges in children's everyday lives. However, the methodological features of these studies, alongside the fact they come from the US or Canada, and from outside the field of education, mean that they are limited in terms of providing evidence for teachers looking to support children from UK armed forces families in school.

2.6 Reducing the negative impact of mobility and parental absence

Although there are some limitations and inconsistencies in the research reviewed above, there does seem to be sufficient evidence to suggest that being part of a forces family can be emotionally, practically, and educationally demanding. There is therefore a need to consider what helps children from forces families cope with these demands. Earlier in the chapter I reported on some educational or school initiatives that have been developed within the UK to help mitigate the negative impacts of mobility or deployment. At local level this has included: additional staffing; transition documents; counselling support; peer groups; as well as the increased provision of numeracy and literacy resources (MoD, 2016c). However, little is known about the efficacy of these interventions. In fact, research suggests that there is a lack of research internationally on school-based interventions designed to support children from forces families (Brendel et al., 2014; De Pedro et al., 2011; Moeller et al., 2015).

Most research tends to adopt a clinical perspective, aiming to enhance the coping skills adopted by children in response to military related stressors. For example, Blasko (2015) reported on the development of an online resource for children designed to provide guidance on effective psychological coping strategies for responding to deployment and moving. A full review of these studies is beyond the scope of this thesis. The research described in this thesis is concerned with strategies that schools can adopt to positively enhance the experiences of children from forces families. In this respect, it adopts a more systemic approach to children's experiences of military lifestyle demands, arguing that efforts should be directed at not only the individual coping strategies adopted by children, but in the ways schools and families respond to military lifestyle demands (De Pedro et al., 2011).

A number of researchers have posited that school could play an important role in supporting children from forces families. For example, Astor et al. (2013) argued that primary and secondary schools could serve as 'promotional contexts' for children from armed forces families. De Pedro et al. (2018) also argues for the supportive role that schools can play in promoting children's wellbeing. Insight into how schools might contribute towards improved positive experiences for

children from forces families comes from two bodies of research. Firstly, there is research that considers the association between school-related factors and the wellbeing or educational outcomes of children from forces families. Secondly, although limited, there is some research which asks children from forces families to report on school practices which have been, or could be, supportive. This research is reviewed to provide a starting point in thinking about what practices or initiatives could contribute towards improved educational experiences for children from forces families.

Relationships within school

Some research suggests that relationships with teachers could be critical. In a US study of secondary school pupils attending military-connected schools, De Pedro et al. (2018) found that young people who regarded teachers as caring were likely to have higher wellbeing scores. A few of the children who participated in Skomorovsky and Bullock's (2017) research (discussed above) indicated that having supportive teachers who understood the situations they were facing was helpful. However, Clifton's (2007) ethnographic study of children from UK Army families argued that the teachers did not fully understand or appreciate the lives of armed forces families. Lack of awareness by staff of the demands and experiences of military life could act as a barrier towards the development of supportive relationships, and ultimately exacerbate negative outcomes (Astor et al., 2013). Ohye et al. (2016) report on an US-based online resource for educators to raise awareness of the stresses associated with parental deployment and provide guidance on practices for promoting resilience.¹ Similar resources have started to be developed in the UK (ADES, 2017). It remains critical to assess the extent to which children believe school staff demonstrate sufficient understanding of the situations they encounter.

Similarly, peer support in school seems to be important for the wellbeing of children from forces families. Bradshaw et al. (2010) invited young people, parents and school staff to comment on what school strategies could support children from

¹ See <http://stayingstrong.org/educators/>

forces families' transition to a new school. Young people felt that schools could play a critical role in helping them to foster relationships with other pupils, particularly in the early stages of their move. With regard to the experience of deployment, children have suggested that peer support groups involving other children experiencing parental absence can help them cope with the situation (Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017).

Schools may also offer support to armed forces children by fostering a sense of belonging. De Pedro et al. (2018) found that young people who: felt close to people in their school; were happy to be at school; and felt part of the school, were less likely to show depressive symptoms. School staff have reported that children often view the school as a supportive space for them to escape the emotion prevalent at home (Chandra et al., 2010b). However, it is important to know how children themselves view the role of school in supporting their experiences of being part of a forces family.

School curricula, policies and practices

Most of the literature on changes to school policies and practices focusses on securing educational continuity as a result of frequent mobility. The parents taking part in Bradshaw et al.'s (2010) research were keen for schools to adapt their school policies and practices to align better with the needs of armed forces families. Parents, staff and young people participating in that research all reported that improved processes for transferring pupil information between schools would support their move to a new school. As discussed earlier, the UK government has made attempts to improve information sharing between schools. As yet, it remains unclear the extent to which these have improved experiences for children from forces families.

Other literature suggests making changes to the school curriculum could support educational outcomes for children from forces families. Guided by the extant literature, Harrison and Vannest (2008) drew on their professional practice experience to suggest how to integrate the experience of deployment into the curriculum. For example, for literacy-based work, they suggest supporting children

to write to their deployed parents and for numeracy-based work, they recommend exploring time-zone differences between the child and the deployed parent.

In an attempt to promote the emotional well-being of armed forces children, an Educational Psychology team in Scotland implemented curriculum interventions as well as a critical incident policy (Eodonable & Lauchlan, 2012). The curriculum interventions focussed on improving what is described as emotional literacy as well as supporting children to respond to changes in their lives. The small numbers of pupils used in the study limited its ability to say anything about efficacy, but the feedback from both teachers and pupils suggested the curriculum interventions were viewed positively.

Relationships outwith the school

The research reviewed above on mobility and parental absence revealed that these experiences have an impact on family dynamics and relationships. Much of the intervention literature reflects this consideration and focusses on improving family functioning. This has implications for how schools might support children from forces families and suggests the need to adopt a familial perspective. Some of this work might involve working closely with other professionals, such as educational psychologists (Eodonable & Lauchlan, 2012; Hogg, Hart, & Collins, 2014) or social workers (e.g. Garcia et al., 2015). However, there is little research that explores how this approach has been incorporated into school practice.

In the US literature, a commonly referenced intervention is Families OverComing Under Stress (FOCUS). This is a preventative psychoeducational programme involving individual and group sessions for family members and is designed to improve individual coping strategies as well as relationships within the family (Lester et al., 2010, 2016). Evaluations to date are limited by the lack of control groups but evidence does show that parents and children participating in the programme have improved psychological health as well as overall improvements in family functioning (Lester et al., 2012). Recently, Garcia et al. (2015) reported on the implementation of an adapted intervention programme for school settings. Social workers were involved in delivering the intervention, but the research did not report on any impact of the intervention for armed forces families.

How children cope with the deployment has been shown to partly depend on how well the at-home parent copes (Andres & Moelker, 2011). In line with these findings, some interventions have focused on improving the wellbeing of spouses. With funding from the MoD, an Educational Psychology team in the UK implemented an intervention for parents consisting of individual and group sessions to help families develop improved coping skills (Hogg, et al., 2014). The sessions delivered information on topics including separation, self-esteem, social skills and coping strategies. Although the exact nature of the impact was not reported, parents reported that they valued the support of the group, and felt more confident in dealing with some of the difficulties they faced. Unfortunately, the study did not consider the resulting impact on the children of the parents who participated in the programme. It is therefore unclear how such an intervention improved the experiences of children, particularly within school.

Conclusions: Supportive approaches

The above review points to a number of gaps in extant literature. There exists a paucity of work exploring the effectiveness of school-based interventions for armed forces families. Thus, despite the increased focus on educational practices designed to mitigate the impact of mobility or deployment, we do not yet know how these practices are experienced by children. There has been some attempt to draw out school-level factors that are associated with improved positive outcomes for young people (e.g., De Pedro et al., 2018). Relationships with teachers, peer support, and school connectedness may be important in promoting the wellbeing of children from forces families. However, it remains important to know whether these supportive elements of school life feature in children's accounts of their experiences. Only a small number of studies have explicitly asked children what school-based practices might help them respond more positively to the stresses of mobility and deployment, and most of these come from outside the UK. It is unclear the extent to which current school practices within the UK have been designed with the involvement of children from forces families. The research described in this thesis aims to address an important gap in our understanding of children's views of supportive school practices.

2.7 Conclusions

This chapter has offered a critique of extant literature on the experiences of children from armed forces families. I began by framing the rationale for this study within current UK and Scottish policy. I argued that, whilst there has been increased recognition in policy terms of the situations children from armed forces face, empirical research supporting the development of resulting educational practice at local level has been slow to catch up. The extent to which recent policy-led initiatives have contributed to improved positive experiences for children from forces families has not yet been systematically documented. Additionally, the policy review also highlighted a tension between needing to raise awareness of the issues facing armed forces families whilst also acknowledging that not all families may wish to be identified or defined as such. Future research and practice with armed forces families therefore needs to carefully consider these sensitivities.

The quantitative research reviewed in this chapter offers no definitive conclusions about the effects of having a parent in the armed forces on children's measurable outcomes. The challenge of being able to draw firm conclusions from such a heterogeneous body of work is evident in a number of reviews (Alfano et al., 2016; Card et al., 2011; White et al., 2011). As discussed above, the lack of longitudinal studies, inappropriate comparison groups, and the variety of measures used, mean that it is difficult to draw out any emerging patterns. More studies which systematically explore protective and risk factors at an individual, family and school level, as well as the features of military lifestyle demands that influence children's experiences and outcomes, are needed. Existing research is limited in terms of illuminating *how* mobility or deployment can impact on educational or psychosocial outcomes. In addition, most of the research comes from the US, where there exist differences in work practices impacting relocation and deployment, and military cultures vary (Fossey, 2012; Pexton et al., 2018).

The qualitative research reviewed in this chapter provides some insight into how children experience mobility (e.g., Bradshaw et al., 2010) or deployment (Baptist et al., 2015; Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017) and suggests that military lifestyle demands can create challenges for children in their everyday lives. For example, frequent moves between schools can disrupt children's social networks and

perceived educational adjustment (Bradshaw et al., 2010). In addition, parental absence due to deployment can be a highly emotional time for children with implications for engagement in school (Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017). It seems reasonable to conclude that mobility and deployment are important aspects in the lives of children from forces families. However, whilst there have been a small number of studies in the UK (Clifton, 2007; Mulderrigg, n. d.; O'Neill, 2011; Children's Commissioner for England, 2018), most research involves US or Canadian armed forces families. In addition, there is often little exploration of the educational or school-related issues and implications. Moreover, there are several methodological features of the qualitative studies that further limit our current understanding.

Firstly, a common approach is to recruit children and young people attending military-connected summer camps in the US (Baptist et al., 2015; Knobloch et al., 2012), and few of the studies made attempts to engage with children or young people living in civilian communities or to conduct the research in educational settings. Around 80% of children from UK forces families attend government-funded schools (MoD, 2017a). Given that most policy and associated interventions are designed to mitigate the educational-related disadvantage, it seems critically important to explore the experiences of children with parents in the armed forces within educational settings.

Secondly, in focusing on children's perspectives, the researchers have often failed to engage critically with the debates being had more widely within the field of childhood research. For example, there is little discussion of the power relations in the research encounters with children and young people (Christensen, 2004). There is equally little attention directed towards more contemporary debates critiquing the position that children's voices offer an authentic depiction of children's stable and coherent lives (Gallagher & Gallagher, 2008). Some researchers purport to be discovering the *essence* of these children's perspectives (e.g., Baptist et al., 2015). There is limited evidence of researchers having taken a reflexive approach that recognises the impact of the researcher on the fieldwork and resulting analysis. The responses from the children are often presented in

decontextualized ways, omitting the researcher's questions or responses (Spyrou, 2011).

The research described in this thesis engages with the views of children from forces families attending government-funded schools in Scotland. In doing so, it addresses an important empirical gap in current research: the gap in understanding how children from forces families describe their experiences, and what their accounts suggest about supporting them in school. It seeks to do so by situating children's accounts within current contemporary debates being had in studies of children's participation and voice (Mannion, 2007; Percy-Smith, 2006, 2018; Tisdall & Punch, 2012). In the next chapter, I present the methodological approach for my research with children and young people from armed forces families.

Chapter 3: Methodology & Methods

The analysis of extant literature on children from forces families described in the previous chapter revealed that a key gap was the paucity of research that directly engages with the views of children and young people. The current study therefore aims to address this gap. This chapter situates this empirical endeavour within a theoretical framework that acknowledges children's perspectives as fluid, contingent and contextually dependent (e.g., Gallagher & Gallagher, 2008).

The chapter has 10 sections. The first section gives a brief introduction to post-qualitative inquiry, and the key arguments within. Drawing upon this framing, in the second section I describe my conceptualisation of 'voice' within this study. The third section begins by explaining some of my ethical concerns about the study, and how these had a profound impact on many of the methodological decisions. I then move on to discuss how I recruited children and young people from forces families into the study and attend to some of the challenges I encountered. Sections five and six explain, in more detail, the research process and specific methods employed. The seventh section addresses the analytical process and describes how I made sense of the different forms of data within an assemblage approach. Sections eight and nine address issues of ethical approval and research quality, respectively. A summary is provided in section 10.

3.1 Post-qualitative orientation

This study draws upon a post-qualitative orientation to research (St. Pierre, 2011, 2013, 2014). Such an approach aligns with much of the work headed under the umbrella terms of new materialism (Fox & Alldred, 2017) or posthumanism (e.g., Kuby, 2017; Mazzei & Jackson, 2017). These methodological approaches often draw on the ontology of Deleuze and Guattari (1988). The concepts that Deleuze and Guattari provide (e.g., rhizome, assemblage, becoming, affect) have made a significant impact in education and sociology (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; Fox & Alldred, 2017). For the purposes of this research, I find that the most helpful tenets of a post-qualitative perspective are those that focus on ideas of materiality, relationality, and movement.

The first feature common across research framed within a post-qualitative or new materialist perspective is a focus on the material and the embodied, as well as the social (Fox & Alldred, 2017; Rautio, 2013). These researchers advocate going beyond focusing on only human interactions and language to include more-than-human material actors (Whatmore, 2006). The materiality attended to from this perspective is disparate, ranging from macro level structures, such as social institutions (e.g., schools), to micro level matter, such as objects or artefacts. For example, Allen (2015) used Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) concept of 'assemblage' to consider how mobile phones, schools, and young people collectively contributed to meanings of sexuality. In addition, post-qualitative researchers also take the position that more subjective matter, such as a person's thoughts and feelings, can be analysed in the same way, in that they have comparable capacity to affect experience and be affected by our experience (Fox & Alldred, 2017). From this perspective, a post-qualitative orientation therefore has the potential to offer a more holistic understanding of experience, allowing me in this study to explore the social, material, discursive and emotional elements of children's experiences of being part of a forces family (Renold & Ivinson, 2014).

However, a second feature of a Deleuzian ontology shifts the focus from thinking about these elements of experiences in isolation to considering what they produce through their relations. This relational-materialist perspective (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Rautio, 2013), considers that it is only useful to consider the human and more-than-human features of the issue under research through their relationship with each other. This means that children's experiences can only be understood by focussing on how physical, social, discursive, material, imaginative or cognitive (Renold & Ivinson, 2014) elements intra-act (Barad, 2007) to produce the experience. Therefore, a relational perspective can offer an alternative to the decontextualized descriptions of children's experiences that are prevalent in much of the existing research on children from forces families. (Paley et al. (2013) makes a similar argument in relation to ecological approaches). In this study, children's experiences are considered to be constituted through material, discursive and social relations.

A third feature of research that draws on the ideas from Deleuze and Guattari (1988) is the emphasis on continuous change and movement. Post-qualitative researchers focus on the dynamic, fluid and unfolding nature of the phenomena they research. For example, Cristancho and Fenwick (2015) focus not on how surgeons achieve a fixed state or identity as 'experts' but rather on how their professional practice evolves in relation to the people and materials around them. This approach requires understanding children from forces families as not fixed individuals or having persistent states but as constantly changing in response to the relations that make up their experiences. Existing literature on armed forces children focusses largely on predicting their experiences through statistical models of various factors (e.g., Mancini et al., 2015) and, as such, imposes a sense of fixity and uniformity. In contrast, a post-qualitative orientation as described above can help us attend to the dynamic nature of children's relational experiences of being part of a forces family.

These three elements – materialism, relationality and movement – are encapsulated within Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) concept of the assemblage, and this is an important concept within this thesis. Assemblage was the term used to translate Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) notion of *agencement* or *ensemble*. Law (2004) observes that much has been lost in the translation from French to English and he encourages researchers to understand assemblage as both a noun and a verb. The term can be used to consider the coming together, the assembling, of different elements, as well as the specific constellation or arrangement of different elements. In recent years, the concept has been taken up by a variety of educational researchers to explore a wide range of issues. For example, Strom (2015) considers a teaching-assemblage consisting of the teacher, students and wider institutional processes. Renold and Ivinson (2014) use the idea to explore how girls' experiences emerged relationally through gendered expectations, the historical landscape, and engagement with horses. For me, assemblage seemed a useful way to attend to the contingent, relational and material aspects of children's experiences of being part of a forces family.

In this thesis, assemblage is used in two main ways. Firstly, it is used to refer to the social, material and discursive relations through which children's experiences of

being part of a forces family unfold. Secondly, I use it to refer to the research relations, including the intra-actions between the children, myself and the research methods, through which children's accounts of being part of a forces family emerge. This approach is in line with Fox and Alldred's (2017) idea of the research assemblage.

Changing our research practices

A post-qualitative perspective therefore offers valuable ideas to researching the experiences of children from forces families. In addition, this orientation has implications for our qualitative research practices more generally. Indeed, by using the term 'post-qualitative', St. Pierre (2011) seeks to signal and argue for a shakeup in how we undertake qualitative research. She argues that theoretical orientations informed by Deleuze are incompatible with our conventional approaches to qualitative research (St. Pierre, 2013). In particular, St. Pierre (2014) argues that, whilst the post-methodologies (i.e., post-modernism, post-structuralism and post-humanism) decentre humans to give equal status to all human and non-human elements, qualitative methods continue to approach qualitative data, specifically verbal accounts, in ways that suggest they are rational accounts from authentic individuals. She argues that our new materialist approaches are incompatible with these phenomenologically oriented methods (St. Pierre, 2014; Springgay & Truman, 2018).

The challenge for researchers to address this "disjuncture between contemporary theoretical paradigms and qualitative inquiry" (McLeod, 2014, p. 378) is no easy feat. Indeed, whilst researchers embrace the commitments of post-qualitative or new materialism, they often report difficulties in escaping phenomenological habits (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Springgay & Truman, 2018). Participants' voices continue to be approached as reflecting their lived experiences and identities (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). The assemblage approach that I employ in this study intends to help orient my research to acknowledge that the children's accounts are the product of both human and more-than-human processes. The aim is to consider how various constellations of people and environment work within the armed-forces-family-assemblage, recognising that the children's accounts of these experiences also arise through the research-assemblage (Fox & Alldred,

2017). As others have done, I focus on the research encounter as my analytical unit, rather than the individual participating children (McCoy, 2012). This approach is described in more detail later in the chapter, and I reflect on the relative success of this approach in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

A post-qualitative orientation has other methodological implications and researchers have attempted to outline what this orientation could mean for research methods and practices (e.g., Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; Mannion, 2018; Fox & Alldred, 2017). Springgay and Truman (2018) argue that methods need to be considered as inventive and experimental rather than as aids that help researchers to gather data that exists as separate from the method. From my perspective, the methods employed in my research help to both describe and enact (Law, 2004) understandings about the experiences of children from forces families. The suite of methods that I describe later in the chapter brought together a range of human and more-than-human elements in an attempt to experiment (Torrance, 2017) with the conditions of the research encounter for generating accounts of being part of a forces family. Rather than the suite of methods being about revealing more authentic knowledge about the children's experiences (Gallagher & Gallagher, 2008), they were approaches for altering the dynamics of the encounter in ways that I hoped would generate new insights into the experiences of children from forces families, and prompting possibilities for educational practices.

Reflexivity is considered central to qualitative inquiry (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). It is understood as a process of self-awareness whereby the researcher recognises the values and experiences they bring to bear on the research. However, reflexivity, like many other concepts of qualitative inquiry, has also come "under erasure" (St. Pierre, 2011) within a post-qualitative orientation. Lenz Taguchi (2012) argues that reflexivity implies that we can separate ourselves from the process of inquiry. In this thesis, whilst I continue to endorse the value of reflexivity in qualitative research, I understand it as a way to consider even more relations that participate in the accounts described in this thesis.

3.2 Conceptualising children & “their” voices: Critiques and debates

The post-qualitative orientation detailed above therefore has significant implications for the process of generating data on children’s accounts of being part of a forces family. Before I describe the implications for understanding the data produced from this inquiry – children’s accounts – I firstly offer some brief contextual information on key debates within childhood research.

During the last three decades, alternative conceptualisations of children provided by the new sociology of childhood (James & Prout, 1997; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998), alongside the ratification of children’s rights in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) have given rise to an increasing concern towards ‘listening to children’s voices’ or ‘giving voice to young people’ (Hill, 2006; James, 2007). Dominant notions of children as cognitively and socially immature had prevailed in research up until that point (Woodhead, 2009). The paradigm shift in the early 1990s led to recognition that children should be considered as competent, social actors and worthy of inclusion in research (James et al., 1998). At the same time, Article 12 of the UNCRC gave children the explicit right to be heard and to participate in decisions that affect them. Notably, much of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, likely due to being located in disciplines less influenced by these movements, fails to engage with the idea of children as active and agentic beings. In that research, the child’s parents and teachers are considered to be the most reliable informants (e.g., Andres & Moelker, 2011) and children’s perspectives are rarely included or given significant attention.

Researchers working within the cross-disciplinary field of childhood studies have repositioned children as subjects rather than objects of research (Tisdall, Davis, & Gallagher, 2009) and have emphasised the need to move away from doing research *on* children to doing research *with* children (Christensen & James, 2008). Alongside this shift, there has been an increase in the development of ‘child-centred’ research methods and participatory approaches (Punch, 2002a; O’Kane, 2008). Some researchers adopt the position that children are different from adults, consequently believing it is necessary to employ methods which are more child-friendly (Clark & Moss, 2001; Greig, Taylor, & MacKay, 2013). Others argue that research with children does not necessarily have to involve the development of

new methods (Christensen & James, 2008). Gallagher and Gallagher (2008) offer a critique of participatory techniques, arguing that they reinforce the idea of children as incompetent by implying that children need support to demonstrate their agency in research. Similarly, they and others (e.g., Spyrou, 2011) argue that even these seemingly more democratic methods fail to overcome issues of power imbalances inherent in the research process.

Researchers who advocate participatory research approaches therefore often argue that it is less about the specific methods used and more about *how* they are used to facilitate research *with* children (O’Kane, 2008). Further, participatory research often seeks to involve children throughout the research process, not just in the data collection phase. Some argue that research becomes participatory when children are involved in: identifying the questions; constructing the research design; and/or perhaps carrying out some of the research themselves, including the analysis and dissemination (Holland et al., 2010). Kellett (2005) argues for supporting children to become researchers themselves. The research approach that I describe in more detail below sought to involve the children and young people in an exploration about their experiences of being part of a forces family. Whilst children were not involved in all the stages of the research process, as in a more participatory research approach, the post-qualitative orientation that I described earlier supported an experimental, relational and flexible research design and, thus, in part, contributed to a participatory dynamic *within* the research encounter. As I explain in more detail later in this chapter, children could choose to participate via a range of activities. In the encounters, I offered suggestions about how we might organise the encounter, but I also invited the children to shape the encounter by providing their own ideas about how, for example, we might combine or alter different activities or change who was present within the encounter. The suite of methods was used flexibly within the encounter and helped to create different modes for exploring aspects of their experiences. Later in the chapter, where I discuss the research process, I explain how I, as the researcher, sought to support this dynamic.

Tisdall and Punch (2012) argue that, whilst there has been a flurry of empirical research capturing the voices of children and young people, there has been less

reflection on the theoretical arguments underpinning this work. To be sure, concepts key to childhood research, such as agency, empowerment and voice, have been contested in contemporary discussions (Prout, 2011). And a number of researchers have made efforts to detail both the practical and conceptual difficulties in undertaking research that seeks to gather the perspectives or voices of children (Percy-Smith, 2018; Spyrou, 2011). The challenge remains to ensure that we attend to these debates within our empirical research.

A methodological response: An assemblage approach to voices

In line with the post-qualitative orientation and in response to the critiques of the notion of children's voices detailed above, in this study, I take an assemblage approach to children's voices (Mazzei, 2013). As explained earlier, the notion of assemblage suggests that 'whole' entities or practices can be considered as different kinds of elements working together.

Applying this idea to think about the children's voices in the research can, I think, offer a productive response to the critiques within childhood studies. Whilst recognising the need to consider the discursive and social context of their production (Komulainen, 2007), an assemblage approach also focuses our attention on the material, more-than-human dimensions. This approach avoids presenting voice data "as if it speaks for itself" (Mazzei & Jackson, 2009, p. 3). It therefore responds to the recurrent critique of qualitative research, both within childhood studies (Komulainen, 2007) and in wider fields (Jackson, 2003), that researchers continue to equate voice with authenticity, reality and truth. Ultimately, such an approach acknowledges that children's voices are not produced in isolation, and further, that they cannot be disentangled from the context in which they were produced (Mazzei, 2013).

3.3 Ethical concerns

In this section I describe some of the ethical concerns I had at the point of embarking on this empirical study and explain how they guided many of my methodological decisions (Rosiek, 2013).

One of my concerns was that the research had the potential to encourage a focus on the differences between those from military families and those from civilian

families. In my previous position working as a Research Assistant, many of the armed forces families I spoke to wanted acknowledgment, not for how their lives were different in *comparison* to civilian families, but how particular features of armed forces life needed to be understood in and of themselves. Existing literature often seeks to compare the experiences of military connected children to non-military connected children (e.g., Harrison et al., 2011). For example, the recent MoD Covenant report explicitly compares the attainment of 'service children' to 'non-service children' (MoD, 2016b). My concern was that by emphasising the relatively unique features of these children's lives, the research could encourage a divide between these communities, or worse contribute to further stigmatisation of this population.

This brings us to the second related concern – the potential consequences of identifying children by their parent's employment in the armed forces. Whilst the label 'armed forces' can support awareness and recognition of particular circumstances that *may* form part of an individual's experiences, it also has the potential to limit the development of other forms of knowledge about these children (see Tucker & Govender, 2016 for a similar argument around diagnostic labels). For example, it may help bring into focus features of military life such as mobility or parental absence but at the same time it could lessen our attention to other aspects of the children's experiences which may be equally, or perhaps even more, significant. Identifying children in this way can further serve to homogenise our understanding of a group of children whose lives are actually very different. An extract from my research journal in the first month of my PhD notes these early concerns:

... it feels wrong to single out a group to say that they are 'different'. At the same time, I recognise this need to illuminate the real issues facing this group of individuals. I was also reminded of my conversations with young people who in fact rejected the 'service children' category. It was either not something they identified with or felt that they were no different from their peers and found it inappropriate to single them out as such.

(Research journal entry, October 2014)

My alignment with the relational ontology described earlier helped me to respond to some of these concerns. Assemblage thinking moved me to consider how the children continued to change and emerge differently in relation to other material and discursive elements (Feely, 2016). For Deleuze, nothing has any independent identity outside its relationship to other entities. His relational approach argues that entities have no “ontological status or integrity other than that produced through their relationship to other similarly contingent and ephemeral bodies, things and ideas” (Fox & Alldred, 2015a, p. 401). For me, moving away from understanding accounts of armed forces children’s experiences as being produced by individual children, to understanding how the accounts emerge through relational processes offered me a more comfortable framing for the research. This approach attended to my concerns that the research would essentialise (even unintentionally) the experiences of children and young people from forces families. However, Hultman and Lenz Taguchi’s (2010) article reminds us how difficult it is to disrupt our ‘habits of seeing’. Because I wanted to avoid building up accounts of any one child’s experience, I opted to include a relatively large number of participants in the research. As I describe in more detail later in this chapter, this led me to focus on research encounters, rather than individual children (Rautio, 2013).

Similarly, my decision to take a multi-method approach was another attempt to disrupt my habits of qualitative inquiry and attend to the multiplicity of children’s experiences. I reasoned that a suite of qualitative methods, described in more detail below, may help me from closing down the multiplicity of children’s experiences. Rather than attempt to draw out a coherent narrative about how children view their experiences, I wanted to keep in focus the uncertainty, dynamism and contradictions inherent in their accounts. Using multiple methods, I considered how children’s accounts changed according to the situation. My research design therefore drew on methods which collectively worked to change the nature of the research encounter. As will be discussed in more detail below, the methods differed from each other in terms of who was present in the encounter; what stimulus material was available; who provided that material; and what kinds of data (e.g., verbal, textual, material) the method produced. I considered children’s

accounts across a variety of different research encounters. I hoped that changing different elements of the research encounter would increase my chances of imagining, understanding and presenting different kinds of knowledge about the experiences of children from forces families.

Torrance (2017) also criticises qualitative inquiry for its emphasis on “describing the nature of the problem” rather than “thinking through or trying to promote alternatives” (p. 4). The existing research reviewed in Chapter 2 has already positioned children from forces families as individuals who are suffering the consequences of frequent mobility and parental deployment. Ethically, I remained cautious about further reinforcing such an understanding. At the very least, I wanted to provide the *opportunity* for different kinds of knowledge about these children’s experiences to emerge. As such, my research questions remained broadly framed throughout the research. I opted to address research aims rather than determine in advance what was interesting. My research aims were to: (i) engage children and young people in an exploration about how they perceive their experiences of being part of a forces family; and (ii) to suggest ways of responding to these experiences in school. My aims show I was keen for the research to look forward, not just backwards, and go beyond a focus on problems (Torrance, 2017). In the research meetings, I opted to use a range of stimulus material created by both the participants and myself to explore different aspects of their experiences. Holland et al. (2010) employed a similar approach in their research with looked-after children where they avoided predetermining areas of their lives that young people should explore. Thus, while it might be argued that in carrying out the research I have somewhat reinforced the categorisation of ‘children from armed forces families’, I attempted to be open to the possibility that children could resist, challenge or revise current understandings throughout the research process.

Rosiek’s (2013) advice to attend to how the research is framed further helped me respond to an additional concern: that the research could further perpetuate a belief that being part of an armed forces family is inherently problematic. I have argued in Chapter 2 that existing research focusses heavily on the negative consequences of having a parent in the forces. Researchers typically focus on how deployment or mobility can create academic, social or emotional difficulties for

these children. In an attempt to bring some balance to existing discourse around military children's experiences, I chose to initiate my conversations with the children on the basis of what was positive about their experiences. Interestingly, on more than one occasion, the children simply refused this framing, explaining that their experience, at least in relation to some aspects of having a parent in the forces, was in fact not positive. This is discussed in the findings chapters in more detail and resonates with findings from Bullock and Skomorovsky (2016). Nevertheless, I would argue that this strategy created the opportunity for more positive dimensions of children's lives to emerge and, as I show in Chapters 5 and 6, this did happen.

Of course, it was impossible to ignore the fact that the research, by its very nature, identifies or singles out children from forces families. This was always going to be a challenge in taking up this research proposal. However, by: including a relatively large number of participants; employing multiple methods; keeping my research questions open; and asking children about positive aspects of their lives, I attempted to respond to some of these ethical concerns. It would be naive to think I have resolved all the ethical tensions in carrying out this research. Indeed, at different points throughout the thesis I reflect on how my research practices may have achieved exactly what I was trying to avoid. It is important to highlight these problems, to show that researchers (and knowledge produced from an inquiry) are fallible, and to provide the opportunity to act differently in the future (Allan & Slee, 2008).

3.4 Recruitment of schools and participants

Selection of schools

By the end of 2015, it became possible for local authorities in Scotland to record, through SEEMiS (Scotland's information management system), pupils from armed forces families (MoD, 2015). Although this makes it possible in theory to directly identify pupils; in practice this remains an ongoing challenge. Not all schools will routinely request this information and, equally, as discussed in Chapter 2, not all families will be willing to share this information for it to be held on a central database. In my experience, it is those working within the school, often directly with the families, who are best placed to identify pupils from forces families. The

research therefore benefitted from established relationships, facilitated by RCET, with schools involved in supporting such pupils. The schools who were invited to take part had already made themselves known, through attendance at conferences or through engagement with RCET, and as being interested in responding to the experiences of this group of children and young people. The rationale behind this decision was largely practical; these schools had already made attempts to identify their military families and therefore it was relatively easy for the teachers or other appropriate staff to circulate invitations to participate in the research.

In addition to inviting schools to participate on the basis that they were willing to take part and had mechanisms in place that supported a straightforward and timely recruitment of families, the selection process addressed two additional considerations. The original research proposal for this study indicated that the research would include children from both primary and secondary education. The review of the literature in Chapter 2 indicated that both contexts were equally worthy of exploration, albeit that each would possibly highlight different educational considerations. For example, I reasoned that the secondary school context and the need to complete external examinations would likely create additional pressures for children at this stage of their schooling. On the other hand, there was some evidence to suggest that children in primary school were more likely to still be experiencing frequent moves in their education. When children in forces families reach secondary school age, parents are more likely to seek educational stability by enrolling them in boarding school or choosing to reside in one place, regardless of the service personnel's relocation (HoCDC, 2013). I concluded that children in primary school may have more recent experiences of moving to draw upon. Therefore, I felt that, because each context had the potential to create different educational experiences, it remained pertinent to the aims of the study to explore both. Finally, given that it was important for RCET, and for the wider context in addressing any educational concerns, to understand about the experiences of children in both primary and secondary school, I decided to include both school settings in the research.

A final consideration when inviting schools to take part in the research was the inclusion of children with parents working across the tri-services. There is some

evidence to suggest that the different institutional structures and organisation can create different kinds of experiences for children (HoCDC, 2013). For example, whether the child is part of a Naval, Army or RAF family may impact on their experience of moving schools. Some reports suggest that, whilst Army families generally move as part of a unit, Naval families are more likely to relocate individually, known as a trickle posting (Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund 2009). For the children in the respective situations, this could mean the difference between moving with peers or starting at a new school alone. It is important to note that, whilst the military connection may render some experiences more typical than others, at the individual level there is still likely to exist considerable variation. Therefore, continuing with the same example, although it may be more likely that the Army-connected child will have moved with other Army-connected children, there will also be those who have experienced isolated moves. Including children with parents across the Army, Navy and RAF contexts was one way to attempt to capture a range of different experiences.

An effort to recruit children with parents working across the tri-services was addressed by, firstly, locating schools close to their respective military bases. In addition, RCET's knowledge of the schools was advantageous in identifying appropriate schools to approach. However, despite the initial intentions, the research was unable to include children with parents in the RAF. With the closure of RAF Leuchars in 2015, there remain only a few schools in Scotland that are likely to support a reasonable number of pupils with parents in the RAF. Contact was established with an appropriate secondary school and two feeder primary schools; initial agreement to take part was very positive and I visited the cluster to deliver information packs for families. Unfortunately, follow-up phone calls and emails to the point-of-contact at the school failed to secure any participation. This was disappointing, but I decided to move forward with the study without the inclusion of these schools. On reflection, it may have been possible to return to RCET and identify additional schools with children from RAF families. However, I found that establishing contact and then negotiating access to schools was a lengthy process and further attempts may have had a negative impact on the

timeline of the study. Secondly, I had already attempted to recruit through a cluster of schools and identifying additional schools which met the criteria would have been challenging, particularly given there is now only one operational RAF station in Scotland. Finally, because the research makes no attempt to make any conclusions about the relative impact of the different services on children's experiences, the inclusion of these schools was not critical to the overall study. I reasoned that the Army and Navy contexts would introduce suitable perspectives with which to address my ultimate aim, which was to explore the diversity of experiences relating to having a parent in the forces.

This selection process led to the inclusion of three primary schools and two secondary schools (See Table 2). It remains difficult to provide specific details about each of the schools without compromising on my promise of anonymity. The schools were located close to military bases and I felt that providing any further details would make it relatively easy to identify schools that took part. Moreover, given that the research focus is on children themselves, rather than school practices, this helps to mitigate the need for detailed descriptions of the schools.

Table 2: List of participating schools

Phase	School	Armed Forces Connection
1	School 1 (Primary)	Army
	School 2 (Secondary)	Navy
2	School 3 (Primary)	Navy
	School 4 (Secondary)	Army
3	School 5 (Primary)	Army

Nonetheless, I can share some details about the schools as a group, which readers may find interesting. All schools were non-denominational and co-educational. The contact at each of the schools confirmed that the schools all had a relatively high percentage of children from forces families. The schools' associated SIMD scores suggested that they were not associated with a high level of deprivation. All schools had postcodes which situated them in the three least deprived quintiles (i.e., the lowest 60% of deprived areas). One of the schools was an independent boarding school, and the remaining four were state schools. Whilst the

independent and state schools are quite different, I reasoned that this would enhance the study's ability to capture data from children with parents occupying different ranks (MoD, 2017a). Although I did not ask the children about their parent's role in the forces, the conversations I had suggested that including the independent school had increased the diversity of participating children.

The next part of this chapter outlines how children and young people in these schools were invited to take part in the research before moving on to provide an overview of those who participated.

Recruitment of children and young people

In each of the participating schools, I chose to invite children to take part from two adjacent school years. In the primary schools, I focussed on Primary 4 and 5, and in the secondary schools, it was S2 and S3. These educational stages were chosen on the assumption that this would avoid critical examination periods and transitional years where most pupils are becoming familiar with a new environment.

Following each school's initial agreement to take part in the research via e-mail, I arranged to visit the school to introduce myself in person and explain more about the research. Although I did not involve school staff in the formal research data collection procedures, these visits often gave me an opportunity to understand the school context; helping me to frame and situate subsequent discussions with the young people. For example, in one of the meetings the head teacher explained about the recent mobility of pupils within the school, including details about the previous geographical location and specific military connection of recently joined pupils. I felt this was helpful for my understanding and allowed me to ask more pertinent questions in my meetings with the children.

In this initial meeting, I gave the schools information leaflets for staff within the school and information and consent packs for families (see appendix 1). The packs consisted of: parent invitation letter; a parent information sheet; parent consent form; leaflet for children/young people; and an RCET leaflet. This was received well by the schools and I felt this process reduced any additional administrative demands on staff. I gave each school 20 packs and asked them to distribute these to armed forces families, balanced across both of the identified school years (i.e.,

P4 & P5 or S2 & S3). My previous experience of working in schools suggested that some families would not reply, and, indeed, response rates varied across the participating schools.

In asking the schools to distribute the packs on my behalf, I explained that, outside of the identified school years, I did not have any specific inclusion/exclusion criteria. I did advise that I was keen to meet with children who would have a range of different experiences. Sometimes this meeting also involved a discussion about those who would feel comfortable in the research situation. One of the head teachers commented that, because of the nature of my proposed methods, she was not concerned about the ability of children to contribute to the research. I felt this was a positive comment and suggested that my approach did, at least from the head teachers' perspective, align with my inclusive intentions. Throughout my discussions with the head teachers or other points of contact, there was no indication that they had selected pupils based on any specific criteria. Indeed, it was my experience that the children who subsequently took part in the research presented a range of different characteristics.

This recruitment process led to between four and 15 parental consent forms being returned to the school. I collected these from the school and then arranged initial meetings with the children. As my field notes demonstrate, in most of the schools the teachers were not aware of who was taking part until I began to negotiate time out of class for the respective children.

The head teacher had collected all the returns and because they were addressed to me she had not opened them. This was a good sign – and suggested to me that the school was respectful of the confidentiality of the project.

(Fieldwork note, School 1 September 2016)

Later in this chapter, where I discuss informed consent, I give more detail about how I attended to the ongoing issues of consent with the children and young people. However, all children whose parents had returned consent forms agreed (at least initially) to take part in the research.

Non-participating pupils

Before moving on to describe the children and young people who contributed to the research, I need to pause and reflect on a group of young people who were unable to participate in the research. As highlighted by others previously (e.g., Skelton, 2008), it demonstrates the ongoing difficulty in requiring the consent of several gatekeepers when conducting research with children.

In addition to the five schools who participated in the research, there was a sixth school, where initial agreement to participate was granted. As detailed earlier, I met with the point-of-contact at the school and delivered information and consent packs for identified families. However, in this instance the usual procedure was unsuccessful and no parental consent forms were returned. With agreement from my point-of-contact, I therefore decided to visit the school and speak to the young people directly. A note was sent round the registration classes inviting those in S2 and S3 with a parent in the forces to attend an information session to find out about the research. I met with around 30 young people and delivered a talk about the research. At the end of the presentation, I invited the young people to complete a form indicating whether they did or did not want to take part (see Figure 1) and then place this in a sealed envelope before moving to their next class. I explained that I only needed those who were giving consent to participate to indicate their name and class on the form; this ensured that no identifying details about those who did not want to participate were gathered.

Invitation to take part in Research

Name of Researcher: Evelyn Cook Pupil's Name: _____
Date: _____ Class: _____

Do you want to take part? **Can you tell me why you have made this decision?**

Yes

No

Tick if you are happy to take part in...

Individual discussion with Evelyn Group Discussion

Any other comments/concerns about what you have heard today?

Figure 1: Indication of desire to participate form

In my experience, this seemed to be a positive way of engaging the young people and some of them took this opportunity to discuss their concerns with me directly, as they completed their forms. For example, one boy asked whether he could take part with his friend. Of the thirty young people who came along to the talk and completed a form, 16 of them indicated that they wished to participate and 14 chose not to take part.

Leaving the school that day I felt very positive and enthusiastic about my future engagement with these sixteen young people. I explained to them that I still needed to obtain permission from their parents and the teacher agreed to send parental consent forms home to the appropriate families. We agreed that I would return to the school when a few of these had been returned. Unfortunately, this process was again lengthy and two weeks later the school got in touch to say there had only been two responses. I followed this up and requested to visit the school to meet with these young people, however, no reply was received. After a few follow-up phone calls and a further email (see Figure 2), again, no reply was received. At this point, it was June and, in my experience, a busy time in the school calendar. As the school term entered its final few weeks, communication from the school about possible ways forward ceased.

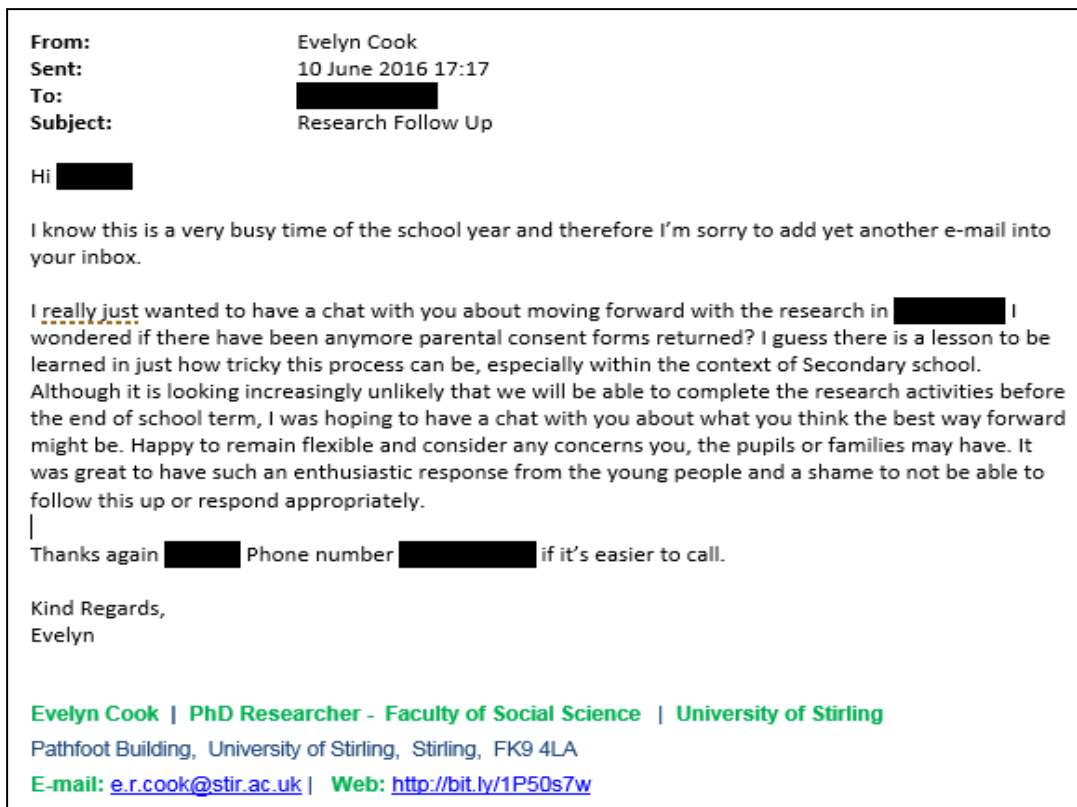


Figure 2: Email communication to school

I completed an internal progress review for the PhD at the University a few weeks later, and the panel suggested that I had already collected more than enough data to address the aims of my research. I therefore made the difficult decision to conclude fieldwork at this point and mitigate any negative impact on the pace of the study. However, I remained (and still do remain) anxious that the young people who had indicated they wished to take part never had the opportunity to do so.

As one small attempt towards addressing the right for these young people to have their views heard, I have decided to formally include the small amount of data I was able to gather in my initial meeting with them. On the form (see Figure 1), I invited the young people to indicate a reason for their choice to take part or not. Whilst I am unable to draw any strong conclusions from this data in its singularity, in my analysis I did find that the young people's responses concurred with concerns raised by other participating young people. Specifically, this relates to a desire to have the opportunity to discuss their experiences of having a parent in the forces. In Chapter 6, I return to this argument and explore it in further detail.

To conclude this section, I suggest that this experience highlights one of the ongoing dilemmas in carrying out research with people where direct access is not possible. Other researchers have highlighted the challenges of conducting research with young people that involves negotiating initial access through other adults or institutions (David, Edwards, & Alldred, 2001; Morrow, 2008). This experience further points to the complexity of the situation. In this case, young people's participation in the research was obstructed by several inter-relating factors, including: unreturned parental consent forms; contextual features of the school environment, including the structure of the school term and work demands of school personnel; and time pressures of the research. Even if parental consent in this case had not been sought, the research still had to negotiate access through the school. The amount of time this required conflicted with the research timeline. All of these aspects combined to impact detrimentally on the young people's participation.

Participating children and young people

In total, 41 children and young people took part across the five schools. Some of the key characteristics of all pupils who participated in the research are shown in Table 3. There were 21 girls and 20 boys. Nine of the children participating were from the two secondary schools, and thirty-two were from the three primary schools. The children were aged between 8 and 14 years. For most of the children, it was their father who was serving, but for Robert (School 1), Paul (School 2), and Jacob (School 5), the connection to the armed forces was through their mother.

Table 3 indicates that 32 of the 41 children indicated they had some experience of moving. A total of 14 children had experienced a move from outside the UK. Overall, the children in School 5 seemed to have experienced the most moves. The highest number of moves reported was by Paul (School 2), who had been to 7 schools. At least 6 of the children offered information that indicated they thought they would be experiencing another move in the near future. I was unable to ascertain whether one child – Robert in School 1 – had experience of moving. Robert did not offer any information about moving during our discussions but spoke at length about parental absence. A total of 8 children had no experience of

moving; they reported that they had joined the school (and their previous school if in secondary) at the normal age.

Table 3 also shows that 35 of the 41 children provided information that indicated they had experienced periods of parental absence. For Ashley and John (School 2), their parent routinely worked away from home and returned at regular intervals. The young people referred to this as “weekending”. Some of the children spoke about their parent previously being deployed for operational duties and others indicated their parents left for training purposes.

At the time of the research, nine of the children noted that they were currently experiencing a parental absence. For four of these children, their parent returned during fieldwork. This included Chloe and Sam (School 3), whose father returned for a week of Rest and Recuperation (R&R). A total of 5 children told me their parent was due to go away relatively soon.

Five of the children who mentioned their parent being away from home gave minimal information about this experience. Notably, some of the children in School 5 gave little detail about their experience of parental absence. In the following chapters, I reflect more on this aspect, but for the moment, I note that, for these children, moving was the primary focus of their conversations with me.

Table 3: Participating Schools and Pupils

School	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Experience of moving	Experience of parental absence
1	Melanie	9	F	Yes, UK-based move, 6 schools	Yes, parent returned during fieldwork, previously deployed to Afghanistan
	Annie	8	F	No	Unknown
	Camilla	8	F	No	Unknown
	Robert	8	M	Unknown	Yes, currently at home due to be deployed next year
	Tom	8	M	Yes, UK-based move, still moving, four times	Yes, currently away for 2 weeks

	Andy	9	M	Yes, UK-based move, 4/5 times	Yes, absent frequently when he was younger including to Afghanistan, now stable
	Mark	9	M	Yes, every 18 months still moving	No
2	Ashley	14	F	Yes, one international move	Yes, absent frequently when younger, now returns home every 3 weeks
	Isla	14	F	Yes, UK-based	Yes, frequently although now more stable
	John	14	M	No	Yes, works away from home and returns at weekend
	Paul	13	M	Yes, international and UK-based, 7 schools	Yes, still frequent
3	Chloe	13	F	Yes – UK-based, 5 schools, now settled	Yes, father returned for R&R during research
	Sam	14	M	Yes – UK-based, 5 schools, now settled	Yes, father returned for R&R during research
	Daniel	14	M	No	Yes, one significant deployment when younger, now stable
	Karen	13	F	Yes, UK-based, more than 3 moves, wasn't specific	Yes, frequently and for operational duties (Afghanistan)
	Natasha	13	F	Yes, UK-and international based, 6 schools, still moving	Yes, very little information provided
4	Ruth	9	F	Yes, UK-based	Yes, regularly, currently home due to be deployed next year
	Rachel	8	F	Yes, UK-based	Yes, regularly, currently at home
	Amanda	9	F	No	Yes, regularly, currently in Germany

	Megan	9	F	No	Yes, regularly, currently at home
	Lucy	8	F	No	Yes, regularly, currently at home but being deployed soon
	Bruce	8	M	No	Unknown
	William	9	M	Yes	Yes, regularly, absent at time of fieldwork
	Craig	9	M	Yes, UK-based	Yes, regularly, currently at home but due to be deployed soon
	Oscar	9	M	Yes, international, 6 schools	Yes, regularly, currently absent
	Harry	9	M	Yes, UK-based	Yes, deploys twice a year, currently at home
5	Sophie	8	F	Yes, UK-based, two moves	Yes, no other information
	Logan	8	M	Yes, international, one move	Yes, father due to leave soon for training exercise
	Hamish	8	M	Yes, international, one move	Yes, no other information
	Hannah	8	F	Yes, international and UK-based, at least 3 moves, still moving	Yes, frequently for operational duties
	Amy	8	F	Yes, international and UK-based, at least 4 moves, still moving	Yes, for extended period of time
	Alex	8	M	Yes, international, at least 1 move	Yes, father due to leave soon for training exercise
	Georgia	8	F	Yes, international and UK-based 4 schools,	Yes, no other information

	Cody	10	M	Yes, UK-based, 2 schools	Yes, regularly
	Clyde	9	M	Yes, international, 2 schools	No mention of absence
	Elizabeth	10	F	Yes, UK-based, at least 2 schools, still moving	Yes, frequently, including to Afghanistan, currently at home due to leave soon
	Gemma	9	F	Yes, international, 1 move	Yes, for extended periods of time, returned during field work
	Lee	9	M	Yes, international, at least one move	Yes, very little information
	Jack	10	M	Yes, within Scotland, one move	No mention of absence
	Jacob	10	M	Yes, international and UK-based, 6 moves	Yes, frequently including to Afghanistan
	Lucas	9	M	Yes, International, at least one move	Yes, frequently, absent at time of fieldwork

3.5 Research process

The fieldwork for this study took place over the course of the school year 2015/2016. The structure of the academic school year across three school terms helped to create three natural phases of the research; delineated by breaks in data collection and an increased focus on data analysis. Table 4 provides an overview of the research phases.

Table 4: Research Phases

Phase	Dates	# schools	# participants
Phase 1	Sep-Nov 2015	2	11
Phase 2	Jan – Mar 2016	2	15
Phase 3	Apr – Jun 2016	1	15

A phased approach to fieldwork was deemed important for two reasons. Firstly, opting to engage with only two schools at once was largely pragmatic. Given the number of children taking part and the number of possible methods (detailed in the next section), this strategy helped me manage my fieldwork and data corpus. Proceeding slowly through phases rather than engaging with all the participating schools at once also gave me more time to respond and adapt my practice, both in relation to negotiating my time in the schools and in my interactions with the children. Chunking the fieldwork into different phases gave me time to pause and think about what I might do differently to disrupt the habitual flow of the research process.

Using a phased approach to slow the research process down was important for another reason. Although I hope it helped me to become a more proficient researcher, it was not just about refining my research skills. It was also not about asking more pertinent questions in some kind of effort to reach a point of data saturation (often associated with the iterative process of grounded theory, e.g., Bryant & Charmaz 2007). Conducting fieldwork in stages was, rather, for me, one attempt to encourage an engagement with the children that was about more than just collecting data. It seemed a helpful way to slow down the empirical stage and attend to the singularity of each research meeting and the differences that ensued. For me, this constituted a more ethical engagement with the research where I was genuinely attempting to experience the research encounters as they presented themselves to me, in that moment.

Throughout my fieldwork, I organised a timetable of planned research activities that I used to negotiate my time in each school. I explained to the school that I planned to visit the school over a period of four to six weeks. These strategies helped me manage teachers' expectations. The first visit to each school involved meeting with all the participating children, explaining the research project and completing consent forms. More detail about this initial meeting is described later in the chapter when I discuss informed consent. The following visits involved individual, paired and group discussions using a suite of qualitative research activities described in next section.

All of the meetings with the children in the participating schools were audio recorded on an iPad. The iPad was a clearly visible part of the research encounter; quite frequently the children chose to pick it up, pause a recording or play back our recorded discussion. At the start of each meeting, I often asked children what title we should give to the recording. This served as a reminder that I would be recording our discussion and often the children's suggestions helped me find out what they understood about our meeting. For example, some children called this 'Sharing time' or 'Talking about the Navy', and this provided an opening for our ensuing discussion.

On completion of fieldwork in each school, I met with all participating children to give them the opportunity to ask any final questions, gather feedback about their experience of taking part, and address any other issues. I chose to present the primary school children with 'thank you' certificates as a token of appreciation for their participation. Feedback suggested that these were gratefully received by the children, parents and school staff. My experience suggested this would not be as well received in the secondary school, and I opted instead simply to express my appreciation verbally.

Throughout my fieldwork, I was driven by a desire to create enjoyable research encounters that encouraged pupils to become actively involved in the process. I was interested in not only the content of children's expressions about their experiences but also about how these expressions emerged within the research encounters. These principles are reflected in both the data generation and analytical methods, as well as in my approach to the research encounters. Drawing on the post-qualitative approach described earlier, I sought to create spaces that would recognise children's experiences of being part of a forces family, and also to allow for new becomings to emerge. My previous experience working with children and my enjoyment in doing so undoubtedly helped me to develop a rapport with the children. As O'Kane (2008) acknowledges, there needs to be trust and mutual respect. I tried to be as clear as possible about my aims for doing this research as part of my PhD and encouraged the children to ask me questions, too (see also discussion on informed consent in Section 3.8). Within the research encounters, I attempted to create enough 'elbow room' (see Renolds, 2018) for the

unexpected or unanticipated to arise. Practically, this often involved attending to the natural flow of the conversation. I found that children fled in and out of dialogue specifically about being part of a forces family and it seemed that appreciating this way of engaging enabled the children to feel comfortable with expressing and exploring their experiences. In addition, I continually sought the children's views about participating throughout, inviting them to choose when, how, and with whom they would like to meet on my next visit. In one example, the children in School 4 indicated that they would prefer to meet within their class groupings and I organised this for the next session. The children's non-verbal behaviour was also an indication to me of how comfortable they felt and, in one instance, changing the encounter from a group to a paired conversation created the space where Gemma and Elizabeth in School 5 felt more able to express their experiences (see pages 202–204 for further details). Later in the chapter, I provide detail on attending to the ethical considerations of informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity, which I would argue also improved the methodological approach (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998).

3.6 Methods

This study used a suite of qualitative methods to engage children and young people in a collective exploration about having a parent in the forces. Each of the methods are described in more detail below, and included: drawing, object elicitation, vignettes, video diaries, peer interviewing, and other task-based activities. My overall research aim and research questions meant that I needed methods which generated data from children about having a parent in the forces. Combining these activities within individual, paired and group meetings, where I could directly ask children about their experiences, seemed a natural choice (see also the discussion on my decision not to use observation below).

I refer to these meetings as participant conversations to emphasise their largely unstructured nature. On reflection, the terms 'interview' or 'focus group' seem too formal to describe our interactions during these meetings. Although I did think about the questions that I wanted to ask the children prior to the meeting, I did not construct an interview guide. I knew my overall aim was to explore with the participants what seemed significant to them about having a parent in the forces

and I used this to guide my questioning. Rather than use pre-formed questions, the activities I describe below helped to organise our meeting and provide some guiding structure (see Bragg & Buckingham, 2008 for a similar approach). The encounters were also naturally structured by the (sometimes limited) time available to us within the school day.

As described earlier, at the start of my fieldwork in each school, I organised a timetable of meetings that I used to negotiate my time in school and the chosen groupings were based on several factors. The nature of the research activity influenced the number of children present. For example, vignettes were primarily used with groups of 3 or more children. Drawings felt better suited to individual or paired situations. My own observations after meeting the children for the first time, as well as my experience working with children and young people, also helped shape these decisions. Finally, the children's communications to me about when and how they would like to engage with the research remained paramount. I explicitly asked children during our first meeting about which activities they would like to take part in (see section on informed consent below) and how they would like to do so (e.g. with a friend or on your own) and throughout the fieldwork adapted my plans in response to their suggestions or requests or my own observations about the workings of the research process.

Before continuing to describe the justification for the choice of methods used in the research, I pause briefly to discuss my decision not to use participant observation as a means of generating data. Fox and Alldred (2015b) described ethnography as one of the most commonly used methodologies within new materialism. Initially, I thought that such an approach would help me to gain some purchase on how children's experiences unfold in their everyday school settings. However preliminary, scoping out visits to both a primary and secondary school during March 2015 raised my concerns about using observation as a research method. In both schools, I spent one day a week over a period of four weeks observing classes with pupils identified by the school as being from a forces family. I noted many interesting interactions during those visits, but only a few that I could explicitly and legitimately link to being part of a forces family. At the same time, observing children on the basis that they were from a forces family felt uncomfortable. Being

part of an armed forces family was just one aspect of their lives and it was difficult to see how observation would help me to understand this specific aspect. The research needed guidance from the children and young people and it was important that they were more directly involved in the research process.

The rationale associated with each method is discussed below, but, overall, I was interested in methods which responded to my methodological concerns raised earlier in this chapter. As a reminder, the suite of qualitative methods sought to create different research encounters that would in turn generate different kinds of data and ultimately lead to a multitude of ways of understanding children's experiences. During the course of the research, I found that, particularly with the younger children, a variety of techniques was valuable in sustaining interest and therefore creating a more enjoyable research process. The opportunity to take part in ways that felt most comfortable I would argue is fundamental to all qualitative research, not just research with children and young people (Punch, 2002b; Christensen & James, 2008). Using a suite of methods therefore arguably attended to several methodological aims.

Drawing

Drawing is now fairly established as a research method that can be used in interview settings with both children and adults. Prosser (2011) discusses the use of drawings, objects or photographs in research broadly as forms of visual elicitation. Advocates of visual methodologies argue that analysis of only verbal or textual data can serve to limit our exploration or understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Guillemin (2004) explored the use of drawings in researching health-related experiences and found that drawings helped to highlight the multiplicity of these experiences as well as introduce time for participants to reflect on the issue being explored. Cristancho and Fenwick's (2015) research design provided the opportunity for the researchers to compare interview situations with the same participants, with and without the use of drawing. Their research revealed that drawings not only helped their participants to express the complexity of their situation, evidenced by the participants' reflections on the method and the content of the two research events, but that it also helped to encourage a more cooperative situation where researchers moved beyond the role

of recipient to that of co-constructor. Therefore, the use of drawing in research has the potential to contribute to our appreciation of the complexity of participant's experiences through both the opportunity it provides to express non-verbally and through its effect on the research process.

Drawings are also a popular method of choice for researchers carrying out research with children and young people (see Duncan, 2013 for a review). Historically, psychologists have analysed children's drawings to understand what they suggest about children's cognitive development or other psychological traits. For example, Goodenough and Harris (1963) developed a standardised scale for connecting features of the drawing to intellectual abilities. Practising psychologists often correlate information from children's drawings with other information about a child's life to reveal their inner psyche (Greig et al., 2013). The new sociology of childhood (James et al., 1998) had an influential impact on moving from research *on* children to research *with* children. Alongside this shift, researchers began to consider not so much what children drew, but what they said about the drawing (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010). Drawing is often advocated as a method that can help children communicate experiences that are difficult to express using spoken or written words. Drawings have also been used in research with younger children who may have limited verbal capacity. Furthermore, drawing is also considered by some to be a method that can help to reduce power differentials in the research situation because it invites participants to communicate in media they may feel more comfortable with, and/or because it changes the dynamic of the research encounter and arguably gives more control to the participants. It is important not to assume that the drawing activity will reduce power differentials (see Gallagher & Gallagher, 2008), and the effect that my method had on the dynamics of the research encounter will be considered throughout the analysis presented in this thesis.

For my purposes, drawing was primarily used as a way to produce expressions of having a parent in the forces that may not have emerged through interviewing alone, as this method encouraged me to consider these expressions beyond the words spoken in the research encounter. Asking participants to create a drawing led to material expressions of having a parent in the forces. These material

productions could be used within the research encounter as prompts for discussion and could equally facilitate or provoke further thoughts post-fieldwork.

In addition, my experience suggested that drawing would be an activity that the primary children would be familiar with doing regularly. I was keen to reduce the formality of the situation and, given that drawing would likely be part of the children's everyday lives, I thought it had the potential to create a comfortable research situation. To this end, I made drawing materials available in most of my meetings with the primary children and, indeed, most of the children naturally engaged in this activity as we talked or carried out other tasks. In my analysis, I distinguish between these spontaneous drawings and prompted drawings.

I elicited drawings from the participants during either individual or paired settings. At the start of the research encounter, I invited participants to draw a picture showing something that they thought was important about being part of an armed forces family. I provided them with a blank sheet of A4 or A3 paper and a variety of coloured pens and pencils. I explained to them that they were free to draw anything they wanted and could take as much time as they needed. As commonly reported in the literature, some of the participants commented on their perceived lack of artistic talent and I emphasised to them that drawing skills were not important. Once the participants had completed their drawings, or when they indicated they were ready to discuss their drawing, we used it as a starting point to discuss their experiences. I asked them to describe what they had drawn and why they had done so. All the young people in the secondary schools completed their drawings in silence before indicating they were ready to discuss their drawing. The primary children, however, carried out their drawing as they continued to talk to me, and each other.

Drawing as a prompted method was used in 18 research encounters involving a total of 28 children (20 primary and 8 secondary). In nine instances, the drawings were produced in an individual setting, eight were produced in a paired setting, and one was produced in a group situation involving three children. This produced a total of 26 drawings and 18 associated audio recordings of conversations lasting, on average, 39 minutes (see Table 5).

The analysis of this data is discussed in more detail later. I am interested in both the content of the drawing and the discussion that emerges through the activity of drawing. In other words, in line with Guillemin's (2004) position, "drawings are visual products and, at the same time, produce meanings" (p. 274). In the analysis, I consider how drawing contributed to the production of information, both within the research encounter and post-fieldwork, when multiple drawings were compared and analysed.

Object elicitation

Another type of visual elicitation used in the research encounters was object elicitation. As it has been used so far in research, this involves using objects either chosen by participants or provided by the researcher to structure or stimulate discussion around the research topic. Barrett and Smigiel (2007) sought children's perspectives on the value of music by asking them to bring an item to the interview that represented their involvement in the arts. Allet (2010) argues that different kinds of materials can introduce new dimensions to the research situation, including visual, tactile and auditory experiences and thus can elicit accounts which may not always be expressed through interviewing alone. Whilst object elicitation is not as commonly used in research as other elicitation techniques, such as drawing or photo-elicitation, researchers have used objects in research settings to establish rapport (Barret & Smigiel, 2007), introduce a sensory dimension to the interview process (Pink, 2009), and help ground participants' discussion on the practices of their lives (Dewhirst, 2013). Material objects therefore have the potential to contribute to the research process.

As with the drawing activity, in my research, object-elicitation was considered as a way to introduce elements to the research encounter that would in turn elicit data and prompt analytical thoughts that went beyond a focus on the words spoken. Whilst all interviews involve more than just talking, bringing objects explicitly into focus, I hoped, would help sharpen my attention to the multi-sensory elements of the encounter (Pink, 2009). As other researchers have argued, I also hoped that the objects that children brought to the interview may stimulate discussion about aspects of having a parent in the forces that may not have emerged through talking alone.

In my study, children and young people were invited to bring into school objects that would help us understand what they thought was important or significant about having a parent in the forces. This was similar to the prompt used in the drawing activity and was deliberately broad. One of the difficulties with this activity was that it relied on participants remembering to bring items into school for our planned research meetings. Unlike the drawing activity, which could be set up relatively easily, object-elicitation required me to meet with the children prior to the planned research meeting to propose the activity. Despite providing participants with small cards detailing some suggestions on what to bring into school, many of the children and young people taking part forgot their objects. On other occasions, they were unsure about what to bring or felt the object was too special to bring into school.

In the end, eight children opted to bring objects to our research meetings. This resulted in six photographs of the objects, and seven audio recordings of conversations (6 individual encounters and 1 paired discussion) involving an object that children had chosen to bring to the encounter (see Table 5). The objects included a previous school t-shirt; two ornaments; a photograph; an iPad, two military badges, and a model submarine. The analysis of the data produced through this method used the objects brought to the interview as a starting point and this is discussed in more detail below.

Vignettes

In addition to using prompts provided by the participants to guide our conversations, I employed the use of vignettes, devised by myself, to elicit discussions with groups of children. Vignettes are typically described as short stories of individuals and situations which can be used to elicit responses (Renold, 2002). They are particularly useful in studies dealing with sensitive topics because they offer the opportunity to respond indirectly. Participants can focus on what the character in the story would do and how they would feel, rather than discuss their own personal experiences (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2014). For example, Hill (2006) argued that presenting a vignette in the form of a short video was an effective way of engaging with her participants about their experiences of parental alcohol problems. Given that the nature of my research also had the potential to elicit

discussion about fairly sensitive topics, vignettes were used to create some distance and thus facilitate a more comfortable situation

Vignettes were also, for me, a way of introducing wider ideas into the research encounter directly. I was interested in how the children would respond to existing narratives about having a parent in the forces. The vignettes I constructed therefore drew on issues that had been previously documented in existing literature around the experiences of military families. Researchers have noted that vignettes are often most effective when they are based on real experiences (e.g., Barter & Renold, 1999) and I drew on my own memories of situations described by children, parents, and teachers prior to embarking on the PhD. In this way, I would argue that the vignette method made transparent some of the ideas I was already bringing to the research encounter. My understanding of the children's experiences, and therefore the questions I asked, were informed by what I had been exposed to prior to the research. Vignettes were a way of presenting these ideas in a concrete and somewhat less obtrusive way to the children and young people (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2014).

The content of the vignettes was based partly on recurring themes discussed in reports around the experiences of military families; for example, parental absence and moving school. I also tried to maintain an equal balance between content that could be perceived as negatively or positively balanced. Given the educational focus of the research, I situated the scenario within the context of school or education. Finally, I created comparable pairs of stories, one for use in the primary school and one for secondary school pupils. I altered details, such as the age of the main character and school situation, to make the story relatable to the different groups of participants. Following guidance from Bradbury-Jones et al. (2014), the vignettes were kept short (under 150 words) and were used as a stimulus material for further discussion. Details of all three pairs of vignettes used are shown in Appendix 2.

I used the vignettes in group or paired situations. During the encounter, I explained to the participants that I would like to read them some fictional stories about other children with parents in the forces. I told them that I was interested in

what they thought about the children's experiences and whether they thought their own experiences were different or similar. After I read the vignette out loud, I asked children broadly what they thought about the story. The level of discussion generated by the vignette somewhat determined how many vignettes we could discuss in the time allotted to the meeting. All group conversations involved discussion of at least two of the three vignettes.

Vignettes were used in 10 research encounters involving a total of 36 participants (see Table 5). With the exception of two paired conversations, all vignette facilitated encounters involved three or more participants. Analysis is discussed in more detail later in the chapter but involved using particular vignettes as starting points to identify and compare the responses across the associated encounters.

Video diaries

Whilst the vignette method arguably provided a way to make explicit some of my own notions around the children's experiences, the video-diary activity was intended as a space where participants could talk about their experiences in the absence of myself. Solicited diaries have been reported as an effective way of allowing the participants to set the agenda and highlight their own priorities and concerns (see Bartlett & Milligan, 2015 for an extensive review). Researchers have elicited written, audio (Gibson et al., 2013), and video diaries (Noyes, 2004) from participants. In one of the few studies using video to capture diary entries from participants, Noyes (2004) argued that the diary method created data that would not have been forthcoming in the presence of the researcher. When alone in the video-diary room, children spoke candidly about their learning experiences, highlighting the contingency of children's accounts.

For me, I was interested in understanding whether and how children's accounts of having a parent in the forces changed when I was physically absent from the encounter. I wondered what accounts might be possible that would further help me articulate the experiences of children with parents in the armed forces. Critically, then, I was interested in how the method changed the nature of the research situation rather than how it helped to elicit more authentic data, as was the focus of Noyes' (2004) study. Furthermore, I was interested in capturing data

that allowed me to move beyond a focus on children's verbally articulated expressions of having a parent in the forces. Recognising that voiced utterances are only one way we communicate (Spyrou, 2016), video data allowed me to consider how children express ideas non-verbally, including how they use their bodies in relation to the material and social environment.

Prior to making a recording, I met with the children to discuss: the practicalities of making a video recording; suggestions for topics to talk about; and any concerns they had about making a recording. The participants made their recording in school: in the secondary school setting they could arrange to do this at a time of their choosing, whilst in the primary school setting, it was necessary to co-ordinate an agreed time and space during my school visits. One of the difficulties raised by participants was the uncertainty about what to discuss. In School 1, two children made a few short video recordings, but I observed or they told me that they were not sure what to say. The four participants at School 2 seemed keen but no video recordings materialised, and the young people in School 3 also raised concerns about making an individual recording. Two pupils in School 1 suggested to me that it would be better to create the recording in pairs. Given that the primary children in particular seemed keen to use video-recording as an activity, I opted to include it within the peer interviewing activity in schools 4 and 5 (discussed next).

As a result, the video diary method led to only six video-recorded encounters from four participants in School 1, lasting a total of 36 minutes (see Table 5). Rather than dismiss the data that emerged from this method, my analysis focusses on its inability to inspire the children to give accounts of their experiences. I compare the data that emerged from this method to data from other methods used in the study.

Peer interviewing

Peer interviewing involves individuals conducting an interview with another member of their peer group (Quarmby, 2014). There is limited literature on the use of this method, but, most commonly, researchers justify its use because it addresses power imbalances within the research situation (Alderson & Morrow, 2004; Kilpatrick, McCartan, McAlister, & McKeown, 2007). Kilpatrick et al. (2007) argue that a peer research approach can be particularly helpful in researching

'hard to reach' groups and thus can maximise opportunities for young people's views to be heard. Quarmby (2014) explored the use of peer interviewing in researching looked-after children's experiences of sport and physical activity. He found that the method helped to reduce the formality of the situation and therefore capture data that might not have emerged in a more traditional researcher-participant interview. Schäfer and Yarwood (2008), however, note that involving young people as researchers often fails to consider the power relations that exist amongst young people.

For me, peer interviewing was yet another way to change the nature and dynamic of the research encounter. Similar to the video dairies, I was either physically absent or verbally silent. However, the focus was on the interaction between the two participants, rather than the participant and the video recording device. As explained earlier, the suite of methods collectively worked to create different arenas for exploring the experiences of having a parent in the forces.

Prior to carrying out their own interviews, I met with those who had signed up to this activity and explained that I was interested in what they felt it was important to ask each other about having a parent in the forces. We used this meeting to talk about: effective questioning; recording on the iPad; and confidentiality. In most cases, the children chose to write their interview questions in advance of carrying out a recorded interview. Some of the primary school children asked me to write their suggested questions for them. Following this, the children took it in turns to ask each other a series of questions. In the secondary school, the young people carried out their interviews independently. In the primary school, I stayed for the duration of the interview to assist with holding their list of questions or support them in using the recording device.

A total of 25 participants took part in peer interviewing and this resulted in 18 research encounters of paired conversations. Twelve of these interviews were audio recorded and six of them were video recorded (Table 5). As with all methods, the analysis has considered what this particular method contributed to the research data.

Task-based activities

Within group and paired conversations, I also made use of what can broadly be described as task-based activities (Punch, 2002a, 2002b; Hill, 2012). This approach involves supplementing discussions by inviting participants to complete particular tasks. Punch (2002a) found that using activities such as grouping and ranking exercises, spider diagrams, and preference charts alongside direct questioning helped to attend to an individual's preferred way of engaging in research. Hill, Laybourn, and Borland (1996) similarly discussed the use of brainstorming techniques, pictorial vignettes and sentence-completion as a way to sustain the interest of primary school children. The rationale given for these techniques is typically that: they can help to stimulate further discussion; provide a natural break in the conversation, allowing participants time to think about their answer; and they create a more enjoyable and interesting research situation (Punch, 2002a; Hill et al., 1996). Some researchers argue that such methods help participants to become more actively involved in the research process (Punch, 2002a; O'Kane, 2008; Greig, Taylor, & MacKay, 2012). However, Gallagher and Gallagher (2008) note the difficulty in describing how to observe active participation.

Within my research, I drew on the use of different activities in order to stimulate further exploration about the children's experiences. These activities often developed organically within the research encounter and, in the absence of an interview or focus group schedule, they helped me to organise the meeting. In my first few meetings with the children and young people in each school, I was keen to elicit some discussion about the kinds of topics we might talk about during the research. To help with this, I proposed a brainstorming activity. After we had talked about the purpose of the research, I invited the children to list suggestions for things to discuss in future research encounters. I provided a large sheet of paper in the centre of the table and a variety of pens. Sometimes I wrote 'having a parent in the armed forces' in the middle of the paper. The children either wrote their ideas directly onto the paper or verbalised them to me and I wrote them down. This activity gave me an early indication of potentially important issues that I could use in my follow up meetings with the children. For example, Natasha

over the different activities but rather enjoyed being part of something that was different to anything they had done before.

The task-based activities were used in initial meetings with the participants or in a final session at the end of fieldwork in each school. Brainstorming as a research technique was used in four initial group conversations and the difference line activity was used with five groups of children. All the children and young people were asked to complete evaluation forms and the diamond-ranking exercise was used in two group conversations with young people in School 2 and School 3.

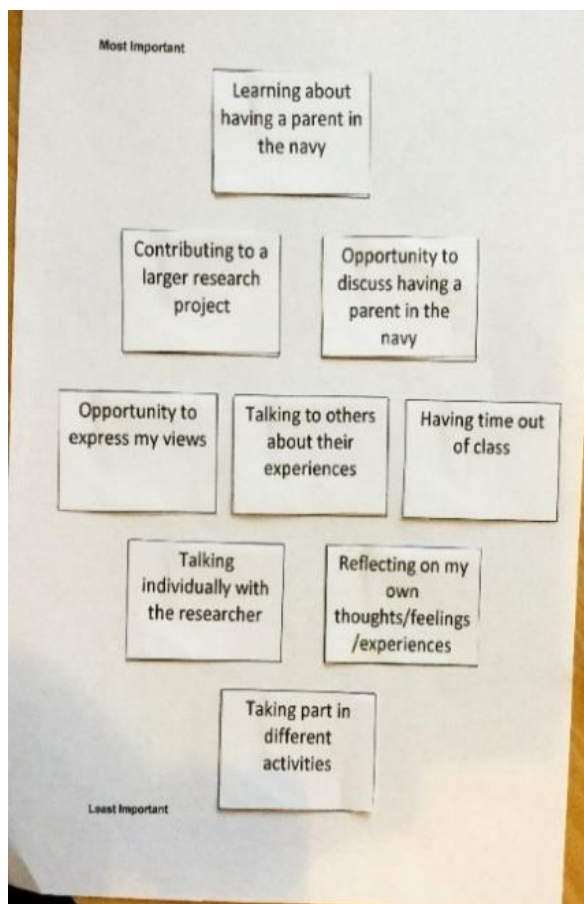


Figure 4: Diamond-Ranking Activity

Summary of data collected

Table 5: Summary of data generated

Method	No. of research encounters	No. of participants	Data generated
Drawing conversations	18	28	26 drawings
			18 audio recordings and transcriptions
Object Conversations	7	8	6 photographs
			7 audio recordings
Vignettes	10	36	10 audio recordings
Video-Diaries	6	4	6 video recordings
Peer Interviewing	18	25	12 audio recordings
			6 video recordings
Task-based activities	8	23	11 audio recordings

Data management

A rigorous research process supported the management of the large number of phases, methods, schools, and participants involved in this study. Early in the fieldwork, I identified this as a critical aspect and therefore devised several management strategies. At the start of fieldwork in each school, I created a timetable of planned research activities. This was helpful for communicating my intentions to the schools and it also served as a reminder about where I had been on what days, who I had met with, and what had been achieved. I added some commentary about changes as they happened; for example, if I was unable to meet with pupils or do certain activities due to unforeseen school events. On some occasions, I also took photographs of the research spaces before the participants arrived. This helped me to recall the research encounter as well as attend to the context of the research encounter, which, as will become apparent in the next section, was central to my analysis. During and after each school visit, I took notes about what had happened, how I felt about the visit and questions or thoughts to follow up on the next visit or when revisiting the data. Because the fieldwork took place over 10 months, these records were particularly helpful.

At the end of fieldwork in each school, I collated all this information for each school with transcriptions of the research encounters, photographs of the drawings and objects brought by the participants, and copies of feedback forms. I opted to partly transcribe the audio recordings for a number of reasons. Firstly, there were too many recordings to transcribe fully. In addition, my intention to create an informal, relaxed research space meant that children often talked over each other making it difficult to transcribe their dialogue word-for-word. Relatedly, sometimes the conversation was not immediately relevant to the research purpose; in the next section I outline more clearly how I decided what was relevant. Where there were sections of the recordings that I did not transcribe, I instead wrote a summary of what was happening. I included time points throughout so I could always return to a recording quickly if necessary. The video recordings were short (average = 4mins) and therefore I chose not to transcribe these, but included them as hyperlinks in these documents so I could easily re-visit a recording as I processed

and wrote about the data. This resulted in five large word documents, one for each school, which I used as the basis for my analysis.

3.7 Analysis Process

The post-qualitative orientation described earlier guided my approach to data and analysis. Post-qualitative researchers argue that data are not simply reflective of a reality that existed before the research event, but also the result of whatever happened in that event (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). Although it is not uncommon to acknowledge the influence that researchers have on the object of inquiry, there continues to be the underlying assumption that we do so in order to produce more accurate or valid interpretations (e.g., Mays & Pope, 2000). However, from my perspective, data are generated relationally within the research encounters, emerging between me, the children, the methods and the schools. Data are also fluid in that they continued to change throughout the process of analysis. We discover the world as we engage with it, and this was ongoing throughout the research. Analysis was viewed as a process of entanglement (Lenz Taguchi & Palmer, 2013) whereby my subsequent engagement with the data, post-fieldwork, continued to bring forth new interpretations. In what follows, I describe what was involved in this process.

There exist a plethora of research textbooks and guidelines on how to do qualitative analysis, which are no doubt particularly helpful to novice researchers (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006). Nevertheless, there is the risk that these generic guidelines close down opportunities to do or see something different. For example, if I believe that I must find patterns across the dataset, I will perhaps miss the potential value of a single moment or expression. Or, as St. Pierre and Jackson (2014) argue, “if you think you have to find a theme, you probably will” (p. 716). It is not that the idea of themes is wholly problematic, the point for me is that too rigidly following a series of steps can miss opportunities for different kinds of engagement with the data produced from our inquiries. I therefore opted to proceed slowly in that the choices and steps I took to address the aims of the research were those that made sense within the context of this particular study. My analysis was informed by descriptions of analytical processes provided by other researchers (Clarke et al., 2018; Feely, 2016; Fox & Alldred, 2017), whilst at

the same time I appreciated the need to respond thoughtfully to the particular demands of this study or the demands that arose within a singular moment of the analysis. Whilst I drew on analytical strategies described by others (described in detail below), I also felt it important to continuously return to my readings of the data and theoretical literature to think how I could proceed with my analysis in other ways. St. Pierre (2011) warns against “the urge to create new structures of comfort” (p. 622) and, as my initial disquiet about much existing qualitative research stemmed from seeing it as over-formalised and rigid, I was cautious about simply appropriating the suggestions of others. Returning frequently to re-read the data and other literature was my attempt to keep the analytical process open to new possibilities.

My research aims described earlier influenced the analytical process. My previous experience of working in schools with teachers supporting children from forces families, as well as the collaboration with Royal Caledonian Education Trust, meant that I was particularly interested in findings which could respond to the concerns and practices of schools and teachers. The purpose of the study – to understand and support the experiences of children and young people from armed forces families in educational settings – was foremost in my mind as I explored the data generated from my fieldwork activities. It is of course not possible to explore all potential interpretations of the data. I adopted an ‘activist stance’ (Stevenson, 2010) in that the data I selected to explore was informed by my ultimate aim: to present educators with productive ways of responding to the experiences of children and young people from armed forces families.

Analytical Phases

Although I was engaging in preliminary analysis when I was in the field, I did find that during the weeks when I was visiting schools, my attention largely focussed on the practical arrangements (e.g., travel, communication with teachers and schools, organising research materials, creating timetables) and reflecting on what had happened (e.g., noting any ethical tensions, thinking about my approach, including the questions I had asked and the methods of data generation). During school holidays, I had more time to think about the connections within and between data and theoretical and/or empirical literature.

As described earlier, all data generated in the research encounters – transcriptions, photographs, drawings, and field notes – were organised into five large documents; one for each school and clearly structured by research activity (e.g., drawing, peer interviewing etc.), and the participants involved. As I gathered the data into these documents, I wrote notes, created mind maps, and shared informal pieces of writing with my supervisors about my initial impressions of the dataset. In my earliest readings of the resulting data documents, I also extracted contextual details about the children’s lives (e.g., their age, siblings, number of schools attended, experience of parental deployment) and used this to provide the descriptions of participants presented earlier in the chapter. These initial activities helped me to become familiar with the data generated in the research encounters and to gain a bird’s eye view of the whole data corpus.

Following this, my analysis progressed through a series of phases: (a) Phase 1: selecting research encounters to explore in more detail; (b) Phase 2: an assemblage analysis of individual research encounters; (c) Phase 3: combining encounters together in a new assemblage. The first phase considered responses produced within each of the methods, the second phase focussed on individual encounters, and the third phase combined data from across the research methods. In each of the phases, I considered how the research methods and my own role as the researcher influenced the resulting accounts (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003).

Phase 1: Selecting encounters

In Phase 1, I tackled data derived from each of the methods as a cluster. I gathered together data associated with each method from across the data corpus and read these smaller data sets. The research had produced a total of 67 research encounters which included 18 drawing conversations, seven object conversations, 10 vignette-facilitated group discussions, six video diaries, 18 peer-interviews and eight conversations involving task-based activities (see Table 5). It seemed impossible to extract the children’s responses from the context of the research encounter. Rather than approach the words spoken in the research encounter as representing individual and isolated voices, I was instead keen to conceptualise them as emerging from the relations within the research encounter. From my perspective, the children’s responses emerged in relation to the social, physical,

discursive and material context (Renold & Ivinson, 2014; Hohti & Karlsson, 2014). For this first phase, the research encounter as a whole was the unit of analysis (Rautio, 2013).

I needed to select research encounters within each research method to explore in further detail. I traced out all the encounters associated with each method to help me think about what was being produced in the encounters, and what particular impact the method had on the data generated. Because the methods had generated different types of data (e.g., drawings, videos, photographs, audio transcripts), my analysis differed somewhat for each. For example, for the drawings, Rose's (2007) description of compositional analysis provided me with some visual language that I felt was needed to describe the drawings. Compositional analysis can be described exactly how it sounds; it involved assessing specific components of visual material. For me, this meant analysing drawings in terms of their content, colour and expressive content. My resulting method map described each of the drawings by these components. For the small number of video diary encounters, I was able to look across them simultaneously to consider transactions between the children and the video camera, and what this produced. These were essentially mind maps which helped me begin to attend to what had been produced through the various methods. To distinguish these from other maps created in the analytical process, I refer to these maps as my 'method maps'.

I brought the method maps together with associated transcripts and other material outputs from the encounters to help me select encounters to analyse in more detail. As I looked at each map and data associated with each (see Figure 5), I realised that some of the encounters seemed to elicit more curiosity in me than others. It was the combination of the newly created method map; the verbal, pictorial, material accounts produced in the encounter; my own memory of the encounter; and my research aims that made me feel compelled to explore some research encounters in further detail. Ultimately, the selected research encounters elicited questions which attended to my research aims.

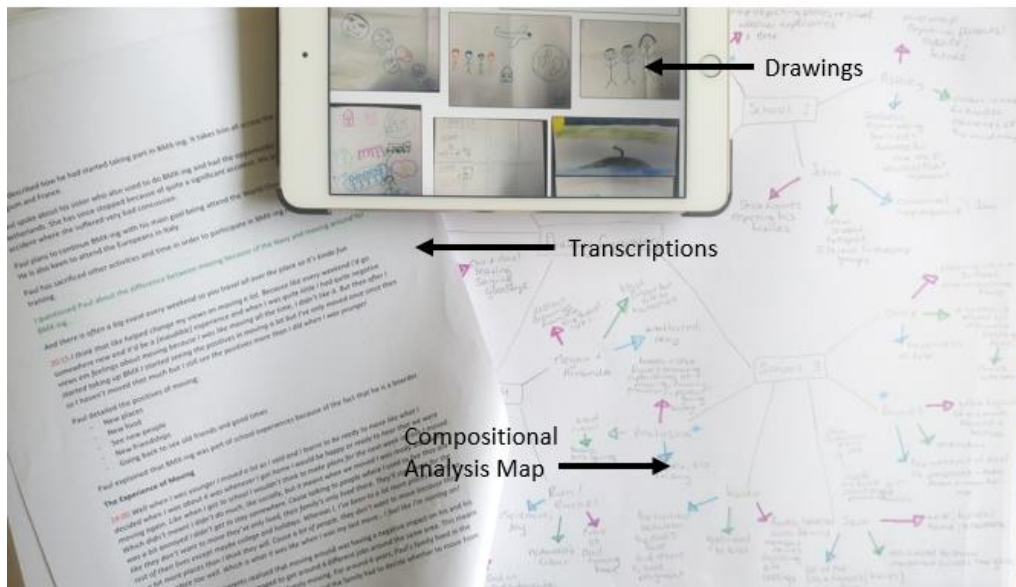


Figure 5: Example of Phase 1 in action (drawing conversations data)

From the 67 research encounters, I chose 31 to explore initially in further detail in Phase 2 of my analysis. This included five drawing conversations, three object conversations, four vignette-facilitated group discussions, nine peer interviews, four conversations involving task-based activities, and (due to the small number) all six video diaries. I returned to the remaining research encounters in Phase 3 of my analysis, but my aim at this stage was primarily to explore *how* different responses emerged, rather than map *all* responses.

Phase 2: Exploring individual encounters

Phase 2 involved looking at the identified research encounters from Phase 1 in more detail. By exploring the research encounters holistically, I hoped to attune myself to the context in which children's responses emerged. This contextual approach was supported by conceiving of the research encounters as assemblages. Thinking about the encounters with the concept of assemblage was helpful because it encouraged me to consider how children's expressions shifted according to the situation and moved me away from trying to capture a fixed understanding of children's experiences. It also sensitized me to the interactions or connections being formed between different elements of the research encounter that encouraged the various expressions to emerge. As Fox and Alldred (2015a) argue, with such a relational approach, the unit of analysis is no longer human behaviours and thoughts. Rather, I attended to how elements of the research

encounter collectively worked together to allow various accounts to emerge (or not emerge). Ultimately, the concept assemblage helped me to keep in focus the contingent and dynamic nature of children's voices.

Conceiving of the research encounters as assemblages was my first step, but just how to enact this idea in my analysis was more difficult. St. Pierre (2011, 2014) argues that if we have read enough theory, our methodology will follow. However, for me, I needed guidance from those who had attempted similar analyses. Fortunately, several researchers have documented their attempts at using assemblage in analysis. In what follows, I describe how I took forward ideas from different researchers to arrive at four questions to guide my analysis.

From Feely's (2016) 'principles of assemblage analysis', I understood the need to firstly consider all the different components relevant to the research encounter. Clarke et al.'s (2018) situational analysis encompasses three mapping strategies, and it was the situational map that I found most helpful for my analysis. Making a situational map involves specifying all the components – human and nonhuman – pertinent to the situation. Following the recommendations from these researchers (Clarke et al., 2018; Feely, 2016), my first question was, therefore, ***'What are the elements in this research encounter?'*** On a large sheet of paper, I wrote down all the different elements I could identify in the research encounter. For each research encounter, the components included, but were not limited to, individuals, collective groups of people, memories, objects, physical space, activities, research techniques, words spoken, feelings, imaginations and events. Similar to McLeod (2014), who also employs Clarke's (2003) situational mapping strategy, I limited this description (as least initially) to components I could observe as having an effect on the expression of having a parent in the forces that emerged in the research encounter. Although this approach will not consider absolutely everything in the research encounter, I drew on Clarke's (2003) advice and tried to be as inclusive as possible. I limited myself only to what I could observe in the account of the research encounter from the transcription, material outputs and my own field notes.

Viewing the research encounter as an assemblage meant considering how these different elements were working together to produce expressions of having a parent in the armed forces. In line with assemblage thinking, which emphasises relationality (Fox & Alldred, 2017), Clarke et al. (2018) note that the components in the situational map should be considered as co-constitutive. Another stage in Clarke et al.'s (2018) description of situational mapping is to draw lines between different elements, focusing on the relations between the two elements. Therefore, my next step was to add connections between the elements. I did this whilst re-reading the transcript, method map and any associated field notes. Guided by the question ***'What connections are formed within this research encounter?'***, I made tentative links between elements that I could observe as working together to produce a particular account of the experience of having a parent in the forces. Therefore, as I drew links between the different elements, I was already starting to think about my third question – ***'What expressions of having a parent in the armed forces are produced?'*** For me, this question attended to the effect of the research encounter – what was produced through the constellations of human, material and discursive elements of the research encounter.

To help me think about these expressions further, I wrote about the connections I could observe using the transcription, material outputs and method map. Writing is being increasingly recognised across researchers from different theoretical perspectives as an important analytical practice (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Augustine, 2014). For me, too, it was an important part of how I arrived at the results of my analyses. Early on, I recognised the importance of writing for my thinking but it was during moments when I pushed myself to write through feelings of uncertainty that thinking happened. For example, when I was unsure what thoughts I had about the research, writing helped to move me to new understandings. As such, writing was not simply a way to record or represent ideas already thought about, but it was a method of inquiry; a way to bring data together with theoretical concepts and previous literature to see synergies and separations (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

My fourth and final question that guided my analysis of the research encounter attended to Feely's (2016) advice to think about the "virtual potential of the

assemblage” (p. 879). I tried to consider *‘What other expressions might be possible?’* Feely (2016) argues that “Deleuzian thought actively encourages us to experiment with taking components out of one assemblage and plugging them into another” (p. 876). I therefore considered how the expressions might have changed if a component of the encounter was different. I tried to map rather than trace new connections in the research encounter. To do so, I took Clarke’s (2003) suggestion and considered if anything was missing from the map that was important to my research questions. My research design also allowed me to look at encounters where the method or participants were different. Question 4 therefore could not be answered by looking at one research encounter. Feely (2016) encourages researchers to engage in a form of activism of the kind that moves us beyond description of the social phenomena. In order to engage in the activism that Feely (2016) argues for, I decided to look across the research encounters. At this point therefore I returned to the data corpus, and this is Phase 3 of my analytical process.

Phase 3: Combining encounters

In Phase 3, I returned to the data corpus to explore “analytic trails from previous research encounters” (Renold & Ivinson, 2014, p. 365). This phase involved mapping connections between the expressions, and between the expressions and other moments of research encounters to create new assemblages which I hoped would produce further insights into the experiences of children from forces families. I began by gathering expressions which I could identify were about a similar aspect of children’s experiences (e.g., parental absence) or which collectively highlighted the workings of the research. I then returned to re-read the datasets, including those research encounters I had not explored in Phase 2.

The research questions that developed from this process were the result of yet another kind of assemblage, consisting of the analytical questions detailed above, my research aims, and observations and analysis of the literature and empirical data (Fox & Alldred, 2017). The research questions that I used to further guide my analysis and organise my presentation of the findings were:

1. What do children describe as the most significant aspects of having a parent in the armed forces?
2. How do children describe themselves in relation to being part of an armed forces family?
3. What do children's accounts suggest about school-based support for children from forces families?

These research questions are important because they respond to identified gaps in the literature and reflect my analysis of the research encounters. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 use empirical data to address each of the research questions respectively. My analysis provides evidence from research encounters, rather than individual children, to emphasise that the accounts generated emerged from the relations, or the assemblage of the research encounter (Fox & Alldred, 2017; Rautio, 2013). The individual research encounters discussed in each chapter involve specific relations and affects but they are grouped together in ways to highlight similar narratives and materialities that emerged from my analysis of the encounters. Rather than attempt to present a stable and coherent account, each chapter tries to use and present the accounts in a way that acknowledges the contingent and dynamic nature of children's voices. Chapter 7 explores some of the potential educational implications that stem from the research findings.

Reflections on the analytical process

Although, as I have presented it, my analytical process appears linear and straightforward, the reality felt significantly different. The phases described above did not happen separately but often overlapped. Analysis felt a bit like attempting to cut my grass with my old lawnmower; it would only work for a certain amount of time before cutting off, forcing me to wait until it had cooled down before starting again. Analysis was slow and often frustrating; it required patience and perseverance. Additionally, whilst together these practices supported my exploration of children's responses produced in the encounters, they at the same time became another kind of empirical formation, after the encounters. My subsequent and ongoing engagement formed new connections. Therefore, I was not only tracing the children's responses, I was also mapping new connections. The next four chapters present the results of this analytical process where I have

attempted to make the connections visible for others, which hopefully will go on to evoke new connections for readers.

3.8 Ethics

The study followed the ethical guidance of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). In addition, adherence to the ESRC framework for Research Ethics (2015) was mandatory for this ESRC-funded research project. Ethical approval was granted from the University of Stirling, School of Education Research Ethics Committee in August 2015 and then again in January 2016 when some minor methodological changes were made (Appendix 3). In addition, I had to seek approval from the respective local authority for two of the participating schools. Both local authorities requested specific information about the study including research methodology, impact on participants and workload implications for schools and staff. One local authority also requested confirmation of a Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) certificate.² Permission was granted from both local authorities on the condition that a final copy of the thesis be sent to the local authority and the participating schools on completion of the study.

Securing initial approval from the University, the local authorities and the participating schools was, of course, only one step in ensuring I carried out the research ethically. Particular issues to do with seeking consent from the children and young people, protecting anonymity of those participating, and respecting the contributions that children wished or did not wish to make, are explored in further detail below.

Informed consent

Discussions about research with children frequently involve issues of informed consent (Morrow & Richards, 1996; Punch, 2002a). Critical issues around the need to secure consent from adult gatekeepers have been explored above. Other related issues pertain to how the structural position of children in society (Mayall, 1994; Punch, 2002b) and specific environments (David, et al., 2001) can create a power

² The certificate is provided by Disclosure Scotland and is necessary for anyone working with children and/or protected adults

each of them would involve. In that initial meeting, I also asked children if they had any questions about the research. In the primary school, I facilitated this discussion with the use of 'question cards' which included both prepared questions and blank cards where children could devise their own questions. I sat in what I called the 'hot seat' and said they could ask me anything they wished. Many of the children asked questions about me. For example, 'How old are you?'; 'Do you have any children?' or 'What is your job?' I hoped that this approach would help to create a research relationship in which the children felt comfortable asking questions and inputting to the research process.

All the children in that initial meeting verbally agreed to take part and completed a consent form. I assured the children that if, when I visited their class again, they decided they had changed their mind, this would not be a problem. I said to them that throughout the research they could decide not to respond to any question, not to take part in a particular session or to stop taking part altogether. I explained I would not feel upset or annoyed and that it would have no consequences for them. Recognising that consent is something that has to be negotiated throughout the research process (Morrow, 2008), I repeated these statements throughout our various meetings.

It is difficult to ascertain what overall impact these efforts made to the relations within the research encounter that would enable children to express a desire to discontinue with the research. However, the fact that some children did opt out of research activities or the research altogether is perhaps some evidence that there was, at least for these children, the opportunity to do so. Isla (School 2) chose not to go forward with one of our research meetings because it meant missing an important lesson. In another instance, Lucas (School 5) chose to return to class mid-way through a group discussion. He later told me he would rather just stay in class for the final meeting. I responded positively, thanked Lucas for his honesty and explained if they had any more questions or concerns to let me know. Both these instances are perhaps relevant because their teachers had encouraged them to continue and even with this added pressure, they verbalised their decisions to me. They are perhaps a small indication of the processes in place.

Confidentiality

As detailed in the information leaflets (Appendix 1), I explained to the children that anything we did or discussed in the research would be confidential, emphasising that I would not share anything with their parents or teachers. For group situations, it was important to be particularly clear that although they may wish to discuss their own contributions, they should not disclose any information shared by a participating peer. In practice, many of the children were comfortable with this principle because of their involvement in group-based interventions such as Seasons for Growth.

It was also important to be clear about the limits of this confidentiality. I explained that the one exception to this agreement would be in the event of them disclosing something that made me concerned that they or someone else was in danger. I revisited this issue throughout the research meetings. There was only one instance when I had to breach confidentiality; I discussed this with the young person first and, in this case, it was an issue that had been discussed previously between the young person and school staff.

Ensuring I protected the privacy of the children and young people was addressed in the following way. During my time in school, I made teachers aware of my confidentiality agreement with the children and all teachers respected this situation. It was also important to limit discussion about the details of the research meetings to the individual children concerned. This proved challenging at points, particularly when the children asked about details that in any other situation would have been non-problematic. However, often a simple reminder that I was unable to discuss this was enough to curb further questioning. Finally, my phased approach to the research described earlier helped ensure I did not inadvertently breach confidentiality.

After each school visit, I transferred consent forms, drawings, feedback forms and other material outputs into a portable locked filing box. I subsequently separated consent forms and other identifiable information from other data and placed this in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Stirling. Digital outputs were

downloaded onto a secure password-protected computer and original recordings on the iPad were deleted as soon as possible after each visit.

Protecting anonymity

Issues relating to revealing details about participating schools were addressed earlier in the chapter. In this thesis, protecting participants' individual identities has been addressed by using pseudonyms and carefully considering the details of each data extract to ensure that, although each individual participant may be able to identify their own contribution, others reading the thesis will not. As others have done (e.g., Morrow, 2008), in the final meeting I asked children to choose their own pseudonyms. This served to remind (and sometimes reassure) the children that their identity would not be shared. However, a few young people expressed disappointment that they would not be recognised for their contribution. Although I sympathised with their position, this was a condition of my ethics approval and I reasoned that whilst they may have agreed initially, if they did change their mind in the future, there would be no way to retract this decision.

The use of video data in this study involved further considerations of anonymity. In my ethics application, I stated that it may be useful to share extracts of the video recordings at closed educational conferences. Agreement for this data to be shared in this way formed a distinct element of the consent form. However, because the data ultimately reveals children's identities, I have subsequently opted only to reproduce the data in textual form.

Ethics within a post-qualitative orientation

As outlined at the start of this chapter, ethical considerations remain at the heart of the research process. However, a post-qualitative orientation with its emphasis on immanence and materiality demands a different approach to ethics. In this study, ethics is viewed as an emergent phenomenon of assemblages that include relations of both human and more-than-human (Bazzul, 2018). In practice, what this means is an attitude of situated sensitivity to consider how the relations created through the research process work to enhance capacities for action (see also Mayes, 2016). 'Good' ethical practice does not involve slavishly following ethical guidelines but

rather “entails responsibilities that expand the powers of entities (e.g., plants, humans, animals) actually and virtually” (Bazzul, 2018, p. 478). For me, this involves a commitment to consider whether the research encounters generated relations that worked to facilitate new experiences and identities or if they generated relations that homogenised and/or restricted these possibilities.

3.9 Research quality

Before moving on to discuss the findings that emerged from the methods of data generation and analysis discussed in this chapter, I pause briefly to address issues of research quality. Creswell and Miller (2000) advise qualitative researchers to draw on ‘validation strategies’ which he defines as accepted ways that other researchers have used to document the value of their work. Given that issues of validity give rise to considerable debate within the literature (e.g., Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lather, 1993; Torrance, 2017), I took heed of this advice and explain how my research process aligns with forms of research validity and quality employed by others.

From Waterhouse (2011), I took the idea of paradigmatic consistency. This proposes that ‘good’ research is that which demonstrates there is consistency between different aspects of research; alignment between theoretical framing, design, analysis and write up of research. Wilson (2016) similarly talks about an “internal coherence in which methods and theoretical concepts mesh” (p. 102). The theoretical framing in this study somewhat suspends the boundaries between epistemology and ontology and therefore the methods of data generation and analysis have sought to acknowledge that knowledge produced from the inquiry is inextricably linked to the research process. I have embraced the position that children’s accounts are contingent and shifting and, in my findings, I have attempted to highlight the factors internal and external to the research encounter that shaped the nature of children’s accounts. Understanding when and how children choose to express different aspects of their experiences could be critical to supporting them in school. As others have argued (Creswell & Miller, 2000), notions of what constitutes good social research somewhat depends on the paradigmatic assumptions underpinning the inquiry.

On the other hand, I agree with others (e.g., Altheide & Johnson, 2011) that regardless of our paradigm assumptions, the nature of our research process should be clearly communicated to others. The research has adopted a rigorous approach to data collection and analysis. I have maintained detailed logs of the research process throughout the course of the research. Since beginning the PhD, I kept a research journal, which has provided the opportunity to track various research decisions. In my fieldwork, I kept comprehensive records of my time in each school, and, in presenting my analysis, I have sought to give a careful and precise account of the process so that the reader can follow my line of thinking.

The collaborative component of the research and my experience prior to the PhD has consequently meant I have been involved in networks across the UK interested in supporting armed forces families. The value and relevance of my findings has been an important consideration for me throughout the PhD. As a result of being involved in various professional networks, I have been able to explore my emerging ideas from the research with those also attempting to grapple with how to support children from forces families in educational settings.

In summary, my claims for the quality of this research are based on: alignment between my theoretical framing, methods and interpretation; detailed records of the research process; and continuous engagement with networks involved in supporting children from forces families.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has described my methodological approach for researching the experiences of children from forces families. It began by describing my post-qualitative orientation to the research process, and the ethical concerns I had upon embarking on this project. I explained how a post-qualitative orientation helped me to think about the relational, material and shifting nature of children's accounts.

I then detailed how schools and children were invited to take part in the research and described the methods of data generation and analysis. The research design drew from participatory traditions. However, whilst I hoped using a suite of qualitative methods would contribute to a comfortable research situation, they

were not used with the intention of revealing the 'authentic' voice of the child (Mazzei & Jackson, 2008). Rather, their purpose drew from post-qualitative incitements to experiment, facilitate new connections and encourage new reflections (Torrance, 2017).

In outlining my analytical process, I explained how I used the concept of assemblage to explore the social, material and discursive context of children's accounts.

The penultimate section of the chapter outlined how I attended to the more commonly discussed elements of ethical research, including informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. Finally, I reflected on evidencing the quality and value of my methodological approach.

The next three chapters discuss the findings from these methods of data generation and analysis.

Chapter 4: Children's accounts of having a parent in the forces

This chapter explores findings relating to the first research question: *What are the most significant features of children's descriptions of their experiences of having a parent in the armed forces?* In line with the issues explored in extant research (e.g., Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017; Bradshaw et al., 2010), two topics featured frequently in children's accounts. Firstly, of those who indicated their parent had been absent for reasons related to their career in the armed forces (35 of the 41 participating children), 27 provided further insight about their experience of the absence. Secondly, of those who had experienced relocation (32 of the 41 participating children), 27 spoke in some detail about their experience of moving home and school. In addition, and somewhat less apparent in existing literature, the children's accounts pointed towards the significance of the armed forces as an institution with considerable influence in the lives of families. This is discussed towards the end of the chapter. The chapter draws on the assemblage approach detailed in Chapter 3, to consider how the children's various accounts emerged in relation to the discourses, materials and people present in the encounter.

In Chapter 7, I will go on to discuss some of the educational implications of these accounts. However, this chapter focusses primarily on how children expressed having a parent in the forces. If we are to appropriately support children in school, it is important to know how children account for this aspect of their experience. Developing a more nuanced understanding of how children express their experiences is therefore a first step towards creating school environments that inclusively respond to the experiences of children from forces families.

This chapter draws on data collected from across the suite of methods, and range of research participants. Most of my research encounters, at least in my initial visits to the schools, began with me asking the children what they felt was important about having a parent in the forces. As described in detail in the previous chapter, across their participation in the research, children could choose to draw a picture, bring in objects, make a video diary, interview another

participating child, or listen and respond to a vignette. The vignettes depicted commonly considered situations that children from forces families face (e.g., moving school or parental absence). The rationale and content of these vignettes was also described in Chapter 3. The analysis highlights how, in different ways, the particular method supported, and was part of, the accounts that emerged in the research encounters (Fox & Alldred, 2017). My own involvement in the generation of these accounts is also considered and included in the data excerpts (Spyrou, 2011). In Chapter 7, I develop this thinking to present implications for dialogues with children about their experiences in educational settings.

The chapter has three sections. Firstly, I give examples of how the participating children and young people described experiences relating to parental absence. Secondly, I do the same for the experiences of moving home and school. Finally, I reflect on the methodological insights that emerged through my analysis.

Throughout the chapter, I discuss the accounts from children across school settings and armed forces background collectively, but, when appropriate, indicate whether these accounts were unique to the stage (primary or secondary), school, or military service (Army or Navy).

Whilst my analysis shows that how these accounts that emerged were specific to the relations within individual research encounters, the subsections contain groupings of research encounters that reflect common narratives and materialities that emerged from this analysis.

4.1 Parental absence

Parental absence or separation is often discussed as one of the relatively unique situations that children face as a consequence of their parent's service in the military (White et al., 2011). Previous research has focussed on the measurable impact of parental absence (e.g., Pexton et al., 2018), largely using parental accounts (Andres & Moelker, 2011). My research adds to the paucity of literature exploring how children themselves describe their situation. In what follows, I show what my assemblage analysis of the transcripts, artefacts, and field notes from the research encounters revealed about children's experiences of parental absence.

Most of the children participating in the research had experienced their parent being away for periods of time as a consequence of being in the armed forces. However, the nature of this absence varied quite a lot across the children. Some children described times when their parent had been deployed for operational purposes, whilst others talked about their parent leaving frequently for training exercises. Some of the absence had been for short periods of time, whilst others faced more long-term separation. The unpredictable nature of the absence featured in some children's accounts; others had parents who routinely worked away from home. Whilst the extant literature focuses almost exclusively on children's experiences of deployment (e.g., Knobloch et al., 2012), my research revealed that children employed a broader understanding of parental absence. Specifically, the research encounters in my study generated talk about children's experiences of their serving parent working away from home on a more routine basis. This was commonly referred to as 'weekending', denoting the situation where the parent stays away during the week and returns home at the weekend. Children expressed the significance of these types of experiences in relation to being from a forces family and therefore I attend to this feature in my analysis.

Whilst the type of parental absence experienced by the children varied, many of the children described their experiences of parental absence as emotional and associated with feelings of sadness, loss and worry. Discussed in more detail below, there were also various visual representations of the emotional impact of parental absence in the children's drawings. For example, sad or crying people and faces featured prominently in the children's drawings. This is in line with findings from Baptist et al. (2015), who found that children's drawings of deployment "were often charged with raw emotions" (p. 315). During the research, there were moments when the sadness and loss experienced by the children seemed particularly palpable (Ringrose & Renold, 2014). In these moments, it appeared that there was something happening that went beyond children verbally communicating their feelings (e.g., "I feel sad when my dad goes away"). Taking the analytical approach outlined in the previous chapter helped me to consider all the different elements of the research encounter that worked together to recreate the sadness experienced by the young people during their parent's absence.

The following example comes from a conversation with Jacob and Cody, aged 9 and in Primary 5 at School 5. We had been discussing one of the vignettes featuring Liam, who has an absent father (see Appendix 2). This prompted Jacob to talk about his own experiences of his mother being away due to her job in the Army. He told me that she had previously been to Afghanistan and that when she did go away he got “the nerves”. Further prompted by my questioning, he then described a memorable moment when he experienced these feelings most intensely.

Jacob: She has gone to Afghanistan quite a lot

Cody: Same as my dad

Jacob: Last year she did go to a training course though and I do get the nerves then but

Evelyn: And how do you deal with the nerves then? What do you do?

Jacob: Think of different things

Evelyn: Yeah, just distract yourself. And when do you get the nerves the most?

Jacob: In [international location], when I used to get, the home, the bus back from school and to school

Cody: Yeah that's what I used to get

Jacob: And when my mum was away I used to look out the window and just imagine that she was walking along the street

[tentative laughing]

Jacob: I was really sad

Evelyn: Aw

Jacob: I don't like explaining these so

Evelyn: It's a difficult thing to talk about isn't it?

Jacob: Mature in a way but

(Vignette paired discussion, 9-year-old boys, School 5, Army family)

My analysis of this event was guided by my analytical questions posed in Chapter 3. Conceiving of Jacob's experience of parental absence as an assemblage, I identified several important relations that were important to this experience of parental absence. Jacob's mum's deployment to Afghanistan produced powerful emotions – nerves and sadness – which further caused Jacob to try and avoid

thinking about his mother being away. However, his travel to and from school, when there are perhaps fewer material and social distractions available, caused him to once again feel “the nerves”. This produced a further cognitive response; Jacob attempted to imagine his mother’s presence and “just imagine that she was walking along the street”. This extract therefore reveals that parental absence produced both emotional and cognitive affects, which were differently experienced in relation to the social and material environment.

In addition, there were relations within the research encounter that helped to generate this account of parental absence. I experienced this moment, then and now, as intensely emotional and, in the encounter, this is revealed through my affective response; “aw”. So far in my visits to School 5, Jacob had appeared unsettled and less engaged in the research. He would often divert off topic and did not appear to want to talk about his experiences. In the extract, despite telling me that he does not like talking about his feelings, Jacob chose to share this personal memory. A connection was established between the story of Liam in the vignette and Jacob’s own experiences of parental absence. This points to the potential of this approach in helping children to share their experiences of parental absence. And the resulting impact of sharing his experiences is revealed through Jacob’s final comment. Expressing his feelings in this way led to a new subjectivity. Jacob positioned himself as “mature in a way” and capable of reflecting on these highly personal experiences. The idea that the research encounter provided the space that helped to encourage this new identity or becoming (Cristancho & Fenwick, 2015; Mayes, 2016) in relation to being part of a forces family is the focus of Chapter 5. Collectively, these elements – the words spoken, the memory of the event, and my own previous interactions with Jacob – worked to create a powerful moment where the emotion caused by parental absence was easy to feel.

The assemblage created in this moment helped me, not only understand how children might feel when their parents are away, but also to connect more intimately with how the experience can impact them. It works to highlight the significance of this experience for children with parents in the military; the powerful emotional impact parental absence can have; and the importance of

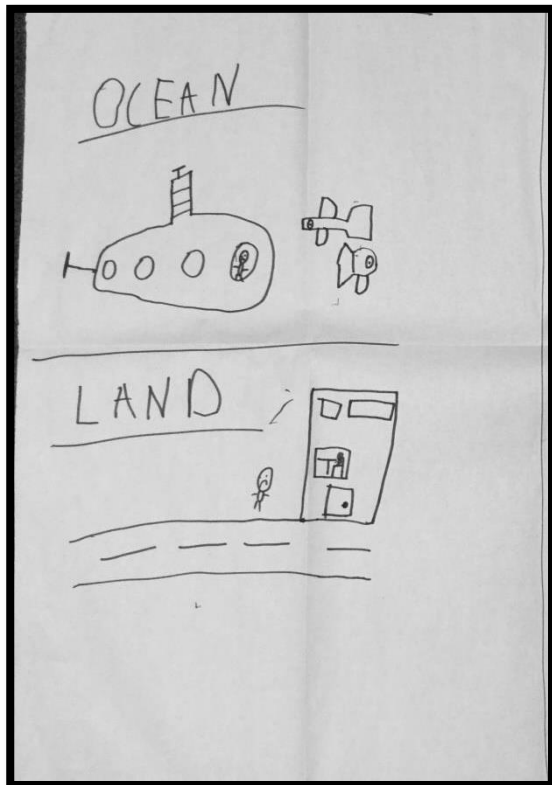
finding ways for children to express their sadness or worries, which may then provide the opportunity for new expressions.

Forgetting about parental absence

Because the children's accounts revealed that parental absence caused them to feel sad and worried, my follow-up questions were often about how they responded to these feelings. One of the strategies that the children in both primary and secondary school commonly described was broadly around the use of distraction techniques. Indeed, in the extract from Jacob above, he said that one of the ways he coped with "the nerves" was to think about other things. The children's accounts emphasised the importance of keeping busy and distracting themselves from thinking about their parent being away. In a study involving children of a similar age to those taking part in my study, Skomorovsky and Bullock (2017) also reported that distraction techniques were commonly employed to respond to the emotional effects of deployment. Their research was concerned with categorising the different coping strategies that children employ. In the examples that I discuss in this section, I use the assemblage analysis described in Chapter 3 to instead focus on how the children's accounts of distraction strategies emerged through the research encounter, and what their accounts of this strategy revealed about the significance of the parental absence experience.

The first example comes from Harry and Oscar, both aged nine and in Primary 5 at School 4. In the encounter, both boys had created a drawing prompted by my question about what they think is important about having a parent in the Navy. Oscar's drawing (Figure 7) illustrated his experience of parental absence through distinguishing between his father, located in the 'OCEAN', and himself and his family, located on 'LAND'. His drawing also included stick characters with sad faces and I asked him to tell me what this suggested about having a parent in the forces.

Evelyn: and what does that tell us about what you think about having a dad and the Navy?



Oscar: I just think that others will feel the same when their dad is away

Evelyn: How will they feel then?

Oscar: Quite sad

Evelyn: Will they feel sad all the time?

Oscar: Probably

Harry: I don't feel sad because I try and forget about it so ...

Oscar: But it's really hard cause he's your dad

Harry: So when I'm playing my playstation and I'm on a game then I forget about it because I'm just into the game

(Drawing interview, 9-year-old boys, School 4, Navy family)

Figure 7: Drawing by Oscar, primary 5, School 4

As with Jacob and most of the children taking part in the research, Harry and Oscar's fathers' absence created feelings of sadness which further caused them to engage in activities and seek connections within their material environments – computer games – that offered a disconnection from these feelings.

Evelyn: So is that quite a good thing to distract yourself?

Boys: Kind of

Evelyn: But kind of?

Harry: Yeah cause when I turn it off I'm like "I want to play it more" but then it, it comes back into my head

Oscar: Yeah cause you probably, cause you kind of want to play it with your dad

(Drawing interview, 9-year-old boys, School 4, Navy family)

Whilst this type of material engagement offers a temporary release from the sadness caused by parental absence, the feelings and thoughts about their father being away persist. Despite the children's efforts, they are reminded about their

situation once again – “it comes back into my head”. This encounter therefore reveals the strength of the connection between parental absence and feelings of sadness.

In addition, these expressions about parental absence that the research encounter helped to generate show that, whilst children try hard to forget about parental absence, they are willing to share their experiences. The drawing activity in this encounter provided the opportunity for Harry and Oscar to depict what they felt was important about having a parent in the forces. Their previous experiences of parental absence materialised in the drawing, and led to a further verbal account about their experiences. Harry and Oscar both had similar previous experiences of parental absence, and their drawings reflected these shared experiences.

The second example comes from a group discussion involving three Primary 5 girls (Megan, Amanda and Ruth) and one Primary 4 girl (Rachel) in School 4. All of the girls had experience of their fathers being away because of their jobs in the Navy. In previous visits to the school, some of the girls told me they felt “ok” about their father being deployed. I asked them to tell me what they do to make themselves feel ok and this generated the following conversation:

Megan: You go to school and you would forget about it mostly all the time

Evelyn: what do the rest of you think? Do you think you would forget about dad being away and feeling sad when you're in school?

Ruth: No, not really

Rachel: I sometimes forget and sometimes I don't

...

Amanda: I think you would forget about it in school because you have to do, sometimes you have to do hard work and sometimes you have to do like, sometimes you run around the playground with your friends

Rachel: Because you're having so much fun!

Evelyn: Ruth do you think there's times when you wouldn't forget about it?

Ruth: Yeah if there was a [inaudible] or if there was a submarine of something you would feel a bit

Evelyn: Tell me again

Ruth: In maths if there was like a submarine on the page

(Group discussion, 8-9 year-old girls, School 4, Navy connection)

This encounter revealed that the material-discursive school environment could be potentially important in the experience of parental absence. An assemblage of school, absent parents, hard work, friends and fun creates the possibility for forgetting and disconnecting with feelings of sadness. At the same time, this assemblage of forgetting can be ruptured (Ringrose & Renold, 2014) by a material presence (i.e., the picture of the submarine) that establishes a connection with feelings of sadness once again. In the encounter, Rachel also described how hearing the “yellow submarine song” would similarly make her feel sad about her father’s absence.

Taking the accounts from this encounter together with Harry and Oscar’s accounts described above suggests that, whilst children work hard to forget about their parent being away, they struggle to entirely forget about it. This points to the intensity of the emotion they experience, and its lingering presence in their everyday lives. Unexpected events or provocations within their social and material environment serve to remind them of their situation.

The research encounters could also be considered as intentional interventions (Mannion, 2018) that connected participants to features of parental absence. In the encounters, I was concerned about the effect of surfacing these accounts. Other post-qualitative researchers encourage us to consider what the research does or what it produces (Masny, 2013; Mayes, 2016). If children were trying hard to forget about parental absence, I wondered about the ethicality of encouraging these accounts of sadness. In the encounter with Rachel and the other girls discussed above, I asked them if it was a good thing to talk about these experiences, like we were doing in the research. Megan told me:

Megan: It would because you’re telling your feelings and that’s actually making you like more happier not sadder so it’s actually good to actually tell someone.

(Group discussion, 9 year-old girl, School 4, Navy connection)

This extract reveals that, whilst on the one hand children value the importance of engaging in social and material activities that help them to not think about their parent's absence, they also recognise the importance of having the opportunity to share their feelings. Sharing their experiences with others seems to offer the chance to alter the kinds of feelings produced through the assemblage of parental absence. Earlier, I similarly showed how, for Jacob, expressing his account of parental absence also encouraged his process of becoming-mature (Mayes, 2016).

The next example comes from an encounter with Isla, in S3 at School 2. I had invited Isla to bring along an object that would tell me something about what she thought was important about being part of a forces family. The object she chose to bring to the encounter was an ornament from a special holiday that Isla's father had missed due to being deployed. The conversation that ensued from this again reveals the significance of parental absence in these children's experiences. The object initially helped to generate talk around this early experience of parental absence. In the encounter, we then moved on to discuss a more recent episode when her father was unexpectedly deployed overseas for a period of six months.

Evelyn: Yeah absolutely. And I suppose having not had him be away for periods of time. Was that quite a different experience then?

Isla: Well em my mum was kinda used to it because like she knows whats gonna happen because he used to go away [...] But em my mum's like kind of used to it like she knows like she keeps herself occupied. [...] And also cause me and my sister were out the house so we went home every weekend to keep my mum company and we did a lot with my mum. And then my Nana came up quite a lot and then we went down at Christmas because my dad wasn't there we had grandparents up. So like she kept quite busy.

[...]

Isla: Yeah! But my grandparents were up so that was nice and we did a lot, like to keep, like we did a lot more traditional Christmas things like secret Santa and stuff. We did like those kind of things to try and keep us like busy so that we didn't like think, 'Oh I wish dad was here,' blah blah blah. So, we didn't get too upset about it. But it was like ok anyway. It wasn't like terrible.

Evelyn: Yeah, a kind of different experience I suppose

Isla: Yeah

Evelyn: And do you think that's the best thing to be doing then? Do you think it's best just to keep yourself busy?

Isla: Yeah

Evelyn: Obviously your mum like knew...

Isla: Like it's good to keep yourself occupied so you don't think like think about oh if he was here we could do this and get yourself worked up about it because like at that point there was still about 4 months left so we still had quite a bit of time till he was back. And like because we saw him early on during his departure, it was quite a long time till we saw him again so it was like trying to ...

(Object conversation, 14-year-old girl, School 2, Navy connection)

Isla's account of parental absence reveals the significance of relations between family members. In this 'family-assemblage' (Price-Robertson, Manderson, & Duff, 2017), various relations work to enable this experience of parental absence. Isla and her sister increased the time they spent with their mother. Isla's mother's previous experience helps Isla to understand the importance of keeping busy. Grandparents visit to support the performance of being a family. Engaging in traditional family practices – "secret Santa and stuff" – also helps to sustain the family assemblage. Forgetting about parental absence in this instance is achieved through the family assemblage. Whilst the upset caused by the parental absence still lingers – "we didn't get too upset about it" – its capacity to affect is somewhat reduced through the relations that constitute the family assemblage.

The ornament Isla chose to bring was part of her account of parental absence. It connected to a memory of a special holiday involving herself, sister, mother and Nana. Isla explained that the ornament was from the first family holiday they took without her father present. The ornament helped to generate the family-assemblage account. Isla's talk in previous encounters, particularly in one-to-one situations, had been punctuated by repetitions of "I don't know". She had also chosen not to participate in the drawing activity and explained that she wasn't sure what to draw. However, the dynamism that I felt, and the talk that emerged in this encounter, suggested that the object had provided a more comfortable starting point for our exploration. In the encounter, the object Isla chose to bring from

home connected to memories of her previous experiences of parental absence and effectively mobilised a verbal narrative about her more recent experiences.

The research encounters discussed in this section all contain narratives that are about forgetting about the absent parent. In one way, therefore, they resonate with findings from the small number of qualitative studies describing how children engage in distraction coping strategies (Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017). However, the assemblage analysis employed above renders the findings being less about children's individual cognitive coping strategies, to a focus on how forgetting as a phenomenon is achieved relationally. Forgetting about parental absence is something that is achieved through relations in children's social and material environment. In addition, whilst these social and material relations, at home and at school, can provide a temporary release from the sadness created by parental absence, the feelings still linger persistently waiting to rupture the forgetting-assemblage (Ringrose & Renold, 2014). The analysis of the encounters further revealed that opportunities for expression can lead to new becomings (discussed further in Chapter 5) and further altered connections between parental absence and children's emotions.

Connecting to the absent parent

Whilst children talked about making efforts to actively forget about their absent parent, they also described moments where they seemed to have actively sought to connect to them. The children participating in the research had varying opportunities to talk to their parents when they were away. Some were able to telephone or video call, whereas others indicated their contact was more restricted. Existing guidance for schools supporting children with deployed parents advises school staff to facilitate communication between children and their deployed parents (O'Neill, 2011). I was therefore interested in how communication made a difference to children's experiences of parental absence. Empirical research suggests that communication with deployed parents has variable effects on children (Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017). The children in my research typically reported feeling emotional about their parent's absence, regardless of how much verbal or visual contact they had with them. One discussion with a group of Primary 4 and 5 children in School 1 helped to highlight

that parental absence is not just emotional and cognitive, but that it is also embodied (Horton & Kraftl, 2006).

In the encounter, we were discussing the Liam vignette (Appendix 2) and I asked the children whether it would make a difference to the experiences of parental absence if Liam could video call his father. This created a debate between Tom and Robert who disagreed on the extent to which this would make Liam happier about his father being away. Both boys had experience of their parent being deployed.

Evelyn: How would it make a difference, Tom?

Tom: Because he could see him

Evelyn: Because he could see him, and how would that make him feel?

Tom: Happy

Evelyn: Yeah?

Robert: And kind of sad cause he can't hug him

Tom: Yeah but he can still talk to him

Robert: Yeah he can still talk to him but he can't hug him or that

(Vignette group discussion, 8-9 year-old mixed, School 1, Army connection)

Whilst Tom acknowledged that a video call would help Liam to feel happier, Robert reminded the group that it fails to make up for the fact they cannot physically touch their parents. There were a number of instances throughout the research that helped to reveal the importance of the material and embodied experiences (Lenz Taguchi, 2011) in children's experiences of parental absence. In this section, I describe four of these instances before collectively discussing the significance of these accounts.

The first example comes from the same encounter introduced above. Based on my own, somewhat naive, assumptions, I continued to question the children about the use of digital technologies to communicate verbally and visually with their absent parent.

Evelyn: And do you Skype him?

Tom: Hmm not that much because his internet is bad

Evelyn: Do you think it would be better to Skype him?

Tom: Y--eah

Melanie: Tom, if you try Skype, just ask your mum to text him and then if he can then Skype him because that's what my mum does and even though I can't smell his deodorant it's a lot better cause I just have the blanket in my arms cause his blanket smells of deodorant so I sleep with his blanket every night

Evelyn: And that makes a difference?

Melanie: Yeah

(Vignette group discussion, 8-9 year-old mixed, School 1, Army connection)

The affordances of the group situation are revealed in this example. My own experiences somewhat limited my ability to recognise the importance of Robert's earlier comment about not being able to cuddle his father. This led to what felt like a somewhat effortful dialogue between myself and Tom. However, Melanie was able to intervene and bring some energy back to the encounter. This is therefore a good example of how multiple participants with different or similar experiences can help to generate new understandings about the experience of being part of a forces family.

The parental absence assemblage that is generated through Melanie's account involves people (e.g., herself, mother, absent father), technologies (e.g. Skype, mobile phone), material objects (e.g., deodorant, blanket), and embodied experiences (e.g., smell, touch). Whilst her mother, Skype and mobile phones permit some forms of communication, what seems to be a more important connection is established through the blanket. In the extract, we understand how bodily contact with the deodorant-smelling blanket prompted productive differences in Melanie's experience of parental absence, bringing comfort that allowed her to go to sleep.

In fact, several of the primary-school children taking part in the research emphasised the importance of smell in their experience of their parent being away. The following example comes from an encounter involving Georgia and Hannah, both aged eight and in Primary 4 at School 5. Using the iPad to video-record their interviews, the girls took it in turns to ask each other a series of questions about

their experiences. These questions were partly planned in advance but also improvised during the course of the interview.

Georgia: How does it feel if your mum or dad goes away?

Hannah: Sad and lonely cause my sister never plays with me and my mum is always busy!

Georgia: How many schools have you been to?

Hannah: thwee

Georgia: thwee?

(Hannah's laughing)

Georgia: Has your dad been in a war?

Hannah: Yes

Georgia: How old are you?

Hannah: Eight

Georgia: What is your name?

Hannah: Hannah of course

Georgia: How many people is in your family?

Hannah: Four of us that live in my house

Georgia: Do you like it when your dad is away?

Hannah: No. No I don't like it so when he's away I have to put one of his t-shirts on as my pyjamas and then spray his aftershave on it

(Hannah starts laughing)

(Peer interview, 8-year-old girls, School 5, Army connection)

In amongst the laughing and joking around, Hannah provided a candid account of her experience. In this short account, lasting in total less than 2 minutes, we learn quite a few things about Hannah and her situation. Whilst Georgia's pre-planned interview questions led to a somewhat predictable question-answer situation, her improvised question, "Do you like it when your dad is away", led to what might be called a palpable hot spot (Ringrose & Renold, 2014). The spontaneity and free-flowing nature of the peer-interviewing situation perhaps helped to create the relations needed to generate this fleeting comment. This points to the potential in

the peer interviewing method for generating accounts about children's experiences.

In another encounter, Harry, a boy in Primary 5 from School 4, also emphasised the material and embodied experience of parental absence. Prior to our meeting, I had invited Harry and Oscar to bring in something from home that would help me understand what he thought was important about having a parent in the forces. Harry chose to bring in one of his father's military badges. I asked Harry to explain further what this might tell me about his experiences.

Evelyn: So boys these are really interesting objects that you've decided to bring in. I'm absolutely thrilled. And what do you think these things tell us about you guys then?

Harry: I do not know. But I do know one thing I use it for at home. Because every time my dad leaves it on one of his t-shirts, I take it and then, my mum, my dad always says that we can like lay it down on our bed. Ahh. And sometimes I wear it. It's like kind of a dressing gown. But not as thick.

(Object conversation, 9-year-old boys, School 4, Navy connection)

This short dialogue is perhaps a reminder that a post-qualitative orientation encourages researchers to focus less on what things mean, and instead consider what they do, and how they function (Masny, 2013). In his response, Harry emphasises how the military badge becomes part of the experience of parental absence. The assemblage of Harry-badge-t-shirt create new possibilities for action (e.g., wearing the t-shirt) and new bodily experiences (the thickness of the t-shirt). Whilst Harry does not elaborate further, we can legitimately argue that this new assemblage helps to alter the relations involved in the parental absence experience. Through Harry's account, the experience of parental absence is again shown to be significant and embodied.

Both Hannah and Melanie emphasised the smell of their absent father's deodorant or aftershave and their descriptions helped me to make sense of another account from William in School 4. In this encounter, William had drawn, in response to my question about what is important about having a parent in the armed forces, a picture of his father and deodorant (see Figure 8). However, William did not

verbally communicate the significance of the deodorant and it was not until I had completed fieldwork and was able to connect his account to those from other participants that I was unable to understand how the deodorant was implicated in his experience of parental absence. The knowing that I produce is, of course, partial and situated within and in relation to the other assemblages I encountered in the research.

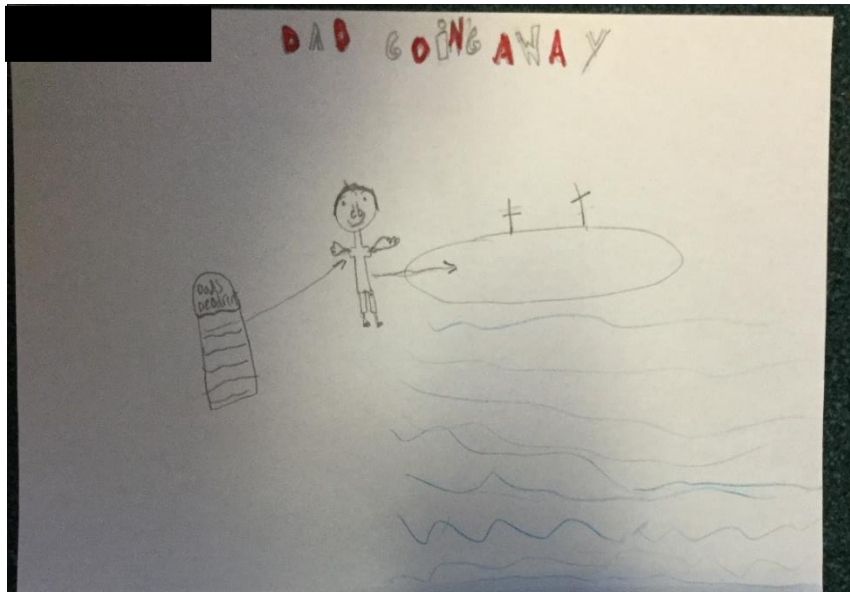


Figure 8: Drawing by William, School 4, primary 4, Navy connection

Initially in the encounter, when we were discussing what William might draw, he told me *"I'm not drawing his deodorant! No no no!"* At the time, William's comment left me feeling puzzled. We had had no prior conversation about deodorant and I was not sure how this was linked to his experiences. I chose to wait until he had completed his drawing before asking any further questions. Despite William saying he was not going to draw his father's deodorant, it did appear in his drawing. In the excerpt below, William explained that the drawing was of his father's deodorant and the submarine. Still feeling puzzled, I asked William once again to describe his drawing in the hope he might explain further. He did not, and I eventually asked him more explicitly.

Evelyn: Why don't you tell me what you've drawn then? What have you got there?

William: [laughing] My dad's deodorant and the submarine.

Evelyn: You've got ... show me again. So you've got ...

William: Dad's deodorant and the submarine

Evelyn: that's the deodorant and that's ...

William: submarine

Evelyn: What's the deodorant then? What's that got to do with it then?

William: It'll makes him smell, it makes him smell if he doesn't have it on

Evelyn: Is that quite important to you?

William: Yes

Evelyn: Is it something that you think about?

William: Yeah

Evelyn: Is there a particular kind of deodorant that dad puts on?

William: Eh no it just smells weird

Evelyn: If you smelled it, would you know it was your Dad's deodorant?

William: Yes, if no-one else has it on. And then I'll think 'that's my dad!' and it's not.

Evelyn: Hmmm ok. I see.

(Drawing conversation, 9-year-old boys, School 4, Navy connection)

In this instance, the effect of the assemblage of William-father-deodorant was more difficult to determine. Despite my repeated questioning, William was unable to verbally articulate the importance of the deodorant drawing. However, reading the encounter and William's drawing in relation to the other encounters described above, leads me to see that the material and bodily engagements with the deodorant become productive of new relations in the parental absence assemblage. These new relations involve sensory connections to the absent parent and establish a somewhat more tolerable experience of parental absence as a result.

The examples discussed above were fragments of the datasets that arose unexpectedly in the research encounters and were so fleeting that I often did not have time to acknowledge and respond to them in the moment. However, as I read through the transcripts post-fieldwork, these somewhat isolated comments by the

children aroused considerable interest. It felt like the data were almost like a “constitutive force, working upon the researcher” (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 527). As I noticed these moments in the research encounters, I also began to notice how they featured in other empirical accounts of children’s experiences. Interestingly, whilst Houston et al. (2009) observed that one child in their research commented “I put his hat on to feel better” (p. 807), they do not consider the significance of this comment beyond defining it as a coping strategy. The quotes in Skomorovsky and Bullock’s (2017) research also bear an uncanny similarity with the accounts described above. These researchers again render these expressions as coping strategies, describing them as attempts to maintain a psychological connection to the absent parent. However, from my perspective, the concept of bodymind from posthumanist researcher Floyd Merrell seems to align better with the practices that the children describe. I use the concept bodymind to understand how the body and mind work collectively (Merrell, 2003). Parental absence is felt in the body as much as in the mind. These material practices that the children engaged in, responded to and enacted their embodied experiences of parental absence. Thus, unlike previous research that adopts a psychological and individualistic perspective, my analysis shows that these practices are collective, embodied and material.

Methodologically, the knowing that I ultimately produced from my engagement with these research encounters emerged from my use of the assemblage analytic. However, my initial awareness and interest in these data fragments did not emerge from a systematic coding of the transcripts. Rather, they can be considered as palpable hot spots which worked to arouse my curiosity (Ringrose & Renold, 2014). The significance of the practices the children described was easy to feel. However, as noted earlier, the comments were fleeting and the children were often unable to explain what was produced through engaging in these practices. The assemblages formed were therefore spontaneous and short-lived, and thus did not generate some of the becomings I witnessed when children reflected on their use of distraction strategies, described in the previous section. Further sustained engagement with these reflections might help children to appreciate the significance of these practices, generating further possibilities for engaging in

similar or different practices that work to positively alter the parental absence experience.

In summary, the analysis of the accounts in this section highlight that, for children in all three participating primary schools, the experiences of parental absence were embodied and material. Whilst this was a key feature of the talk generated with primary school children, it was absent in the encounters with the young people at secondary school. In contrast, the young people frequently discussed the social dimensions of the parental absence assemblage experience, particularly with regard to family relationships.

Being and becoming a family

Earlier in this chapter, I introduced the idea of the family-assemblage (Price-Robertson, et al., 2017) and showed that, for Isla, family was a key context for considering the experience of parental absence. Price-Robertson et al. (2017) argue that family-assemblages involve not just human relationships but also practices, spaces and other material entities which collectively assemble and re-assemble. This section presents further examples to show that children understand and experience parental absence through family relations. Whilst both primary and secondary school children described parental absence in familial ways, this feature seemed to be particularly prominent in the accounts from the young people in the two participating secondary schools. Three encounters involving Daniel from School 3, and John and Paul from School 2, are discussed in this section, before reflecting on their collective significance.

The first example comes from a drawing conversation with 15-year-old Daniel, whose father is in the Army. In the encounter, I had invited Daniel to draw a picture that would show something he thought was important about having a parent in the forces. The resulting drawing (Figure 9) was a picture of his family – mother, brother, himself but no father – and he told me this was about “just trying to stick together”. He related this to a memory of his father leaving to go to Iraq when he was younger and described this as one of the “tough times”.

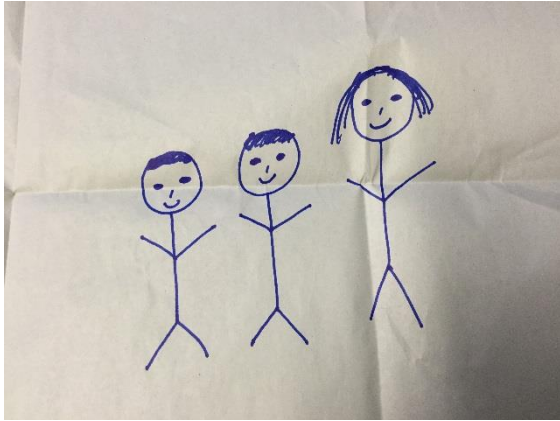


Figure 9: Drawing by Daniel, aged 15, School 3, Army connection

Evelyn: Ok but your dad's not in the picture

Daniel: no

Evelyn: So is that because he's not there?

Daniel: Yeah

Evelyn: ... he's went away

Daniel: It's kind of like about working as a team really just to try and get through it. Which I think was important. Like if we just did our own thing, didn't talk to anyone, it'd be a lot harder than it was

(Drawing conversation, 14-year-old boy, School 3, Army connection)

In the excerpt above, Daniel tells us that coping with father being away involves working together. Earlier in the encounter he had also described observing that his mother was quite upset when his father left. Reporting on the emotions of family members during deployment was a common feature of young people's discussions in previous research (Knobloch et al., 2012). It draws our attention to the understanding that parental absence affects the whole family. In order to "get through it", it is necessary for the family to support and talk to each other. Daniel suggested that trying to cope with it individually would have been more difficult. I continued to question Daniel about how the family work together.

Evelyn: Yeah ok, and how did you do that then? I mean well tell me about what it's like with your mum and brother and your family then ...

Daniel: I think we just had to, like, act like it wasn't that bad, like we just had to like go to funfairs and stuff like that like theme parks and act like we were still, I guess you could say, a normal family. But

I mean it was just trying to like pretend that it was like, alright I guess ...

Evelyn: mmm

Daniel: ... it's hard to explain but it was just, it was just trying to stick together really

(Drawing conversation, 14-year-old boy, School 3, Army connection)

A family-assemblage (Price-Robertson et al., 2017) develops in response to Daniel's absent father. Relationships and communication between Daniel, his mother and brother help to shape the experience of parental absence, and perhaps make it more bearable. It is not just human relations that sustain the family-assemblage. Family practices (going to funfairs and theme parks) help with the pretence of being a "normal-family". Collectively, these relations, described by Daniel as "sticking together" helped to create the perception that despite the tough time, the family were coping well.

The genesis of this account came from Daniel's drawing. It participated in and helped to generate this account of parental absence. The drawing, depicting Daniel, his brother and mother all smiling, emphasised, in my mind, the idea that, in the absence of the serving parent, the remaining family members work to present an image of family, one that in turn helps them to cope with the absence. The drawing therefore resonates with this image of family life. The way I arrived at this knowing was enhanced by the presence of the drawing, and points to the drawing method as a useful way to generate accounts about being part of a forces family.

The second example comes from an encounter involving Paul and Isla in School 2. In this encounter, Isla had been interviewing Paul about his experiences. Paul had described 'weekending' as something his mother used to do, which involved working away from home Monday through Friday and only returning at the weekend. Isla asked Paul to explain why he did not like the experience of his mother 'weekending'.

Isla: So, you said that your mum weekended, why didn't you like her weekending?

Paul: Well it was my dad looking after me and my 2 sisters and um with that, basically, whilst mum was away my dad, by Thursday or Friday he'd get really annoyed because he wasn't, because sometimes we wouldn't listen to him and help and then he'd get annoyed. And then by the time mum was home she'd try and help but then dad would be annoyed and then we'd be annoyed and then just generally everyone was annoyed. Very annoying

(Peer interviewing, 13-14 year-old mixed, School 2, Navy connection)

Family relationships were implicated significantly in Paul's account of parental absence. The temporary single-parent household created additional responsibilities for his father, and this led to further altered relations between Paul, his siblings and his father. The return of his mother at the weekend altered dynamics yet again, perpetuating the strained relationships within the family-assemblage. Both Paul and Daniel's account help us to understand that the experience of parental absence is thoroughly relational. Interestingly, Paul's account is about his mother working away from home, rather than being deployed as such, and thus points to the importance of broadening our appreciation of parental absence within armed forces families.

The final example also suggests it would be worthwhile to consider parental absence that goes beyond a focus on deployment. This encounter involves John, also in School 2. John had no experience of moving and whilst his father worked away from home during the week, he did not appear to have experienced a deployment. In the research encounters, John often positioned himself as different to others with parents in the Navy. In the following excerpt, I asked John to compare his experience to others with a Navy parent.

Evelyn: So do you think your experiences are different to others who have dads in the Navy?

John: In the armed forces, from what I know of yes

Evelyn: You think they're different?

John: Yes – because when I think of the Navy parent I think of like them going away in submarines for long stretches of time and then being back, going again whereas, and moving up and down the country, whereas I'd say, it might not be, I'm sure that's just a small part of it but that's what I think of. Apart from myself.

(Object interview, 14-year-old boy, School 2, Navy connection)

John described what he believed to be the typical experience of a parent in the Navy. Whilst John's father returns home every weekend, a Navy parent (in John's opinion) would be away for "*long stretches of time and then being back, going again*". I was interested in understanding the effect of this identification on his experiences.

Evelyn: Do you think it makes a difference then? If you think about your other friends who don't have parents in the Navy, and their dad's home through the week, do you think their experiences are different?

John: Well I'd say that some of them might be closer to their dad. Cause I don't want to say this in a bad way but like I would say, yeah I would say that they're closer to their dad. His family for most of the time. Cause ever, like when I was younger and stuff and this can kind of be said now, like when I was sick or something I would always want my mum there because she was like the familiar figure and the one that I, unintentionally, thought of taking care of me. Whereas my dad was taking care of me in a completely different way having to like be away, be away from...

(Object interview, 14-year-old boy, School 2, Navy connection)

John's account of parental absence also discloses the family relationships to be integral to his experience. His father's absence led to altered relations between himself and both his parents, which had subsequent effect on how he interacted with them. Further, John's identification as dissimilar to other children from forces families initially worked to limit his account of parental absence. However, when I invited him to compare his experiences to his peers with no experience of parental absence, a different expression emerged.

The research encounters discussed in this section show that the young people's accounts featured narratives and materialities that related to family relationships and practices. The findings are consistent with previous research involving children and young people from forces families highlighting the importance of family to the parental absence experience (Knobloch et al., 2012; Baptist et al., 2015). The young people's accounts from my research therefore add to this small

body of existing literature. In addition, the findings provoke additional considerations for further research and practice. Firstly, whilst previous research has focussed on understanding family dynamics in response to parental *deployment*, the young people's accounts in my study suggest that a broader appreciation of the parental absence situations children may encounter would be worthwhile. Secondly, the assemblage thinking sensitised me to not only the human relationships constituting the family-assemblage, but also the more-than-human practices and responsibilities that are integral to the experience of 'becoming-family' in response to parental absence. In this way, an assemblage approach has the potential to go beyond the family systems and ecological approaches advocated in some existing research on forces families (e.g., Paley et al., 2013). Overall, the accounts in this section suggest that a relational approach which encompasses both human and more-than-human relations could be a viable way of understanding and responding to parental absence experiences.

Discussion

In line with extant literature (e.g., Baptist et al., 2015), the children in this study expressed the experience of parental absence as emotional, leading them to feel sad, lonely and worried. This finding adds weight to the idea that parental deployment has the potential to impact negatively on children's wellbeing (Pexton et al., 2018). Children employed various strategies to reduce the emotional effects of parental absence. Similar strategies have been reported in previous research (Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017). My study allowed for a comparison of these strategies across age groups and indeed some group differences emerged. Younger children were more likely to report trying to connect in both material and embodied ways to their absent parent. Older children were more likely to reflect on the family relations involved in the experience of parental absence. In addition, children's broader appreciation of parental absence in my research suggests that a narrow focus on instances of parental deployment may miss opportunities to respond and recognise the significance of parental absence more generally in children's experiences.

Furthermore, whilst a focus on the strategies children use in response to experiences of parental absence can be useful, the onus for coping necessarily lies

with the individual, and therefore ignores the social and material contexts through which these strategies can emerge (Lenz Taguchi & Palmer, 2013). I argue that children's accounts of these strategies are particularly interesting because of what they reveal about the social, material and embodied experiences of parental absence. 'Coping' with parental absence is not an individual undertaking; it involves multiple relations, including family members and practices; material objects and activities; and school and home environments. My assemblage analysis increased my sensitivity to the embodied and material, as well as the social, dimensions of the experiences of parental absence.

In addition, the finding that family relationships are integral to the experiences of parental absence is also supported by previous literature (Knobloch et al., 2012). In the absence of their serving parent, family relationships and practices became particularly important, helping to alter the parental absence experience in varying ways. This again suggests that an individualistic understanding and response to parental absence would be quite limited. The young people's accounts suggested that it would be challenging to distinguish their own experiences of parental absence from their family relationships and responsibilities within these families. Parental absence involves significant human and more-than-human family relations.

The analysis in this section has shown how relations within the research encounter facilitated children's reflexive accounts of their experience. My questions encouraged the children to explain how they responded to the experience of parental absence. I also found that children's expressions of parental absence were facilitated via research methods and other people present. There was also some evidence to suggest that expressed accounts further allowed for the emergence of new expressions and experiences. These methodological insights are discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

4.2 Moving school

Another aspect of having a parent in the forces that the children commonly described in my research was the experience of relocation. As highlighted in Chapter 2, frequent moves are often discussed in the literature as one of the key

challenges facing armed forces families (e.g., Eodanable & Lauchlan, 2011; HoCDC, 2013). Whilst most of the children participating in the research had experienced at least one move, it was typically those who had moved more frequently that provided the most detail about their experiences. The children described their experience of living in different houses and attending new schools. Children identified both positive and negative aspects of relocating. In line with the small body of literature, the advantages of moving involved opportunities to have new experiences and make new friends (see Bullock & Skomorovsky, 2016) whilst the disadvantages also surrounded peer relationships, and some discussion of the educational challenges (see Bradshaw et al., 2010; Mmari et al., 2010).

In addition, there seemed to be some differences in the ways in which the primary and secondary school children described their experiences of relocating. Firstly, the primary school children described a strong dislike for having to move, and at times seemed reluctant to identify anything positive about relocating (see also Bullock & Skomorovsky, 2016). The young people in secondary school were relatively less negative and identified a few perceived opportunities associated with moving. It is important to note that, as suggested in existing reports (DfE, 2010; Dobson & Pooley, 2004), the young people in secondary school (except for Natasha) indicated that they no longer expected to experience future school moves. Furthermore, whilst peer relationships appeared to be a concern for both groups of children, discussions about the academic challenges involved in relocating were more prevalent in the data involving the secondary school young people.

In this section, I focus on how children's accounts of moving school emerged through the relations of the research encounter (Mayes, 2016) and what these accounts suggested about children's experiences of being part of a forces family. Whilst the research encounters generated accounts about children's views and experiences of living in different houses, in order to attend to the educational concerns of this study, I have selected to specifically explore children's accounts of moving school. The most detailed accounts came from Alex in School 5, Paul in School 2 and Natasha in School 3. Overall, and in comparison to other participating

children, these children had relocated most frequently and/or had moved school relatively recently.

Creating friendships

In line with extant literature on moving and school transitions more generally, most of the children and young people described their experiences in terms of leaving behind old friends and making new friends (Mmari et al., 2010; Topping, 2011). This was clearly a key concern and a feature that the children considered important about their experience of moving. This section shows how these types of narratives emerged in the research encounters, and what they reveal about the significance of the moving school experience.

The first example comes from my engagement with eight-year-old Alex in School 5. Alex had lived for the first part of his life in England before his father was posted abroad. He lived outside the UK in one location for the majority of his life before moving to Scotland within a year of the research taking place. During the research, Alex was keen to tell me about moving school and overall seemed to have really struggled with the experience. In one of the encounters, involving Alex and two other participating classmates, I read out a vignette about a character called Katie who had moved from Scotland to England (see Appendix 2). I asked the group how they thought Katie might be feeling.

Alex: Very very upset!

[Logan agreed and showed thumbs down]

Alex: I was crying when I left from [international location]. My friends were crying on the side, I was crying on the bus like 'let me out!'

(Vignette discussion, 8-year-old boys, School 5, Army connection)

This extract reveals the moving experience to be an emotional event. It also shows friendships to be a key context for understanding this feature of children's experiences. In another encounter, Alex's account suggested that he may have had a challenging time making friends in his new school. In the following excerpt, I asked the children about this aspect of moving school.

Evelyn: Do you think it's quite easy to make new friends when you go to another school?

All: No

Alex: It's really hard

Evelyn: Why is it hard?

Alex: It's hard because sometimes you can just kind of get nervous and run away

Logan: And they might not like you

Evelyn: They might not like you. What about you, Hamish?

Alex: They might think you're really not cool, really not clever and they might want to be friends with clever people

Evelyn: So that would be something that would make it quite difficult. So when you first came to [School 5] then, was there anything that made it easier to make friends?

[shaking of heads]

Evelyn: No, was it still really hard?

Alex: It was really hard because everyone I spoke to, when I tried to make friends with some people, they started to call me an idiot and they started to test me if I could like climb these certain things and I would be really scared. And I would just run home

...

Alex: It was really hard though to make friends.

(Drawing interview, 8-year-old boys, School 5, Army connection)

There are several important relations which contribute to the difficult moving experience. Alex's personality and feelings of confidence limit his opportunities to create new friendships. The behaviours of other children within his school also influence his ability to make new friends. School support did not feature as part of the assemblage, and this raises the question about how the school's involvement might alter some of these relations. The existing relations collectively meant that for Alex, making friends was "really hard".

Whilst most of the primary school children firmly expressed their dislike for moving school, I was keen to ensure there was space within the encounters for any opportunities associated with moving to emerge. In the following encounter

however, Alex and his classmates reiterated the “rubbish part of it”, which centred on friendships.

Evelyn: So what are some of the good things about moving home or moving school?

Alex: I hate it!

Hamish: I don't like it at all

Alex: I hate it, I think it should be banned!

Evelyn: Logan, do you think the same as Alex and Hamish? Do you think, can you think of anything that's good about moving?

Alex: Making new friends, meeting new people BUT the rubbish part of it ... that you don't get to stay in contact with them most of the time! It's not fair!

(Vignette discussion, 8-year-old boys, School 5, Army connection)

Overall, these accounts from Alex reveal that moving has the potential to be highly emotive and distressing. In line with accounts from other children; those who participated in the current research, and those in other published studies (e.g., Bradshaw et al., 2010), Alex strongly protested against having to move school. However, his ability to momentarily suggest that moving school presents the opportunity to make new friends hints at a potential, perhaps not fully activated, line of flight (e.g., Renold & Iverson, 2014). I understand a line of flight as something that has the potential to alter existing relations within assemblages. Here, new friendships could potentially disrupt Alex's distressing moving experience. There are clear implications here for how schools could support children to make new friends when joining a new school, a point discussed further in Chapter 7.

Both encounters above were group situations involving Alex, Hamish and Logan. The relations between the children and myself shaped the accounts that emerged. As can be seen from the excerpts, despite my efforts to direct questions to Hamish and Logan, it was Alex's voice that had affective capacity with the research-assemblage (Fox & Alldred, 2015a). By this I mean that the group situation worked to amplify Alex's capacity to speak (Mayes, 2016). These encounters can be understood as spaces that worked to both augment and diminish capacities to act

(Ringrose, 2011). Whilst they afforded the opportunity for some accounts to be expressed, through the power relations between children, they also limited the emergence of other accounts.

The next example comprises two encounters involving 13-year-old Natasha, who, on the one hand, expressed moving as an enjoyable experience, involving the opportunity to make new friends and have a “fresh start”. However, she also recognised the challenges of moving and making new friends. In the first encounter, Natasha and Karen, both in S2 at School 3, had taken it in turns to ask each other a series of questions about their experiences. The girls were part of the same friendship group at school, and both had experience of moving school, although Natasha seemed to have experienced a greater number of moves than Karen.

Karen: resuming our questions. Karen interviewing Natasha. How was it to move so many times or if you haven't moved a lot how was it to move and meet new friends?

Natasha: I find it fun cause like you get an opportunity like some people don't, most people, the people in our school, don't have people, their dads in the Army and it's like fun to explore a new place cause you can get like kind of bored of the place you're in. Like bored of the people that you know all the time

Karen: How was it to meet new friends when you moved school?

Natasha: Fun cause like you should, say if you're trying to like make friends you should just not be quiet and sit in the back of the class or the front

(Peer interview, 13-year-old girls, School 3, Army connection)

Karen's questions direct the focus of the conversation towards how Natasha responds to the challenge of making new friends. Natasha explained that being part of a forces family creates a unique situation, typically unavailable to other non-forces children, and provides an opportunity to have new experiences. Natasha revealed that making friends is partly about how she uses her body within her school environment. Another encounter with Natasha, this time involving just her and myself, extends our understanding of the relations involved in the moving school assemblage.

Evelyn: ... So, what is it that you like about moving then? What makes it so exciting?

Natasha: The thought of having like a fresh start. For like sometimes you can muck up in a school like I have in my behaviour. I know we get a report sent to the school but there's like sometimes it's just like ah we'll still have you and like give you a fresh start. Like you can have a fresh start and sometimes you can just change ... like I came in S1 with like a high ponytail and everything and like really bad shoes and it was like gave me a reputation straight away and I was really bad. But then I got like settled in with all the nice staff. And I just feel it gives you a fresh start. Like see as I've, I was in an old school everyone but like accepted you from like primary as well but like when I came here I learned you've gotta just put yourself out there instead. So, like I'll have a better start in the next one cause I feel like I know how to do it more so I feel like it just gives me a chance to see if I'm good at it

Evelyn: What would that fresh start look like then? What would you do differently?

Natasha: I feel like I would just, instead of going just quiet the whole time I feel like I would be a bit louder the whole time and just see if I can get like, cause like I came in with the wrong group I feel like, if I act myself again then I feel like I would probably get a better group going

(Drawing interview, 13-year-old girl, School 3, Army connection)

Moving school is constituted here as a learning process through which Natasha acquires the skills and experience to make new friends. In addition, whilst Natasha suggested that she has “learned” that moving school involves *being* herself, it seems that her subjectivity is constituted through multiple, shifting relations (Gallagher & Gallagher, 2008), including, her relationships with peers and teachers, her physical appearance and behaviour, and her school environment. Many of these relations are uncertain, for example, how her new school responds to school reports, or how others respond to her appearance. This uncertainty could legitimately impact on the “fresh start” Natasha desires from her moving school experience. Thus, whilst Natasha learns how to adapt her body and mind in response to the people and environment around her, as these change they will likely present new challenges. This is evident in Natasha’s account of previous moving school experiences – “everyone but like accepted you from like Primary

but when I came here I learned ...". Whilst Natasha suggests that she has "learned" how to make new friends, it is clear that moving school actually involves a continual renegotiation of people and environment relations.

Existing literature has reported mixed effects on the association between the number of school moves children experience and their academic and psychosocial outcomes (Lyle, 2006; Mancini et al., 2015). The children in Bradshaw et al.'s (2010) study reported feeling better able to manage transitions. My analysis of Natasha's account suggests that, with each school move, children will encounter new challenges and opportunities (Natasha's "fresh start"). Moving school is not simply about how individuals cope with or master the experience, it is also about the shifting environment. The implications of this finding are discussed in Chapter 7.

Becoming-learner

Of the nine young people who participated in the research, seven of them reported having experience of moving school due to an armed forces-related relocation. Four of these young people had relatively recent experiences of moving school. However, only Paul from School 2 talked in detail about the academic challenges associated with moving school.

One example comes from a group discussion with the four participating pupils in School 2. In this discussion, I had invited the group to respond to a vignette about Ruth, a character who had moved from Scotland to England (see Appendix 2). Due to the differences in education systems, the vignette details how Ruth moved into a different year group. This generated talk from Paul about his similar experiences.

Paul: The systems are very different. It's confusing.

Isla: Yeah cause there's GCSEs in England and then there's like Nat 4s and 5s here.

Paul: And there's Highers and stuff. And it's like I'm repeating a year so all my friends in England will be leaving a year before me but I haven't technically, haven't gone down a year

Evelyn: Ok so tell me about that then Paul

Paul: Oh cause they start earlier in England cause they start a year later here. So I moved up into the correct year but I will be doing a

year extra of education than they will because they will have already done that

Evelyn: Ok

Paul: So I get an extra year but I'm in the right year which is confusing

(Vignette discussion, 13-year-old boy, School 2, Navy connection)

Paul had completed his first year of secondary school in England but because children start secondary school later in Scotland, when he moved, he returned to S1. Paul was keen to point out that he is in the 'right' or 'correct' year and noted that the challenges of moving through different education systems can be confusing. Across all the participating children, Paul seemed to have experienced the greatest number of moves. He elaborated on some of the educational challenges in other encounters.

Evelyn: Do you think, I mean we've spoke a lot about moving in our conversations and we've spoke about the fact that you've moved an awful lot. You're not particularly, I mean correct me if I'm wrong but you don't particularly think it's a good idea to do lots of moves when you're in school?

Paul: Not generally. Like because of that I haven't actually learned my times tables all of them and I don't know how to tell the time on an analogue clock very well. It takes quite a while because of that and there's just a few other little things like that, that I haven't learned because I've moved so I've missed bits

...

Paul: ... But I would not like to move now, now would not be a nice time to move. Especially with like in S3 and above being like prelims and exams and national 5's and stuff, I don't really understand that but

Evelyn: So I guess there's kind of challenges at different ages then? Cause when your younger you need to kind of

Paul: Absorb all the information and when you're older you need to get all the information for National 5, S3 prelims, exams

(Object interview, 13-year-old boy, School 2, Navy connection)

Paul's account about moving school shows that his experience has implications for his learner identity. Discontinuities in the relationship between ages and stages across the UK can cause concern for families (e.g., National Audit Office, 2013) and here Paul notes how this situation can influence his perceived educational progression in relation to his peers – "I haven't gone down a year". Moving school itself creates missed learning opportunities, and an identity as a learner with gaps in his knowledge (times tables) and skills (telling the time) emerges from this account. Paul's becoming-learner (see Youdell, 2010) identification has shaped his previous educational experiences. The subjectivities available to him moving forward will be partly shaped by the stability of his future educational experiences.

Moving school was a key feature of children's accounts. However, whilst the research took place in school, the academic challenges associated with moving, with the exception of Paul's brief reflection above, did not feature in the children's accounts. The vignette describing the character Ruth helped to generate reflections on this aspect of children's experiences, but the assemblages were short-lived. This may suggest that the connections between children's learner identities and having a parent in the forces are relatively less significant than other relations in the assemblage of being part of a forces family. However, this is discussed in further detail in Chapter 6 when I explore school-based support.

Making choices

In addition to experiencing moving school in the context of peer-relations and learner identifications, my analysis helped to reveal how choices about relocating are made. To my knowledge, this has not been a focus of existing research. Whilst researchers have sought to explore the impact of moving school on children's outcomes and relationships (e.g., Mancini et al., 2015) there has been less consideration of the *process* of relocation (Messiou & Jones, 2015), including how armed forces families make the decision to relocate. The three encounters I selected to explore in this section show how choices around moving are shaped in varying ways, by relations operating in family, institutional and geographical fields.

In the following example, Paul explains that moving involves making choices about family life and educational continuity. Paul had explained that prior to coming to

Scotland, he had lived in one location for around six years. This seemed to be a deliberate decision, based partly upon his parents' desire for educational stability.

Paul: ... Cause what had happened is my parents had realised that moving had been bad for mine and Katrina's education. And my mum managed to get I think it was 3 or 4 jobs in the same place so we could stay at home but she ended up weekending more ... so she was weekending all through that and then once that finished we got the news that we were moving to Scotland

Evelyn: And you felt differently about that move?

Paul: mmmm

Evelyn: It was because you had been in the place for...

Paul: Yeah the choice was either mum moved up to Scotland and she'd spend about a month there and then she'd come back for a weekend and we'd stay there or we moved as a family and because of the boarding school here we stayed here and then they moved to wherever

(Object interview, 13-year-old boy, School 2, Navy connection)

Paul explained that, despite his mother managing to secure some posts closer to home, this consequently had an impact on family life (recall earlier in the chapter I described Paul's difficult experience of weekending). In addition, whilst the family were able to secure some stability, they inevitably "*got the news*" that his mother was going to be positioned in Scotland. At that point, the family had another choice to make. One choice would have involved remaining in the same place with his mum returning home even less frequently. A move to Scotland, whilst granting some stability for a while, would eventually involve Paul being separated from his parents as he stayed on at boarding school. For Paul, relocation seems to be an inevitable feature of having a parent in the forces. Families have to continually make choices which respond to concerns about family life and education. Paul continued:

Paul: Cause now, it's a possibility that after she moves to England, her next move might be to America. Which would also be, a very big move.

Evelyn: And what do you think you would do in that situation?

Paul: For the family?

Evelyn: For you I suppose

Paul: Um well I don't really have much control over where I'm going now that I'm in boarding however I would like Megan, who is my little sister, to go to America because it's a lot bigger, the weather's probably better. And then she'll make more friends. And I think she'd rather be somewhere like America rather than somewhere like England. And I think she'd really enjoy it

Paul's account of moving reveals several important relations involved in the moving school assemblage. Family is a key context; Paul focuses on how choices were made as a family and talks about the implications of moving for his sibling. Geographical locations also influence the experience, creating new possibilities (e.g., boarding school for Paul, new experiences for his sister, Megan, career progression for his mother). The sense of control that Paul feels he has around moving is diminished by his educational situation (decision to enrol in boarding school) and the wider context of the armed forces who deliver "the news" about where and when the service personnel will be posted. Moving school involves making choices about family life, education, career and sometimes choosing *between* these aspects of life.

Another encounter also generated accounts that highlighted the relations involved in making choices about relocating. This involved a group discussion with four P4 & P5 children – Melanie, Tom, Robert, and Andy – in School 1. In the research encounters, I often asked the children to compare their experiences to others without parents in the armed forces. This was my attempt to elicit accounts about what was significant, from their perspective, about having a parent in forces. In this excerpt below, Melanie and Tom both responded to my question and their accounts highlight the complexity involved in making decisions around relocation.

Evelyn: What is different about the kinds of things that you might have experienced?

Melanie: They might just have moved because they wanted to but some people that have parents in the armed forces move because they have to, because they have a job there. That's why we had to move because my step dad had a new job

...

Evelyn: Is that a different experience to you guys then? So Melanie was saying that if you have a mum or dad in the armed forces you might move because you have to and that might be different to other boys and girls who move because they choose to, is that right Melanie?

Melanie: Yeah

Evelyn: So why would that be a different kind of experience then?

Tom: Because there's not a war in this part of the country so we don't have to, we can if we like to but we don't have to. Unless if like, I moved here because we wanted to so we could see my dad like most of the time. Because when I lived in Kiltyrnie I only got to see my dad like 2 weeks a year

(Group discussion, 8-9 year-old mixed, School 1, Army connection)

Melanie compared non-military families' choice in moving to the situation for military families where they often must move due to a new posting for the service personnel. The lack of choice apparent in Melanie's account is also emphasised in another discussion we had on a separate occasion. In that discussion Melanie told me: *"Well other boys and girls might want to just move, they aren't forced to move. Cause if I didn't move I wouldn't get to see my step dad for like, unless it was like once a year or maybe twice a year. So that's why we moved."* Therefore, Melanie's family did not choose to move, they were *"forced to move"* in order to stay with the serving family member. Tom's account includes somewhat more agency – *"we wanted to so we could see my dad"* – but nevertheless highlights that, for military families, lifestyle choices are often initiated by the armed forces. Tom and Melanie's family chose to move to stay with the service personnel, but this was after the armed forces made the decision to relocate their serving parent.

The process of making choices around moving involves relations between armed forces, career and family life. My analysis of the children's accounts drew attention to the armed forces as an important influence on the types and nature of choices available to children and their families. Decisions around moving are also made within the context of family life and job opportunities.

Features of the research encounter also helped generate these accounts. My questions around differences encouraged the children to reflect on what was

significant or relatively unique about their experiences of moving. In addition, Tom and Melanie's shared experiences of having to relocate to be remain together as a family facilitated these reflective accounts.

My assemblage analysis also enabled me to notice the presence of the armed forces in the accounts from Paul and Isla in School 2. This example shows that choices around moving were shaped by relations between armed forces, family, and career progression. The following conversation emerged between these pupils whilst Isla was interviewing Paul about his experiences.

Isla: How long has she been in the Navy for?

Paul: I think it's around 20 years, yes 20 years.

Isla: So has she like always been in the position she is now?

Paul: No.

Isla: did she have to work her way up?

Paul: Every time we moved, I think she joined as, I want to say officer but I've probably got that wrong but basically every time she moved she got a rank higher and higher and higher until now, and she is currently a Sergeant commander

Isla: Yeah, cause they like it when you move

Paul: Yeah

(Peer interview, 13-14 year-old mixed,, School 2, Navy connection)

From Paul's perspective his mother's progression in the Navy was linked to the moves the family had to make. What is particularly interesting is Isla's response to Paul – "*Yeah, cause they like it when you move*" – which brings into focus the powerful role the armed forces as an institution can play in children's experiences. Isla's comment highlights the subtle ways in which the Navy is perhaps able to exercise power over service personnel and their families. Isla and Paul seemed to share this understanding. Children understand that choices about relocating are bound up with career choices, which are further tied to the armed forces' systems and processes.

The assemblage analysis has foregrounded the relations involved in the process of making decisions around relocation, and has suggested that the armed forces have

an important role in generating these experiences. Previous literature documents the considerable demand that armed forces places on serving personnel and acknowledges the effect this has on their families. Segal (1986) notes that “most pressures affecting families are exerted indirectly through claims made on service members” (p. 13). As discussed earlier, these demands involve the requirement to relocate or endure family separation. Whilst extant literature has considered the impact of these experiences on children’s academic or social/emotional outcomes (e.g., Pexton et al., 2018; Engel et al., 2010), the accounts above suggest that the experience of these demands is directly shaped by the armed forces. In various ways, the armed forces constrain families’ possibilities for action. What is more, the children appreciate this constraint in their accounts of relocation. The children acknowledge that many of their choices and experiences were managed at the behest of the armed forces, consequently reducing the amount of control or power that both they and their parents were able to exercise over their own lives. The armed forces exert a powerful influence over children’s experiences of moving and parental absence, and how they shape these experiences has been somewhat neglected in existing literature. An assemblage analysis has revealed the ways in which children’s experiences of relocation are shaped by relations operating in institutional, familial and educational fields.

The assemblage analysis adds to existing research by going beyond a focus on what happens during relocation (i.e., what academic/social/emotional outcomes are affected) to provide a detailed analysis of *how* decisions around relocation occur. Here, we see that family, school, geographical locations, career progression and the armed forces are all involved in shaping the experience of moving school. In contrast to existing literature which tends to focus on the individual effects of moving, this analysis therefore reveals the relational aspect of this experience.

Discussion

In line with extant literature (e.g., Bradshaw et al., 2010), the findings from this study provide evidence that the process of making friends is, for children, an important, perhaps the most important, feature of moving school for children. Whilst previous research has highlighted this feature, the assemblage analysis employed in this study afforded a more in-depth consideration of the relations

involved in creating friendships. This revealed the multifaceted and shifting nature of the experience, and highlighted potential openings for changing the moving school relations. The methodological approach therefore afforded new insights.

Across the research, there was far less discussion about the academic challenges of moving school. Other research has similarly highlighted that children and young people may be less concerned about the academic aspects of moving school (Topping, 2011). My study did find, however, that moving school could have, perhaps, long-lasting effects, on how young people position themselves as learners. The implications of this finding are discussed in chapter 7.

Somewhat surprisingly, school relations did not feature prominently in children's accounts of moving. In particular, there was a distinct lack of discussion about how schools had supported children's peer relations. At the same time, there was some evidence of the potential role of school. The accounts suggested that perhaps a broader appreciation of the learning involved in moving school could be particularly worthwhile.

The section also provided evidence of, not only significant features of moving school, but also how families make choices to relocate. This is a relatively unexplored area of existing research, and my findings reveal that the complexity of these decisions, involving tensions between, most particularly, family life, educational continuity and career progression. One of the unique findings that emerged from this analysis was how the armed forces participate in these choices, as forces that shape and constrain the types of experiences that may emerge from being part of a forces family.

4.3 Methodological reflections

Throughout this chapter, I have analysed how children's accounts emerged in relation to the context of the research encounter. Overall, the analysis above suggested that the suite of methods was a powerful approach in supporting different expressions of armed forces life. The examples in this chapter showed that many of these expressions emerged in relation to drawing a picture, bringing in an object, interviewing a fellow participant or listening to fictional vignette. All

of these activities, in differing ways, helped to generate and were part of the children's accounts of having a parent in the forces.

At times, accounts directly flowed from the social, material and discursive environment of the research encounter. For example, I showed that drawings or objects often provided useful starting points for generating reflective accounts, particularly from some of the children who were initially unsure or hesitant about talking about their experiences. By providing the opportunity to compare their experiences, the vignettes also worked to mobilise accounts of children's experiences of being part of a forces family. Connections with other participating children and their differing or similar experiences often helped to create new insights into armed forces life. My analysis of the effect of the methods was supported by looking across the encounters. Whilst no one method in general seemed to be more successful than the others, they all seemed to effectively provoke connections with children's personal histories of being part of a forces family. These connections could not have been predicted in advance, and whilst one method provoked verbal and material accounts in one situation, it may have failed to generate accounts in another (Mayes, 2016). The accounts generated in the research encounters were relationally contingent. In this way, therefore, the suite of methods appeared as a particularly viable way of researching children's accounts of armed forces life.

There is, however, two further points to make. Within the suite of methods, the video diary method did not generate any insightful accounts about being part of a forces family. Only a few of the children participating in the research indicated they wanted to create a video diary. The young people in School 2 initially decided to do so, but no diary entries ever materialised. Of the four children in School 1 who did create entries, two of them opted to create this together. For the remaining two children, their recordings seemed effortful and forced, and indicated that they struggled to know what to do or say in their recording. The dynamism that I witnessed in other research encounters, where children's accounts of their experiences emerged out of the relations they formed with the other objects or people present, led me understand the limitations of the video diary technique for researching in this context. In comparison to the other

methods, the video diary method perhaps provided relatively fewer opportunities for material and social connections.

In addition, the methods did not just work to disclose children's personal histories of being part of a forces family. There was evidence that the research encounters were provocative of further expressions or experiences. The research encounters were sites of movement where the children did not just describe their previous experiences but also enacted new thoughts and identities. This argument is taken forward and expanded in Chapter 5 and 6.

4.4 Conclusions

The analysis in this chapter responded to the research question: '*What are the most significant features of children's descriptions of their experiences of having a parent in the armed forces?*' Whilst the findings in this chapter are in some ways consistent with existing literature on children from forces families, they add to and extend the paucity of research exploring how children themselves describe their own experiences (e.g., Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017; Bradshaw et al., 2010). With the exception of the very recent study by the Children's Commissioner for England (2018), my research provides the first UK-based qualitative study of children's perspectives of belonging to a forces family.

In this research, children spoke, drew pictures, brought in other objects and asked their peers questions that focussed primarily on their experiences of parental absence or moving school. These are the issues that are commonly the focus of research on children from forces families (Robson et al., 2013; Mmari et al., 2010). Whilst previous studies typically decide in advance to focus on *either* mobility or deployment, my approach was more exploratory, asking the children to describe what was important about having a parent in the armed forces. My study showed that for the participating children, parental absence and moving school were pre-eminent concerns of belonging to an armed forces family. In addition, the children expressed both parental absence and moving school as challenging and upsetting. The sadness and feelings of loss associated with parental absence persisted despite the children's efforts to forget about their absent parent. This adds support to the

idea that these are significant features of the lived experiences of these children, which are worthy of attention in further research.

My research also allowed for a comparison of children's accounts across children from primary and secondary school. I found that primary school children expressed their experiences of moving school and parental absence somewhat differently to young people in secondary school. The accounts from primary school children showed that the material practices they engaged in, responded to and enacted their embodied experiences of parental absence. The accounts from the young people in secondary school focussed on how the family collectively respond to parental absence. Whilst past research has explored children's experiences as individualised cognitive processes (Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017), the main advantage of the assemblage approach advanced in this thesis is that it allowed for a more nuanced understanding of how children respond to parental absence in relation to their socio-material context.

This chapter also found that all children expressed concerns about establishing new friends when moving school. Some of the accounts from young people in secondary school showed that moving school influenced their identifications as learners. Overall, children's accounts suggested that more could be done to support their transitions to new schools, particularly in relation to making new friends. Thus, there is potential to alter relations in children's experiences. This is a particularly important finding, given that children in this research generally described their experiences of parental absence and moving school as challenging and emotionally intense. This is explored further in Chapter 6.

Across accounts of both parental absence and moving school, I found evidence to support the idea that both family and friends are key contexts for understanding children's experiences of being part of a forces family (Mmari et al., 2010). Previous literature has argued for family systems or ecological perspective. However, these theories often encourage a relatively static view of the family unit. In contrast, the family assemblage idea employed in this chapter emphasises openness and change (Price-Robertson et al., 2017). In addition, the assemblage perspective allowed for the consideration of more-than-human relations, including

practices, norms and discourses (ibid.), and found that these also contributed to the experience of parental absence and moving school. Thus, the assemblage approach supports the emphasis on the social context of children's experiences of being part of a forces family, acknowledged in some research (e.g., Paley et al., 2013) but extends this relational focus to not just human, but more-than-human relations. A key finding was that children's experiences of parental absence and moving school were significantly shaped by family relationships and practices.

The armed forces as an institution featured in children's accounts of their experiences. Their parents' service in the military had important implications for major lifestyle choices, and, most importantly, children acknowledged this in their accounts. From their perspective, there was an awareness that the armed forces played a significant role in their experiences; their accounts highlighted a sense of limited control over major lifestyle choices. The demands placed on service personnel therefore extend into how children understand their choices and experiences. A key finding was that children experienced their lives as being shaped by the practices of the armed forces. To my knowledge this feature of children's experiences has not been explored in existing research.

The methodology also helped to extend existing research. The analytical approach allowed for a more nuanced and contextual understanding of children's accounts that, as I argued in chapter 2, is currently missing from extant literature. The analysis focused less on identifying static features of children's experiences and more on exploring the shifting, heterogeneous relations involved in the experiences of being part of a forces family, whilst also seeking to determine what is produced from these relations. This chapter explored how various features of children's accounts of parental absence and moving school emerged in the research encounters. The relations involved in the parental-absence and moving-school assemblages led to responses that can be conceived of as assemblages in their own right. Whilst previous research identifies similar features of children's accounts, the researchers often stop short of exploring how these behaviours, emotions, practices, relationships, etc. emerge in everyday life. For example, whilst Skomorovsky and Bullock (2017) identify distraction strategies as a common feature of children's responses to parental absence, my assemblage analysis

focused on exploring how this strategy is achieved, as well as what is achieved through this strategy (i.e., how are relations assembled and what is produced through these assembled relations). This chapter has shown that the experience of being part of a forces family is not simply about the impact of deployment or mobility on children's educational, social or emotional outcomes. The experiences of being part of a forces family are constituted in and through specific social and material relations that comprise, for example, personalities of children, material objects, educational systems, school practices and family dynamics. Constellations of these shifting relations have specific consequences for children's experiences.

The assemblages formed when the participants connected to the vignette, their chosen object, created drawing, or participating peer, provided opportunities to reflect on their experiences of being part of a forces family, and had consequences for the accounts generated in the research-assemblage (Fox & Alldred, 2017). Different kinds of accounts were generated in the encounters, and in part revealed the participants' personal histories of being part of a forces family. However, the accounts generated did not just describe children's previous experiences but also suggested that new connections had formed (Torrence, 2016). This methodological insight is explored further in Chapter 5 and 6.

Chapter 5: Becoming-armed-forces-children

The previous chapter explored significant features of children's accounts of being part of a forces family. The analysis presented showed that assemblages formed when children connected with the aims of the inquiry, the research methods, and their personal histories, and an analysis of these assemblages helped to reveal the relations involved in the experiences of parental absence and moving school. The analysis presented also started to show how expressing these relations further allowed for new connections and new forms of subjectivity.

This chapter moves on to consider the second research question: *'How do children describe themselves in relation to being part of an armed forces family?'* The encounters selected for inclusion in this chapter were chosen for their ability to respond to this research question; the encounters do not seek to map all the possible identifications, but rather are chosen for their ability to portray the various ways children expressed their identities as children from forces families. I found that the difference line activity was a particularly effective way to generate these expressions, and seven of the nine research encounters discussed in this chapter involved this activity. The remaining two research encounters discussed in this chapter were initially identified through Phase 2 of my assemblage analysis (discussed in section 3.8) where I analysed individual research encounters across the datasets for each of the methods. In total, data from nine research encounters involving 17 participants from across all five of the schools are explored in this chapter.

As explained in more detail below, in this chapter, I employ the idea of 'becoming' (Cristancho & Fenwick, 2015; de Freitas & Curinga, 2015) to analyse the selected research encounters. A key finding was that children's subjectivities arose in part through the significance they placed upon their experiences of armed forces life, and, importantly, this did not necessarily align with more crude measures often used in the literature to define and delineate children's experiences. The chapter also looks reflexively back at the research processes themselves to understand what relations helped shape the children's differing becomings. The second key

finding discussed in this chapter that arose from this analysis was that the material-discursive conditions of children's everyday lives afford different possibilities for expressions of identity.

The chapter begins by explaining how I understand subjectivity as a form of becoming. This is followed by five sections, detailing different ways children expressed their identities as children with a parent in the armed forces. The different expressions are analysed as forms of becoming and are presented as examples of some of the movements possible and the relations that helped to generate children's processes of becoming-armed-forces-child. In this chapter, I firstly provide an initial analysis of the different identifications before providing a collective analysis of the encounters.

5.1 Subjectivity as a form of becoming

In my analysis presented in Chapter 4, I showed how the concept of assemblage can be used to consider the heterogeneous relations that work together to form varying kinds of parental absence and moving school assemblages. As I undertook this analysis, I noticed additional offshoots (Lenz Taguchi & Palmer, 2013) or movements that emerged from these assemblages, and I began to consider these in relation to how children traversed the research process in describing themselves as part of a forces family.

As detailed in Chapter 3, movement is fundamental to the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1988). From their perspective, everything is continually changing or 'becoming' (Feely, 2016). This concept of becoming can be used to understand children's subjectivities in the research. The process of assembling and re-assembling was described by Deleuze and Guattari (1988) in terms of territorialisation and de-territorialisation (Fox & Ward, 2008). Assemblages form through processes of territorialisation and re-form or change through processes of de-territorialisation. De-territorialisation involves new 'becomings', which can create new or altered assemblages with new capacities (Allan, 2008). The idea of becoming is drawn upon in this chapter to provide insights in relation to the second research question: *How do children describe themselves in relation to being part of an armed forces family?* Following others (e.g., Cristancho & Fenwick, 2015;

Youdell, 2010) my analysis considers how the children's identities as part of a forces family were re-configured in relation to the people and environment around them. Towards the end of the chapter, I provide a summary analysis on the dimensions that seemed to matter for the children's various becomings.

The title of the chapter, 'Becoming-armed-forces-child', intends to reflect the focus of the research inquiry. There is perhaps a risk that such a framing homogenises the experiences of these children. However, I intend to show in this chapter that the children re-configured their identities in complex and potentially resistant ways. Thus 'becoming-armed-forces-child' is understood in terms of how children engaged with the focus of the research inquiry, rather than suggest that all children identified in similar ways and to similar degrees with the idea of being part of a forces family.

5.2 Difference line activity

Data from the difference line activity was particularly useful for exploring various forms of becoming, and seven of the encounters discussed in this chapter involved this research method. As described in Chapter 3, the difference line activity involved inviting children to respond to the question *'How different do you think you are from others who don't have parents in the forces?'* by placing a sticker along a scale from 'very different' to 'not at all different'. Follow-up questions were also used to further provoke and generate new insights about being part of a forces family. As the examples in this chapter intend to highlight, the difference line activity became a critical part of how children explored their identifications in relation to having a parent in the forces. Through my analysis, I show that the difference line intra-acted (Barad, 2007) with the children's own desires, as well as their reservations, about expressing difference. Difference then became an idea that children took up in their expressions of armed forces life. The research encounters thus provided the space for children to embrace, share, re-create and resist notions of difference. My analysis shows that the processes of becoming-armed-forces-child were supported by the methodology of the research encounters, including the difference line activity.

5.3 Becoming-different

The previous chapter analysed how children described and elaborated on the situations they have faced as a direct result of their parent's service in the armed forces. I explained that when children were invited to identify what was important about their experiences, their discursive and material accounts focussed primarily on either parental absence or moving school. The children also highlighted these experiences when explicitly comparing themselves to others without parents in the forces. That is, within the research encounters, some participants identified these features as not only significant but significantly *different* from children without parents in the forces. Thus, their experiences of parental absence and mobility were an important part of their identity formations.

This insight was frequently shared during encounters involving the difference line activity. Some of the children reasoned that their experiences were 'very different' or at least somewhat different because they had parents who were absent from home. One example comes from a group discussion with four children – Ruth, Rachel, Megan and Amanda – all in Primary 4 and 5 at School 4. All four children have a father in the Navy who is sometimes deployed. They have little experience of moving and have attended School 4 since nursery or Primary 1. At the beginning of the encounter, I invited them to complete the difference line activity. I asked the question '*How different do you think you are from other boys and girls who don't have dads in the Navy?*' In response to this question, all four girls immediately placed their sticker at the 'very different' end of the scale. When I asked them why they felt very different, Megan explained:

Megan: Well because our dads go away and we don't get to see them at all like not that much time. And others people get to see their mum and dad all the time.

(Difference line activity, 9-year-old girls, School 4, Navy connection)

The rest of the group said they also agreed with this explanation. At this point therefore, the experience that gets surfaced to show difference is their experience of parental absence. The children recognised this aspect of their life as being

relatively unique and, through their placement of the sticker on the difference line, materially positioned themselves as 'very different'.

Other children drew on their extensive experience of moving to distinguish their situation from others without parents in the armed forces.

Evelyn: What kinds of things have happened to you that might not have happened to other boys and girls who don't have dads in the Army?

Hannah: I keep moving all over the world

Amy: I might be moving to Australia

Hannah: I've moved from Germany, to England, to Edinburgh, to here, it's very annoying!

(Group discussion, 8-year-old girls, School 5, Army connection)

The difference line activity was a particularly effective way to generate these types of expressions. My questions around difference encouraged the children to reflect on aspects of their lives that other children may not have experienced. For these children, their previous experiences of parental absence or mobility enabled them to generate these expressions relatively easily. Hannah and Amy both verbalised their significant experiences of moving and this enabled them to somewhat endorse each other's position.

My assemblage analysis focusses not on whether these children *thought* they were different to children without parents in the forces, but on how several elements came together to allow these subjectivities to be possible (Mazzei & Jackson, 2017). The difference line activity, the children's personal histories, and the reactions from others present, all worked together to enable the children to position themselves, both materially on the difference line and discursively through their talk, as somewhat different from other children. This resonates with findings from Skomorovsky and Bullock (2017), who found that children reported feeling different to children without parents in the forces. However, as we will see in the examples in the next section, this type of becoming was not possible for all children, and, whilst some of the children endorsed this position in one moment

during the research encounter, many of them continued to extend and re-create these notions of becoming-different throughout their participation in the research.

The final example further highlights how children's participation in the research became part of the children's identities of becoming-different. This example focuses on nine-year-old Melanie from School 1. Melanie had recently become part of a forces family. Her step-father was in the Army and last year her family moved to Scotland from England. Melanie had been enthusiastic about participating and during her brief video diary entry, she said "*It makes quite a difference because you have access to ... you can do more stuff because I'm in helping a SPD researcher*". Her involvement in the research seemed to be quite important to her. In another encounter the following conversation emerged:

Evelyn: How does having a dad in the Army make a difference to your school experiences?

Melanie: I get to take part in things that other kids couldn't. Cause I'm taking part in this and other kids couldn't do. And em there's like loads of different events that they do, for like kids in the Army. And I don't think this is a school experience but other kids they can't go into this military base unless one of their family members live there

Evelyn: Ah that's interesting

(Drawing conversation, 9-year-old girl, School 1, Army connection)

Understanding becoming as a process that emerges between relations of assemblages (Ivinson & Renold, 2013) can help us understand what was involved in Melanie's process of becoming-different. Melanie's identity has been shaped by taking part in the research, attending Army-specific events and accessing the military base. All of these are activities that other children without parents in the forces cannot take part in, and Melanie thus positions herself as occupying a privileged position. This extract therefore reveals that becoming-different emerged in relation to both Melanie's personal history of being part of a forces family (which involved participating in Army specific events), and her current experience of the research inquiry.

5.4 Becoming-similar

Another move that the children made in the encounters was to position themselves as similar to other children without parents in the forces but who nevertheless share their experiences of moving or parental absence. Again, the difference line activity helped to enact this form of becoming. This move in children's accounts worked to somewhat destabilise or deterritorialise (Renold & Ringrose, 2011) the assemblage of difference discussed above.

One example shows how nine-year-old Harry in School 4 moved from describing his experience as 'very different' from children without parents in the Navy, to 'not at all different'. The primary 5 participants in the encounter – Harry, Oscar and Craig – all have Naval fathers that appeared to be deployed fairly frequently. I introduced the difference line at the beginning of our encounter and asked the children the question, *'How different do you think you are from other boys and girls who don't have parents in the Navy?'* Harry and Oscar both placed their purple sticker (see Figure 10) at the 'very different' end of the scale and immediately commented:

Oscar: I think we have a whole row of other feelings

Harry: Because we can be, because the people with dads in the Navy could be more emotional

Oscar: suffer more

Harry: because their dads are going away, and you will have to look after your mums when they're away and the other boys and girls will have to, they can play normally

(Difference line activity, 9 year-old boys, School 4, Navy connection)

suggested that they were no longer interested in taking part in the activity (e.g., yawning, comments about being tired, and talking off topic), my question seemed to have sparked the possibility for Harry to reconsider his earlier position.

Harry sat back silently in his chair holding his sticker for a few moments. He then asked me: *'Wait, so people without their dads in the Navy but their dads still go away?'* After I confirmed his correct interpretation of the question, he placed his sticker on the 'not at all different' end of the scale. I asked him to explain his choice.

Harry: Because if their dads still go away but not because of the Navy because what if the Navy family's dad goes away at the same time. The whole, for that reason and they go away for the same amount of time, it's not that different because they're suffering without their dad as well. So it's not that different.

(Difference line activity, 9 year-old boys, School 4, Navy connection)

In this encounter, the difference line activity initially encouraged the children to reflect on features of their experiences than may be unique to having a parent in the forces. Parental absence, and in particular the emotions that emerge as a result, surfaced as an important context for subsequent identity formations. However, my second question encouraged a connection for Harry to develop his earlier account of having a parent in the Navy. Harry acknowledged that the experience of parental absence, regardless of the reason, will still involve "suffering" and concluded that the experience is "not that different". My question introduced a new relation – other children who experience parental absence – and this new relation altered the assemblage, generating the possibility for Harry to become-similar.

This reveals two things about identity formation in relation to being part of a forces family. Firstly, it suggests that identities are perhaps not always forged in relation to the armed forces as such, but in relation to the experiences that result as a consequence of having a parent in the forces. For both Harry and Oscar, the experience of parental absence affected their process of individuation. Secondly, these identities are not rigidly tied to their previous experiences. New relations formed in their social and material milieu worked to encourage further becomings.

In a further discussion with Megan, Ruth, Rachel and Amanda in School 4, they also showed that their identities as different (described above) were open to change. Initially, all four girls had described themselves as 'very different' to other children without parents in the forces. However, when I asked the group whether their family was any different to non-armed forces families, their responses changed. Megan placed her sticker at the 'not at all different' end of scale, whilst the rest of the group placed theirs in the middle.

*Evelyn: Megan why have you place your sticker at this end then?
[not at all different]*

Megan: Because some parents might be doctors and they have to go to the hospital like mostly all the time or somewhere like or like maybe separated and they don't get to see their parents that time as well.

[rest of group place sticker in middle]

Ruth: I think it's in the middle because sometimes you're different and sometimes you're not really different because sometimes...

Evelyn: So tell me about the times when you are very different then?

Ruth: Like when your dad is actually away and that's quite different to other people but if your dads back it's not really that different cause he just goes to work

(Difference line activity, 8-9 year old girls, School 4, Navy connection)

In this encounter, as with Harry and Oscar, the girls' identities were influenced by their experiences of parental absence. However, whilst these experiences initially led to identities of becoming-different, my second question made Megan reconsider her earlier position. Connecting to the knowledge that other families may also have to endure periods of parental absence, Megan positions her sticker on the 'not at all different' end of the scale, thereby becoming-similar as a result of this movement. This analysis reveals that whilst Megan's identity did in part emerge in relation to her experiences of armed forces life, her identity formation cannot be reduced solely to this dimension. Children's identities become known and experienced through their intra-actions with the ideas, people and environment present in the research encounter.

5.5 Being normal

So far in this chapter I have shown how the research process, and in particular the difference line activity, worked to generate diverse identifications in relation to being part of a forces family. The difference line activity worked to create research encounters for children to identify both distinguishing features of their experiences (becoming-different) and reflect on how their experiences were similar to other children without parents in forces (becoming-similar). Whilst the difference line activity arguably created the conditions for new becomings, there was also evidence that it worked to create an undesirable effect, stifling children's opportunities to emerge and become in new ways.

In a group discussion with Hannah, Rosie, Georgia and Amy in School 5, I once again asked the question, '*How different do you think you are to other boys and girls who don't have mums or dads in the Army?*' All children had frequent experiences of moving home and school. Hannah and Georgia placed their sticker at the 'not at all different' end of the scale, whilst Amy placed hers in the middle. After noticing the difference in the placement of their stickers, Amy questioned their position. This produces a response from Rosie and Hannah about being a normal person.

Amy: but you guys move around quite a lot

Georgia: Dad's just in the Army, it's no difference

Evelyn: You're no different?

Rosie: You're still a normal person like other people

...

Hannah: Cause I don't think I'm different to other people that dads are not in the Army cause I'm still a normal person [laughing]

Evelyn: Amy you said you're somewhere in the middle?

Amy: I move around quite a lot and others who don't have dads in the Army don't move around a lot

Evelyn: And what do you think is just the same?

Amy: That I'm still a human

[laughing]

(Difference line activity, 8-year-old girls, School 5, Army connection)

Whilst Amy had initially expressed a desire to position herself as at least somewhat different, the other children present played with the idea of difference, distorting this into an idea that they are not human. Their laughter intra-acted with Amy's initial positioning and questioning of their position. Whilst she expressed some notion of difference, she subsequently aligned with Hannah and Georgia, describing herself as "*still a human*". Thus, in this encounter, the 'difference line' activity provided an initial opening for Amy to express her distinctive experiences, but the social relations and the discourses also present subsequently limited her own processes of becoming-armed-forces-child.

Further evidence of the varying ways the difference line activity participated in children's expressions of becoming-armed-forces-child came from the effect it produced with the young people in School 3. In my final visit to this school, I asked Karen, Chloe, Daniel and Sam to complete the difference line activity. However, unlike the other groups of children, they seemed less enthusiastic about taking part. In response to the question, most of the young people placed their sticker towards the 'not at all different' end of the scale.

Evelyn: Ok, right. You've all placed yourself further down towards this end of the scale but you're not right the way down. Can you give me some reasons why you've placed your sticker there?

Karen: Cause you don't need to be different just because your dads in the Army. Like you're still basically the same person, just your dads in the Army

(Difference line activity, 13-14 year-old mixed, School 3, Army connection)

As with Hannah and Georgia, Karen explained that having a parent in the Army does not change you as a person. Just because you have a parent in the forces, does not necessarily suggest your experiences are any different to those without military connections. In previous encounters, the young people had, however, explored a range of ways in which being part of a forces family had created differences. However, in this situation, the young people in School 3 did not present their experiences as different to others without a parent in the forces and they seemed to find the difference line activity a bit challenging. I explained,

therefore, that the activity was not about being different per se, but more about what they felt to be important about having a parent in the forces.

Evelyn: ... it's just a way in to think about, are there things that go on in your lives that we should be knowing about, that your schools should be knowing about, that people in your lives should be able to understand in a better way ...

Karen: This is a suggestion right. Isn't it like if you're quite different from your friends, like you can be different because like all the moving, em your family can get into a lot of fights and that. Like they can get really stressful and that

My new explanation of the difference line activity seemed to provide an opportunity for Karen to recognise the importance of moving as an experience connected to having a parent in the forces. Whilst the idea of difference was initially resisted, in this instance Karen reveals potentially significant features of her life as part of a forces family. She suggests that frequent moves can be quite stressful, causing arguments within families. In contrast, Daniel maintains his original position and reiterates that having a parent in the forces, for him, does not make that much of a difference.

Daniel: I don't think my experience is weird enough to be different [laughing]

Evelyn: Ok, different but does not mean weird

Daniel: I don't know, I just think it doesn't make that much of a difference

Evelyn: Ok, it doesn't make that much of a difference to you

Daniel: Yeah cause I've never experienced like arguments or anything

Evelyn: Ok and remember there are no right or wrong answers in this, it's entirely what you think. Chloe, you look like you've got something to say

Chloe: I don't know, I think just because most families stay in the same place and for like years at a time. And we've moved quite a lot so it's a bit different for us

(Difference line activity, 13-14 year-old mixed, School 3, Army connection)

Whilst Daniel may feel his experience “doesn’t make much of a difference”, Karen and Chloe do suggest that moving is a significant part of their experience. Re-framing the question seemed to provide the opportunity for them to express this aspect of their experience.

The responses from the children point to the importance of thinking carefully about the conditions needed for children and young people to express and develop their identities as armed forces children. Whilst for many of the children, the research process offered a positive space for new becomings, for Daniel and Amy in these encounters, it was experienced as restrictive and arguably stifled opportunities for new experiences and subjectivities. This has implications for creating inclusive school environments, discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7.

5.6 Becoming-lucky

Another way children described their identities in relation to being part of a forces family was to compare their experiences to others *with* parents in the forces. Whilst children often identified significant, and distinguishing features of their own experiences, they also qualified their situation in relation to an imagined exemplary armed-forces child experience.

One example comes from a drawing interview with Daniel in School 3. Daniel had no experience of moving and, whilst his father was deployed when he was younger, it seemed his father now worked in a role that limited the need for him to be absent from home. The research encounter generated talk and a drawing about Daniel’s early experience of parental absence. Despite regarding this experience as significant – understood through an analysis of his account – Daniel described himself as being lucky:

*Daniel: [...] I mean, I’ve been quite lucky because my dad went to Iraq when I was about 3 or 4 uh but apart from that he’s just gone to like, maybe, he went to like, he’s not been anywhere else really
[...]*

Evelyn: So, do you feel quite lucky then in terms of your experiences?

Daniel: Yeah I mean I know so many other people who have had it a lot worse than us. I mean some people, like their dad gets posted 3

or 4 times in 4 years or something. So to only have him gone once was quite lucky

(Drawing interview, 14-year-old boy, School 3, Army connection)

Drawing on his knowledge of others, Daniel positions himself, and his family, as fortunate not to have experienced multiple and frequent instances of parental absence. Later in the encounter Daniel told me that everyone's experience will be different.

Daniel: ... I think it's just our story I guess.

Evelyn: Yeah, you would respond to it kind of differ ...

Daniel: Yeah I think everyone has a different story really!

My analysis revealed that there were several important relations in Daniel's process of 'becoming-lucky'. Initially in the research, Daniel's previous experiences and the relations of the research encounter helped to generate talk about important features of being part of a forces family. In this moment, Daniel developed his sense of self further by comparing his situation to others "who have had it a lot worse". Fox and Ward (2008) argue that "deterritorialization can provide an opportunity for creative, sense-making" (p. 1009), by which they seem to mean a moment of reflexivity. Daniel's moment of reflexivity can be observed through his comment, "I think it's just our story I guess". Here, Daniel's process of 'becoming-lucky' also allows him to consider the multiplicity of people's experiences.

In the research, Daniel's identity was shaped by both his experience of parental absence, and his perceptions of the experiences of others. Daniel's participation in the research provided the conditions for becoming-different and becoming-other. However, as we saw above, there were times when Daniel did not experience the research encounter as a space for surfacing new possible identities.

5.7 Becoming-curious

A final example highlights the ways in which participation in the research seemed to encourage new connections and subjectivities. In this example, I analyse the process of becoming-curious for John from School 2.

John had no experience of moving, and, whilst his father worked away from home during the week, he did not seem to have experienced a significant deployment. For these reasons, John often described himself as being different to others with parents in the Navy. In this object interview encounter, John had chosen to bring along his iPad. However, it failed to stimulate any connections to his experiences of armed forces life. I felt the interview to be slow and effortful. Around 10 minutes into the interview, we had started talking about John's friends. This prompted John to remember something he had been thinking about since our last meeting, and I felt the energy in the research encounter become more dynamic.

John: Oh, right, I'd also like to say that friends are important but something that I was [pause] saying after the interviews was, I now know my own experiences and stuff, I know other Naval kids' experiences and stuff but what I was also wondering about is like the friends of like the Naval kids or whatever, what, do they have any experiences? Like do they not mention a couple of things? Like do they, do they ask or do they know?

Evelyn: So, friends, maybe your friends?

John: Yeah

Evelyn: Or friends who have friends who have parents in the Navy so are you wondering about something to do with their experiences?

John: Like do they cause obviously they're tied to the Navy in a really roundabout way and it's quite weak, like they're linked to the Navy however, do their experiences change because of someone else's? I dunno, my friend, eh just like for example, are you more wary to em, do you say, do you ask 'do you want a lift' because they've only got one parent there?

(Object interview, 14-year-old boy, School 2, Navy connection)

This extract reveals several relations that helped to generate John's process of becoming-curious. Our conversation around friends helped him to recall something that ideas that had been triggered by his involvement in an earlier research encounter. In that encounter, the participating young people had been interviewed each other about their experiences. This seemed to have led to new knowledge – *"I now know my own experiences ... I know other Naval kids' experiences"* – and new questions, which he now posed in the current research

encounter. These questions (e.g., “*how do their experiences change because of someone else’s?*”) reflected his process of becoming-curious. John’s process of becoming-curious did not emerge from relations within the individual research encounter, but rather from his participation in the research so far. He told me:

John: ... I was just wondering because it’s not something I’ve really thought about or considered ...

Prior to taking part, these were not curiosities that John had necessarily been thinking about. His curiosity about the experiences of those connected to forces families emerged from taking part in the research. In the earlier excerpt, John also said “*I **now** know my own experiences and stuff, I know other Naval kids’ experiences and stuff*”. This reveals that the responses emerging within the research are not just recollections of past experiences but involve new understandings or thoughts about the participants own experiences, and the experiences of others (see also Christensen & James, 2008). This suggests that the research encounter had created an opportunity for both new knowledge and new questions to emerge. Whilst John in general seemed to downplay the significance of his experiences as part of a forces family, he was keen to take part in the research. The assemblages that formed through his participation seemed to have afforded John the possibility of new becomings.

5.8 Summary analysis

Previous research has suggested that being part of a forces family has a significant impact on children’s sense of self (Children’s Commissioner for England, 2018; Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017). So far in this chapter I have explored the different ways children’s personal histories of being part of a forces family coalesced with features of the research encounter to generate diverse subjectivities. Overall, it reveals that the possibilities for identity in relation to being part of a forces family are not as fixed and predictable as existing research seems to imply.

In line with the findings from Chapter 4, this chapter showed that the research encounters generated narratives and materialities about being part of a forces family. There were times when some of the children strongly aligned with the identity of being part of a forces family, and the associated experiences of parental

absence and relocating. My analysis of the children's accounts suggested that these experiences and the context of armed forces life more generally was an important part of their identity formations. This finding is broadly in line with Skomorovsky and Bullock's (2017) research, who found that children felt different to other children whose parents are not in the forces. However, rather than focus on children's *identity as being* part of a forces family, my research has considered ongoing *processes* of individuation (de Freitas & Curinga, 2015) or becoming as children's personal histories intra-acted with the ideas, people and environment of the research encounter. This interrupts the closure and homogenising narratives that result from the limited research describing children's identities as belonging to an armed forces family, offering a more dynamic and multifaceted understanding of children's identities.

This analysis so far in this chapter has found that these children's possibilities for becoming – “stepping into something new” (Cristancho & Fenwick, 2015, p. 4) – varied across the research encounters. Some of the children seemed to experience becomings that allowed them to re-consider their subjectivity or experiences, whereas others experienced less possibility for re-imagining their sense of self. Ivinson and Renold (2013) also found that their participants had access to different possibilities for new becomings, which they argue emerged from variations in assemblages of place, history and particularly body movements. The analysis that I present next therefore sought to understand the variations in the assemblages in my research that were important for the children's differing becomings.

In comparing the possibilities for becoming, I found it helpful to draw upon Fox and Ward's (2008) work on health identities. They argue for an approach that considers identity in terms of what a body can do. They map a two-by-two property space with two broad dimensions, one referring to the body's capacities for change – and one referring to the types of becoming possible. Applying a similar approach to the encounters above, I identified that the children's various becomings depended at least in part on two broad dimensions. Following the approach outlined by Fox and Ward (2008), I mapped the becoming-armed-forces-child identities in a similar two-by-two property space (Figure 11).

The vertical dimension describes children's exposure to features of armed forces life, and this dimension seemed to affect children's reflexive identity as part of a forces family. Children who experienced moving as a significant feature of their life tended to have a strong reflexive identity, as did children who had experienced parental absence as significant. In contrast, children who had limited engagement with others from forces families or did not experience moving school or parental absence as significant feature of their lives tended to have a weaker reflexive identity. This was not necessarily about how many moves or how often their parent was absent, it was more about how children experienced the significance of these situations. This dimension impacted on the kinds of becoming that were possible. Exemplars of this dimension may be Harry and Oscar, who strongly described the effect of parental absence, and Daniel, who felt that the significance of being part of a forces family was minimal.

The horizontal dimension describes children's experience of the social, material and discursive milieu in which they are also implicated. This dimension seemed to affect children's capacity for becoming. If the social, material and discursive conditions facilitated connections with other people, practices or discourses, then this enhanced the children's capacity to become. Whereas if these conditions restricted new connections, then children's capacity for change or becoming-otherwise (Youdell, 2010) were diminished. Exemplars of this dimension may be John, whose experience of the research encounter encouraged him to imagine the experiences of his peers in relation to his situation, and Amy, whose interactions with her peers somewhat inhibited her ability to become-different. Whilst my analysis focused on the conditions operating within the research encounter, they speak back to conditions operating in the wider context of children's lives.

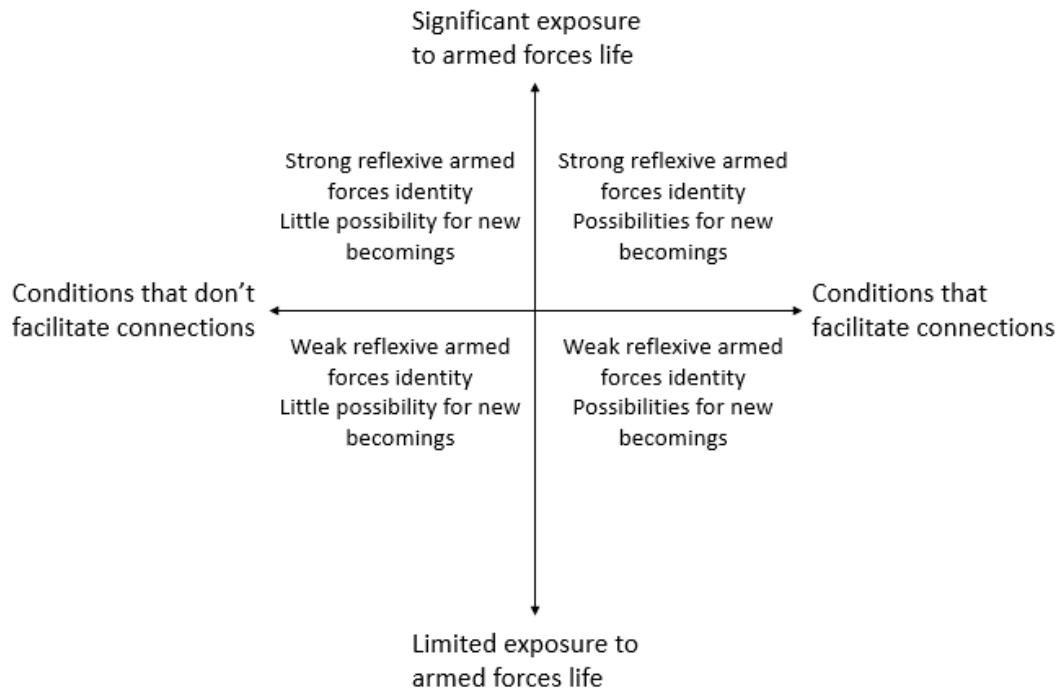


Figure 11: Possible identity positions in the research encounters

Mapping in this way helps us to understand how children's identities as part of a forces family are shaped by how their previous armed forces-related experiences intra-act with the wider material-discursive conditions of their lives. These wider conditions were captured in the research encounters and my analysis helped to show that different kinds of encounters revealed and produced different opportunities for becoming. Overall, the analysis showed that the children's identity positions were not fixed. For example, whilst Daniel experienced the conditions of the research encounter as restrictive in one encounter, he was able to move into a more reflexive position in another encounter.

5.9 Discussion and conclusions

The analysis in this chapter has responded to the research questions '*How do children describe themselves in relation to being part of an armed forces family?*' Some researchers have argued that being part of an armed forces family strongly influences children's identity formations (Lester et al., 2013; Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017). Whilst some argue that children's identities will vary according to their parent's role and resulting mobility and deployment patterns, they do not provide empirical evidence exploring how this may vary (Lester et al., 2013). A

recent report by the Children's Commissioner for England (2018) found that many of the children they spoke to identified strongly with being part of a forces family. They argued that "belonging to a military family was central to their identity and sense of self" (p. 2). My research has shown that, through participating in the research, children became more aware of what it means to be part of a forces family but also, and of equal importance, they explored other becomings. Thus, my research offers and participated in the generation of more complex identity formations. The concept of becoming helped me to consider who and how the children were becoming through participating in the research. The key finding in response to research question above was that children's identifications of belonging to armed forces families were expressed in various ways that reflected their past experiences and the socio-material and discursive contexts of their current lives. Thus, in contrast to how the identities of children from forces families are discussed in existing literature (Children's Commissioner for England, 2018; Lester et al., 2013; Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017), my research showed that children's identities were not stable and continued to change throughout the research process.

Overall, these responses are significant for how we understand and support children from forces families, and these are discussed further in Chapter 7. Given the children's responses, it seems to be important to continue to acknowledge parental absence and mobility as aspects of these children's lives that they need to endure. However, it also remains essential to realise that within this group, children will position the significance of their experiences differently, and the analysis has shown how this positioning can and does change in relation to the people and environment. Furthermore, any attempt to single these children out from others without parents in the forces may be incongruent with how children self-identify and may miss opportunities to see how they share their situation with others outside of the armed forces.

Data were analysed in this chapter in order to understand how children positioned themselves in relation to being part of an armed forces family. The research encounters discussed in this chapter were chosen as powerful exemplars of the various ways children expressed their identities. The analysis has used the concept

of 'becoming' to understand children's subjectivities. As I have shown, this has provided a more nuanced way to appreciate the differing relations involved in children's identifications of being part of a forces family. The children's processes of becoming-armed-forces-child were variously shaped by children's personal histories and conditions of the research encounter, speaking back to material-discursive conditions operating in the wider context of children's lives. The main advantage of this approach is that it avoids homogenising the identities and experiences of children from forces families and offers a more detailed exploration that can be more usefully employed by educational practitioners. Finally, this chapter has argued that the research process seemed to have encouraged a reflexive appreciation by the children about their experiences of being part of a forces family. This becomes even more significant when I consider children's existing opportunities to reflect on their experiences, which forms part of my analysis in the next chapter where I will discuss children's accounts of school-based support.

Chapter 6: School-based support for children from forces families

This chapter continues with an assemblage analysis of the research encounters, this time focussing on the third research question: *What do children's accounts suggest about school-based support for children from forces families?* Chapters 4 and 5 revealed that children could and did reflect on their experiences of having a parent in the forces. The analysis showed how these expressions of armed forces life were made possible through various social, material and affective relations. Chapter 5 showed that different becomings were available to the children in the research encounters and highlighted some of the conditions that gave rise to differently expressed identities in relation to being part of an armed forces family.

This chapter moves on to consider the role of school in attending to the experiences of children from forces families. It provides an analysis of empirical accounts relating to the ways schools both, currently support children, and could support children from forces families. My main argument in this chapter is that schools have currently a largely untapped potential to firstly, find out about and recognise children's experiences of being part of a forces family. Secondly, there is more schools can do to respond to children's experiences and generate new possibilities for becoming-armed-forces-child. Towards the end of the chapter, I discuss the conditions that are pertinent to these new possibilities for becoming which I started to draw out in earlier chapters and discuss in further detail in this chapter.

The chapter begins by analysing empirical evidence about what schools currently do to support children from armed forces families. Using the assemblage analysis deployed in the previous chapters, I consider how school practices participate in children's experiences of being from a forces family, and what this produces.

Overall, I show that whilst the research encounters generated little evidence of *current* educational provision for forces families (caveats on this discussed below), the accounts that did emerge showed that schools can play a significant and positive role in children's experiences of armed forces life. The final two sections of

the chapter draw on data relating to children's reflections on participating in the research. The second section of the chapter discusses evidence relating to existing opportunities for children to reflect on their experiences. The final section of the chapter discusses the conditions that will be important to attend to as we engage children in future explorations about their experiences. My analysis draws on theorising around both the virtual capacity (Feely, 2016) of the school-assemblage and 'recognition' within the context of school (Graham, Powell & Truscott, 2016). Overall, the analysis of the encounters explored in this chapter provide useful insights into school-based support for children from forces families.

6.1 Children's perspectives on school-based support

In this section I attend to the ways in which school featured in children's accounts of being part of an armed forces family. During the fieldwork stage of the research, I became aware of how little children discussed their experiences of having a parent in the armed forces in relation to school. Across the research encounters, I found that the children rarely spontaneously discussed school (i.e. teachers, events or programmes) in relation to their experiences of having a parent in the armed forces. I started to evidence this in chapter 4; children's accounts relating to their experiences of parental absence and moving school contained few references to school-based support that had positively enhanced their experiences of being part of a forces family. I argued in chapter 4 however that the children's accounts were suggestive of the role school could play in supporting their experiences. This chapter develops this idea further.

Given that during the course of the research children did not commonly discuss the role of school in relation to their experiences of being part of a forces family, I used my final visit to the schools to specifically ask the children to reflect on how school had or could support them. In my analysis, I gathered together these research encounters which involved group-based conversations with the participating children. In addition, the vignette facilitated method also generated accounts on children's perspectives of how school could attend to their experiences. As explained in chapter 3, the vignettes explicitly placed children's experiences within the context of school. For example, the 'Megan vignette' (Appendix 2) described school-based support in the form of an after-school club for children from armed

forces families. The children were invited to respond to these fictional examples of school-based support, which were based on existing literature discussed in chapter 2. The examples in this section were drawn from these datasets. In addition, through my analysis of individual research encounters in phase 2 of my assemblage analysis (discussed in section 3.8) I identified accounts within the encounters that helped me understand how children experienced school-based support for their experiences. These were also included in my initial analysis in response to the research question addressed in this chapter.

My observations during fieldwork as well as phase 2 of my assemblage analysis found that children did not commonly spontaneously discuss their experiences of school in relation to having a parent in the armed forces. My targeted questions around what school could do and the vignette-facilitated method helped to generate accounts about children's perspectives of school-based support. Some of these accounts indicated that children had experienced support that aligned with the examples of implemented interventions as a result of targeted funding, discussed in chapter 2 (MoD, 2016a). For example, some of the children described buddying systems. Others mentioned participating in peer groups such as HMS Heroes or being supported by school staff to help them with their worries around deployment. I found that children were differently reflective about their experience of support provisions. The children in School 4 offered detailed examples, describing how teachers responded to their experiences of parental absence or how they had attended support groups. Children in the other schools did provide some accounts of school-based support, however their reflections were brief and short-lived. This suggests that across the participating schools, children experienced an uneven provision of support. Further, as I show through my analysis of the examples in this section, even within School 4, children's experiences of this support were not consistent, further suggesting that existing support is lacking in coordination. I return to these findings at the end of the chapter.

This section provides five examples, considers how the children experienced these school-based practices, and explores what this might suggest about school's capacity to contribute positively to the experiences of children from forces

families. Five of the six examples in this section come from children attending School 4. In my analysis of these examples below, I show that children had experienced school-based provision in largely positive ways. However, there were also some instances where the children suggested these practices could be augmented to support them even further. The six encounters selected for inclusion in this section were chosen for their ability to afford a detailed analysis of children's experiences of these practices and *how* the practices participated in their experiences of being part of a forces family.

Example 1

The first example comes from a group discussion with 4 of the participating girls at School 4. This was my final visit to School 4 and I asked the girls about how their school could help with the experiences around parental absence they had described in previous encounters. In response to my question, Ruth and Amanda recalled a time when one member of staff within the school had helped them.

Evelyn: Do you think it's important for your teacher to know that you might be a bit sad that dad's away?

All: Yeah!

Evelyn: Oh right ok so we're definitely a yes for that. Why do we think that?

Rachel: because she can help us out or something

Evelyn: What kinds of things could she help you out on?

Rachel: Like if we're crying cause my dad's at sea she could help us

Ruth: You know Mrs Thomson? Well she helps us.

Evelyn: What did Mrs Thomson do?

Ruth: She like makes us chests and she brings us...

Amanda: She helps us make stuff and it was last year when me and Ruth were in P4 em our dads were away and Mrs Thomson helped us to make some

Ruth: Like a chest

Amanda: Like a chest and you could

Ruth: And it had submarine badges on it

Amanda: And you could put memories in it and you could put stuff in it when your dad was away

[...]

Evelyn: Why was that a good thing to do?

Ruth: We could keep it in our rooms and stuff and anytime we were feeling sad we could look at it and then we felt a bit better

Rachel: I feel sad that I'm going to leave this group

(Group discussion, 8-9 year-old girls, School 4, Navy connection)

This account highlights several important relations involved in the children's experience of this school support. Ruth recalled that Mrs Thomson recognised and responded to the children's situation. Furthermore, the creation of memory chests led to new possibilities for action – "*We could keep it in our rooms and stuff and anytime we were feeling sad we could look at it and then we felt a bit better*". This activity *inside* school helped alter how children responded to the absence *outside* of school. It also seemed to connect with some of the strategies children described in responding to parental absence, previously explored in Chapter 4. Specifically, the provision of chests with memories of their absent parent helped them to connect to their absent parent (see section 4.1).

The parental absence assemblage generated through this encounter revealed the potential role of school in supporting children from forces families. Ruth commented that memory chests made the children feel "*a bit better*" and this was followed by a comment from Rachel "*I feel sad that I'm going to leave this group*". Rachel may have connected the helpfulness of the approach described by Ruth and Amanda with her own experience of participating in the group discussions, established for the research. The opportunity for children to reflect on and share their experiences is explored further in the next section of this chapter.

The importance of school staff understanding and responding to children's experiences as part of a forces family surfaced through this encounter. Later in the same encounter, Megan emphasised this point:

Evelyn: Are there important things to know about having a dad in the Navy?

Megan: Yeeah because they could like help you out. And they're more kind to you if your dad's away because one time my dad was away, and they were more kinder to me!

Evelyn: How were they kind to you?

Megan: Helped me with me my maths and stuff

(Group discussion, 8-9 year-old girls, School 4, Navy connection)

Megan's account shows that knowing children are facing parental absence can lead to opportunities for teachers to respond appropriately. This is particularly significant given some evidence that teachers are not always aware of children's armed forces affiliation (ADES, 2017; Bradshaw et al., 2010). In another example, later in the chapter, I show that teachers may not always appreciate the significance of children's experiences of parental absence.

Example 2

A group discussion with young people in School 2 similarly highlighted the role school can play in supporting these children's experiences. Isla and Paul had both experienced moving within the UK and Paul had also previously lived abroad. I asked them about what had helped them previously to respond to these school moves.

Evelyn: And what helps in that situation then? Cause I can imagine its already quite difficult moving, not only home but you're moving school and now you have to get used to different educational systems. What kinds of things are you thinking about when you're coming up to a move? What kinds of things help with those thoughts?

Isla: I guess knowing that like other people have done that, that you're not the only one who has moved to a different country...Yeah cause like here cause there's quite a lot of boarders that are in the Navy like Paul and Paul's big sister so it's like you understand how like you've moved a lot, lots of other people have moved too

Paul: Yeah so reassurance

Evelyn: So, kind of connecting with other people?

Paul: Yeah

Evelyn: and how do you find out who those other people are?

Paul: I guess by like talking to them

Isla: Yeah like on the day you and your sister came on a tour Mr Angus told me that you were both Navy kids cause I was a Navy kid too so he just thought to tell me that [laughing]

Evelyn: Was that helpful then?

Isla: Yeah

(Group discussion, 13-14 year-old mixed, School 2, Navy connection)

In this encounter, the children's identity formations are supported through their connections with others who have faced or are facing similar situations. Isla recalls a time when school facilitated these connections. Mr Angus' recognition of the young people as "Navy kids" opened up the opportunity for the young people to become "not the only one". This is in line with the findings from educational research more widely that shows that teachers can play an important role in opening up new identifications for pupils, which in turn lead to new possibilities for young people (Youdell, 2010). Isla's identification as a "Navy kid" led to possibilities for connecting with others who shared her experiences of moving.

Example 3 and 4

The opportunity to talk and connect with other children about their experiences was also a feature of other children's accounts. In the example below, Oscar and Ruth from School 4 described two specific school-based interventions they had experienced.

Evelyn: What about, is there anybody, so we've got friends, he can talk to his mum, he can think about some other nice things. Is there anything that you think school could do?

Ruth: Maybe talk to his teacher about it

Oscar: He could go that like place thing

Ruth: Seasons for growth?

Oscar: Seasons for growth maybe!

Evelyn: ah ok and how could that help then?

Rachel: He could share things out and maybe just tell them how they feel cause they could like

Oscar: Encourage him to get

Rachel: this is how we can try stop this happening

Evelyn: Ok

...

Evelyn: Anything else that school could help?

Rachel: Maybe he could be talking to his teacher

Ruth: Maybe his classmates could help him

Oscar: Help for Heroes

Evelyn: Ah what could his classmates and help for heroes do?

Ruth: That's like Seasons for Growth

Oscar: Help for heroes is like when you start there's a big chart and you put like a green if you're happy and you don't get talked to cause your're feeling fine, and orange if you, they ask if you want to talk to them and if you put up a red then they talk to you

Evelyn: I see so when do you do that then, is that at a special club that you go to?

Oscar: It's like an after school club

(Group discussion, 8-9 year-old mixed, School 4, Navy connection)

Earlier in the encounter, the children had reflected on how their friends and family members could play a positive role in altering the parental absence assemblage. In the excerpt, I asked the children if school could also be part of their assembled experiences. This prompted a discussion about their participation in Seasons for Growth and, what Oscar referred to as, Help for Heroes. Seasons for Growth³ is a programme widely used in schools for children who have experienced significant change or loss, including children from forces families in Scotland (Eodanable & Lachlan, 2011). Oscar's description of Help for Heroes refers to HMS Heroes⁴ which is a school-based group for children from forces families that connects to a national network. The children's recognition of these programmes of support, which align with some of the interventions noted to be implemented using

³ For more information, see <http://www.seasonsforgrowth.org.uk/>

⁴ <http://www.plymouthcurriculum.swgfl.org.uk/hmsheroes/>

targeted MoD funding in Chapter 2, highlight that this school contributes to the experience of parental absence.

The children's accounts in this excerpt reveal how this school-based support works within the parental absence assemblage. Participating in these groups provide children with the opportunity to express how they are feeling. They can also talk to others, both adults and peers, through their attendance at the group. Further, comments from Ruth and Rachel reveal that children could find it helpful to talk to teachers in school about their experiences of parental absence.

However, in another encounter with two of these children, they expanded on how they perceived the value of HMS Heroes as an experienced support provision.

Harry: we used to go but I left because I thought it was quite boring

Oscar: I thought there would be a disco but there wasn't. Because there was a disco last year

Evelyn: And why did you think it was a good idea to go to HMS Heroes?

Oscar: We thought it would be about like Navy, the Navy. But like all we did was kind of like play games

...

Evelyn: and when you said you thought it would be about the Navy what do you think it might've involved then?

Oscar: like what our dads do [...] we did have someone from HMS and she taught us about what they normally do. like if someone like loses a body part in like a battle or something they like get a robotic one

...

Evelyn: ... do you think that would have been helpful at HMS Heroes?

Oscar: yes because I don't really know what it does

Evelyn: Ah ok so you'd like to know more about that. And how would that help you then?

Oscar: I thought it would like, Like I want to know what it's like on a submarine because I've never been on one and I'm really interested because all my other friends have been in one

(Drawing conversation, 9-year-old boys, School 4, Navy connection)

In this encounter, Harry and Oscar explained that they had withdrawn from this potentially helpful provision of support because it did not quite meet their expectations. Whilst it may have provided the space for them to reflect and share, it failed to offer the connection they were seeking. Harry and Oscar expressed a desire to learn more about Navy life, and “*what our dads do*”. This suggests that fostering connections between schools and the armed forces could help generate assemblages that have the capacity to alter children’s experiences of parental absence in positive ways. Associated implications are discussed in further detail in chapter 7.

Example 5

The examples so far show that currently some schools or teachers are contributing positively to the experiences of children with parents in the forces. Nevertheless, there remains scope to increase and improve these efforts. The next example in this section continues my examination of what role school *currently* plays in supporting children from forces families. In this example, the children reflected on a time when their school did not provide the support they expected or desired. It helps to highlight why it is important for schools to recognise and respond to the experiences of children from forces families.

During the research, Oscar, Craig and Harry – aged 9 and attending School 4 - had explained how sad they felt when their father was away. In my final visit to the school, I asked the children if they thought it was important for their teachers to know about this aspect of their experiences. Oscar explained that they would need know in order to provide an appropriately empathetic response to any associated behaviour changes. Craig offered an example of what could happen if teachers do not recognise and respond.

Evelyn: Do you think it's important for schools to know, do you think it's important for your teacher to know about you feeling sad?

Oscar: I think it would be, just in case she like, a teacher thinks, asks, doesn't know why you're feeling this sad and like you just don't want to do your work because you're that sad

Craig: Well I think it was when my brother was in P6 or P5, he started crying because my dad was away and the teacher didn't do anything about it, like she didn't even help him or anything

Evelyn: Ok and what do you think she should have done Craig?

Oscar: Talk to him

Craig: Em ask him how he was feeling and talked to him about how he was feeling

...

Oscar: I think it's important for them to know because....like they might notice your behaviour like if there's a change about you. Like you do things that you don't normally do. And you don't really like to do things that you used to love to do.

(Group conversation, 9-year-old boys, School 4, Navy connection)

Craig and Oscar's account reveals the potential significance of relations between teachers, school and the children's emotions in the parental absence assemblage. The parental absence assemblage works to produce feelings of sadness which Oscar suggests may lead to a reduction in motivation for school work and other activities, resonating with the findings reported by Huebner et al. (2007) in their study of American military-connected young people. In this assemblage, teachers emerge with significant capacity to alter the relations, and as such can perhaps be understood as an "assemblage convertor" (McLeod, 2014, p. 13). Lack of recognition by the teachers of the situations facing children from forces families can limit their possibilities for action, and in turn constrain possibilities for altering the parental-absence assemblage. On the other hand, recognition by the teachers could lead to feelings of being understood, inferred from Oscar's comment. Therefore, if the teacher in Craig's example had appreciated the significance of parental absence then there could have been a positive opportunity for new relations in the parental absence assemblage.

The potential of teachers to make an important contribution to children's experiences was also revealed later in the same encounter. I asked the children what teachers needed to know about them:

Evelyn: what is important for teachers to know about you?

Harry: Listening!

Evelyn: Why is listening important?

Harry: Cause we listen to them and if they listen to us if we're sad then they'll know what's happened

Oscar: Respect

(Group conversation, 9-year-old boys, School 4, Navy connection)

Whilst my question asks about 'what', the children's responses focus on 'how'. Teachers develop an appreciation for the situations facing children through the process of listening which in turn promotes a sense of being respected. In line with research into teacher-student relationships, the significance of this relation seemed to emerge through the experience of being both cared for and respected (Graham, Powell & Truscott, 2016). This is analysed in further detail in the collective analysis of these examples, discussed below.

Example 6

The final example highlights that children were keen to talk and share their experiences with others. Previous research has suggested that children from forces families value the opportunity to attend support groups with other children facing similar situations (Baptist et al., 2015; Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017). Whilst the children in this encounter did not indicate that the support group was a school provision *currently* available to them, information from other children and encounters within this school suggested that it was an existing feature of school support. In this encounter, the children and I had been discussing the vignette describing the character, Megan, who had been offered the option to go to an after-school club for children with parents in the forces (see Appendix 2). The vignette explained that Megan would find out that other children experience similar situations. In the research encounter, I asked the children if and why they thought Megan should go to the club. The children provided several reasons why the club would be helpful.

Evelyn: [...] So what else would it be good for, if her dad was away?

Lucy: She might not be so sad because she would be like, I shouldn't be feeling so sad because these people, my friends have dads who are out at sea and they're really sad that their dad's gone

Evelyn: Oh right ok, so help her to not feel sad

William: She might feel sad but her dad's away and if she goes the loud noises would get it out of her brain and then she can play more games with people

Evelyn: Ah ok so she could play games that would help. Help her feel distracted so she wouldn't feel unhappy

William: Lonely

Evelyn: Lonely

Megan: When she's like talking to people about her dad being away it's like helping her because it's better than just, it's better for like talking about it than just keeping it and then it will help like the other people there like so like they're not the only ones that have got a dad away

Evelyn: Ah right so she would see that other people feel the same things?

Megan: Yeah

Lucy: that's what I've been trying to say

(Vignette discussion, 8-9 year-old mixed, School 4, Navy connection)

In this excerpt, the children showed that the after-school club had various capacities to alter the relations within the parental absence assemblage. It could help children forget about their absent parent (an important feature of children's responses to parental absence discussed in section 4.1.). The provision of an after-school club would provide opportunities for children to connect with others with similar experiences, thus helping them to know, as Megan said: "*they're not the only ones*". As with some of the earlier accounts discussed in this section, the after-school provision seemed to work to recognise the experiences of children from forces families, thus supporting identity formations in the form of becoming-similar (see also section 5.4).

Summary analysis

As outlined in Chapter 2, there is limited literature exploring how schools support children's experiences of being from an armed forces family. When accounts are found, they tend to come from outside the UK, and few studies have included the perspectives of children. This section has provided empirical examples of

children's perspectives of school-based provision that attends to their experiences as belonging to a forces family. As stated earlier, most of these examples came from School 4, but even within School 4 there was evidence that these practices or interventions could be developed to more effectively respond to children's experiences. A key finding was therefore that children experienced an uneven provision of support both between and within the participating schools. Whilst research from outside the UK suggests that school support for children from armed forces families is lacking (Baptist et al., 2015; Mmari et al., 2009), my research provides a UK-based understanding of existing provision and provides empirical data on children's perspectives of this support.

More importantly, the analysis of these efforts that I now provide help us to understand *how* these school provisions work to enhance the experiences of children from forces families. The assemblage analysis of the individual research encounters above helped to reveal the relations that were important in providing positive experiences for children from forces families in school. From children's perspectives, the significant contributory features that led to effective school-based support, included:

- Relationships with teachers who recognise and respond to children's experiences of the features of armed forces life
- Activities which attend to the material and embodied ways children experience parental absence
- Environments that allow for expression of experiences of having a parent in the forces
- School discourses that position teacher and pupil as equal
- Connections with others who have had similar experiences
- Opportunities to share with others (both adults and peers) about having a parent in the forces
- Educational connections with the armed forces

Importantly, whilst these relations emerged in the children's accounts of positive school-based support, I found little evidence to suggest that they were part of a coordinated programme of support for children from forces families. A few of

these relations have been sporadically hinted at in previous research outside the UK (e.g., Mmari et al., 2010; Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017). However, my assemblage analysis of the encounters has afforded a much more comprehensive understanding of school-based support which is importantly based on children's accounts. As described in chapter 3 my assemblage analysis involved moving beyond description to think creatively about how assemblages could function differently. Here I use this idea to understand current support and further opportunities for enhanced support. By plugging the relations above into each other (Feely, 2016) we can map new possibilities for the designing more coordinated school-based support for children from forces families. I argue that this school-forces-support assemblage (see Figure 12) involves teachers who are informed about armed forces children and the experiences they face; school environments which allow children to freely express and explore their experiences as part of a forces family; and school practices which foster connections between people (children, peers, teachers, parents) and organisations (schools, armed forces).

*Education – armed forces – school – teachers – peers – support
groups – participatory discourses*

Figure 12: School-forces-support assemblage

To understand the effect of this school-forces-support assemblage (i.e. what does it produce), I turned to Nigel Thomas' accounts of recognition theory (Thomas, 2012; Thomas and Stoecklin, 2018). Thomas (2012) argues that the three modes of recognition identified in Honneth's conceptualisation of recognition can be important in understanding children's experiences and identity formations. Recognition is achieved when children experience (1) love; (2) respect and (3) esteem. Graham et al. (2016) argues that three modes of recognition can be understood within school settings as being about being 'cared for', 'respected' and 'valued'. Others argue that recognition is central to children's wellbeing. For example, Simmons et al. (2015) argue that recognition through relationships is essential to school environments that promote children's wellbeing. I argue that collectively the relations within the school-forces-support assemblage work to *recognise* the children as belonging to an armed forces family and the particular

experiences that might ensue. This recognition is crafted from these relations and has the potential to carry children forward into new possibilities, perhaps encouraging their own unique processes for becoming-armed-forces-child (link to chapter 5).

Taken together, the analysis provided in this section suggests that being recognised as children from forces families can generate opportunities for new actions and possibilities. How these existing school-based practices and relationships contribute and enhance the experiences of children from forces families can be usefully understood through the lens of recognition theory. The analysis of encounters in this section showed that children experienced school as positive when teachers demonstrated they *cared for* children's feelings in relation to being part of a forces families. The examples also showed that children saw a need for *respect* that was reciprocal. There was also evidence that the children felt *valued* through the existence of specific support that recognised the situations they may be facing as part of a forces family. As Graham et al., (2016) argue, the teacher-child relationships were fundamental to the acts of recognition (and misrecognition) the children experienced. Thus, a critical finding of this study is that a key feature of effective school-based provision for children from forces families is that it recognises children's identities as belonging to a forces family and the experiences they may be facing.

6.2 Opportunity to express

To further understand the virtual capacity (Feely, 2016) of the school-forces-support assemblage described above, I explored data on children's reflections of participating in the research. By the virtual capacity I mean the not yet actualised but potential ability for school-based support to positively contribute to children's experiences of armed forces life. This section considers opportunities for children to talk and reflect on their experiences of having a parent in the armed forces. Chapters 4 and 5 have both shown how the research encounters generated talk and material entities (e.g. drawings, objects) about being part of a forces family. A key finding was that participating in the research helped to create new experiences and new possibilities for becoming-armed-forces-child. This section argues that,

prior to participating in the research, the children had limited opportunity to express and explore their experiences of being part of a forces family.

The examples used in this section draw on data on children's reflections of participating in the research. This data comes from my final visits to the participating schools when I invited the children to complete feedback forms on their participation and take part in diamond ranking activities. As described in chapter 3, the feedback forms were collected anonymously and asked children to reflect on what they liked/didn't like about taking part. Slightly different versions were created for the primary and secondary school children. The diamond ranking activity was used in two group conversations with young people in School 2 and 3 and is described in more detail below. In addition, in this section, I draw on evidence from young people who did not participate in the research but who nevertheless provided feedback about why they wanted/did not want to participate in the research, collected via sign-up sheets (also explained in chapter 3). The reason for selecting this data to explore in this section is that it provided information about children's previous experiences of reflecting on being part of a forces family. As the researcher participating in the encounters, I was able to gain some correspondence (Mannion, Adey & Lynch, 2010) with the participants that this was a relatively new experience. The data from these activities provided tangible evidence which illustrated how familiar the children were with reflecting on their experiences of being part of a forces family.

A good example which helped to evidence existing opportunities to express came from my brief engagement with young people in another school who were unable to participate in the research. As explained in chapter 3, difficulties in engaging and communicating with gatekeepers meant that I was unable to continue my research with these young people. However, I had initially broached these young people to find out if they would like to participate. On their response forms, I asked the young people to indicate their reasons for wanting, or not wanting, to take part in the research. Of the 28 young people invited to take part, 16 expressed a desire to participate. Their responses for wanting to take part could be broadly summarised as: believing it would be helpful and enjoyable to talk about their experiences; considering that it would be an opportunity to learn more about being part of a

forces family; and because they had not yet encountered opportunities to reflect on their experiences. A particularly powerful written response from one young person was: *"because I don't talk to anybody about it, but I want to"*. These young people's brief engagement with the research had sparked the possibility of something new, or potential becomings (Renold & Ivinson, 2014). Their partial articulations give a glimpse of what might have been possible had their participation in the research not been blocked by the existing power relations (Mayes, 2016). Overall, their responses highlight the importance of providing opportunities for young people to engage in explorations about their experiences of being part of a forces family.

The young people who did participate provided insight into what did become possible through taking part in the research. In my final visit to School 2, I asked the young people to complete a diamond ranking activity (O'Kane, 2008) to explore their perspectives on participating in the research. As described in chapter 3, this involved arranging a set of statements in a diamond pattern according to their relative importance. The actual placement of the statements was less important; I was more interested in understanding how the activity helped shape the resulting accounts. In this encounter, Paul and John both chose to place *'opportunity to express my views'* and *'opportunity to discuss having a parent in the Navy'* at the top of the diamond, indicating that they believed these were the most important aspects of their participation in the research. They explained that through taking part they were able to challenge assumptions. I discuss that aspect of their discussion in further detail later in the chapter but focus here on the children's reflections that the research experience was unlike anything they had encountered before.

Evelyn: do you feel that by being able to talk about, so it was expressing your views, so you got to say what was actually the case with your experiences, rather than what people might assume to be case?

Paul: yeah cause I haven't really done anything like this before so I haven't really talked to anyone about it

John: Yeah I would say that's the thing with mine is instead of like the opportunity, it kind of made me discuss, about having a parent in the Navy that I've never really done before

Isla: yeah we've never really talked about this kind of stuff

John: so therefore it made me like reflect, and learn and things like that

(Group discussion, 13-14 year-old mixed, School 2, Navy connection)

Paul, John and Isla all said they had never talked about their experiences before. John used my chosen word of 'opportunity' in the statements for the ranking activity to contrast with his experience of taking part. For him, the research encounter was not simply a space to express thoughts already considered, but something that provoked him – *"it kind of made me discuss"* - to consider his experiences of having a parent in the Navy, encouraging new thoughts and reflections – *"made me like reflect, and learn and things like that"*.

Throughout the research process, I started to develop a sense that, prior to participating, the children had little exposure to the kind of reflections and learnings that John described experiencing through the research. Paul, Isla and John in School 2 clearly communicated this in the example above. In addition, there were more isolated comments from the children as I interacted with them through the research process. These were sometimes captured in the feedback forms I invited the children to complete at the end of my school visits (discussed in chapter 3). The feedback provided by the children was all positive, with many of the children indicating that they liked "everything" about taking part. Whilst children's feedback was collected anonymously, it remains important to recognise that children may have felt uncomfortable about providing negative feedback (Punch, 2002a). Nevertheless, their comments were still useful in understanding what was possible through the research encounters. Figure 13 provides some example feedback from children in School 5. The opportunity to express their feelings was a recurring theme, resonating with reasons reported by others who have carried out research with children and young people (Edwards & Alldred, 1999; Punch, 2002a). The use of the word "finally" in the example in Figure 13 may add weight to the idea that for the children participating in this research there had

been few opportunities for expression. Other examples came from young people in School 3 who wrote in response to the question ‘what did you like about taking part?’: “that I got to speak out and not get judged”; “that you were very interested to hear about our experiences”; and “speak to people who’s parent is also in the Army”. Therefore, the children’s feedback signalled what had been possible through participation in the research. Their comments align with the expectations noted by the young people that were unable to participate.

1. Circle how much you enjoyed this project

1 2 3 4 5

2. What did you like about taking part this project?

I liked when I got talk out loud
and I like how we express our feelings

2. What did you like about taking part this project?

That ^{we} got to talk
about our own apinyon

2. What did you like about taking part this project?

it was good finally
talking about my feelings.

Figure 13: Excerpts of feedback forms from School 5

Overall, the children’s accounts highlighted that the research encounters provided an opening, perhaps not previously available to them.

Chapters 4 and 5 have provided examples of what emerged through these openings, both in terms of children’s accounts of their experiences (chapter 4) and their identity formations (chapter 5). Further, my analysis has endeavoured to show that the research process did not merely help to elicit accounts from the children but intervened and helped contribute to the formation of new relations (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013). The analysis presented throughout chapters 4, 5 and

6 has provided evidence that participation led to new subjectivities, new experiences, and, as John described earlier in this chapter, new learning opportunities.

Through this argument, the need to engage with children about their experiences of forces life is not just about helping children to express. Participating in the research – talking, sharing and reflecting on their experiences – helped to foster new relations in the experiences of being from a forces family. In addition, as the following example shows, the research process allowed the young people to speak back to some of the ideas held by others about life with a parent in the armed forces.

I introduced the following encounter, involving the young people in School 2, earlier in this section. The excerpt comes from our discussion during the diamond ranking activity.

Evelyn: So girls, you have got the same statement right at the very top, why do you think that was the most important?

Isla: Um, no many people know what it's like, not many people like understand. Like when you just say oh yeah, my dad's in the Navy, they're like ah so like he goes on submarines and stuff

Evelyn: Was that similar kind of feeling?

Ashley: Yeah

Evelyn: So was it learning about, was it for you learning or was it for other people? Were you thinking about scope for the research to inform other people?

Isla: I don't really know

Paul: For me on this one, whenever I say I've got a mum in the Navy or whenever they say I've got a parent in the Navy they always naturally assume it's the dad

[agreement sound from group]

*Paul: Like and they always assume they're on a boat **constantly***

Isla: Yeah on a submarine or on a boat

*Paul: and that they're not at home **constantly**, which they aren't so it's a big misunderstanding and you have to explain*

Isla: Yeah like they don't get that they're not always on the submarine, like they're not always on a boat

Paul: and them being away on a submarine can almost be as bad as weekendening. Sometimes.

(Group discussion, 13-14 year-old mixed, School 2, Navy connection)

The excerpt above reveals that another experienced consequence of taking part in the research was the opportunity to challenge assumptions about having a parent in the armed forces. An important finding emerging from this excerpt therefore is that children may not feel that others fully understand their experiences of forces life. The benefits of a similar provision in school may therefore be two-fold, helping both teachers and peers to understand the realities of armed forces life and ensuring that young people do not feel misunderstood.

As explained above, many of the children participating in the research indicated that they welcomed the opportunity to talk about their experiences. However, they also explained that their accounts about having a parent in the forces would not necessarily emerge in all situations. Their accounts were contingent on the conditions of the research encounter (Mayes, 2016). The final section of this chapter therefore explores some of these conditions in further detail.

6.3 Conditions for recognition and expression

Thus far, this chapter has shown that the research encounters generated little evidence that children had experienced coordinated support from schools in relation to being part of a forces family. In addition, the children's accounts based on their reflections on taking part in the research suggested that they had had little opportunity to reflect and share their experiences of having a parent in the forces. However, there was also evidence to suggest that both the relatively isolated pockets of school provision, and children's participation in the research could contribute in potentially positive ways to their ongoing experiences. The implications for these findings are discussed in chapter 7.

This section moves on to consider evidence about the conditions that may or may not give rise to school-based provision that both recognises and facilitates ongoing explorations. This section provides examples from 3 encounters from 3 of the

participating schools. These examples were chosen for their ability to highlight some of the considerations for schools in recognising and responding to the experiences of children from forces families. They build on themes discussed and highlighted in previous chapters, respectively reflecting different material, discursive and social considerations.

One example comes from a group discussion with young people in School 2. This was my final visit to this school and I was keen to ask about how school could better support them. The young people indicated that school had little capacity to support their experiences of armed forces life.

Evelyn: Ok. So is it a hard question to answer? Is it difficult to know what schools should do or is it difficult because you don't think there's anything that schools need to be doing or need to be aware of?

*Paul: I don't know if there is much that the schools **can** do
[agreement sounds from group]*

(Group discussion, 13-14 year-old mixed, School 2, Navy connection)

Given there was limited evidence that children had experienced school provision that responded to the situations they were facing, the virtual space Paul was able to access in thinking about how schools could support him may have been limited (Wilson, 2016). In fact, I would argue that the research has provided extensive evidence of the role school can play in supporting children from forces families. In addition, later in the encounter Paul suggested that school may be the ideal place for children to engage in explorations about their experiences.

*Paul: I think having time out of class was very important
[laughing]*

John: But I don't think I would have done it if it wasn't during school

Paul: Yeah

John: Because like, if it was something out of school and you contacted me I think it would have seemed like more of a chore or something

Evelyn: Ok yeah yeah

John: Whereas being in school it felt like more of an opportunity

Evelyn: Hmmm yeah that's interesting. So, do you think it was quite hard work then?

John: Em no I just think I would have deemed it, like I wouldn't have had such an open mind set

Paul: Like cause its during school like the way you see school is you go to school and anything you do at school during school is an extra

John: Yeah

Paul: But if it's not during school, you could possibly be doing something else

(Group discussion, 13-14 year-old mixed, School 2, Navy connection)

The account from Paul and John suggests that school may indeed be the right place for exploring and expressing their experiences of having a parent in the forces. In other places children live out their everyday lives (home, activity clubs, parks) children may experience such reflective activities as a "chore". In contrast, inside school, it may be perceived as an "opportunity". Therefore, this adds support to the finding that children welcome the chance to explore their experiences, and that school may be one appropriate place for such explorations.

An encounter with four of the participating young people in School 3 highlighted another consideration when creating opportunities for children from forces families to discuss their experiences in school. As with the young people in School 2, this group struggled to identify anything schools should do to support them, responding most often with 'I don't know'. At the same time, they recognised the value in talking about their experiences and in relation to this, Daniel was keen to emphasise that schools need to employ appropriately sensitive, inclusive approaches.

Evelyn: Ok. Do you think it's a good thing to talk about having a dad in the Army or do you think it's quite irrelevant?

Sam: I think it's a good idea

Evelyn: Yeah?

Sam: Well for different people, it's a good idea. Cause some people might be sensitive about it

[...]

Evelyn: I'm interested to know if you think schools should be thinking about these things?

Daniel: I don't think it makes much difference to be honest. I think you should just not take a child out of like a certain group just because they've got a dad in the Army, you should just let them fit in

Evelyn: Ok yeah, so what about this situation here today then Daniel? We've taken you out because you are part of an Army family?

Daniel: I know but this is only like a temporary thing so I don't really think that matters that much but if you like got taken out like every single week of school to like talk about it, it probably just make people think

[...]

Daniel: People would probably just like think that you're different

(Group discussion, 13-14 year-old mixed, School 2, Army connection)

Whilst talking may be a “*good idea*”, it also has to be approached in a way that is responsive to the child’s desires and sensitive to how they wish to be perceived by others. This also suggests that children may be reluctant to engage in a discussion about their experiences, perhaps out of a desire to appear “*normal*”. The encounter served to highlight some of the tensions involved for children who potentially want to talk about their experiences whilst at the same time not be perceived by others as ‘different’. This resonates with findings from chapter 5 that showed that surfacing of differences was challenging to young people who were concerned about being perceived as different. Analysis suggests that children may be hesitant about expressing notions of difference that arise from their unique and personal histories of belonging to an armed forces family.

In addition, Gemma and Elizabeth in School 5 indicated that the previous research encounter had not provided the right conditions for them to feel comfortable talking about their experiences. In my first visit to the school, I met with all the children taking part and noted that Elizabeth in particular had been very quiet. She was much more communicative in the following research encounter, where only her best friend, Gemma, and I was present.

Evelyn: So what we might want to think about is what we do next time? So we might come together as a pair again...

Gemma: Yeah!

Evelyn: Yeah? do you quite like that?

Elizabeth: I like it because there's not many people here and you can just like talk to someone without getting embarrassed about what you're saying

Gemma: Cause we already know quite embarrassing stuff about each other and we're not really bothered

Elizabeth: And we're not bothered to tell people but but

Gemma: But we think it's just easier to tell each other without

Elizabeth: the people in our class, people if they hear something funny they'll just take they micky out of us so

Evelyn: Ok so it's important

Elizabeth: I think the other people will like it as well being in pairs

Evelyn: Yeah? Is it easier to talk about these things when you're in a pair than when you're in a big group?

Elizabeth: Yeah cause there was boys and...

Gemma: ...too scared...

Elizabeth: ...I was actually too scared to say stuff what's eh actually going on

(Drawing interview, 9-year-old girls, School 5, Army connection)

Despite being keen to talk about their experiences, this only became apparent when the research environment changed. The move from a big group discussion to a paired interview situation created the necessary conditions for Gemma and Elizabeth to express their lived experiences. Similar to the previous examples, the girls also emphasised the importance of being able to share how they feel about having a parent in the forces.

Elizabeth: At first I thought it was just gonna be...

Gemma: ...just a big group

Elizabeth: ...but I like it actually because you get to talk about what's going on and how you feel and stuff because I feel um, sometimes I feel happy being in the Army sometimes I don't because

in [previous location] we used to always go on trips and stuff and then when we come here we don't go on any trips really. So, I feel happy but at the same time sad.

(Drawing interview, 9-year-old girls, School 5, Army connection)

The social conditions of the research encounter changed how the children expressed their experiences of armed forces life. Children felt differently able to express their experiences as a result of shifting interpersonal dynamics.

Collectively, these three examples support the idea that children value the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of having a parent in the armed forces. However, they also highlight the importance of attending to the discursive, social and material conditions that contribute to the expression of these accounts (Mayes, 2016). They suggest that whilst school is a viable place for supporting children from forces families the discourses circulating targeted interventions and relations between children taking part will shape what effect they will have.

6.4 Overall discussion and conclusions

This chapter addressed the third research questions: *'What do children's accounts suggest about school-based support for children from forces families?'* It draws on data on children's experiences of current school-based provision as well as data from their reflections on participating in the research. The analysis combined my assemblage analysis described in chapter 3 with recognition theory from childhood studies (Thomas, 2012). Collectively, the findings suggest that schools have, at present, under-explored capacity, to recognise and respond to children's experiences in relation to being part of a forces family. The key findings are now discussed.

As discussed in chapter 2, internationally little is known about the existence and effect of school-based provision for children from forces families (Brendel et al., 2014). This is a particularly significant gap in current research given that teachers within the UK are expected to mitigate any educational disadvantage that arises from having a parent in the forces (MoD, 2017b). The first section of this chapter explored children's perspectives on school-based support. I found that across the participating schools there was an uneven provision of support. There was

variability in how children within the same school experienced support, further suggesting lack of any coordinated programme of support for children from forces families. This limited school support is consistent with previous research outside the UK (Baptist et al., 2015; Mmari et al., 2009). My research makes an important contribution by providing empirical data on children's perspectives of existing UK-based provision and an analysis of what might further advance effective school-based support for children from forces families.

Although the research suggested that there exists variability in the support being offered by schools, my analysis of the children's accounts of existing efforts suggested that school could play an important role in responding to these children's experiences. Across the examples explored, children saw the potential for school staff and programmes to positively influence their experiences of being part of a forces family. This lends support to current efforts to enhance educational provision for children from forces families (MoD, 2016c). An assemblage analysis then identified key relations contributing to the experience of this support. I showed that a school-forces-support assemblage involved people (children, teachers, parents), organisations (school, armed forces), discourses in school, and material objects that connect children to their absent armed-forces parent. A particularly unique aspect of this school-forces-support assemblage were the potential relations between the armed forces and children's educational experiences. Previous research has highlighted the role of these connections in facilitating the transfer of information about children's armed forces status (Mmari et al., 2010). However, my research found that children were keen for the armed forces to play an educational role in their school-based experiences.

My analysis focused on understanding the significance of these relations through the lens of recognition theory (Thomas, 2012), thus providing greater insight into *how* these provisions contribute to positive experiences and therefore what more could be done to support these children in school. I found that a key feature of effective school-based provision for children from forces families was that it recognised the distinctive experiences and identifications of children through belonging to an armed forces family. The school practices and relationships that children described demonstrated that children were cared for, respected and

valued them as children from forces families (Graham et al., 2016). Furthermore, there was evidence of instances of misrecognition (ibid) when children were not recognised within the context of these lived experiences, and these instances were evaluated negatively by the children. Despite the increased emphasis and financial provision in recent years to assist UK schools with developing practices which support children from forces families (Scottish Government, 2017), there remains scope for teachers and schools to do more in supporting these children. This key implication is discussed in further detail in chapter 7.

In the second two sections of this chapter, I analysed children's reflections about participating in the research. I considered the existence of opportunities for children to reflect on their experiences as being from a forces family, opportunities that I argue was created through the methodology of the research. A key finding was that the children had not much opportunity prior to the research encounters to reflect on and share their experiences with others. Another finding was that there exists an enthusiasm and appetite amongst children and young people for expressing their experiences. These insights are suggestive of the role school could play in facilitating opportunities for children to engage in reflexive dialogue with others about their experiences. The analysis also showed that whilst children may desire the opportunity to talk about their experiences, the right conditions need to be in place for this dialogue to occur. The children's differently expressed experiences of being part of a forces family were found to be contingent on the material, discursive and social conditions of the research encounter. Specifically, whilst school was perceived as an appropriate place for exploring and expressing experiences of armed forces life, children could experience feeling 'othered' by targeted approaches and felt differently able to express based on existing social dynamics. These conditions reflect some of the concerns raised in the previous chapter and highlight the advantages of an assemblage approach which recognises that children's experiences emerge in and through material, social and discursive relations (Feely, 2016; Mayes, 2016).

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Implications

Using a post-qualitative orientation to explore the empirical accounts of children belonging to an armed forces family, this thesis contributes a rich contextualised understanding of children's experiences and has generated important signposts for educational practitioners looking to support these children within school settings. This final chapter summarises the key findings from the thesis, presents implications for educational practice, acknowledges the limitations of this study, and provides suggestions for future research. In keeping with my commitment to reflexivity, outlined in Chapter 1 and attended to throughout the thesis, I close with some final reflections on conducting the research.

7.1 Overview of study and contributions

Chapter 2 provided a critical review of existing research on the experiences of children from forces families. I showed how the dominant approach is on quantifying the relationship between key aspects of military life, such as deployment and mobility, and children's attainment and well-being outcomes. Differences in methodology employed across these studies have led to an inconsistent pattern of results. I argued that, whilst a quantitative approach may offer some parameters of experience (Greene & Hogan, 2005), the design is inappropriate if what we are seeking is an understanding of the nuanced ways in which children experience being part of a forces family. The qualitative approach taken in this study has illustrated how aspects of armed forces life come to matter in children's lived experiences. Moreover, Chapter 2 also showed that, most importantly, in both quantitative and qualitative research on armed forces families, children are rarely asked to report on their own experiences. My study has addressed this gap by foregrounding children's accounts of their lived experiences in a qualitative, explorative study.

In addition, Chapter 2 outlined that, whilst most of the policy literature is concerned with the impact of the demands of armed forces life on children's education, the empirical literature often gives little detail about the implications of research findings for educational practitioners. There remain few systematic

evaluations of educational or school-based programmes designed to support children from forces families (Brendel et al., 2014). Because most of the evidence is drawn from research being conducted outside of the UK, and most of that with children attending US summer camps for military families, teachers in the UK currently have little evidence to guide their efforts in supporting children from forces families in school. The research described in this thesis involved children from UK armed forces families attending schools in Scotland, and the overall aim was to generate signposts for educational practice that might positively contribute to children's experiences of armed forces life.

My review further argued that, whilst there does exist a small, but arguably, growing, body of qualitative research directly involving children from forces families (e.g., Baptist et al., 2015; Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017), the methodological detail included in these studies warrants doubt about the in-depth nature of the research. In response to this limitation in the existing literature, my research has conceptualised children's expressions of their experiences as part of and emerging from their social, material and discursive milieu (Hohti & Karlsson, 2014; Mazzei, 2013), therefore contributing a richer contextualised analysis of children's accounts.

Empirical contributions

In summary, my study has addressed the identified limitations in current research on the experiences of armed forces families. First and foremost, I have engaged directly with children and young people from forces families. Including the perspectives of children from forces families alongside an analysis of how they described their lived experiences is the most important contribution my study makes to the field. Through conducting the research in schools, and asking children about their experiences of school-based practices, this research has also been able to provide insights which can usefully inform how schools and teachers can develop practices that positively contribute to the experiences of children from forces families. The methodological approach has drawn from post-qualitative perspectives and offers an alternative to the positivist approach typically employed in existing research on children from forces families. This approach has been able to offer insights regarding the need to create experimental and socio-

materially informed educational encounters that both allow children to express their experiences of belonging to an armed forces family and encourage new possibilities for becoming-different.

7.2 Summary of main findings

The thesis aimed to explore the experiences of children with parents in the armed forces with a view to providing signposts for improved school-based support. The research questions were identified through my analysis of both the extant literature and empirical data. The key findings that emerged against each of these are shown in Table 6. Each of these questions were respectively addressed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. I discuss the key findings from these chapters in further detail below.

Table 6: Research questions and key findings

1. What are the most significant features of children’s descriptions of their experiences of having a parent in the armed forces?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children described parental absence and moving school as important features of belonging to an armed forces family. • In general, children experienced these features of parental absence and moving school as challenging and emotionally upsetting. • Primary school children expressed their experiences of moving school and parental absence differently to young people in secondary school. • Children’s experience of parental absence could be understood as an embodied relation with the socio-material environment, rather than being about an individualised cognitive process. • Children’s expressions of parental absence and moving school showed that these experiences are significantly shaped by family relationships and practices. • Children experienced their lives as being shaped by the practices of the armed forces. • Children expressed concerns about establishing new friends when moving school and there was less focus in their accounts of academic concerns. • Expressions from the secondary school young people showed that moving school influenced their identifications as learners.
2. Understanding subjectivity as a form of becoming, how do children describe themselves in relation to being part of an armed forces family?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s identifications with being part of armed forces families were expressed in various ways that reflected their past experiences and the socio-material and discursive contexts of their current lives.

3. What do children's accounts suggest about school-based support for children from forces families?

- Children experienced an uneven provision of support both between and within the participating schools.
- From the children's accounts, there was little evidence that there existed a coordinated programme of support for pupils from armed forces families.
- A key feature of effective school-based provision for children from forces families was that it recognised the distinctive experiences and identifications of children through belonging to an armed forces family.
- Children expressed a desire to explore and share their personal experiences of being part of a forces family but experienced few opportunities for expression in school.
- Feeling able to express and explore experiences of being part of a forces family are dependent on social, material and discursive conditions. The research methods and processes employed in this thesis were particularly appropriate in effectively revealing the conditions that were supportive of opportunities for expression.

Research Question 1: Lived experiences of being part of a forces family

This research sought to explore with the children their perspectives on what was important about having a parent in the armed forces. I found that children recognised and experienced parental absence and moving school as key features of their lives of belonging to an armed forces family. In general, children expressed these experiences of their lives in largely negative terms. It was clear from both children's verbal accounts and the drawings they chose to create, that their parents' absence led to emotions that were difficult to forget. Children's drawings were also often indicative of the emotion that surrounded their experiences of parental absence and moving school. I showed that children's feelings around these experiences, particularly in relation to parental absence, were palpable (May, 2005) in the research encounters. Overall, these key features of belonging to an armed forces family caused children emotional upset, but expressions of these feelings also helped to alter the armed forces child experience.

I found that there were differences in how the primary and secondary school children expressed their experiences of parental absence and moving school. With regard to parental absence, the primary school children's accounts showed that parental absence was an embodied experience and children often sought out

material objects that helped them to connect to their absent parent. The young people in the secondary schools expressed their experiences of parental absence in terms of how it affected the whole family and the associated relationships and practices. Indeed, it was difficult for the young people to express their own experience of parental absence as being separate from the experience of the family. For the accounts that focussed on moving school, whilst all children talked about establishing friendships, academic concerns were only raised, and then only minimally referred to, by the young people in the secondary schools. Across both primary and secondary school contexts, children expressed that their main concern when moving school was making new friends and, for most children, this was a difficult challenge. There was little evidence from the children's accounts that they felt school had helped them with their transition and in making new friends (discussed further in relation to research question 3). I also showed that there was some evidence to suggest that moving school could impact on how children perceived themselves as learners and their own academic abilities.

I have shown that family was a key context for shaping children's experiences of parental absence and moving school. As a consequence of serving in the armed forces, families have important decisions to make around when and whether to relocate as well as how to manage being a family. Children's accounts showed how their experiences of parental absence and moving were relationally experienced. It was both family relationships and family practices that contributed to experiences of parental absence. When parents were away, children acknowledged the importance of working together and supporting each other. Similarly, children's accounts of moving school suggested that choices around relocation were collectively made in relation to family life, educational continuity and the serving parent's career in the armed forces.

Relatedly, I found that children's accounts of parental absence and moving school showed the significant presence and influence of the armed forces in their experiences. Through my assemblage analysis, the armed forces emerged as a significant relation, working to constrain the choices that children felt were available to them and their family.

Research Question 2: Subjectivity as becoming

In answer to research question 2, I drew on the Deleuzian concept of becoming (de Freitas & Curinga, 2015) to explore how children described themselves in relation to being part of an armed forces family. I found that children expressed their identifications in a variety of ways. At times, children strongly aligned with being part of a forces family and expressed their experiences as distinctive in relation to the experiences of others. At other times, children experienced difficulty in expressing their distinctive experiences. Rather than these various subjectivities being ascribed to individual children, I showed that children's identifications were shaped by relations operating inside and outside the research encounter. I analysed four different becomings and explored the dimensions that helped to prompt children's processes of becoming-armed-forces-child. I found that children's identifications of belonging to an armed forces family were related to both the significance they placed on their past experiences and the socio-material and discursive contexts of their current lives. As discussed in my methodological reflections below, I also found that the 'difference line' activity was a useful way of encouraging children's process of becoming-armed-forces-child. However, how this worked was also contingent on the socio-material and discursive conditions of the research encounter. I discuss the implications of this analysis in further detail below, specifically in relation to evidence of the opportunities children have to reflect on and share their experiences of being part of a forces family. However, at this point, I reiterate the importance of providing catalytic opportunities for different expressions of becoming-armed-forces-child.

Research Question 3: School-based support

This research also sought to explore children's experiences of belonging to an armed forces family in relation to their school-based experiences. I showed that children's accounts of armed forces life did not typically refer to teachers, the curriculum, or other aspects of schooling. When I invited the children to reflect upon school-based support, I found evidence to suggest that children experienced an uneven provision of support both between and within schools. Whilst some of the accounts showed that children evaluated the support they had experienced as positive, other accounts showed that there was scope to increase and improve these efforts. Overall, I argued that schools in Scotland have, at present, under-

explored capacity to recognise and respond to children's experiences of belonging to an armed forces family. Through an assemblage analysis, I identified that children appreciated support facilitated connections between people (teachers, parents, peers), organisations (school, armed forces), participatory discourses and practices that allow for expression. I argued that collectively these relations worked to recognise the distinctive experiences and identifications of children who have parents in the armed forces. This was therefore found to be a key feature of effective school-based support.

Given the limited data on children's accounts of school-based support, I used data on children's reflections on participating in the research to suggest how school-based support could be improved to more positively affect children's experiences of belonging to an armed forces family. I found that, prior to participating in the research, children had had few opportunities to express and explore their experiences. At the same time, children's accounts suggested that they would welcome further opportunities to express and share their experiences. In addition, my analysis suggested that children's participation in the research had prompted new subjectivities and relations within the armed forces child assemblage. Finally, I found that whilst there was a desire amongst children for greater opportunity to express, the capacity to express was contingent on the socio-material conditions of the milieu in which they were implicated. These specific conditions were identified through a reflective analysis of the research processes and are discussed in the next section.

7.3 Methodology matters

My analyses of children's accounts were not offered as unmediated reflections of their 'real' or authentic experiences (James, 2007; Mazzei, 2013). Rather, I understood them as arising relationally through the social, material and discursive context, in which I was also implicated (Hohti & Karlsson, 2014). This perspective has helped me to consider the role the research process played in contributing to how children expressed their experiences. Throughout Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I took time to reflect on what difference the methods made to the research encounters. I discussed these points within my analysis of the individual encounters and sought to highlight the contribution of the research process to the expressions that

emerged. Overall, this analysis showed how the ways in which different methods were deployed enabled diverse kinds of research encounters and expressions of experiences of being part of a forces family. The importance of socio-material informed experimental dialogues with children in school is a key theme running through the findings from Chapters 4, 5 and 6. These methodological findings have important implications for the design of educational practices, and these are discussed further in section 7.4.

In general, I found that no one method was uniquely helpful in generating accounts about children's experiences of being part of a forces family. However, as others have also found (e.g., Punch, 2002a), the suite of qualitative methods emerged as a particularly viable way of generating accounts from a range of participants, with different preferences of engagement and different personal histories of being part of a forces family. In Chapter 4, I showed that, whilst one method may have failed to mobilise an account on one occasion, it then emerged as particularly effective in a different encounter with different participants. The variety of methods therefore reflected children's diverse experiences.

Whilst the suite of methods employed collectively worked to enable accounts from a diverse range of participants, they also worked in quite specific ways, and these insights helped to reveal the relational nature of children's experiences of being part of a forces family. Firstly, I found that the video-diary method failed to generate any insightful accounts about being part of a forces family. By examining the conditions of the video-diary method in relation to the conditions of the other methods, I argued that the people (peers or myself as the researcher) and materials (drawings, objects, story vignettes) present in the encounter helped to prompt children to connect with their past experiences of armed forces life and in this way helped to generate children's accounts.

As others have found (McLeod, 2014), explicitly introducing materials into the research encounter encouraged me to focus on not just human relations but the more-than-human features of the analysed assemblages. In my study, the drawings, objects and other materials produced from the activities affected what emerged in the research encounters. The drawings and objects provided

productive connections with children's experiences of forces life outside of school. The 'difference line' activity encouraged children to embrace, share, re-create and resist notions of difference. Overall, the use of materials within the encounter seemed to have afforded opportunities for children to reflect on their experiences of being part of a forces family.

The research process was approached as a reciprocal, experimental process of inquiry. The analysis found that the research encounters were sites of movement that facilitated new connections. As a consequence of expressing their experiences, children developed new subjectivities, reflections, feelings about their experiences, and questions about their experiences. These new connections were also facilitated through the research process by establishing encounters that were socio-materially informed.

7.4 Implications for educational practice

The findings discussed above raise important implications for educational practitioners. Perhaps the most significant implication of this research is to argue that schools can and should do more to support children from forces families. Whilst there was some evidence of there being supports in place within the participating schools, the variability with which children experienced this support, both between and within schools, suggests that a more coordinated programme of provision is needed to ensure that all children from forces families in all parts of Scotland are consistently recognised and supported. Furthermore, whilst some children reported positive features of this support, there was also evidence that these efforts could be improved. The specific implications for educational practice are discussed in further detail below and include:

- Making efforts to find out which pupils within school belong to an armed forces family;
- Recognising the distinctive experiences and identifications of children through belonging to an armed forces family;
- Implementing whole school approaches to supporting children from forces families;

- Designing programmes of support which take account of the wider context of children's lives;
- Developing improved school transition practices;
- Attending to the social and material conditions of the school environment in efforts to create inclusive school environments for expression; and
- Development of initial teacher education.

Identifying armed forces families

First, educational practitioners need to make efforts to become aware of children in their class and school that belong to armed forces families. This would be a first step towards recognising that these children may have distinctive experiences and identifications as a result of their parent's service. As discussed in Chapter 2, not all families may wish to identify themselves as being part of the armed forces community. Children also raised concerns about being singled out or feeling targeted within school. At the same time, I found variability in how strongly children identified with being part of a forces family. Schools therefore need to ensure their efforts do not inadvertently stigmatise or homogenise the experiences of these children. Some specific suggestions on how teachers may create inclusive school environments are discussed below.

Recognising the experiences of children from forces families

This study found that children experienced existing school-based support as positive when it recognised the distinctive situations they may be facing as a consequence of their parents' service in forces. Therefore, there needs to be greater awareness amongst teachers and schools that children from forces families regard parental absence and moving school as important features of their lives. In chapter 6, I showed that recognising children from forces families in school is about ensuring that children feel cared for, respected and valued (Graham et al., 2016). There is a need to ensure that teachers acknowledge the emotional upset that can arise from the experiences of parental absence and moving school and demonstrate this understanding to children through their actions.

Continued professional development opportunities may be needed to help schools understand more about these dimensions of children's lives. In Chapter 1, I

reflected on my own experience of designing and participating in a Professional Learning Community for school staff to raise awareness of the specific situations facing children from forces families. This initiative brought together teachers, support staff, parents, armed forces personnel and community workers. Such an approach could be strengthened, either by involving children directly or including children's reflections on being part of a forces family.

Whole school approach

In this study, I found that the children experienced variability in the level and nature of support available to them within their school. In Chapter 3, I outlined that the participating schools were already part of professional networks for supporting children from forces families. From my own interactions with school staff, I was aware that there were initiatives being implemented within these schools designed to support these children. Indeed, at times my liaison with the school was through an identified lead person for working with forces families. This suggests that, whilst there was perhaps targeted and/or isolated provision in place, the support could be enhanced by ensuring that it is embedded throughout the children's experience in school. It is important that all teachers and support staff are informed about the experiences of children from forces families. A whole-school approach would help ensure that all teachers respond in appropriately sensitive ways to the experiences of children from forces families.

Wider framings

The findings suggest that school-based provision needs to recognise the wider environments of children's lives. A decontextualized focus on the individual child will fail to grasp and respond to the breadth of children's experiences. To varying degrees, the children emphasised their peers, family and the armed forces in their accounts, suggesting that all these contexts of children's lives need to be considered when planning and implementing programmes of support for children from forces families.

A particularly important action arising from my findings is for schools to establish links with the armed forces community. Children expressed a desire to find out more about the work of their parents in the forces. These connections could

therefore afford educational opportunities, which may further enhance understanding amongst peers, teachers and the children themselves about the lives of armed forces families. Further, this study also found that children's lives were experienced to be influenced by the practices of the armed forces. Therefore, fostering connections between schools and the armed forces is likely to be valuable in positively contributing to the experiences of these children.

The findings also suggest that school-based support needs to take a familial perspective, acknowledging that children's experiences of both parental absence and school transitions are significantly shaped by their relationships with family members and the practices of the family. This suggests that schools should work in collaboration with children, parents and the wider community to develop and enhance support for children from forces families.

School transition policies and practices

Given that all of the children who had experience of moving talked about their difficulties in establishing friendships, it is important that schools develop robust approaches to ensure that children are offered more support when making transitions between schools. In addition, whilst children tended not to express academic-related concerns, there was some evidence to suggest that moving school could have an impact on how they perceive themselves as learners in comparison to their peers. As reported in Chapter 2, there was conflicting evidence on how frequent mobility impacts the attainment of children from forces families. However, given this finding, it is perhaps important that schools consider approaches for addressing gaps in children's processes of becoming-learner.

Inclusive opportunities for expression

This study found that children were presented with few opportunities to express their experiences of being part of a forces family. Yet it was clear that they would welcome such opportunities. The children's accounts of armed forces life, generated in the research encounters, also allowed for reflections about their experiences and new becomings, and thus in some ways expanded the virtual space to which the children had access (Wilson, 2016). This suggests that, if schools and teachers draw on some of the key features of the research encounter,

then educational encounters could also help to generate new relations. A reflexive analysis of the research processes helped to reveal features that supported children's expression of their experiences. Based on these findings, some signposts for creating inclusive opportunities for children to express their experiences in school have been generated.

Firstly, schools should make available a diverse range of opportunities for children to engage in an exploration about their experiences of armed forces life. My research found that using a suite of qualitative methods was a viable way of encouraging expressions from a range of participants. The contingency of children establishing a connection with the method or practice that allows for expression cannot be avoided (Mayes, 2016). However, varied opportunities for expression can allow for more experimental encounters (Torrence, 2016) where educational practitioners try different approaches and explore how they affect children's ability to express. This may lead to productive connections that facilitate new experiences.

The social conditions of the school environment will influence children's ability to feel able to express their experiences. Connections with others who share similar experiences was found to be important in helping the children to express their own distinctive experiences. It is important therefore for teachers to make efforts to facilitate these connections. This could be achieved through the provision of groups or meetings for children from forces families. Equally, in acknowledging that other children experience parental absence and moving school, expanding membership of these groups may help to facilitate new connections and prompt new subjectivities. In addition, teachers could use stories or other mediums to provide accounts of other children with similar experiences. These efforts may work to normalise children's experiences which seem to allow for expressions of difference to emerge. Furthermore, the research found that the provision of material objects within the encounter was a viable way of supporting children to express their experiences. Teachers could also use objects or drawings to prompt further discussion about children's experiences of being part of a forces family. These methods can provide connections with children's experiences of belonging to an armed forces family outside of school. More widely, these implications for

designing inclusive school environments are also applicable for educational practitioners working with other groups of children, including those who may experience parental absence or school transitions for other reasons. I discuss the broader implications for educational practice in more detail in the next section.

Initial teacher education

As well as having implications for educational practitioners, the findings in this thesis also lead to implications for initial teacher education (ITE). Pre-service professionals need to be informed about the experiences of children from forces families. The implications above about how to effectively support these children in school should feature as part of ITE programmes. ITE institutions therefore should include course content in relation to armed forces families.

7.5 Participation and inclusion: Going beyond children from forces families

This research has focussed on the experiences of children from forces families. However, the findings have wider implications for teachers and schools seeking to design inclusive school environments that are supportive of the broader lived experiences of all children. My research found that the children were keen to explore and share their personal experiences. This highlights the potential importance of fostering opportunities for children to reflect on their experiences in school. There exists a body of research that recognises the benefits of listening to children and encouraging their participation in school (e.g., Mannion, Sowerby, & I'Anson, 2015; McCluskey et al., 2013). For example, Simmons et al. (2015) evidences the links between wellbeing and student voice. In my research, I found that, through expressing their experiences, the children developed new subjectivities, feelings, and questions about their lives and the lives of others. Further, the participation of children and young people is often considered as a central part of what it means to be inclusive (Messiou, 2006). Education policies across the globe show a commitment to the development of educational practices which support the inclusion of all children (Kiuppis & Rume, 2015). The findings from my research resonate with similar arguments made by inclusive education researchers about the importance of listening to children (e.g., Florian & Beaton, 2018). However, my research also argues that it is not enough to enact a one-way listening process, but crucial to create opportunities for dialogues that encourage

new thoughts and experiences for those involved. An important implication is that inclusive education should involve reciprocal dialogues with children where there is capacity for learning and change.

Another important implication stems from my use of recognition theory (Thomas, 2012) to help understand how children experienced school-based support. My findings showed that the use of this framework was a viable way to understand the practices identified by the children that contributed positively to their experiences, as well as those that led to experiences of misrecognition. Accordingly, these findings suggest that schools and teachers could use this framework as a tool to support their reflections on the ways in which they recognise and respond to the experiences of all children.

Exactly *how* teachers and schools might create the opportunities for expression that the children valued is another important contribution of the research. In practical terms, there are a variety of ways that teachers could foster spaces that allow for both recognition and new becomings. For instance, schools could maximise connections to children's wider lived experiences by creating opportunities for families and communities to participate in school life, and vice versa. This would help to *value* the wider contributions and distinctive lived experiences that children bring to school. My research also showed the importance of caring, supportive teacher-pupil relationships in recognising children's experiences and, therefore, practitioners should not underestimate the significance of micro-level interactions that demonstrate to children that they are *cared for*. For example, noticing when children are upset, asking them about how things are going, and other small transactions would help to communicate genuine concern and interest in their wider lived experiences. Teachers may further help to embed the principles of recognition theory in schools by *respecting* the rights children have to participate in decisions which affect them. Recently published guidance (Education Scotland, 2018) provides a four-arena framework for supporting learner participation premised on an understanding of the importance of authentic participation that involves intergenerational dialogue and leads to change or impact. Together with my research findings, this suggests that schools need to provide a variety of opportunities for expression as well as ensure that the culture

and appropriate structures exist to enable teachers and children to work collaboratively on improving educational experiences. My research therefore responds more generally to how teachers and schools may facilitate inclusive school experiences for all children. Responding to the research findings may help to ensure that school practices are not only responsive to the views of children and young people but also that they play a positive role in contributing to the development of their views and reflections about their lived experiences.

7.5 Limitations

My research sought to respond to an important gap in current literature on armed forces children: the perspectives of children and young people. However, from a relational perspective, it was perhaps limited in identifying and understanding important child-adult relations because the views of significant adults such as parents or teachers, were not included (Mannion, 2007). Information about the wider context of children's lives and personal histories would have also perhaps enhanced my understanding of what the children shared with me during the research encounters. However, given the paucity of research that directly solicits the views of children, I opted to prioritise children's accounts in this study. Without this contextual information from other informants, I was able to focus on how and what children chose to tell me in the research encounter. Particularly within the context of frequent mobility, it may be that teachers have to develop relationships and generate talk with children in the absence of contextual information from previous schools (HoCDC, 2013). Therefore, in some ways, the context of the research encounters may not be that dissimilar from everyday school encounters.

Another limitation is the lack of involvement of children from RAF families. As described in Chapter 3, despite efforts to engage schools with children from RAF families, the limited number of schools and the timeline for the study led to difficulties with recruitment. There is only one remaining RAF base in Scotland, and, particularly given that there is a suggestion that RAF families may be experiencing greater instability than normal (MoD & DfE, 2009), it remains important to engage with children from these families.

In addition, a potential limitation arises from my own reflections on the methodological approach, or, more specifically, my enactment of the post-qualitative methodology. In Chapter 3, I explained that, whilst my approach did not involve children and young people in all stages of the research process, I sought to create a participatory dynamic within the research encounter. Holland et al. (2010) argue that it is more important to consider *how* participation occurred rather *how much* participation was achieved. Throughout the thesis, I have brought forward evidence to suggest that the human and more-than-human relations within the research encounters encouraged flows where children felt able to articulate their preferences and experiences of taking part. However, I also presented examples of some moments when children experienced difficulties in expressing themselves. As Mayes (2016) argues, we should not assume that the research has been able to “transcend power relations” (p. 117), either between myself and the participants, or between the participants themselves. As the researcher, I played an important role in co-ordinating the research assemblage and, despite my efforts, not all the children may have experienced the research as participatory, all of the time. Furthermore, employing a post-qualitative approach orients researchers to focus on, not just describing what happened, but also expanding the space of the virtual through experimenting or intervening with the social world (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; Torrance, 2017). In my research, this was primarily achieved through the use of a suite of qualitative methods and an open-ended approach. However, on reflection, it may have been possible to further enhance opportunities for new thoughts and experiences. Restricting the children’s participation to the data collection stage inevitably reduced the capacity of the research to intervene and improve the world (Fox & Alldred, 2016). Renold’s (2018) recent account of post-qualitative research shows the value of adopting a more activist stance where young people were involved in effecting change through sharing what they had learned with their peers. Post-qualitative approaches therefore can expand and support the overall aims of participation, but perhaps my experience, skills and resources as a doctoral student impacted somewhat on the full realisation of this potential. Nevertheless, the approach supported me to continually reflect on what was produced through the research assemblage and therefore made a valuable contribution to the realisation of participation within the research.

A final limitation concerns the extent to which we can generalise these findings to children's experiences outside the school context. Spyrou (2011) notes that children's expressions changed when they were talking inside and outside school. David, et al., (2001) also note the impact that school can have on children's motivations for providing a 'correct answer'. However, this finding is part and partial of the post-qualitative orientation underpinning the thesis: children's accounts emerged in relation to their social, material and discursive environments. It is likely that children's expressions would have been different if they had been participating at home, or outside school. Given that the research aims to contribute to our understanding of how to support children *in* school, the fact that the research was conducted in school supports arguments that these findings are relevant and applicable to educators and support staff.

Despite these limitations, the analysis provided in this thesis produces an understanding of children's perspectives that is original and important, specifically given the paucity of research directly involving children from forces families, and the oversimplified ways in which the voice of children from forces families is often approached in existing research. Although there is a growing body of literature on the experiences of children from forces families, the research is often situated within medical or psychological fields, and therefore fails to engage with key debates in sociology and education around children's participation, agency and voice. The thesis therefore makes an important contribution to the field by examining the empirical accounts of children about their experiences of being part of a forces family, from a post-qualitative perspective.

7.6 Suggestions for future research

The limitations of this study and the findings that have been generated through my research provide useful considerations for future research. A study that includes the accounts of teachers, parents, siblings, and friends, as well as the armed forces themselves, would further enhance the relational understanding that has been advanced in this thesis. These people and organisations, to varying degrees, featured in children's accounts and, therefore, future research should seek to explore their perspectives and practices in further detail. Although I showed how children experienced school-based support, it is important to explore teacher's

understanding of the experiences of children from forces families and their perspectives of practices to support them. Whilst I excluded observation early in the design of my study, this may be a useful way to examine school-based support for children from forces families. In addition, I showed that children's experiences of school practices could be usefully understood with the use of recognition theory (Graham et al., 2016). Future research could therefore use this conceptualisation to explore how other children experience school-based support.

Whilst my research showed that participating in the research helped to generate new subjectivities and experiences, it may be possible to expand these possibilities beyond children's individual experiences. In this respect, Percy-Smith's (2018) action-based research approach may be a useful framing for a study that could seek to engage a wider range of stakeholders in an inquiry process focussed on transforming existing school practices and processes for children from forces families. Such a participatory approach would be beneficial to both research and in our development of initiatives or interventions to support children from forces families.

Relatedly, the findings from this study could be strengthened by using them to start conversations and further explorations with other children and young people from forces families. Rather than this being in the usual spirit of validating the current conclusions, the intended purpose would be about encouraging further explorations with children about their experiences of being part of a forces family. It seemed that, for many of the children taking part, reflecting on their experiences as part of a forces family was not a familiar practice. Using the findings as a catalyst for further reflections with other children and young people, including those from RAF families not included in the current study, would be a worthwhile line of inquiry.

In addition, this study engaged with schools with relatively high numbers of children from forces families and the schools were at least to some extent already engaged in professional networks for supporting children from forces families. Given that children expressed differing levels of support from their school in relation to their experiences of armed force life, this suggests that research with

schools that are perhaps less engaged or aware of the children within their school from armed forces families would be valuable in further exploration of children's educational or school-based experiences.

There are also methodological developments that could usefully be taken forward into future research. The assemblage analysis that has been advanced in this thesis helped to sensitise me to a much broader range of elements (e.g., social, material, discursive) that collectively contribute to children's experiences. This opens up possibilities for employing this approach in research that seeks to explore the experiences of other children.

7.7 Final Reflections

... productions of knowledge are also productions of reality that will always have specific material consequences.

(Lenz Taguchi, 2012, p. 278)

Throughout the thesis I have demonstrated a commitment to continually reflect on the consequences of my research decisions. Following Rosiek (2013), I consider that researchers have a profoundly ethical responsibility to consider the potential impacts of the research. I have tried to engage in an "open-ended assessment of how the products of our inquiry overall affect our continuing experience" (Rosiek, 2013, p. 697). I now present some final thoughts on how undertaking this study has influenced my own thinking and practice as a researcher, my own processes of becoming-researcher.

In Chapter 1, I explained that, prior to beginning the PhD, I worked as a Research Assistant in a local authority with a remit to explore school provision for children from forces families. Whilst that post provided me with an understanding of the issues that teachers and parents were grappling with, I still did not know how children experienced having a parent in the forces. In the beginning stages of the fieldwork, with no personal experience of the armed forces life to draw on, my engagements with the children and young people felt somewhat awkward. I felt uncomfortable with asking them to share such personal aspects of their lives with me. I was also concerned that my research would "become exclusionary by accident" (Allan & Slee, 2008, p. 3) and at times I felt overwhelmed with the desire

to ensure that my research practices were both ethical and inclusive. However, as I settled into the research process and was welcomed by the children and young people in the participating schools, my concerns somewhat lifted. They seemed genuinely happy to participate in the study and I felt deeply grateful that they were willing to share their experiences with me. Their feedback helped me to appreciate the importance of talking to children about their experiences and pursuing opportunities for them to engage in explorations that further enhanced their experiences.

In closing this thesis, I reflect that my own process of becoming-researcher has been shaped by a multitude of relations that extend far beyond the research encounters with the children and young people. The collaborative nature of the doctorate was an important element of my learning process. I have shifted considerably from the researcher I was at the beginning of this doctorate. Most importantly, perhaps, I have learned that good research recognises the possibility of not just describing social phenomena, but also participating in the enactment of new possibilities. As I move forward I hope for future opportunities to carry out research that facilitates change and encourages new becomings.

References

- Alderson, P., & Morrow, V. (2004). *The ethics of research with children and young people: A practical handbook*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Alfano, C. A., Lau, S., Balderas, J., Bunnell, B. E., & Beidel, D. C. (2016). The impact of military deployment on children: Placing developmental risk in context. *Clinical Psychology Review, 43*, 17–29.
- Allan, J. (20078). *Rethinking inclusive education: The philosophers of difference in practice* (Vol. 5). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Allan, J., & Slee, R. (2008). *Doing inclusive education research* (Vol. 1). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Allen, L. (2015). Sexual assemblages: Mobile phones/young people/school. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 36*(1), 120–132.
- Altheide, D. L., & Johnson, J. M. (2011). Reflections on interpretive adequacy in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 581–594). London: Sage.
- Andres, M. D., & Moelker, R. (2011). There and back again: How parental experiences affect children's adjustments in the course of military deployments. *Armed Forces & Society, 37*(3), 418–447. doi:10.1177/0095327X10390461
- Aranda, M. C., Middleton, L. S., Flake, E., & Davis, B. E. (2011). Psychosocial screening in children with wartime-deployed parents. *Military Medicine, 176*(4), 402–407.

Aronson, K. R., Caldwell, L. L., Perkins, D. F., & Pasch, K. W. (2011). Assisting children and families with military-related disruptions: The United States Marine Corps school liaison program. *Psychology in the Schools*, 48(10), 998-1015.

Association of Directors of Education in Scotland. (2017). *Forces Children's Education*. Retrieved from <https://forceschildreducation.org.uk/>

Astor, R. A., De Pedro, K. T., Gilreath, T. D., Esqueda, M. C., & Benbenishty, R. (2013). The promotional role of school and community contexts for military students. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 16(3), 233-244.

Augustine, S. M. (2014). Living in a post-coding world: Analysis as assemblage. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(6), 747-753.

Baptist, J., Barros, P., Cafferky, B., & Johannes, E. (2015). Resilience building among adolescents from National Guard families: Applying a developmental contextual model. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 30(3), 306-334.

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke university Press.

Barker, L. H., & Berry, K. D. (2009). Developmental issues impacting military families with young children during single and multiple deployments. *Military Medicine*, 174(10), 1033-1040.

Barrett, M. S., & Smigiel, H. M. (2007). Children's perspectives of participation in music youth arts settings: Meaning, value and participation. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 28(1), 39-50.

Barter, C., & Renold, E. (1999). The use of vignettes in qualitative research. *Social Research Update*, 25(9), 1-6.

- Bazzul, J. (2018). Ethics, subjectivity, and sociomaterial assemblages: Two important directions and methodological tensions. *Studies in Philosophy and Education, 37*(5), 467–480.
- Biesta, G. J. (2010). Why 'what works' still won't work: From evidence-based education to value-based education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education, 29*(5), 491–503.
- Blasko, K. A. (2015). MilitaryKidsConnect: Web-based prevention services for military children. *Psychological Services, 12*(3), 261.
- Bradbury-Jones, C., Taylor, J., & Herber, O. R. (2014). Vignette development and administration: a framework for protecting research participants. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 17*(4), 427-440.
- Bradshaw, C. P., Sudhinaraset, M., Mmari, K., & Blum, R. W. (2010). School transitions among military adolescents: A qualitative study of stress and coping. *School Psychology Review, 39*(1), 84.
- Bragg, S. & Buckingham, D. (2008). 'Scrapbooks' as a resource in media research with young people. In P. Thomson (Ed.). *Doing Visual Research with Children and Young People* (pp. 114–131). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101.
- Brendel, K. E., Maynard, B. R., Albright, D. L., & Bellomo, M. (2014). Effects of school-based interventions with US military-connected children: A systematic review. *Research on Social Work Practice, 24*(6), 649–658.
- British Educational Research Association. (2011). *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*. London: British Educational Research Association.

Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (Eds.). (2007). *The Sage handbook of grounded theory*. Sage.

Bullock, A., & Skomorovsky, A. (2016). Children's positive experiences growing up in Canadian military households. *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health, 2*(2), 21–28.

Card, N. A., Bosch, L., Casper, D. M., Wiggs, C. B., Hawkins, S. A., Schlomer, G. L., & Borden, L. M. (2011). A meta-analytic review of internalizing, externalizing, and academic adjustment among children of deployed military service members. *Journal of Family Psychology, 25*(4), 508–520. doi:10.1037/a0024395

Chandra, A., Lara-Cinisomo, S., Jaycox, L. H., Tanielian, T., Burns, R. M., Ruder, T., & Han, B. (2010a). Children on the homefront: The experience of children from military families. *Pediatrics, 125*(1), 16–25.

Chandra, A., Martin, L. T., Hawkins, S. A., & Richardson, A. (2010b). The impact of parental deployment on child social and emotional functioning: Perspectives of school staff. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 46*(3), 218–223.

Chartrand, M. M., Frank, D. A., White, L. F., & Shope, T. R. (2008). Effect of parents' wartime deployment on the behavior of young children in military families. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 162*(11), 1009–1014.

Children's Commissioner for England. (2018). *Kin and country: Growing up as an Armed Forces child*. London: Children's Commissioner for England.

Christensen, P. H. (2004). Children's participation in ethnographic research: Issues of power and representation. *Children & Society, 18*(2), 165–176.

Christensen, P., & James, A. (Eds.). (2008). *Research with children: Perspectives and practices* (2nd ed.). Abingdon, Routledge.

- Clark, A. & Moss, P. (2001). *Listening to young children: The Mosaic Approach*. London: National Children's Bureau.
- Clarke, A. E. (2003). Situational analyses: Grounded theory mapping after the postmodern turn. *Symbolic Interaction*, 26(4), 553–576.
- Clarke, A. E. (2018). *Situational analysis: Grounded Theory after the interpretive turn* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Clarke, A. E., Friese, C., & Washburn, R. S. (2018). *Situational analysis: Grounded Theory after the interpretive turn* (2nd ed.). Singapore: Sage Publications Inc.
- Clifton, G. (2007). *The experience of education of the Army child*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Oxford-Brookes University.
- Coleman, B., & Ringrose, J. (2013). *Deleuze and research methodologies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, 39(3), 124–130.
- Cristancho, S., & Fenwick, T. (2015). Mapping a surgeon's becoming with Deleuze. *Medical Humanities*, 41(2), 128–135.
- Crow, J. R., & Seybold, A. K. (2013). Discrepancies in military middle-school adolescents' and parents' perceptions of family functioning, social support, anger frequency, and concerns. *Journal of Adolescence*, 36(1), 1–9.
- David, M., Edwards, R., & Alldred, P. (2001). Children and school-based research: 'Informed consent' or 'educated consent'? *British Educational Research Journal*, 27(3), 347–365.

de Freitas, E., & Curinga, M. X. (2015). New materialist approaches to the study of language and identity: Assembling the posthuman subject. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 45(3), 249–265.

De Pedro, K. T., Astor, R. A., Gilreath, T. D., Benbenishty, R., & Berkowitz, R. (2018). School climate, deployment, and mental health among students in military-connected schools. *Youth & Society*, 50(1), 93–115.

De Pedro, Kris M T., Astor, R. A., Benbenishty, R., Estrada, J., Esqueda, M. C., & Esqueda, M. C. (2011). The children of military service members: Challenges, supports, and future educational research. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(4), 566–618.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1988). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Demie, F. (2002). Pupil mobility and educational achievement in schools: An empirical analysis. *Educational Research*, 44(2), 197–215.

Department for Education. (2010). *The Educational performance of children of service personnel* (No. DFE-RR011). London: Department for Education.

Dewhirst, C. (2013). *Thinking practice: CPD as ethical work*. Doctoral thesis, University of Stirling.

Dickson-Swift, V., James, E. L., Kippen, S., & Liamputtong, P. (2007). Doing sensitive research: What challenges do qualitative researchers face? *Qualitative Research*, 7(3), 327–353.

Dixon-Woods, M., Cavers, D., Agarwal, S., Annandale, E., Arthur, A., Harvey, J., ... & Riley, R. (2006). Conducting a critical interpretive synthesis of the literature on access to healthcare by vulnerable groups. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 6(1), 35.

Dobson, J., & Henthorne, K. (1999). *Pupil mobility in schools* (DfEE Research Report RR168). London: DfEE Publications.

Dobson, J., & Pooley, C. (2004). *Mobility, Equality, Diversity: a study of pupil mobility in the secondary school system*. London: University College London.

Dobson, J., Henthorne, K., & Lynas, Z. (2000). *Pupil mobility in schools: Final report*. London: Migration Research Unit.

Duncan, P. (2013). *Drawing as a method for accessing young children's perspectives in research*. University of Stirling.

Economic and Social Research Council. (2015). *Framework for Research Ethics 2015*. Swindon: Economic and Social Research Council.

Education Scotland. (2014). *Supporting learners: Children and young people from Service families* (Learning and Teaching Resource). Edinburgh: Education Scotland.

Edwards, R., & Alldred, P. (1999). Children and young people's views of social research: the case of research on home-school relations. *Childhood*, 6(2), 261-281.

Edwards, R., Miller, K., & Priestley, M. (2009). Curriculum-making in school and college: The case of hospitality. *The Curriculum Journal*, 20(1), 27-42.

Engel, R. C., Gallagher, L. B., & Lyle, D. S. (2010). Military deployments and children's academic achievement: Evidence from Department of Defence education activity schools. *Economics of Education Review*, 29(1), 73-82.

Eodanable, M., & Lauchlan, F. (2012). Promoting positive emotional health of children of transient armed forces families. *School Psychology International*, 33(1), 22-38.

- Fargas-Malet, M., McSherry, D., Larkin, E., & Robinson, C. (2010). Research with children: Methodological issues and innovative techniques. *Journal of Early Childhood Research, 8*(2), 175-192.
- Feely, M. (2016). Disability studies after the ontological turn: A return to the material world and material bodies without a return to essentialism. *Disability & Society, 31*(7), 863–883.
- Finkel, L. B., Kelley, M. L., & Ashby, J. (2003). Geographic mobility, family, and maternal variables as related to the psychosocial adjustment of military children. *Military Medicine, 168*(12), 1019–1024.
- Flake, E. M., Davis, B. E., Johnson, P. L., & Middleton, L. S. (2009). The psychosocial effects of deployment on military children. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics, 30*(4), 271–278.
- Florian, L., & Beaton, M. (2018). Inclusive pedagogy in action: getting it right for every child. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 22*(8), 870-884.
- Fossey, M. (2012). *Unsung heroes: Developing a better understanding of the emotional support needs of Service families*. London: Centre for Mental Health.
- Fox, N. J., & Alldred, P. (2015a). New materialist social inquiry: Designs, methods and the research-assemblage. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 18*(4), 399–414.
- Fox, N. J., & Alldred, P. (2015b). Inside the research-assemblage: New materialism and the micropolitics of social inquiry. *Sociological Research Online, 20*(2), 6.
- Fox, N. J., & Alldred, P. (2017). *Sociology and the new materialism: Theory, research, action*. London: Sage.
- Fox, N. J., & Ward, K. J. (2008). What are health identities and how may we study them? *Sociology of Health & Illness, 30*(7), 1007–1021.

- Gallacher, L. A., & Gallagher, M. (2008). Methodological immaturity in childhood research? Thinking through participatory methods. *Childhood, 15*(4), 499–516.
- Garcia, E., De Pedro, K. T., Astor, R. A., Lester, P., & Benbenishty, R. (2015). FOCUS school-based skill-building groups: Training and implementation. *Journal of Social Work Education, 51*(Supl. 1), S102–S116.
- Gibson, B. E., Mistry, B., Smith, B., Yoshida, K. K., Abbott, D., Lindsay, S., & Hamdani, Y. (2013). The integrated use of audio diaries, photography, and interviews in research with disabled young men. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 12*, 383–402.
- Gough, D., Thomas, J., & Oliver, S. (2012). Clarifying differences between review designs and methods. *Systematic Reviews, 1*(1), 28.
- Graham, A., Powell, M. A., & Truscott, J. (2016). Facilitating student well-being: Relationships do matter. *Educational Research, 58*(4), 366–383.
- Greene, J. C. (2013). On rhizomes, lines of flight, mangles, and other assemblages. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 26*(6), 749–758.
- Greene, S., & Hogan, D. (2005). *Researching children's experience: Approaches and methods*. London: Sage Publications.
- Greig, A. D., Taylor, J., & MacKay, T. (2013). *Doing research with children: A practical guide*. London: Sage.
- Guillemin, M. (2004). Understanding illness: Using drawings as a research method. *Qualitative health research, 14*(2), 272-289.
- Harris, D. B., & Goodenough, F. L. (1963). *Goodenough: Harris drawing test manual*. Harcourt, Brace & World.

Harrison, D., Robson, K., Albanese, P., Sanders, C., & Newburn-Cook, C. (2011). The impact of shared location on the mental health of military and civilian adolescents in a community affected by frequent deployments: A research note. *Armed Forces & Society, 37*(3), 550–560.

Harrison, J., & Vannest, K. J. (2008). Educators supporting families in times of crisis: Military reserve deployments. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth, 52*(4), 17–24.

Hill, L. (2012). *Revealing lives: A qualitative study with children and young people affected by parental alcohol problems*. Doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh.

Hill, M. (2006). Children's voices on ways of having a voice. *Childhood, 13*(1), 69–89. doi: 10.1177/0907568206059972

Hill, M., Laybourn, A., & Borland, M. (1996). Engaging with primary-aged children about their emotions and well-being: methodological considerations. *Children & Society, 10*(2), 129–144.

Hogg, J., Hart, A., & Collins, Z. V. (2014). Service family support – a small-scale project of educational psychologists working with parents. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 30*(2), 167–180. doi:10.1080/02667363.2014.899488

Hohti, R., & Karlsson, L. (2014). Lollipop stories: Listening to children's voices in the classroom and narrative ethnographical research. *Childhood, 21*(4), 548–562.

Holland, S., Renold, E., Ross, N. J., & Hillman, A. (2010). Power, agency and participatory agendas: A critical exploration of young people's engagement in participative qualitative research. *Childhood, 17*(3), 360–375.

Holligan, C., Hanson, L., Henderson, G., & Adams, M. (2014). The 'care' of children in need in contemporary Scotland: The role of positivism and performance indicators in official imaginings of childhood and wellbeing. *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care, 13*(1).

- Horton, J., & Kraftl, P. (2006). Not just growing up, but going on: Materials, spacings, bodies, situations. *Children's Geographies*, 4(3), 259–276.
- House of Commons Defence Committee. (2006). *Educating Service Children: Eleventh Report of Session 2005–06* (HC 1054). London: The Stationery Office.
- House of Commons Defence Committee. (2013). *The armed forces covenant in action? Part 3: Educating the children of service personnel* (HC 586, No. 4). London: The Stationery Office.
- Houston, J. B., Pfefferbaum, B., Sherman, M. D., Melson, A. G., Jeon-Slaughter, H., Brand, M. W., & Jarman, Y. (2009). Children of deployed National Guard troops: Perceptions of parental deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom. *Psychiatric Annals*, 39(8).
- Huebner, A. J., Mancini, J. A., Wilcox, R. M., Grass, S. R., & Grass, G. A. (2007). Parental deployment and youth in military families: Exploring uncertainty and ambiguous loss. *Family Relations*, 56(2), 112–122.
- Hultman, K., & Lenz Taguchi, H. (2010). Challenging anthropocentric analysis of visual data: A relational materialist methodological approach to educational research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 23(5), 525–542.
- Humes, W. (2011). Creativity and wellbeing in education: Possibilities, tensions and personal journeys. *Teacher Education Advancement Network Journal (TEAN Journal)*, 2(1).
- Hutchings, H. A., Evans, A., Barnes, P., Demmler, J., Heaven, M., Hyatt, M. A., ... & Rodgers, S. E. (2013). Do children who move home and school frequently have poorer educational outcomes in their early years at school? An anonymised cohort study. *PLOS ONE*, 8(8), e70601.
- Ivinson, G., & Renold, E. (2013). Valleys' girls: re-theorising bodies and agency in a semi-rural post-industrial locale. *Gender and Education*, 25(6), 704-721.

Jackson, A. Y. (2003). Rhizovocality. *Qualitative studies in education*, 16(5), 693-710.

Jackson, A. Y. (2010). Deleuze and the girl. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 23(5), 579–587.

Jackson, A. Y., & Mazzei, L. A. (2012). *Thinking with theory in qualitative research: Viewing data across multiple perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Jackson, A. Y., & Mazzei, L. A. (Eds.). (2008). *Voice in qualitative inquiry: Challenging conventional, interpretive, and critical conceptions in qualitative research*. Routledge.

Jagger, J. C., & Lederer, S. (2014). Impact of geographic mobility on military children's access to special education services. *Children & Schools*, 36(1), 15–22.

Jain, V., Stevelink, S. A. M., & Fear, N. T. (2016). What are the best and worst things about having a father in UK Armed Forces? Analysis of free text responses. *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps*, 163(2). doi: 10.1136/jramc-2015-000487

James, A. (2007). Giving voice to children's voices: Practices and problems, pitfalls and potentials. *American anthropologist*, 109(2), 261-272.

James, A., & Prout, A. (1997). Re-presenting childhood: Time and transition in the study of childhood. In A. James, & A. Prout (Eds.). *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood* (pp. 230–250). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

James, A., Jenks, C. & Prout, A. (1998). *Theorising childhood*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kellett, M. (2005). *Children as active researchers: a new research paradigm for the 21st century?* UK: ESRC.

- Kelley, M. L., Hock, E., Smith, K. M., Jarvis, M. S., Bonney, J. F., & Gaffney, M. A. (2001). Internalizing and externalizing behavior of children with enlisted Navy mothers experiencing military-induced separation. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 40*(4), 464–471.
- Kilpatrick, R., McCartan, C., McAlister, S., & McKeown, P. (2007). 'If I am brutally honest, research has never appealed to me... 'The problems and successes of a peer research project. *Educational Action Research, 15*(3), 351–369.
- Kiuppis, F., & Hausstätter, R. S. (Eds.). (2015). *Inclusive education twenty years after Salamanca*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Knobloch, L. K., Pusateri, K. B., Ebata, A. T., & McGlaughlin, P. C. (2012). Experiences of military youth during a family member's deployment: Changes, challenges, and opportunities. *Youth & Society, 47*(3), pp. 319–342.
- Komulainen, S. (2007). The ambiguity of the child's 'voice' in social research. *Childhood, 14*(1), 11–28.
- Kuby, C. R. (2017). Why a paradigm shift of 'more than human ontologies' is needed: Putting to work poststructural and posthuman theories in writers' studio. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 30*(9), 877–896.
- Lather, P. (1993). Fertile obsession: Validity after poststructuralism. *The Sociological Quarterly, 34*(4), 673–693.
- Lather, P., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2013). Post-qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 26*(6), 629–633.
- Law, J. (2004). *After method: Mess in social science research*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Leander, K. M., & Rowe, D. W. (2006). Mapping literacy spaces in motion: A rhizomatic analysis of a classroom literacy performance. *Reading Research Quarterly, 41*(4), 428–460.

Lenz Taguchi, H. L. (2011). Investigating learning, participation and becoming in early childhood practices with a relational materialist approach. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 1(1), 36–50.

Lenz Taguchi, H. L. (2012). A diffractive and Deleuzian approach to analysing interview data. *Feminist Theory*, 13(3), 265–281.

Lenz Taguchi, H., & Palmer, A. (2013). A more 'livable' school? A diffractive analysis of the performative enactments of girls' ill-/well-being with (in) school environments. *Gender and Education*, 25(6), 671–687.

Lester, L., Waters, S., Spears, B., Epstein, M., Watson, J., & Wenden, E. (2015). Parenting adolescents: developing strategies for FIFO parents. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 24(12), 3757-3766.

Lester, P., & Flake, E. (2013). *How wartime military service affects children and families*. *The Future of Children*, 121-141.

Lester, P., Liang, L. J., Milburn, N., Mogil, C., Woodward, K., Nash, W., ... & Beardslee, W. (2016). Evaluation of a family-centered preventive intervention for military families: Parent and child longitudinal outcomes. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 55(1), 14–24.

Lester, P., Peterson, K., Reeves, J., Knauss, L., Glover, D., Mogil, C., ... & Beardslee, W. (2010). The long war and parental combat deployment: Effects on military children and at-home spouses. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 49(4), 310–320.

Levinsson, M., & Prøitz, T. S. (2017). The (non-) use of configurative reviews in education. *Education Inquiry*, 8(3), 209–231.

Lijadi, A. A., & Van Schalkwyk, G. J. (2017). Place identity construction of Third Culture Kids: Eliciting voices of children with high mobility lifestyle. *Geoforum*, (81), 120-128.

Lucier-Greer, M., Arnold, A. L., Grimsley, R. N., Ford, J. L., Bryant, C., & Mancini, J. A. (2016). Parental military service and adolescent well-being: Mental health, social connections and coping among youth in the USA. *Child & Family Social Work, 21*(4), 421–432.

Lyle, D. S. (2006). Using military deployments and job assignments to estimate the effect of parental absences and household relocations on children's academic achievement. *Journal of Labor Economics, 24*(2), 319–350.

MacLure, M. (2013). Researching without representation? Language and materiality in post-qualitative methodology. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 26*(6), 658–667.

MacLure, M., Holmes, R., Jones, L., & MacRae, C. (2010). Silence as resistance to analysis: Or, on not opening one's mouth properly. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(6), 492–500.

Mancini, J. A., Bowen, G. L., O'Neal, C. W., & Arnold, A. L. (2015). Relationship provisions, self-efficacy and youth well-being in military families. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 40*, 17–25.

Mannion, G. (2007). Going spatial, going relational: Why 'listening to children' and children's participation needs reframing. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 28*(3), 405–420.

Mannion, G. (2018) Assemblage Theory and Environmental and Sustainability Education: New Materialist Approaches to Research. Paper presented at the *European Educational Research Conference: Inclusion and Exclusion: Resources for Educational Research*, Bolzano, Italy, September.

Mannion, G., Adey, C. & Lynch, J. (2010). *Intergenerational place-based education: Where schools, communities, and nature meet*. Stirling: University of Stirling for Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice.

Mannion, Sowerby, & I'Anson (2015). How young people's participation in school supports achievement and attainment. Edinburgh: Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland.

Masny, D. (2013). Rhizoanalytic pathways in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 19(5), 339–348.

Mauthner, N. S., & Doucet, A. (2003). Reflexive accounts and accounts of reflexivity in qualitative data analysis. *Sociology*, 37(3), 413–431.

May, T. (2005). *Gilles Deleuze: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mayall, B. (Ed.). (1994). *Children's childhoods: Observed and experienced*. New York: The Falmer Press.

Mayes, E. (2016). Shifting research methods with a becoming-child ontology: Co-theorising puppet production with high school students. *Childhood*, 23(1), 105–122.

Mays, N., & Pope, C. (2000). Assessing quality in qualitative research. *British Medical Journal*, 320(7226), 50–52.

Mazzei, L. A. (2013). A voice without organs: Interviewing in posthumanist research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 26(6), 732–740.

Mazzei, L. A., & Jackson, A. Y. (2017). Voice in the agentic assemblage. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 49(11), 1090–1098.

Mazzei, L. A., & McCoy, K. (2010). Thinking with Deleuze in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 23, 503–509.

- McCluskey, G., Brown, J., Munn, P., Lloyd, G., Hamilton, L., Sharp, S., & Macleod, G. (2013). 'Take more time to actually listen': students' reflections on participation and negotiation in school. *British educational research journal*, 39(2), 287-301.
- McCoy, K. (2012). Toward a methodology of encounters: Opening to complexity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 18(9), 762-772.
- McLeod, K. (2014). Orientating to assembling: Qualitative inquiry for more-than-human worlds. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 13(1), 377-394.
- Mehana, M., & Reynolds, A. J. (2004). School mobility and achievement: A meta-analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 26(1), 93-119.
- Merrell, F. (2003). *Sensing corporeally: Toward a posthuman understanding*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Messiou, K. (2012). Collaborating with children in exploring marginalisation: an approach to inclusive education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16(2), 1311-1322.
- Messiou, K., & Jones, L. (2015). Pupil mobility: Using students' voices to explore their experiences of changing schools. *Children & Society*, 29(4), 255-265.
- Ministry of Defence & Department for Education. (2009). *Guidance: Service children in state schools 2013*. Upavon: Ministry of Defence. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/service-children-in-state-schools-handbook/service-children-in-state-schools-handbook-2013>
- Ministry of Defence. (2008). *The nation's commitment: Cross-government support for our armed forces, their families and veterans* (Cm 7424). London: The Stationery Office. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nations-commitment-cross-government-support-for-our-armed-forces-their-families-and-veterans>

Ministry of Defence. (2011). *The Armed Forces Covenant*. London: The Stationery Office.

Ministry of Defence. (2012). *The Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2012*. London: The Stationery Office.

Ministry of Defence. (2013). *The Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2013*. London: The Stationery Office.

Ministry of Defence. (2015). *The Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2015*. London: The Stationery Office.

Ministry of Defence. (2016a). *MOD Education Support Fund: 2017 Support and Guidance*. Upavon: Directorate Children & Young People, Ministry of Defence. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-support-fund-for-schools-with-service-children-grant-application-form>

Ministry of Defence. (2016b). *The Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2016*. London: The Stationery Office.

Ministry of Defence. (2016c). *Service pupil premium: Examples of best practice*. Upavon: Directorate Children and Young People and Ministry of Defence.

Ministry of Defence. (2017a). *Tri-service families continuous attitude survey 2017: Main report*. London: The Stationery Office. Retrieved from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/632455/Tri-Service_Families_Continuous_Attitude_Survey_2017_Main_report.pdf

Ministry of Defence. (2017b). *The Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2017*. London: The Stationery Office.

Mmari, K. N., Bradshaw, C. P., Sudhinaraset, M., & Blum, R. (2010). Exploring the role of social connectedness among military youth: Perceptions from youth,

parents, and school personnel. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 39(5), 351–366. doi: 10.1007/s10566-010-9109-3

Mmari, K., Roche, K. M., Sudhinaraset, M., & Blum, R. (2009). When a parent goes off to war: Exploring the issues faced by adolescents and their families. *Youth & Society*, 40(4), 455–475.

Moeller, J. D., Culler, E. D., Hamilton, M. D., Aronson, K. R., & Perkins, D. F. (2015). The effects of military-connected parental absence on the behavioural and academic functioning of children: a literature review. *Journal of Children's Services*, 10(3), 291–306.

Morris, A. S., & Age, T. R. (2009). Adjustment among youth in military families: The protective roles of effortful control and maternal social support. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 30(6), 695–707.

Morrow, V. (2008). Ethical dilemmas in research with children and young people about their social environments. *Children's Geographies*, 6(1), 49–61.

Morrow, V., & Richards, M. (1996). The ethics of social research with children: An overview 1. *Children & Society*, 10(2), 90–105.

Mulderrigg, J. (n. d.). *Educating children from Armed Forces families in Scottish schools: The implications of interrupted learning for children, schools and communities*. Edinburgh: Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity, The University of Edinburgh.

Myers, M. (2018). Gypsy students in the UK: The impact of 'mobility' on education. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 21(3), 353–369.

National Audit Office. (2013). *The education of Service children: Findings of a National Audit Office consultation*. London: National Audit Office.

- Noret, N., Mayor, H., Al-Afaleq, H., Lingard, S., & Mair, E. (2014). *The educational attainment of Army children*. York: York St John University.
- Norford, B. C., & Medway, F. J. (2002). Adolescents' mobility histories and present social adjustment. *Psychology in the Schools*, 39(1), 51-62.
- Noyes, A. (2004). Video diary: A method for exploring learning dispositions. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 34(2), 193–209.
- O’Kane, C. (2008). The development of participatory techniques: Facilitating children’s views about decisions which affect them. In P. Christensen, & A. James. *Research with Children* (pp. 141–171). New York: Routledge.
- O’Neill, J. (2011). *Service children: A guide for education and welfare professionals*. Gamlingay: Bright Pen (Authors Online).
- Ofsted. (2011). *Children in Service families*. Manchester: Ofsted. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-in-service-families>
- Ohye, B., Kelly, H., Chen, Y., Zakarian, R. J., Simon, N. M., & Bui, E. (2016). Staying Strong With Schools: A civilian school-based intervention to promote resilience for military-connected children. *Military Medicine*, 181(8), 872–877.
- Paley, B., Lester, P., & Mogil, C. (2013). Family systems and ecological perspectives on the impact of deployment on military families. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 16(3), 245–265.
- Park, N. (2011). Military children and families: Strengths and challenges during peace and war. *American Psychologist*, 66(1), 65–72. doi: 10.1037/a0021249
- Percy-Smith, B. (2006). From consultation to social learning in community participation with young people. *Children Youth and Environments*, 16(2), 153–179.

Percy-Smith, B. (2018). Participation as learning for change in everyday spaces: Enhancing meaning and effectiveness using action research. In C. Baraldi, & T. Cockburn (Eds.). *Theorising Childhood: Citizenship, rights and participation* (pp. 159–186). Cham: Springer International Publishing AG.

Pexton, S., Farrants, J., & Yule, W. (2018). The impact of fathers' military deployment on child adjustment. The support needs of primary school children and their families separated during active military service: A pilot study. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 23(1), 110–124.

Pincus, S. H., House, R., Christenson, J., & Adler, L. E. (2001). The emotional cycle of deployment: A military family perspective. *US Army Medical Department Journal*, 4(5), 6.

Pink, S. (2011). Multimodality, multisensoriality and ethnographic knowing: Social semiotics and the phenomenology of perception. *Qualitative research*, 11(3), 261–276.

Pribesh, S., & Downey, D. B. (1999). Why are residential and school moves associated with poor school performance? *Demography*, 36(4), 521–534.

Price-Robertson, R., Manderson, L., & Duff, C. (2017). Mental ill health, recovery and the family assemblage. *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry*, 41(3), 407–430.

Prosser, J. D. (2012). Visual methodology. Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials, 177.

Prout, A. (2011). Taking a step away from modernity: Reconsidering the new sociology of childhood. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 1(1), 4–14.

Punch, S. (2002a). Interviewing strategies with young people: The 'secret box', stimulus material and task-based activities. *Children & Society*, 16, 45 – 56.

- Punch, S. (2002b). Research with children: The same or different from research with adults? *Childhood*, 9(3), 321–341.
- Quarmby, T. (2014). Sport and physical activity in the lives of looked-after children: A 'hidden group' in research, policy and practice. *Sport, Education and Society*, 19(7), 944–958.
- Rautio, P. (2013). Children who carry stones in their pockets: On autotelic material practices in everyday life. *Children's Geographies*, 11(4), 394–408.
- Renold, E. (2002). Using vignettes in qualitative research. *Building Research Capacity*, 3(3-5).
- Renold, E. (2018). 'Feel what I feel': making da(r)ta with teen girls for creative activism on how sexual violence matters. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 27(1), 37-55.
- Renold, E., & Ivinson, G. (2014). Horse-girl assemblages: Towards a post-human cartography of girls' desire in an ex-mining valleys community. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 35(3), 361–376.
- Renold, E., & Ringrose, J. (2011). Schizoid subjectivities? Re-theorizing teen girls' sexual cultures in an era of 'sexualization'. *Journal of Sociology*, 47(4), 389–409.
- Richardson, L., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2005). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 959–978). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Ringrose, J. (2011). Beyond discourse? Using Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis to explore affective assemblages, heterosexually striated space, and lines of flight online and at school. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 43(6), 598–618.
- Ringrose, J., & Renold, E. (2014). "F** k Rape!" Exploring affective intensities in a feminist research assemblage. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(6), 772–780.

- Robson, K., Albanese, P., Harrison, D., & Sanders, C. (2013). School engagement among youth in Canadian forces families: A comparative analysis. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 59(3), 363–381.
- Rose, G. (2016). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials*. London: Sage.
- Rosiek, J. L. (2013). Pragmatism and post-qualitative futures. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 26(6), 692–705.
- Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund. (2009). *The overlooked casualties of conflict*. Portsmouth: Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund.
- Ruff, S. B., & Keim, M. A. (2014). Revolving doors: The impact of multiple school transitions on Military children. *Professional Counselor*, 4(2), 103–113.
- Schäfer, N., & Yarwood, R. (2008). Involving young people as researchers: Uncovering multiple power relations among youths. *Children's Geographies*, 6(2), 121–135.
- Schagen, I. (2007). Service children, mobility and school performance. *Education Journal*, 105, 41.
- Scottish Executive. (2004). *A Curriculum for Excellence: The Curriculum Review Group*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.
- Scottish Government. (2012). *Our Commitments: Scottish Government Support for the Armed Forces Community in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.
- Scottish Government. (2016a). *Renewing our commitments*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.
- Scottish Government. (2016b). *National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education – Achieving excellence and equity*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

- Scottish Government. (2017). *Scottish Government support for Veterans and the Armed Forces community in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.
- Segal, M. W. (1986). The military and the family as greedy institutions. *Armed Forces & Society*, 13(1), 9–38.
- Simmons, C., Graham, A., & Thomas, N. (2015). Imagining an ideal school for wellbeing: Locating student voice. *Journal of Educational Change*, 16(2), 129-144.
- Skelton, T. (2008). Research with children and young people: Exploring the tensions between ethics, competence and participation. *Children's Geographies*, 6(1), 21–36.
- Skomorovsky, A., & Bullock, A. (2017). The impact of deployment on children from Canadian Military families. *Armed Forces & Society*, 43(4), 654–673.
- Springgay, S., & Truman, S. E. (2018). On the need for methods beyond proceduralism: Speculative middles, (in) tensions, and response-ability in research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 24(3), 203–214.
- Spyrou, S. (2011). The limits of children's voices: From authenticity to critical, reflexive representation. *Childhood*, 18(2), 151–165.
- Spyrou, S. (2016). Researching children's silences: Exploring the fullness of voice in childhood research. *Childhood*, 23(1), 7-21.
- St Pierre, E. A. (2011). Post qualitative research: The critique and the coming after. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 611–626). London: Sage.
- St. Pierre, E. A. (1997). Methodology in the fold and the irruption of transgressive data. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 10(2), 175-189.

- St. Pierre, E. A. (2013). The appearance of data. *Cultural Studies? Critical Methodologies*, 13(4), 223–227.
- St. Pierre, E. A. (2014). A brief and personal history of post qualitative research: Toward ‘post inquiry’. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 30(2), 1–19.
- St. Pierre, E. A., & Jackson, A. Y. (2014). Qualitative data analysis after coding. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(6), 715–719.
- Stevenson, M. (2010). Flexible and responsive research: Developing rights-based emancipatory disability research methodology in collaboration with young adults with Down syndrome. *Australian Social Work*, 63(1), 35–50.
- Strand, S., & Demie, F. (2007). Pupil mobility, attainment and progress in secondary school. *Educational Studies*, 33(3), 313–331. doi: 10.1080/03055690701423184
- Strom, K. J. (2015). Teaching as assemblage: Negotiating learning and practice in the first year of teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 66(4), 321–333.
- Sullivan, K. (2014). An application of family stress theory to clinical work with military families and other vulnerable populations. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 43(1), 89–87.
- Thijs, A. & van den Akker, J. (2009). *Curriculum in development*. Enschede, the Netherlands: Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development.
- Thomas, N. (2012). Love, rights and solidarity: Studying children’s participation using Honneth’s theory of recognition. *Childhood*, 19(4), 453-466.
- Thomas, N., & O’Kane, C. (1998). The ethics of participatory research with children. *Children & Society*, 12(5), 336-348.

Thomas, N., & Stoecklin, D. (2018). Recognition and Capability: A New Way to Understand How Children Can Achieve Their Rights?. In *Theorising Childhood* (pp. 73-94). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Tisdall, E. K. M., & Punch, S. (2012). Not so 'new'? Looking critically at childhood studies. *Children's Geographies*, 10(3), 249–264.

Tisdall, E. K. M., Davis, J. M., & Gallagher, M. (2009). *Research with children and young people: Research design, methods and analysis*. London: Sage.

Topping, K. (2011). Primary–secondary transition: Differences between teachers' and children's perceptions. *Improving Schools*, 14(3), 268–285.

Torrance, H. (2017). Experimenting with qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 23(1), 69–76.

Tucker, L. A., & Govender, K. (2017). Ethical considerations for research involving boys diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. *Early Child Development and Care*, 187(7), 1147–1156.

UK Government. (2012). *Children's Education Advisory Service*. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childrens-education-advisory-service>

UK Parliament. (2018). *Education Support Fund: Written statement – HCWS908*. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2018-07-24/HCWS908/>

United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. New York: UNICEF.


Waterhouse, M. C. (2011). Experiences of multiple literacies and peace: A rhizoanalysis of becoming in immigrant language classrooms. Doctoral dissertation, Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa.

- Weber, E. G., & Weber, D. K. (2005). Geographic relocation frequency, resilience, and military adolescent behavior. *Military Medicine*, 170(7), 638–642.
- Whatmore, S. (2003). Generating materials. In M. Pryke, G. Rose, & S. Whatmore (Eds.). *Using social theory: Thinking through research* (pp. 89–104). London: Sage.
- Whatmore, S. (2006). Materialist returns: practising cultural geography in and for a more-than-human world. *Cultural geographies*, 13(4), 600-609.
- White, C. J., de Burgh, H. T., Fear, N. T., & Iversen, A. C. (2011). The impact of deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan on Military children: A review of the literature. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 23(2), 210–217.
- Wilson, A. N. (2016). *What is, and what might be, learned from images shared during Twitter conversations among professionals?* Doctoral thesis, University of Stirling.
- Woodhead, M. (2009). Child development and the development of childhood. In J. Qvortrup, W. Corsaro, & M. Honig (Eds.). *The Palgrave handbook of childhood studies* (pp. 46–61). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Youdell, D. (2010). Pedagogies of becoming in an end-of-the-line ‘special’ school. *Critical Studies in Education*, 51(3), 313–324.


Appendices

Appendix 1: Information Sheets

Information Leaflet (School)



Royal Caledonian
Education Trust
Established 1978



UNIVERSITY of
STIRLING



E · S · R · C
ECONOMIC
& SOCIAL
RESEARCH
COUNCIL

Exploring the Educational Experiences of Pupils with Parents in the Armed Forces
Information Sheet for Schools

Your school is being invited to take part in an exciting new pilot study. Please read the information below to find out more.

What is the study about?
The study aims to explore how pupils from armed forces families describe their experiences in school. It will explore what kinds of things make a positive difference to pupil's educational experiences. This research is not about evaluating the provision that schools offer. It is focused on the children's views and thoughts. This is an under-researched area and it is hoped the findings will be helpful for teachers and schools across the UK.

Who is doing the study?
My name is Evelyn Cook and I'm carrying out this research as part of my PhD in Education at the University of Stirling.

My interest in this topic developed from my previous role as a Research Assistant funded by the MOD Education Support Fund.

Who is funding this research?
The research is a joint project funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Royal Caledonian Education Trust. RCET is a Scottish charity providing support to children of parents who have served or are serving in the Armed Forces.

What does the study involve?
This is the first stage of the project and as a pilot it's important for trying out the planned research design.

I am really keen to make sure the research methods I use are fun, engaging and effective. To help with this I would like to invite pupils from armed forces families to take part in some activities.

What are the activities?
There are 5 activities that pupils can choose to take part in:

- Individual or paired discussions involving creating drawings/digital graphics
- Individual or paired discussions focusing on an object pupils choose to bring along
- Small group discussions using fictional stories
- Video Diaries created in school by pupils
- Pupil to pupil interviewing about experiences of being a pupil from an armed forces family

When will the activities take place?
The activities will take place during the school day over a period of 4 weeks. I hope

Information Leaflet (School)

to be in school for around 10 days but will of course remain flexible to fit in with your school's timetable and requirements. I will work with class teachers to avoid any potential disruption.

How will information from the study be recorded?

With agreement from parents and pupils the discussions will be audio recorded and photographs may be taken of the objects children bring or the drawings produced.

Confidentiality

All responses will be kept strictly confidential. Names of pupils and any identifiable information about schools will not be revealed in any publications.

I will not tell anyone what individual pupils say, unless I am concerned that there is risk of someone being harmed.

Use of Videos

Video recordings created during the video diaries activity will only be viewed by me and my supervisor. With permission from

parents and pupils, it may be useful to use some of the videos to illustrate findings at Educational conferences or workshops.

What will happen at the end of the project?

The findings from this project will be written as part of a PhD thesis. I will talk at conferences about the research and write articles for others in Education.

A key aim of this research is to support people working with pupils from armed forces families. I therefore intend to use what I have learned to support RCET with the development of their Education Programme.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research is supervised by Dr Christine Stephen and Dr Greg Mannion at the School of Education, University of Stirling. This study has been approved by the School of Education, University of Stirling Research Ethics Committee.

Please feel free to ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like any more information. You can contact me at e.r.cook@stir.ac.uk

Any concerns about the project can be sent to Professor Malcolm MacLeod, Head of School of Education – University of Stirling, Stirling, FK9 4LA / malcolm.macleod@stir.ac.uk



Exploring the Educational Experiences of Pupils with Parents in the Armed Forces

Parental Information Sheet

Your child is being invited to take part in a research study and this leaflet explains all about it.

Who is doing the study?

My name is Evelyn Cook and I'm carrying out this research as part of my PhD in Education at the University of Stirling.

The research is a joint project funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council and Royal Caledonian Education Trust. RCET is a Scottish charity providing support to children of parents who have served or are serving in the Armed Forces (also see enclosed leaflet).

What are the aims of the study?

The study aims to explore how pupils from armed forces families describe their experiences in school. It will explore what kinds of things make a positive difference pupil's educational experiences. This is an under-researched area and it is hoped the findings will be helpful for teachers and schools.

What will happen?

This is the first stage of the project and as a pilot it's important for trying out the planned research design.

I am really keen to make sure the research methods I use are fun, engaging and effective. To help with this I would like to invite your child to take part in some activities. These activities will take place during the school day within the school.

What are the activities?

There are 5 ways I will listen to pupils about their experiences. You can choose for your child to take part in all or some of these.

- Individual or paired discussions involving creating drawings/digital graphics
- Individual or paired discussions focusing on an object pupils choose to bring along
- Small group discussions using fictional stories
- Video Diaries created in school by pupils
- Pupil to pupil interviewing about experiences of being a pupil from an armed forces family

With agreement from pupils the discussions will be audio recorded and photographs may be taken of the objects children bring or the drawings produced.

Does my child have to take part?

It's entirely up to you and your child if you want to take part. Your child can stop taking part at any point and I'll always make sure they're happy to take part.

Confidentiality

All responses will be kept strictly confidential. I will not use the names of any

Information Leaflet (Parent)

pupils or schools in any publications. I will not tell anyone what individual pupils say.

Use of Videos

Video recordings created during the video diaries activity will only be viewed by me and my supervisor. With your permission, it may be useful to use some of the videos to illustrate findings at Educational conferences or workshops. You can choose whether you are happy with this.

What will happen at the end of the project?

The findings from this project will be written as part of a PhD thesis. I will talk at conferences about the research and write articles for others in Education.

A key aim of this research is to support people working with pupils from armed

forces families. I therefore intend to use what I have learned to support RCET with the development of their Education Programme.

Who has reviewed the study?

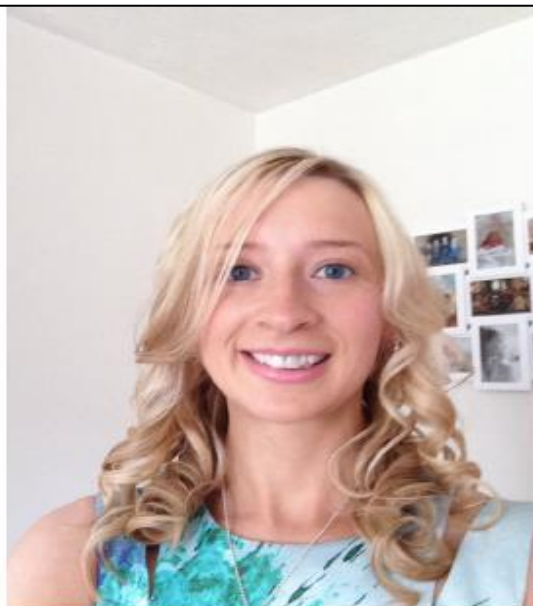
This study has been approved by the School of Education, University of Stirling Research Ethics Committee.

Next Steps

If you are happy for your child to take part, please complete the enclosed consent form and return this to the school.

Please feel free to ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like any more information. You can contact me at e.r.cook@stir.ac.uk or via [Head Teacher].

Any concerns about the project can be sent to Professor Malcolm MacLeod, Head of School of Education – University of Stirling, Stirling, FK9 4LA / malcolm.macleod@stir.ac.uk



A Research Project about Your Experiences in School

Project Title:
Exploring the educational experiences of young people from armed forces families

Who am I?

Evelyn Cook

I'm a PhD Researcher at the University of Stirling.

Any questions?
Email me at:
e.r.cook@stir.ac.uk

Or
Speak to a teacher in your school

Scotland's Armed Forces Children's Charity

This project started because this charity (RCET) wanted more information about the school experiences of children and young people with a parent in the armed forces.

I want to support the Trust in helping schools and teachers make sure you have good experiences in school.

This project will help teachers, schools and others think about what's important to you

What do you think?

What is this project all about?

This project is about exploring your views of your experiences in school. Nobody really knows what it's like to be a pupil with a parent in the armed forces.

I'm interested in what kinds of things matter to you and what things help you in school. There are no right or wrong answers.

Why am I being asked to take part?

Your school has agreed to take part in this project. Other pupils with a parent in the armed forces have been sent a leaflet too. I'm interested in meeting with you even if you've had no problems in school.

What will taking part involve?

Different activities will be happening in your school. Most activities involve talking to me. You can choose to talk to me individually, with a friend or in a group.



The Activities...

You can choose to take part in all or some of these...

❖ "SHOW & TELL"

Bring along something that's important to you E.G. book, tablet, music, photo, clothing, ornament, scrapbook...ANYTHING!

❖ Design a picture

Create a picture using the either iPad or paper about your experiences in school

❖ Group Discussions

Respond to different scenarios and discuss your answers with other pupils

❖ Video Diaries

Make a video recording about your experiences in school

❖ Interview another pupil

Design interview questions and record your interview with another pupil

What will you ask?

During our activities, I'll ask you about events, places, things and people that make a positive difference to your experiences in school. I'll also ask you to suggest if I could improve the activities.

If you agree, I'll audio record our discussions - so I don't forget what you've said! It would be helpful to share some video clips with schools across the UK - but only with your agreement.



Do I have to take part?

It's your choice if you want to take part and you can stop taking part at any point - either for a moment or for the whole project.

Will anyone know what I've said?

No, everything we talk about is confidential. I'll not tell anyone what you've said unless I'm worried that you or someone else is at risk of serious harm.

How will you tell others about the findings?

I'll not use your name. I'll also change the name of your school and other people you might talk about.

What will the information be used for?

I'll use what you and other pupils in other schools tell me to write one big report (my PhD thesis) and hopefully some smaller reports too. I'd also like to share some of the information with teachers and schools who are interested in learning more.

FINALLY ... This is an opportunity to have your views heard and hopefully you'll enjoy taking part too! If your parent agrees, I'll pick up their completed form in school and see you there soon!



Scotland's Armed Forces
Children's Charity

A Research Project about your Experiences in School

Exploring the school experiences
of children and young people
from armed forces families

Who am I?

My name is Evelyn

I am a PhD Researcher at the
University of Stirling

Any questions?

Speak to a teacher in
your school who
can help you get in
touch



Some people want to know
what it's like to be a pupil
with mum or dad in the armed
forces.

I want to support this charity
in helping schools and teachers
make sure you have good
experiences in school.

I hope this project will help
teachers, schools and others
think about what's important
to you.





Can you help?

Nobody really knows what it's like to be a pupil with a parent in the armed forces.

This project is trying to understand what pupils with a mum or dad in the Army, Navy or RAF think about their experiences of school.

I'm interested in what kinds of things matter to you. There are no right or wrong answers.



Taking Part...

If you think you want to help then you can choose to take part in all or some of the activities below which will be going on in your school.

✚ Show and Tell

Bring in something about having a mum or dad in the armed forces

✚ Create a Picture

Create a picture using an iPad (but you can draw if you want to)

✚ Group discussions

Listen to some stories and answer some questions with other pupils

✚ Video Diaries

Make a video recording about what you think or feel about your school experiences.

✚ Interview another pupil

Design some questions to ask another pupil from armed forces families.

Do I have to take part?

It's up to you if you want to take part. Choosing not to take part is ok! If you say you want to but later decide you don't want to do an activity or take part in any of the project, just let me or your teacher know.

Will my name be used?

No. I'll use another name. I'll also use another name for your school.

Will anyone know what I have said?

I will not tell anyone what you have said unless you say something that makes me worried that you or someone else may be hurt.



Appendix 2: Vignettes

Vignette 1 – Primary school - ‘Liam Vignette’

Liam is 8 years old. One afternoon, Liam’s Teacher, sets the class a special project. She says that for homework, everyone is to create their own model of what they think transport will be like in the future. Liam’s got some good ideas and knows his mum will help but he wishes his dad was around to help him create something really different and cool. His dad is in the Navy and because he’s on a top secret boat, Liam can’t phone or write to him. He’s also not sure when he’ll be coming home.

Vignette 1 – Secondary school - ‘Tom Vignette’

Tom is 13 years old and he is in S2. He is very much looking forward to next year when he will only have to do the subjects he likes! It’s the day before Tom has to submit his subject choices to his school but he is struggling to make up his mind with some of them. His mum has got good advice, but he’d like to know what his dad thinks. Thing is, he’s away at Sea at the moment and because he’s on the one of the HMS boats he can’t get in touch with him – Tom is not even sure when he’s going to come home.

Vignette 2 – Primary school - ‘Katie Vignette’

Last week, Katie found out her family were moving from Scotland to a new house in England. She was going to be moving during the summer holidays. After the summer, instead of joining all her friends in Primary 5, she was going to a new school with different pupils and unfamiliar teachers.

Vignette 2 – Secondary school - ‘Ruth Vignette’

Ruth is 12 years old. Last year, her family moved from Scotland to the South of England. Ruth had been about to go into her last year at Primary School – Primary 7 – and was looking forward to being at the top of the school. However, when Ruth moved to England she and her family were surprised to find out she would actually be going to Secondary School. This was because the school years are different across England and Scotland and it meant that Ruth missed a whole year of school.

Vignette 3 – Primary school - ‘Megan Vignette’

Part 1

Megan is 9 years old. Recently, Megan’s school set up a new after school club. The group is run by Miss Clements and anyone who has a mum or dad in the armed forces can come along. Miss Clements said that the group would help her in school and she would find out that other children also experience similar situations.

Part 2

Megan’s now being going to the after school club for a few weeks and she’s really enjoying it. They do lots of different things at the group. In fact, this week they’re going on a special trip. However, some of the other children in the school didn’t think this was fair – they said things like why did they get to go on a trip and they didn’t.

Vignette 3 – Secondary school - ‘Amy Vignette’

Part 1

Amy is 14 years old. Her dad's just come home from being away on tour and although she's happy he's home and safe, she sometimes worries because she knows he could always go away again. Her school has recently set up dedicated space in the school that pupils with parents in the armed forces can go whenever they want, just to let it all out and there's always someone friendly there that you can talk to.

Part 2

Last week, Amy was feeling a bit stressed and things had been a bit different at home since her dad came home. She decided to go along to and visit this space in her school. Some of the pupils in her class starting asking why she was allowed just to leave class. They said it was unfair that she could leave and they had to stay and do their work.

Appendix 3: Evidence of Ethical Approval



Research Project Ethical Approval DECISION FORM

To be completed by the School of Education Ethics Committee Chair or Vice-Chair.

Applicant: Evelyn Cook
Title: Exploring the Educational Experiences of Children and Young People from Armed Forces Families
IS INTERIM APPROVAL NECESSARY Yes
Interim Decision (please highlight):- Approved
Interim Approval By & Date Christine Stephen, 6 January 2016
Date Considered by SoE Ethics Committee:
Decision :-

Chair's Signature

Date