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**The Transition from the Military to Civilian Life
Becoming a Private Security Contractor after Military Service for US and UK Service leavers**

Hawks, Alison

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King's College London
Department of War Studies and Department of Defence Studies
Faculty of Social Science and Public Policy

*The Transition from the Military to Civilian Life: Becoming a Private Security
Contractor after Military Service for US and UK Service leavers*

Alison Hawks

Thesis submitted to the Department of War Studies and Department of Defence Studies for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
London, December 2014

ABSTRACT

This thesis asks the question *what role does becoming a private security contractor after military service play in an individual's transition from the military to civilian life?* Situated in sociology, this project is concerned with the role that becoming a private security contractor after military service plays in both the life course of the individual and what effect it has on their military to civilian life transition. The post-9/11 conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan created an unprecedented market for outsourcing security. Most visible of this market during this time were private security contractors. These contractors provided security for individuals, organisations, buildings and convoys – and most recently, ships. Newspapers, magazines and the internet became saturated with pictures of men in sunglasses, draped with guns. This visibility attracted intense attention resulting in the development of national law, standards and codes for the private military and security company industry. Academic inquiry has subsequently run along two broad lines; theoretical implications of outsourcing and the regulation and accountability of the PMSC industry for state sovereignty. As a result, research and examination has taken a ‘top-down’ approach, leaving the individual private security contractor – whose behaviours regulation and accountability seek to influence and regulate – absent from analysis or application. This project aims to fill this gap by addressing US and UK military veterans-turned-private security contractors by way of their transition to civilian life. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, this project examines how becoming a private security contractor after military service effects an individual's transition to civilian life.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of King's College London is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others.

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Thesis word count: 92,066

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CPO	Close Protection Officer
CRS	Career Readiness Standards
CTP	Career Transition Partnership
DoD	Department of Defense
DoL	Department of Labor
EC	Epistemic Community
ESL	Early Service Leaver
ICoC	International Code of Conduct
IVR	Involuntarily Retired
IVS	Involuntarily Separated
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MoD	Ministry of Defence
mTBI	Mild Traumatic Brain Injury
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PMSC	Private Military and Security Company
PSC.1	Private Security Company Operation and Standards of Guidance
PTSD	Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
SLC	Standard Learning Credits
TAP	Transition Assistance Program
TAP GPS	Transition Assistance Program GPS
TNC	Transnational Corporation
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
VA	Veterans Affairs
CMD	Common Mental Disorders

For my brother, Nik, my mother, Janet, and my father, Andrew.

Chapter One

Introduction

'The international commercial security circuit, or The Circuit as it's known, was a natural place for someone with my background and skills to land.' Bob Shepard, British ex-SAS soldier'

1.1 Introduction

On September 11, 2012 the US Ambassador to Libya, J. Christopher Stevens died in an attack on the US embassy in the Libyan city of Benghazi. The attackers set fire to the embassy and flames engulfed the building. When the assault began, Stevens rushed for safety to a back room where he died from asphyxiation.² Also killed were Foreign Service veteran Sean Smith, and two private security contractors, former Navy SEALs Tyrone Woods and Glen Doherty. Not a part of Ambassador Stevens' security detail, Woods and Doherty were working on contracts in Libya and rushed to the scene in an effort to save embassy workers, including Stevens.³ In the days and weeks after the attack their pictures were printed on the front page of local and national US newspapers and their images flashed across television screens. Their family and friends were interviewed in an effort to understand who these two contractors were and why, with such apparent risk, they became contractors.

By 2012 though, there had been thousands of contractors like Woods and Doherty operating in Iraq and Afghanistan with little inquiry into who they were and why they, like the two former SEALs, had chosen to become contractors. While media coverage of these two individuals was sympathetic, contractors and contracting generally enjoy little sympathy or support in popular media, with contractors popularly being identified as

¹ Bob Shepard 'The Circuit' Macmillan, London 2008, p9

² 'Libya Attack Brings Challenges for the U.S.' September 12, 2012 *New York Times*, David D. Kirkpatrick and Steven Lee Meyers, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/13/world/middleeast/us-envoy-to-libya-is-reported-killed.html?pagewanted=all>

³ See 'For Slain Contractor, A Life of Risks Overseas' September 13, 2012 *New York Times*, Jess Bidgood, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/14/world/africa/glen-doherty-killed-in-libya-fought-intolerance.html?_r=0; 'CIA Played Major Role Fighting Militants in Libya Attack' November 1, 2012 *New York Times*, Eric Schmitt, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/02/world/africa/cia-played-major-defensive-role-in-libya-attack.html?pagewanted=all>; 'SEAL Veteran with Zest for Adrenaline' September 14, 2012 *New York Times*, Timothy Pratt, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/15/world/middleeast/navy-seals-veteran-with-zest-for-adrenaline.html>

‘mercenaries.’⁴ However, the infamy of ‘Mad’ Mike Hoare and Bob Denard’s various African coup d’état’s from the 1960s to the 1990s were in fact the dying sparks of an industry that was rapidly changing.⁵ Rogue individuals and ad-hoc organisation were replaced by legitimately formed companies, boards of directors, shareholders, human resource administrators and fell under the state authority of company filing.⁶ Eligibility for private, public, and government bids now depends on the private military and security company’s (PMSC)⁷ adherence to various codes of conduct, in-house training and vetting procedures.⁸ In turn, PMSCs rely on former military personnel for skills, knowledge and experience to fulfil these contracts. Since 9/11, security contracting after military service has become a type of employment for which no additional skills or knowledge are needed; and for armed contractors, herein referred to as ‘security contractors’, prior operational experience almost always required.⁹ ¹⁰ As a result, employment as a security contractor for

⁴ This thesis does not explore the contractor versus mercenary debate as examining the role security contracting plays within an individual’s life course has little to no relation in how they are classified by international humanitarian law. However, the evolution of IHL under the UN Convention in the last ten years has given a direct acknowledgement to ‘motivation’ as cause for classification. Important to note in regards to security contractors surveyed by Volker Franke and Marc von Boemcken, is, in contradiction to the legal literature, motivation and nationalism are not mutually exclusive in today’s contractors. Originally ‘mercenaries’ were measured by their ‘profit motive’, ‘...the construction of the mercenary as a distinct group of persons with particular characteristics. A central role in this construction was the distinction draw between ‘mercenary’, who ‘is essentially motivated by material gain’, and the ‘volunteer’, ‘who is motivated by a noble idea.’ Elke Krahnmann (2012) ‘From ‘Mercenaries’ to ‘Private Security Contractors’: The (Re)Construction of Armed Security Providers in International Legal Discourses’ *Millennium Journal of International Studies* Vol.40, No.2 pp343-363; p350. Yet, Franke *et al* found the security contractors surveyed in their cohort exhibited a high degree of patriotism where 96% (n=221) agreed with the statement ‘I look upon my work as a security contractor as a ‘calling’ where I can serve my country.’ Volker Franke and Marc von Boemcken ‘Guns for Hire: Motivations and Attitudes of Private Security Contractors’ *Armed Forces and Society* Vol37, No.4 (2011) pp725-742; p732. ‘B

⁵ See for example Mike Hoare ‘Congo Mercenary’ (1967) Paladin Press, Colorado, USA; and ‘Bob Denard, mercenary and coup master, died on October 13, 2007 aged 78’ *The Economist* October 18, 2007 available at: <http://www.economist.com/node/9982943> ; Anthony Mockler ‘The Mercenaries’ (1970) Macmillan; Anthony Mockler ‘The New Mercenaries’ (1987) Paragon House. It is important to note that this does not mean ‘mercenaries’ as traditionally conceived ceased to exist as a result of the evolution of the PMSC industry. Mercenaries continue to exist, but the point here is they are not to be confused with private security contractors.

⁶ See for example, Carlos Ortiz (2010) ‘Private Armed Forces and Global Security: A Guide to the Issues’ Praeger, California, where in his discussion of a ‘working definition of PMCs’, he provides various explanations: ‘Legally established. Like firms in a more conventional sphere, PMCs pay taxes and enter into contractual and binding agreements with governments, international and nongovernmental organizations and multinational corporations. Some PMCs are also listed on stock exchanges. The debate about whether it is right or wrong to employ PMCs or allow them to operate should not be confused with their status as legally established commercial enterprises.’ p48

⁷ Throughout the literature on the privatisation of security and outsourcing, companies are referred to as Private Military Companies, Private Security Companies, Private Security Service Provider Companies, and Private Military and Security Companies. This paper uses the term Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) to refer to the employers of security contractors, who are the focus of this thesis.

⁸ See for example The Montreux Document, The International Code of Conduct, ASIS PSC.1, PSC.4, and ISO-9000.

⁹ See for example Joakim Berndtsson’s case study of the Swedish PMSC Vespa Group, where the author interviewed the Swedish Secretariat for Security Officials who stated: ‘[We] knew that if we turned to a Swedish private security company...we would get exactly the kind of staff we were

'Service leavers'¹¹ has low barriers to entry and is further incentivized by high pay in comparison to active duty wages. But, security contracting carries a high risk; security contractors are up to 4.5 times more likely to die in hostile environments than uniformed personnel.¹² In addition, as one contractor stated regarding job security, 'there's no security in security.'¹³ The conditions of low barriers to industry entry for service leavers,¹⁴ high pay, high risk, and little job security seem counterintuitive to a labour force predominantly made up of military veterans,¹⁵ where security and structure are part of the institutional core. Yet, at the height of post-9/11 contracting in 2004 there were around 54,000 native English speaking security contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan, most of whom had prior military or law-enforcement experience.¹⁶

looking for, the same training as the police and the military. Because no one gets a job with a private security company unless they have a background in the military or the police, so it is exactly the same kind of people that you get.' Joakim Berndtsson (2012) 'Security Professionals for Hire: Exploring the Many Faces of Private Security Expertise' *Millennium Journal of International Studies* Vol.40, No.2 pp303-320; p318

¹⁰ Further, most, if not all, job postings for security contractor positions specifically state the requirement of military service. Some examples include, but are not limited to, PMSCs Aegis Defence Ltd.'s website, an overseas CPO job posting stated 'essential minimum 5 years of military or law enforcement experience.' Available at <http://www.aegisworld.com> accessed February 18, 2014. PMSC Triple Canopy requires a minimum of 3 years military or law enforcement experience, <https://www.careers.triplecanopy.com/careers/> accessed on February 18, 2014

¹¹ The term 'service leaver' is used to refer to an individual who has left the military in British literature and is used interchangeably with the term 'veteran.' US literature commonly uses the term 'veteran.' This thesis uses the term service leaver and veteran interchangeably.

¹² Steven L. Schooner and Collin D. Swan 'Contractors and the Ultimate Sacrifice' (September 1, 2010) *Service Contractor* p.16, September 2010; GWU Legal Studies Research Paper No. 512; GWU Law School Public Law Research Paper 512. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1677506>

¹³ Personal interview with author March 2013 Interview 1017

¹⁴ These conditions make the barriers to entry low for this particular, specific population of military veterans and are not applicable to other market sectors, e.g. civilians with no prior military service (teachers or lawyers, etc.) trying to become a security contractor, where the barriers to entry like prior operational military service, familiarity and competence with use of weapons, experience in hostile environments would make it difficult to secure this type of work over those with prior operational military experience.

¹⁵ Most armed security contractors are military veterans, whether they are Western 'ex pats' or Third Country Nationals. Local Nationals (LNs) however, in the case of Iraq or Afghanistan, may be less representative in terms of this background as defence contractors under Coalition-led efforts were to be contracted to train and sustain the indigenous military. In this case LNs would be less likely to have military experience, and more likely to have been civilians.

¹⁶ These numbers vary, as total numbers of security contractors are unknown. The US government did not start tracking the number of contractors until 2007 and various US Department of Defense reports include contractor numbers, but are not consistent in distinguishing between Westerners, TCNs and LNs. 'In 2010 the number of armed contractors working for the multinational coalition in Iraq and Afghanistan had risen to over 30,000 and 24,000 respectively' Elke Krahmhann 'From 'Mercenaries' (2012) p344; see also Dexter Filkins and Scott Shane 'Afghan Leader to Ban Private Guards' *New York Times* August 16, 2010. Further, it is unknown the exact backgrounds of these contractors. Yet, various interviews and a search of the top ten PMSCs show that prior military and/or law-enforcement service is a requirement for the job. For government tracking, see U.S. Department of Defense Census Statistics by Fiscal Year Quarter, Contractor Support of U.S. Operations in the U.S. CENTCOM Area of Responsibility, Iraq and Afghanistan March 2014; Contingency Contracting: DOD, State, and USAID Contracts and Contractor Personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan (GAO-09-19) U.S. Government Accountability Office November 2008; T. Christian Miller ProPublica: War Contractors: The Numbers on American vs. Foreign Workers in Iraq and

This thesis examines how and why military veterans left the military to become security contractors and the role security contracting plays in their transition from the military to civilian life using qualitative and quantitative methods. It seeks to determine the effect of time spent in civilian life between leaving the military and security contracting on the transition, and also considers the extent to which the individual's social networks influenced them to become a private security contractor. Further, it examines security contractor values and attitudes, addressing the retention and recruitment of security contractors. This thesis reports how security contracting after military service has affected 45 individual's military to civilian transition, drawing further from a survey of 1,514 private security contractors in this same regard.

The precise number of private security contractors working around the world is unknown for a number of reasons, including lack of adequate auditing and transparency by the contract bid holder (e.g. governments, private organisations or individuals) and the still-opaque nature of the PMSC industry.¹⁷ Contractors can, and do, operate around the world in varying capacities.¹⁸ ¹⁹ Current estimates put English-speaking western contractors at around 45,000.²⁰ Yet, despite this small number, more contractors have died in these two

Afghanistan June 9, 2009 available at: <http://www.propublica.org/article/war-contractors-the-numbers-on-american-vs.-foreign-workers-619>

¹⁷ Peter Singer, Christopher Kinsey and Deborah Avant all referenced the particularly opaque nature of the PMSC industry that barred them to an extent from gathering comprehensive and accurate data. While the industry remains opaque to a certain degree, efforts of transparency have been made in efforts of greater regulation and accountability of the PMSC industry. This transparency, though, does not rest on the industry alone. One of the largest government contracting bodies in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US Department of Defense (DoD), developed the Synchronised Pre-deployment Operational Tracker (SPOT) 'A Web-based system that provides standardized front-end user interface for use by federal contractors, government agencies, and the military. SPOT generates digitally signed Letters of Authorization (LOAs) as part of the deployment process for contractors...SPOT allows verification of a person's identity in theater, tracks their movements, and provides theater commanders up-to-date visibility into contractor assets and capabilities' yet was not used until 2007, four years after the start of the Iraq war and was mired with technical difficulties that continue to this day. For more information, see http://www.acq.osd.mil/log/PS/SPOT/SPOT-ES_Information_Sheet.pdf

¹⁸ Peter W. Singer (2003) 'Corporate Warriors, the Rise of the Privatized Military Industry' Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London

¹⁹ An offshoot of PMSC literature focuses debate on the varying capacities, the most prominent of which, whether PMSCs can, by their service, be humanitarian actors. As PMSCs are contracted by various NGOs, e.g. the United Nations, to protect humanitarian aid workers, the literature questions whether this makes the individual contractor and/or PMSC as a whole a humanitarian actors. See further Christopher Spearin (2008) 'Private, Armed and Humanitarian? States, NGOs, International Private Security Companies and Shifting Humanitarianism' *Security Dialogue* Vol.39, No.4 pp363-382; Jutta Joachim and Andrea Schneiker (2012) 'New Humanitarians? Frame Appropriation through Private Military and Security Companies' *Millennium Journal of International Studies* Vol.40, No.1 pp365-388; Birthe Anders (2013) 'Tree Huggers and Baby Killers: The relationship between NGOs and PMSCs and its impact on coordinating actors in complex operations' *Small Wars and Insurgencies* Vol.24, No.2 pp278-294.

²⁰ This number was the result of the author contacting various PMSCs and asking how many western security contractors they had in their databases; both data and informal inquiries to the top

wars than US soldiers.²¹ With their presence on the ground at times indiscernible to host populations,²² security contractors are now an integral and indispensable part of the military's total force.²³ Despite popular assumptions, security contractors are the smallest sector of the PMSC industry. And, despite disproportionate media attention from Iraq and Afghanistan, security contracting is not restricted to Western English-speaking individuals. Most security contractors are, in fact, not Westerners.²⁴ The majority of security contractors in these two conflicts are either local nationals (LNs), e.g. Iraqis or Afghans, or third country nationals (TCNs), representing countries from around the world.²⁵ Security contractors are, by the service they provide, firmly embedded in new wars.²⁶ They have reported many of the same experiences of active duty military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan, including but not limited to incoming fire, ambush, kidnapping, mortar attacks, gunshot and shrapnel wounds, death of fellow security contractors,

10 PMSCs answering the question how many armed contractors they had on contracts at the time – March 2013. Acknowledged here as an informal estimate.

²¹ T. Christian Miller 'This Year, Contractor Deaths Exceed Military Ones in Iraq and Afghanistan' September 23, 2010 *Disposable Army, Civilian Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan* ProPublica Independent Investigation, available at: <https://www.propublica.org/series/disposable-army>

²² T.X. Hammes (2010) 'Private Contractors in Conflict Zones: The Good, the Bad, and the Strategic Impact' Strategic Forum, National Defense University; Institute for National Strategic Studies, available at: http://psm.du.edu/media/documents/reports_and_stats/think_tanks/inss_hammes-private-contractors.pdf

²³ See for example, Moshe Schwartz and Jennifer Church 'Department of Defense's Use of Contractors to Support Military Operations: Background, Analysis, and Issues for Congress' *Congressional Research Service Report* No. R43074 Updated May 17, 2013 available at: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R43074.pdf> 'Over the last two decades, contractors have played a critical role in U.S. military operations, making up more than half of Department of Defense's (DOD) total workforce in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Balkans' p1; in the UK see Ministry of Defence 'The Contractor Support to Operations Tiger Team Final Report' 16 March 2010 available at: http://psm.du.edu/media/documents/national_regulations/countries/europe/united_kingdom/united_kingdom_ministry_of_defence_tiger_team_report_2010.pdf

²⁴ See Moshe Schwartz and Joyprada Swain 'Department of Defense Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan: Background and Analysis' May 13, 2011 Congressional Research Service Report No. R40764; Moshe Schwartz 'Department of Defense Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan: Background, Analysis and Options for Congress' February 21, 2011 Congressional Research Service Report No. R40835; Moshe Schwartz and Jennifer Church 'Department of Defense Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan: Background Analysis and Issues for Congress' May 17, 2013 Congressional Research Service Report No. R43074.

²⁵ Countries of TCNs include, but are not limited to, Chile, Peru, Latvia, Estonia, Argentina, Spain, France, Italy, Russia, Poland, Czech Republic, Uruguay, Latvia, South Africa, Germany – among others – see Chapter 5 of this thesis for a full list of nationalities.

²⁶ (Armed) security contractors provide active, static or convoy security, often working alongside the military to meet contract aims and objectives. They have reported similar experiences of military personnel serving in the same environments, including prevalence rates of PTSD. See Molly Dunigan *et al* 'Out of the Shadows, the Health and Well Being of Contractors in Conflict Environments' RAND Corporation, December 2013. See also Professional Overseas Contractors 'Making the Relationship Work: Private Security Contractors and the Military' July 2, 2013 available at: <http://www.your-poc.com/making-the-relationship-work-private-security-contractors-and-the-military/>; also Moshe Schwartz 'Wartime Contracting in Afghanistan, Analysis and Issues for Congress' Congressional Research Service Report No. R42084

improvised explosive devices (IEDs), seeing civilians wounded and/or killed, and uncovering human remains.²⁷

What makes security contracting after military service different from other types of post-military civilian employment is the similarity between the two environments. Commonalities include socio-cultural characteristics (language, social identity, recognition, and social networks) and vocational characteristics (skills, operational tempo, professionalism, and organisational structure). Becoming a security contractor after military service may simply be for the money; the pay is considerably more than that of a soldier.²⁸ Yet, this thesis argues that becoming a security contractor after military service plays a role in the individual's transition to civilian life in two ways:

- 1) The environmental similarity between of security contracting to the military provides an opportunity for a different type of transition experience to that of other Service leavers going into civilian employment and not becoming a security contractor;

²⁷ Katy Messenger, Lorna Farquharson, Pippa Stallworthy, Paul Cawkill, and Neil Greenberg (2012) 'The Experiences of Security Industry Contractors Working in Iraq; An Interperative Phenomenological Analysis' *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* Vol. 54, No.7 (July 2012) pp859-867; p861

²⁸ See for example, 'private security guards in Iraq could earn up to \$200,000 a year, while US Army Green Berets or Navy SEALs would typically earn only about \$50,000 in base pay and members of the UK Special Air Service between £25,000 and £80,000' in Elke Krahmman (2010) 'States, Citizens and the Privatization of Security' Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; Moshe Schwartz 'Department of Defense' CRS Report (2010) stating the daily rate of a security contractor in the early years of Iraq could be between US \$500-700 per day. This, though, is a subject of debate. Factoring in duty plus hazardous duty pay, soldiers can make up to \$115,000 per year, not including additional benefits like healthcare, subsidized housing, retirement and amenities. If these costs were factored in to security contractor pay, and subtracted, the contractor would earn the same if not less than the soldier, with no job security. Ann Jocelyn gives the following breakdown in his (written under the pseudonym of 'Ann Jocelyn') piece 'Just How Overpaid Are Private Security Contractors?': 'The independent security contractor, who in this instance earns a base pay of \$165,000, receives no other benefits. Because he is rotated in and out of Iraq every 90 days, he cannot claim the income tax exemptions that he could if he was stationed abroad for a full tax year. In his high tax bracket, he must pay \$69,300 in federal taxes—more than 50 times what the sergeant must pay. That still leaves the contractor with a net cash compensation of \$95,700, or about 38 percent more than the sergeant. Then we factor in noncash benefits such as health care, installation-based benefits, subsistence in kind, family housing and barracks, education, and other benefits. For the sergeant, these benefits can total \$22,765. The sergeant is also entitled to retirement pay accrual, Veterans Administration (VA) compensation and pension, VA health care, and related health benefits, amounting to \$34,269 per year in deferred benefits. Total compensation for the staff sergeant after taxes can equal \$126,734. The contractor in this illustration receives none of the noncash benefits or deferred benefits of the sergeant. Now the tables are turned: \$126,734 in total compensation for the staff sergeant, and \$95,700 for the contractor. But wait—there's more. If the contractor wants the noncash and deferred benefits such as health care, housing, and retirement contributions, he must pay out of his pocket. His \$95,700 take-home pay, minus the equivalent \$22,765 in noncash benefits and the \$34,629 in deferred benefits, leaves him with a net cash compensation equivalent of a paltry \$38,306. By contrast, the staff sergeant walks away with a net cash contribution of \$69,340.' Available at: <http://feraljundi.com/36/industry-talk-just-how-overpaid-are-we/#more-36>

- 2) The unique role of informal social networks in facilitating the move from the military into security contracting facilitates a transition within the military world, not away from it, thus affecting the individual's transition.

Reason (1) allows the service leaver to sustain and nurture particular aspects of their prior military identity, which can postpone an adaptation and/or resocialisation to civilian norms and behaviours. It can also lead to the development of a social identity particular to security contracting where a sense of belonging to a group becomes more important than motivations like money. Additionally, the physical environment of security contracting, often overseas, may isolate the individual from re-socialisation into civilian life. Understanding why service leavers like Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods choose to become security contractors sheds light on the attraction of security contracting as a form of post-military employment option beyond its obvious economic advantages.

1.2 Highlighting the Gap

Comprehensive inquiry into the post-9/11 privatisation of security and/or outsourcing began with Peter W. Singer's 'Corporate Warriors.'²⁹ This followed, however, the 1999 bi-annual Cambridge Review of International Affairs, shortly before the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan and dedicated to the privatisation of security, in which there had been a significant nod to the role of security privatisation in the changing international system, laying the groundwork for Singer's piece.³⁰ The main point of this Review was that private security and military companies and the privatisation of security were not only here to stay, but would witness rapid growth in the 21st century.³¹ This argument rested on a few claims. The first claim was the end of the Cold War, in which both the release of thousands of military personnel on to the market as a result of military downsizing and the outbreak of conflicts once held in place by the Cold War³² created what Deborah Avant termed a 'market for force.'³³ From the early 1990s to 2001 PMSCs experienced a period of growth

²⁹ Peter W. Singer (2003) 'Corporate Warriors, the Rise of the Privatized Military Industry' Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London. While Singer's was the first comprehensive look at the industry, he was by no means the first. See Robert Mandel's 'Armies without States, the privatization of security' (2002) Lynne Rienner Publishing, Colorado; and David Isenberg 'Shadow Forces, Private Security Contractors in Iraq' Praeger, 2009

³⁰ Duncan Bell and Michael Boyle 'Introduction: Privatising Warfare: Mercenaries, Militia or Middleman?' *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (Autumn-Winter 1999) Vol.13, No.1 p79.

³¹ David Shearer 'Private Military Force and Challenges for the Future' *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (Autumn-Winter 1999) Vol.13, No.1 pp80-94

³² Singer 'Corporate Warriors' (2003)

³³ Deborah Avant (2005) 'The Market For Force; The Consequences of Privatizing Security' Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

in terms of services performed and offered,³⁴ organisational structure and leadership,³⁵ and client relationships varying from governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), multi and trans-national corporations (MNCs and TNCs), and individuals.³⁶ This decade during which PMSCs like Executive Outcomes and Sandline International demonstrated the potential capabilities of PMSCs in conflict environments, was a time of fundamental development for the current PMSC industry, and therefore a pre-cursor of increased state dependency on outsourcing security.³⁷ While state outsourcing security has deep-rooted historical origins,³⁸ PMSCs had not yet been so squarely placed within civil-military relations as they were from 2003 onwards, when the number of contractors³⁹ deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan at times outnumbered troops⁴⁰ and their visibility both on the ground and to coalition state's civilians back home, was unprecedented.⁴¹

³⁴ While outsourcing by states is not a new phenomenon, this decade saw a shift in the use of PMSCs. Evolving from clandestine use, for example, by the British in the Yemen Civil war, as Clive Jones documented (see Clive Jones (2004) 'Britain and the Yemen Civil War 1962-1965' Sussex Academic Press, United Kingdom), the period between the 1990s and 2001 saw the successful offensive combat operations against Sierra Leone's RUF by PMSC Executive Outcomes (see both Peter W. Singer 'Corporate Warriors' and Eben Barlow 'Executive Outcomes; Against All Odds' (2007) Galago, and the Sandline Affair see T. McCormack 'The Sandline Affair: Papua New Guinea Resorts to Mercenaries to end Bougainville Conflict' Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law (1998) Cambridge University Press.

³⁵ Christopher Kinsey 'Examining the Organisational Structure of UK Private Security Companies' *Defence Studies* Vol.5, No.2 (2005) pp188-212

³⁶ For example, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), see Peter W. Singer 'Humanitarian Principles, private military agents: some implications of the privatised military industry for the humanitarian community' from Victoria Wheeler and Adele Harmer (eds) 'Resetting the Rules of Engagement: Trends and Issues in the Military – Humanitarian Relations' HPG Report 22 February 2006; Christopher Spearin 'A private security panacea? A specific response to mean times' *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* (2000) Vol.7, No.3 pp67-80

³⁷ In 1990s the PMSC Executive Outcomes repelled the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, successfully preventing the overthrow of both the government and the capital, Freetown. Their offensive combat operations against the RUF allowed for the first democratic elections in 20 years; see for example Peter Singer 'Corporate Warriors' and Eben Barlow 'Executive Outcomes – Against All Odds' (2007) Galago and Tim Spicer 'An Unorthodox Soldier, Peace and War and the Sandline Affair (1999) Mainstream Publishing, Edinburgh.

³⁸ See for example Janice Thompson 'Mercenaries, Pirates and Sovereigns' (1996) Princeton University Press, Princeton; Sarah Percy 'Mercenaries: The History of Norm in International Relations' (2007) Oxford University Press, Oxford; Peter W. Singer 'Corporate Warriors'; Christopher Kinsey 'Corporate Soldiers and International Security: The Rise of Private Military Companies' (2006) Routledge; Anthony Mockler 'The Mercenaries' (1969) MacDonal, London; Mockler, Anthony 'The New Mercenaries' (1985) London: Sidgwick and Jackson; James Pattison 'The Morality of Private War, The Challenge of Private Military and Security Companies' (2014) Oxford University Press, Oxford, among others.

³⁹ All contractors, not just armed.

⁴⁰ Moshe Schwartz and Joyprada Swain 'Department of Defense Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan: Background and Analysis' May 13, 2011 Congressional Research Service Report No. R40764; Moshe Schwartz 'Department of Defense Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan: Background, Analysis and Options for Congress' February 21, 2011 Congressional Research Service Report No. R40835; Moshe Schwartz and Jennifer Church 'Department of Defense Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan: Background Analysis and Issues for Congress' May 17, 2013 Congressional Research Service Report No. R43074.

⁴¹ See among others coverage of security contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan in the New York Times, The Economist, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, The Times of London, The Telegraph, The Guardian, among others.

Scholarship on the privatisation of security has grown rapidly since 2003. Largely divided into two categories the literature on PMSCs is either approached by International Relations (IR) theory addressing the theoretical implications⁴² of outsourcing - what Shearer describes as the 'abdication of state sovereignty'⁴³ -, or the practical implications of regulation and accountability of PMSCs within international humanitarian law (IHL).⁴⁴ Despite the literature's conceptual and theoretical location of PMSCs within international politics,⁴⁵ humanitarian intervention, the laws of armed conflict (LOAC), and national and international norms,⁴⁶ there are various peripheral acknowledgements of the individual security contractor. One of these was the development of PMSC typologies by Peter Singer, Christopher Kinsey and Deborah Avant. The aim of these typologies was to classify PMSCs by services provided or by the type of firm, e.g. Military Provider Firm (MPF) versus Military Consulting Firm (MCF) against an all-encompassing PMSC that would cover the entirety of services a firm could possibly provide.⁴⁷

Singer's typology was the first, organised by three types of services provided: Military Provider Firms (MPFs), e.g. Executive Outcomes, Military Consulting Firms (MCFs), e.g. MPRI, and Military Support Firms (MSFs), e.g. Kellogg Brown & Root.⁴⁸ In a triangular figure he placed MSFs as the bottom and widest base comprising the largest market share and services required most. MCFs, which also had a considerable market share, were placed in the middle, providing services like training another country's police or armed

⁴² See for example Anna Leander 'Global Ungovernance, Mercenaries States and the Control Over Violence' (2002) Copenhagen Peach Research Institute; Allison Stanger 'One Nation Under Contract, the Outsourcing of American Power and the Future of Foreign Policy' (2009), Molly Dunigan 'Victory for Hire' (2012) Cornell University Press, Cornell; Christopher Kinsey 'Corporate Soldiers and International Security: The Rise of Private Military Companies' (2006) Routledge; Deborah Avant 'The Market For Force, the Consequences of Privatizing Security' (2005) Cambridge University Press, New York; Peter Singer 'Corporate Warriors' (2003); and Elke Krahnmann 'States, Citizens and the Privatization of Security' (2010) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, among others.

⁴³ David Shearer 'Private Military' (1999) p80

⁴⁴ See Simon Chesterman (Eds) 'Private Security, Public Order' (2009) Oxford University Press, Oxford, Ian Ralby for Dextra Fortis available at: <http://dextrafortis.com/author/imralby/>; Laura Dickenson 'Outsourcing War and Peace' (2011) Yale University Press, New Haven and London.

⁴⁵ See for example Rita Abrahamsen and Michael C. Williams (2011) 'Security Beyond the State: Private Security in International Politics' Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

⁴⁶ See for example Allison Stanger 'One Nation Under Contract, the Outsourcing of American Power and the Future of Foreign Policy' (2009). Molly Dunigan 'Victory for Hire' (2012) Cornell University Press, Cornell; Elke Krahnmann 'States, Citizens and the Privatization of Security' (2010) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; Rita Abrahamsen and Michael Williams 'Security Beyond the State, Private Security in International Politics' (2010) Cambridge University Press, Ottawa.

⁴⁷ There are various acronyms used to describe private military and security companies based on either the type of company they are or the service they provide. Use of PMF or PSC have largely been replaced in the last few years by the all-inclusive PMSC. As such, this thesis refers to all private military and security service providers as PMSCs.

⁴⁸ Singer 'Corporate Warriors' (2003)

forces. At the top of the triangle is what he termed the 'tip of the spear' where MPFs that provided security services required contractors to be, almost always, armed.⁴⁹

Deborah Avant, instead, argued that PMSCs could be more accurately classified by the type of contract that was being carried out.⁵⁰ She developed two categories of contract support, internal (police) and external (military). Internal covered armed site security, unarmed site security, police advice and training, crime prevention and intelligence.⁵¹ External contracts covered armed operational support, unarmed operational support, unarmed military advice and training and logistics support.⁵² Acknowledging the adaptability of the industry to various markets and services, Christopher Kinsey developed a typology that would not exclude any PMSC by type of contract or service, as both Singer and Avant's typologies do, but would analyse the company by the 'object to be secured' and the 'means of securing the object.'⁵³ On an x and y axis Kinsey labelled horizontally, from left to right, 'object to be secured' and 'Public authority/defence of the state.'⁵⁴ Vertically, from top to bottom is labelled 'lethality' and 'non-lethality',⁵⁵ respectively. PMSCs were then situated within the appropriate four quadrants, depending on the services provided in regards to both their contract and lethality.

None of these typologies though explicitly acknowledge the individual security contractor. Yet, these typologies firmly place the individual within the service they provide, and subsequently, the type of environment where they provide their service. This is significant because it directly acknowledges that individual private security contractors have a specific and defined utility within outsourcing; their service cannot be interchanged with any other type of service, e.g. support or logistics. This utility means that the individual's skills, knowledge and experience are fundamentally required by the industry and upon these PMSCs rely for their existence. As such, security contracting, for as long as the industry survives, will always be an employment option after military service. In comparison to the amount of scholarship on the privatisation of security, direct acknowledgement or examination of the individual private security contractor remains nascent.

Inquiry into the individual security contractor attracted little interest until two major incidents occurred; the 2005 ambush, burning and killing of four US PMSC Blackwater

⁴⁹ Singer 'Corporate Warriors' (2003)

⁵⁰ Deborah Avant (2005) 'The Market For Force' Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

⁵¹ *Ibid*

⁵² Avant in Carlos Ortiz 'Private Armed Forces and Global Security: A Guide to the Issues' (2010) Greenwood Publishing Group, p74

⁵³ Christopher Kinsey 'Corporate Soldiers' (2007) p10

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁵ *Ibid*

security contractors in Fallujah, Iraq and the 2007 shooting of seventeen Iraqi civilians, again by Blackwater contractors, in Nisour Square. Sociologist Paul Higate, in quick succession, produced eleven papers on the individual security contractor by way of their masculinised identity, most of which specifically referenced these two incidents and the company Blackwater.⁵⁶ The overarching theme of Higate's papers is the (re)masculinisation of the (male) private security contractor, who he analyses using a critical gender framework of 'militarised masculinity.' Focusing on those with prior military service, militarised masculinity refers to the 'masculine norms, values and cultures that shape private contractors security practices'⁵⁷. Higate is concerned with how security contractors draw upon this masculinity to shape their identity as a security contractor and the intersection of this identity with the accountability of their actions in areas of conflict.

Concerning those with former military service Higate explores the idea of the 'embodied veteran' whose repetitive and protracted military training can either enable an aggressive or restrained physical response in areas of conflict as a security contractor.⁵⁸ Higate uses the term 'instrumental use of violence' and 'instrumental use of force' interchangeably to describe what has been 'embodied' by the individual's former military service, thus producing a masculinised identity. What he appears to mean by 'embodied violence' is the ability to either exert force or practice restraint from using force. The use of force becomes a focal point in Higate's analysis, as he refers throughout the papers how aggression or restraint may be conceived as a way to regulate private security contractors, although he does not provide any prescriptions in this regard.

⁵⁶ Paul Higate 'Private Military Companies and the Problem of Men and Masculinities' ISA Paper 2009; 'Mercenary Killer or Embodied Veteran? The Case of Paul Slough and the Nisour Square Massacre' SPAIS Working Paper 09-11; 'Putting Mercenary Masculinities on the Research Agenda' SPAIS Working Paper 03-09; 'In the business of security? Mavericks, Mercenaries and Masculinities in the Private Security Company' in Eds. *Making Gender, Making War; Violence, Military and Peacekeeping Practices* Routledge, London pp182-196; 'Cat Food and Clients: Gendering the politics of protection in the private militarized security company' SPAIS Working Paper 2011; 'Cowboys and Professionals, The Politics of Identity Work in the Private Military and Security Company' *Millennium Journal of International Studies* Vol.40, No.2 (2012) pp321-341; 'Drinking Vodka from the Butt-Crack, Men, Masculinities and Fratriarchy in the Private Militarized Company' *International Feminist Journal of Politics* (2012) Vol.14, No.4 pp450-469; 'Martial Races and Enforcement Masculinities of the Global South: Weaponising Fijian, Chilean and Salvadoran Postcoloniality in the Mercenary Sector' *Globalizations* Vol.9, No.1 (2012) pp35-52; 'Aversion to Masculine Excess in the Private Military and Security Company and their Effects: Don't Be a 'Billy Big Bollocks' and beware the 'Ninja!' SPAIS Working Paper No.08-12 (2012); 'The Private Militarized and Security Contractor as a Geocorporeal Actor' *International Political Sociology* Vol.6, No.4 (2012) pp355-372; 'Switching on for Cash' in (Eds) *War and the Body: Militarisation, Practice and Experience* Edited by Kevin McSorley (2013)

⁵⁷ Higate 2009, p7

⁵⁸ Higate 'Switching on for Cash: The Private Militarised Security Contractors as Geo-Corporeal Actor' (2013); Cowboys and Professionals p3

Relevant to this project, Higate directly address why Service leavers may be attracted to security contracting after military service:

‘The PMSC⁵⁹ industry simultaneously offered the chance to reinvigorate unspoken masculinised camaraderie of the soldierly habitus...the embodied continuities between soldiers trained in the instrumental use of violence and the subsequent mobilisation by the PMSC sector.’⁶⁰

The militarised masculinity of private security contractors is what Higate found to be the ‘intuitive appeal’ for those with former military service to become security contractors.

‘Veteran demeanour and deportment that resonate with the intuitive sense that soldierly bodies are inscribed with Army experience, but also sheds light on the intuitive appeal of the paid work into which many are drawn.’⁶¹

From this Higate concludes: ‘Thus, individuals entering the industry did so as a matter of both push (lack of money/work) and pull factors through the lure of high wages, risk, camaraderie, and for some, the chance to bring meaning to one’s banal civilian life.’

In the development of a security contractor identity, he analysed five security contractor memoirs, in which he found British security contractors to consider themselves professionals. This professionalism was reliant upon their extensive training during their military service, by which the contractors:

‘comprehensively detailed their highly developed *skill* at handling firearms, a knowledge and expertise that allowed them to dismantle, clean and service this vial ‘kit’ with consummate prowess and as ‘second nature.’⁶²

Their professionalism also appeared to be drawn from their tendency towards ‘de-escalation’ versus ‘open confrontation’, and their ‘low profile’ physical identity in conflict environments.⁶³ Higate argues this professional identity has implications for contractors personal and occupational conduct in terms of how these individuals can be regulated within an industry in which he claims individual security contractors to be unaccountable for various infractions and incidents. The incident Higate focuses on throughout the papers in this regard is the killing of seventeen civilians by Blackwater contractors in Nisour Square in 2007.

⁵⁹ Higate, until his latest papers in 2013, consistently referred to the PMSC industry as the ‘Private Militarised Security Company’, a term he argued apt because of the militarized identity of contractors who previously served in the military. He addresses the weaknesses of this term, but continued to use it. Footnote 7 addresses the weaknesses in ‘Switching On for Cash’, 2013.

⁶⁰ Higate 2013 Switchin On p5

⁶¹ Higate 2013 Switching On p4

⁶² Higate ‘Cowboys and Professionals’ p11

⁶³ *Ibid* drawing from Bob Shepard’s ‘The Circuit’, p128-129

Higate's observations and conclusions were drawn from an ethnographic study in which he spent time with security contractors in Afghanistan, in addition to drawing heavily on the books of Scahill and Young,⁶⁴ five security contractor memoirs, the PMSC Blackwater and Blackwater security contractors. While Higate draws on the experiences of the private security contractor, specifically those with prior military experience and of those male, his research is concerned with the development of a masculinised security contractor identity, who expressions of aggression or restraint can serve to regulate these individuals – or, as he stated his wish, the 'incremental dissolution' of the PMSC industry.⁶⁵ As a result, his work, while the first to introduce sociological micro-issues in PMSC scholarship, has limited applicability to the security population as a whole and offers limited insight into the individual, who they are and the role security contracting plays in their life.

Following Higate's pioneering step of examining PMSCs within gender studies and politics, there is now a small, but established body of work on the topic. This particular literature is largely conceptual, addressing overall gendered identities of the companies themselves within neoliberal and liberal state order, the various implications of these identity types to the services they provide, and women both inside and outside PMSCs.⁶⁶ This literature is concerned with various types of self-'framing' by the PMSCs and its effects on where they operate and the types of services they provide. Berndtsson explains;

'The increasing dependence on private security also means that these actors play significant roles in shaping the 'politics of protection' and understandings of security concerns in various contexts...To market their services, PSCs need to explain something about the world around us...[and] must project convincing images of themselves as security professionals. As Livingstone and Hart rightly observe, 'developing a positive and attractive image is central to the private security sector's bid for professional status.'⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Jeremy Scahill 'Blackwater' and Robert Young Pelton 'License to Kill', both journalistic representations of the PMSC industry.

⁶⁵ Higate, 2009, p5

⁶⁶ See for example, Jutta Joachim and Andreas Schmeiker (2012) '(Re)Masculinization of Security? Gender and Private Military and Security Companies' in *Gender, Agency and Political Violence*, Basingstoke pp70-92; Jutta Joachim and Andreas Schmeiker (2012) 'Of 'true professionals' and 'ethical hero warriors': A gender-discourse analysis of private military and security companies' *Security Dialogue* Vol.43, No.6 pp495-512; Andrea Brekalo (2012) 'Enquiry into the Private Military and Security Companies Identities: Shifting the Paradigm in Conceptualising Security' Diss. Central European University; Maya Eichler (2012) 'Gender and the privatization of security: neoliberal transformation of the militarized gender order' *Critical Studies on Security* Vol.1, No.3 pp311-325; Ana Filipa Vrdoljak 'Women and Private Military and Security Companies' *War by Contract. Human Rights, Human Law and Private Contractors* Ed. F. Francioni and N Ronzitti Oxford University Press, Oxford pp280-298, 2010

⁶⁷ Joakim Berndtsson 'Security Professionals for Hire: Exploring the Many Faces of Private Security Expertise' *Millennium Journal of International Studies* (2011) Vol.40, No.2 pp303-320; p304

While this literature draws on the broader PMSC scholarship, its ideas and inquires find foundation in the larger theoretical and conceptual inquiries of the PMSC industry, with little emphasis on the individual themselves. Inspired by Carmola's assignation of PMSCs as 'distinctly protean' and as a result 'hybrid,'⁶⁸ Berndtsson observes the flexible and adaptable nature of PMSCs by way of the various self-images they create and sell to various clients. For example, some PMSCs will either emphasise or de-emphasise the 'military culture' formed by the individuals that work for them depending on the type of contract the PMSC is seeking to secure.⁶⁹ As with Higate's work, these analyses ignore how security contracting effects the individual, but reinforces the PMSCs' dependence on employees with prior military service. There is, though, consistent reference within this particular literature on the 'professionalism' of 'security professionals.' Berndtsson, Joachim and Schneiker referred to collective professionalism of the PMSCs, as the identities of the individual contractors ultimately determining how the PMSC can and will market itself as security professionals.⁷⁰

There have been four earlier studies on the individual security contractor themselves. The first was Volker Franke and Marc von Boemcken's survey of 223 law-enforcement personnel-turned-security contractors. Franke *et al's* study was the first of its kind. Seeking to measure the attitudes and values of their cohort, they collected data on the prevalence of warriorism, patriotism, Machiavellianism, motive, social dominance, masculinity, and ethical conduct motivation.⁷¹ What emerged were data showing high levels of patriotism and job engagement that challenged the idea of mercenaries as traditionally conceived. They argued these data showed security contractors as 'resembling a new breed of professionals' in efforts to challenge the popular 'mercenary' label.⁷² These results proved somewhat anti-climatic. The 'mercenary' versus contractor debate had by this time wide exposure within the literature,⁷³ with a general conclusion that identifying the former with the latter was somewhat outdated within research and analysis.

⁶⁸ Kateri Carmola (2010) 'Private Security Contractors and New Wars: Risk, Law and Ethics' Abingdon, Routledge

⁶⁹ Joakim Berndtsson 'Security Professionals' (2011) p308 and Kateri Carmola 'Private Security Contractors' (2010) p 31

⁷⁰ In particular Berndtsson writes 'the ways in which private security actors construct their 'identities' is not well understood. Strictly speaking, it is the employees of the PSCs rather than the companies themselves that 'have the identities' and, thus, it makes more sense to speak of images or self-images in relation to the companies as such.' Joakim Berndtsson 'Security Professionals' (2012) p308

⁷¹ Volke Franke and Marc von Boemcken (2011) 'Guns for Hire: Motivations and Attitudes of Private Security Contractors' *Armed Forces and Society* Vol.25, No. 7 pp725-742

⁷² *Ibid* p729

⁷³ See Kinsey (2006), Krahmman (2010) and Percy (2007).

What Franke and von Boemcken did with this study, though, is put individual contractors squarely on the research agenda. It was the first time individual security contractors were given a collective voice within academic research. Surveying only former US law enforcement personnel-turned-security contractors, the study's reach was limited and not representative of the security contracting population as a whole; former law enforcement personnel-turned-security contractors are a less representative population than security contractors with prior military experience (who represent the dominant population of Western security contractors).

The skill sets and type of experience also differentiate former law-enforcement personnel from Service leavers. While both law enforcement and the military employ institutional methods of indoctrination and the development of a specific social identity in new recruits, in comparison to the Armed Forces, law enforcement interactions in the US and the UK rarely involve use of force.⁷⁴ The emphasis of law enforcement in both countries is on community relations, where the police officer establishes various relationships within the community to prevent crime and ensure peace.⁷⁵ They do not actively deploy to hostile environments for any length of time like active duty and reserve soldiers and are operationally different in their organisation often paired with another law enforcement 'partner' or within specific working groups or specialities, e.g. homicide or domestic violence whereas active duty and reserve soldiers will prepare, train and deploy with an entire platoon or regiment serving with that platoon or regiment for the length of their deployment.

Franke *et al's* study filled a gap within PMSC literature by providing analysis of the values and attitudes of private security contractors that appeared to inform their occupational self-conception.⁷⁶ Before this study this had previously been unknown. There are also three studies that have reported how these individuals fare physically and mentally as a result of their security contracting experience. The first study measured the prevalence levels of

⁷⁴ US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs Report 'Use of Force by Police, Overview of National and Local Data' October 1999 NCJ 176330 available at: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/176330-1.pdf> 'Research consistently demonstrates that a small percentage of police-public interactions involve the use of force...Also known with substantial confidence is that police use of force typically occurs at the lower end of the force spectrum, involving grabbing, pushing or shoving.' p.iii-vii In the United Kingdom the use of force is also concentrated on the lower end of the force spectrum, with the use of firearms and discharge of firearms by UK law enforcement decreasing, and in 2011 discharged a weapon in only three incidents *see* Home Office Statistics on Police Use of Firearms in England and Wales 2010-11 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183401/police-firearms-use-2010-2011.pdf with the use of force requirement found in Chapter 3, paragraph 3.1 ACPO Manual of Guidance on the Management, Command and Deployment of Armed Officers (2011) <http://www.acpo.police.uk/documents/uniformed/2011/201111MCDofAO3.pdf>

⁷⁵ *Ibid*

⁷⁶ *Ibid* p736

PTSD and the varying levels of combat exposure of security contractors.⁷⁷ The second study examined the experiences of seven male security contractors in Iraq.⁷⁸ This study's population was found to be resilient in the face of significant exposure to trauma inducing diagnoses. For example, despite the exposure of the study's sample population to things like witnessing fellow contractors die, there was no significant level of trauma reported by this group. The third study surveyed both armed and un-armed contractors working in conflict environments, also on the prevalence levels of PTSD, but extended beyond the first two studies by surveying contractors' access and/or barriers to care for these issues.⁷⁹ The findings of these three studies showed a serious need for greater access to care for these individuals, but highlighted the security contractor as a disenfranchised 'other.' Some contractors feel this disenfranchisement distinctly. Various websites and blogs by security contractors or contractor advocacy groups actively comment on their 'place' within the coalition war effort; effectively, forgotten.^{80 81} The largest contractor advocacy website, American Contractors in Iraq, displayed the following poem on the homepage of their website, titled 'The Civilian Contractor', expressing the perceived lack of recognition for the work contractors⁸² perform:

I'm a civilian contractor, not a soldier.
 You see, that's the only difference between you and me.
 Like you, I volunteered and like you, I have some fear.
 I go with you standing tall and praying we don't fall.
 You carry weapons of all shapes and sizes and I carry the
 hope of avoiding our demise.
 You've done well, you scored one today and they tell me your
 medals are on the way.
 I get no medal, promotions or awards.
 Doesn't matter, I must go forward.
 Newsweek and Time write about you often, the contractor
 mostly forgotten.
 You tell your story, your loved ones can hear.

⁷⁷ Andrew Fienstien 'Psychological Well-Being in Conflict Zones' *Stability Operations, Journal of International Peace Operations* Vol.5, No.5 March-April 2010 available at: <http://web.peaceops.com/archives/511>; Feinstein, Anthony and Botes, Maggie 'The Psychological Health of Contractors Working in War Zones' *Journal of Traumatic Stress* Vol22, No.2 April 2009 pp102-105; Messenger, Katy *et al* 'The Experiences of Security Industry Contractors Working in Iraq; An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis' *JOEM* Vol.54, No.7 (July 2012) pp859-867

⁷⁸ Katy Messenger, Lorna Farquharson, Pippa Stallworthy, Paul Cawkill and Neil Greenberg 'The Experiences of Security Industry Contractors Working in Iraq, An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis' *JOEM* (2012) Vol54, No.7 pp859-867

⁷⁹ Molly Dunigan *et al* 'Out of the Shadows: The Health and Well Being of Contractors in Conflict Environments' RAND Corporation, Santa Monica 2013 available at: http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR420.html

⁸⁰ See for example www.americancontractorsiniraq.com

⁸¹ In fact, investigative journalist T. Christian Miller wrote a series of articles on contractors in this regard titled 'Disposable Army, Civilian Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan' that documents contractors 'battle' against insurance companies for the denial of insurance claims, the loss of contractor lives, among other things. See <http://www.propublica.org/series/disposable-army>

⁸² This includes all contractors, not just armed. The website is inclusive to all contractors and they put forth that their view is representative of the population as a whole.

I have been cautioned to keep quiet my job to fear.
No one knows us, we're just there, hurting bleeding and
dying.
Doesn't matter, we're just contractors.⁸³

This type of 'othering' was also felt in Chisholm's ethnographic study using post-colonial analysis on Gurkha contractors in comparison to their 'white' counterparts in Afghanistan. In this study, the Gurkhas reported an almost inherent sense of being an 'other'; 'most of the men interviewed continued to follow colonial logics, reinforcing the white Westerner as the ideal security contractor. The closer a Gurkha could mimic the Westerner in security, the higher status he felt he would achieve.'⁸⁴ Chisholm, like Franke and von Boemcken, gave a direct voice to security contractors, in this case, regarding their masculine and racialised identities. This exposure of the individual security contractor moved the discussion away from the collective PMSC and its varying relationships with the state or its clients, and directly towards those who provide the labour.

These new data have developed the groundwork for serious academic inquiry on an aspect of a labour force commonly thought to be somewhat dispersed. As these studies showed, and this project will demonstrate further, security contractors are keenly aware of their role in conflict, and the dependence on them in future conflicts. With acknowledged dependence on contractors in future conflicts by both the US and UK governments⁸⁵ analysis of security contractors as a labour population is imperative for not only policy implications but also the well-being of a workforce that number in the tens of thousands.

The above discussion demonstrates emerging inquiry into the individual security contractor and highlights the gap in examining the role security contracting plays in the individual's 'life-course'; a sociological term used to describe a sequence of socially defined events and roles the individual enacts over time.⁸⁶ This project addresses the gap by collecting empirical and qualitative data on the role security contracting plays in the individual's transition from the military to civilian life. The data collected in this project will describe the experiences of leaving the military and becoming a security contractor. For some, becoming a contractor was a way to ameliorate difficulties and frustrations experienced in civilian life and security contracting, by contrast, was an experience in

⁸³ <http://americancontractorsiniraq.com> accessed February 17, 2014

⁸⁴ Amanda Chisholm 'The Silenced and Indispensable, Gurkhas in Private Military Security Companies' *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 2013 pp1-22; p8

⁸⁵ Moshe Schwartz and Jennifer Church 'Department of Defense's Use of Contractors to Support Military Operations: Background, Analysis, and Issues for Congress' *Congressional Research Service Report* No. R43074 Updated May 17, 2013 available at: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R43074.pdf>

⁸⁶ Janet Z. Giele and Glen H. Elder Jr., (eds) 'Methods of the Life Course Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches' Sage Publications 1998

which the individual found purpose, meaning and fulfilment. For others it was a way to utilize skills and capabilities the individual was unsure of how to translate to employment success in civilian life. Further, some reported they did not think they were transitioning at all. For them security contracting was perceived as a linear progression of a job they had already been doing. This chapter proceeds by addressing this project's research questions and a brief overview of methodology, concluding with a short outline of the following chapters.

1.3 Thesis question

This thesis examines how and why US and UK soldiers exit the military and analyses their subsequent transition to civilian life via private security contracting. While this study focuses only on US and UK Service-leavers-turned-security-contractors (for language feasibility and access), this project is *not* a comparative study between the two countries.

Nevertheless, there are differences found in the reporting of mental health issues of UK and US Service leavers that are attributed in part to the difference in country culture.⁸⁷ Higate found in part a cultural difference between US and UK security contractors when considering themselves and security contractors around them 'professional.'⁸⁸ However, a review on the literature of military to civilian transition for both UK and US Service leavers did not present significant differences in experience, including feelings experienced and the use of government provided transition services, to warrant a comparative study between the two countries in this project. Any significant differences that appear in the data concerning country will be addressed in the discussion of the findings, but is not a core aim of the project.

The main research question of this project is *how does becoming a private security contracting after military service affect an individual's transition from the military to civilian life?* Overall, the project's emphasis is on transition. Military to civilian transition is a type of journey. For some Service leavers it is existential; a profound experience of changing identities. For

⁸⁷ C. W.Hoge, C.A. Castro, S.C. Messer, D. McGurk, D.I Cotting, R.L. Koffman 'Combat Duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, mental health problems and barriers to care' *New England Journal of Medicine* 351, (2004) pp13-22; C.W. Hoge, J.L. Auchterloine and C.S. Milliken 'Mental Health problems, use of mental health services, and attrition from military service after returning from deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan' *Journal of the American Medical Association* 295, (2006) pp1023-1032; Amy Iversen, Lauren van Staden, Jamie Hacker Hughes, Tess Browne, Lisa Hull, John Hall, Neil Greenberg, Roberto Rona, Matthew Hotopf, Simon Wessely and Nicola T Fear 'The prevalence of common mental disorders and PTSD in the UK military: using data from a clinical interview-based study' *BMC Psychiatry* Vol.9, No.68 (2009).

⁸⁸ Paul Higate 'Cowboys and Professionals: The Politics of Identity Work in the Private and Military Security Company' *Millennium Journal of International Studies* published 8 November 2011, pp1-21

others it can be a non-event, a transition where no great change or impact is experienced. Most US and UK Service leavers do very well after leaving the military and entering civilian life.⁸⁹ Some face difficulties and frustration. This latter group receive disproportionate attention in comparison with the former, both in wartime and peace. As a result, some issues that veterans experience become unequivocally associated with being a veteran, for example despite less than one quarter of US and UK veterans reporting they experience PTSD⁹⁰ it is often conflated as an issue that affects Service leavers as a whole.

Different conflicts, too, have different 'signature' injuries and/or issues that may, and more often than not, impact the individual's military to civilian transition and their success as a civilian. For example, the signature injury of Iraq and Afghanistan has been reported to be both PTSD and mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI), otherwise known as a concussion.⁹¹ In Vietnam, a signature issue was, and continues to be, homelessness.⁹² These issues, though, are not necessarily conflict-dependent. An example is Rosenheck's four categories used to determine the prevalence of homelessness in Vietnam-era veterans; pre-military risk factors, war-related and non-war-related traumatic experiences; lack of social support at time of discharge from military service, and; post-military psychiatric disorder and social dysfunction.⁹³ The range of these categories underscores the importance of a comprehensive view when determining veteran issues and the experience of their

⁸⁹ For UK: Iversen A, Nikolaou V, Greenberg N, Unwin C, Hull L, Hotopf M, Dandeker C, Ross J, Wessely S. What happens to British veterans when they leave the armed forces? *European Journal of Public Health* (2005) 15: 175-84; for US: Nancy Berglass and Margaret C. Harrell 'Well After Service, Veteran Reintegration and American Communities' Center for New American Security April 2012; p7.

⁹⁰ In the US 18.5% of Iraq and Afghanistan military veterans have PTSD or depression, see Tanielian T and Jaycox LH, eds., *Invisible Wounds of War: Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences, and Services to Assist Recovery*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-720-CCF, 2008, 492 pp., available at <http://veterans.rand.org> ; Tanielian T, Jaycox LH, Schell TL, Marshall GN, Burnam MA, Eibner C, Karney BR, Meredith LS, Ringel JS, Vaiana ME, and the Invisible Wounds Study Team, *Invisible Wounds of War: Summary and Recommendations for Addressing Psychological and Cognitive Injuries*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-720/1-CCF, 2008, 64 pp., available at <http://veterans.rand.org>. In the UK between 1.3-4.8% report PTSD, with those in combat reporting higher at 7% see Josefín Sundin, Richard K. Herrell, Charles W. Hoge, Nicola T. Fear, Amy B. Adler, Neil Greenberg, Lyndon A. Riviere, Jeffrey L. Thomas, Simon Wessely and Paul D. Bleise 'Mental health outcomes in US and UK military personnel returning from Iraq' (2014) *British Journal of Psychiatry* published online January 14, 2014 available at: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/kcmhr/publications/assetfiles/2014/Sundin2014a.pdf>

⁹¹ J. Sundin, N.T. Fear, A. Iverson, R.J. Rona, and S. Wessely (2010) 'PTSD after deployment to Iraq: conflicting rates, conflicting claims' *Psychological Medicine* Vol.X., No.40 pp367-382 and Roberto Rona *et al* (2003) 'Mild Traumatic Brain Injury in UK Military Personnel Returning from Afghanistan and Iraq: Cohort and Cross-Sectional Analyses' *Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation* Vol.27, No.1, pp33-44

⁹² Libby Pearl 'Veterans and Homelessness' Congressional Research Service Report No. RL32024 November 29, 2013 available at: <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL34024.pdf>

⁹³ Robert Rosenheck and Alan Fontana (1994) 'A Model of Homelessness Among Male Veterans of the Vietnam War Generation' *American Journal of Psychiatry* Vol.151, No.3 pp421-417; p421

transition. An individual's transition status of either experiencing difficulty or not experiencing difficulty cannot be attributed or explained by any one thing. Transition is a cumulative experience. It is the outcome of who the individual was pre-military, the individual's particular military experience (i.e. operational versus non-operational), their perception of themselves and their place within their many worlds; family, friends, work, life.⁹⁴ Further, it includes the individual's education, skills and competencies, the year they joined the military, years they served (peace or war time) and type of service (operational, etc.), and year they exited the military (peace or war time). As such, the military to civilian transition is highly subjective as it is their specific biography.

Some private security contractors, after military service, will experience some of the above listed conditions, many of them while actively deployed on contracts.⁹⁵ A recent RAND study found that 25 percent (n = 660) of all contractors surveyed⁹⁶ met the criteria for probable PTSD, and 18 percent screened positive for depression.⁹⁷ While this project does not address the mental and physical health of contractors it is considered an important part of the individual's transition, as prevalence for or presence of any of these issues may affect the extent to which they transition to civilian life. As such, this project acknowledges the potential prevalence of mental health issues among this population, but does not collect data nor conducts analysis on their mental health.

Throughout the military to civilian transition and veteran literature there are common references as to whether an individual should be considered to have had either a successful or unsuccessful transition.⁹⁸ Terming a transition as successful or unsuccessful on criteria like employment, social integration, housing, alcohol and substance abuse and friend and family relationships are what Higate calls the 'crude dichotomy' of successful and/or unsuccessful transitions.⁹⁹ Yet these metrics are necessary for policy-making and the

⁹⁴ Howard Burdett 'The Mental Health and Social Wellbeing of UK Ex-Service Personnel: The Resettlement Process' University of London 2013

⁹⁵ The 2013 RAND Report surveyed 660 private contractors, 30% of which took the survey while on deployment. The numbers of those that were on deployment and those that had met the criteria for probable PTSD, depression or high risk drinking is not known. See M. Dunigan *et al* 'Out of Shadows; The Health and Well-Being of Private Contractors Working in Conflict Environment' RAND Corporation report available at: http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR420.html

⁹⁶ This percentage includes both security and non-security contractors. It is unknown how many of the security contractors with military experience moved directly into security contracting or secured other civilian employment before becoming a security contractor. These types of data were outside of the scope of the RAND study.

⁹⁷ M. Dunigan, C.M. Farmer, R. M. Burns, A. Hawks, C. Messan Setodji (2013) 'Out of Shadows; The Health and Well-Being of Private Contractors Working in Conflict Environment' RAND Corporation report available at: http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR420.html

⁹⁸ Ruth Jolly (1996) and Paul Higate (2001) explicitly discuss the issues of classifying a Service leaver as successful or unsuccessful in their transition to civilian life.

⁹⁹ Paul Higate 'Theorizing Continuity, From Military to Civilian Life' *Armed Forces & Society* Vol.27, No.3 (Spring 2001) pp443-460

provision of appropriate services to veterans.¹⁰⁰ The classification of successful or unsuccessful using these metrics is unnecessary in this project because the focus is on the individual's specific biography, informed by their subjective remembered experience of leaving the military and becoming a security contractor. Their transition outcome is not yet known as this project hypothesizes that becoming a private security contractor plays a role in the transition, and to examine what that role is. Measuring outcomes based on the factors above is not an aim in this project.

Individual security contractors are a largely unknown population. What *is* known about private security contractors is that most post-9/11 security contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan are either Local Nationals (LNs) or Third Country Nationals (TCNs).¹⁰¹ The smallest part of this group is English-speaking Western security contractors.¹⁰² Of this group, most have served in their country's military, often overseas, as enlisted, officers or non-commissioned officers with either operational or combat experience.¹⁰³ Those that do not have a military background may have prior law-enforcement service. Those who have neither military nor law-enforcement service will have taken a course and/or certification to become a private security contractor. This latter group, though, represent a very small portion of the industry.

Private security contractors, while mostly male, represent a variety of nationalities, ages, experience, education, military and/or law-enforcement branch and rank. As such, they are not easily defined as being any one person or thing. Taking the breadth of the population into consideration, and the nascent nature of inquiry into the individual security contractor, this project represents a 'first cut' both in terms of methodology and theoretical framework. As a result, I chose a relatively narrow scope, with an established body of literature on Service leavers and transition theory by which to examine the individual security contractor. The reason for this particular literature is it provides reference for both the military and civilian experience. Security contractors, while often working within the military sphere, are civilians; they do not 'serve', they work. Security contracting is a

¹⁰⁰ Christopher Dandeker, Simon Wessely, Amy Iversen, and John Ross 'Improving the Delivery of Cross Departmental Support and Services for Veterans' A Joint Report of the Department of War Studies and the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London, July 2003

¹⁰¹ U.S. Department of Defense Census Statistics by Fiscal Year Quarter, Contractor Support of U.S. Operations in the U.S. CENTCOM Area of Responsibility, Iraq and Afghanistan March 2014; Contingency Contracting: DOD, State, and USAID Contracts and Contractor Personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan (GAO-09-19) U.S. Government Accountability Office November 2008; ProPublica: War Contractors: The Numbers on American vs. Foreign Workers in Iraq and Afghanistan March 2014 available at: <http://www.propublica.org/article/war-contractors-the-numbers-on-american-vs.-foreign-workers-619>

¹⁰² *Ibid*

¹⁰³ Operational experience describes those who have been on operations, during which exposure to combat can occur. Some soldiers will deploy on operations and never be exposed to combat.

different type of civilian employment to most, but is captured within this literature appropriately.

This study examines only US and UK security contractors with prior regular military experience.¹⁰⁴ This allowed me to focus on a very specific population that could not only be reached, but could be analysed against established literature and research on both US and UK soldiers and veterans. More so, though, what prompted this project were the astonishing numbers of security contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan post-9/11. Thousands of jobs became available overnight and thousands of individuals utilised their prior or current military and/or law-enforcement networks to seek and secure PMSC work in these conflict environments. Some of the individuals I spoke with reported meeting someone to talk about a contracting job and found themselves deploying overseas within 48 hours. Others had to wait longer; a week. The haste in which the US government required manpower from 2003 to 2005 to support coalition war fighting meant a high demand market with ready supply.¹⁰⁵ Today, personnel vetting and the reduced number of contracts in these two conflicts can require the individual to wait up to three months before leaving on a contract in addition to considerable paperwork.¹⁰⁶

Security contracting can provide two things to the Service leaver: a continuation of a similar environment for the individual, both physical (Iraq, Afghanistan) and socio-cultural (language, structure) termed here as ‘environmental continuity’; or, for those with longer in civilian life and possibly no operational and/or combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, a specific experience the individual seeks to return to in exchange for certain rewards, e.g. fulfilment, purpose, sense of belonging, and/or adventure. Becoming a private security contractor after military service puts the individual into what this thesis terms as the ‘quasi-military environment’ where the existence of socio-cultural characteristics like language, institutional attitudes, values, beliefs, recognition and validations of another individual’s prior military service reinforces a particular post-military identity which in turn has an effect on their military to civilian transition.

In this quasi-military environment security contractors are neither soldiers nor civilians. They occupy a specific place in Western military strategy where they can deploy on contracts to areas of operation, where for some, they previously served as an active duty soldier. Security contractors, unlike soldiers, have the freedom and ability to move between

¹⁰⁴ All of the individuals interviewed were during their military service, active duty personnel, I did not restrict the interviews to this population and was open to reserve soldiers but did not meet any or was referred to any and I did not hear of many, if any, reservists becoming security contractors.

¹⁰⁵ Peter W. Singer (2003) ‘Corporate Warriors, the Rise of the Privatized Military Industry’ Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London

¹⁰⁶ As reported in the interviews with the author

contracts and companies. Therefore, their time overseas is largely indeterminable. Contracts can range anywhere from 1 month, to 3 months, to 1 year. Between contracts, contractors will usually travel home.¹⁰⁷ Some will take a year between contracts, some contract continuously.¹⁰⁸ As such, they are what Lomsky-Feder *et al* refer to as ‘transmigrants’:

‘social and organizational amalgams – they are soldiers and civilians, they are outside yet inside the military system, and are invested in both spheres – and as continual migrants journeying between military and civilian spheres. Moreover, by moving between these worlds, [reservists] are mediums for a constant flow of ideas, identities, and social links between them.’¹⁰⁹

Lomsky-Feder *et al* attributed the term ‘transmigrant’ to military reservists, to address the ‘unique social position’ reservists inhabit, as ‘continual migrants.’ They reasoned that

‘while conceptualizing reserve soldiers as being betwixt and between the civilian and military worlds underscores their structural duality, the picture taken from the world of migration introduces a much more dynamic and processual emphasis to this structural characterization.’¹¹⁰

While reservists are distinctly different from security contractors because of their function within the social contract and subsequent relationship to the state, this characterisation of transmigrants, for the reasons Lomsky-Feder *et al* describe, is apt. Security contractors frequently move between the physical military environment (areas of operation/tours), the quasi-military environment of security contracting, and civilian life. Like reservists, security contractors are, also, a medium of ideas and identities. Their social links, though, are distinctly different. Security contractors will often use current or past military colleagues and/or acquaintances, or current or past military friends, which taken together form a ‘residual military network’ to seek and secure employment as a security contractor. As a result, their social links will remain relatively untouched by civilian life, and their network isolated from civilian influence. Reservists will adapt to certain behaviours, language and structure as they move from civilian life into their military rotation. Security contracting, on the other hand, for those with a short time in civilian life between the military and contracting is stabilizing, not adaptive. Behaviours like peer interaction, operational behaviour and social cohesion are a continuation of what the individual experienced and expressed in the military. For those that have spent longer in civilian life

¹⁰⁷ As reported in the interviews with the author

¹⁰⁸ As reported in the interviews with the author

¹⁰⁹ Edna Lomsky-Feder, Nir Gazit and Eyal Ben-Ari (2008) ‘Reserve Soldiers as Transmigrants, Moving Between the Civilian and Military Worlds’ *Armed Forces and Society* Vol.34, No.4 (January 2008) pp593-614; p594

¹¹⁰ Lomsky-Feder *et al* ‘Reserve Soldiers’ p594

between exiting the military and security contracting, contracting becomes a validation of skills, knowledge and identity and gives the individual a sense of purpose or fulfilment, and for those experiencing difficulties in civilian life, may serve to ameliorate those difficulties.

Drawing on Higate's conception of 'environmental continuity' in the Service leaver's transition to civilian life and the previous four studies on individual private security contractors, I hypothesize in this thesis that spending less than six months in civilian life between leaving the military and becoming a private security contractor will delay the individual's engagement with their military exit, thus post-poning the transition to civilian life. To test this hypothesis I discuss in the next section the approach and design of the project, and the plan of this thesis.

1.4 Approach, Design and Plan of Thesis

1.4.1 Approach and Design

I first became aware of security contracting in the early 2000s when people I knew from home were contracting as soon as they left the military, or were leaving the military to become security contractors. Reading the media coverage in newspapers and popular media (for example Jeremy Scahill's 'Blackwater')¹¹¹ created a dissonance in that what I knew of security contractors personally did not resonate nor was represented in what I had read or heard. I am aware that my personal experience with these individuals does not equate to appropriate or even accurate generalities or analyses of these individuals, either to one particular person or to the population as a whole. It was simply that what I knew and what I read were different. I wanted to find out why. As I began to research private security contractors for this project I noted that many of them had previously served in their state's military as regular soldiers. I initially hypothesised that these individuals became contractors because it was just like the military. To explore this hypothesis I turned to military – civilian transition literature and realised that security contracting may not only play a role in their transition, but a potentially significant one. Further review of the literature highlighted a gap in both bodies of literature; military – civilian transition and security studies where analysis of individual security contractors was not only underdeveloped, but had not yet been analysed in reference to military exit and the transition to civilian life.

¹¹¹ Jeremy Scahill 'Blackwater; The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army' Nation Books, 2007

Restricting this project to only English-speaking Western security contractors was an issue of feasibility and language. It was unreasonable to collect representative, generalizable and reliable data on tens of different nationalities and languages. This restriction meant I could rely on a very specific body of scholarship containing accepted theories, research and studies as a foundation for reasonable assumptions and analysis. Where the literature of military – civilian transition is robust, the literature on private security contractors was comparatively non-existent. The literature, though, on the PMSC industry, was, when I began this project and today, continues to grow rapidly. While this body of literature provides context and structure in terms of organisation and company ethos, again, the individual contractor was missing.

To make an original contribution I spoke with the contractors themselves. To do this, I developed a network of private security contractors through my supervisor, attended industry conferences, called industry representatives, participated in website blogs and forums, and asked those friends I knew that were security contractors to refer me to other security contractors. As a result I interviewed a total of 45 US and UK private security contractors who had previously served in the military as active duty soldiers. In these interviews I asked them about their time in the military, why they joined, what they liked about the military, how they dealt with and remembered their transition to civilian life and how and why they became security contractors. These semi-structured interviews became meaningful and authentic reflections of the individual's remembered experience. For many I spoke with, remembering their military – civilian transition was the first time they had acknowledged they had or had not made the transition to civilian life.

Wanting to supplement the interview data with empirical data, I developed a survey based on military – civilian transition literature, PMSC literature, and the Pilot Interviews. Initially I developed a Pilot Survey sent to the initial individuals I interviewed. Their survey responses and additional input prompted changes to what became the final survey. Through contacts of US and UK private security employment agencies, I was able to distribute the survey to around 15,000 private security contractors. In addition, a PMSC agreed to distribute the survey on my behalf, bringing those who were sent the survey to just fewer than 16,000. This represents the largest distribution of an academic survey to this population, to date. The response rate is also the highest experienced within this field of inquiry, although was very low in comparison to the numbers it was sent to and survey methodology in general. Response rate and bias will be addressed, along with technical details and the full methodology of this project in Chapter 4 'Methodology.'

As a result of my initial assumptions, subsequent research and inquiry about these individuals and their transition from the military to civilian life by way of security contracting, this thesis is formatted as follows:

1.4.2 *Plan of Thesis*

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This chapter introduces the project's main argument, research questions and hypothesis preceding a brief review of PMSC literature, including research done to date on the individual private security contractor. This chapter highlights the gap in research this project aims to fill and gives a brief summary of the proceeding chapters.

Chapter 2 – The Experience of Transition

This chapter analyses the literature on the transition to civilian life as reported by governments, non-governmental organisations, academia, and the veterans themselves. The aim of this chapter is to provide context in which the individual makes the decision to become a private security contractor after military service. In this regard the first section of this chapter explicitly addresses who is a veteran and the government provided transition services for both US and UK Service leavers in the months and years after they separate from the military. The second section of the chapter focuses on the various issues a Service leaver might experience during military separation and their subsequent transition. This section relied on experiences as given by Service leavers drawing on sources that included websites, professional organisations, personal blogs, magazine articles, YouTube videos and podcasts.

Chapter 3 – Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This chapter extends Clive Jones's idea of PMSCs as representing an epistemic community; by arguing individual security contractors qualify as an epistemic community based on the professionalization of security contracting. In this section the private security contractor is distinguished from the professional soldier, and uses Burk, Friedson and Abbot to explain the emergence of their professionalization. The second half of this chapter presents the project's theoretical framework, developing first Jurgen Habermas's idea of the 'life world' as a way in which Service leavers-turned-security contractors experience contracting. The chapter proceeds by discussing the theories of social identity, transition, motive and network theory as a framework to discuss the project's findings.

Chapter 4 – Survey and Interview Methodology

This chapter explains the project's methodology of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. It discusses, in detail, how the survey questions were developed, how survey participants were found, non-responder bias, and the strengths and limitations of both the methodological approach and research design. While methodology is often placed at the start of a research project/thesis I felt it important to first develop the conceptual transition to support the methodology I chose for this project.

Chapter 5 – Data Results – Survey

This chapter presents the quantitative data collected in this project's survey of one PMSC and two private security employment agencies. The chapter begins by presenting the major findings, and proceeds with the demographic data of the sample population, followed by the data collected on transition, networks, and attitudes and values. These data are not discussed here, but in Chapter 8 'Discussion of the Findings.'

Chapter 6 – Data Results - Interviews

This chapter presents the data gathered from 41 interviews with US and UK military veterans-turned- private security contractors. The chapter begins with the major findings from the interview data and demographics, and proceeds by presenting the data in the following categories: (1) historical perspective: motivation and influence: review of reasons for joining the military; (2) the transition from the military to security contracting (for those with interim civilian employment; (3) use of social networks in becoming a private security contractor; (4) professionalism in private security contracting; (5) similarities between the military and security contracting; (6) sense of difference between the military and security contracting; and (7) the transition from security contracting to civilian life. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the interview findings.

Chapter 7 – Discussion of the Survey and Interview Findings

This chapter discusses the survey and interview findings in reference to the literature on Service leavers and the project's theoretical framework. The chapter begins with a discussion on the demographic findings of both the survey and interview sample population and proceeds thematically discussing (1) networks; (2) attitudes and values; (3) professionalism; and (4) transition. A brief conclusion follows.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

This chapter discusses the project, its importance and the gaps in the existing literature it addresses. In this chapter I set out the key findings and how they change existing literature on both transition and the privatisation of security, and whether the data confirms the hypothesis as set out in Chapter 1. Proceeding is a discussion on the policy implications of the findings, the project's strengths and limitations and areas for future research of which this project is the first step.

Chapter 2

The Experience of Transition from the Military to Civilian Life

'Often lately, I find myself revisiting the list of reasons I chose to get out, in what I suppose was an attempt to reinforce that decision, as I become increasingly aware of the vacuum it's left in my world. Obviously I miss it. Who doesn't? The sentiment becomes even more acute when you realize that nobody really gives a shit how much of a pipe-hitting- napalm-pissing-one-man-national-asset you were while you were in. Oh, you were Special Forces? That's super. Back of the line asshole.

*The transition is turbulent to say the least. If I'm conservative with my self-analysis, I'd tell you that it left me struggling to find relevance in the workforce, put a significant strain on my marriage, and left me in the throes of a full-blown identity crisis. If I'm a bit more honest with that same analysis, I'd tell you that it nearly destroyed me.'*¹¹²

2.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the literature on the experiences of US and UK Service leavers in the transition to civilian life. The literature is a combination of research done on Service leavers and transition, and also literature by the leavers themselves, describing their experience as they remember it.

What has not been considered before in either military to civilian transition literature or on the privatization of security is whether private security contracting is an effort by the Service leaver to address – or even ignore – possible issues experienced in civilian life after leaving the military. This chapter addresses the experience of transition, drawing from government reports and programmes, academic and research literature on veterans and from veterans themselves in an aim to provide an understanding of what issues arise during the transition to civilian life. The aim of the chapter is to provide a framework of reference for the data collected in the interviews and surveys in order to examine the role of private security contracting in the individual's transition to civilian life and to determine whether the issues (if any) experience by the sample population during their transition make them similar to other Service leavers. While there is much literature on veteran outcomes¹¹³ like

¹¹² Nico 'Ronin: The Masterclass Warrior of Generation Y' available on www.oafnation.com, accessed March 2014

¹¹³ See for example Amy Iversen *et al* 'What happens to British Veterans when they leave the armed forces' *European Journal for Public Health* (2005) Vol.15, No.2 pp175-184; Kilpatrick and Kilpatrick

educational attainment,¹¹⁴ earnings potential compared to their civilian counterparts,¹¹⁵ mental health¹¹⁶ and homelessness,¹¹⁷ this chapter focuses on issues, for example the deconstruction and reconstruction of identity upon military exit, that shape the individual's transition and the experience of transition itself.

First, this chapter addresses who is determined a veteran in the US and UK. Understanding 'who' is a veteran is significant because the recognition of certain conditions qualifying one as a veteran has implications on the veteran's relationship with civilian

'Retirement from the Military: Problems of Adjustment' *Social Casework* 60 (1979); R.G. Druss 'Problems Associated with Retirement from the Military' *Military Medicine* Vol.130, No.4 (1965);

¹¹⁴Jere Cohen *et al* (1995) 'Military Service and Educational-Attainment in the All Volunteer Force' *Social Science Quarterly* Vol.76, No.1 pp88-104; Jay D. Teachman *et al* (1996) 'The effect of military service on educational, occupational, and income attainment' *Social Science Research* Vol.25, No.1 pp1-31; R.J. Sampson and J.H. Laub (1996) 'Socioeconomic achievement in the life course of disadvantaged men: Military service as a turning point, circa 1940-1945' *American Sociological Review* pp347-367; Jere Cohen (1992) 'The Impact of Education on Vietnam-Era Veterans' Occupational Attainment' *Social Science Quarterly* Vol.73, No.2 pp397-409; Jay Teachman (2007) 'Military service and educational attainment in the all-volunteer era' *Sociology of Education* Vol.80, No.4 pp359-374; and, Alair MacLean and Glen H. Elder Jr (2007) 'Military service in the life course' *Sociology* Vol.33, No.1 pp175, among many others.

¹¹⁵ See for example Roger D Little *et al* 'Veterans Status, Earnings and Race: Some Long Term Results' (Winter 1979) *Armed Forces and Society* Vol.5, No.2 pp244-260; Yu Xie 'The Socioeconomic Status of Young Male Veterans, 1964-1984' *Social Science Quarterly* Vol.73, No.2 pp379-396; G.H. Elder in R.a.L. Sampson 'Socioeconomic Achievement in the life course of disadvantaged men: military service as a turning point circa 1940-1945' (1996) *American Sociological Review* No.61, pp347-367; David S. Loughran 'Wage Growth in the Civilian Careers for Military Retirees' (2010) *Research Institute of National Defense*; RAND National Defense Research Institute, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, 9th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation; J. Teachman and L. Tedrow 'Joining up: Did Military Service in the Early All Volunteer Era Affect Subsequent Civilian Income?' *Social Science Research* Vol.36, No.4 (2007); G. Elder 'Military Times and Turning Points in Men's Lives' *Development Psychology* 22 (1986), Wayne J. VILLEMEZ and John D. Kasarda 'Veteran Status and Socioeconomic Attainment' *Armed Forces and Society* Vol.2, No.3 (Spring 1976) pp407-420; Melanie Martindale and Dudley L. Poston Jr 'Variations in Veteran/Nonveteran Earning Patterns among World War II, Korea, and Vietnam War Cohorts' *Armed Forces and Society* Vol.5, No.2 (Winter 1979) pp219-243; Doo-Seung Hong 'Retired U.S. Military Elites – Postmilitary Employment and Its Sociopolitical Implications' *Armed Forces and Society* Vol.5, No.3 (Spring 1979) pp451-466; among others.

¹¹⁶ There is an extensive amount of research on the mental health of veterans, especially post-9/11 and also on PTSD, mTBI and suicide. A few of the most cited studies include: C.W. Hoge *et al* (2004) 'Combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, mental health problems, and barriers to care' *New England Journal of Medicine* 351 (1) pp13-22; C.W. Hoge *et al.* (2008) Mild traumatic brain injury in US soldiers returning from Iraq *New England Journal of Medicine* 358 (5) pp453-463; C.W. Hoge *et al* 'Mental health problems, use of mental health services, and attrition from military service after returning from deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan' *JAMA* 295 (9) PP1023-1032; J Sundin *et al* (2014) 'Mental health outcomes in US and UK military personnel returning from Iraq' *British Journal of Psychiatry*; N Jones *et al* 'Mild traumatic brain injury among UK military personnel whilst deployed in Afghanistan in 2011' *Brain Injury*; and, D MacManus *et al* (2014) 'The mental health of the UK Armed Forces in the 21st Century: resilience in the face of adversity' *JR Army Med Corps*; see <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/kcmhr/pubdb/> for further publications.

¹¹⁷ D. Doll and D.M. Bowley (2008) 'Veteran's health – surviving acute injuries is not enough' *The Lancet* Vol.371 No.9618, pp1053-55; P.R. Higate (2000) 'Tough bodies and rough sleeping: embodying homelessness amongst ex-servicemen' *Housing, Theory and Society* Vol.17, No.3 pp97-108; P.R. Higate (2001) 'Theorizing continuity: from military to civilian life' *Armed Forces and Society* Vol.27, No.3 pp97-108; P.R. Higate (2008) 'Ex-servicemen on the road: travel and homelessness' *Sociological Review* Vol.48, No.3 pp.443-460; Libby Pearl 'Veterans and Homelessness' Congressional Research Service Report November 29, 2013 Report No.34024

society and civilians, and also how the individual identifies themselves.¹¹⁸ This relationship between the Service leaver and civilians is a crucial and integral part of the individual's transition to civilian life, as it is the integration, acceptance, understanding and ultimately, belonging in civilian life by which the individual experiences their transition. This relationship becomes its most tenuous in regards to communication and the language used between veterans and civilians, and also in regards to community and belonging, of which the transition from military language replete with acronyms to civilian 'language' can be a barrier to entry.

Following is a brief discussion on the enlistment motivations and propensities in an effort to understand what draws or motivates individuals to join the military and to compare and contrast these in Chapter 8 with the data collected in this project on remembered motivations of private security contractors for initially joining the military. This is significant to address because it sheds light on the relationship the individual has with private security contracting by examining whether the individual sees security contracting as the same type of rewards-institution like the military, e.g. social mobility. This short section provides general enlistment motivations and propensities, briefly comparing them to Volker Franke and Marc vom Boemcken's 2011 survey results of reported motivations of former law enforcement personnel-turned-private security contractors.

2.2 *Who is a Veteran?*

There are varying definitions of what it means to be a veteran.¹¹⁹ The relevance of this term to this thesis is as Dandeker *et al* write 'definitions of *veteran* not only shape the scale of what is considered to be the veteran population but also underpin the sociological framework within which their needs, rights and concerns evolve and are dealt with.'¹²⁰ Veteran status will indicate the needs, rights and concerns, as developed in this thesis that may influence the individual to become a private security contractor. The US and the UK use the widest definition of veteran to include anyone who has served at least one day in the armed forces.¹²¹ The term, though, has different meanings in each of these countries; 'In the United Kingdom, the norm has been to use *ex-service* to describe those who have been employed in the armed forces, with the term *veteran* reserved for those who have served in

¹¹⁸ Dandeker *et al* (2006) 'What's in a Name? Defining and Caring for Veterans' *Armed Forces and Society* Vol.32, No.2 pp161-177

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*

¹²⁰ *Ibid* p162 emphasis in original

¹²¹ For the US definition see Umar Moulta-Ali 'Who is a Veteran? – Basic Eligibility for Veterans' Benefits' Congressional Research Service Report R42324 January 23, 2014; where it states 'By statute, a 'veteran' is defined as a 'person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released there from under conditions other than dishonorable.' [38 U.S.C. § 101(2); 38 C.F.R. § 3.1(d)] p1; for the UK definition see Dandeker 'What's in a Name?'

military operations and, by implication, for those who have been called upon to perform the unique obligations implied by the military contract.’¹²² In the United States ‘veterans are defined as personnel who have served for a minimum period of service and have been discharged with at least the status of ‘honorable’ despite the fact they may not have served on operations.’¹²³

This thesis does not require the individual to state whether they are a ‘veteran’ *per se* but considers the affirmative answers to questions about whether the individual has served in their country’s armed forces that the individual is a veteran according to the above definitions for US and UK veterans. The status of veteran is important to consider as it has been shown to play a role and have significant value in the Service leaver forming their identity after leaving the Armed Forces.¹²⁴

What is agreed upon in veteran literature is that Service leavers represent a cohort that may experience particular outcomes and experiences solely as a result of their military service within their life course. An obvious example is mental health issues or physical disabilities as a result of combat exposure. Additionally, these individuals may have experiences and outcomes civilians without military service may also have. However, military service has a significant impact on the life course of a veteran in that some outcomes may be specifically related to military service. In order to understand this impact it is important to acknowledge why individuals decide to join the military.

2.3 *Joining the Military: Propensities and Motivations*

‘An All Volunteer Force (AVF) makes studying enlistment propensities and motivations crucial as troops need to be replenished continuously.’¹²⁵ Further, understanding an individual’s background before military service has shown some correlations to levels of potential prevalence for social and or physical issues, like PTSD, suicide or violence and/or crime leading to incarceration.¹²⁶ For example, Cabrera *et al* and Iversen *et al* found

¹²² *Ibid* p165

¹²³ *Ibid* p166

¹²⁴ Howard Burdett, Charlotte Woodhead, Amy C. Iversen, Simon Wessely, Christopher Dandeker and Nicola T. Fear ‘Are you a Veteran? Understanding the Term ‘Veteran’ among UK Ex-Service Personnel A Research Note’ *Armed Forces & Society* published online 2012, pp1-9, p2

¹²⁵ David R. Segal and Mady Wechsler Segal ‘America’s Military Population’ *Population Bulletin* (2004) Vol.59, No4; Meredith Kleykamp ‘College Jobs or the Military? Enlistment During a Time of War’ *Social Science Quarterly* Vol.87, No.2 (June 2006) pp272-290; Todd Woodruff, Ryan Kely and David R. Segal ‘Propensity to Serve and Motivation to Enlist Among American Combat Soldiers’ *Armed Forces and Society* Vol.32, No.3 (April 2006) pp353-366

¹²⁶ Diedere MacManus *et al* ‘Violent Offending by UK Veterans – Authors’ Reply’ *The Lancet* (June 2013) 381(9885):2252; M. Jones, M. Sundin, L. Goodwin, L. Hull, N.T. Fear, S. Wessely and R.J. Rona ‘What explains post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in UK service personnel: deployment

childhood adversity contributed to a prevalence of PTSD in both US and UK soldiers, with Iversen *et al* further finding lower rank, being unmarried, and low educational attainment also contribute to a prevalence of PTSD in deployed and non-deployed soldiers.¹²⁷ Enlistment, in turn, is also predicted by particular factors; parents' education, high school grades, college plans, race and ethnicity, and attractiveness of military work roles.¹²⁸ Children of college educated parents and those with higher grades are less likely to serve, along with college students who are less likely to enlist, with African Americans and Hispanics more likely to serve than whites.¹²⁹

Motivation to enlist has been found to be correlated with social mobility in both the US and UK.¹³⁰ Military service, for many, is an opportunity for the development of skills, capabilities and education, whether within the military or money for further education, and positioning for a better job. Enlistment propensity, then, is representative, generally, of certain populations.¹³¹ Specifically, Lutz found individuals that come from a higher socioeconomic background are less likely to enlist, whereas those with lowered socioeconomic backgrounds, more likely.¹³² Some argue that motivation and enlistment propensity cannot be simply defined by social mobility, but represent greater state and social macro issues as indicators of enlistment; that 'relying purely on economics fail at three important points: 1) when there are political crisis or long periods of ethnic tension; 2) when questions of equality become crucial; and 3) when a group's self-identity is tied up in a tradition of military service.'¹³³ A study of white and non-white British Army recruits

or something else?' *Psychological Medicine* (November 2012) pp1-10; R.J. Rona, M. Jones, J. Sundin, L. Goodwin, L. Hull, S. Wessely, N.T. Fear 'Predicting persistent posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in UK military personnel who served in Iraq' *Journal of Psychiatric Research* 2012 pp1-8; Matthew Miller *et al* 'Veterans and Suicide: A Reexamination of the National Death Index-Linked National Health Interview Survey' (March 2012) Vol.102, No.S1, ppS154-S149, among many others addressing these issues.

¹²⁷ Oscar Cabrera, Charles Hoge, Paul Bliese, Carl Castro and Stephen Messer 'Childhood Adversity and Combat as Predictors of Depression and Post Traumatic Stress in Deployed Troops' *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* Vol.33, No.2 (2007) pp77-82; AC Iversen, NT Fear, A Ehlers, J Hacker Hughes, L Hull, M Earnshaw, N Greenberg, R Rona, S Wessely, and M Hotopf 'Risk factors for post-traumatic stress disorder among UK Armed Forces personnel' *Psychological Medicine* No.4 (2008) pp511-522

¹²⁸ David R. Segal and Mady Wechsler Segal 'America's Military Population' *Population Bulletin* (2004) Vol.59, No4

¹²⁹ *Ibid* p9

¹³⁰ Kleykamp 2006; Woodruff *et al* 2006, Angrist 1998, Seeborg 1994; Elder 1986, 1987; Sampson and Laub 1996; Ian Bellany 'Accounting for army recruitment: White and non-white soldiers and the British Army' *Defence and Peace Economics* Vol.14, No.2 (2010) pp281-292

¹³¹ Kleykamp 2006; Woodruff *et al* 2006; Angrist 1998; Binking and Eitelberg 1982; Bulter 1992; Kilburn and Asch 2003; Segal 1989.

¹³² Lutz 2008, p178

¹³³ Peterson 1989, p564; James Hosek *et al* 'Who Stays Who Leaves? Attrition Among First Term Enlistees' *Armed Forces and Society* Vol.15, No.3 (Spring 1989) pp389-409

found the strongest motivation was economic and rates of enlistment fluctuated to reflect the British economy.¹³⁴

Woodruff and Kelty produced four categories of enlistment motivations; ‘1) institutional, composed of the desire to serve one’s country, feelings of patriotism, sense of adventure, and desire to be a soldier (for a few years); 2) future-oriented; includes the desire to be a career soldier and the desire to receive money for college; 3) occupational; including the need to support one’s family, the need to deal with a personal or family crisis (e.g. divorce, job loss, and financial problems), the lack of better employment options, and the military being the best employment available; and 4) pecuniary; including both enlistment bonus and money to repay college loans.’¹³⁵ Volker Franke and Marc vom Boemcken’s survey of the motivations to become a security contractor, of prior law enforcement-turned-private security contractors (n=223) in 2011, produced below consistent results to Woodruff and Kelty’s data:

Table 1. Franke and von Boemcken’s ‘Guns for Hire’, ‘Motivations’

Motivations	Very Important	Important	Less/Not Important
To face and meet new challenges	74.9%	20.8%	4.3%
To help others	64.5%	24.1%	11.3%
To feel like my work makes a difference	38%	37.1%	24.9%
To serve my country	31.3%	34.1%	34.6%
To make more money than in my previous job	25.2%	44.1%	30.6%
To seek adventure and excitement	19.1%	35.4%	45.5%
To travel and visit new places	11.3%	32.1%	56.6%

The first four motivations listed on this table, ‘to face and meet new challenges,’ ‘to help others,’ ‘to feel like my work makes a difference,’ ‘to serve my country’ were reported as ‘*very important*’ by the survey respondents.¹³⁶ These motivations fit into Woodruff and Kelty’s ‘institutional’ category; the individual shows little change despite institutionalisation via the military and/or law enforcement. What is known, then, is that basic employment interests across these cohorts remain similar. Motivation to enlist provides valuable context as to the role the military, or in this project’s case, security

¹³⁴ Bellany (2010)

¹³⁵ Todd Woodruff, Ryan Kelty and David R. Segal ‘Propensity to Serve and Motivation to Enlist among American Combat Soldiers’ *Armed Forces and Society* Vol.32, No.2 (April 2006) pp353-361; p360-361.

¹³⁶ Franke and von Boemcken (2011) p736

contracting, plays in the individual's life-course. The motivations above appear relatively stable from pre-institution to post-institution, providing an initial indicator in this project that the two populations of those who join the military and those who become private security contractors are motivated by similar reasons.

The majority of the literature on the enlistment propensities and motivations are concerning the US Armed Forces. In comparison, there is little UK literature done on Army enlistment propensities. The main source for information regarding UK enlistment is 'Defence Statistics' provided by the Ministry of Defence (MoD), and the Strategic Defence and Security Review, from which Bellany found that the main motivation for the British Army recruits is that of economics and job availability in Britain.¹³⁷

2.4 Transition Services – US and UK

Both the US and UK governments provide transition services for all Service leavers, the extent of which services and support to the individual is determined by the amount of time served. Both countries transition services will be discussed briefly below to highlight the institutional process by which the individual leaves the Armed Forces and enters civilian life.

2.4.1 United States

All US Armed Forces service leavers have access to the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), run by the US Department of Labor (DoL). TAP consists of a three day workshop, nationwide, both in-person and virtual that offers assistance and guidance with the following: job searches, career-decision making, current occupational and labor market conditions, resume and cover letter preparation and interview techniques.¹³⁸ The aim of TAP is 'to give employment and training information to armed forces members within 180 days of separation or retirement.'¹³⁹ TAP acknowledges 'many veterans initially find it difficult to compete successfully in the labor market. The TAP program addresses many of the barriers to success and alleviates many employment related difficulties.'¹⁴⁰ Further to the three day course is the assigned 280-page TAP manual. While comprehensive in addressing practical methods of securing civilian employment, the individual's identity is

¹³⁷ Bellany (2010)

¹³⁸ Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) <http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/>

¹³⁹ Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) <http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/>

¹⁴⁰ Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) <http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/>

referred to only once in the manual; 'although leaving the military can cause some internal confusion of identity, loss of self-esteem and control, you can identify appropriate coping mechanisms to use to mitigate the consequences of change.'¹⁴¹ These 'mechanisms' include relying on social, familial and institutional support like the Veteran's Administration (VA), but do not include further elaboration.

Regarding language, an issue many veterans report as a barrier to a smooth transition discussed later in this chapter, the manual's 'Resume Checklist' addresses language only once, by use of a 'check box' to ensure the individual has not 'inappropriate jargon or military abbreviations' in their resume.¹⁴² Potentially useful for securing civilian employment, there is no discussion by the transition assistance provider in the literature given to the Service leaver that these prohibitive prescriptions may have consequences the individual may feel once employment is secured; loss of identity and lack of understanding between themselves and civilians when refraining from a way of communication that is familiar to the individual. The annual \$104 million dollar budget for TAP includes a recent upgrade of TAP to TAP Goals, Plans and Success (GPS), a 'mandatory five day workshop with additional days of optional training depending upon the path that service members select. Transitioning service members participating in the program will be able to select a path, depending upon if they plan to pursue education after the military, search for a job, or start their own business.'¹⁴³ The program's emphasis is on career readiness. In addition to TAP, each branch of the armed services provide their own transition services.¹⁴⁴

Despite its comprehensiveness in regard to employment preparation and familiarisation with civilian administration, e.g. taxes, benefits, TAP and TAP GPS did not seem to inspire the individuals I interviewed in this project. For the US veterans-turned-contractors interviewed, TAP had not yet been upgraded to TAP GPS and a repeated recollection of the TAP process was a one-day 220 slide power point presentation of which most of the US veterans interviewed for this project reported did not provide any transition assistance outside of understanding veteran benefits forms, such as veteran benefits and healthcare. This, though, is not necessarily representative of the TAP experience in general. In a Pentagon review of the new program, conducted at Langley Air Force base,

¹⁴¹ US DOL Employment Workshop Handbook January 2014 available at: http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/DOLEW-Participant-Guide-January_2014.pdf

¹⁴² Ibid p154

¹⁴³ <http://www.taonline.com/tapoffice/>

¹⁴⁴ US Marines 'Military Transition Readiness Program' <http://www.mccscp.com/transition-assistance-veterans-benefits>; US Navy Transition GPS <http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/career/transition/Pages/default.aspx>; US Air Force <http://www.afpc.af.mil/lifeandcareer/transition.asp>; US Army [http://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Home/Benefit_Library/Federal_Benefits_Page/Transition_Assistance_Program_\(TAP\).html](http://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Home/Benefit_Library/Federal_Benefits_Page/Transition_Assistance_Program_(TAP).html)

one participant stated: 'When I came into class today, I had a strictly planned future,' Smith said. 'Now I know a better, more efficient way to achieve my dreams.'¹⁴⁵ Whether or not TAP efficiently ensures the achievement of dreams, US veterans in general do not suffer from high unemployment rates after military service, with the veteran unemployment rate consistently hovering around 7%, pre and post-TAP GPS.¹⁴⁶ While studies have long reported that military service enhances socioeconomic status, the conclusion of military service improving this status is 'disparate depending upon the cohort analysed and the time span intervening since active duty.'¹⁴⁷ This disparity goes to the centre of the debate on the impact of military service on the individual's life course and effects on civilian earnings.

While each branch of the forces will have recommended transition services or trainings, all service members must complete the TAP/TAP GPS program.¹⁴⁸ This includes those service members that were involuntarily separated (IVS) or involuntarily retired (IVR).¹⁴⁹ It is important to note that the TAP GPS has exemptions, for which many security contractors may have been eligible for by the second requirement in order to bypass TAP GPS. They include:

- 1) Those that have served 20 or more years on active duty;
- 2) Service members with documented civilian employment or acceptance to an accredited career technical training, undergraduate or graduate program, or;
- 3) Wounded warriors enrolled in an Education and Employment Initiative.¹⁵⁰

Why this is significant is that while the individual may not need traditional transition services that include resume/CV building or interview techniques, they are given no instruction regarding the social aspects of civilian life. It is likely that when the individual

¹⁴⁵ Pentagon Officials Review Langley's Transition Assistance Program by Airman 1st Class Austin Harvill, available at: <http://www.acc.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123348700> accessed on April 29, 2014

¹⁴⁶ Dan Black, Amer Hasan and Julia Lane 'Report 2: Developing a Deeper Understanding of the Labor Market Dynamics of Recently Discharged Veterans' National Organization for Research Chicago January 2007. In fact 'discharged veterans are more likely to be employed than their civilian counterparts' p2

¹⁴⁷ Little (1979) 'Veterans Status' p245, see also Yu Xie (1992) 'The Socioeconomic Status of Young Male Veterans 1964-1984' *Social Science Quarterly* Vol.73, No.2 pp379-396; and Dan Black and Julie Lane (2007) Report 1: 'The Labor Market Trajectories of 20-24 year old veterans' National Organization for Research Chicago, January 1, 2007

¹⁴⁸ See for example for the US Navy OPNAVINST 1900.2 (Series) for eligibility for transition services and benefits, where it states 'every service member is eligible for and will have full access to transition services and must meet Career Readiness Standards (CRS) prior to separation' p2 <http://doni.daps.dla.mil/Directives/01000%20Military%20Personnel%20Support/01-900%20Military%20Separation%20Services/1900.2B.pdf>

¹⁴⁹ Ibid p2-3

¹⁵⁰ Transition Assistance Program available at: <http://www.afpc.af.mil/lifeandcareer/transition.asp>

leaves security contracting their eligibility for TAP GPS will have expired.¹⁵¹ While exemptions apply to TAP GPS, attendance and participation in Veteran's Affairs (VA) benefits is mandatory. This includes disability payments and health care, among other things. Also mandatory is the approval of the individual's Career Readiness Standards (CRS) by a transition counsellor, stipulating the individual has met the CRS requirements and has a basic understanding of writing a resume and the interview process for civilian employment.¹⁵²

Retirees are eligible for transition services up to twenty-four months before retirement and those separating from the military eligible up to 12 months prior to separation. Apart from the provision of services, these timelines are more recommendations and guidelines rather than mandated steps in order to exit the military. The emphasis of all transition services is civilian employment readiness, first only to financial awareness and planning. While some veterans have a lifetime access to certain benefits depending on time serviced, all veterans have access to TAP GPS only for 180 days after separating from the military. After this initial six months the individual will be eligible for various benefits, e.g. Veteran's Affairs/Health Services, but will not have access to job assistance.

2.4.2 *United Kingdom*

The Armed Forces in the United Kingdom have a graduated transition assistance programme dependent upon the amount of time served, provided by the Ministry of Defence (MoD). Those having served for four years or less (termed 'Early Service Leavers' (ESLs)) are eligible for the 'Future Horizons Programme' whose focus is matching the individual with suitable employment by identifying skills so the individual is 'job ready'.¹⁵³ In addition to employment advice ESLs are given advice on housing, social benefits, service charities and a review of available training, development and education courses.¹⁵⁴

Those with between four and six years of service get what is called the 'Employment Support Programme' that includes employment consultants, online jobs database and a range of allowances and grants.¹⁵⁵ These allowances and grants support training and education by way of Standard Learning Credits (SLCs) and Enhanced Learning Credits

¹⁵¹ TAP GPS is available up to 180 days after separation from the military.

¹⁵² A full copy of the CRS requirements can be found in Appendix X and also here: <http://www.afpc.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-140311-054.pdf>

¹⁵³ <http://www.ctp.org.uk/futurehorizons>

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*

(ELCs).¹⁵⁶ Individuals can apply these credits to a variety of accredited training programmes. Specifically, individuals can apply their ELCs towards a Close Protection Officer (CPO) certification, most often required for employment as a private security contractor. To date there are over 240,000 ex service members registered in the ELC scheme.¹⁵⁷

Those with six years of service or longer, are eligible for the 'Full Support Programme', giving the service leaver access to individual career advice, workshops, finance and housing advice, 'Career Transition Partnership' (CTP) training course, trial attachments and external training, job finding service, individual resettlement preparation and post-discharge support.¹⁵⁸ While those with a longer service enjoy greater support before, during and shortly after military separation, research has shown that greater support may be required for individuals who have had less exposure to civilian life over a long period of time.¹⁵⁹

Like the US, the main focus of UK resettlement is on securing civilian employment after military separation. Unlike the US, the UK's resettlement programme provides more 'hands on' training, but is not as flexible as the US who provides most of their training online where it is easily accessed. For example, for those eligible for the Full Support Programme are able to attend workshops and trainings, but are limited to providing those classes in a single location where courses range from five days to two weeks and cost upwards of £3,000 for specialized job training, such as an electrician course.¹⁶⁰ While SLCs and ELCs can be applied to these courses, they do not cover the full cost requiring the individual to pay the remaining balance.

The purpose of briefly addressing US and UK transition/resettlement provisions is to show that those individuals who become private security contractors have a variety of employment assistance options, the degree to which depends on time served, so that while for some becoming a private security contractor may be reported as a last minute employment choice upon military exit, the individual will have had exposure and accessibility to training for civilian employment. This is important because security

¹⁵⁶ From 2003, the MoD's ELC initiative has been outsourced, run and supported by the PMSC G4S, who manages the ELC programme, *see* [http://www.g4s.uk.com/en-GB/Media%20Centre/Case%20Studies/Government/Defence%20-](http://www.g4s.uk.com/en-GB/Media%20Centre/Case%20Studies/Government/Defence%20-%20MOD%20Enhanced%20Learning%20Credits%20Initiative/)

¹⁵⁷ [http://www.g4s.uk.com/en-GB/Media%20Centre/Case%20Studies/Government/Defence%20-](http://www.g4s.uk.com/en-GB/Media%20Centre/Case%20Studies/Government/Defence%20-%20MOD%20Enhanced%20Learning%20Credits%20Initiative/)

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.ctp.org.uk>

¹⁵⁹ Howard Burdett 'The Mental Health and Social Wellbeing of UK Ex-Service Personnel: The Resettlement Process' University of London 2013

¹⁶⁰ <https://www.ctp.org.uk/assets/x/53343>

contracting becomes an active choice the individual is making against other provided options for civilian employment. This means the decision to become a security contractor is not a decision made on 'auto pilot' but a form of employment the individual chose.

2.5 Transition

Most Service leavers do well.¹⁶¹ Some do not.¹⁶² All, though, will experience the transition from the military to civilian life in some capacity.¹⁶³ The Service leaver faces a myriad of changes when leaving the military. Practical changes include finding civilian employment, geographic relocation (for some), and reintegration with family and community. Burdett found those who leave the military demographically reflect the general make up of the Armed Forces, and that the majority leave in a planned way.¹⁶⁴ More existential changes of transition include as Borus wrote 'the forced integrated setting of the military, changes in basic constitutional and civil rights, a decrease in ability to control life with a much greater dependency on others, and the generalized demand for adjustment to a variety of both extreme and mundane environments.'¹⁶⁵ In addition, the Service leaver must deconstruct and reconstruct their identity in which to cope with and face these changes.¹⁶⁶ These changes often happen simultaneously, and despite facing and experiencing many changes during this time, most do well in civilian life. The outcome of the individual's transition, regardless of type of transition, e.g. difficult or easy, does not mean they will not experience a transition.¹⁶⁷ Military to civilian transition is unique because the military, and military life, is unlike any civilian experience and/or employment¹⁶⁸ where the leaving of one and entry into the other can be felt as somewhat of a 'jolt.'¹⁶⁹ Serving in the military is a way of life, where military socialisation produces a strong culture and sense of camaraderie.¹⁷⁰ This way of life may have a 'lasting impact even after they have returned to civilian life.'¹⁷¹

¹⁶¹ Iversen *et al* (2005)

¹⁶² Those that do not do well are a minority of the veteran population who experience and suffer from issues like homelessness, alcohol and substance abuse, deterioration of friend and family relationships, domestic violence, and for some, suicide. For additional material on these issues and the research surrounding them, see the following few examples, among many: FINISH CITE

¹⁶³ Stephani L. Hatch *et al* (2013) 'Life in and after the Armed Forces: social networks and mental health in the UK military' *Sociology of Health and Illness* Vol.35, No.7 pp1045-1064; p1045-6

¹⁶⁴ Howard Burdett 'The Mental Health and Social Wellbeing of UK Ex-Service Personnel: The Resettlement Process' University of London 2013; p344-345

¹⁶⁵ Jonathan F Borus (1975) 'The Reentry Transition of the Vietnam Veteran' *Armed Forces and Society* Vol.2, No.1 (November) pp97-114; p98

¹⁶⁶ David Walker (2012) 'Anticipating Army Exit: Identity Constructions of Final Year UK Career Soldiers' *Armed Forces and Society* published online 2012, pp1-21

¹⁶⁷ The recent Forces in Mind Trust 'Transition Mapping Study' concluded that 'transition is a bumpy road even for those who transitions are successful.' (August 2013, p54).

¹⁶⁸ McClure (1999) p309

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid* p309

¹⁷⁰ The Howard League for Penal Reform 'Leaving Forces Life: The Issue of Transition'

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*

In addition, transition is ‘an on-going spatial process rather than a singular event that marks a disjuncture between the different lives lived in the military and civilian spaces.’¹⁷²

The extent of difficulties and frustration in transition can be mitigated by preparation and planning for military exit.¹⁷³ One study found the relationship between the degree of planning and the degree of adjustment was significant and concluded ‘those who planned had less trouble adjusting to their new lifestyle.’¹⁷⁴ While planning and preparation is encouraged by both the US and UK Armed Forces transition programmes between 12 and 24 months prior to exit, studies found that many do not plan or prepare until a few months before they leave.¹⁷⁵ This was due to a combination of the uncertainty of exactly when the individual would be leaving the military and also the cultural attitude of ‘giving it your all’ including up to the last day of service, which delayed engagement in preparation for transition.¹⁷⁶

Service leavers face practical issues upon leaving the military and much of both the US and UK’s various transition assistance programmes, specifically address and provide support for these issues. They include writing a CV, interview techniques, how to conduct a job search, understanding what benefits are available and how to access these benefits once the separation from the military has occurred. What these programmes do not appear to address are the socio-cultural issues of adjustment the individual may face when leaving the military.

A review of US and UK military to civilian transition literature found the following three are issues commonly faced by the Service leaver:

- 1) Role confusion and role transition:

Nicholson theorized ‘work roles can be viewed as networks of goals and means-ends relationships involving both people and materials’ where the successful

¹⁷² Agatha Herman and Richard Yarwood (2014) ‘From services to civilian: the geographies of veterans’ post-military lives’ *Geoforum* 54 pp41-50; p41

¹⁷³ R.L. Fuller and D.L. Redfering (1976) ‘Effects of pre-retirement planning on the retirement adjustment of military personnel’ *Sociology of Work and Occupations* Vol.3, No.4 pp478-487; D.S. Wolpert (2000) ‘Military Retirement and the Transition to Civilian Life’ in *The Military Family* ed. JA Martin, LN Rosen LR Sparacino. London, Praeger

¹⁷⁴ Peggy McClure p317, R.L. Fuller and D.L. Redfering (1976) ‘Effects of pre-retirement planning on the retirement adjustment of military personnel’ *Sociology of Work and Occupations* Vol.3, No.4 pp478-487.

¹⁷⁵ R. A. Frank (1993) ‘Military retirement in the Post-Cold War era’ in FW Kaslow (Ed) *The Military family in peace and war* pp214-240, Springer, New York; Peggy McClure 1992

¹⁷⁶ McClure (1999) p313

adaptation to a new role depends on the 'novelty of job demands.'¹⁷⁷ When moving from a role of novelty (military) to civilian life, the individual must 'absorb and explore' in order to adapt.¹⁷⁸ Service leavers, whether they have prepared for their transition and/or secured civilian employment, will temporarily face role confusion upon military exit¹⁷⁹ as they work to translate their skills and capabilities to commensurate civilian employment whereby they experience a transition from having a role within a clear chain of command to being a civilian.

2) Loss of rank-status / loss of recognition:

Loss of rank-status and loss of recognition is when the individual no longer experiences recognition by their peers, colleagues and/or subordinates within the institutional hierarchy of the military of having a particular rank. This loss extends into civilian life where military personnel previously enjoyed distinction from their civilian counterparts by both serving in the military and having a particular rank or job, e.g. Special Forces. One US veteran recalled the feeling associated with the distinctiveness of being in the regular military:

'As a former member of the Air Force, I once had a school bus pull up alongside me at a stop light. After I watched children fill up the windows to peek over at me in my fatigues, I smiled about it for the rest of the day. Walking through the airport in uniform feels like being an NBA ball player, who comes to his home city.'¹⁸⁰

McClure writes of this process for career soldiers:

'those who have spent at least twenty years in the military have become accustomed to the privileges and deference associated with their rank, visible even to strangers by the emblems on their uniforms. Once the retirees have left the service and placed the uniform in mothballs, their rank carries no weight in the civilian world. No one salutes them anymore.'¹⁸¹

Milowe found it was not only when the individual left the military they experienced the loss of rank-status recognition, but before where some suffered from pre-exit anxiety as they 'uniformly faced a plunge from being the whale to

¹⁷⁷ Nigel Nicholson p156

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁹ McNeil (1983) in McClure (1999) p309

¹⁸⁰ Kevin King 'My Difficulties Adjusting to Civilian Life' June 7, 2012 Yahoo Voices available at <http://voices.yahoo.com/my-difficulties-adjusting-civilian-life-11427132.html> accessed on 25 March 2014

¹⁸¹ McClure (1999) p309

being a minnow.¹⁸² This process by which they are relieved of their rank and status is physically recorded by the submission of the individual's military ID card and uniform. Whereby the individual may employ the use of coping mechanisms to assist in this loss of rank-status recognition, to be discussed shortly, this physical process of turning in tangible items like the ID card and uniform can be a painful experience as the individual must actively participate in this process of giving up physical things that comprised their identity until that point;

‘Through parting with their ID cards, participants [of the study] relinquished the very core of their identity – their life as a soldier – thus counterposing the birth of a military identity that had once been conceived through enlistment.’

3) Loss of structure and direction.

Military organisations have been called ‘greedy institutions’ ‘because they require a lot from their personnel: during active duty personnel are on a permanent, 24-hour call with rather idiosyncratic working shifts; their leave is subject to cancellation; and they can be ordered to far-off places on short notice.’¹⁸³ As MacManus explains ‘Servicemen have been provided for, for years – health, housing, everything they need – and then when they leave, they can really flounder.’¹⁸⁴ Adjusting from dependence to independence the immediate lack of structure in civilian life can be ‘unsettling.’¹⁸⁵ At the extreme end of the spectrum and for the minority of Service leavers the loss of structure has extreme consequence where the individual is unable to cope independently in civilian life and may experience homelessness, depression or alcohol and substance abuse as an outcome of this transition.¹⁸⁶ The loss of structure has served in the literature to explain or support the premise that Service leavers naturally gravitate to other institutionalised professions in an effort to retain a familiar structure.¹⁸⁷ Dandeker

¹⁸² ID Milowe (1964) ‘A Study in Role Diffusion: The Chief and the Sergeant Face Retirement’ *Mental Hygiene* 48

¹⁸³ Joseph L Soeters, Donna J Winslow and Alise Weibull ‘Military Culture’ in *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military* (Eds) Giuseppe Caforio, Springer 2006, p237

¹⁸⁴ Deidre MacManus (2013) ‘Ex-service personnel struggle to cope with civilian life’ *Mental Health Practice* Vol.16, No.10

¹⁸⁵ McClure (1999) p309

¹⁸⁶ Higate (2002), Deirdre MacManus and Simon Wessely (2011) ‘Why do some ex-armed forces personnel end up in prison?’ *BMJ* pp342-343; Amy Iverson *et al* ‘Goodbye and goodluck’: the mental health needs and treatment experiences of British ex-service’ *British Journal of Psychiatry* 186 (2005) pp480-486; Amy Iverson *et al* ‘What happens to British veterans when they leave the armed forces?’ *European Journal of Public Health* Vol.15, No.2 pp175-184, among many others.

¹⁸⁷ Jolly (1996) and Higate (2002)

et al describe this as the ‘need to be weaned off the dependency culture in order to make a successful transition to civilian life.’¹⁸⁸

Another contributing factor to the prevalence of these issues is the gap between expectation of the transition and civilian life and the reality of transition.¹⁸⁹ As Janowitz observed ‘The military man must stress the distinctiveness of his calling, but the second career problem places emphasis on its non-distinctiveness.’¹⁹⁰ The jump from distinction to non-distinction can be as Grinker and Speigal reported, ‘the real return rarely lived up to the fantasies of the idealized anticipation reunion, and the veteran had to cope not only with reality stresses but also with discrepancies between reality and his [sic] fantasies.’¹⁹¹ Jolly explains why this gap may exist:

‘Military members have *surrendered* a larger portion of control over their lives and have pledged obedience to their superiors. Since they have submitted of their own volition, their self-esteem remains intact and their perception of dependency is not great. Unlike prisoners, the sick and disabled, they usually feel enriched, not defeated by the organization which directs their endeavors. They remain motivated, from choice, to live their lives according to the rules to which they have given their assent. And when they leave, they leave not as ‘losers’ but as former members of a body which commands widespread public respect.’¹⁹²

Yet, Service leavers often experience situations where they perceive they do not receive the respect they deserve as a former member of this institution. These feelings of not receiving recognition may engender alienation between Service leavers and civilians. As a result of these three issues, some Service leavers have been found to experience physical pain as a result of separation from service, termed ‘retirement syndrome’ where symptoms displayed include: confusion, heavy drinking, depression, physical problems and erratic behaviour.¹⁹³

A more common reaction to these issues is a period of grief in which the individual mourns the loss of their identity and with that identity of status, recognition and the known role of what is expected of them.^{194 195} Participants in a study were found to grieve for the loss of

¹⁸⁸ Dandeker *et al* ‘Improving the Delivery of Cross Departmental Support and Services for Veterans’ Joint Report between Department of War Studies and the Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London 2003

¹⁸⁹ Jonathan F. Borus (1973) ‘Reentry I. Adjustment Issues Facing the Vietnam Returnee’ *Arch Gen Psychiatry* Vol.28 (April) pp501-506

¹⁹⁰ M Janowitz (1964) *Patterns of Organisation* Ed (New York; Science Editions)

¹⁹¹ Grinker and Speigal in Jonathan F. Borus (1973) ‘Reentry I. Adjustment Issues Facing the Vietnam Returnee’ *Arch Gen Psychiatry* Vol.28 (April) pp501-506; 504

¹⁹² Ruth Jolly ‘Changing Step’ p39

¹⁹³ MB Giffen and JS McNeil (1967) ‘Effect of military retirements on dependents’ *Archives of General Psychiatry* 17, 717-722.

¹⁹⁴ Kira Harris, Dr. Eyal Gingart and Dr. Deirdre Drake (2013) ‘Identity, Military Retirement: Reflections from Former Members of Special Operations Forces’ *Australian Army Journal Culture*

intense camaraderie, of purpose and of guilt over fallen comrades as part of their transition experience.¹⁹⁶ After this period of grief individuals may either adapt or adjust by reconstructing their identity or they may employ coping mechanisms to manage the above three issues. The most prevalent coping mechanisms among Service leavers are found to be:

- 1) Avoidance, and;
- 2) Replication.¹⁹⁷

Avoidance is where the individual avoids all interactions or information having to do with the military.¹⁹⁸ Replication 'represents those transitions that generate minimal adjustment to personal or role systems. The new incumbent makes few adjustments in his or her identity behaviour to fit into the new role and makes no changes in role requirements.'¹⁹⁹ For Service leavers' replication is where the individual seeks to replicate both the environment and socio-cultural characteristics of the military. Regarding environment they may seek to replicate by joining highly structured organisation or institution in which the reliability and familiarity with structure confirms the how the individual perceives themselves, e.g. their identity. This does not have to be an institution *per se* but can be a structure the individual creates and maintains. An example of this is from a study where one Service leaver started his own gym that replicated the most favourable experiences he had while in the military:

'One of the things that made working in the regiment good was that we came to work and we were allocated two hours a day to train in the morning. We did our training and we did whatever we did during the day whether it be shooting or fast driving, or parachuting or whatever and then at the end of the day I would go back and train before I went home. And then I would ride home from there, so to me that was the perfect lifestyle and I wanted to emulate it. So the best way to do it was to try and set up exactly the same thing. So we start[ed] a gym where we could rock up to work and train all day and then we started up a security consultancy where

Edition, Vol.X, No.3 pp97-112; Helen Brunger, Jonathan Serrato and Jane Ogden 'No Man's Land: The Transition to Civilian Life' *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research* Vol.5, No.2 (2013) pp86-100; David D Ramio, Robert Ackerman, Regina L. Mitchell (2008) 'From Combat to Campus: Voices of Student Veterans' *NASPA Journal* Vol.45, No.1 pp73-97; Peggy McClure (1999) 'The Transition to Civilian Life: The Case of Military Retirement' A Review of Military Family Research, Military Family Institute, University of Marywood

¹⁹⁵ Grief is a natural occurrence during any life transition and often accompanies a role transition. It is no exclusive to military to civilian transitions. See Chapter 2 on transition theory, Goodman *et al* (1997) p169 'When the 'moving out' transition is voluntary, there is likely to be 'a process of mourning for the old ways'.

¹⁹⁶ Harris *et al* (2013)

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid* p101

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid* p105

¹⁹⁹ Nigel Nicholson (1984) 'A Theory of Work Role Transitions' *Administrative Science Quarterly* 29 pp172-191; p175-176

we did stuff we were very familiar with during the day and after the end of the day we would train again. And that was the day, so to me we are creating, I am trying to create that same lifestyle that we were so used to, and so enjoyed. And one of the big things about working there but outside the army this time and trying to surround ourselves with similar people who think the way these boys think. And they don't necessarily have to be soldiers and 6ft 6 and 120kg guys they can be guys and girls now, but the common thing is that they are geared towards doing the best they can and being the best person they can and a lot of these guys that is what they do. So to me the gym is part of this vision.'²⁰⁰

In his new employment this Service leaver was able to maintain the same schedule he had had in the military, while doing the activities he found most challenging. The structure he developed attracted like-minded people, as a result he 'reproduced familiar relationships' as to that experienced in the military.²⁰¹ This example is not the exception to individuals experiencing transitions who 'want to establish new routines, regain confidence about their abilities to perform well in work settings, and reaffirm their perceptions of personal control over their environments.'²⁰² The loss of structure is at times underestimated in the individual's transition where some of the simplest exercises like how to wear one's hair or what to wear can be confounding and unsettling.²⁰³ These seemingly small things can make the larger issues of reintegration seem insurmountable in comparison.

An area where coping by replication is prevalent in the literature is the Service leaver's returning to or beginning university after military service. Often, these Service leavers were found to have sought out social groups similar to that of the military, or other veterans. An example of the former, one US veteran-turned-student explained 'I embraced [Greek life] simply because I didn't have anybody up here at the time. I tried it out, and those guys [fraternity brothers] found out about my situation and embraced me.'²⁰⁴ A study on veteran students found 'military transition students feel most comfortable with each other. Peer support is particularly valued because military training and culture has the unit of individual's relying on one another for safety and, literally, for life and limb when in combat.'²⁰⁵ In universities veterans were often found to seek out other veterans as a way to cope with their perceived differences from other students. Post-9/11 some veterans found it difficult to establish a connection to students who had never served in the

²⁰⁰ *Ibid* p105-106

²⁰¹ *Ibid* p106

²⁰² Leana and Feldman 1998,p 382 in Mary A Gowen, Sonya Lee Solesbee Craft, Raymond Zimmerman (2000) 'Response to Work Transitions by United States Army Personnel: Effects of Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy, and Career Resilience' *Psychological Reports* Vol.84, pp911-921; p915

²⁰³ McClure (1999) p309

²⁰⁴ David D Ramio, Robert Ackerman, Regina L. Mitchell (2008) 'From Combat to Campus: Voices of Student Veterans' *NASPA Journal* Vol.45, No.1 pp73-97, p88

²⁰⁵ Sandra E. Burnett and John Segoria (2009) 'Collaboration for Military Transition Students from Combat to College: It Takes a Community' *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* Vol.22, No.1 pp53-58; p54

military, where the latter had never experienced combat and as such appeared trivial and unrelatable.²⁰⁶ Meaning, the veteran felt they could not create relationships with their civilian counterparts, as a common ground was not believed by the veteran to exist.

From the Service leavers point of view, they found themselves to be different from other students and perceived themselves, based on their military experience in which they dealt with the reality of life and death in combat, to be more mature than their student peers. This act of the Service leaver perceiving himself or herself to be better or unique is an example of role confusion.²⁰⁷ This role confusion and/or 'role loss' would have occurred as the individual adjusted to the lack of structure and clearly defined norms in civilian life in comparison to the military.²⁰⁸ As the military is a distinct institution, so too is the military identity distinct. This identity, while serving as a regular soldier, receives recognition from civilians as someone in service of the greater good. The loss of this recognition can lead the individual to question their identity and to cope with the loss of recognition. Often the individual will engage in efforts to remain distinct by perceiving themselves to be novel as a result of their military experience in comparison to their civilian peers.²⁰⁹ An example of this was a participant interviewed in a study whereby he created a dialogue with himself about the novelty of his military experience as making him perfect for the job market in comparison to his civilian peers.²¹⁰ Military experience, for this individual, served to distinguish him from his counterparts as someone able to accomplish tasks on time, provide leadership, and to 'get the job done.'²¹¹ This lack of confirmation by civilians as to who the Service leaver is and the role they play and the 'weight' they carry can be a profoundly confusing experience.

Replication can have positive and negative effects. It can, as Harris *et al* found 'serve as a buffer against negative aspects of retirement as it requires only small changes to personal behaviour while core aspects of the organization, culture and identity are maintained.'²¹² It may also delay or post-pone the individual's engagement with the crucial step of identity reconstruction as a part of the transition process. During transition the individual may

²⁰⁶ *Ibid* p55 and Corey B Rumann and Florence A Hamrick (2010) 'Student Veterans in Transition: Re-enrolling after War Zone Deployments' *The Journal of Higher Education* Vol.81, No.4 (July/August 2010) pp431-458; p442 This perception of difference fell under what Rumann and Hamrick themed 'Maturity' where one participant, 'Joe' 'disparaged students' preoccupations with celebrity news' Respondents described themselves as more mature, with clearer perspectives and increased goal commitment, p442

²⁰⁷ McNeil (1983)

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*

²⁰⁹ Walker (2012)

²¹⁰ *Ibid*

²¹¹ *Ibid*

²¹² Kira Harris *et al* (2013) p 309

also face issues experienced in adolescence held in place by military service.²¹³ Replication may further delay the engagement with these issues and subsequently delay the individual's reintegration into civilian life. Crucially, though, replication prevents the Service leaver from developing a civilian network that is necessary for reintegration. Service leavers themselves are aware of this danger of replicating; 'Sometimes it can be a bit double-edged in that you've left the military, but not really sort of thing because you are still hanging about with ex-military people...[military minded], the way they talk, the way their personalities are.'²¹⁴

Higate approached this type of coping by way of environmental continuity, arguing against the institutionalisation of the individual as negligible in the analysis of transition as 'we are all to a greater or lesser degree latently insitutionalised.'²¹⁵ Instead, Higate proposed analysis that considered the Service leavers adaptability to their new environment more useful than explaining outcomes with the generalisation of an individual being 'institutionalised.'²¹⁶ Recently, Burdett *et al* reinforced Higate's sentiment and furthered the use of 'culture shock' to term the experience of transition, rather than one of an institutionalised individual being unable to be de-institutionalised.²¹⁷

Higate believes the environment, and more so the '*adaptability to environment*' is what should be considered paramount in analysing transition.²¹⁸ Replication by way of seeking other institutionalised employment after military service is acknowledged by Higate as the individual's attempt to ease their transition, where 'by going into often-uniformed occupations the individual 'instinctively assumes [it] will provide ontological or emotional security with a recognizably gendered milieu.'²¹⁹

What is important about the coping by way of replication is the role networks play in the transition. As Dandeker *et al* found, 'the loss of social embeddedness and group cohesion is often difficult to bear and is said to impede the successful transition and re-integration into civilian life.'²²⁰ Coping by way of replicating means the individual will often seek like-minded people, as shown in the example of the Service leaver who started a gym, to recreate that social embeddedness and cohesion. These networks have shown to have

²¹³ ID Milowe (1964) 'A Study in Role Diffusion: The Chief and the Sergeant Face Retirement' *Mental Hygiene* FINISH CITE

²¹⁴ Harris *et al* (2013) p105

²¹⁵ Paul Higate (2001) 'Theorizing Continuity: From Military to Civilian Life' *Armed Forces and Society* Vol.27, No.3 pp443-460; p447

²¹⁶ *Ibid*

²¹⁷ Burdett *et al* 2012

²¹⁸ *Ibid* p447 emphasis in original

²¹⁹ *Ibid* p456

²²⁰ Dandeker *et al* (2003)

particular influence on the individual's transition, either limited or extensive depending on the type of coping mechanism used. For those who choose to cope with transition issues by avoidance the sudden and immediate separation of close ties may put the Service leaver in a better position as they are forced to develop and adapt to civilian networks and its subsequent civilian norms, attitudes and values. It is likely, though, that those coping by avoidance will retain some military ties during and after their transition. A lower number of these ties though are not shown to have any detrimental effects on the individual.²²¹ Those coping by replication, however, may increase their prevalence for mental health issues, by not expanding and/or relying on their civilian networks.²²² Those remaining in contact with their military social network after military exit are continuing their exposure to 'patterns and standards of behaviour through which sources of information are shared and support offered...it is also within social networks that norms and beliefs are shared among the network's members.'²²³ By replicating or remaining close to the military social network the individual remains engaged with their military identity inclusive of beliefs, attitudes and values. This engagement may prevent the individual from adapting to civilian beliefs, attitudes and values and thus affect their transition to civilian life.

The nature of military service may affect the influence of networks as the individual may not have established any real roots as a result of transferring to a different location every few years.²²⁴ This also means that the Service leaver will not have developed robust civilian networks, either social or professional, that may improve the individual's post-military employment and career options.²²⁵

Coping and replicating rely on what Ruth Jolly found to be the first stage of transition; 'confrontation.' Presenting three stages of transition (confrontation, disengagement and resocialisation) as a result of an in-depth study of 62 UK Service leavers in 1996, Jolly observed that confrontation 'consists of acknowledging and confronting the fact that an alteration of direction and lifestyle is desirable, or perhaps, inevitable. Two factors are important here: the degree of suddenness with which the realisation dawns and the degree of willingness to make a change.'²²⁶ The 'degree of suddenness' should not be overlooked. An unforeseen medical discharge can often be sudden without giving the individual time to prepare practically or emotionally to leave the military. Further, a physical disability may

²²¹ Hatch *et al* (2013)

²²² Stephani Hatch *et al* p1060

²²³ *Ibid* p1046

²²⁴ Walker (2012)

²²⁵ Elysia V. Clemes and Amy S. Milson (2008) 'Enlisted Services Members' Transition Into the Civilian World of Work: A Cognitive Information Processing Approach' *The Career Development Quarterly* Vol.56, pp246-256; p247

²²⁶ Ruth Jolly (1996) 'Changing Step: From Military to Civilian Life: People in Transition' Brassey's, London, p10

have far reaching consequences on the social aspects of transition whereby a physical affliction or disability may compound the existing feelings of helplessness, worthlessness and perception of suitability for employment in light of the physical issue.²²⁷ Physical disability, can as Harris *et al* argue 'lead to a role evaluation, and potentially a negative self-evaluation as they derived part of their social identity from being physically fit and able to perform.'²²⁸ In Harris *et al*'s study, one participant's struggle to come to terms with their physical disability and sudden military exit prompted a 'lack of physical competence and inability to perform...and threatened the participant's self-concept as he was no longer able to achieve previously held standards.'²²⁹

Once the Service leaver has confronted military exit Jolly observes the second stage as 'disengagement', a stage she argues is '*always* muddled.'²³⁰ This stage 'typically starts in the mind, with a questioning of sympathies, of judgments, of priorities...This whole period, when a former way of life is being relinquished before there are many certainties to replace it, is almost always confusing and painful. But it appears to be a necessary and productive pain. The final break with the old way of life, if and when it comes, is often an anti-climax, a relief rather than a triumph.'²³¹

The third and final stage is what Jolly calls 'resocialisation.' This stage is 'the business of assuming a new social identity – of becoming not so much someone else as something else – taking on a different role in society and, in doing so, being regarded differently by others and also by oneself...Resocialisation is the final phase in 'changing step' – and it is every bit as difficult as the previous phases. It seems that people will not resocialise unless they really want to.'²³²

Like Higate, Jolly addresses the element of institutionalisation on the individual's ability and willingness to engage with all three stages of transition. Institutionalisation is often seen by civilians as a negative characteristic and remnant of military service within the Service leaver, where the dependency of the individual on the institution may be seen as an inability or lack of competence in various tasks. It is assumed then the required independence in civilian life is often a source of difficulty for Service leavers.²³³ Jolly urges Service leavers to not consider institutionalisation as either negative or inherent. She

²²⁷ Kira Harris *et al* (2013) p103

²²⁸ *Ibid* p103

²²⁹ *Ibid* p103

²³⁰ Jolly (1996) p10-11, emphasis in original

²³¹ *Ibid*

²³² *Ibid*

²³³ CR Rogers (1944) 'Psychological adjustments of discharged service personnel' *Psychological Bulletin* Vol.41, No.1 pp689-696

states 'a degree of institutionalisation is normal for a serving man or woman in the armed forces, just as it is a person who has dedicated him or herself to a religious life. It is nothing to be ashamed of; it points up no innate deficiencies of character or ability, but is a giant handicap when the guiding hand of the institution is removed.'²³⁴ Civilian employment, in contrast to the military, can feel chaotic. A veteran support worker explained; 'As civilians we get used to so many choices, it's background noise for us, but there are many that find the military and the predictability and structure something they can lean into and trust and be part of something bigger. That's not so easily replicated in civilian life.'²³⁵ Walker argues the Service leaver – regardless of the various stages they might experience upon military exit – must face two questions: 'Who or what will I be after leaving the Army? Which implies a second and related process of answering 'Who or what have I become?''²³⁶ Jolly argued that the lack of encouragement for introspection in which to face these questions plays a crucial role in the individual's transition, often having the implication where the Service leaver takes their first job they find or are offered regardless of suitable skill and knowledge capability.²³⁷ She argues that in fact introspection is '*positively discouraged* through the constantly reinforced training of individuals to act positively, quickly and always in the interest of the group.'²³⁸ Because of the lack of introspection Jolly found in her study that subsequent civilian employment after military service was the penultimate experience in the individual's life, never measuring up to the individual's experience in the military.²³⁹

While all Service leavers will experience the transition to civilian life, as discussed above, their experience will also be affected by the relationship between the military, veterans and civilian society. Military service can be seen as a signal or 'screening device' for employers of Service leavers and today still carries with it powerful indicators in which certain characteristics and aspects of the individual are inferentially transferred to the civilian receiving the information.²⁴⁰ Post-9/11 veterans enjoy more support in the civilian sector than they have since World War II, with civilian non-profit and NGO's providing the majority of veteran services over government provided programmes. An example of this in the US is the Wounded Warrior Project, where offices around the country offer

²³⁴ Jolly (1996) p51

²³⁵ Laura Williams in Kevin Simpson 'Amid Adjustment to Civilian Life, Veteran Still Feels Tug of Military' The Denver Post November 12, 2012 available at: <http://www.americanhomecomings.com/news/2012/11/12/amid-adjustment-to-civilian-life-veteran-still-feels-tug-of-military>

²³⁶ David Walker (2012); p6-7

²³⁷ Jolly (1996) p100

²³⁸ *Ibid* p100 emphasis in original

²³⁹ *Ibid*

²⁴⁰ Mark C Berger and Barry T Hirsch (1985) 'Veteran Status as a Screening Device during the Vietnam Era' *Social Science Quarterly* Vol.66, No.1 pp79-89 and D DeTray (1982) 'Veteran Status as a Screening Device' *The American Economic Review* pp133-142

rehabilitative services for those wounded in combat.²⁴¹ In the UK, Help for Heroes and the Royal British Legion are two of the biggest charities that offer support through variety of programmes that include outreach, mentorship and rehabilitation.²⁴² Vietnam veterans, on the other hand, experienced transition in the face of anti-war protests, where some veterans recorded feelings of alienation and hurt as a result of the relationship to their civilian counterparts.²⁴³ While both the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan faced significant protest by civilians in both the US and the UK, unlike protests against the Vietnam war, the protests against Iraq and Afghanistan did not include a disapproval or protest against serving personnel. The saturation of veteran assistance organisations are a phenomenon which can be as Christopher Coker observed of contemporary society understanding war no longer by heroic acts, but by how the warrior survives the outcomes of war, 'we respond more positively, not to tales of soldiers locked in a fight with the enemy but of a soldier recovering from serious wounds or coping with person trauma. In our post-heroic time survival is considered the real act of moral and emotional worth.'²⁴⁴

Despite the swell of support for veterans post-9/11, US and UK veterans have never been more misunderstood by their civilian counterparts.²⁴⁵ This is because those who serve in the military represent a small percentage of the overall civilian population of each country. As a result there is a 'divide between the vast majority who do not have military service experience and the tiny minority that do.'²⁴⁶ The military's 'rigid hierarchical system based on dominance and subordination' engenders the divide between civilians and serving personnel. The culture of the military is 'very inward focused, with a consistent and hierarchical structure...where the isolation of soldiers (from civilians) is magnified by the language, often spoken in acronyms and other idiosyncratic terms.'²⁴⁷ As a result of this culture, 'the world of the military can become an oddly isolated life.'²⁴⁸ A report by the Center for New American Security found:

²⁴¹ The US non-profit organisation The Wounded Warrior Project is one of the biggest and most well-recognized veterans programmes, with the mission 'to foster the most successful, well-adjusted generation of wounded service members in our nation's history.' Available at: <http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/mission.aspx>

²⁴² <http://www.helpforheroes.org.uk> and <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk>

²⁴³ Lifton in David D Ramio 'From Combat to Campus' p35

²⁴⁴ Christopher Coker (2007) 'The Warrior Ethos, Military Culture and the War on Terror' Routledge, London, p2

²⁴⁵ Dandeker *et al* (2003) found in studying the UK Service leaver population that 'there has been a decline in civilian-military understanding for many years' p95

²⁴⁶ Gegax and Thoams (2005) in Lynn K. Hall (2011) 'The Importance of Understanding Military Culture' *Social Work in Health Care* Vol.50 pp4-18, p10

²⁴⁷ Lynn K. Hall (2011) 'The Importance of Understanding Military Culture' *Social Work in Health Care* Vol.50 pp4-18; p10

²⁴⁸ *Ibid* p10

‘the culture gap between civilian and military societies challenges the nation’s capacity to care properly for veterans. Fewer than 1 percent of Americans serve in today’s armed forces, so the military frame of reference, while fundamental to the identity of many veterans, is largely foreign to most civilians. Few Americans understand the transformative nature of military service and the many ways this transformation affects veteran wellness.’

This gulf of understanding between Service leavers and civilians is most commonly expressed by Service leavers as experiencing a lack of satisfaction in civilian employment. This lack of satisfaction is the result of a few things: not feeling challenged or not feeling as if the skills and capabilities are being properly utilized (e.g. leadership), language and incommensurate social cohesion or belonging in civilian workplaces. The UK Transition Mapping Study found ‘whilst having employment as a source of income is key to financial stability, this does not necessarily follow that the ex-Service person is motivated or satisfied by the job they are able to get after leaving. Many suffer from feeling a lack of purpose and direction in their post-Service employment.’²⁴⁹ Additionally, the relationship between the Service leaver and their civilian colleagues can be a source of tension. Language is a particularly prominent cause of tension between the Service leaver and civilian, and coping by replication serves to provide an environment in which the individual can communicate and be understood, and also understand.²⁵⁰ One veteran described the experience of trying to become acquainted with civilians after military service as a ‘fundamental difference,’ explaining ‘the civilians have their drinking stories, and “This chick I met last night” stories, and the veterans’ got the “No shit, there I was” stories. It’s kind of like we’re a different breed of person after we get back.’²⁵¹ Harris *et al* call this identification through language ‘linguistic identity.’²⁵² The lack of a common language between the Service leaver and civilian can cause the Service leaver to feel isolated and invisible; ‘isolation is magnified by the language, often spoke in acronyms and other idiosyncratic terms.’²⁵³

Often Service leavers compare the relationships they had in the military as one of ‘family’, ‘brothers’ where camaraderie is strong. One veteran recalled: ‘That’s probably the thing I miss about the army, is the lads, because you bond a bit like a family. When you go abroad,

²⁴⁹ Forces in Mind Trust ‘Transition Mapping Study, Understanding the transition process for Service personnel returning to civilian life’ August 2013, p54

²⁵⁰ Brunger *et al* (2013) p92 and Kira Harris *et al* (2013)

²⁵¹ Corey B Rumann and Florence A Hamrick ‘Student Veterans in Transition: Re-enrolling after War Zone Deployments’ *Journal of Higher Education* Vol.81, No.4 (July/August 2010) pp432-458; p446

²⁵² Harris *et al* p106

²⁵³ Lynn K. Hall (2011) ‘The Importance of Understanding Military Culture’ *Social Work in Health Care* Vol.50, pp4-18; p10

you've got to know you've got each other's backs. So you miss the lads.'²⁵⁴ Another reiterated 'It's [the military] like being in a functional family – quite probably more functional than you were in before. And then you leave that family.'²⁵⁵ Camaraderie developed and experienced during military service 'is often seen as more than friendship, it is instead built upon shared hardships, a sense of uniformity and common purpose, and a shared dependency on one another.'²⁵⁶ Civilian employment, for some Service leavers, can be a difficult place in which to build a shared identity that gives military personnel a sense of purpose and shared destiny.²⁵⁷ The loss of camaraderie and related feelings of lack of purpose, worth or fulfilment can have consequences on the Service leavers mental health, where inclusion in social groups to the degree one feels a shared sense of purpose are argued to play a protective role against depression and guilt, and the severity of PTSD.²⁵⁸ For some the intense loss felt by the absence of camaraderie has been strong enough to compel the Service leaver to consider re-joining the military. One participant in a study on veterans reported the experience of strained and terminated relationships in civilian life after military service had prompted him to consider 'going back to Iraq where a sense of camaraderie existed.'²⁵⁹ In most studies on veterans the loss of community/camaraderie is a dominant and powerful theme from which the Service leaver derives a sense of identity, belonging, purpose and worth.

2.6 Conclusion

Transition is a process by which many experiences and issues are 'inter-linked.'²⁶⁰ Those Service leavers not ready or unwilling to reconstruct a new civilian identity may cope by replicating their military service in various ways. This includes replicating the physical environment, the structure, the language or being surrounded by like-minded individuals. This replication provides a level of social belonging and distinction needed to preserve the individual's military identity. While coping by replication may ease some of the difficulties the individual is experiencing, it has a limited contribution to the individual's overall transition as it prevents the individual from developing a robust civilian network in which they can use to find suitable employment. A civilian network also influences upon the Service leaver reintegration by way of attitudes, beliefs and values that will assist in the

²⁵⁴ Forces in Mind Trust Report (2013) p49

²⁵⁵ Mental Health Practice 'Ex-Service personnel struggle to cope with civilian life' Vol.16, No.10 (July 2013)

²⁵⁶ The Howard League for Penal Reform 'Leaving Forces Life: The Issue of Transition'

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*

²⁵⁸ Gina P Owens, Michael F Steger, Allison A Whitesell and Catherine J Herrera 'Posttraumatic stress disorder, Guilt, Depression and Meaning in Life Among Military Veterans' *Journal of Traumatic Stress* Vol.22, No.6 (December 2009) pp654-657; p654

²⁵⁹ Ramio *et al* (2008) p86

²⁶⁰ Brunger *et al* (2013) p87

deconstruction of the military identity and the reconstruction of a civilian one. These civilian networks, as McClure observed, 'are most needed – but are underdeveloped or non-existent.'²⁶¹

Some may choose to cope by avoiding all things to do with the military, cutting ties and plunging in civilian life. In much of the literature transition outcomes are measured by the absence of issues like homelessness, alcohol and substance abuse, domestic violence, severity of PTSD or mTBI, and the presence of civilian employment, geographic and social stability in the form of friend and family relationships. While these units of measurement may be considered a 'crude dichotomy' by which to determine a Service leaver's transition, as Higate argued, the literature also acknowledges and accepts that transition is subjective, and reliant on the individual's values and experiences.²⁶² As Brunger *et al* rightly state coping mechanisms like replication, while in essence ameliorating difficulties and frustrations felt in civilian life, must be questioned to the extent it 'constitutes a successful transition and reintegration'²⁶³ as coping by replicating leaves the individual no more prepared for civilian life than they were during the event of military exit.

Some Service leavers may feel physical symptoms in relation to their transition, and most Service leavers are faced with issues of role confusion, role loss and the loss of structure. The loss of status recognition is particularly powerful and is a cause for a re-evaluation of roles, assumptions and attitudes. This process ultimately assists the individual in the deconstruction of their military identity. Further, most will experience some difficulties during their transition as they adjust to numerous issues as discussed above but most will transition successfully and do well in civilian life. The linguistic identity of Service leavers can also be a source of tension during the transition as they may struggle to communicate with their civilian counterparts that include civilian colleagues, family and friends. While all of those who served in the military will at some point in their lives face military exit they may experience it to varying degrees dependent upon their occupation, branch and rank, as Moskos and Biderman have argued.

This chapter reviewed both the literature and the reported experiences of US and UK Service leavers in regard to their transition from the military to civilian life. There have been documented differences between the US and the UK soldiers and Service leavers in regards to the reported prevalence of mental and physical health issues as a result of military service. However, in reviewing the literature the experiences felt by Service

²⁶¹ McClure (1999) p310

²⁶² *Ibid* p97

²⁶³ *Ibid* p88

leavers to not differ to any great degree. Both US and UK Service leavers report to face issues of identity, purpose, transferable skills, isolation, and communication during their transition to civilian life. In this regard, they appear to be a similar population and the issues discussed in this chapter were not exclusive to one culture or the other. Where US and UK Service leavers do differ is the level of government provided transition services based upon time served per country. Despite the different transition assistance offering between the two countries, both early service leavers in the US and UK are found to be more prone to difficult transition than their longer serving peers. Additionally, government provided transition services of any degree did not appear to mitigate the experience of feelings like confusion, isolation, loneliness, questions of identity and purpose, among others, regardless of whether the individual transition outcome was considered successful by metrics like housing, relationships, alcohol and substance abuse, and mental health issues.

By understanding the issues that Service leavers have reported to face during their transition it is possible to use the data collected in this project to examine whether becoming a private security contractor is a way to address these issues for whom these issues are reported to exist. The next chapter presents the conceptual and theoretical framework in which the data collected in this project can be explained against the experiences discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Three

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

The individuals interviewed and surveyed in this project are complex individuals with varied personal histories. To gather data on their identity, transition, motives and networks I believed it necessary to develop the individual's remembered experience of their military service, their transition to civilian life and becoming a security contractor in which to analyse its role within their life-course.

Developing their remembered experience required a varied framework to explain the role of security contracting within the individual's military to civilian transition. This type of approach is different from existing research on individual security contractors because of its multi-disciplinary framework. It is also different because it relied on the individual's remembered experience of transition, by way of becoming a private security contractor, to develop security contractors as a community of like-others.

The first section of this chapter furthers Clive Jones's argument of PMSCs as an epistemic community by arguing that individual security contractors, outside of the companies, can also be considered an epistemic community. This approach emphasizes the process of professionalization security contractors appear to be undergoing.

The second section of the chapter develops the project's theoretical framework by discussing theories of transition, motive, social identity and networks in which to support and explain the data collected.

3.2 Security Contractors as Representing an Epistemic Community

In 2006, two years before the signing of the Montreux Document by governments,²⁶⁴ three years before the signing of the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service

²⁶⁴ The Montreux Document was developed by the international law division of the Swiss government and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as a means of exploring existing laws and good practices, developing 'pertinent international legal obligations relating to private military and security companies.' The Document was signed by 50 states. While not legally binding, its significance is marked by being the first collective and international regulatory effort over PMSCs. For further information, see <http://irconsilium.com/a-brief-explanation-of-the->

Providers (ICoC),²⁶⁵ and six years before the adoption of the PSC.1 Standard for land-based private security services,²⁶⁶ Clive Jones persuasively argued that regulatory mechanisms already existed within the PMSC industry. He argued that the application of a normative ideal, PMSCs as ‘epistemic communities,’ provided both functionality and empiricism where none was previously thought to exist.²⁶⁷

The concept of ECs is a relatively new application within International Relations theory.²⁶⁸ Peter M. Haas originally introduced the use of ECs in understanding the influence of international policy organizations in 1992.²⁶⁹ Haas argued the use of ECs outside of hard science, where they were traditionally conceived, could address state behaviour as a collective of all individuals within it; voters, politicians and state organizations as learning new patterns of reasoning and as such, changing state interests and mechanisms through which new interests can be realized.²⁷⁰

Jones relied on Haas’s definition of epistemic communities for his case:

‘An epistemic community is a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area.’²⁷¹

private-security-regulatory-initiatives-the-swiss-processes/ and
<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/topics/intla/humlaw/pse/psechi.html>

²⁶⁵ The International Code of Conduct (ICoC) is ‘a multi-stakeholder initiative convened by the Swiss government. It aims to set private security industry principles and standards based on international human rights and humanitarian law, as well as to improve accountability of the industry by establishing an external independent oversight mechanism. The Articles of Association seek to establish this mechanism which will include certification, auditing, monitoring and reporting. By signing the ICoC, signatory companies publicly commit to operate in accordance with the Code. Signatory Companies are expected to seek to become members of the Association, which will start its functioning by the middle of 2013.’ See <http://www.icoc-ppsp.org>.

²⁶⁶ The PSC.1 Standard was developed by the ASIS to address conduct and best practices for land-based PMSCs, set forth in the abstract of the document as: This Standard builds on the Montreux Document and the International Code of Conduct (ICoC) for Private Security Service Providers to provide requirements and guidance for a management system with auditable criteria for Quality of Private Security Company Operations, consistent with respect for human rights, legal obligations and good practices related to operations of private security service provider companies in conditions where governance and the rule of law have been undermined by conflict or disaster. It provides auditable requirements based on the Plan- Do-Check-Act model for third-party certification of private security service providers working for any client.’ Available at: http://www.acq.osd.mil/log/PS/p_vault/item_1997-PSC_1_STD.PDF

²⁶⁷ Clive Jones ‘Private Military Companies as Epistemic Communities’ *Civil Wars* Vol.8, No.3-4 (2006) pp355-372

²⁶⁸ Mai’a K. Davis Cross (2013) ‘Rethinking Epistemic Communities; Twenty Years Later’ *Review of International Studies* Vol.29, No.1 pp137-160

²⁶⁹ Peter M. Haas ‘Knowledge, Power and International Policy Coordination’ *International Organisation* Vol.46, No.1 (1992) pp1-35

²⁷⁰ *Ibid* p2

²⁷¹ *Ibid*

Jones believed the shared expertise and competence of the PMSC industry had been overlooked as an instrument in which to influence policy. He labelled this knowledge a 'depository of military expertise (or expertise in a given issue area, for example knowledge of military tactics) and their information unfettered by bureaucratic constraints.'²⁷² He gives two examples to support his argument. The first is the PMSC Executive Outcomes (EO) in Sierra Leone in 1995. Executive Outcomes was hired by the government in Freetown to repel the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), rebels who threatened to topple the central government and impose a reign of indiscriminate violence. 'Drawing on soldiers with vast counter-insurgency experience with the apartheid era South African Defence Forces, EO effectively beat the RUF into submission by February 1997, a victory that cost the central government \$US35 million.'²⁷³ The EO contractors, former South African Defence Forces, had had significant training and experience in the use of a range of tactics and strategy. Using this case Jones argued PMSCs can have a 'stabilising role' to play as an epistemic community.

His second example is the United Nations Special Commission for Iraq (UNSCOM) where he wrote 'they too were the epitome of an epistemic community whose collective repository of expertise on issues of weapons of mass destruction included seconded or retired military personnel from several countries.'²⁷⁴ The roles Jones envisioned for PMSCs as being an epistemic community ranged from preventative intelligence (that is, 'the provision of a macro-level analysis over a given issue area') to conflict prevention.²⁷⁵ Jones was more concerned with the utility derived from a specific area of shared expertise. He did not comment on the individuals themselves within the community, nor did he comment on whether they were professionals, only referring to them as a group of individuals possessing expertise. The distinction of professionals has been debated extensively since Haas's article observed influence of a group's expertise in areas ranging from the climate change and the environment to foreign policy.²⁷⁶

Haas, in his 1992 article, does not define who is a 'professional' nor does he give any qualification for being a 'professional.' He also uses the term interchangeably with 'specialist' and 'expert', but gives no direct definition. Nor does he qualify 'knowledge' to where there is a clear distinction of what is sufficient knowledge (and of what) for the qualification of a group of individuals as an epistemic community. Some considered this

²⁷² Jones (2006) p358

²⁷³ *Ibid* p363

²⁷⁴ *Ibid* p364

²⁷⁵ *Ibid* pp364-366

²⁷⁶ Gough and Shackely (2001), Meijerinic (2005), Dimitrov (2006), Campbell Keller (2009), and Peterson (1992), among others.

lack of definition as an oversight that undermined the concept²⁷⁷ while others considered the gap to allow for a flexible interpretation of what Haas meant.²⁷⁸

There is a wide body of literature on professionalism, briefly discussed here, in which to reduce the ambiguity of Haas's meaning of the term. The sociologist Eliot Friedson began his evaluation of the term with 'the common denominator of professions; whatever else they are, professionals are experts: indeed, 'profession' as opposed to 'amateur' connotes not only earning a living by one's work, but also superior skillfulness, or expertise at doing a professional as opposed to amateurish job.'²⁷⁹ The division between professional and amateur is a type of litmus test where Friedson asks; can everyone perform a task? (Friedson provides the example of dialing a telephone). If the answer is yes, normal competence is not a specialized skill and therefore no expertise is required.²⁸⁰ If, though, the task requires 'either extensive training or experience or both, the performers are true specialists with skill and knowledge – that is – expertise which is distinctly theirs.'²⁸¹ The possession of expertise is not exclusive to the performer; simply that extensive training that produces skill and expertise separates it as a function performed well, or to a standard, over those with no training or expertise.²⁸² This training provided a specialty, he argued, 'characterized by some form of *credential* testifying to the formal training through to be prerequisite for competent performance.'²⁸³

What Haas does indicate regarding the professionalism of epistemic community members is the:

'uncertainty requiring specialized information' that serves as a catalyst for the group to form initially. The demand for knowledge as a result of uncertainty is what gives rise to an epistemic community, where 'networks or communities of specialists capable of producing and providing information emerge and proliferate.'²⁸⁴

As the literature on epistemic communities developed from Haas, an emphasis has been placed on internal dynamics, varying degrees of influence, and the central attribute of

²⁷⁷ David Toke 'Epistemic Communities and Environmental Groups' *Politics* Vol.19, No.2 (1999) pp97-102

²⁷⁸ Claire Dunlop 'Epistemic Communities, A Reply to Toke' *Politics* Vol.20, No.3 (2000) pp137-144

²⁷⁹ Eliot Friedson *Professionalism Reborn, Theory, Prophecy and Policy* Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994, p157

²⁸⁰ Friedson (1994) p157

²⁸¹ *Ibid* p157

²⁸² *Ibid*

²⁸³ Friedson (1994) p153

²⁸⁴ Haas (1992) p4

professionalism²⁸⁵ which represents an evolution from Haas's original stipulations: (1) a shared set of normative and principled beliefs, which provide a value-based rationale for the social action of the community members; (2) shared causal beliefs; (3) shared notions of validity – that is, inter-subjective, internally defined criteria for weighing and validating knowledge in the domain of their expertise, and; (4) a common policy enterprise – that is, a set of common practices associated with a set of problems to which their professional competence is directed, presumably out of the conviction that human welfare will be enhanced as a consequence.²⁸⁶ Mai'a Davis Cross sought to reduce the ambiguity of Haas, which was considered by some to be 'empirical undernourishment'²⁸⁷ in the application of ECs, by discussing professionalism as measured by four factors: (1) selection and training; (2) meeting frequency and quality; (3) shared professional norms, and (4) common culture.²⁸⁸

Cross was not as interested in Haas's emphasis of the nature of knowledge, but in the EC's professionalism as a core requirement to be considered an EC. Specifically she felt that the process of becoming a profession was 'one way in which internal cohesion is established'; a condition she argues 'ultimately provides the group with an *episteme*, a shared worldview that derives mutual socialization and shared knowledge.'²⁸⁹ Internal cohesion is important to Cross because it shows the degree of influence it is likely to, or even can, exert. Influence is ultimately the *raison d'être* for ECs, who otherwise would simply be classified as a 'status group' or community group with shared expertise but exert no influence on either policy or governance. The 'more internally cohesive' the EC, 'the more likely it will achieve a high degree of influence on policy outcomes.'²⁹⁰

The factor of 'selection and training' as a unit of measurement is therefore important when classifying private security contractors as an EC, as it contributes to the cohesion amongst a group of individuals with shared knowledge, but also the cohesion required to deliver the service for which they have been hired. For example, protecting an individual/client will usually require a team of four private security contractors. In this situation a lack of shared knowledge, training or cohesion would mean each one of the four contractors might perform in different ways, when the purpose of the team is to perform in the same way to protect the client, completing the task. To apply Cross's framework it is worth discussing

²⁸⁵ Mai'a K. Davis Cross 'Rethinking Epistemic Communities Twenty Years Later' *Review of International Studies* Vol.31, No.1 (2013) pp137-160

²⁸⁶ Haas (1992) p3

²⁸⁷ Toke (1999) and Dunlop (2000)

²⁸⁸ Davis Cross (2013) p150

²⁸⁹ *Ibid* p149 and Elini Tsingou 'Transnational policy communities and financial governance: the role of private actors in derivatives regulation' *Center for the Study of Globalization and Regionalisation*, Working Paper No. 111 (2003) p8, in Davis Cross (2013) p147

²⁹⁰ *Ibid* p138

the shared knowledge of private security contractors as knowledge derived from their past military experience. This knowledge refers to a shared understanding of security threats that certain environments pose, in addition to a common knowledge of how to address and mitigate the threat/s.

The Professional Soldier and Private Security Contractors – Shared Knowledge

What makes private security contractors unique as an epistemic community is the intersection between the professionalization of the private security contractor and the professional soldier; a status applied to most of this project's population during their military service of which '*selection and training*' was an integral part to the classification of the term. Burk, who considered Friedson and Abbot's models of professionalism in '*The Future of the Army Professions*', introduced three factors by which to determine a profession:

'One is mastery of abstract knowledge, which occurs through a system of higher education. Another is control – almost always contested – over a jurisdiction within which expert knowledge is applied. Finally is the match between the form of professional knowledge and the prevailing cultural belief or bias about the legitimacy of that form compared to others, which is the source of professional status. We can refer to these three simply as expertise, jurisdiction, and legitimacy.'²⁹¹

Burk traced the historical evolution of the military profession that derived legitimacy from 'the expert knowledge in the management of violence, certified by science,'²⁹² to jurisdiction that has been increasingly contested since the turn of the 20th century as the US Army's remit expanded from war fighting to peacekeeping, and finally the nature of wars in the 21st century combined with military innovation (social and technological), which he argued, has given up a share of its legitimacy to the market.²⁹³ The specific knowledge from which Burk wrote about the military profession derived its legitimacy was the science of war. For Friedson this scientific knowledge would be a credential to exclude others from a profession,²⁹⁴ and for Abbot would lay claim to jurisdiction over this body of knowledge.²⁹⁵

It is important to consider the professional soldier as a result of this history, who as defined by Huntington had a particular expertise and skill, the implementation of which was regulated by the 'management of violence and underpinned by an individual and collective

²⁹¹ James Burk 'Expertise, Jurisdiction, and Legitimacy of the Military Profession' in *The Future of the Army Profession* 2Ed Don M. Snider and Lloyd J. Matthews, McGraw Hill, 2005; p43-44

²⁹² Burk (2005) p49

²⁹³ *Ibid* p55

²⁹⁴ Friedson (1994) p159

²⁹⁵ Andrew Abbot *The Systems of Professions* University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1988, p3

ethos not of financial remuneration but of vocational excellence.²⁹⁶ 'In order to manage violence successfully, officers have three fundamental duties: (1) the organization, equipping, and training of this force; (2) the planning of its activities; and (3) the direction of its operation in and out of combat.'²⁹⁷

Janowitz derived the professionalism of the soldier by 'skill acquired over time, the rendering of a specialized service, and a sense of group identity, which entails a system of internal administration and a professional ethic.'²⁹⁸ The importance in referencing the development of the professional soldier is the training, skill and resulting expertise that enable a Service leaver-turned-private security contractor to secure employment; the first step in becoming a professional within the PMSC industry.

Drawing on King's analysis of the professional soldier, whom he believed by interpreting Huntington and Janowitz, not to be relegated solely to the officer corps,²⁹⁹ the professional soldier has a specific set of skills and expertise developed by consistent and continuous training. King observed the UK and UK Army's battle drills where he links tactical training to 'judgement in the application of military violence'³⁰⁰ to make his argument.

'Clearly, in different environments and against different enemies, tactics differ, even at the platoon level. Accordingly, the term tactics typically presumes an idea of analysis and judgement in the application of military violence.'³⁰¹

By way of extensive training and drills, King found the infantry soldier to have professional expertise.³⁰² Tactical training and drills meant the individual soldier developed decision-making capabilities over a period of time, refined by the repetitiveness of battle drills. This is the link between the professional soldier and private security contractors with prior military experience. Released from the military covenant and/or social contract upon military exit,³⁰³ the contractor is no longer constrained by the management of violence conceived by Huntington, nor the motivation of 'a technical love for his craft and the sense

²⁹⁶ Anthony King 'The Combat Soldier, Infantry Tactics and Cohesion in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries' Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013, p219.

²⁹⁷ Samuel Huntington *The Soldier and the State* Harvard University Press, Cambridge and London, 1957, p11

²⁹⁸ Morris Janowitz *The Professional Soldier* Free Press, Glencoe, IL 1960, p5-7 in Burk (2005) p45

²⁹⁹ King (2013) p221

³⁰⁰ *Ibid* p222

³⁰¹ *Ibid*

³⁰² *Ibid*

³⁰³ Krahmman (2012) p104

of social obligation to utilize his craft for the benefit of society' as Janowitz argued.³⁰⁴ A sense of social obligation may be felt but is not necessary or required for employment as a security contractor. What is required – the market demand – is skill, expertise and knowledge.

At the time Jones used Haas's article to build on his idea of epistemic communities by extending the classification to include PMSCs, the evolution of epistemic communities having an influence on transnational governance had not yet occurred, and Cross's model emphasizing internal dynamics yet to be presented. Using the example of groups of environmental experts addressing global issues of climate change, Jones argued ECs can and do play a decisive role in the formulation of foreign policy.³⁰⁵ He found that 'as knowledge-based communities, an underlying assumption regarding the role of epistemic communities is that they can play an influential role in the common good.'³⁰⁶ The transnational nature of PMSCs, Jones argued, made PMSCs 'well placed to act as a force multiplier among states anxious to bolster internal security without necessarily incurring a concomitant rise in defence expenditure.'³⁰⁷

Jones's application of epistemic communities to PMSCs was prescient and innovative at a time when regulation of PMSCs at both the national and international level was mired by the lack of cohesion and authority in newly formed oversight organizations, and the belabored development of codes of conduct and standards for private security service providers. Jones, in a direct break from the literature at the time, conceptually applied epistemology in correlation to the functional value of PMSCs. He argued that regardless of the relationship PMSCs have with a state, their function and utility was a direct result of their knowledge within the industry where their use introduced a 'modicum of peace and stability.'³⁰⁸ This knowledge, he argued, was a particularly powerful tool in which positive outcomes did, and can, occur. For example, he addressed the relationship between humanitarian actors and PMSCs, whom the former often rely on the latter to secure the/an environment in which organizations can carry out humanitarian work, frequently under the protection of PMSCs.³⁰⁹

No one has yet extended Jones's framework of PMSCs as an EC, but the growing professionalism among PMSCs has been observed by various academics. Kinsey

³⁰⁴ Janowitz (1960) p15

³⁰⁵ Jones (2006) p358

³⁰⁶ *Ibid* p358

³⁰⁷ *Ibid* p356

³⁰⁸ *Ibid* p363

³⁰⁹ For an in-depth discussion of the relationship between NGOs and PMSCs, see Birthe Anders Doctoral Dissertation, Department of War Studies, King's College London, submission 2013

specifically discusses the skill and expertise required of PMSCs in his examination of their organizational structure: ‘Team members working on projects...are normally hired for a specific task and must possess the necessary skill and experience to take on the task that the contract demands. In this respect, if a contract calls for a team of explosive ordnance disposal engineers then that is exactly what the team members will be skilled in.’³¹⁰ When Berndtsson explores how PMSCs develop their ‘professional’ image he found that expertise possessed by the PMSC was used to differentiate themselves from the client, who possessed none and therefore unable to solve the problem themselves. An excerpt from an interview with a CEO of a Swedish PMSC follows:

‘[CEO]: I don’t know what experience you have with security work but if you were to set up an office in Baghdad you would probably know nothing about how to evaluate bullet proof cars, but we do.’³¹¹

While Berndtsson found PMSCs either emphasise or de-emphasise their military experience depending on the client (security versus peacekeeping, for example), the core offering of the PMSC was the expertise through which they presented themselves as professionals. Higate’s comparative study of US and UK security contractors found that individual security contractors evaluated each other by way of skill, asking themselves, do they (other contractors) exercise good judgment? Do they safely handle their weapons? Are they skilled in the use of their weapons? These questions, he found, lead to security contractors considering themselves professional over other security contractors. In some memoirs, security contractors consider themselves professional by exercising good judgment in tactics and the controlled use of force.³¹² In his analysis of these memoirs, Higate found the recurrent themes: (1) nationality and professionalism; (2) examinations of ‘contact’ with the enemy involving discharge of firearms, and (3) discussion of training drills, among others.³¹³

Outside of academia the formation of various private security contractor associations in both the US and the UK confirms a type of professionalizing of the individual security contractor is underway and also illustrates cohesion as required by Cross. Some examples

³¹⁰ Kinsey (2005) p197

³¹¹ Berndtsson (2012) p310-311

³¹² Bob Shepard ‘*The Circuit, An Ex-SAS Soldier, a Secretive Industry, The War on Terror, A True Story*’ Pan Books, 2009; John Heron, ‘A Security Advisor in Iraq’ Authorhouse, Milton Keynes 2010; James Ashcroft *Making a Killing: The Explosive Story of a Hired Gun in Iraq* 2006; John Geddes *Highway to Hell*; Simon Low *The Boys of Baghdad: From the Foreign Legion to the Killing Fields of Iraq*, 2007; Peter Mercer *Dirty Deeds Done Cheap: The Incredible Story of My Life from the SBS to a Hired Gun in Iraq*, 2009.

³¹³ Higate (2012)b p9

include the Association for Professional Security Contractors (APSC),³¹⁴ the International Professional Security Association (IPSA),³¹⁵ and the International Contractors Association,³¹⁶ among others. Through these associations, private security contractors are informally represented regarding private security employment, career development through recurrent training and education offerings, and resources for health and well-being issues, as well as guidelines and recommendations for professional conduct. For example, the International Professional Security Association provides an 'Ethical Code of Conduct' included here as Appendix A, whose adherence is required for membership.

This movement appears to be the reaction to three issues: (1) barriers and access to care for injuries sustained while employed as a security contractor; (2) perceived lack of recognition of sacrifice and job performed as a security contractor, and; (3) the lower number of jobs available as a security contractor on the market as Iraq and Afghanistan have drawn to a close. These three factors appear to have united a group of people with a common expertise that consider themselves as professionals in their capacity as a security contractor. In addition to these three issues, exclusivity of the group has been imposed in the form of several legal and social barriers. Legally, barriers include: (1) licenses required for employment, e.g. weapons license and (2) background checks. The social barrier of prior military experience, a requirement found more often than not in the recruitment of US and UK PMSCs, means an exclusivity based on shared experience, norms and values.

These professional bodies are significant because they serve as a medium for the contractor to negotiate with both the industry and government on various issues. They also formalize security contracting as an option after military service; a 'second-career', a profession in which expertise and skills do not need to be learned – for those with prior military service – before entering security contracting. For those with prior military service these organizations provide transition services and training in what appears to be an effort to make the transition natural; transferring known skills and expertise to another environment in which they can be implemented. PMSCs appear to recognize the relationship between recruitment of new security contractors with those having prior military service by way of offering specific assistance in the military to civilian transition. In the case of Service leavers, recruitment appeals to the individual practically and socially. For example, transfer of the individual's military skill and expertise to security contracting via training and accreditation is a practical offering. Socially, the PMSC identifies with the Service leaver by way of a past, shared identity of prior military service. An example of this

³¹⁴ <http://www.ipsa.org.uk>

³¹⁵ <http://www.nasp.org.uk>

³¹⁶ <http://www.icaonline.us/home/>

is the UK based PMSC Minimal Risk. The company exclusively employs military personnel because they are:

‘experts with a wide range of skills, self-reliant and disciplined’ but ‘may not self-market themselves well’ and states they have ‘a background in utilizing and assisting former military personnel’ by explaining to the potential employee; “We have an understanding of what you may have experienced whilst serving your country as several members of the Minimal Risk team also have military backgrounds.’³¹⁷

Minimal Risks is not the only PMSC to leverage past military experience among the companies recruiting new security contractors.³¹⁸ The past and shared experience of military service in which military skills and expertise are eligibility requirements for employment make this recruitment strategy one that appears for the Service leaver either a natural next step, a stepping-stone during the transition, or a permanent second career.

Conclusion

To return to Cross’s four factors of (1) selection and training; (2) meeting frequency and quality; (3) shared professional norms, and (4) common culture,³¹⁹ it is feasible to argue that private security contractors can be considered an EC under these terms. There is ample evidence that the barrier to enter the industry rests on prior skills and competence, derived from training over a significant period of time. There is also evidence that there exist among security contractors shared professional norms that again rely on skill and expertise which can be observed through the tactical use of weapons or knowledge. Some examples of professional norms in this case can be conduct, responsibility, status, due diligence and leadership. Higate also highlighted the use of professional norms use by security contractors to determine who or who is not a professional among their colleagues. Finally, the organization of the private security contractors can be seen as an effort to claim jurisdiction over their health and well-being and recognition for their contribution to either a conflict, or an area, by way of their skills, signalling the type of jurisdictional competition Abbot found to legitimize a profession. The shared professional norms appear to be linked to the fourth factor, a common culture. This is evidenced by the recruitment by PMSCs of

³¹⁷ Minimal Risk Mission Statement, www.minimalriskrecruitment.co.uk, accessed on 3 February 2014

³¹⁸ Some of the bigger PMSCs, for example, DynCorp regularly host ‘job fairs’ specifically targeted at Service leavers: ‘Recruit Military Dallas Veterans Job Fair, Service Academy Career Conference, and the Army Career and Alumni Program and Education Expo, <http://www.dyn-intl.com/careers/job-fairs-related-events/> accessed on 18 February 2014.

³¹⁹ Davis Cross (2013) p150

Service leavers; a shared identity and an environment in which military skills are not only required, but necessary and valued.

Friedson, in discussing the necessity of expertise in the professions, posed the question: 'Is such specialized expertise necessary?'³²⁰ The CEO Berndtsson interviewed allude to his employees specialist knowledge in evaluating bullet holes in a car, something he assumes not everyone can do and therefore distinguishes them as a group of people possessing particular knowledge. In regard to this project's population, the requirement for security contractors to be armed means that basic knowledge about the use and storage of the weapon is required. This basic knowledge is not specialized; many people can learn to use and store a weapon and even secure a weapons license with minimal effort (in the US). It is the environment of security contracting that requires specialized knowledge; the ability to train within a short period of time with other contractors to work cohesively, the experience and tactical knowledge to engage in defensive combat if necessary, and the use of a common language in which to communicate tactics in pressurized environments. Collectively, those without the experience, knowledge and skill gained from military service and needed to perform well cannot easily do these tasks, if at all. It is the expertise in handling these tasks that individual security contractors can be considered professionals, and as such, showing signs of becoming an epistemic community.

3.3 – Theoretical Framework

This project's theoretical framework is connected by a common theme: language. For this project's cohort, language represents a world in which the individual is understood and understands those around them. In this sense, language is not restricted to specific words *per se* but embodies a community whose common language engenders camaraderie, cohesion, trust, and a sense of belonging, and in turn allows the individual to identify themselves in relation to a specific social group, or as described below a 'life world.'³²¹ The following theoretical framework relies on theories where language plays a distinct role in the shaping of identity, motive, networks and worlds in which the individual exists; for the security contractor this includes the military, the quasi-military environment of security contracting, and civilian life. The language, environment, and socio-cultural characteristics represent a distinct and unique 'life world' in which Service leavers-turned-private security contractors make sense of their identity within their life-course.

³²⁰ Friedson (1994) p157

³²¹ It is important to note that the concept of 'life world' can apply to any group of individuals, regardless of background, that share certain characteristics, as discussed further in this chapter. This is different from an EC where there are distinct barriers to entry based on expertise and knowledge.

3.3.1 Jurgen Habermas's 'Life World' for Private Security Contractors

The 'life world' is a concept first introduced by Edmund Husserl, and further developed by Jurgen Habermas building on the 'paradigm shift from purposive activity to communicative action' theory begun by Mead and Durkheim as a sociological response to Weber's philosophy of consciousness.³²² The life world, for Habermas, is a 'cognitive horizon' in which the constant and simultaneous exchange of shared beliefs, attitudes, values, and experiential reference points are realised by a common language based on these things. This common language allows for the structural development of particular identities representative of a group that exist by the communicative action of language.

Communicative action, 'relies on a cooperative process of interpretation in which participants relate simultaneously to something in the objective, the social, and the subjective worlds...Speaker and hearer use the reference system of the three worlds as an interpretative framework within which they work out their common situation definitions.'³²³

Within communicative action Habermas constructs themes, goals and plans that infer group hierarchy and as such, a normative framework for communication among members of the group.³²⁴ This is directly related to the development of a life-world within security contracting where the mutual understanding of shared skills and background required for successfully doing a job and/or contract is rooted in the commonality of language whose institutional origin is prior military experience.

'Language and culture are constitutive for the life-world itself. They are neither one of the formal frames, that is, the worlds in which participants assign elements of situations, nor do they appear as something in the objective, social, or subjective worlds. In performing or understanding a speech act, participants are very much moving within their language, so that they cannot bring a present utterance *before themselves* as 'something inter-subjective,' in the way they experience an event as something objective, encounter a pattern of behaviour as something normative, experience or ascribe a desire or feeling as something subjective. The very medium of mutual understanding abides in a peculiar *half-transcendence*...The same is true of culture – of those patterns of interpretation transmitted in language...The lifeworld is, so to speak, the transcendental site where speaker and hearer meet, where they can reciprocally raise claims that their utterances fit the world (objective, social,

³²² Jurgen Habermas 'The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two Lifeworld and the System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason' (1987) Polity Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom; p1

³²³ *Ibid* p120

³²⁴ *Ibid* p121

or subjective), and where they can criticize and confirm those validity claims, settle their disagreements, and arrive at agreements.³²⁵

In essence, the life world is a nexus of culture, customs, experience, and mutual understanding that exists by use of a common language in which individual can make sense of themselves and others within this world. The restriction of the life world is the individual must stay within this world for communicative action to have an authentic resonance with both the individual and group identity. The life world itself is conditioned by flexibility 'in which situational horizons shift, expand, or contract. It forms a context that, itself boundless, draws boundaries.'³²⁶ As such, the life world of security contracting is one in which the individual may experience autonomy as an individual actor and as a result may re-invent/re-create themselves within this world, but when they use the life world's language outside of the life world or physically leave the life world, it ceases, for the individual, to exist. Habermas explains: 'the life world screened out of the domain of relevance of an action situation stands undecided as a reality that is at once unquestionable and shadowy. It flows into the actual process of reaching understanding not at all, or only very indirectly, and thus remains indeterminate.'³²⁷ In relevance to this project, being 'screened out of the domain' would be either leaving the military or security contracting for civilian life in which there is little initial commonality with the individual's past world.

The 'life world' theory applies structurally and literally to the language used by service leavers-turned-security contractors. Structurally, it allows a particular experience, security contracting, to become a temporal structure and/or phase within the individual's life course where the individual recognises themselves and others around them as belonging to a group, and thus, proffers acceptance and validation of a certain identity. This particular life world cannot exist in civilian life because it is constructed, and restricted, by the physical environment in which the individual interacts with other security contractors, e.g. areas of operation/overseas. The physical environment makes language both a requirement and a barrier to entry thus ensuring the integrity of the life-world, but also restricting the opportunities in which a individual can engage with this particular life-world. This temporal restriction can be a means in which to negotiate various aspects of the individual's life course. In this case, it can be used to negotiate the transition to civilian life because it becomes a period of time to address varying perceived needs by the individual that are not met in the experience of civilian life.

³²⁵ *Ibid* p125-126

³²⁶ *Ibid* p132

³²⁷ *Ibid* p132

Following, language within the life-world is a way for the individual to make sense of their lives within a particular phase; ‘...in coming to an understanding about something in the world, actors are at the same time taking part in interactions through which they develop, confirm, and renew their memberships in social groups and their own identities.’³²⁸ These interactions inform the individual’s military – civilian transition via security contracting because it allows the individual to develop a self-conception that is appropriate to them, and meets their needs at the time in order to reach certain goals about their identity they had previously reached through military service: worthiness, belonging, purpose, and fulfilment. In order, though, to understand the place of language within the life-world of security contracting, its temporal condition must be examined. The next section addresses various theories of transition that help explain, outside of their specific military – civilian transition, underlying life course transitions the individual may experience, contributing in part to the decision to become a security contractor after military service.

3.3.2 *Transition and the Life Course*

While the theories of motive, transition and social identity provide an underpinning for data analysis in this project, the theoretical root of this project is transition within life course. The life-course framework is an approach to the study of ageing that emphasizes the interaction of historical events, individual decisions and opportunities, and the effect of early life experiences in determining later life outcomes.³²⁹ Life course research is the study between time and human behaviour, specifically looking at how chronological age, relationships, common life transitions, and social change shape people’s lives from birth to death.³³⁰ The study of the life course is fundamental in the social sciences and aims to ‘denote the sequence of activities or states and events of various life domains spanning birth to death. The life course is thus seen as the embedding of individual lives into social structures primarily in the form of their partaking in social positions and roles, that is, in regard to their membership in institutional orders.’³³¹ The study of the life course is multi-disciplinary, relying on sociology, anthropology, social history, demography and psychology.³³² Originating from a longitudinal study on the impact of the life course by the Great Depression, results showed tremendous impact on individual and family pathways.³³³

³²⁸ *Ibid* p139

³²⁹ G.H. Elder ‘Time, Human Agency and Change: Perspectives on the Life Course’ *Social Psychology Quarterly* (1994) pp4-15

³³⁰ Elizabeth D. Hutchinson ‘A Life Course Perspective’ Chapter 1 in *Dimensions of Human Behaviour*, 4th ED (2010) Sage Publications pp1-38

³³¹ Karl Ulrich Mayer (2004) ‘Whose Lives? How history, societies and institutions define and shape life courses’ *Research in Human Development* Vol.1, pp161-187

³³² *Ibid* p11

³³³ Elder (1994)

As a result of this study, developmental theory and research was used to further address the influence of historical forces on family, education and work roles.³³⁴

Life course research is concerned with the lifelong consequences of important individual decisions,³³⁵ a concept Elder defined as a ‘sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time.’³³⁶ As people age, they move through different social roles that provide them with different identities – student, husband or wife, worker or parent. Sociologists call these role changes ‘transitions.’³³⁷ In addition to transitions, there are ‘counter transitions’; where a change will alter the role of the individual. For example, becoming a widower, marrying and your parents becoming mother/father-in-laws.³³⁸ Overall, a series of transitions is called a ‘trajectory.’³³⁹ Trajectories vary according to gender and the period of time within which the individual lives.³⁴⁰ For example, forty years ago a male’s employment trajectory would have been relatively stable, working for one company or two their entire working life. Today, it is becoming less frequent to work for one company for the entirety of one’s career. Security contracting, in this project, is part of the individual’s overall trajectory, as both a result of their military to civilian transition and also one that prompts a second transition: from security contracting to civilian life. The skill level, competencies, and age of the individual at the time they leave the military may make security contracting a particularly important time in the individual’s life course because this transition happens against significant ‘life transitions’, e.g. adulthood, mid-life, etc. As a result, the individual often faces a layered transition where they are confronted with the transition from the military while at the same time experiencing overall life transitions. The significance of this is, while some will acknowledge a transition as taking place, may not actually *feel* the transition. They will not look older over night; their life will not abruptly change from one day to the next. These larger life transitions are gradual and subtle, but significant. Humans will unconsciously engage with this transition, understanding their role, purpose and place in the world. For some, retrospective realisations of transitions can lead to times of crisis. For example, individuals will exhibit behaviours known to them in early adulthood as a way to negotiate adulthood.³⁴¹ Many call this the ‘mid-life crisis.’ This type of ‘crisis’ originated from Sigmund Freud, but has been subsequently deconstructed by proceeding scholars, namely Peter Newton, who

³³⁴ Elder in Hutchinson ‘A Life Course Perspective’ (2010) p11

³³⁵ Goodman (2006) p51

³³⁶ Janet Z. Giele and Glen H. Elder Jr., (eds) ‘Methods of the Life Course Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches’ Sage Publications 1998, p22

³³⁷ Goodman (2006) p51

³³⁸ *Ibid* p51

³³⁹ *Ibid* p51

³⁴⁰ *Ibid* p52

³⁴¹ R. Chris Farley ‘A Brief Overview of Adult Attachment Theory and Research’ online paper, University of Illinois, available at: <http://internal.psychology.illinois.edu/~rcfraley/attachment.htm>

emphasised major developmental change during mid-life, but refused to acknowledge it as a 'crisis.'³⁴²

Levinson positions various transitions within a developmental framework, defining them as 'turning points' or as two periods of instability.³⁴³ Transition, broadly, is any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles.³⁴⁴ Transition, though, is not exclusive to fragmented changes within an individual's life course. Transition is the *act* the individual experiences as they leave the military for civilian life, of which becoming a private security contractor plays a particular and specific *role*. This role is dependent upon when the individual becomes a security contractor within their life course, and how much time they spent in civilian life between military exit and security contracting. Transition theory is itself characteristically broad as it describes both the period of time an individual experiences moving from one environment to another and how the individual experiences this move.

Transition, within the life course, is thus a unit of analysis for empirical and longitudinal studies, considered the 'gold standard' of quantitative social science.³⁴⁵ Longitudinal studies of transition within the life course consist of 'research on different age groups, different life phases, and different life domains such as the family cycle, fertility history, occupational careers and employment, the dynamics of income and consumptions, migration and normative patterns of ageing.'³⁴⁶ Originally, life course research examined 'various segmented life domains' within the larger life course, isolating specific trends like age differentiation, family demography, social and occupational mobility and status attainment, among others.³⁴⁷ Yet, argues Mayer *et al*, missing from this kind of segmentation was the 'role of the state in structuring the life course,' previous research treating the individual as if they lived in a 'state-less social structure.'³⁴⁸ As a result, life course research developed to include the role of the state,³⁴⁹ initially in response to the influence of welfare states on social security and inequality.³⁵⁰ Mayer's framework is particularly suited for this project as the state, via military service, has a fundamental and

³⁴² Peter Newton (1995) 'Freud: From Youthful Dream to Midlife Crisis' Guilford Press, New York

³⁴³ Levinson (1986) in Jane Goodman *et al* (2006) 'Counseling Adults'; p23

³⁴⁴ Jane Goodman *et al* (2006) p33

³⁴⁵ Karl Ulrich Mayer (2009) 'New Directions in Life Course Research' *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol.32, pp413-433; p414

³⁴⁶ Karl Ulrich Mayer and Urs Schoepflin (1989a) 'The State and the Life Course' *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol.15, pp187-209; p187

³⁴⁷ *Ibid* p188

³⁴⁸ *Ibid* pp218-220

³⁴⁹ State influences, as posited by Mayer, were state imposed transitions like voting age and drinking age, among others; Karl Ulrich Mayer (2009) 'New Directions in Life Course Research' *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol.32, pp413-433;

³⁵⁰ *Ibid* p189

formative impact on the individual in various aspects of their life; identity, education, skills, geographic location and retirement.

Within the life course, transitions are permanent actions that will inevitably occur during different stages of life. Levinson developed three general transitions within an individual's life course; early adult transition (17-22 years old), mid-life transition (40-45 years old), and late adult transition (60-65 years old).³⁵¹ Levinson's stages are a framework for this project where the demography of the data collected can be applied by attributing certain age groups to Levinson's three stages. Within this framework, the individual, as s/he grows older, will build a structure within three phases. These 'structure building periods' ordinarily last five to seven years, at which point, a *transitional* period terminates the existing life structure and creates the possibility for a new one.³⁵² Applied to the individual exiting the military and becoming a private security contractor means that, in most cases, the individual will experience two transitions simultaneously: a general life transition as stated above, and the transition from the military to civilian life. This is particularly true for this project's cohort, where the majority are between 40 and 55 years old.

All three stages of Levinson's age-influenced transitions are equally important to the development of the life course. In this project, the first two structural transitions have the most significance because they will be the period of time in which the individual will initially join the military, and when they leave the military, and for some, become a security contractor. The key question is which dimensions are the decisive determinants of the overall structure of the life course.³⁵³ The crucially important feature of any transition is the new structure of one's life emerging from it.³⁵⁴ Security contracting can be counterintuitive to this process because environmental continuity between the military and security contracting may hinder or postpone the emergence of a structure resulting from the traditional military to civilian transition. Within this theory, security contracting itself would not be considered an emerging structure after the military to civilian transition for a few reasons. First, security contracting is uncertain. Contracting may last anywhere from a few months to many years. Second, the similar socio-cultural environment of security contracting does not force *per se* the individual to adapt to new assumptions, roles or identities. As a result, entering civilian life after security contracting, according to the above theory, will be the beginning of a transitional period, but not one from which a structure emerges.

³⁵¹ Levinson (1986)

³⁵² *Ibid* p7

³⁵³ M Kohli (2007) p260

³⁵⁴ Levinson (1986) p10

Levinson's development theory is somewhat controversial. Assigning structural development within specific age phases of an individual's life, critics argue, does not leave room for generational changes and influences. Further, critics argue it is not possible that development should unfold in so orderly a sequence during adulthood; 'a standard series of periods, each beginning at a well-defined modal age with a range of only four to five years around it.'³⁵⁵ Yet, developmental theory is an anchor in contemporary sociological thinking despite the increasingly 'pluralized and non-linear transitions.'³⁵⁶

Societal expectations have relaxed since Levinson wrote his developmental theory. Today choices made within the three phases of life are more accepted and even encouraged in age groups where these types of choices were not previously made. For example, returning or beginning university in one's mid-life is more encouraged and accepted today than it has ever been. Contemporary culture encourages the distancing of the individual from state-influenced transitions and instead allows greater individual freedom over the life course, enabling the individual to change their life if they perceive it to be unsatisfactory. Some authors call this the 'patchwork thesis' 'that supposes that globalization breeds widespread employment flexibility.'³⁵⁷ Gone are the days of working in a factory until retirement, or going to university straight from school. Not only is change now more readily accessible and encouraged, expectations have changed where stability is no longer the 'gold standard.' Although critics of the 'patchwork career thesis' argue that stable and secure employment, such as the standard lifelong employment contract, has been slowly altered and is gradually being replaced by unstable 'patchwork' employment careers, the more experiences the individual has and the more changes the individual makes has today become more a measurement of success and life progression than the previously valued constant stability.³⁵⁸

Stability, in turn, is now increasingly viewed as more of a stagnant, less experienced way of life. This does not mean the individual will still not experience Levinson's structure-building phases and transitions in between. The individual will naturally progress through Levinson's framework, but there will no longer be one change per structure or phase. There will be many. These collective changes will still, though, represent construction of a particular phase. For example, in the era of early adulthood, ages twenty-two to forty may

³⁵⁵ *Ibid* p11

³⁵⁶ John Fields in Kathryn Ecclestone, Gert Biesta and Martin Huges (2010) 'Transitions and Learning Through the Life Course, the Role of Identity, Agency and Structure' Routledge, New York, NY, p.xvii

³⁵⁷ Beck 1992, 2000, Castells 1996 in Hans Peter Blossfield, Melinda Mills and Fabrizio Bernardi (2006) 'Globalization, Uncertainty and Men's Careers: An International Comparison' Edward Elger Publishing Limited, United Kingdom, p4

³⁵⁸ Diprete and Nonnemaker 1997; Handy 1994; Heery and Salmon 2000 in Hans Peter Blossfield *et al* 'Globalization' (2006) p4

see an individual go to university, secure employment, leave that employment, travel and perhaps start a job in an entirely different profession. Perhaps they will move to several different cities within this period, making transitions concurrently, e.g. getting married, divorced, having a child, etc. Fields calls these frequent changes 'liquid modernity' in relation to the life course.³⁵⁹ He questions this liquidity, asking if post-modern conditions have thrown the life course in chaos. As Levinson argued it is no longer the simple transition from A to B, seen as the narrow adaptation and change stemming from a single event.³⁶⁰ Security contractors, depending on the amount of time in civilian life between military exit and becoming a security contractor can either have the pre and post-modern transition as described above. They may be a part of this 'liquid modernity' where security contracting is one of many jobs they will have throughout their life, representing a 'post-modern' transition. On the other hand, some may use security contracting as a career, experiencing a 'pre-modern' transition.

Within the life course, transition is broken down into 'internal temporal orderings'; the relative duration of given states influenced by age distributions, events and type of transition.³⁶¹ Goodman *et al* presented three types of transition; anticipated, non-anticipated and non-event transitions.³⁶² Within these three types are transition-determining factors of relativity, context, and impact.³⁶³ These factors are in turn determined by sub-factors like timing, age, duration and sense of control.³⁶⁴ Yet, the most important point regarding transitions is that the experience of transition is largely subjective. While a transition is influenced by objective factors like age or timing, the individual's holistic memory is based on the perception of who the individual thought s/he was at the time and their remembered environment where the transition took place. Regardless if the change occurred objectively, per Levinson, it will be whether the individual experienced the change that is the crux of determining transition. Goodman *et al* state in this regard 'transition is not so much a matter of change as it is the individual's own perception of the change...transition is only a transition if it is so defined by the person experiencing it.'³⁶⁵ The environmental continuity of security contracting from the military may not cause the individual to acknowledge a transition is taking place as the environment has not changed to a degree that would force an evaluation of assumptions, roles and identities.

³⁵⁹ John Fields in Ecclestone (2010) p3

³⁶⁰ Levinson (1986) p10

³⁶¹ Mayer (2004) p163

³⁶² Goodman *et al* (2006) p34-35

³⁶³ *Ibid* p37-39

³⁶⁴ *Ibid* p92-95

³⁶⁵ *Ibid* p33

Anticipated transitions comprise normative gains and losses or a major alteration of roles that predictably occur in the course of the unfolding life cycle.³⁶⁶ These transitions can be seen in the move from being single to becoming a spouse, mother, father, grandparent, job moves or physical moves. Unanticipated transitions are alterations that unpredictably occur, such as losing a job, losing a partner suddenly, or having a serious or sudden illness. Non-event transitions are the ones ‘the individual *expected* but did not occur, thereby altering his or her life – the marriage that never occurred, the promotion that never materialized, the child that was never born...the realizations that the expected transition did not and will not ever occur alters the way they see themselves and might also alter the way they behave.’³⁶⁷ The type of transition the individual experiences will be determined by these factors and the role the individual’s environment plays in supporting or exacerbating the transition.

Applying theory to this thesis, individual security contractors present a unique position within this transition typology. The transition from the military to civilian life via security contracting has the potential to be both an anticipated and non-event transition. Not taking into account unanticipated transition like dishonourable or sudden medical discharge, the individual, in most instances is aware and anticipates military exit. Yet, if becoming a security contractor is a linear experience in which the individual does not perceive a significant shift in identity or environment, exiting the military could be perceived as a non-event, despite military exit being an significant life transition in the sense of leaving one world for another. The transition from the military to civilian life could be perceived to never have happened if the environment they move into, security contracting, is similar and familiar to the extent it will not cause the individual to re-evaluate their identity in relation to their transition. The transition-determining factor ‘impact’ will be influential in determining the extent to which the individual perceived a life shift when leaving the military. Impact is the degree to which the transition alters one’s daily life, relationships, routines, assumptions about the self and the world, and roles.³⁶⁸

Prior to leaving the military, the forecasted impact of transition will rely on how the individual sees their transition as happening and how much they have prepared for the transition. Those that have started to make plans post-military exit will most likely experience less stress than if they had done no preparation.³⁶⁹ For those that did not

³⁶⁶ Peralin and Lieberman (1979 p22) in Goodman *et al* ‘Counseling Adults’ (2006) p33-35

³⁶⁷ Goodman *et al* (2006) p33-35

³⁶⁸ *Ibid* p37

³⁶⁹ See for example David Boesel and Kyle Johnson ‘Why Service Members Leave the Military. Review of the Literature and Analysis’ (April 1984) from the Defense Manpower Database available at: <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA173559>; David Walker ‘Anticipating Army Exit: Identity Constructions of Final Year UK Career Soldiers’

prepare, the impact of exit will prevent what for the prepared group was a progressive adjustment of routines, assumptions and roles. As a result, the individual that did not previously prepare for exiting the military might seek a situation in which to regain their former roles, routines, relationships and familiarity. Yet, this is not to say that all individuals that did not prepare will all seek similar environments to that of the military, just that there is a greater likelihood that a similar environment to the military post-military exit may be perceived as the only option for post-military employment in the absence of military exit preparation.

Environmental continuity between the military and becoming a security contractor may not impact on the individual enough for them to experience their military to civilian transitions on a larger scale than they actually are. That is to say, if the environment is similar and they do not perceive a significant impact on their life that forces a change in assumptions and roles, the individual may not consider themselves to be transitioning at all. For those that may have experienced a difficult transition by entering civilian life and not becoming a security contractor immediately after military exit, becoming a security contractor could, then, ameliorate an otherwise difficult transition because the degree of impact is limited.

Lieberman concluded that the degree to which an individual is required to make new adaptations associated with environmental change will influence the level of stress one experiences upon transitioning.³⁷⁰ He found that the individual's success or failure in adapting to the new environment was strongly correlated with the similarity and dissimilarity of the pre-transition and post-transition environment, despite the individual's attitude to change.³⁷¹ As a result of environmental similarity, the individual may experience little to no stress forcing the individual to make little, if any, adaptations to their new world. Transition to security contracting may then become a non-event because the transition the individual expected to face either did not factor into their perception of undergoing a huge change or they perceived not to have transitioned at all. Yet, leaving the military is an inarguable fact, the ending of a specific and particular stage in the individual's life course, regardless of the similarity of any environment the individual enters into after the military.

Armed Forces and Society published online February 2012, p1-21; David Walker 'Narrating Identity: Career Soldiers Anticipating Exit from the British Army' Doctoral thesis submitted to Durham University 2012 available at: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/639/>

³⁷⁰ Liberman (1975) in Jane Goodman *et al* 'Counseling Adults' (2006) p37-38

³⁷¹ *Ibid*

Transition is a regular occurrence in the life course, whether inherent in human development, per Levinson, or catalysed by either segmented change or state influence. Today people move rapidly as a result of globalisation and technology, but these developments do not preclude transition in life as we simultaneously become or un-become as we leave one stage for the next. Yet, positive or negative transitions depend on the individual's subjectivity and context in which the transitions occur. While the state may influence an individual moving from one stage to the next, it is ultimately determinate on the individual, their perception of themselves, the world around them, and how they make sense of their place in the world that determines how they experience and remember their transitions.

Understanding transition theory in relation to the military to civilian transition via private security contracting is important because it provides a 'road map', for both overall life transitions, like Levinson's three age stages, and for the types of transition the individual may experience. This theory is used in Chapter 6 Data Analysis to understand the type of transition from the military to civilian life the individual experienced, and the role they have perceived security contracting to play in this transition. This section provides reference points regarding the influence of environmental continuity in the individual's transition to civilian life via security contracting, and also provides a larger perspective of what the individual may experience in their life-course as a whole.

3.3.3 *Social Identity Theory*

Despite this research project being on the individual security contractor, and further relying on the individual for data regarding their particular transition experience, these individuals identify with each other through various characteristics and commonality of experience that give them a social and group identity. This social identity is not a means in which to classify individual security contractors, but a mechanism in which they classify themselves, and as such, make sense of their place in the world. Identity theory relies on 'the self as an occupant of a role' in which to categorize themselves and 'the incorporation, into the self, of the meanings and expectations associated with that role and its performance.'³⁷² 'A social identity is a person's knowledge that he or she belongs to a social group or category...a social group is a set of individuals who hold a common social identity or view themselves as members of the same social category.'³⁷³ In this case it is the desire to be a member of a particular social group representative of the individual's past

³⁷² Burke and Tully 1997; Thoits 1986 in Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke (2000) 'Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory' *Social Psychology Quarterly* Vol.63, No.3 pp224-237; p225

³⁷³ Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke (2000) 'Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory' *Social Psychology Quarterly* Vol.63, No.3 pp224-237; p225

experiences that is relevant to military veterans-turned-security contractors, and not the 'self as an occupant of a role.'³⁷⁴ Security contracting is not a 'role' *per se*; like one becoming a father or mother in which case a particular role is taken on nor is it an identity in and of itself. These individuals, in this case US and UK service leavers that become security contractors, comprise a social group where the collective experience of military service activates pre-existing norms that allow a particular identity to be sustained.

Originating from Tajfel, social identity developed along three main lines: self-categorisation, self-identification, and self-comparison.³⁷⁵ While social identity is a broad area of inquiry, its relevance to this project are these three concepts because they explain how the individual leaving the military may associate with security contracting to a degree they choose it as employment after military service, or after some time in civilian life between the military and security contracting.

'Social identity is motivated by two processes, self-enhancement and uncertainty reduction, that cause groups to strive to be both better than and distinct from other groups. People strive to reduce subjective uncertainty about their social world and their place within it – they like to know who they are and how to behave and who others are and how they might behave. Social categorization is particularly effective at reducing uncertainty because it furnishes group prototypes that describe how people (including self) will and ought to behave and interact with one another.'³⁷⁶

Self-categorization has direct relevance to this project's cohort for two reasons. First, military service thrives on certainty. There are few unknowns in regards to where you are expected to be each day, how you are expected to perform, the trajectory of one's career based on performance, and how one must act in accordance to others in regard to rank. Further is economic security; pay-checks are consistent and a member of the military will always have a place to sleep. Institutionalisation will engender a particular relationship between the individual and the institution, emphasizing a particular dependency on what is 'known.' There is considerable preparation for moves between rank, location and operational tasks, e.g. deployments. Little is unknown within the military. Adjusting to a life of unknowns after the military, i.e. civilian employment, location, pay, and social networks may cause an individual to experience difficulties, manifesting in various outcomes. The extreme outcomes include homelessness, suicide, domestic violence and/or alcohol and substance abuse. Self-categorization, then, of like-others in security contracting may serve as an underlying yet not acknowledged appeal to the service leaver-

³⁷⁴ *Ibid*

³⁷⁵ Michael A. Hogg 'Social Identity Theory' Chapter 6 in Eds 'Contemporary Social Psychological Theories' Stanford University Press, Stanford (2006) pp111-128

³⁷⁶ *Ibid* p120

turned-security contractor. It establishes a known and familiar identity of the individual in which they can make sense of themselves in relation to others they perceive as similar.

Private security contracting is not a new identity for Service leavers, but an environment in which a previous identity is allowed to exist and find like-others.

'In group-based identities, the uniformity of perception reveals itself in several ways (Hogg and Abrams 1988; Oakes, Haslam, and Turner 1994). These may be categorized along cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioural lines. Social stereotyping is primary among the cognitive outcomes: researchers have found that stereotyped perceptions of in-group members and out-group members are enhanced and are made more homogeneous by identification with the in-group (Haslam, Oakes, McGarty, Turner, Reynolds, and Eggins 1996). Similarly, others have found strong evidence that group identification influences the view of the self as prototypical in the group (Hogg and Hardie 1992). Still others have found that in-group homogeneity is especially strong when no motivational forces exist to distinguish the self from others within the group (Brewer 1993; Simon, Pantaleo, and Mummendey 1995).³⁷⁷

Social identity theorists are particularly concerned with when identities become 'activated' and where.³⁷⁸ This activation is termed 'salience.'³⁷⁹ Salience is not a physical manifestation where the activation of an identity is recognisable as someone jumping up and down, or immediately exhibiting 'attention-grabbing' behaviour, 'but the psychological significance of a group membership.'³⁸⁰

This is in contrast to salience within identity theory where salience is 'understood as the probability that an identity will be activated in a situation.'³⁸¹ Salience depends on accessibility and fit.³⁸² The accessibility is the 'readiness of a given category to become activated in the person' and fit is 'the congruence between the stored category specifications and perceptions of the situation.'³⁸³ This is particularly applicable to security contracting for those with prior military service because the accessibility to the security contractor network is high for former military veterans. Many security contractors who have relied on their network of former military colleagues are able to begin the process of seeking and security employment as a contractor relatively easily. Further is the job requirement of prior military service where there are little to no new skills required for security contracting as a military veteran; security contracting is the 'fit' required for the

³⁷⁷ *Ibid* p226

³⁷⁸ *Ibid* p229

³⁷⁹ *Ibid*

³⁸⁰ *Ibid* p230

³⁸¹ Stryker (1980)

³⁸² Stets (2000) p224

³⁸³ *Ibid* p230

salience of a social identity. The low barriers of accessibility and fit for veterans-turned-security contractors contributes to the likelihood a social identity will be activated once the individual recognises themselves as belonging to the group.

Social identity theory illustrates the importance of socio-cultural characteristics like language, shared beliefs, attitudes and values in the appeal and/or decision to become a security contractor and the influence of group membership in this decision. Social identity gives the individual language (the tool in which understand and be understood – *belong*) and recognition (shared beliefs, attitudes and values). Language and recognition validate the individual's identity as familiar. When an individual leaves the military for civilian life this loss of recognition and language, for some, may cause the individual to question their role in the world and may influence the decision to be in a profession where they can, once again, regain control of their role within the world.

3.3.4 *Motive*

Language, too, plays a significant role in the individual's motive in becoming a private security contractor. Motive, in this project, addresses the influence of language across the strata of relationships and situations the individual faces during their transition from the military to civilian life.

Building on basic motivation are theorists who argue that motivation is best explained as a duality of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivations are defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequences.³⁸⁴ In warriors, Christopher Coker states 'intrinsic motivations are those that civilians bring to military life. They are genetic or culturally constructed in childhood' and extrinsic motivations as 'derived from the military through socialisation including training.'³⁸⁵ Their relation to basic motivation theory can be traced from cognitive evaluation theory positing 'interpersonal events and structures (e.g., rewards, communications, feedback) that conduce towards *feelings of competence* during action can enhance intrinsic motivation for that action because they allow satisfaction of the basic psychological need for competence.³⁸⁶ Instead of psychological needs, intrinsic motivators satisfy psychological needs. Feelings of competence will naturally come from what Deci and Ryan write as interpersonal events and

³⁸⁴ E. Deci and R. Ryan (2000) 'Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classical Definitions and New Directions' *Contemporary Educational Psychology* Vol.25, pp54-67; p56

³⁸⁵ Christopher Coker (2007) 'The Warrior Ethos: Military Culture and the War on Terror' Routledge, New York, p5

³⁸⁶ Deci and Ryan (2000) p56

structures, and it is safe to argue these include requirements of the needs of self-esteem and will be inherently linked to the individual's identity.³⁸⁷

Exploring individual security contractor motivations by way of extrinsic or intrinsic motivations does not explain the unique area that security contractors inhabit as they transition from the military to civilian life via security contracting because it does not take into account the situational identity of the individual. Further, it is difficult to 'differentiate motivated from non-motivated behaviour.'³⁸⁸ Foote's development of motive extends beyond what he views as the restriction of extrinsic and intrinsic, summarising generally:

'We take motivation to refer to the degree to which a human being, as a participant in the ongoing social process in which he necessarily finds himself, defines a problematic situation as calling for performance of a particular act, with more or less anticipated consummations and consequences, and *thereby* his organism releases the energy appropriate to performing it.'³⁸⁹

Building on sociologist C. Wright Mills development of motive as situational and dependent on vocabulary and behaviours or choices committed as a result of expectations developed through a social identity, he states: 'symbolic constructs which not only organize these acts in particular situations but make them recognizably recurrent in the life history of any person or group. This pattern of recurrence constitutes what is often reified as 'personality' or 'culture.'³⁹⁰ Mills stated 'motives are words. Generically, to what do they refer? They do not denote any elements 'in' individuals. They stand for anticipated situational consequences of questioned conduct.'³⁹¹ Meaning, motivation is contextual and rational. It is not assigned either an inward or outward reason but is shaped by the environment the individual is in, and subsequently the language used in that environment, which can define the environment in and of itself. When the environment changes, the motives of the individual will also change. If the environment does not change significantly to impact the individual, as discussed in regard to transition, it is possible to argue their motivation will remain unchanged.

What is different about Mills' theory in contrast to other motivation theorists is the use of language; 'an explanatory paradigm of why certain motives are verbalized rather than

³⁸⁷ *Ibid* p59

³⁸⁸ Nelson N. Foote 'Identification as the Basis for a Theory of Motivation' *American Sociological Review* Vol.16, No.1 (Feb 1951) pp14-21; p15

³⁸⁹ Foote (1951) p15

³⁹⁰ *Ibid* p15

³⁹¹ C. Wright Mills 'Situational Actions and Vocabularies of Motive' *American Sociological Review* Vol.5, No.6 (Dec. 1940) pp904-913; p905

others.’³⁹² He writes ‘conversations may be concerned with the factual features of a situation as they are seen and believed to be or it may seek to integrate and promote a set of diverse social actions with reference to the situation and its normative pattern of expectations.’³⁹³ This ‘normative pattern’ is particularly important as it highlights the influence of institutions on situations and how they will subsequently engender a particular narrative that constructs not only the individual’s motive but also what is expected by others for the individual’s motive to be. For example, the normative social construct existing today regarding individual security contractors is that they are motivated by economic gain, e.g. ‘doing it for the money.’ For Mills, this explanation of money as a sole motive would be far too reductive in considering these individuals, as ‘institutionally different situations have different *vocabularies of motive* appropriate to their respective behaviours.’³⁹⁴ Verbalizing ‘money’ as a motive is counterintuitive to the military institution; an institution that embeds, reinforces and nurtures the individual’s dependent role in the social contract, emphasising the *service* the individual provides. Money is not an indigenous motive to the military mentality. While individuals may join for particular aspects of economic gain, e.g. funding for education or to buy a house, economic remuneration is in exchange for social mobility and job security and not for the sake of money itself.

In greater explanation of the ‘conception of motives as relatively stable lingual phases’³⁹⁵ Mills expands on Mead’s conclusion that motives do not originate from within, but that ‘the question of ‘why’ and ‘how’ is answerable in terms of a situation and its vocabulary of motives, i.e. those which conventionally accompany that type of situation and function as cues and justifications for normative actions in it.’³⁹⁶ Mills highlights the overall environment of modern times as catalysing these vocabularies; ‘individualistic, sexual, hedonistic, and pecuniary vocabularies of motives are apparently now dominant in many sectors of twentieth-century urban America.’³⁹⁷ If the normative explanation for security contractors is that they are motivated by money, then it is possible the individual is influenced by this particular verbal and social construct more than the possibility of the military fostering this kind of motive. Whether or not this motive exists and/or is fostered in the military, people leaving the military to become security contractors to make more than their military counterparts is less a question of motive and more a case of relative deprivation; a perception that security contractors perform the same job as soldiers yet the latter is paid much less. Mills writes ‘acts will often be abandoned if no reason can be found

³⁹² *Ibid* p905

³⁹³ *Ibid* p905

³⁹⁴ *Ibid* 906 emphasis in original

³⁹⁵ *Ibid* p906

³⁹⁶ *Ibid* p906

³⁹⁷ *Ibid* p910

that others will accept.’³⁹⁸ Yet, society accepts the ‘money motivator’ for security contractors because it provides a rational that is understood. It is accepted because given the chance at the same kind of economic gain, others, in all likelihood, would take the same opportunity, as conditioned by the liberal social construct.

Within the military, socialisation of the individual is sustained by environment and language, among other things. The environmental continuity of the military to security contracting discourages adaptation to motives outside of this environment and language. The development of different motives, though, is not unreasonable. The extent of socialisation, though, may be a greater barrier for adaptation to other motives when the environment remains unchanged and with which the individual identifies strongly. Mills allows for flexibility in situational context, that an individual ‘may begin to act for one motive...in the course of it, he may adopt an ancillary motive...the vocalized expectation of an act, its ‘reason’, is not only a mediating condition of the act but a proximate and controlling condition for which the term ‘cause’ is not appropriate.’³⁹⁹ This is not to say the ‘money motivator’ will never be realised through language and situation, but that in most cases it is more likely that the security contracting motive is more a product of the language and situation of the military institution than that of an individual solely seeking monetary gain. Discussed in the previous section on transition, and to be discussed further in military to civilian transition; a similar environment that does not challenge the individual’s identity may serve more powerful than being motivated by money. Mills concludes that ‘motives are no value apart from the delimited societal situations for which there are appropriate vocabularies. They must be situated.’⁴⁰⁰

Mills theory explains how the individual organises their choices in concurrence with their social identity to make sense of their life world. Dependent on vocabulary, this theory aligns with Habermas’ ‘life world’ and social identity theory as language serves as the catalyst and conduit of how the individual views themselves; which ultimately influences the direction they take within their life course.

3.3.5 *Networks*

The networks military veterans-turned-security contractors build during their exit from the military to civilian life via security contracting are vital mechanisms of not only environmental continuity, but isolation from civilian life. Network theory builds on Mills

³⁹⁸ *Ibid* p907

³⁹⁹ *Ibid* p907

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid* p913

theory of situated motives by explaining the mechanism used by the individual to negotiate their transition to civilian life. It allows for a more technical view of how the individual will theoretically move from phase to phase within their transition and a personal view of how networks operate overall in the individual's life course. Seeing the individual's network as a whole, spanning their transition allows for examination of what points or people influenced their decision-making and subsequent movement. Lewin argued 'the group and its environment are elements within a single field of relations...the opportunities that individuals have to move about in their social world are determined by the boundaries between the different regions of the field in which they are located.'⁴⁰¹ This is supported by Christakis and Fowler who argue that one is influenced by their friends' friends' friends.⁴⁰² In regards to individuals leaving the military, this can be significant. While in today's world everyone is seemingly connected through media and technology, civilians are products of social networks formed by family, education and work. These civilian networks will be fluid, flexible and can change easily and quickly, absent the constraint of a larger network. The military is different because it connects individual within an inherently hierarchical framework that relies on a particular social identity. In civilian life the individual will use both occupational and social networks to change or enhance their identity through connections to people different than them. Military networks, on the contrary, are a combination of occupation and social networks that sustain and enforce a particular identity. As a structure of command, the military network will be fluid, but not flexible. People will move within this network on a structured basis, pre-planned and pre-determined according to rank (hierarchy) and job (skill). In the absence of this military network, those leaving the military may be more likely to be influenced by similarity and familiarity in the form of a replicated network (security contractors), and in turn may become influencers themselves.

According to Christakis and Fowler, if one soldier leaving the military knows just one person that has gone into, or is going into security contracting, they may be more likely to go into security contracting themselves. The individual's pre-existing network can affect their transition because they are subjected to a higher level of influence based on both their military network and shared social identity. The tendency to affect the spread from person to person beyond an individual's social ties is termed hyperdyadic spread.⁴⁰³ This spread is the building of influence from one person to another, e.g. if your friends smoke, then it is alright to smoke; if your friends are runners then running is normal, so that behaviours of

⁴⁰¹ Lewin in John Scott (2000) 'Social Network Analysis: A Handbook' 2nd Eds. Sage Publications, London; p11

⁴⁰² Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler (2009) 'Connected, How Your Friends' Friends' Friends Affect Everything You Feel, Think and Do' Back Bay Books

⁴⁰³ Christakis and Fowler (2009) p22

individuals around each other define their norms.⁴⁰⁴ Yet, these influences are not easily recognizable or isolated to any one person or thing; 'it is very hard for an individual to detect those influences, as they are the result of thousands of small impressions left by our friends, family, colleagues, and neighbours.'⁴⁰⁵ Paradoxically though dependence on a network is required for independence from it. The individual becomes dependent on a network that provides communication with others and shared experiences in which to validate and confirm the role the individual perceives themselves to play, or allows them to situate themselves in a role they want to play. Security contractors, though, do not interact with their networks in the same way as civilians might because their network is isolated and developed through socialisation and institutionalisation.

Scott argues:

'the opportunities that individuals have to move about in their social world are determined by the boundaries between the regions of the field in which they are located. The constraints imposed by these boundaries are the 'forces' that determine group behaviour...the total social field, therefore, is a field of forces acting on group members and shaping their actions and experiences.'⁴⁰⁶

Security contractors exist in two worlds simultaneously; the civilian world and the quasi-military world of contracting. Both of these worlds have constricted networks for two reasons. The first, the individual will not adjust their prior military network significantly on as large scale if they had entered and remained in civilian life. Second, the development of a civilian network after military service will be one over which the individual has greater control, but will have less influence on the individual because it will be underdeveloped and new. Using the individual's prior military network to secure employment as a security contractor increases the likelihood that their network will remain constrained yet highly influential, limiting its exposure to outside influence. This is because their point of contact(s) within the network and the network boundaries remain concentrated within their prior military network.

While on the one hand, being a security contractor is highly individualistic in comparison to having a specific role in connection to other individuals in a military unit. On the other hand, the individual transitioning to security contracting is reliant on a particular pattern of ties that will enable them to obtain the job as a contractor. These ties allow the

⁴⁰⁴ Elizabeth Bales and William Griswold (2011) 'Interpersonal Infomatics: Understanding Ourselves Through Our Communities' CHI 2011, May 7-12, 2011, Vancouver BC; p2

⁴⁰⁵ Bales and Griswold (2011) p2

⁴⁰⁶ John Scott (2000) 'Social Network Analysis: A Handbook' 2Ed. Sage Publications, p11

individual to function within a group to achieve a particular outcome (a contract) the individual may be unable to secure operating solely on their own.⁴⁰⁷ In this sense, individuals leaving the military for security contracting have the opportunity to influence and to be influenced to a degree of three;

‘everything we do or say tends to ripple through our network, having an impact on our friends (one degree), our friends’ friends (two degrees), and even our friends’ friends’ friends (three degrees). Our influence gradually dissipates and ceases to have noticeable effect on people beyond the social frontier that lies at three degrees of separation. Likewise, we are influenced by friends within three degree but generally not those beyond.’⁴⁰⁸

According to this rule, it is plausible to argue that individuals who leave the military and become security contractors are not only influenced by those that assisted them in getting the job, via their network, but will influence others to become security contractors as an option after leaving the military. This type of influence creates a self-sustaining and relatively homogenous network, lacking the influence of the civilian labour market.

This type of influence in military networks in securing security contractor work is somewhat counterintuitive to Granovetter’s ‘strength of weak ties’ theory. Granovetter asserts that ‘our acquaintances (*weak ties*) are less likely to be socially involved with one another than are our close friends (*strong ties*). Thus, the set of people made up of any individual and his or her acquaintances comprise a low-density network (one in which many of the possible relational lines are absent) whereas the set consisting of the same individual and his or her *close* friends will be densely knit (many of the possible lines present).⁴⁰⁹ Granovetter goes on to argue that weak ties between clusters of dense ties are the life line, or what he calls the ‘bridge’ to one another. For those individuals with few weak ties they will be confined to the information they receive, thus insulating them, and as a result, untouched.⁴¹⁰

Granovetter, though, had to revise his argument in light of various strong-tie/weak-tie studies. These new studies proved the opposite; weak ties are the most influential, using seeking employment as a case study. Individuals leaving the military and becoming security contractors would most likely display Granovetter’s original assertion; their

⁴⁰⁷ Scott (2000) ‘While a network, like a group, is a collection of people, it includes something more: a specific set of connections between people in the group. These ties, and the particular pattern of these ties, are often more important than the individual people themselves. They allow groups to do things that a disconnected collection of individuals cannot.’ p9; Mark Granovetter (1974) ‘Getting a Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers’ Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA

⁴⁰⁸ Christakis and Fowler (2009) p22

⁴⁰⁹ Mark Granovetter (1983) ‘The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited’ *Sociological Theory* Vol.1 pp201-233; p201-202

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid* p202

'cluster' or 'population' will be relatively untouched and as a result of being part of the larger military cluster and/or population they will not only not have a small number of weak ties. They will rely mainly on strong ties because within the labour market this is what they have access to at this particular time. It is important though to make the distinction that the regular military is inherently different to civilian networks due to its structure and institutional character where it sustains attitudes, values, beliefs and norms, versus civilian life and the movement within the civilian labour market/network.

In regards to transition, relying on their military network, a security contractor may be slow to develop a civilian network that would give them a greater possibility of securing civilian employment other than security contracting. By continuing to be a member of a network comprised of former military colleagues and friends in the search for security contracting employment, the individual exists between both the civilian and military worlds simultaneously. This 'transmigrant' existence may impact the individual's full transition to civilian life.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter developed the idea of individual private security contractors as an epistemic community and different strands of a theoretical framework to make the following points:

- 1) by way of organising, security contracting is becoming a formalized, professionalised occupation in which experience, knowledge and expertise qualifies security contractors collectively as an epistemic community, and;
- 2) language is essential in the formation of security contracting 'life world' and serves as the nexus between the professionalization of security contracting – manifested here as an epistemic community – and the individual's transition from the military to security contracting.

The idea of security contractors as an epistemic community is a new approach in the existing literature and methodology on private security contractors. This approach aims to analyse the utility of knowledge, expertise and skill the individual developed in the military within the wider context of the PMSC industry as professionals. This chapter builds on Jones original, and initial, assertion of PMSCs as epistemic communities by demonstrating the professionalization of individual security contractors. This professionalization is a result of an industry that is beginning to stabilize in terms regulation, accountability and best practices and therefore the individual has sought to make security contracting a career in which they consider themselves to be a professional. I demonstrated not only do the

individuals themselves subjectively consider themselves as professionals based on the use of professional norms, but that the PMSC industry objectively affirms this trend by providing organised support to this group and exclusivity by requiring certain qualifications and standards as barriers to entry.

The theoretical framework picks up at this point of recognition by the individuals and the PMSC industry of the professionalization of the private security contractor to explain how this formal recognition becomes a part of the individual's transition from the military to civilian life. Transition theory was used to explain how the physical and socio-cultural environment of private security contracting might not force the individual to acknowledge or even 'feel' a transition taking place due to the similarity of environments between the military and contracting. It also provides a framework against which to compare the demographic data collected in this project to see whether while the individual is transitioning from the military they are also experiencing general life/age transitions, which can significantly affect the choices they make as they negotiate their identity leaving the military. Social identity theory was used to make two things clear. The first, Service leavers-turned-private security contractors rely on their former military identity to make value judgments about other security contractors with whom they work. This has a direct impact and influence on the development of social cohesion and camaraderie between security contractors – often the two most-stated reasons for becoming a security contractor, discussed later in this thesis. The second is to show that security contractors as a group display a set of distinctive attributes (language, attitudes, values) that keep them directly linked to their prior military experience and thus sustaining a particular identity different than that of a civilian. Social identity also provides the foundation for the individual's motive of what drives them or influences them to become a security contractor after military service – regardless of the length of time spent in civilian life between the two.

Motivation has been a recurrent interest in the popular literature on private security contractors, often seen as a 'sexy' subject. Franke and vom Boemcken deconstructed this sexiness, discussed in greater depth in the following chapters, with their survey on the motivations of former law enforcement personnel-turned-security contractors. Continuing, I used C. Wright Mills' conception of motive as vocabulary to underscore the significant influence language has on the individual's transition via security contracting. The theory of motive was also used to de-emphasise motivation as a tool of measurement for understanding security contractors, as it is highly subjective and not possible to empirically measure against a set of accepted or core human motives. Following from this argument, I consider network theory to provide empiricism where motivation cannot. Network theory

provides a useful framework in tracking the influence of others on the individual's decision to become a private security contractor. It also serves to enforce the social identity of security contractors by isolating the individual from civilian life and re-enforcing attitudes, values and beliefs developed and held from military service.

Using the literature from Chapter's 1 and 2, and the theories presented in this chapter, I designed this project using both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to answer the main research question. The next chapter presents the project's methodology.

Qualitative and Quantitative Methodology of the Project

4.1 *Introduction*

The purpose of this research project is to determine the role becoming a private security contractor after military service plays in the transition from the military to civilian life. Little is known about the private security contractor. Their socio-economic background, social networks, motives, or how becoming a security contractor and going to a similar environment⁴¹¹ they may have experienced as a soldier has yet been examined. Even their basic demographics are unknown. This project's approach to the individual security contractor is the first of its kind, despite emerging inquiry in this subject area. The methodology and data collected in this project address varying aspects of the individual's transition via security contracting that includes: time in civilian life between leaving the military and becoming a contractor, networks, motivation, and job engagement.

By suggesting security contractors as a 'transmigrants' in Chapter 1, this project considers the constant movement between the different environments of the military, civilian life and the quasi-military environment of security contracting. It is this movement that interested me in applying a transition theory-based framework in which to examine the individual's move from the military to civilian life and thus capturing the role of becoming a security contractor within this transition. The transition to civilian life has not shown in the published literature to be restricted by any certain period of time. The term 'transition' is used to define the movement or process by which the individual leaves the military and enters civilian life. An individual may transition over the course of a few months, a few years or some may report the transition has never ceased.

In the literature, military to civilian transition composed of two periods of time; the military as one period of time and civilian life as the other. In this thesis private security contracting is introduced as a third period of time within the military to civilian transition (for those that become security contractors). Security contracting provides a post-military labour market for veterans, but also an environment in which the individual has access to

⁴¹¹ This refers to both the physical environment for those that served in Iraq and Afghanistan, returning as security contractors and also the socio-cultural environment defined by camaraderie, language, structure and discipline.

military-like socio-cultural characteristics and norms that may affect their transition by not forcing the individual to adapt to a new environment like that if they had a conventional transition to civilian life.⁴¹²

The aim of this project's data collection and analysis is to understand the role security contracting plays in the individual's transition from the military to civilian life. This includes considering the influence of environmental continuity security contracting provides as a quasi-military environment, and also the motivations the individual had for joining the military and for later becoming a private security contractor. This comparison of motivation sheds light on whether the individual considers security contracting to be an institution in which they can receive certain awards (recognition, career mobility, i.e. promotion) or achieve certain things (development of skill and knowledge base, education, e.g. social mobility). Further, this project considers and collects data on the individual's social network as they began to think about becoming a security contractor, allowing for the consideration of the influence by social networks on the individual's decision-making. Building on the first academic survey of security contractors⁴¹³ this survey replicates some of the same categories used in the first survey in an effort to promote generalizability and reliability among this project's sample population, thus contributing to future research in this area.

To collect data I used both a survey and interviews. The reason for this approach was to develop a robust analysis of the individual contractor where the interviews conducted would be complemented by the wider security contractor population captured in the survey.⁴¹⁴ While all of the individuals I interviewed took and completed the survey, not everyone who completed the survey was interviewed. The interviews expansion upon the individual's transition and gave the individual time to think and speak through their remembered experience of transition, whereas the survey engaged the individual only for the time it took them to complete and was on a structured question and category basis. Open text boxes throughout the survey did give the survey participant an opportunity to relay their experience concerning a particular category (i.e. networks) or question uninhibited by 'Yes/No' and scaled answers.

⁴¹² Throughout military to civilian transition literature there is an emphasis on employment after military service for ESLs and also for retirees, for whom post-military employment is termed as a 'second career' which is examined by way of the effect of military service on earnings potential and the rates of employment for veterans in the civilian labour market.

⁴¹³ Franke and von Boemcken (2012)

⁴¹⁴ Within the restrictions of US and UK private security contractors with prior military service, and who speak English.

By collecting data from both the interviews and the survey a comprehensive picture of transition of transition emerged. All of the participants in this project – both survey and interviews – experienced two shared events: military service and military exit. Yet, as individuals the interviews presented distinct narratives on why they became security contractors and their perception of its role in their transition. This individuality prevented this project from delivering a simple generalisation of a particular group of people in which to use as a ‘catch all’ explanation as to why US and UK military veterans become security contractors. The significance of this is a detailed and thorough examination of a population of which little is known, contributing to the development of more robust scholarship on individuals whose employment is considered so controversial.

Currently, unofficial numbers put ‘Western’ native English-speaking security contractors at around 45,000.⁴¹⁵ This number includes individuals that within the last two years have been deployed on contracts as armed security contractors, and also individuals in PMSC databases.⁴¹⁶ The surveys and interviews in this project capture a portion of this population. Four identical surveys were distributed, including the Pilot Survey. Collectively the survey was sent to a total of 15,472 private security contractors. This survey is the biggest survey of security contractors to date in terms of the number of individuals it was sent to and the subject-area of transition, networks, motivation, warriorism, patriotism and job engagement.⁴¹⁷ It also has the highest response rate of all surveys to date on the security contractor population, although it was a low response rate in general⁴¹⁸, discussed further in Section 4.3.3.g ‘*Response Rate of Survey*’ of this chapter.

4.2 Approach – Grounded Theory

This project’s methodology is a mixed-method approach of both qualitative and quantitative data methods. This approach acknowledges the individual’s subjective experience of transition against the objectivity of the life-course and physiological transitions from one life stage to the next.

As an area previously not researched, this study found grounded theory to be appropriate for the examination of the interviews with military veterans-turned-private security contractors, where grounded theory is believed to be ‘the strongest case for use in

⁴¹⁵ See Chapter 1.

⁴¹⁶ Not all databases, but the few I had access to.

⁴¹⁷ In comparison to Volker Franke’s study where n=221, and Dunigan *et al*’s survey population where n=660.

⁴¹⁸ For what is considered within a ‘normal’ range in academic inquiry.

investigations of relatively uncharted waters.⁴¹⁹ In its conception, Glaser and Strauss defines grounded theory (GT) as ‘simply a set of integrated conceptual hypotheses systemically generated to produce an inductive theory about a substantive area.’⁴²⁰ A further reason for using grounded theory was the processes required by the theory where data collection, examination and analysis happen simultaneously, allowing me to develop the data discussion almost from the beginning of the project.⁴²¹ As the surveys and interviews were conducted collectively over a two year period the constant development of the data by way of coding, categorizing and concept formation was crucial to the discussion as a whole.⁴²² Especially of use as it allowed me to develop an explanation for the phenomenon of veteran-turned-security contractors continuously. The theory was particularly instructive in the ‘reductive’ process in which developed concepts and codes are organised categorically, which allows for the streamlining of data but also for linkages to be seen and highlighted throughout.⁴²³

Further, the use of GT for my interviews countered the subjectivity and the existence of some elusive truth claims as the result of ‘multiple explanations’ of the individual’s remembered experience. Because GT accepts the data ‘as it is’⁴²⁴ and requires examination of the data also, ‘as it is’ the processes of GT allow for the reduction of elusive truth claims by relying on the conceptualisation and categorization of experiences by a population. Specifically to this project this conceptualization against the backdrop of certain socio-cultural characteristics of the military and security contracting served as a frame of reference. Outliers are then identifiable and incorporated appropriately outside of the developed core concept and theory. The processes of GT can then allow the emergence of a ‘stream of events’ that ‘can be examined for patterns in occurrence of events, that is, stages in the process of development and implementation’⁴²⁵ which rests at the core of GT; ‘looking for processes which are going on in the social scene.’⁴²⁶

While the methodology in which the development of the veteran-turned-security contractor narrative could be confused or even interchanged with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) what distinguishes the method of this project so as not confused with IPA is not to discover, as is the aim of IPA, the common meanings of the

⁴¹⁹ Phyllis Noerager Stern (1980) ‘Grounded Theory Methodology: Its Uses and Processes’ *The Journal of Nursing Scholarship* Vol.12, No.1 (February 1980) pp20-23; p21

⁴²⁰ Barney G. Glaser with the assistance of Judith Holton (2007) ‘Remodeling Grounded Theory’ *Historical Social Research, Supplement* No.19, pp47-68; p47

⁴²¹ *Ibid* p21

⁴²² *Ibid* also see Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss (1967) ‘The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research’

⁴²³ *Ibid* p22

⁴²⁴ *Ibid*

⁴²⁵ Wildemuth ‘Post Positivist’ (1993) p451-454

⁴²⁶ Noerager Stern (1980) p20

‘world-as-experienced’ by the participants of a given phenomenon⁴²⁷ but to ‘explain a given social situation by identifying the core and subsidiary processes operating in it.’⁴²⁸ This contribution of identifying ‘core and subsidiary processes’ is not limited to qualitative data collection in this project, but also uses quantitative data to empirically support the developed concepts and theories resulting from the processes required in GT.

While ‘in the case of qualitative data, the explicit goal is description’⁴²⁹ quantitative data are traditionally employed as a method to make ‘judgments of the probability that an observed difference between groups is a dependable one or one that may have happened by chance’⁴³⁰ and so infers truths from a given data set. In contrast, descriptive statistics ‘simply describe what is or what the data shows.’⁴³¹ The survey is interpreted as descriptive statistics that support the analyses of the interview data.

4.3 *Strategy and Research Design*

4.3.1 *Research Questions*

To answer the main research question: ‘*what role does becoming a security contractor plays in the individual’s transition from the military to civilian life?*’ I developed and explain the below four research questions that guide the project:

- 1) Is becoming a private security contractor after military service a logical progression to civilian life – in terms transferable skills – for those with between one and six months in civilian life between the military and security contracting?
- 2) Does becoming a security contractor post-pone or delay the individual’s transition to civilian life for those with between one and six months in civilian life between the military and security contracting?
- 3) What role does the individual’s social network play in the decision to becoming a private security contractor after military service?

⁴²⁷ Cynthia Baker, Judith Wuest, Phyllis Noerager Stern (1992) ‘Method slurring: the grounded theory/phenomenology example’ *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 17, pp1355-1360; p1356

⁴²⁸ *Ibid* p1357

⁴²⁹ Glaser with Holton (2007) p47

⁴³⁰ Web Centre for Social Research Methods ‘Descriptive Statistics’ available at: <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/statdesc.php>

⁴³¹ *Ibid*

- 4) Does becoming a security contractor play a different role in the individual's transition between those who spent a short amount of time in civilian life between the military and contracting to those who spent a longer amount of time in civilian life?

The above four research questions serve to anchor the project. They are intentionally broad questions, allowing space for emerging themes and concepts to develop throughout the data collection process. This section addresses these four questions in greater detail. The reason for explaining these research questions is to develop a reference for the next Chapter where the collected data is presented.

Research Question 1:

Is becoming a private security contractor after military service a natural progression to civilian life for those with between one and six months in civilian life between the military and security contracting?

This question was developed directly from the literature on military to civilian transition where it has often been recorded that veterans tend to naturally gravitate towards other uniformed or security professions, e.g. prison guard or law-enforcement.⁴³² Between one and six months after the individual's military exit is the time at which the provision for government provided transition assistance is at its highest in terms of the amount of services offered to the Service leaver (ranging from CV writing, in-person workshops, interview techniques, etc.).⁴³³ Therefore, this is a crucial time in the individual's reintegration as the provision of these services then taper off or end completely depending on time served. Both the US and UK encourage preparation for military exit at the earliest stage possible, between twelve and twenty-four months, depending on time served.⁴³⁴ This question allows consideration for the individual's preparation (or lack thereof) of anticipated military exit⁴³⁵ and also what they perceive their career options or post-military employment to be. This question also addresses the perceived environmental continuity of security contracting to military service by the individual and whether this is influential in their decision in becoming a security contractor. It also addresses the concept of security contractors as an epistemic community, introduced in Chapter 2 of this thesis, where security contracting may be perceived as a viable career in which the individual can easily

⁴³² See discussion in Chapter 2

⁴³³ For a full discussion see Chapter 2

⁴³⁴ See Chapter 2

⁴³⁵ Anticipated exit was defined in the survey as the absence of sudden medical or dishonourable discharge, where the individual is aware they are exiting the military and know the approximate date/time of exit and will be honourably discharged.

transfer skills and capabilities from one to the other, and whether this becomes a profession by extension.

For career soldiers this question is particularly salient as the age in which US and UK career soldier exit (anywhere between 36 and 40 years old for both countries) as ‘even when technically qualifying for a pension, Service leavers are at an age and life stage that makes retirement a misleading term.’⁴³⁶ Further, ‘for most leavers, aged around forty, the pension is insufficient on which to live and commonly they will be married and have dependent children. It is also the case that individuals in this age range are expected to work, so perhaps, the language of a second career is more fitting.’⁴³⁷ This question further develops the concepts set out in Chapter 2 regarding the perceived professionalization of security contracting, the perception that it is a career-viable industry and whether it is natural next step for all Service leavers, regardless of time spent in civilian life between the military and contracting.

Another important aspect of transition, discussed in detail in Chapter 3, is the gap between the ‘anticipation and realisation’ of civilian life,⁴³⁸ often causing some frustrations or difficulties in the transition period. This question confronts this anticipation by considering what the Service leaver conceives civilian life to be to the extent becoming a security contractor is considered a natural progression from the military. This question addresses the perception the Service leaver has of civilian life in contrast to security contracting (both in terms of employment and social identity) and also the role they see security contracting playing in the immediate time after military exit in which to address these perceptions.

Research Question 2:

Does becoming a security contractor, for those with between one and six months in civilian life between the military and security contracting post-poned or delay the individual’s transition to civilian life?

Dealing again with those who spent a shorter amount of time in civilian life between leaving the military and security contracting, this question addresses whether becoming a contractor shortly after military exit means the individual does not experience their transition until they leave contracting for civilian life. This question uses the literature on

⁴³⁶ Walker (2012), p3

⁴³⁷ *Ibid*

⁴³⁸ E.C. Hughes (1958) ‘Men and their Work’ Free Press, Glencoe IL p126

transition within the life-course, discussed in Chapter 2, where the change or loss of roles, assumptions, attitudes and values is crucial to any transition.⁴³⁹ As roles, assumptions, attitudes and values are challenged when the individual is confronted with a change of environment, both physical and social, and the subsequent adaptation and adjustment of these roles, etc. allow the individual to deconstruct their old identity and reconstruct a new one. The physical (for some)⁴⁴⁰ and socio-cultural (for all) environmental continuity of the military to security contracting will not give the individual an environment in which their previous roles, assumptions, attitudes or values will be challenged to the extent – or even if at all – they may be in civilian life. Further, without this challenge provided by the environmental continuity of the military to security contracting the individual's military identity may remain largely intact in terms of socio-cultural characteristics, with little civilian influence. With little time in civilian life in which to adjust to environmental confrontations, the individual may not feel they are experiencing a transition or may acknowledge they have left the military but experience little to no environmental change forcing them to adjust their identity accordingly.

When the individual leaves security contracting for civilian life, they may then experience the confrontation they would have if they had not become a security contractor. Having spent time in a military-replicated environment like security contracting, yet not benefiting from the institution as one would as a regular soldier (e.g. social support, medical service support, etc.), the individual upon leaving security contracting is 'once-removed' from the military and may experience leaving the military for the first time, when in reality they have left a replicated structure and social identity of the military in the form of security contracting. This question is developed in the interviews by asking the individual to remember why they left the military, how they prepared for military exit, what the first few months was like, the appeal of security contracting and whether they felt, in light of our discussion, they have transitioned to civilian life.

Research Question 3:

What role does the individual's social network play in the decision to become a private security contractor after military service?

⁴³⁹ See Chapter 3

⁴⁴⁰ Physical environment denotes a physical environment or particular conflict, e.g. Iraq or Afghanistan. While prior operational experience is usually required for security contracting jobs, not all security contractors will have operational experience in the place to which they are deployed as a security contractor. For example some contractors will have experience in Northern Ireland, but not in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Social networks are influential, as research has shown and as discussed in Chapter 3. This question was developed for both the interviews and survey to collect empirical data in which to determine how prominent or influential the individual's social network was in deciding to become a security contractor after military service. While the decision can be explained, as Chapter 6 will show, by various drivers and not necessarily just one, using network theory to measure the size and type (strong or weak ties) of the individual's network gives an idea of how these individuals leave the military and enter security contracting. The individual's residual military network is often how the individual reported securing employment as a security contractor. By relying on their military social network to secure employment they also limit their exposure to civilian life and subsequently reintegration because they are relying on 'strong ties' – individuals who share a common social identity – that enforce the same roles, attitudes, assumptions and values as the individual. Staying actively connected to this residual military network reinforces the individual's prior military identity and gives no cause to construct a new one. Further these networks isolate the individual from civilian life and subsequently serve to isolate them from the development of skills and capabilities outside of their current knowledge and experience base formed in the military.

This question also addresses the discussion in some of the literature on security contractors concerning their motivation to become security contractors.⁴⁴¹ This question seeks to challenge assumptions made in this literature where economic motivation has so far been used to explain why individuals become security contractors. Instead, this question examines the influence exerted by the individual's social residual military network while relying on motivation as the contextual background. Further, it is a technical approach to understanding why veterans become security contractors, versus motivation which is difficult to prove, changes over time and, as C. Wright Mills' argued, is dependent upon vocabulary.⁴⁴²

Research Question 4:

Does becoming a security contractor play a specific role depending on the amount of time the individual spent in civilian life between military exit and becoming a security contractor?

This question considers the influence of time spent in civilian life between leaving the military and becoming a security contractor. This question supports questions 1 and 2

⁴⁴¹ See Chapter 1, 'Highlighting the Gap'

⁴⁴² See Chapter 2, 'Motive'

regarding security contracting as a natural progression for some with a shorter amount of time in civilian life. For those with a longer amount of time in civilian life this question considers the influence of socio-cultural characteristics perceived by the individual to be present in security contracting that remind them of or reconnects them to their past military experience. Further is what role these socio-cultural characteristics, perceived to be present in security contracting, play. For example, does the perception of camaraderie, or the adventure of overseas travel, the opportunity to be an 'operator' again give the individual feels of fulfilment, purpose and worth? In addition, is it a powerful motivator for becoming a security contractor after a longer period of time in civilian life? This question led me to split the survey into two groups based on participant response of the amount of time in civilian life to see whether the two groups viewed security contracting and their transition differently. This split addresses the institutionalisation of the individual. Again, most veterans do well in civilian life. Yet, as Jolly observed, for many the military will be a penultimate experience.⁴⁴³ Security contracting then may be a way to relive that ultimate experience and in doing so again feel a sense of belonging to something greater. For those with a shorter amount of time in civilian life the immediate experience in civilian life may be inconsequential to their transition for the reasons discussed in the preceding three research questions. This question really focuses on those who spent a longer amount of time in civilian life. In the interviews this meant exploring what type of employment the individual sought, if not security contracting, whether they enjoyed it and how they felt after years in civilian life; did they still identify with the military as the origin of their identity or had they resocialised where they considered themselves a civilian above everything else? It is not uncommon for the Service leaver to still consider themselves as soldiers years after military exit.⁴⁴⁴ For this particular group of participants that spent a longer amount of time in civilian life, becoming a security contractor may mean returning to an experience or a feeling they perceive becoming a security contractor can give to them. It may also indicate the individual has not fully transitioned and is using security contractor to address what may be an incomplete transition.

4.3.2 *Population*

As this research project aims to examine the individual private security contractor, it was only natural I collect data from the individuals themselves. While secondary sources of security contractor memoirs, newspaper articles or popular journals have provided valuable insight into the individual security contractor, the limited amount of academic engagement

⁴⁴³ Jolly (1996)

⁴⁴⁴ R.C. Yanos (2004) 'Perceptions of Adjustment to Civilian Life among Recently Retired Air Force Officers' (University of Maryland) PhD Thesis

with this population presented a gap in research. This oversight is odd considering the breadth and depth of the PMSC industry. Considered by the US and UK governments to be part of the ‘total force’,⁴⁴⁵ working in austere environments around the world,⁴⁴⁶ both in conflict, post-conflict and non-conflict environments,⁴⁴⁷ literature and research on PMSCs and those that work for them remain largely theoretical and conceptual. Much of this inquiry though is directly related to the behaviours and actions of those carrying out the contracts on the ground: security contractors and non-security contractors. The debate continues in both academia and government as to what contractors⁴⁴⁸ can and cannot do within international humanitarian law, how they interact with and their effect on host populations, their effect on military – civilian coordination and whether their functions, specifically in the case of armed contractors, are inherently governmental.

This project, though, does not address the greater conceptual and theoretical debates surrounding the use of contractors or the privatisation of security. Instead it focuses on the individual, seeking to offer a robust explanation of the individual by focusing on a specific sub-group of all contractors (US and UK; and military veterans) by way of their demographics and transition to civilian life.

While security contractors perform a variety of functions,⁴⁴⁹ capturing the entire security contractor population would not be feasible due to the size, geographic spread and the multitude of languages spoken in this overall population. Because of this I use the scope of only US or UK security contractors, for whom English was a native language, who had previously served in their state’s military. These restrictions ensure that in relation to background and nationality, the population was generalized and reliable. The commonality of prior military service means this project can compare this sample population against general the Service leaver population who did not become security contractors.

All of the participants in this study were restricted by their function as *armed* security contractors, to which I refer as ‘security contractors’ throughout this thesis. There are several reasons for choosing this restriction. First, most PMSCs will require security

⁴⁴⁵ Schwartz (2010)

⁴⁴⁶ Singer (2004)

⁴⁴⁷ For example, security of civilian installations like shopping centres, or even nuclear sites., or for major events as was seen with the UK government’s contract with PMSC G4S to provide security for the 2012 Olympics.

⁴⁴⁸ In this case it is not just security contractors under which remit is sought to be determined. As seen in the Abu Ghraib torture incident it was not armed security contractors but civilian interrogators working for PMSCs CACI International and Titan.

⁴⁴⁹ Functions include providing static, active and close protection security, intelligence and FINISH. For a full discussion see Christopher Kinsey (2006) and Peter Singer (2003).

contractors to possess prior knowledge, use of and certification⁴⁵⁰ for the use of arms. Further, this knowledge is often required in the form of as operational or combat experience in the military and or law-enforcement. This restriction meant that most security contractors contacted either for the interview or survey would have served in their state's military and/or law enforcement.

Second, security contractors working in hostile environments face a greater risk than other civilian occupations. As stated in Chapter 1, security contractors are four and a half times more likely to die in conflict than a regular soldier.⁴⁵¹ In conflicts they enjoy less support than the military in terms of protection, back up and medical services.⁴⁵² The element of risk is an important consideration to the scope of the population because it is something the individual will consider and weigh in their decision-making process to become a security contractor. It is important to note though that it is not always guaranteed the individual is/was aware of the risk before they became a security contractor. This specific point is addressed in the interviews exploring the expectations and the reality of becoming a security contractor, as relayed by the individual. This risk too may also be a socio-cultural characteristic the individual associates between the military and security contracting, where that element of risk gives the individual a feeling of 'being back in the game' and the re-entry into the environment is, as a result, highly satisfying. Risk also considers the lengths the individual is willing to go to either sustain or resurrect their prior military identity demonstrating the influence and impact this identity has on the individual's decision making.

The third reason for restricting this study to armed security contractors is that it restricts the population for whom past experience may be similar to the experience of being a security contractor. The environmental continuity between the military and contracting is what sets this post-military employment option apart from other civilian employment, and also challenges the traditional military-civilian transition by introducing a similar and familiar environment the individual experienced during military service as an area they may be exposed to as a part of their transition. The return to a familiar environment, for those who operated in Iraq or Afghanistan while serving in the military, also considers the role military exit preparation and planning play and therefore sheds light into whether the individual perceived the move to security contracting as a viable professional career or whether it was a type of 'stop-gap' while preparing for other employment. This reason is

⁴⁵⁰ For example an SIA weapons license.

⁴⁵¹ Schooner and Swan (2010)

⁴⁵² The need for medical services in hostile environments by contractors was specifically addressed in US Department of Defense's 'Inspector General Report on Military Treatment Facilities' 2009, where security contractors represented 33% of all outpatient visits in these facilities in Iraq, p3.

linked to the concept developed in Chapter 3 of the professionalization of security contracting and the development of security contractors as an epistemic community. Lastly it will address those who have spent time in civilian life and secured other civilian employment before becoming a security contractor.

To be eligible for either both the interview and/or the survey, participants:

- 1) had to have either prior military or law-enforcement service at some point before becoming a security contractor, and;
- 2) had ever been or currently were security contractors⁴⁵³ in a hostile environment after their military service, and;
- 3) had been on one or more contracts with a PMSC to a hostile environment, and;
- 4) spoke fluent English.

The conditions for eligibility were determined so the resulting population could be defined as sharing common experiences (military service, military exit and security contracting). The language requirement was one of practicality and as English is the spoken language of the PMSC industry.⁴⁵⁴

4.3.2.a *Participant Recruitment*

The participants for this study were obtained in several ways. First, I used the qualitative method 'chain referral sampling' known as 'snowballing' to develop Pilot Interview questions, which served as the basis for the subsequent survey. I did this by requesting initial and personally known security contractor contacts to put me in touch with other security contractors they knew. Once I had made contact with these referrals I asked them to further refer me to others they knew, whereby 'snowballing'.⁴⁵⁵ Civilians outside of the PMSC industry security contractors are wary to a degree, where they believe many civilians to consider them falsely as 'mercenaries'. This method particularly suited the participants of the study, as security contractors are a hard to reach population and the development of trust was essential in securing an interview. The method of snowballing granted access through referrals where one security contractor would 'vouch' for me and as

⁴⁵³ Which includes the requirement they were armed during these contracts and that being armed was a requirement for the job.

⁴⁵⁴ All 'Western' contractors are required to have a command of the English language, as well as Third Country Nationals (TCNs). It is unclear whether Local Nationals needed to fulfil this requirement, as interpreters would be present. It is informally known that most LNs do speak English.

⁴⁵⁵ Martin N. Marshall (1996) 'Sampling for Qualitative Research' *Family Practice* Vol.13, No.6, pp522-526, p523

a result I was considered for an interview by another, and so on and so forth. This method, though, is not without its drawbacks. The most common problem associated with ‘snowballing’ is maintaining the ‘chain’ itself, including:

- 1) Starting an initial referral chain;
- 2) Controlling the type of chain, and;
- 3) Verifying the eligibility of individuals within that chain.⁴⁵⁶

I address these drawbacks as follows. I had three referral chains in total. The first chain was a personal contact I knew personally that was a security contractor who then referred me on to other security contractors they had deployed with in Iraq. I did not interview the initial personal contact. From this particular referral chain I interviewed twelve security contractors, all of whom met the eligibility for participation as set out in the previous section. The second ‘chain starter’ was an individual who had read an article I had written for an online blog and got in touch with me via email. From this individual I interviewed seven security contractors, including the chain starter. The third chain was a result of a personal contact I knew who was not a security contractor but put me in touch with a security contractor who I interviewed. The total interviews done using the ‘snowball’ method was twenty. In this project I did not encounter difficulty in finding chain referral starters, although several declined to be interviewed in all three chains. This method does present the issue of bias among like-populations, e.g. those who previously served in the military together. However, as all three snowball chains began from different and unconnected sources, as well as the mix between those individuals had previously served with but do not work together on the same contract, I believe there is a wide enough distribution to offset bias among this population.

The requirements for participation eligibility in this study addressed the second two issues of controlling the chain and also verifying the individuals within that chain. While databases exist (discussed further on) of security contractors within the industry, security contractors work for corporations and/or companies, as such they are a population that are more centralised versus researching deviant populations like drug addicts or those who have committed crimes who are not in an institution⁴⁵⁷ who may be more difficult to reach in order to develop a sample population. Despite being contractual employees of one company or another and as such they are ‘traceable’ to a degree, security contractors can be

⁴⁵⁶ Patrick Biernack and Dan Waldorf (1981) ‘Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling’ *Sociological Research Methods* Vol.10, No.2 pp141-163; p144

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid* p144

considered what is called in sociological research a 'low social visibility population.'⁴⁵⁸ Although this is beginning to change, as discussed in Chapter 2, with the increasing number of security contractor organisations and associations. The challenge of low social visibility populations is developing a true representativeness of the sample. I addressed this by using three different referral chains, but also interviewing individuals from the survey who after taking the survey reached out to me via email wishing to be in further contact.⁴⁵⁹ From here I requested interviews and as a result of the survey conducted twenty-four interviews.

Because individuals often referred me to those they served in the military with whom they knew now to be security contractors, I was able to verify eligibility. Otherwise individuals would refer other security contractors they worked with and I would verify their eligibility by asking their background. I did not triangulate the eligibility of the interviewees for two reasons. One, I did not see how I could. All of the interviews were granted on conditions of anonymity preventing me from confirming with their PMSC employer or the military their current status as a security contractor or their previous military service. Second, I did not feel that the method of chain referral for this project required verification to the degree it would undermine the project or call in question those whom I interviewed. As the interviews addressed why the individual joined the military and remembering their past experiences they were required to have a variable knowledge of both military service and security contracting which was verifiable in the literature of both the military and security contracting.

Control of the referral chain is 'exercised in an attempt to ensure that the sample includes an array of respondents that, in qualitative terms, if not rigorous statistical ones, reflect what are thought to be the general characteristics of the population in question.'⁴⁶⁰ For this project this meant interviewing and surveying both US and UK military veterans, from all class and racial backgrounds, geographic areas and occupations in civilian life if applicable.⁴⁶¹ As there are a disproportionate number of men to women in security contracting I was not concerned with gender in the sense of getting an equal amount of women and an equal amount of men. The main concern was to understand the experience of transition from the individual's point of view. Where referrals led me to individuals who did not satisfy the eligibility requirements they were thanked for their time and no interview was conducted. The same approach held for the survey.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid* p145

⁴⁵⁹ The survey solicitation text included my contact information and email address, along with both of my supervisors email addresses, in the event the individual wanted to speak with me further or to verify the survey as legitimate.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid* p155

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid*

The survey was sent to two PMSC databases within two PMSC recruitment and consultant agencies, one in the UK and one in the US, and a PMSC all on the condition of anonymity, to include both the company and the individuals. I found the UK agency through my research network at King's College, where I explained the aim of the survey, the population I was interested in reaching and the type of survey questions. This led to developing a relationship with the UK agency where I was able to send the survey through them. The survey and the survey solicitation text were approved by the Human Resources Department of the UK agency as well as the agency owner. Access to their database was contingent on the UK agency sending out the survey and survey solicitation text on my behalf to their database, from their internal email system versus me sending to their database from my King's email address. In order to access the specific population of 'security contractors' the agency cross-referenced their database for individuals who were eligible to secure employment as security contractors (in this case possessing current weapons license and other various certifications). There was no way to further cross-reference by past military service. This was managed by making the initial question of the survey determine eligibility to participate based on the type of experience the individual had (military, law enforcement or neither).

The second database was based in the US and like the UK method the survey and survey solicitation were sent out on my behalf by the agency. The survey and survey solicitation text were also reviewed and approved by the Human Resources Manager and the agency owner. The US agency also could not account for specific qualifications such as prior military experience, but again this was addressed in the first question of my survey.

The third distributor of the survey was a PMSC who specialised in contracts that provided security contractors to a variety of clients, with significant contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Like the first two agencies, the PMSC's Human Resources and Legal Department reviewed and approved of the survey and survey solicitation text. Unlike the first two, in this case I was given an in-house email address from the PMSC and was allowed to send the survey from that address. This helped relieve the PMSC from the many responses received as a result of individual's replying to the survey distribution email, which for the other two survey distributors was the Human Resources Manager.

All three survey distributors are well known among the PMSC industry and whose services are clearly provided both on their website and marketing materials as being entities that specialise in the provision armed security services in hostile environments. As the PMSC's remit include countries around the world with security services available for

hostile environments, extractive industry, close protection, post-conflict reconstruction, and training I determined this PMSC to be representative of the industry, including their employees. For the two agencies, they provide personnel for PMSCs, organisations or individual requiring security contractors also around the world in varying in environments. Because of this I qualified them as being representative of the industry.

The population of these three distributors is as follows, with the corresponding number representing the number of individuals to whom the survey was sent, *not* the number who completed the survey:

- 1) [Anonymous] US Agency: 7,172
- 2) [Anonymous] UK Agency: 8,110
- 3) [Anonymous] PMSC: 460

The total to which the survey was sent was 15,472 security contractors.⁴⁶²

4.3.2.b *Conditions of Participation*

For both the surveys and interviews all participants agreed to participate on the condition of full anonymity. I agreed to this condition as anonymity can often produce richer, unrestricted results. Further anonymity allowed access to a larger population of security contractors whereas if anonymity was not a condition, the study may have resulted in limited or no access to this population.

4.3.2.c *Informed Consent and Confidentiality of Survey and Interview*

All interview participants were given an 'Information and Consent and Confidentiality Sheet' approved by the King's Research and Ethics Committee, approval number WSG/10/11-39. The Information and Consent Sheet provided the aims and details of this research project, as well as a confidentiality sheet the individual was required to sign and date before the interview took place. The Information and Consent Sheet contained the following:

- aims of the research and possible benefits
- intended recruitment population (security contractors)

⁴⁶² Again, not all of these individuals had military or law enforcement experience, and they were filtered out in the initial survey questions. This number is the total number of security contractors – regardless of background – to whom the survey was sent.

- how the interviews will be conducted
- any known risks of participation
- arrangements for ensuring anonymity and confidentiality including the Data Protection Act 1992, and
- name and contact details of the researcher and the researcher's two supervisors

To ensure anonymity of the individuals I assigned each individual a number, and encrypted the 'contractor key.' In the data discussion in Chapter 6 I have given the interviewees pseudonyms. All interview participants agreed to this process before the interview took place. When requesting interviews I made it clear the interviews were recorded, and again sought written confirmation via email before the interview took place, along with again asking the individual to give their consent to the interview being recorded before I turned on the call recorder. The participants were made aware they could ask me to turn the recorder off at any time during the interview for any reason. This option was not exercised in any of the interviews.

For survey participants it was made clear in the survey solicitation text that by clicking on the survey link/URL the individual was giving informed consent to participate in the survey.

4.3.2.d *Survey Instrumentation*

The survey was designed and hosted by the online software 'Survey Monkey.' This software platform allowed me to bifurcate the survey, utilize question piping (where the individual is routed to the next question depending upon their answer to the proceeding question), and the use open text boxes and a variety of data analysis tools.⁴⁶³ The online platform produced a unique URL that I was able to distribute to the survey respondents and the data collected was secured and encrypted on the website itself.

The disadvantages of using an online platform included not everyone having access to the internet,⁴⁶⁴ possible participants being suspicious about the administration and confidentiality of the survey⁴⁶⁵ and various technical troubles that arise from using online

⁴⁶³ For example, the software allowed me to 'cross-tab' the various surveys based on certain characteristics, e.g. age, sex, or time spent in the military. This made a strong contribution to the collected data as various linkages and relationships emerged as a result of this tool.

⁴⁶⁴ L. Gjestland (1996) 'Net? Not yet' *Marketing Research* Vol.8, No.1 pp26-39

⁴⁶⁵ C.B. Smith (1997) 'Casting the net: Surveying an Internet population' *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication* Vol.3, No.1 pp77-84

software.⁴⁶⁶ These drawbacks have the potential to affect the response rate, but the benefits of using an online survey platform for this population outweigh these drawbacks. In general the benefits of using an web-based survey is a time and cost-effective alternative to paper surveys,⁴⁶⁷ the convenience of accessibility where the survey can be taken at any time and any place the individual has an internet connection,⁴⁶⁸ and the lack of restriction of time the individual is allowed so that they may take the survey at their own leisure.⁴⁶⁹ Specifically for this population the use of a web-based survey overcame the geographic limitations and the survey was accessed and taken from countries around the world at varying times of the day during the time that the survey was available.

Some disadvantages specific to this project's use of an online survey is the unknown frequency of how often an individual checks the email address given to either of the two agencies of the PMSC, some may have received the email after the survey had passed. Or, some email addresses that were in use when the individual first signed up with the company were no longer in use and now defunct, in addition to the possibility of the email going into the individual's 'spam' folder. For both the PMSC and the agencies, there were numerous 'kick back' emails received which indicated this latter point of many now-defunct email addresses.

4.3.2.e Length of Survey Data Collection Period

Each survey was in the field for 90 days, over which time (overall) 1,774 individuals accessed the survey. In all, 1,634 were eligible to participate based on the qualifying questions and 1,516 individuals completed the full survey, comprising both individuals with prior military and law-enforcement experience. The drop out rate was due to lack of qualifying conditions on behalf of the participant, e.g. did not have military and/or law-enforcement experience. These individuals fell outside of the scope of this study and were thus not examined.

4.3.2.f Predicted Non-response Rate of Survey

Demographics are often used in predicting the non-response rate of a survey. In general women are more likely than men to take and complete a survey, also those with higher socio-economic backgrounds that include a higher level of education and personal wealth

⁴⁶⁶ Linda J. Sax, Shannon K. Gilmartin and Alyssa N. Bryant (2003) 'Assessing Response Rates and Nonresponse Bias in Web and Paper Surveys' *Research in Higher Education* Vol.44, No.4 pp409-429

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid* p410 and D. A. Dillman (2000) 'Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method' 2nd ED.) John Wiley and Sons, New York

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid* p410

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid* p410

(i.e. able to own a personal computer and have internet access) are also more likely to access and complete surveys, and those who are younger (20s to 30s) are most likely to complete surveys.⁴⁷⁰

In contrast, the population to whom I sent the survey was predominantly male, had some college but no educational degree and were between the ages of 40 and 55 years old. Further, middle aged males serving in the military are also the least likely population to access or complete a survey. By extrapolation of the individual's past military service and the nature of security contracting with which wariness is already present, as previously mentioned, I expected a larger non-response rate in general as opposed to doing a survey on a high socially visible population, e.g. college students.

4.3.2.g *Response Rate of Survey*

The overall response rate of the survey was 9.8%. This rate was due to several factors. The first is that private security contractors are a low visibility population and difficult to reach, both geographically and socially. Second, due to the nascent nature of inquiry on the individual security contractor there is not yet an established and trusting relationship between the population and academia, as say military populations and academia.⁴⁷¹ The emails I received in response to my survey, wanting to verify who I was and that what I was doing was 'legitimate', 'academic' and to ensure I was not a journalist supports the yet fully developed researcher-population relationship. Third, the demographics of this cohort in terms of age, gender and prior occupation of military service are widely recognized within quantitative research as individuals least likely to take or complete surveys.

Despite the relatively low response rate, the data collected remains significant as an original contribution to academia, based on the number of people who were accessed by the survey, the type of data collected and sample size representing the largest dataset on this population to date. This thesis does not make robust claims based on this response rate that this cohort is a representative sample of the entire security contracting population. Regardless it is a significant contribution to the literature simply due to the overall size of the responder sample. Further, because of original data collection this study identifies a number of heretofore unexamined issues for future research to confirm the

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid* p420-423

⁴⁷¹ An example of this established relationship is the King's Centre for Military Health Research in which the centre has an active and strong relationship with the UK's Ministry of Defence, allowing access to data from which to do studies on issues like education, earnings potential and mental health.

representativeness of the population first introduced here. Low response rate, though, does not ‘necessarily suggest a bias is present.’⁴⁷² This is discussed next.

4.3.2.h *Non-Response Bias*

There are two types of non-response in a survey; total nonresponse where ‘individuals fail to return the survey at all, and ‘unit’ or ‘item’ nonresponse that indicates the survey was returned incomplete.’⁴⁷³ This brief section focuses on total nonresponse of the survey, addressing whether those who did not take the survey are different than those who did take the survey.⁴⁷⁴

I addressed non-responder bias in two ways. Due to the method by which the survey was disseminated through the two PMSC agencies I was limited in sending requests to those who did not access the survey to inquire why and to further access some basic demographics about these non-responders for the purpose of representativeness. The limitation arose from both the agencies concern with exhausting their database with multiple emails, especially those who had completed the survey to be contacted several times again as those who responded and those who had not could not be identified to avoid repetitive communication. Despite this limitation I was able to contact directly those non-responders where I had a specific email address through the PMSC, which is the first method I used to address the survey’s non-response bias. These additional emails requesting those who did not take the survey to explain their reasons for doing so resulted in little information from limited replies. The responses were largely attitudinal confirming the wariness of any type of inquiry, regardless of its nature. Further there were several responses alluding to a type of condescension felt by some individuals as to an academic studying them, projecting a perception of the researcher by the individual to be in an ‘ivory tower’ and ‘out of touch’ thinking I was ‘high and mighty.’ These responses were few and far between.

The second method of addressing the non-responder bias was to compare my demographic results with the academic surveys done so far on this population. By comparing the demographics from this survey to Volker Franke and Marc von Boemcken’s survey of security contractors⁴⁷⁵ and the RAND Corporation’s survey on contractors⁴⁷⁶ I was able to

⁴⁷² *Ibid* p412

⁴⁷³ J.R. Fraenkel and N.E. Wallen (1993) ‘How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education’ 2nd Eds. McGraw Hill, New York

⁴⁷⁴ Sax *et al* (2003) p411

⁴⁷⁵ Franke and von Boemcken (2011); Dunigan *et al* (2013)

⁴⁷⁶ The RAND Corporation survey was designed to capture all contractors, across a range of functions. Respondents of this survey included civilian truck drivers who worked in Iraq or

confirm that my survey population was similar to these two previous surveys in terms of basic demographics: gender, age and education.

4.3.3 *Survey Design*

The survey was developed using the existing literature on military – civilian transition, theories of transition (as covered in Chapter 3), identity and networks. The Pilot Interviews were crucial in informing the survey as the feedback allowed me to develop additional question and/or edit current survey questions.

The survey consisted of a combination of: ‘yes/no’ questions, five five-point numerical Likert scales (explained further in this chapter) and open text boxes. All eligible survey participants answered a series of questions over the following categories/themes of: demographics, transition, networks, career engagement and attitudes and values. I chose these themes and categories as asking questions beyond the individual’s transition would help in developing a more robust picture of the individual and the role they perceive security contracting to play in their transition to civilian life. I also chose the themes and categories to align with this project’s theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 2. The theories then are referenced throughout the project and are relied upon for the explanation of the data in Chapter 6.

The survey also includes five five-point ‘Likert’ scales, which is a technique to measure the attitudes and values of the survey respondent by which the respondent chooses from between five to seven answers that best describe how the individual feels.⁴⁷⁷ Likert scales are the ‘most universal method for survey collection’ and are ‘easily understood’ by survey respondents.⁴⁷⁸ While the scale allows the individual a range of responses (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) it cannot account for the full range of attitudes as the respondent can only choose one answer and that rigidity means that the respondents true attitude is not necessarily their answer.⁴⁷⁹ This limitation is addressed in this project by using the same five five-point Likert scales as used in Franke and von Boemcken’s study on former law-enforcement personnel-turned-security contractor in an effort to compare and boost the reliability and representativeness of the security contractor population. An

Afghanistan and maritime security contractors, for a few examples. Security contractors also took this survey and they were ‘cross tabbed’ in the data analysis, presented in the report, and thus I was able to build on the generalizability of this sample population.

⁴⁷⁷ R. Likert (1932) ‘A technique for the measurement of attitudes’ *Archives of Psychology* Vol.22, No.140

⁴⁷⁸ Nicole LaMarca (2011) The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using a Likert Scale ‘Field Research in Organizational Psychology’

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid*

explanation of each attitudinal Likert scale is below in sub-section 4.3.2.e *Attitudes and Values*.

4.3.3.a *Demographics*

The demographics section was the first section of the survey the participant completed. The individual was directed to this initial section after affirmatively answering whether they had prior military service and if they had been at one time or currently were security contractors who have worked in hostile environments. The demographics captured data on the individual's: age, gender, highest level of education, nationality, length of military service, country and branch of military service and rank at the time their service ended. Further was whether the individual had combat experience when serving in the military. Those not of US or UK nationality were categorized as 'other' and their nationalities given in Chapter 5.

Demographics are an important part of this study for two reasons. The first is no comprehensive demographic data on the security population exists in academic scholarship. As a result this data is an original contribution to the literature and what is known about security contractors. Second, demographic data can explain and/or indicate the existence of certain relationships. For example this type of data can show that individuals of a certain age are more likely to become security contractors than those of other ages. This is useful as this data can be analysed against the theories of transition and whether what the individual experienced during this age may have any correlation to their decision to become a security contractor. An example of this was discussed earlier regarding career soldiers who will exit around the age of forty and will think about their transition to civilian life not as a 'retirement' *per se* but as the time to begin a second career.⁴⁸⁰

4.3.3.b *Transition*

The category of transition served as the core category of the survey. Within the transition section of the survey I bifurcated the survey into two identical surveys for the entire transition section. The bifurcation was dependent on the amount of time the individual spent in civilian life between leaving the military and becoming a security contractor. Those who spent up to six months in civilian life became their own set of respondents and those who spent longer than six months in civilian life became another set. The reason for bifurcating this category into two sections was to determine if time in civilian life showed any significance between the two groups. It also was cross-referenced against the

⁴⁸⁰ See Chapter 3

demographic data to see who was more likely to spend less time in civilian life (age, education, rank and time spent in the military) to those who spent longer in civilian life (age, education, rank and time spent in the military). The reasoning for the specific time periods was that up to six months after military exit is a particularly unstable time for the individual, regardless of pre-exit preparation, as they grapple with resocialisation by way of deconstructing an old identity and constructing a new one. It is also the time the amount of government offered transition services are at their highest for all lengths of time served. If the individual has access to a high level of support and decides over other civilian employment to become a security contractor, what role does this play in their transition and are they considered to be transitioning by the rapid entry into a similar environment to that of the military? Further, transition is a gradual process for many so the first six months can often be ones when reality has not necessarily 'sunk in.'⁴⁸¹ On the other hand information from reading soldier memoirs, blogs, articles, veteran support websites and organisation and listening to podcasts gave the impression that the initial stage is experienced as a bit of a 'shock' and this is the time during which individuals felt most hopeful about securing other civilian employment. It was after six months that information from these sources indicated that reality 'set in' and this was the time when they began to transition.

Cross-referencing both sets of respondents against the demographic data allowed a picture to emerge of who was, again, more likely to spend less or more time, but also to extrapolate assumptions of when the individual would experience their transition, and what role security contracting played in the transition. This bifurcation was largely experimental, prompted by the transition experiences reported by veterans themselves. Chapter 6 will address the significance of these two time periods in relation to the individual's transition via security contracting. Following the first section of 'Transition' the respondents answered the remaining survey sections with no bifurcation of time in civilian life.

4.3.3.c *Networks*

This section sought to determine the properties of the individual's social network before they became a contractor. The term 'properties' refers to the type of network connection: former military colleague, former military acquaintance, friend/non-military, friend/military, family/non-military, family/military. The questions of this section took the individual through the process by which they found their first security contracting job

⁴⁸¹ Rich Moran (2011) 'The Difficult Transition from Military to Civilian Life' Pew Research Social and Demographic Trends December 8, 2011 available at: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/12/08/the-difficult-transition-from-military-to-civilian-life/> accessed on October 18, 2013.

by asking how they began this process, who they knew, and how and when they knew them.⁴⁸² By building the individual's network in this way I was able to see if there were particular 'nodes' where they knew many former military colleagues who were now security contractors that they reported assisted the individual in getting the job.

Further, this was a way to measure whether the individual's social network was strong or weak in terms of who was in the network, e.g. only former military colleagues and friends, or a combination of properties. This design allows me to rely heavily on the theoretical framework from Chapter 2 in making assumptions or extrapolations based on what the networks look like from the individual's surveyed. For example, if the individual knew three or more people – the threshold by which network theory is posited to exert the most influence over decisions and behaviour⁴⁸³ – who were security contractors before they became one and these individuals they knew were from their prior military network I can make the argument that the network exerted some level of influence over the individual in becoming a security contractor. Further I can support the argument I make in this thesis that security contracting reinforces a particular social identity by the individual being around known and like-others. The proximity to the individual of these known and like-others supports the argument there exist socio-cultural characteristics in security contracting that make it different from other civilian employment. Therefore it represents an employment option in the labour market that is different from other civilian employment after military service, confirming security contracting as a third dimension to the military – civilian transition. It also fosters and sustains a social identity that emerges from remaining within the individual's prior military social network after they leave the military. The exposure, then, to civilians is thus limited, which is argued in this thesis as a means by which the individual's transition to civilian life via security contracting is delayed and/or postpones as a result of contracting.

These networks, depending on the properties that emerge from the data, will contribute to the hypothesis put forth in this thesis that security contracting provides environmental continuity proceeding military service. Further this section challenges some aspects of network theory regarding the influence of strong and weak ties, as discussed in Chapter 2. Network theory states that in regards to job seeking it is an individual's weak ties that are the most valuable. This means friends of friends, etc. Yet, in this thesis strong ties are assumed to secure employment as a security contractor for the individual, challenging the theory that there exist some exceptions, specifically military veterans who use their strong ties to secure employment as security contractors.

⁴⁸² For the Networks section of the survey see Appendix X

⁴⁸³ Christakis and Fowler (2009)

4.3.3.d *Career Engagement*

Security Contracting as a long-term career

The questions addressing security contracting as a long-term career revolved around questioning whether the individual had planned or prepared for their career after security contracting. This included asking whether the respondent viewed security contracting as a long or short term career, whether they had thought about the impact security contracting had on their family and friends (separation for periods of time and risk), and whether security contracting was stepping stone in preparation for another career or whether it represented a career in and of itself and one which the respondent planned on doing for a long time.

This theme directly addresses whether the individual considers security contracting to be a profession in which they see a viable long-term career. This data will use the discussion and concept put forth in Chapter 2 as security contractors as an epistemic community.

Job Engagement (Likert Scale)

I included the same Likert scale 'Job Engagement' used in Franke and von Boemcken's study because it allowed me to collect data on the commitment the respondent has to security contracting and further addresses the professionalization of security contracting. The description given of the category used by Franke and von Boemcken is given here:

'Psychological research has shown that individuals who view their job as an integral part of their identity will feel a personal commitment to doing well, and consequently tend to perform better. To get a sense of their job engagement, respondents were asked about their commitment to and investment in their job and their investment in their job performance.'⁴⁸⁴ I added one statement to this scale 'I feel recognized by my [PMSC] employer' as the loss of recognition is a significant issue reported by Service leavers in the transition to civilian life. This additional statement measured whether the individual received any recognition during their employment for their work by their employer.

⁴⁸⁴ Franke and von Boemcken (2011) p7

4.3.3.e *Attitudes and Values (Likert Scales)*

The 'attitudes and values' theme of the survey was copied from Franke and von Boemcken's survey on former law-enforcement personnel-turned-security contractors that use four five-point Likert scales to measure the respondents 'motive', 'warriorism', 'patriotism' and 'job engagement.' The inclusion of 'motive' was to underpin a main theme of discussion in this thesis regarding the process by which a Service leaver becomes a security contractor. 'What motivated you?' is an obvious question, but one I argue does not shed rigorous light on the individual from which to draw conclusions of the population as a whole. The motivations provide context, but again, not clarity. The scale, despite its limited applicability, was to further the representativeness of the population building on the empirical data produced by Franke and von Boemcken. It is also used in Chapter 6 to provide context and contrast to the themes produced from the interviews as why Service leavers became security contractors.

The use of 'warriorism' within this theme was to measure the respondent's expectations of their role as a security contractor in a hostile environment. Further was to measure their beliefs for the role of conflict and combat to see whether these align with common attitudes among military populations or if security contractors were outliers with extreme attitudes on conflict.

'Patriotism' was also included in this theme to address the extension by which the individual saw security contracting as a social contract between them and their country, which is the basis for civil military relations as a regular or reserve soldier. This has relevance for how the individual sees contracting within their career trajectory, and again to measure whether this population is an outlier of civil-military relations and whether they believed certain actions appropriate. This addresses the professionalization of security contracting falling under the theme of ethical and appropriate behaviour.

I have used the explanations given by Franke and von Boemcken for the below categories, as directly quoted from their text.

Warriorism

'In his classic 1957 analysis of 'The Soldier and the State', Samuel Huntington found that soldiers typically believed in the permanence, irrationality, weakness, and evil in human nature and argued that the traditional warrior believed in the inevitability of war, tended to be sceptical of international law and organisations as effective instruments for preventing

war and only hesitantly accepted civilian control over armed forces. Respondents were asked for their attitudes toward the military's warfighting and peacekeeping roles, their own expectation to fight in a war and the personal satisfaction they expected to gain from participating in warfighting and peacekeeping missions.⁴⁸⁵

Patriotism

'National attachment and patriotic motivations have been primary reasons for young people to pursue military careers and for enlisted personnel to make sense of their mission assignments. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements concerning their allegiance and loyalty to their home state and their attitudes toward serving and fighting for their country.'⁴⁸⁶

4.3.3.f Expected Quality of the Collected Survey Data

I expected the quality of the collected data to be excellent, with 5% of the questions to be interpreted by the respondent to be problematic due to vague or non-descriptive writing. The following questions are those I considered problematic and why:

Question No.19 [Section: Transition] Please rank the following statement on the scale provided: 'Leaving the military marked a significant event in my life' [Answer options: Strongly Agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly Disagree]

This question is problematic because I did not define what 'significant' meant. The respondent's answers therefore may not be representative or indicate what the individual actually meant, as significant could have been positive or negative, among many other emotions. As a result the data from this question may not be consistent with other answers in the survey.

Question No.21 [Section: Transition] Please rank the following statement on the scale provided: 'Leaving the military had a noticeable POSITIVE impact on my life' [Answer options: Strongly Agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly Disagree]

The words 'positive' and 'impact' were not defined in the question prompt. Therefore, the respondent may have answered the question based on their person and varying

⁴⁸⁵ Franke and von Boemcken 2011 p7

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid* p7

interpretations of what ‘positive’ and ‘impact’ meant to them. As a result the data from this question may not be consistent with other answers in the survey.

Question No.22 [Section: Transition] Please rank the following statement on the scale provided: ‘Leaving the military had a noticeable NEGATIVE impact on my life’ [Answer options: Strong Agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly Disagree]

The words ‘negative’ and ‘impact’ were not defined in the question prompt. Therefore, the respondent may have answered a question based on their interpretation of what ‘negative’ and ‘impact’ meant. As a result, this question is problematic and the answers received may not be consistent with other answers in the survey.

4.3.4 Interview Design

The interviews represent the qualitative method of this project. I interviewed 44 private security contractors out of 72 interviews requested in total.⁴⁸⁷ Of this 72, 13 declined to be interviewed. The remaining 15 agreed to be interviewed but due to scheduling, travel on behalf of the potential interviewee and lack of or poor quality of the internet connection an interview never took place. Saturation of information in qualitative research is thought to occur on average between twenty-three and twenty-four interviews.⁴⁸⁸ Saturation means that no new information is contributed as a result of additional data collection where the hypotheses need further explanation.⁴⁸⁹ The forty-four interviews conducted in this project are sufficient to satisfy the approach required by Grounded Theory and I believe a level of saturation was reached.

⁴⁸⁷ It should be noted that I did face a significant loss of data when my laptop on which my interviews were recorded, transcribed and stored was stolen in June of 2013 from the Department of War Studies PhD workroom at King’s College London. Hesitant to have multiple copies of this material and perhaps naïve I had only one copy, not wanting the various interviews on different machines or in different places in an effort to ensure confidentiality and secure data storage. In total, I lost 23 interviews and their corresponding transcripts. I immediately reported the incident to the King’s College Ethical Approval office on June 12, 2013 and also to the Legal Compliance manager on June 19, 2013 whereby I was able to submit a police report. It was determined because the interviews were only assigned a number and the ‘contractor key’ was not stored on the same device, there was no way for the individual to be linked to their interview transcript, and subsequently would not be reported to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO). The Manager filed an internal report stating as much. However I kept in my possession the notes from the interview and was able to still develop themes and coding from these notes absent the verbatim transcripts.

⁴⁸⁸ Noerager Stern (1980) p22

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid* p22

While prior scholarship on the PMSC industry and of security contractors has relied on interviews, the number of interviews of security contractors used in this project represent the largest to date of studies on the individual private security contractor.

I designed the interview to be semi-structured where I had developed a set of thematic questions, but allowed for deviation from these questions if an interesting avenue of thought was being discussed and let the individual narrate their story using the questions as prompts for each theme. The categories and themes are as follows, in the same order used in the interviews:

- 1) Demographics
- 2) Military experience
 - a. Why they joined
 - b. What they liked/disliked about military service
 - c. Why they left military service
- 3) Transition
 - a. Preparation/planning
 - b. Feelings or experiences in particular remembered about their transition
- 4) Process of becoming a security contractor
 - a. When they first heard about contracting
 - b. Social network (how many people did they know)
- 5) Security contracting
 - a. Expectations versus realities
 - b. How it has benefitted them
 - c. Likes/dislikes
 - d. Its role in their transition
- 6) Interview wrap up
 - a. Most memorable experience as a security contractor
 - b. Anything missed in the interview, given the topic that should have been covered.
 - c. Additional comments/goodbye.

These themes and categories were developed from the literature on military to civilian transition as well as four Pilot Interviews. These Pilot Interviews were secured by using security contractors known to me. While this may impose a certain degree of bias, the Pilot Interviews were representative of the later interview population as a whole. It was from these Pilot Interviews that I developed the survey themes and categories.

The interviews lasted anywhere between 30 and 90 minutes and were recorded. An explanation of the survey instrumentation is below. The questions within the themes and categories was designed to develop a chronological narrative so the individual was able to tell their 'story' in a coherent manner. By asking the individual take a minute and first remember why they joined the military in the first place allowed the interviewee to get into the mindset of reflection and remembering past experiences. This approach also led to coherence when remembering the individual's military exit, transition and then security contracting as the discussion on exit and transition lead most interviewees naturally into the appeal of contracting and how they found the job. The question about their past experiences and reasons for why the individual made certain decisions required a good deal of reflection and the semi-structured nature of the interview allowed for pauses or tangential discussions before the interviewee was led back to the interview topic. An example of this was an interview where the individual in describing the environment of security contracting began to discuss certain things that displeased him that led him to a theoretical discussion about how things should be. Questions reminding him about security contracting and what he liked led him back to the focus of the environment and the interview moved forward.

4.3.4.a *Interview Instrumentation*

I conducted 45 interviews over Skype, the online calling platform and used the recording software 'Call Recorder' to record and save the calls. Skype was an appropriate instrument because it removed the geographic restrictions and allowed me to interview security contractors around the globe. In addition it meant I could interview the individual when it was best for their schedule, which included some individuals who were currently on contracts and some who were not. As a result I interviewed individuals in Iraq, Afghanistan, United States and locations outside of London around the UK. Once the call was recorded it was saved to Quicktime player and password protected.

While Skype has an option for video calls, no video was used in any of the interviews. The reason for this was to remove the bias of body language in which the interviewee could be given extra sources of information when none was needed.⁴⁹⁰ The drawbacks of using this instrumentation meant that there was a reduction in visual social cues that can create a good 'interview ambience' yet the social cues provided by tone and intonation I believed to

⁴⁹⁰ Raymond Opdenakker 'Advantages and Disadvantages of Interview Techniques in Qualitative Research' *FQS* Vol.7, No.4 pp; p5

be sufficient.⁴⁹¹ I found with no video the individual came across as uninhibited where they could pause and take time to answer a question. This method I felt provided a richer more authentic narrative of the individual's remembered experience.

The remaining three interviews took place in person, two in California and one in London. In all three of these instances I used a hand held recorder, from which I then transcribed the interview transcript.

4.3.4.b *Interview Objectives*

The aim of the interview was to develop a narrative of the individual's trajectory from when they first joined the military through their military exit and transition to security contracting. From this narrative codes and linkages would be developed and analysed to confirm or disprove the hypotheses set out in Chapter 1 and also to answer the four research questions set out in the beginning of this Chapter. Overall the aim was to answer the question whether security contracting played a role in the individual's transition from the military to civilian life. I had four objectives for the interviews to maintain focus on the overall aim of the project.

- 1) Determine why the individual chose private security contracting over civilian employment;
- 2) Determine the size and influence of the individual's social network in becoming a private security contractor as reported by them;
- 3) Determine the type of transition the individual remembered experiencing (difficult, easy, no transition, etc), and;
- 4) Determine the relationship the individual has to security contracting by way of socio-cultural characteristics, e.g. language, camaraderie, etc. (Does it make them feel like they belong? Give them purpose?)

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid*

4.4 Data Collection and Analysis Methods

In line with the methods of Grounded Theory, I collected and analysed the data as follows:⁴⁹²

Step 1: Collection of Data	Conduct Survey
	Conduct Interviews
Coding	Examination of the survey open text and interview transcripts and notes 'line by line and the processes in the data.' ⁴⁹³
	Example: Almost all interviewees commented on the allure of 'mateship', 'camaraderie' and 'brotherhood' they perceived to exist in security contracting. These remarks were labelled 'camaraderie'. Interviewees also talked about a loss of recognition in civilian life where they felt 'invisible'. These remarks were labelled 'loss of recognition'.
Categorization	Putting the codes that were clustered into one category.
	Example: Using the codes given from the above two examples I then created a category titled 'Belonging'.
Step 2: Concept Formation	The aim of this stage was to identify an emerging conceptual framework. From the codes and categories the concept of professionalization of security contracting and environmental continuity by way of socio-cultural characteristics emerged.
Step 3: Concept Development	
3.1 Reduction	Here I took the categories I had so far developed and reduced them where some were clustered with others forming one category from a few.
3.2 Sample of the literature	With the concepts that I had developed from the text, I then referenced them with existing literature

⁴⁹² All steps in this process are copied from Stern (1980) p22

⁴⁹³ *Ibid* p21

on both military to civilian transition as well as that of private security.

3.3 Selective sampling	This is the process by which I was required to ask if the concepts and the data aligned to the extent do various variables (e.g. belonging and professionalization) co-exist, in which to determine the importance of the variables. ⁴⁹⁴
3.4 Emergence of core variable	From selective sampling a core variable emerges from which to explain much of the social process that is being examined.
Step 4: Concept modification and integration	During this process I began to code the material and continued to reference it with the material and also relied heavily on the theories set out in Chapter 2.
Theoretical coding	During this stage I put transformed my data into graphs and charts, and began to ‘consider the main variable’ ‘from the point of view of its causes, consequences, contexts, contingencies, co-variances and conditions’ ⁴⁹⁵
Memoing	Memoing occurred throughout the project and took the form of taking notes during the interview, writing down themes or points while I re-listened to the interviews several times, as various things emerged each time. I also took notes during the review of the literature, in terms of any possible relationships to the data or as potential explanations.
Step 5: Writing	The result of the above processes is Chapter 6, Data Analysis in which the presented data from Chapter 5 is analysed and discussed in reference to the developed concepts, using the literature as a reference to put forth a theory based on the data.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid* p22

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid* p23

4.5 *Conclusion*

The aim of this chapter was to introduce the methodology used in this project. As this study was the first of its kind, both in terms of the population studied and social process (military to civilian transition) it was necessary that the methodology be flexible so the remembered experience of the individual's military to civilian transition by way of becoming a private security contractor could be fully developed. I believed a mixed methods approach to allow for flexibility where the narrative of the interviews are complemented by the empirical data from the survey.

Grounded theory allowed for this mixed method approach and in particular offered flexibility in the development of the interview data. As the interviews and surveys were conducted over a two-year period, the continual processes of grounded theory allowed me to develop the data throughout the two years. As a result I was able to integrate various themes, concepts and codes where a distinct military veteran-turned-private security contractor emerged. This distinct narrative represents my original contribution to the literature and to research on this population as a whole. The next chapter presents the survey data collected.

Chapter 5

Data Results – Survey

5.1 Introduction

This Chapter introduces the demographic data collected from the survey and interviews. Presenting demographics from the survey data first provides context of the sample population. The survey data is remarkable for its sample size. At the time of writing, this sample provides the largest academic dataset on US and UK private security contractors, including female security contractors (n=25).⁴⁹⁶

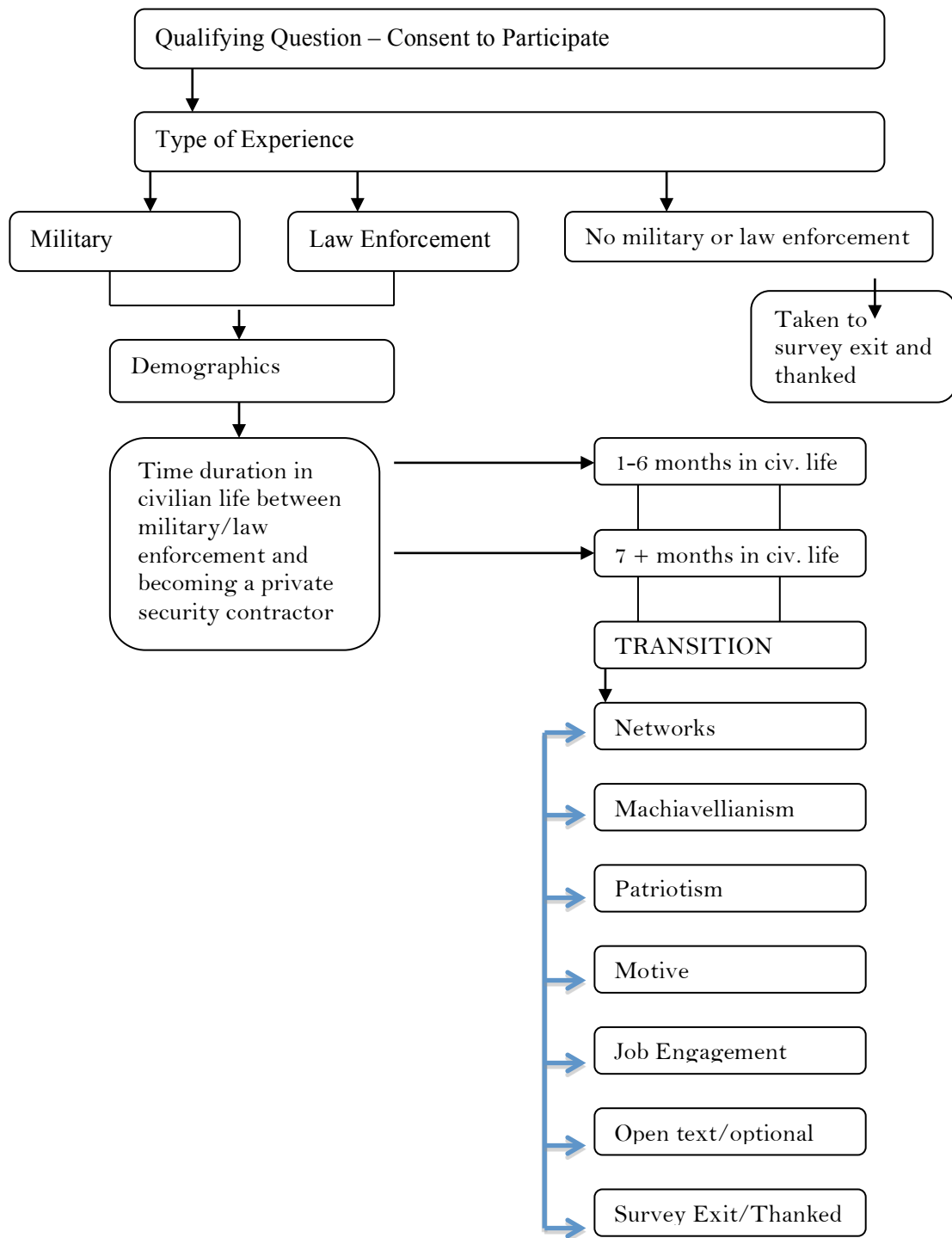
In addition to collecting demographic information, the survey's second objective was to assess if the duration of time spent in civilian life between military exit and the start of security contracting impacted post-military employment decisions. I explored the hypothesis that there would be a difference in responses dependent upon the length of time spent in civilian life between the military and security contracting. I sorted respondents between those who had only experienced up to six months in civilian life and were still eligible for government provided transition services and those who were no longer eligible to the extent they are within 180 days of separating from the military. I used descriptive statistics to profile each population's demographics. The quantitative data gathered in this project focuses on the individual's remembered and subjective experiences of their military to civilian transition, and how the decision to become a security contractor impacts the transition. Survey data provide information on the relationship between an individual and their transition to civilian life via security contracting.

In this chapter, I included cross-tabs to provide a more detailed context to the statistics presented. These cross-tabs are for descriptive purposes only, and should not be used to compare subsets of the survey. For example, possible gender differences cannot be inferred when the percentage of females is highlighted within the statistic because women comprise only 1% of the overall sample population.

⁴⁹⁶ Paul Higate *Critical Impact Report: The Politics of Profile and the Private Military and Security Contractor* University of Bristol Global Insecurities Report, 2013 available at: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/global-insecurities/past-projects/#engendering>

First, I report the demographics of the sample population. Second, I introduce some brief demographics on the individual's transition based on the amount of time the individual spent in civilian life between military exit and becoming a private security contractor. Data are reported based on the aggregate time spent in civilian life. Then I cross-tab data by age and time served in the military.

5.1.1 Survey Design Diagram



5.1.2 *Population Inclusions, Exclusions, and Subsets*

After limiting participants to only those with military experience, I sorted responses in the 'Transition' section of the survey between those who had spent between 1 and 6 months in civilian life between military exit and becoming a security contractor and those who had spent 7 months or longer in civilian life between the two. From this I cross-tabulated age, citizenship, combat experience, education, length of military service and gender to create a robust profile of the sample. Of the remaining population reporting no military experience, 318 (21%) had former law-enforcement experience, 76 (5%) had neither former military or law-enforcement experience but had taken a course and/or certification to become a private security contractor. Sixty-four respondents (4%) reported neither previous military nor law-enforcement experience nor no certification to become a private security contractor. As this study is focused on the military to civilian transition, those who had neither previous military nor law-enforcement experience were taken to the survey exit and thanked. Former law-enforcement personnel took the same survey as security contractors, but their data were not included in the analyses as these respondents did not meet the survey inclusion criteria.

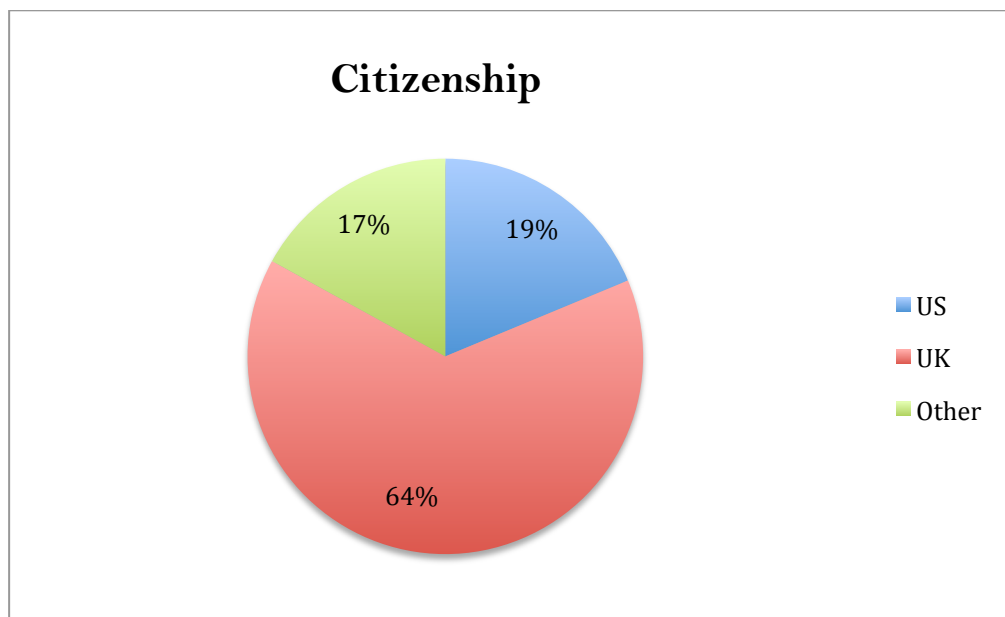
I did not include any comparisons on citizenship between the US and UK for two reasons. First, statistical analysis showed there was no statistical difference between US and UK survey respondents. Second, this project is not a comparative study, but one on the experience of transition. There was no evidence in the literature to suggest beyond the obvious cultural differences of some attitudes and values a comparative study would produce significant data on the experience of transition as a whole.

5.2 Overall Population Demographic Profile

Of participants who completed the survey (n=1516), 86% had prior military experience, of which 65% served in the UK armed forces, 19% served in the US armed forces and the remaining 17% were from countries other than the US and UK, as show below in Figure 2. All survey respondents (military and law-enforcement) confirmed they had been or were currently private security contractors working overseas in the capacity as an armed private security contractor. The following figures in this chapter only address those with military experience, that is, the 86% of the overall sample. I use the term 'survey respondents' to refer to the subset representing 86% of the overall sample.

5.2.1 Citizenship of Survey Respondents

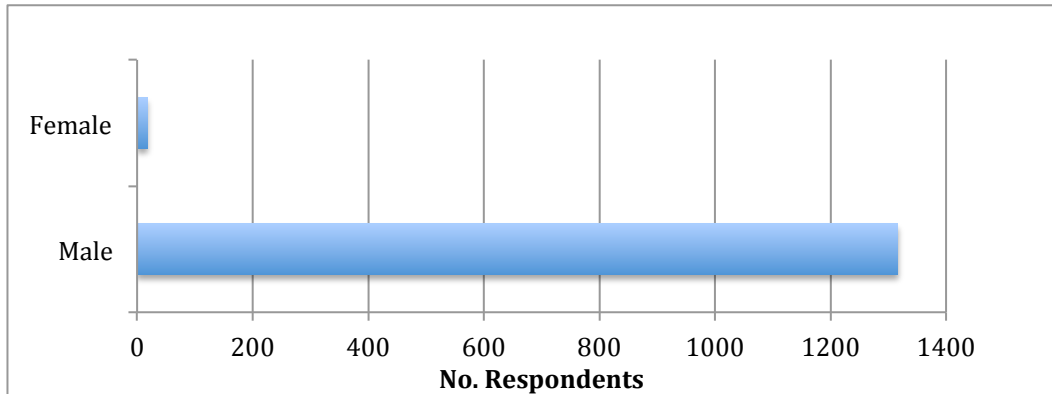
Figure 2 (n=1516)



*Other citizenship includes: Estonia, France, South Africa, Uganda, Sweden, Lithuania, Australia, Macedonia, Portugal, Bosnia, Cameroon, Denmark, Norway, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Spain, New Zealand, Hungary, Latvia, Israel, Croatia, Belgium, Italy, Iran, Cyprus and Russia.

5.2.2 Gender of Survey Respondents

Figure 3 (n=1334)



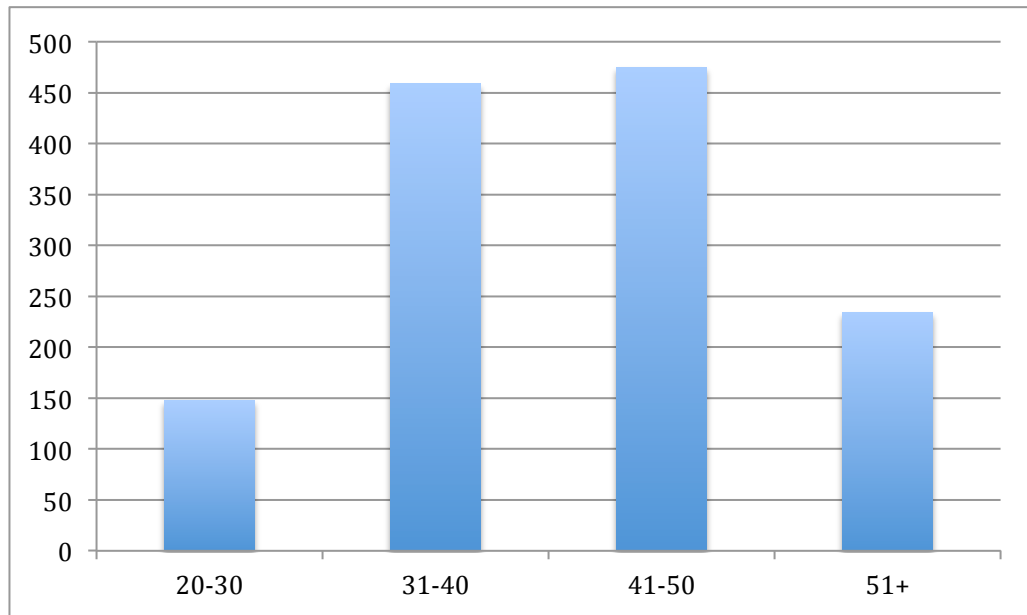
The majority (99%) of survey respondents were male (n=1316), with 1% (18) female. I felt it important to include women in my exploratory research analyses because research on private security contractors has mainly focused on only male contractors. The small sample subset of females indicates a presence that has thus far had limited acknowledgement in academic inquiry on the former military-turned-security contractor population.⁴⁹⁷

Female: Of the 18 female survey respondents, 13 were from the UK, 2 were from the US. Based on the open text prompt to identify nationality, 3 were from countries other than the US or UK, such as Latvia and South Africa.

⁴⁹⁷ Vrdoljak (2010)

5.2.3 Age of Survey Respondents

Figure 4 (n=1316)



About one-third (35%; n=1316) of survey respondents were 46 years old or older. Participants older than 56 years old were in the minority and represented only 6% of the cohort. Just under one-third (29%) of respondents were aged between 36 and 45 years. Survey respondents aged 31-35 years represented 15% of the overall cohort. The smallest age subset were survey respondents between 20 and 25 years old (2%). The age profile is consistent with previous demographic survey reports of private security contractors where the age was between 40 and 50 years old.⁴⁹⁸ The range in age is consistent with the published age range of exit for Service leavers.⁴⁹⁹

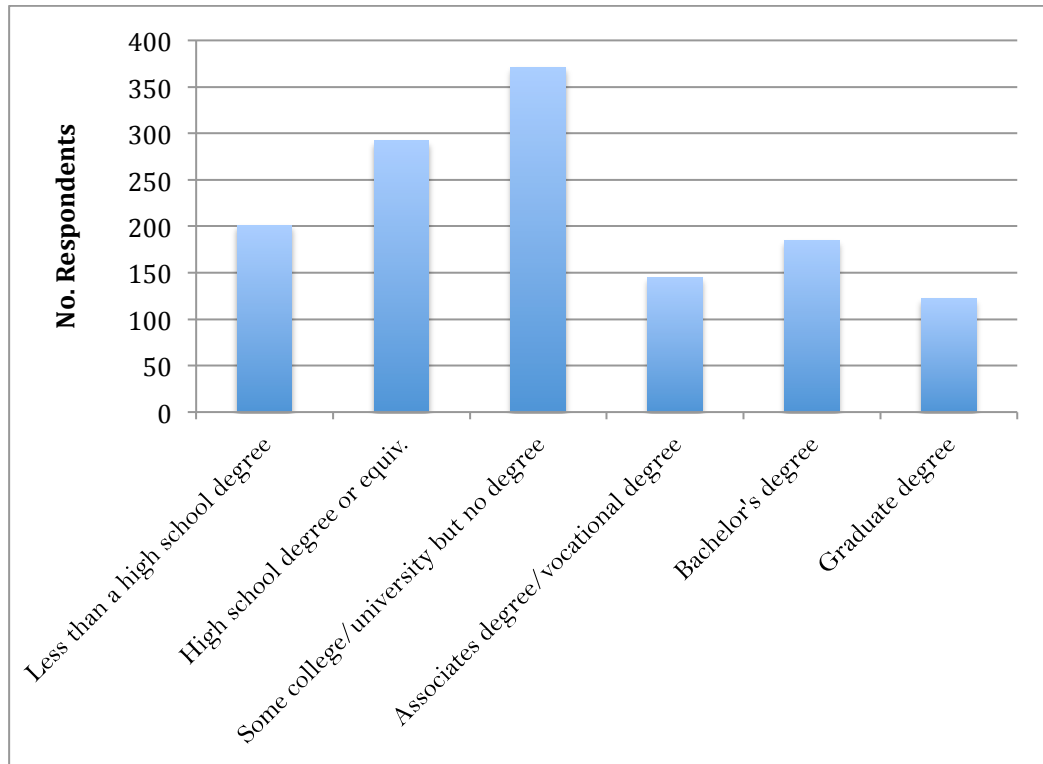
Female: Of the 18 females, 7 were between 36 and 40 years old. There were no women 25 years or younger, and ages 56 years or older. Five females were aged between 46 and 55 years. 4 females were between 26 and 35 years old; and 2 females were between 41 to 45 years old.

⁴⁹⁸ Franke and von Boemcken (2011) Molly Dunigan *et al* (2013); Katy Messenger *et al*; Fienstein and Botes, Spearin 2006

⁴⁹⁹ Walker (2012)

5.2.4 Education Attainment (Figure 5, 5.1)

Figure 5 (n=1316)



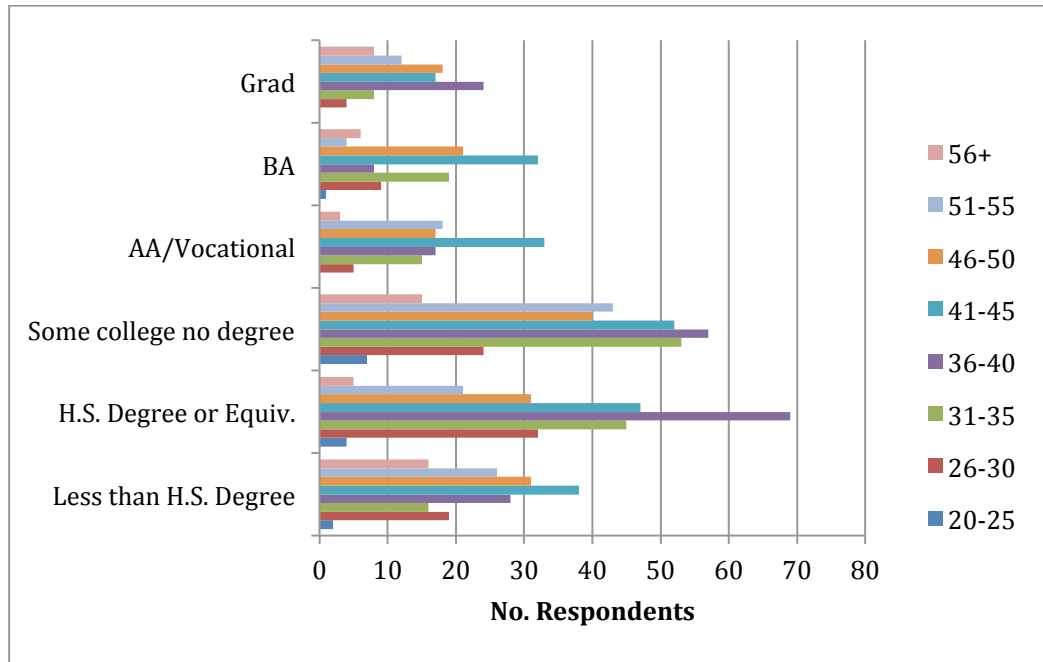
The majority of respondents (overall 65%) had no higher degree than high school. Of this 65%, 28% reported some college/university education but did not receive a degree. The remaining respondents reported some type of associate's or vocation degree (11%), baccalaureate degree (14%) or a post-baccalaureate (graduate) degree (9%) of some kind.

These findings are consistent with those reported for the general veteran population of the US, where the majority of veterans report 'some college' or 'high school' degree as the highest level of completed education.⁵⁰⁰

⁵⁰⁰ US Department of Veterans Affairs 'Profile of Veterans 2011' Data from the American Community Survey, National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics, March 2013, p16 'some college' represented 47.1% of the veteran population, and 38.8% had high school degree as their highest level of education.

Education of Survey Respondents by Age

Figure 5.1 (n=1020)



Of the survey population (1020), the age cohort most likely to have ‘some college/university but no degree’ are those between 31 and 45 years old (n=588), representing 58% of survey respondents.

Those between 36 and 40 years old (n=213) were the age group least likely to have any degree beyond secondary education, at 72% of the population.

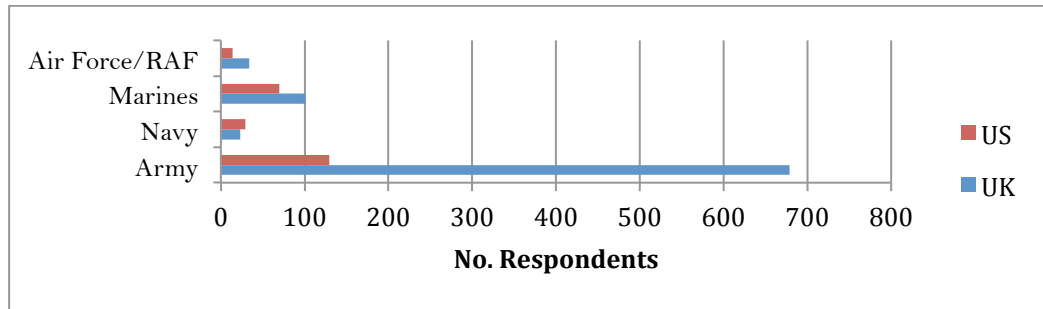
Those most likely to have a degree beyond secondary education are those aged 41 to 45 (n=219), 8% of the population.

Female: Of the 18 females, 6 hold graduate degrees, 2 hold Bachelor’s degrees, 2 hold Associates and/or Vocational degrees, 4 have some college/university education but no degree, and 4 have either a high school degree (1) or equivalent or less (3).

Within each 10-year cohort (20-30, 31-40, etc.) less than 5% have a college/university or higher degree.

5.2.5 Branch of Military Service

Figure 6 (n=1298)



Of the survey respondents (n=1298) 52% served in the British Army, 8% in the British Royal Marines, 2% in the British Royal Navy and 3% in the British Royal Air Force (RAF).

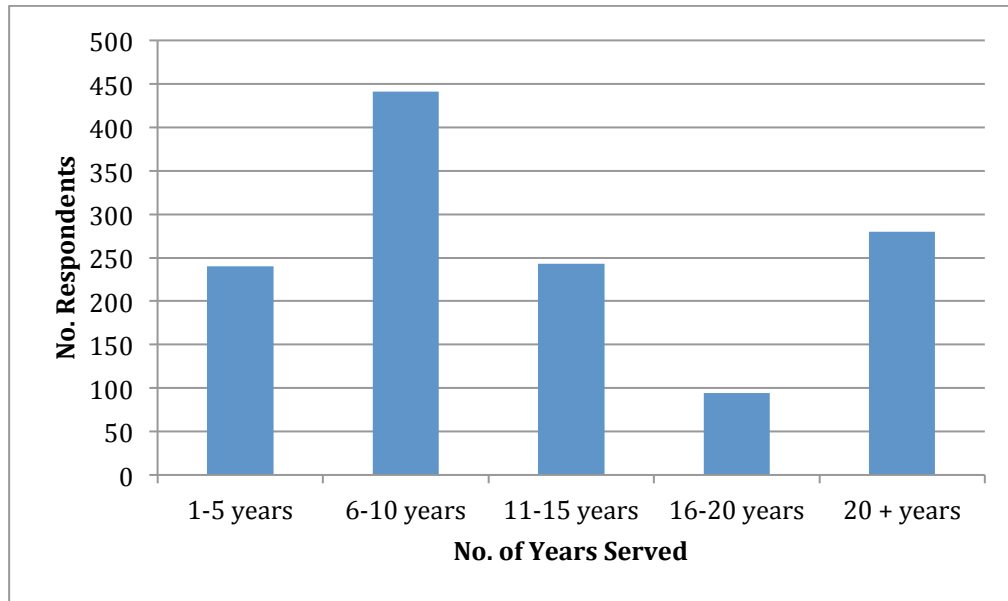
United States Army veterans comprised 10% of the overall survey population. US Navy veterans accounted for 2%, US Marine Corps veterans (5%) and US Air Force veterans (1%).

17% chose the response option of 'other' indicating in the open text option they were military veterans from other nationalities that had served in the different branches of their country's military.

Female: Of the 18 females, 9 served in the British Army, 2 in the RAF, 1 in the Royal Marines and 1 in the Royal Navy. Two were US Army veterans. Two females indicated 'other' including military service in South Africa and Latvia. 1 respondent did not respond.

5.2.6 Length of Military Service (Figure 7a, b, c)

Figure 7.a (n=1298)



Most of the respondents served between 6 and 10 years in the military (n=441) at 34%. This number is consistent with published reports of the average time in military service in the UK and US.^{501 502}

The second longest duration of service was 20+ years at 22%.

18% of respondents served between 1 and 5 years. In the UK this duration of service is termed 'early service leaver' or ESL.

Those that served between 16 and 20 years were in the minority. I note that 1% of this group were female.

The five-year increments encompassed both US and UK minimum duration of service.⁵⁰³ Once individuals complete the minimum requirement, they must choose to re-enlist, with

⁵⁰¹ Royal British Legion 'Profile and Needs of Ex-Service Community 2005-2020' Report published September 2006, p8; available at: <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/media/33526/summary%20and%20cons.%20report.pdf>

⁵⁰² US Department of Veterans Affairs 'Profile of Veterans: 2011' Data from the American Community Survey, National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics, March 2013, where by in 2000 more than 50% of veterans had served for longer than four years.

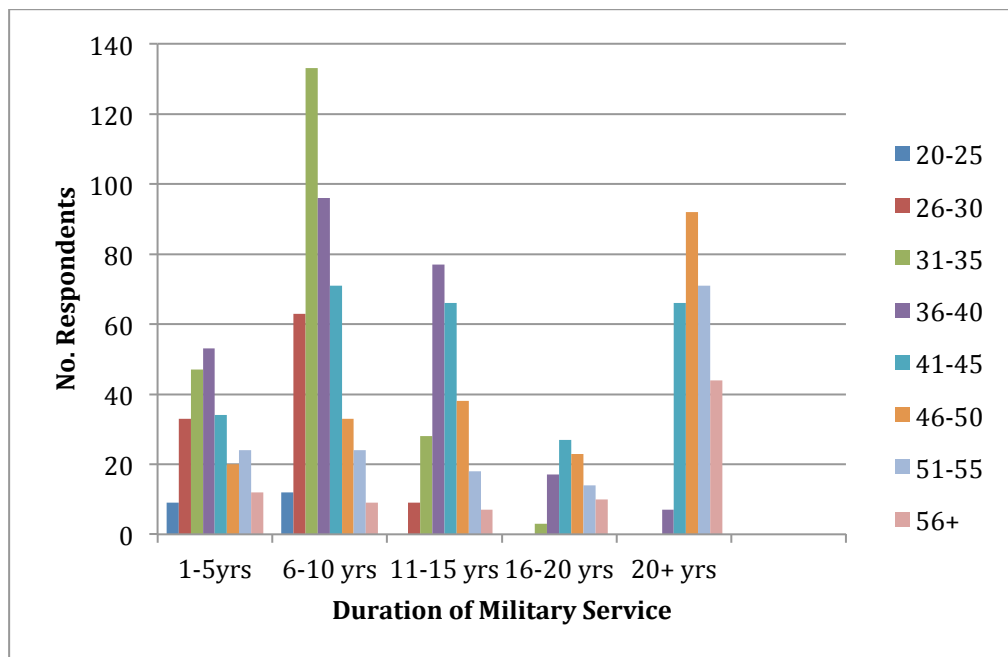
⁵⁰³ The US Army offers full time enlistment between 2 and 5 years of service, the US Navy offers two years of full time enlistment. The US Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard offer 4 years of full time enlistment: <http://usmilitary.about.com/od/joiningthemilitary/f/obligation.htm> The British Army has a 4 year minimum requirement. The Royal navy has either 3.5 years after completion of training or 4 years, whichever is longer, and the RAF 3 years after completion of training or 4 years,

required notice between six months (US) to one year (UK). The majority of survey respondents served between 6 and 10 years indicating they re-enlisted at least once. Fewer than half of the survey respondents re-enlisted a minimum of two more times.

Female: Of the 18 females, 7 served between 6-10 years, 5 served between 11 and 15 years, one served between 16 and 20 years and one served for 20+ years. 3 were early service leavers. 1 did not respond.

Length of Military Service by Age

Figure 7.b (n=1290)



Of those that served between 6 and 10 years most were 31 to 35 years old (12%). The remainder were either, between 36 to 40 years (7%) or 41 to 45 years (6%).

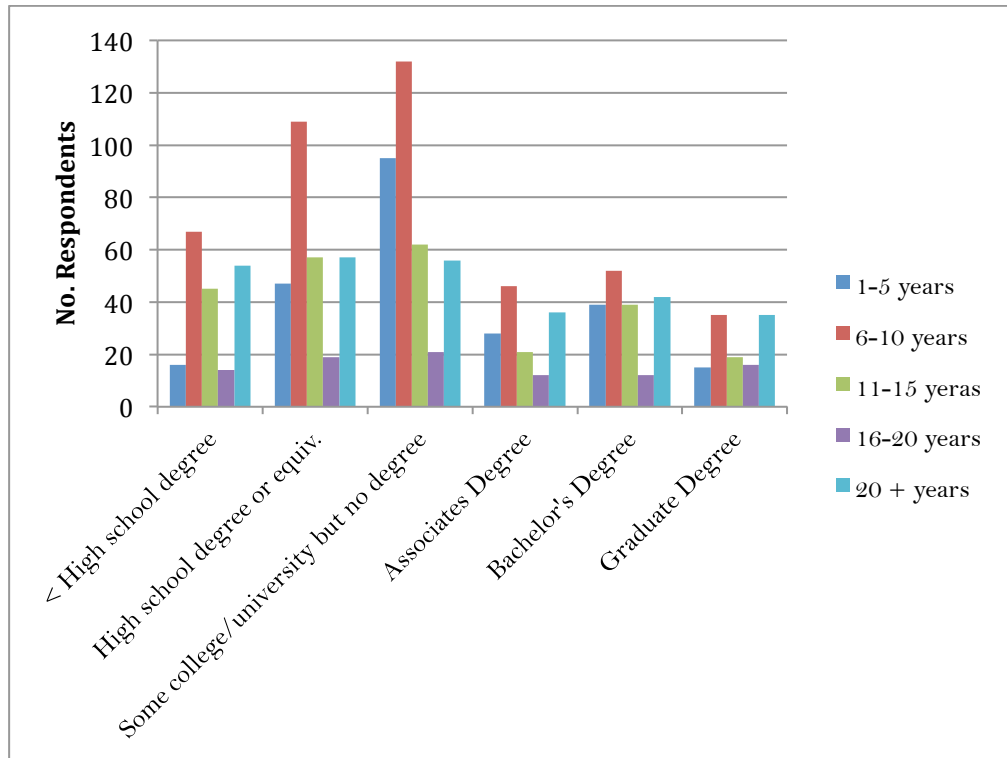
Those who served 20+ years in the military are represented by age groups in order of dominance: 46-50 (7%), 51-55 (6%) and 41-45 (5%).

Of those who served between 1 and 5 years in the military most were 31-40 years old (8%). 3% of those with 1 to 5 years of service were between 26 and 30 years old.

whichever is longer. http://www.parliament.uk/documents/joint-committees/human-rights/Briefing_from_Forces_Watch_Terms_of_service.pdf

Education by time served in the military

Figure 7.c (n=1289)



Those with 1 to 5 years of military service (n=240) were more likely to have some college/university education but no degree (40%), while 35% report additional education ranging from Associates/Vocational certification (12%) to baccalaureate degree (16%) or post-baccalaureate (graduate) degree (6%).

Of those that served between 6 and 10 years (n=441) 70% were unlikely to have received a degree beyond high school and/or secondary school. The remainder (30%) reported additional education, ranging from Associates/Vocational certification to graduate degrees. Although those who served between 6 and 10 years were the least likely to continue their education after high school, this group represented one of the two age cohorts with the highest percentage of graduate degree holders (8%).

Of the 280 respondents who served twenty years or longer 19% failed to complete high school certification; 20% reported a high school degree or equivalent, 20% had some college/university experience but no degree, and 40% reported Associates/Vocational certification or baccalaureate or graduate degrees.

5.2.7 Military Rank Upon Exit of Respondents

Figure 8 (n=1022)

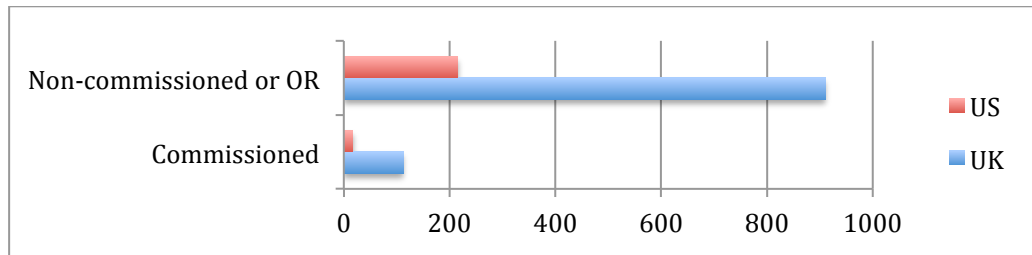


Table 2. Prior Military Rank of US and UK Survey Respondents

US Sample (n=262)	Number
Commissioned (n=17) (6% of US Sample)	
0-1 2 nd Lt.	1
0-3 Captain	11
0-4 Major	2
0-5 Lt. Colonel	2
0-7 Brigadier General	1
Non Commissioned (n=215) (82% of US Sample)	
E2 – Private	2
E3 – Private First Class	3
E4 – Corporal	48
E-5 – Sergeant	57
E-6 – Staff Sergeant	40
E-7 – Sergeant First Class	34
E-8 – Master Sergeant	14
E-9 – Sergeant Major	9
Chief Warrant Officer (CWO)	2
CWO2	2
CWO3	3
CWO4	1
UK Sample (n=1022)	
Commissioned, British Army (n=101) (10% UK Sample)	
Major General	2
Colonel	3
Lt. Colonel	5
Major	24
Captain	51
Lieutenant	11
2 nd Lieutenant	5
Officer Cadet	1

Non Commissioned/Other Rank, British Army (n=861) (84% of UK Sample)

Private	90
Lance Corporal	119
Corporal	283
Sergeant	185
Staff/Colour Sergeant	74
WO2	58
WO1	52

Commissioned, Royal Navy (n=11) (1% of UK Sample)

Lt Commander	2
1 st Lieutenant	5
Flight Lieutenant	2
Flying Officer	2

Non Commissioned/Other Rank, Royal Navy (n=39) (4% UK Sample)

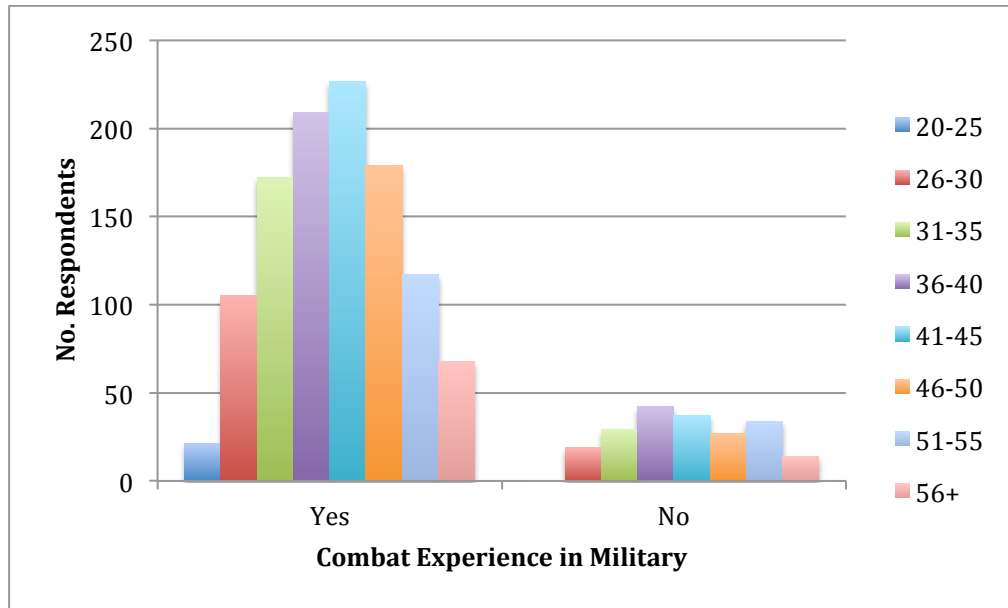
Flight Sergeant	2
Leading Diver	1
Senior Aircraftsman	7
Aircraftsman	1
Able Seaman	2
Marines	26

Non Commissioned/Other Rank, Royal Air Force (n=10) (1% of UK Sample)

Chief Petty Officer	2
Petty Officer	7
Rating	1

5.2.8 Combat Experience of Respondents by Age

Figure 9 (n=1318)



84% of respondents indicated having combat experience while serving in the military, prior to becoming a private security contractor.

Those between 41 and 45 years old were most likely to have combat experience (20%), followed by those between 36 and 40 years old (18%).

A minority (16%) of all survey respondents have no prior combat experience. This may be a significant finding as security contractors are almost always armed and working in a hostile environment. These individuals may have been subjected to combat-like situations, i.e. incoming fire, engagement with insurgents, after their military service as a security contractor in either Iraq or Afghanistan. Because all respondents self-identified as armed security contractors in order to be eligible to participate in the survey, security contracting may be the first time they experience ‘combat.’⁵⁰⁴

Female: Of the 18 females, 9 responded ‘yes’ to whether they experienced combat during military service, and 8 indicated ‘no.’ 1 respondent did not answer the question.

⁵⁰⁴ It is important to note that security contractors, by law, are not allowed to engage in offensive combat. See the ICoC, PSC.1, Montreux Document.

5.2.9 – a *Combat Experience by Time Served in the Military*

Of the 441 who served between 6 and 10 years in the military, the majority (86%) had combat experience.

Of those who served for 20 years or longer (n=280), the majority (90%) reported combat experience.

Of those with 11 to 15 years of service (n=243), the majority (91%) indicated prior combat experience; of those serving between 1 and 5 years, 65% had combat experience.

Overall, those reporting 6 to 10 years of service (29%) were the most likely of all age subsets to have had combat experience of the survey population.

5.3 Summary Findings of the Survey Population

US and UK veteran-turned-private security contractors have a significant amount of military experience before becoming a security contractor

While there is little known about the demographics of the private security contractor population as a whole, there are references in the literature describing them both as ‘amateurs’, ‘less competent others’ and ‘professionals’.⁵⁰⁵ This survey presents data supporting the latter; professionals. Security contractors with prior military experience have a significant amount of military experience across the board; education levels ranging from some college/university education to holding graduate degrees. 80% of the survey population have six or more years of military service before becoming a security contractor, indicating significant military training and experience.

- Security contractors were most likely to have between 6 and 10 years of prior military service and of these, 86% reported combat experience in the military, and;
- Be between 31 and 40 years old;
- Least likely to hold a degree *but* report some college/university education, and;
- Have spent between 1 and 3 months in civilian life between military exit and security contracting.

Many security contractors were career soldiers who had served either the full 20 or 22 years as required by the US and UK, respectively. These security contractors will:

- Be between the ages of 46 and 50 years old;
- Most likely to have some college/university education, but hold no degree;
- Have combat experience while in the military (90%);
- Have spent between 1 and 3 months in civilian life between military exit and contracting, and;
- See security contracting as a viable second career, in which they consider themselves to be professionals.

⁵⁰⁵ Paul Highate and Joakim Berndtsson

Robust social networks developed during military service are used by security contractors to seek and secure employment as a contractor. These networks are also important in the recruitment and retention of security contractors.

The social networks developed by the respondents during military service that include between 1 and 3, or more than 3 known security contractors satisfy and/or exceed the threshold of influence of social network theory.

70% of the survey respondents (n=1224) reported knowing other security contractors while the respondent was serving in the military on active duty. Over half of respondents knew between 1 and 3 security contractors before the respondent became one (57%) while approximately one quarter of respondents knew 11 or more security contractors before they became one.

Over half of the survey respondents (59%) began the process of seeking and securing security contractor employment by using social networks, known to the respondent as either a former military friend, former military colleague or former military acquaintance (78%).

59% of the survey population affirmed knowing other security contractors in the above capacities influenced them to become a security contractor.

Time in civilian life between leaving the military and becoming a private security contractor plays a role in the individual's military to civilian transition.

Just less than half of survey respondents (46%) spent 1 to 6 months in civilian life between leaving the military and becoming a security contractor. Of this population, most were between 31 and 45 years old (58%) with some college/university education but no degree.

Of those who spent 1 to 6 months in civilian life, half (50%) have been on at least 2 and 5 overseas contracts. 87% of this population confirm the environment in terms of the language used and the operational conduct of security contracting similar to that of the military (87%).

US and UK veterans-turned-private security contractors are a highly dedicated workforce that display high levels of pride in their work and seek personal growth through security contracting.

While the data confirm that money is a significant motivation in becoming a private security contractor for most (80%) the overall survey population (n=1185) were equally motivated by the opportunity security contracting offered to 'face and meet new challenges' (75%) and 'for personal growth' (76%).

In turn, these positive personal motivations displayed high levels of job engagement. The sample population showed equal levels of job engagement; 100% agreed they 'felt personal responsibility for my job performance', 'how well I do in my job matters a great deal to me' (98%), 'I am committed to performing my job well' (99%), and concern about the outcome resulting from their performance (96%).

US and UK veterans-turned-private security contractors consider security contracting to be a career-viable profession in which they indicate long-term dedication.

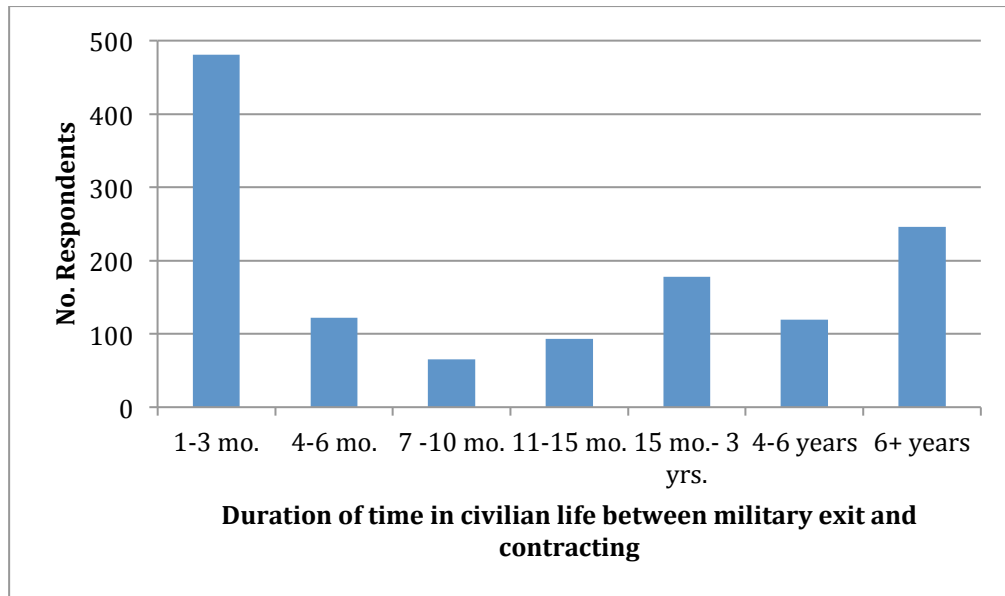
There is no significant difference between the data given by US and UK contractors in terms of their transition and networks.

There is a significant difference between the data given by US and UK security contractors' attitudes and values, specifically patriotism and Machiavellianism.

5.3 Transition Demographics (Figures 10.a - 10.c)

Duration of time in civilian life between leaving the military and becoming a private security contractor

Figure 10.a (n=1304)



Just less than half of survey respondents (46%) spent 1 to 6 months in civilian life between leaving the military and becoming a security contractor. Of these, about one-third (37%) spent only 1 to 3 months in civilian life.

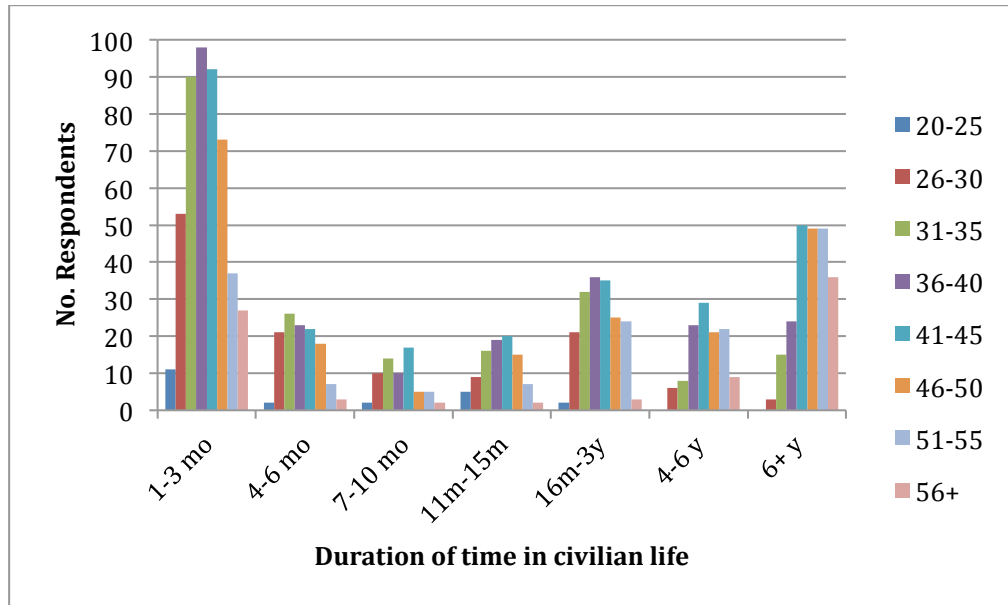
The second highest representation of time spent in civilian life were the subset who spent six years or more in civilian life (19%). Following are those who spent 15 months and 3 years in civilian life (14%).

Those who spent between 7 and 10 months in civilian life were the least likely of the survey population to become security contractors when 'time spent in civilian life' was considered.

Female: Between leaving the military and starting security contracting 8 of the 18 women reported spending 1 and 6 months in civilian life, 6 women spent 7 months to 3 years and 4 women spent 4 years or longer in civilian life.

Duration of time spent in civilian life between the military and becoming a private security contractor by age

Figure 10.b (n=1283)



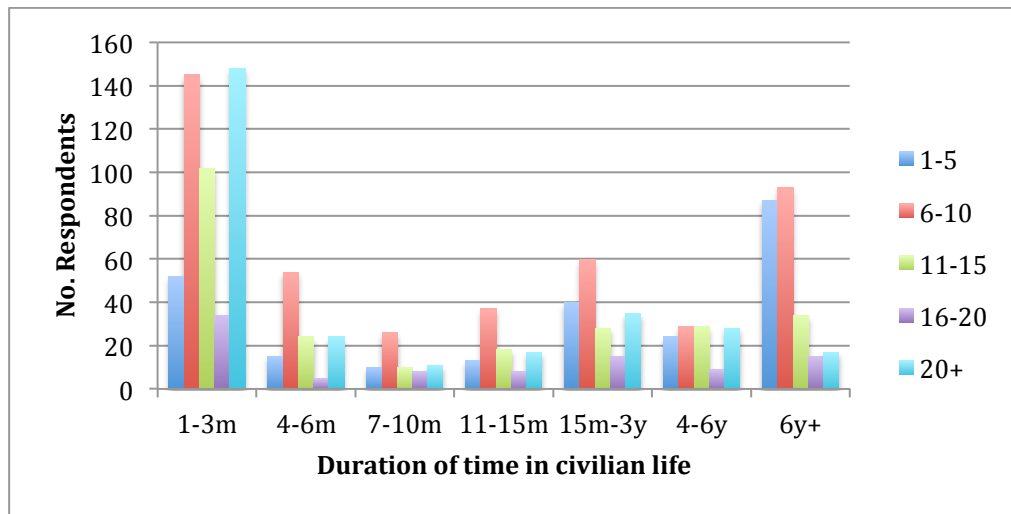
Of survey respondents who spent 1 to 30 months in civilian life (n=481), most were between 31 and 45 years old (58%). Of those who reported 1-3 months in civilian life, 15% were aged 46 to 50, and 11% were aged 20 to 25 years.

By age, the second highest subset were those who spent 6 years or longer in civilian life (n=226). There was a bi-modal distribution in responses by age groups: 41-45 (22% of the group), 46-50 (22% of the group) and 51-55 years old (22% of the group).

Survey respondents, 56 years or older (n=82) were the least likely of all groups to have spent a 'medium' amount of time in civilian life (between 7 months to 6 years).

Duration of time in civilian life by time served in the military

Figure 10.c (n=1304)



Respondents reporting 1 to 6 months in civilian life (n=603), those most likely to become security contractors had previously served between 6 to 10 years in the military (33%).

Among those who report 1 to 3 months in civilian life (n=481) the largest subset (31%) spent 20+ years in the military. Of this cohort (n=280) approximately half (53%) went into security contracting immediately after military service (between 1 and 3 months).

Early service leavers (n=241) were most likely to report a longer time in civilian life than other groups based on length of service as 36% reported 6 years or longer in civilian life. Within the ESL cohort, 8% were between 31 and 40 years and 3% between 26 to 30 years.

Those who served between 6 and 10 years (the highest cohort by length of time served of the overall survey population at 34%) were more likely to have less time in civilian life between leaving the military and contracting.

5.4 *Subset Analyses: Significance of Time in Transition*

In this section of the survey, two data sets were created by giving the same survey to those who spent between 1 and 6 months in civilian life and those who spent 7 months or longer in civilian life. The reason for this was to measure for a significance of time spent in civilian life on the individual's transition and becoming a security contractor. A chi-square analysis was used to measure the significance between the two data sets for the bifurcated portion of the survey. Time in civilian life between separating from the military and becoming a security contractor denotes whether the individual reintegrated into civilian life, or developed civilian networks to facilitate their reintegration and civilian employment opportunities. Length of time in civilian life also determines the role security contracting plays as becoming a security contracting may be different depending on the factors of: length of time served in the military, age and educational attainment.

For example, those with longer in civilian life may use security contracting to address transition issues they were unable to resolve in civilian life. For those with a shorter amount of time in civilian life, the interlude may be seen either as a stepping-stone to their next job in a natural progression to civilian life, or indicate the individual has no intention of civilian reintegration and aims to make a career as close to a military environment as possible.

5.4.1 *Military Exit Preparation* (Figures 11.a – 11.c)

As discussed in Chapter 3 preparation for military exit has a significant impact on the individual's subsequent satisfaction in civilian life. Those who prepare more for military separation are least likely to face employment, housing or social issues (such as relationships) than those who do not prepare or were suddenly discharged. This question asks if the individual knew they were leaving the military (anticipated exit) or if they were suddenly discharged (unanticipated). I defined 'sudden discharge' as either sudden medical discharge or dishonourable discharge, among other possibilities. The option of unanticipated exit was not designed to identify between these possibilities, it was not possible to cross-associate the choices with units like age, gender, length of service, etc.

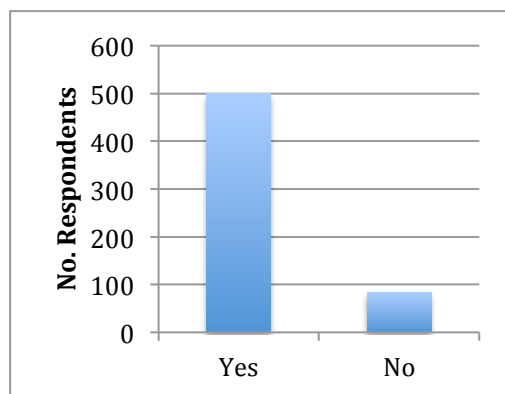
For both cohorts (total n=1220) leaving the military proved to be an anticipated event. Of those reporting between 1 to 6 months in civilian life (n=584) 86% reported leaving the military was an anticipated event. Of those reporting 7 months or longer in civilian life (n=636), leaving was anticipated for 81%.

Overall, 33% of the survey population had an unanticipated military exit. As discussed in Chapter 2, unanticipated transitions are often the most difficult to adjust and adapt to. The individual has little or no time to prepare for their military exit and will have to reintegrate into civilian life while also coming to terms with leaving the military at a time that was not of their choosing. The interviews indicated the most common reason for an unanticipated exit was sudden medical discharge, which had a disorienting affect on the individual as they grappled with their medical issues in addition to entering civilian life.

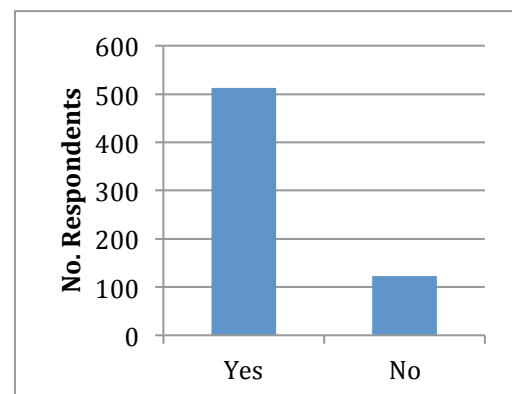
Question: Leaving the military was an anticipated event

Figure 11.a (n=1220)

1 to 6 months in civilian life



7 + months in civilian life

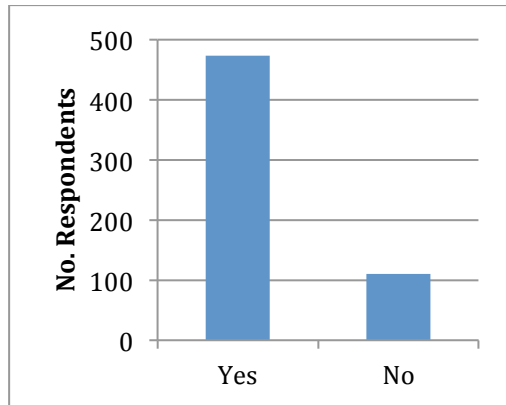


Military preparation literature provided by the US and UK government provided transition assistance services prescribe preparation for the transition to civilian life at the earliest possible period, between 6 and 24 months depending on time served and country. As a result, I asked whether security contracting was a part of military exit preparation.

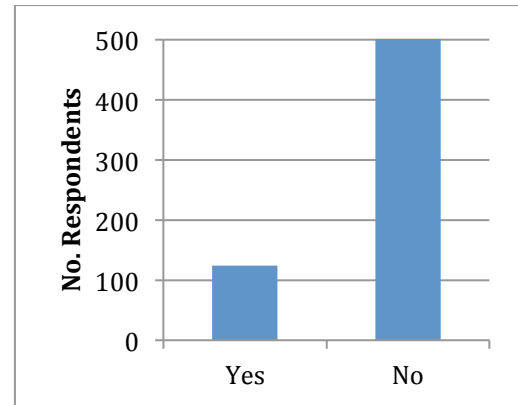
Question: I began to think about becoming a security contractor BEFORE leaving the military

Figure 11.b (n=1232)

1 to 6 months in civilian life



7 + months in civilian life



The responses from both cohorts show a significant difference in whether the individual began to think about becoming a security contractor before leaving the military.

The significance of this finding is based on the likelihood of those with a longer amount of time in civilian life may not have had the option – to the extent that security contracting post-9/11 expanded contracting career opportunities – of becoming a security contractor after military service. Those who spent a longer in civilian life 1) either sought other civilian employment opportunities or education or 2) chose to return to the quasi-military environment as a career option now more readily available.

Alternatively, based on age, it is reasonable to infer that those who spent a shorter amount of time in civilian life probably served in Iraq or Afghanistan. Security contracting would be a more likely and viable option for post-military employment for this group than for those reporting longer times in civilian life who may not have had this same option. This inference is supported by information obtained from the interviews, which will be discussed later in Chapter 8.

In addition to *thinking* about what type of employment the individual would like to have when they leave the military or what they envision doing, I investigated if respondents acted on their thinking by asking if they actively sought employment as a security contractor while they were still serving in the military, or immediately upon their exit.

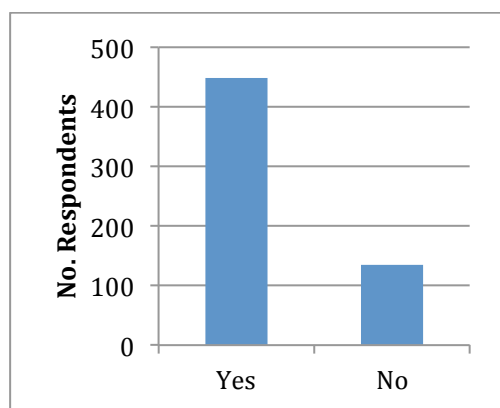
This significance of this question is to challenge the literature discussed in Chapter 2 and 3 of Service leavers naturally gravitating towards similar institutionalized employment after

military service. The assumption in the literature is the individual seeks out the same structure and discipline in a career as their experience in the military. While security contracting has structure and discipline, it is not institutionalised employment such as prison service work or law-enforcement. This question therefore challenges the literature by demonstrating these individuals are not ‘naturally gravitating’ to security contracting; they actively plan for post-military employment, and plan to secure employment for which there is no institutional support like that of the military. Institutional support includes the provision of housing, healthcare benefits and family support, among others. This institutional support is thought to be one of the reasons as to why Service leavers are attracted to alternate institutional forms of employment.⁵⁰⁶ What security contracting does provide, absent the institution, is environmental continuity where socio-cultural characteristics serve to replicate the military experience. Prison service work or law-enforcement cannot replicate military experience because the level and requirement of risk differs from that of security contracting. While law-enforcement personnel will encounter situations where the use of force is required, their core mission and aim is community building and relationships, not the use of force similar to that used by the military in conflicts and/or war.

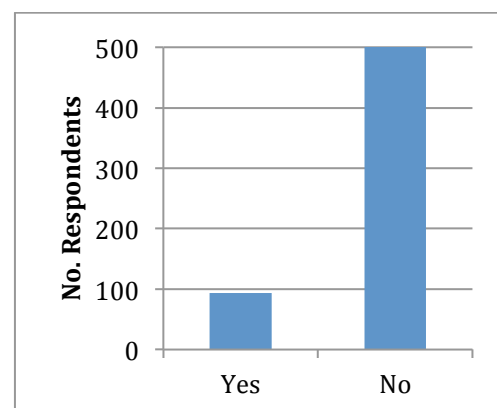
Question: I actively sought employment as a security contractor WHILE I was serving in the military or immediately upon military exit

Table 11.c (n=1184)

1 to 6 months in civilian life



7 + months in civilian life



The responses shown in Figure 10.c confirm the previous question’s interpretation that for those reporting a longer amount of time in civilian life, security contracting may not have been a viable employment option to the extent it was after 9/11 in Iraq and Afghanistan.

⁵⁰⁶ Higate (2001), Jolly (1996)

For those with 1 to 6 months in civilian life, their active thinking and planning to become a security contractor after the military indicates a willingness to continue working in a similar environment to the one they are leaving. Their physical isolation from civilian life during security contracting prevents the individual from traditional reintegration into civilian life after military service.

In summary, respondents who spent a shorter amount of time in civilian life reported they not only thought about becoming a security contractor while still serving in the military or immediately upon military exit, but also implemented that plan by actively seeking employment as a security contractor during this time.

Security contracting is unlike other civilian employment when environment and risk are considered. The degree of planning as demonstrated above may mean the individual may lessen the risk of experiencing difficulties in civilian life. Security contracting, though, in comparison to other civilian employment is much riskier even to that of being a regular soldier. As a result, security contracting offers a third option to the military to civilian transition, where security contracting is neither civilian nor military employment and differs from both in terms of environment to the former, and institutionally to the latter.

The next section presents the findings categorized as ‘Post Military Career Perceptions’ addressing how the respondents perceive security contracting as a career in general, and more specifically how they perceive security contracting as a career for them after military service.

5.4.2 Post Military Career Perceptions (Figures 12.a – 12.f)

The following set of questions produced novel findings on the individual’s perceptions of a post-military career, and how they perceived security contracting within a career development context.

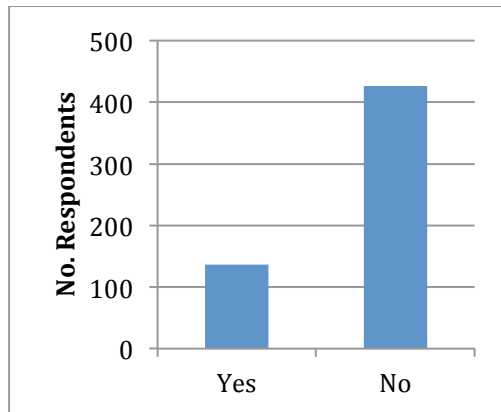
The first significant finding is that across both time cohorts (n=1071), nearly one third (28%) of overall survey respondents actively sought employment other than security contracting but could not find any.

Those who spent a longer amount of time in civilian life were more likely than those with a shorter amount of time to have sought employment other than contracting and not found any. It is likely that security contracting provided a job in which skills and knowledge gained in the military are not only required, but valued.

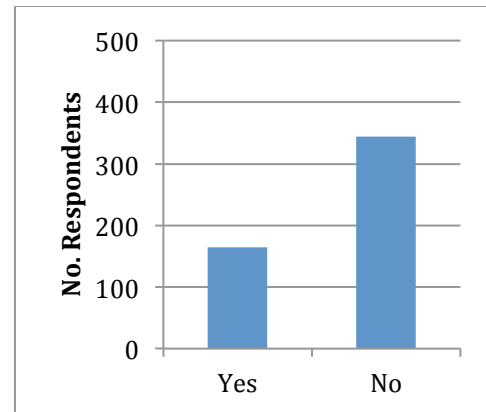
Question: Once I left the military I actively sought employment OTHER THAN security contracting but could not find any.

Table 12.a (n=1071)

1 to 6 months in civilian life



7 + months in civilian life



Just as significant as the subset who sought employment other than contracting were the subset for whom security contracting was the desired employment option after leaving the military.

This question included an 'Open Text Box' in which the individual could elaborate on their answer, providing an explanation for what they did in the interim and the types of other jobs they sought. The most repeated comment from this was 'low pay in civilian life' followed by 'lack of satisfaction and/or happiness' in civilian employment.

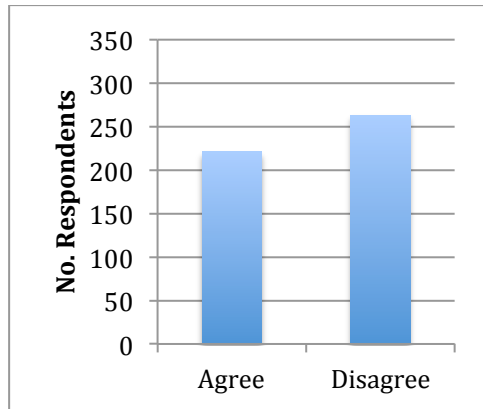
A significant findings from the 'Open Text Box' responses was that the types of employment the individual either sought or had experienced in civilian life before becoming a contractor included working in institutionalised professions like the prison service or law-enforcement. These findings extend those in the published literature. While results initially confirm that individuals gravitate towards other institutions for career development, this career move is transient. These individuals sought to return to an environment similar to the military and not an institution.

The next question asked if individuals felt security contracting was the *only* employment option for them after serving in the military.

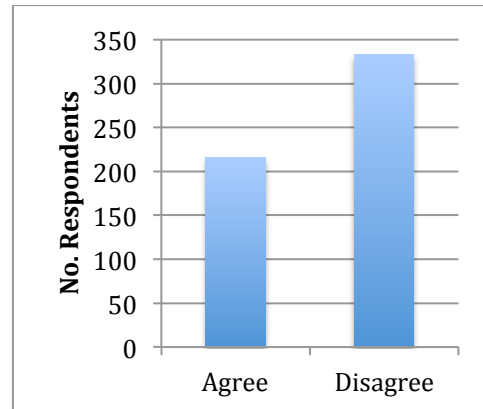
Question: I felt security contracting was the only option for me regarding employment after serving in the military.

Figure 12.b (n=1033)

1 to 6 months in civilian life



7 + months in civilian life



The significance of this data is despite thinking about becoming a security contractor and actively seeking employment as a security contractor either during or after military service, most respondents in the overall population disagreed that it was the only option for them (72%).

Yet, over a third (39%) who spent longer in civilian life agreed security contracting was the only employment option for them, despite a longer amount of time in civilian life in which to reintegrate. Just fewer than half (45%) of those who spent a shorter amount of time in civilian life agreed it was the only option for them. Walker's study on the identity of career soldier Service leavers sought to project the distinction they felt as a regular soldier in civilian life as being an employee that is novel and at an advantage to their civilian peers as a result of military service.⁵⁰⁷ Therefore, many of this survey population may disagree whether security contracting was the only employment option available to them as they may believe themselves to be capable and qualified to secure other civilian employment in an effort to be seen as relevant, both to themselves and those around them.

At this point many of the respondents see security contracting as the main post-military employment choice and have actively pursued this form of employment, while also believing themselves to be capable of securing employment other than security contracting. Following on from preparation for military exit by way of job seeking and perceptions of

⁵⁰⁷ David Walker (2012) 'Anticipating Army Exit: Identity Constructions of Final Year UK Career Soldiers' *Armed Forces and Society* first published online 2012, pp1-21; p8

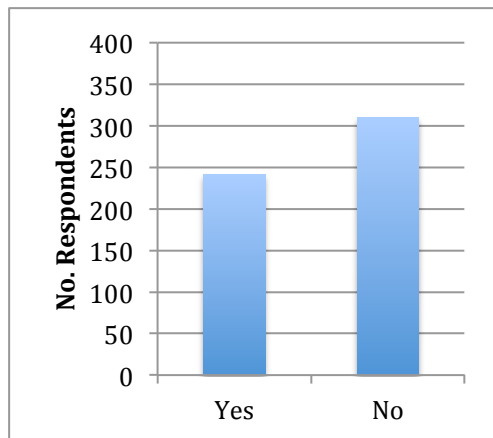
available employment options, the next few questions address the perceived role security contracting plays in the individual's career development.

To begin, I ask whether the individual thinks of security contracting as a 'stepping stone' to their next job. The term 'stepping stone' implies something temporary but also indicates an alignment and trajectory where security contracting presents an opportunity to further a career path upon which the individual has embarked.

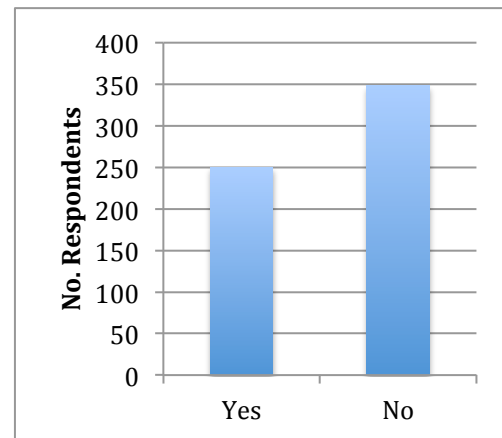
Question: I think of security contracting as a stepping-stone to my next job.

Table 12.c (n=1150)

1 to 6 months in civilian life



7 + months in civilian life



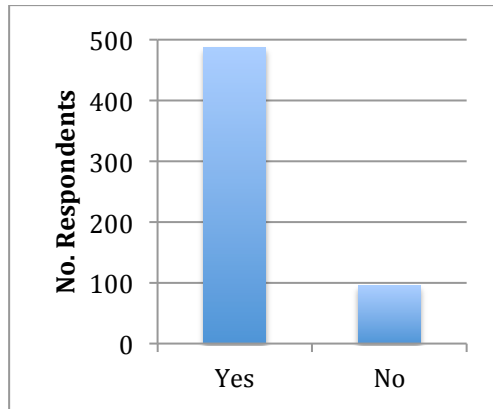
There is no significant difference between those who spent a shorter amount of time in civilian life to those with longer. Overall 57% of the survey population do not think of security contracting as a stepping-stone to their next job. This may be they believe security contracting to be a long-term career (addressed next) or they do not believe security contracting to be something progressive or naturally leading them to their next employment.

On the other hand, 43% of overall survey respondents agreed it was indeed was a stepping-stone to their next job. For this group security contracting may be a tool or experience they use to arrive at their next job. I infer from this finding the respondent has some sort of a plan in which security contracting plays a specific part in the respondent's career development.

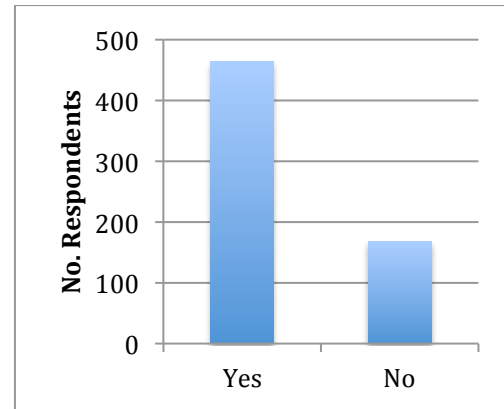
*Question: Being a security contractor is a long-term career for me (4 years or longer)*⁵⁰⁸

Table 12.d (n=1216)

1 to 6 months in civilian life



7 + months in civilian life



These data illuminate further the respondent's trajectory after military service where security contracting is perceived as a planned and viable career option. 78% of the overall survey respondents indicate that security contracting is a long-term career for them regardless the amount of time they spent in civilian life.

Yet, there is a significant difference in those who answered 'no' across both sets ($p=2.1E-05$). Those with longer in civilian life were more likely to not think of security contracting as a long-term career versus those with a shorter duration of time spent in civilian life.

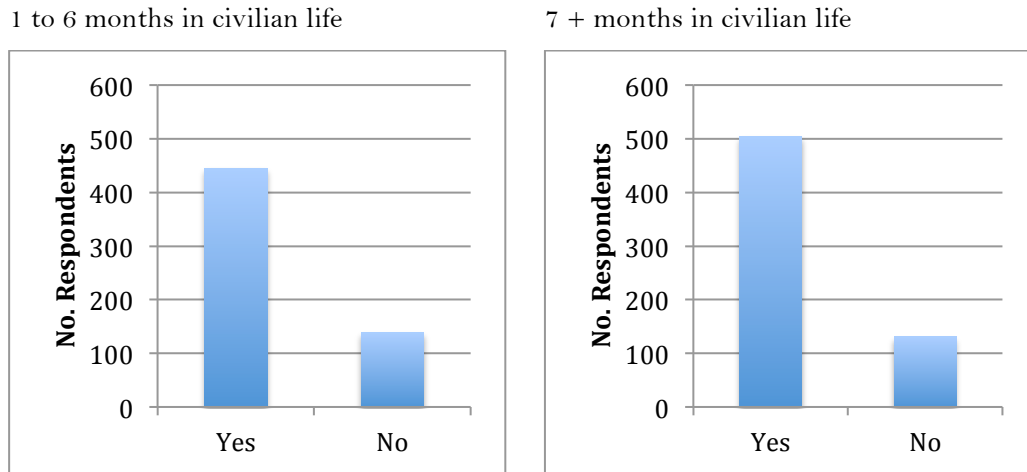
The data presented by both sets are significant because it confirms security contracting 1) to be a career and 2) a long-term career. The first finding is significant because it demonstrates the respondent's perception of security contracting as a career. The second significant as it demonstrates it is a career in which the respondent plans to be in long-term. I infer from the data that security contracting, for these respondents, is not a 'stop gap' or a 'quick fix' but a form of employment in which they see sustainability and commitment.

⁵⁰⁸ The term 'long-term career' with the definition of 4 years or longer was based on contemporary movement within the civilian labour force, which is what Service leavers enter. A RAND Corporation report found 'on average, civilians had seven different jobs in the first 10 years of their career.' 'Identifying Civilian Labour Market Realities for Army Officer Stay/Leave Decisions' 2012. Further, civilian employees in both the US and UK experience a relatively high turn-over rate compared to twenty years ago when one may be expected to have between 1 and 3 jobs their entire life. Today, a high rate of movement within the labour force is not only accepted, it is encouraged in order for the individual to be more versatile and experienced.

While most respondents view security contracting to be long-term, they indicate they have also thought about a career beyond security contracting.

Question: I have thought about my career beyond security contracting

Figure 12.e (n=1220)



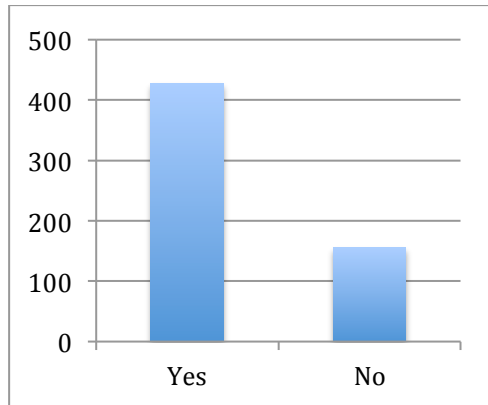
The majority of the overall respondents (78%) indicated that security contracting is a long-term career, and thought about career paths building on security contracting. This indicates that decisions to be a security contractor and career development arising out of this decision are carefully thought-out choices, after considering alternate civilian career possibilities. My data do not support a hypothesis that this career choice represents a 'natural gravitation' where the individual is on 'autopilot.' My survey and questions support the alternate hypothesis that security contracting is an active and planned for career after military service, and one that has been considered within the wider context of the individual's life.

This career may include other forms of employment within the security sector where security contracting is the starting point from which to develop a career, much like moving up through the ranks in the military. To determine if this was true, I asked respondents if they planned to stay in the security sector after being a security contractor.

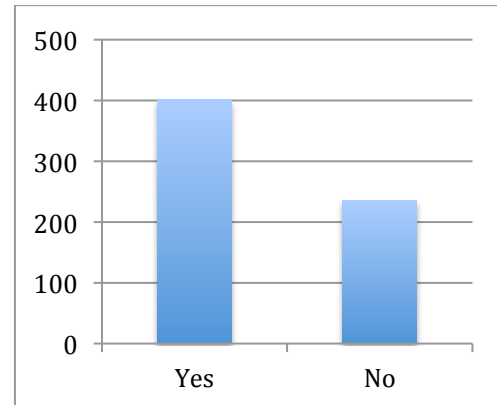
Question: I plan to stay in the security sector after being a private security contractor, i.e. management, administration, etc.

Figure 12.f (n=1220)

1 to 6 months in civilian life



7 + months in civilian life



Overall, 68% of all survey respondents indicate they plan to stay in the security sector after the particular job of being a security contractor.

Of those who spent longer in civilian life responding 'no' to the question, about one-third indicated they do not plan to stay in the security sector. This is a significant finding because it supports the argument that security contracting plays a different role in the individual's transition, depending on time spent in civilian life. Here, data support the argument that those with a longer amount of time in civilian life are more experientially motivated to become contractors. For example, to regain a sense of belonging experience during military service, or to feel camaraderie once felt during military service. It also indicates the individual has not necessarily reconciled their experience in the military with their experience in civilian life. While the individual may have been in civilian life for a long period time, the transition from the military may not be completed.

In summary, an individual perceives security contracting to be a viable career option after the military service, and one in which they have given time, thought and preparation in order to become a security contractor. Security contracting is not a 'tunnel vision' decision by an individual. Only a minority of the survey population believed it to be the only choice for them in a post-military employment. The majority perceived themselves to be capable of other types of employment, and had considered other employment choices before becoming a security contractor after military service.

Most significant is the individual's perception that security contracting is a viable long-term career, in which they see themselves performing different functions (e.g. management or administration) as a natural career path progression. This indicates that these individuals believe contracting to be a profession in which there is professional growth and the use of skills, knowledge and experience that is already in the individual's possession.

5.6 Transition: Analyses of Social Networks of Survey Population

The second theme to be presented in the survey is 'Networks.' The questions in this section were designed to develop an idea of the respondent's social network in regards to how they found employment as a security contractor and whether this network was influential in them becoming a private security contractor. Here the survey's bifurcation of time in civilian life ends.

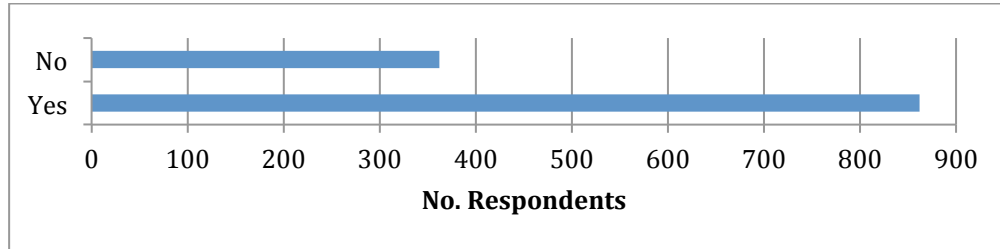
Social networks are influential to how 'we' think, feel and what we do. The influence of networks may not only influence an individual to make a decision but also inform their identity. Security contractors, by using the network they developed in the military, rely on these networks in which to not only secure post-military employment, but to also replicate the environment of the military, whether intentional or not.

The following data show security contractors report being influenced by other security contractors previously known during military service. These informal social networks are comprised of the respondent's former military colleagues, friends and acquaintances and prove instrumental in security employment as a security contractor. Additionally these social networks serve as informal vetting mechanisms in which another security contractor's military experience plays a role in the respondent's level of trust and comfort felt on a contract. This validation and certification of others by their past military experience is important in developing trust and cohesion among security contractor 'teams', discussed further in Chapter 8. The data on the social networks of security contractors is a significant finding in regards to the recruitment and retention of security contractors by the PMSCs.

5.5.1 Social Networks (Figures 13.a – 13.e)

Question: Before I left the military I knew one or more people employed as a security contractor

Figure 13.a (n=1224)



These data indicates most (70%) survey respondents knew already-employed private security contractors while the respondent was still serving in the military.

It is significant to note that a minority of respondents (~25%), while in the military, did not know one or more security contractors. This observation may help explain my earlier findings (*see 5.X.X*) that security contracting was not considered an option while the individual was in the military for around one-third of the overall population surveyed. Further to this I asked how many other security contractors they knew before they became on themselves.

Question: How many people did you know that were ALREADY security contractors BEFORE you became one?

Figure 13.b (n=1254)

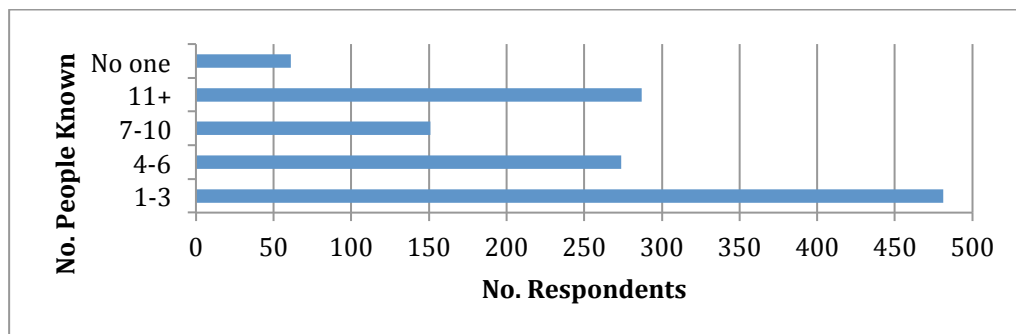


Figure 13.b shows the extent of an individual respondent's social network of security contractors, prior to that individual becoming a security contractor.

Prior to becoming a security contractor, the majority (95%) of survey respondents knew someone that was already a security contractor.

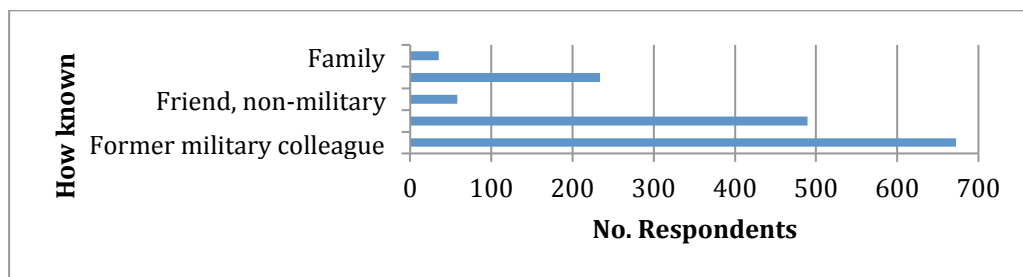
More than half of respondents (57%) reported knowing between 1 and 3 security contractors. Christakis and Fowler argue that this range represents the threshold for the highest degree of influence exerted within network theory.

A sub-set (less than 25%) of respondents demonstrated robust networks. These individuals, before becoming a security contractor, reported extensive networks of 11 or more security contractors. I speculate that individuals with such extensive networks represent an unusual cohort who are able to identify other people in a form of employment that aligns attitudes, values and norms with the individual's past employment (the military) and the employment they seek (security contracting).

Granovetter's theory of the strength of weak ties to create a robust social network posits that 'weak ties' such as links to friends of friends, or a colleague of a friend, are most influential in ultimate choices. To identify the kind of ties in an individual's network, I asked in what capacity did the survey respondents know these other individuals?

Question: In what capacity did you know these other security contractors?

Figure 13.c (n=1288)



Most of the survey population (78%) demonstrated weak ties in their networks as they reported knowing other security contractors as a former military colleague or former military friend, before becoming a security contractor.

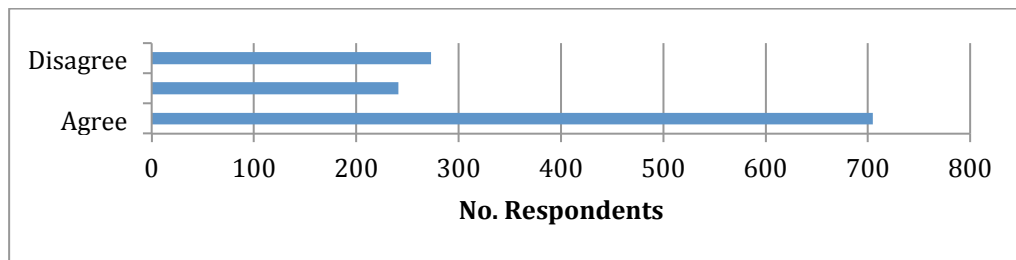
The novel finding that 'strong ties' dominated the networks of survey respondents challenges Granovetter's theory on choices made by military veteran-turned-security contractors to secure employment as a security contractor.

My findings strongly suggest that, among survey respondents, social networks that influence career decisions to become a security contractor were robust in number and strong due to inclusion of multiple links to people with significant experience in military service.

Next, I asked if respondents felt their network and links to other security contractors influenced their decision to become a security contractor.

Question: Knowing other people who were private security contractors BEFORE I became one had an influence on me becoming a private security contractor

Figure 13.d (n=1219)



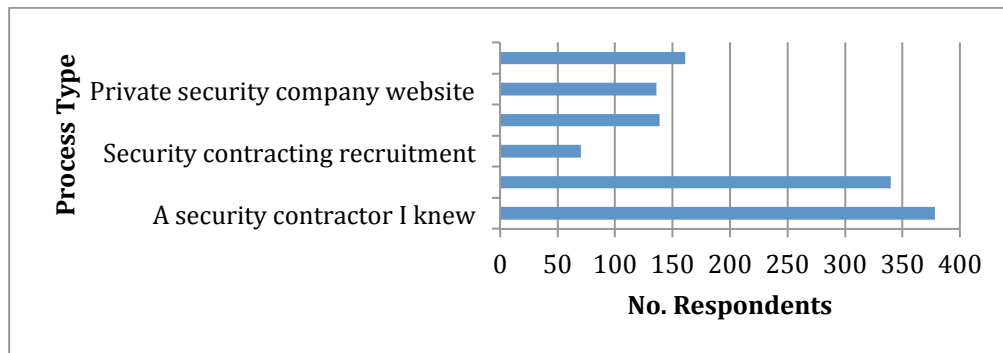
Just over half of the survey population, 58%, agreed that knowing other private security contractors before they became one influenced their career decision to become one.

A subset of respondents (20%) neither 'agreed' nor 'disagreed', suggesting that factors other than knowing others may have influenced their career decision to become a security contractor.

To better understand how influential these networks were, I asked if these informal social networks were then leveraged to secure employment as a security contractor.

Question: How did you begin the process of becoming a security contractor?

Figure 13.e (n=1224)



Interestingly, just over half of the survey population (59%) leveraged their informal social network of security contractors to make the decision to become a security contractor.

Of those who leveraged other security contractors they knew to begin the process of securing employment as a contractor, being contacted by a known security contractor was slightly more likely (n=378) than those who reached out and contacted a security contractor they knew (n=340).

This also reflects that recruitment practices are fairly informal, but to what degree is unknown. While the individual may have been contacted, or contacted a known security contractor it is unclear whether that secured an interview from which formal hiring practices took over or whether the process was informal throughout.

Survey respondents were less likely to search PMSC company websites or basic online searchers to support a career decision to become a security contractor. The least likely strategy to support career decisions was leveraging security contracting recruitment websites. These results that informal networks are dominant in the process of becoming a security contractor are important and novel.

11% of the population indicated 'other' as an answer choice. There was an Open Text Box in which to expand upon this answer. Most responses confirmed they contacted either someone they knew who was a security contractor, or someone they knew as a security contractor contacted them. For a full list of these responses, see Appendix X.

In summary, survey respondents demonstrate a robust and influential social network of security contractors, which influenced their decision to become a security contractor.

5.5.2 Security Contracting Experience (Figures 14.a – 14.h)

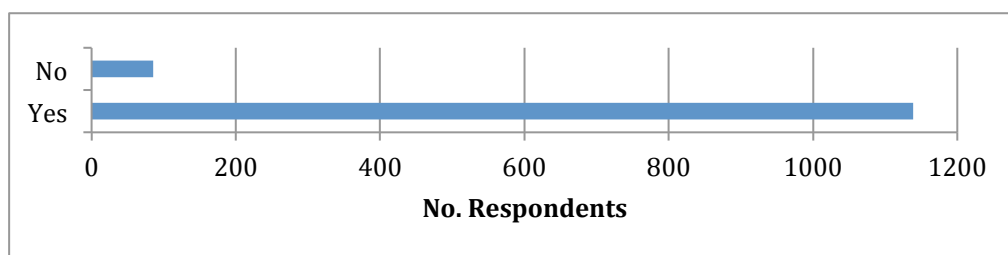
The next questions asked how experienced they are as security contractors; the environment of security contracting; how they develop trust among other security contractors absent the shared indoctrination of military service; and how they perceive life after security contracting in social terms, e.g. impact on their family and type of transition.

The most significant findings of this section are the majority of respondents confirm security contracting to be a similar experience to their military service, including a similarity of environment. Another significant finding is the type of ‘vetting’ each respondent does of other security contractors based on the type of prior experience of others. Overall, knowing other security contractors who have similar experiences to the respondent gave the respondent ‘peace of mind.’ Such prior experience appears to engender a high level of trust among contractors.

To begin, I investigated the extent of prior experience of survey respondents as security contractors.

Question: Have you completed one or more contracts as a private security contractor?

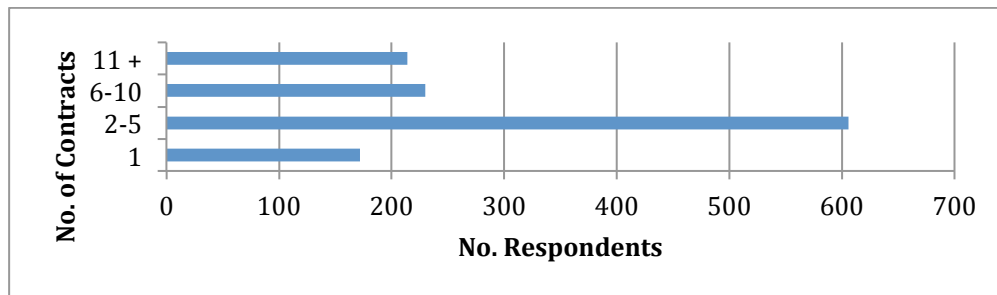
Figure 14.a (n=1224)



The majority of the survey population (93%) has had one or more contracts as a security contractor, demonstrating that their answers were based on work experiences, and not speculation.

Question: If yes to the previous question, how many contracts have you been on?

Figure 14.b (n=1222)



Overall this survey population reported in-depth experience with security contracting, as only 14% having been on one contract.

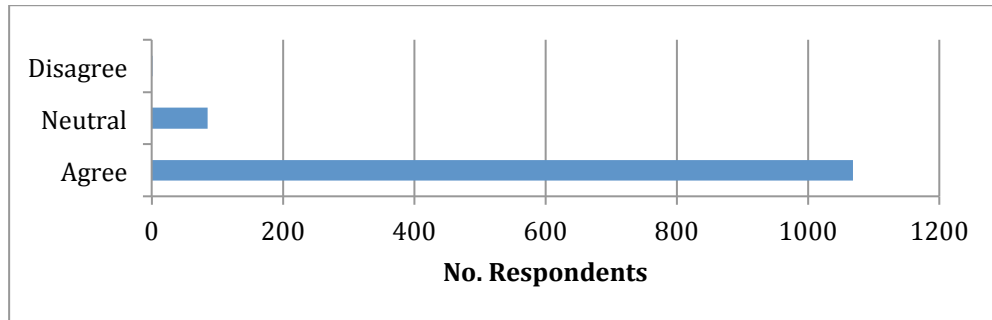
More than one-third of the survey population has significant experience as they had engaged in 6 or more contracts.

The majority of responses reported respondents had a history of between 2 and 5 contracts. This is a significant finding because individuals responded to questions of security contracting as a career based on their experience and knowing of the PMSC industry as employees.

Having established the work experience of respondents, I asked if the individual agreed with the statement that the environment of security contracting is similar to that of the military environment.

Question: The environment of security contracting is similar to the environment of the military in terms of language and operational conduct.

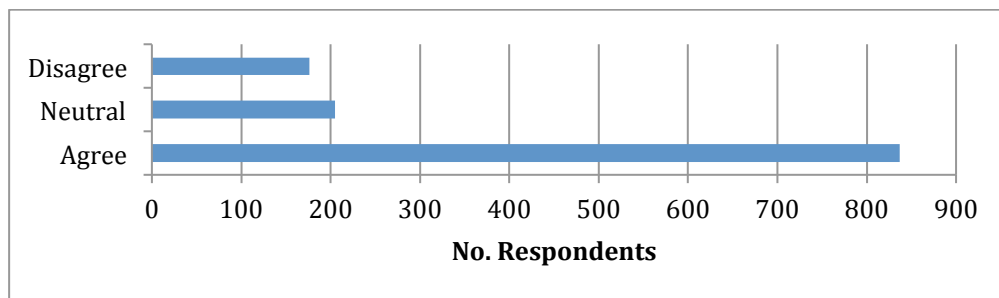
Figure 14.c (n=1221)



87% of survey respondents agreed that the language and operational conduct was similar to that of the military, suggesting that the individual will be familiar with the security contracting work environment and its expectations.

Question: Security contracting is a similar experience to when I served in the military

Figure 14.d (n=1281)

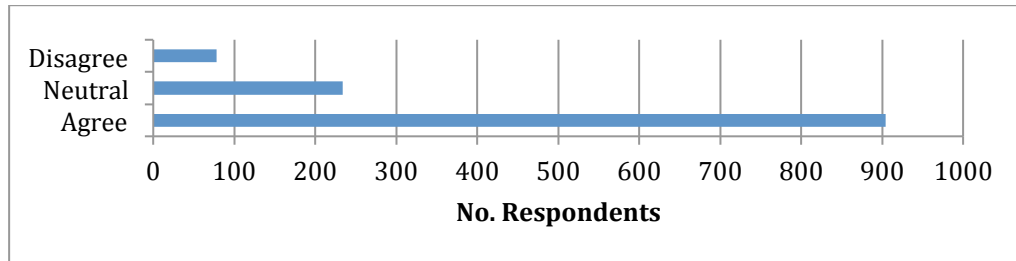


Although 69% agreed that the work experiences in security contracting were similar to those they experienced while in the military, the variability in answers between 'disagree' and 'neutral' suggests the question may have been vague and/or confusing.

To understand more about how prior military experience may engender trust and/or cohesion among security contractors who did not train together in the military, I asked questions about experience and trust.

Question: I am comfortable working with other private security contractors I did not know previously

Figure 14.e (n=1216)



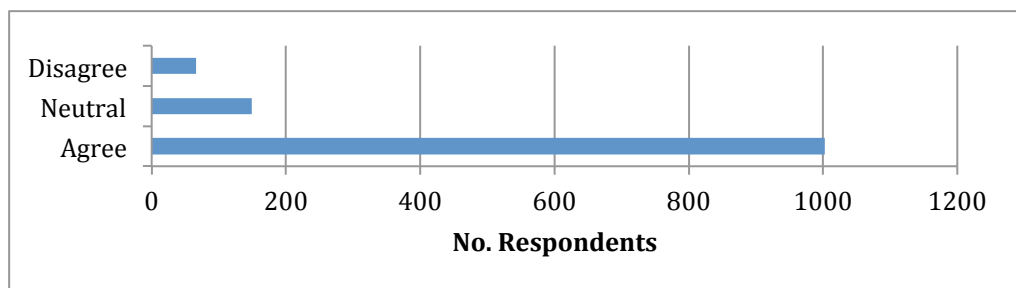
Approximately three quarters of the survey respondents (74%) agreed to feeling comfortable working with other security contractors whom they had not known previously.

These data suggest that security contractors undergo significant team-building and training to develop effective teams composed of individuals who have not previously worked together.

I asked how working with other security contractors who had prior military experience contributed to this level of comfort.

Question: Knowing other private security contractors I work with have prior military experience gives me peace of mind

Figure 14.f (n=1218)



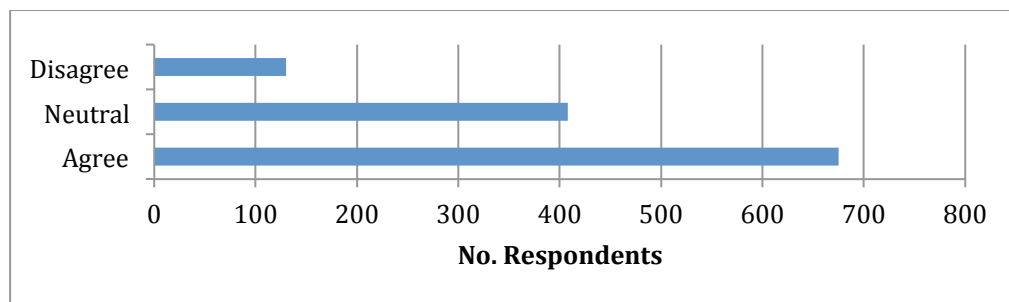
Not only did respondents indicate, in the previous questions, that they are comfortable working with security contractors they did not know, but most respondents also agreed that knowing other security contractors with prior military experience gave them peace of mind (82%).

These data suggest prior military service as a hiring requirement of a PMSC serves to bolster recruitment and retention among other security contractors by way of the assurance resulting from others prior military experience. Security contracting does not offer the same type of training and indoctrination to that of the military, and there is often little back-up support as one may have experienced in the military. These data demonstrate that prior military experience appears to be important in developing trust among security contractors.

The next question explored the issue of trust among security contractors.

Question: I trust the other security contractors I work with

Figure 14.g (n=1213)



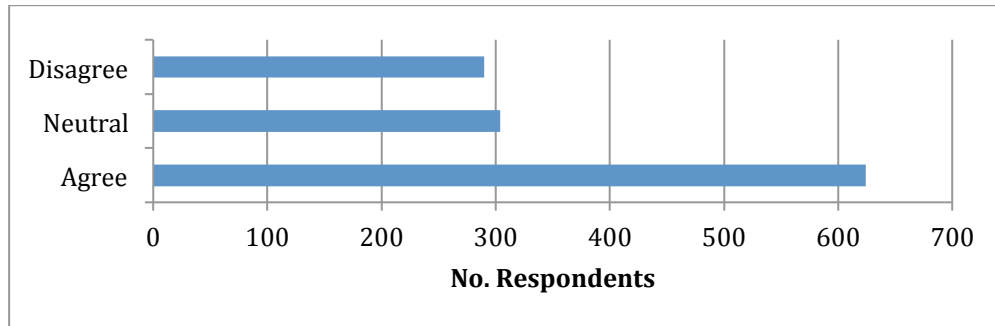
In general, just over half of the survey population agreed (56%) they trust the security contractors with whom they work.

About a third (34%) indicated 'neutral' suggesting that trust may not be important to a subset of contractors. There also may have been reservations about using the word 'trust' that were not provided in the answer choices.

To investigate the extent of trust among security contractors, I asked if prior military experience specifically engendered trust, so that prior military service becomes a validation or certification that an individual is 'accepted' or 'trustworthy'.

Question: I only trust other private security contractors who have the same background/experience as I do

Figure 14.h (n=1218)



About half of the survey respondents (51%) agreed they only trust other private security contractors who have the same background/experience as they do. This is a significant finding because it indicates that prior military experience signals a social identity that is recognisable, known and one which the individual will share with other security contractors. It may also be that this experience allows the individual to enter the 'social identity' group of other security contractors. This perhaps explains what an individual seeks from contracting: belonging, communication and/or worthiness. It is interesting that while an individual is comfortable working with those they did not know previously irrespective of military experience, prior military service provides some comfort and peace of mind. A minority (24%) who responded with 'neutral' or 'disagree' showed there was a subset for whom another's prior military experience did not necessarily engender trust.

This is a significant finding because it affirms, through more than one question, how trust may develop during security contracting. For many, implicit trust exists based on the validation of prior military service in their fellow contractors. My survey suggests that trust is not always derived from the prior military experience of other security contractors.

The development of trust in contracting when fellow contractors do not have prior military experience, speaks to the professionalization of security contractors. Training and cohesion distinguishes this type of employment from other types of civilian employment, and contributes to establishing security contracting as a socially acceptable career as individuals transition from the military.

In summary, the survey population displays highly populated social network of security contractors known to them from their military service. Such networks clearly influence the career decision to become a security contractor. Survey respondents were not naïve in

their career choice, as most had had significant experience of contracting at the time they completed the survey. Based on their military experience, survey respondents indicated that prior military experience of other contractors played a role in their level of comfort and contributed to the development of trust.

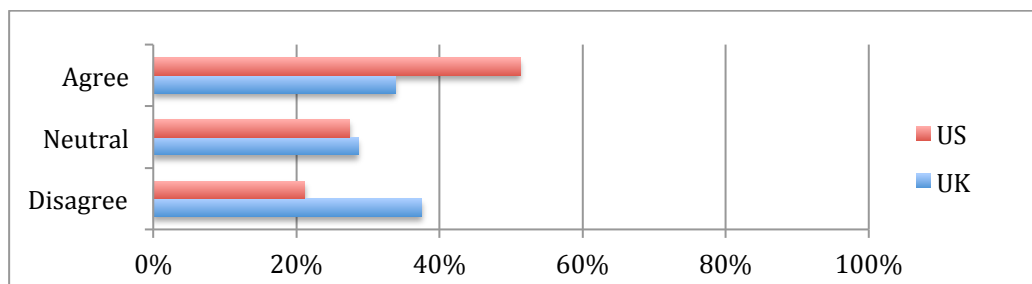
The last part of the survey explored the attitudes and values of the survey respondents. As explained in Chapter 4 ‘Methodology’ the following four sections used the same 5-point Likert scales described in Volker Franke and Marc von Boemcken’s survey on former law-enforcement personnel-turned-private security contractors.⁵⁰⁹ The scales used were reported as ‘Machiavellianism’, ‘Patriotism’, ‘Motive’ and ‘Job Engagement’.

5.6 Analyses of Attitudes and Values

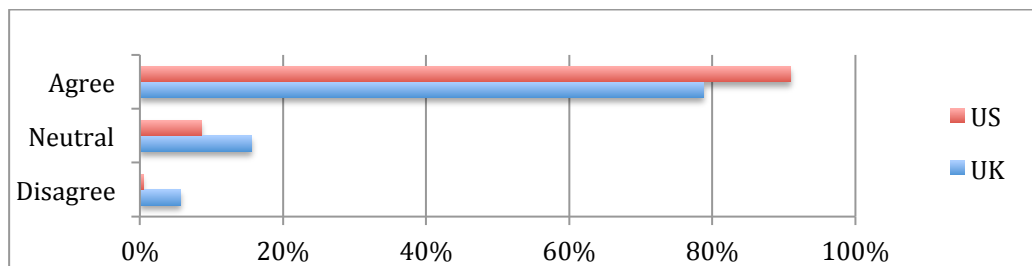
The attitudes and values data collected of the survey population developed a wider context for individuals as they transition from the military to civilian employment. The first Likert scale assessed ‘Machiavellianism’, by gauging a respondent’s belief about the state, the military and war.

5.6.1 Machiavellianism (Table 3)

When I decided to sign on with a security firm, I expected to engage in actual fighting

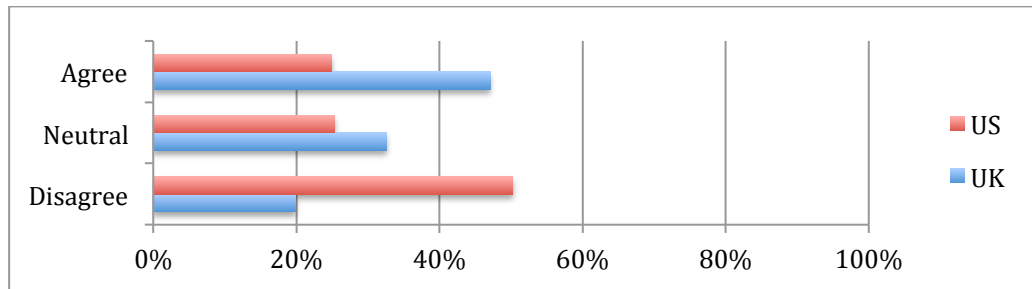


Sometimes war is necessary to protect national interests

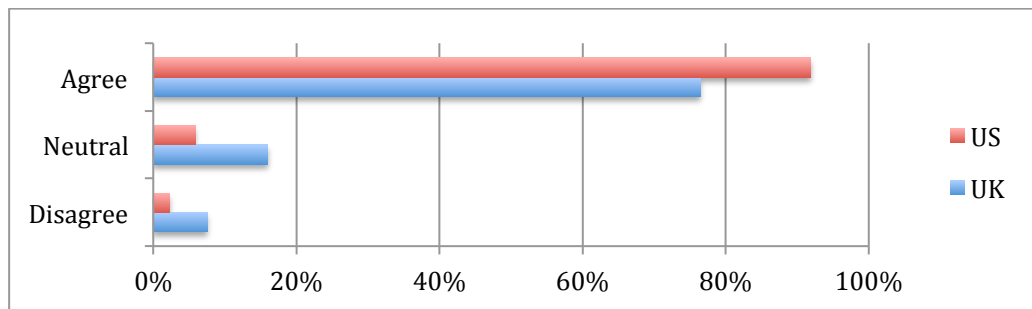


⁵⁰⁹ Franke and von Boemcken (2011)

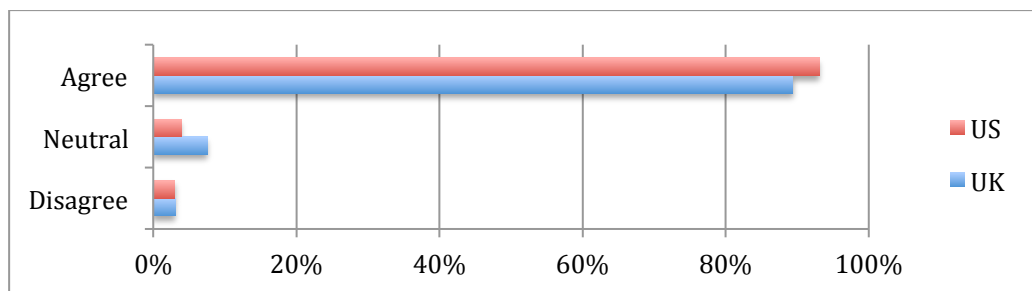
In today's world, peacekeeping and other non-combatant activities should be central to the military's function



The military's primary focus should be preparation for and conduct of combat operations



Human nature being what it is, there will always be war

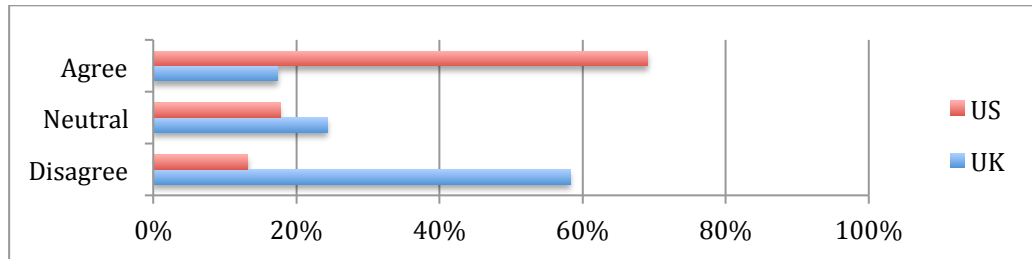


The responses indicate that most of this survey population holds militaristic values. This is not surprising because all survey respondents had had prior military service and were indoctrinated to varying degrees on the state's relationship to war.

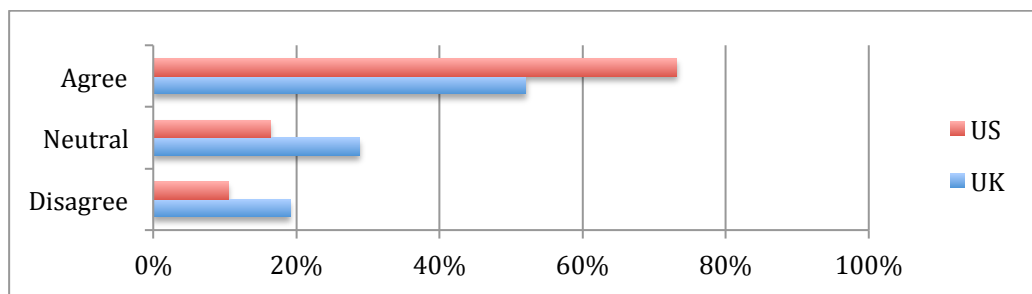
The responses also support common beliefs about conflict among the security contracting population, confirming that the majority of respondents shared a similar mind-set.

5.6.2 Patriotism (Table 4)

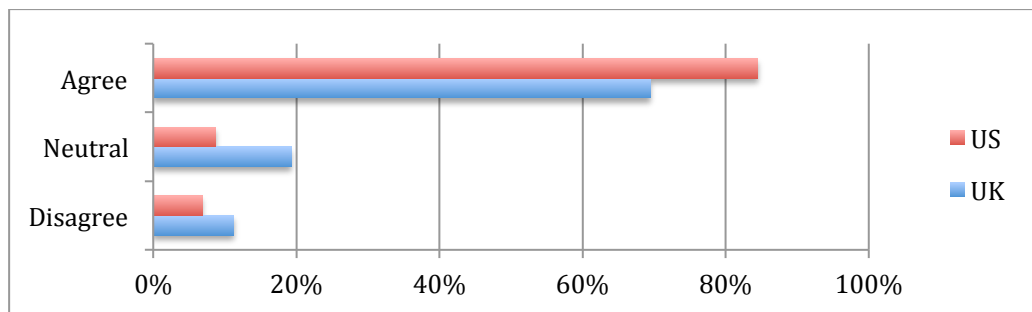
I look upon my work as a security contractor as a 'calling' where I can serve my country



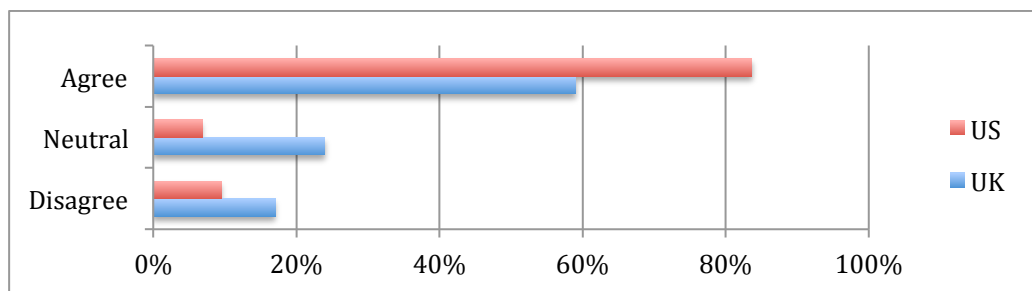
We should strive for loyalty to our own country before we can afford to consider world brotherhood



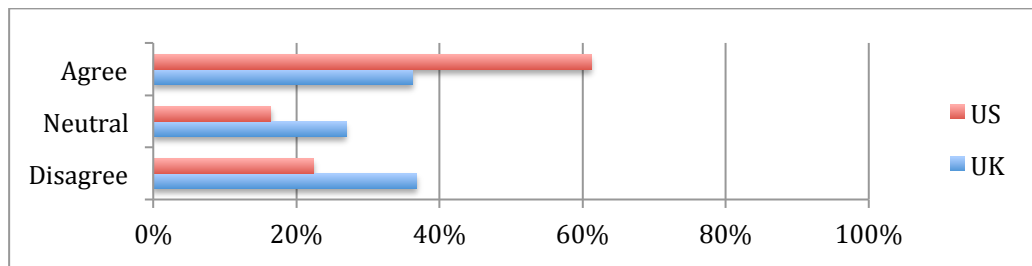
A citizen should always feel that his/her primary allegiance is to his/her country



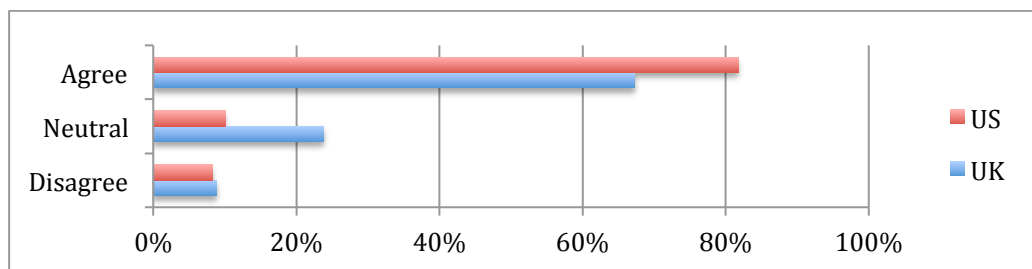
All citizens should be willing to fight for their country



The strongest indicator of good citizenship is performance of military service in defense of one's country



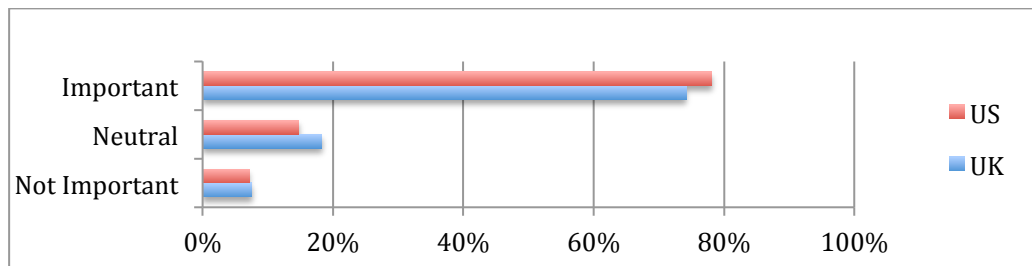
The promotion of patriotism should be an important aim of citizenship education



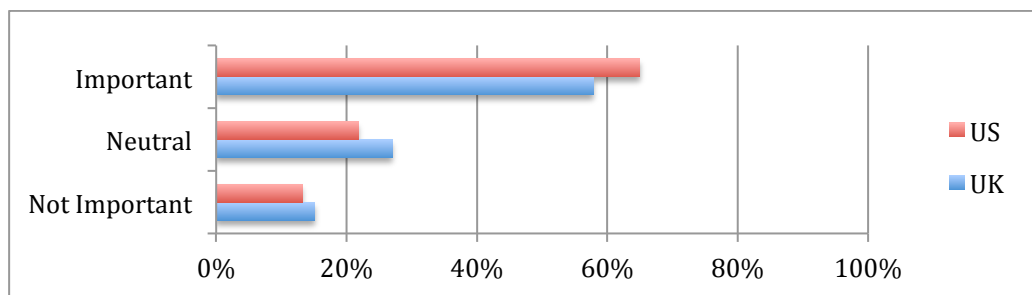
A significant finding from these data rests on the respondent's primary allegiance (third statement down, 72% 'Agree') to their own country. Such data directly challenges traditional notions of 'mercenaries' who are defined as having no particular loyalty to any one country. Survey respondents were therefore qualitatively distinctly different from the traditional concept of mercenaries.

5.6.3 Motive (Table 5)

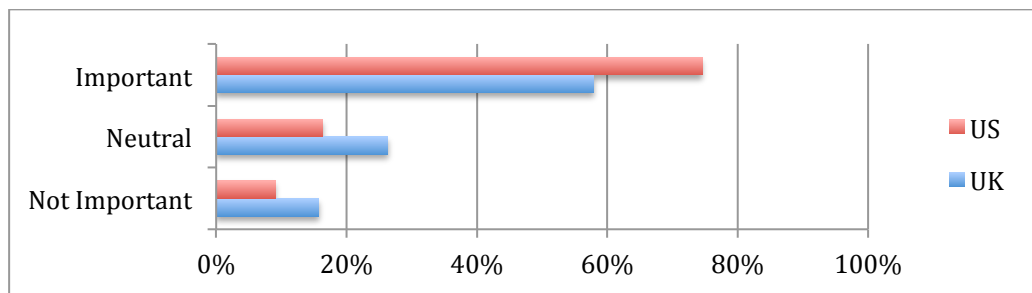
To Face and meet new challenges



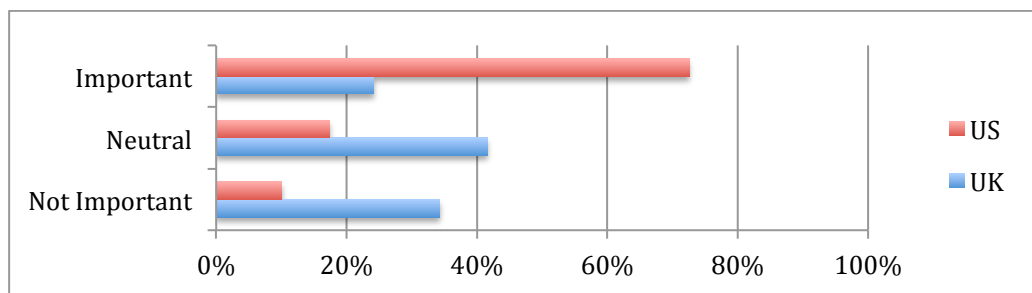
To help others



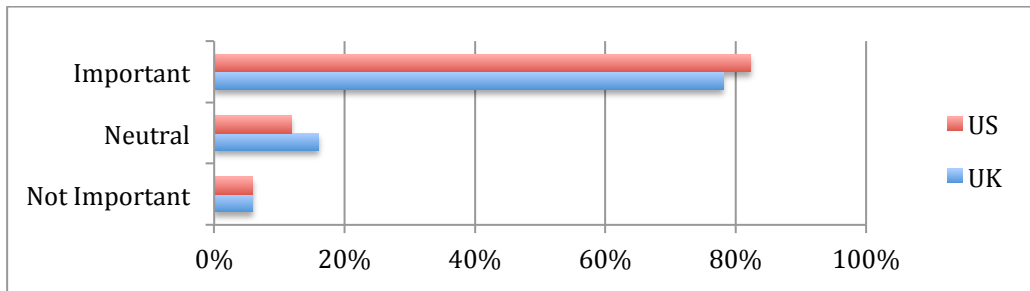
To feel like my work makes a difference



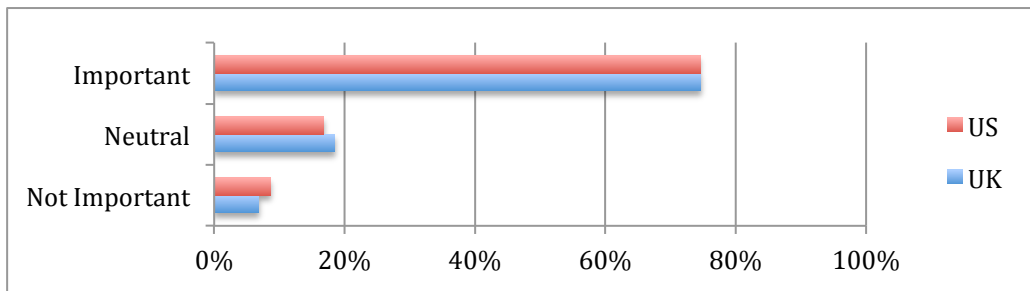
To serve my country



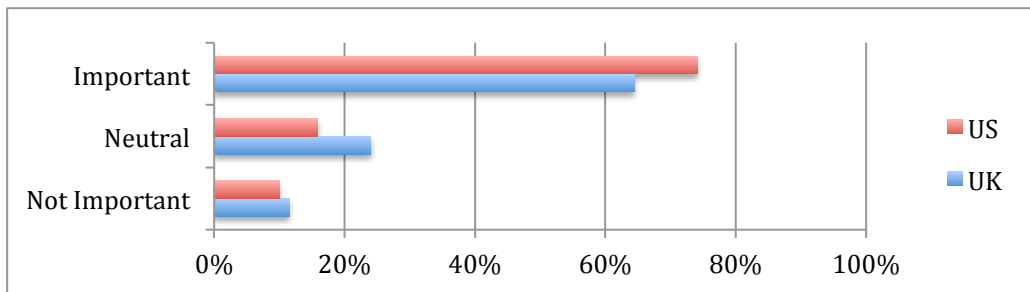
To make more money than in my previous job



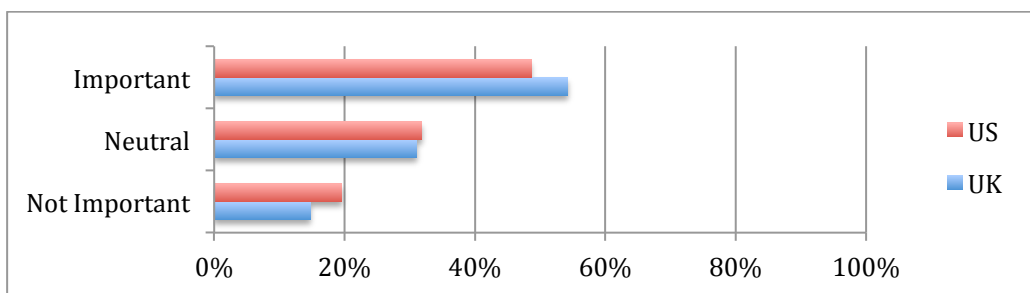
For personal growth



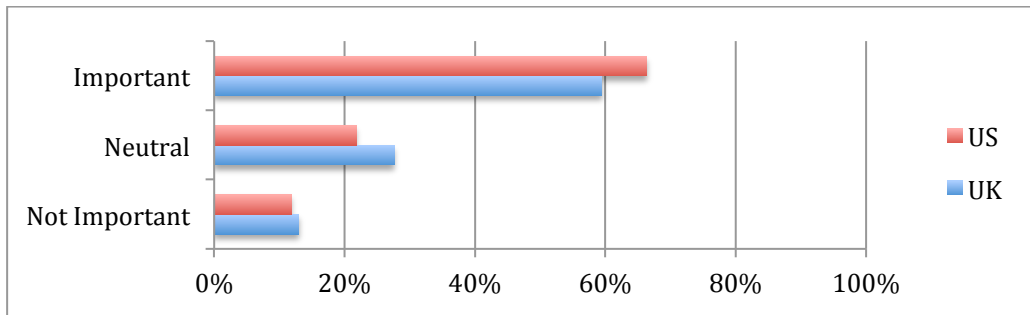
To seek adventure and excitement



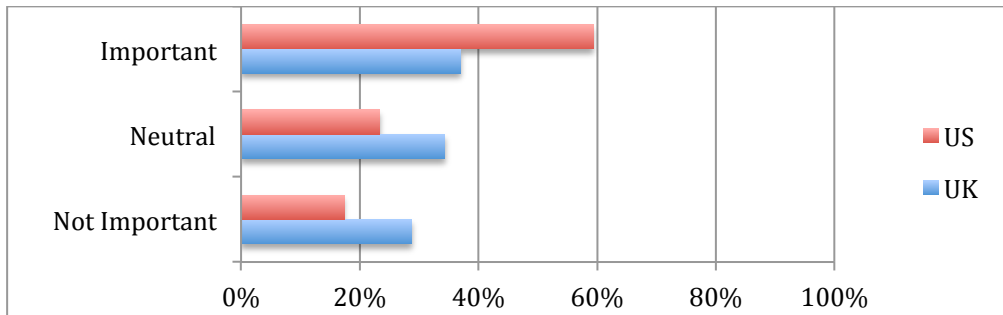
To improve my chances of finding a better job



To travel and visit new places



To be in a military environment



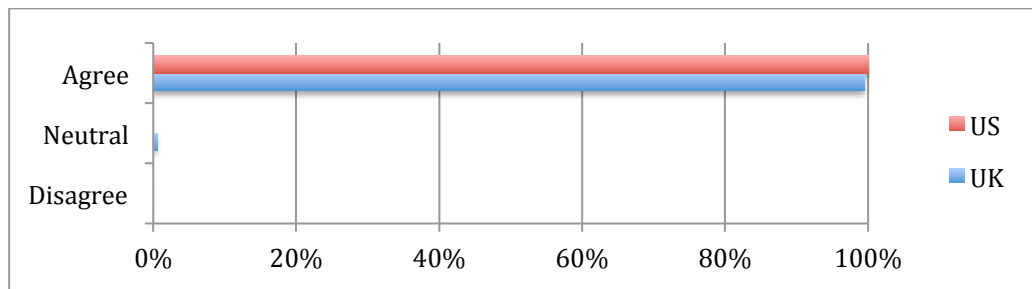
A significant finding is the similarity of responses for 'to face and meet new challenges' (75%), 'to make more money than in my previous job' (80%), and 'for personal growth' (76%). Respondents appear to be as motivated by personal growth goals, as by money. This significant finding challenges assumptions that security contracting is all about the money.

These motivations are similar to what Woodruff and Kelty reported in their study of enlistment propensities and motivations of combat soldiers (discussed in Chapter 3). This is a significant finding, confirming prior data that motivations underlying a choice of security contracting is not qualitatively different from that of the military. However, security contractors remain a distinctive population as their career choice is based on more motivation than remuneration. This distinction separates them from other types of employees and civilian employment, and supports the argument that security contracting is an emerging career profession.

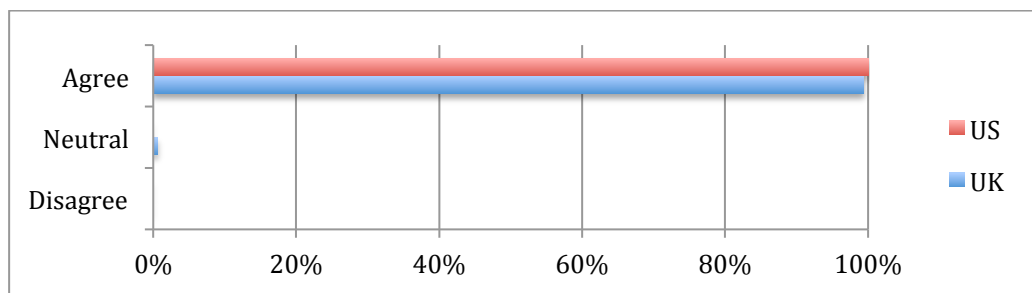
This qualitative similarity supports the argument that the socio-cultural nature of private security contracting is similar to that of the military and engenders a social cohesiveness of identity among the group.

5.6.4 Job Engagement (Table 6)

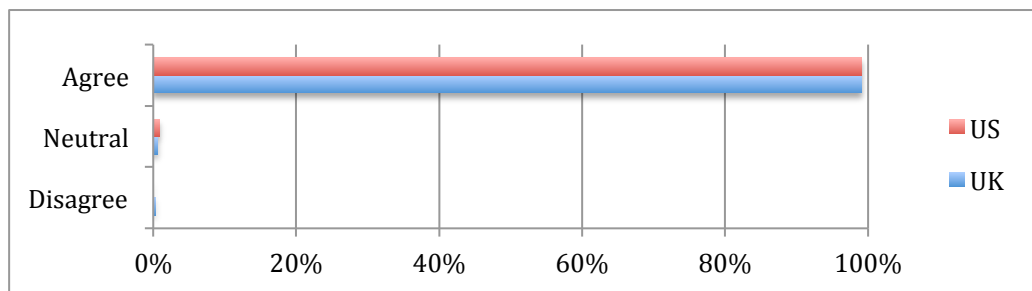
I am committed to performing well at my job



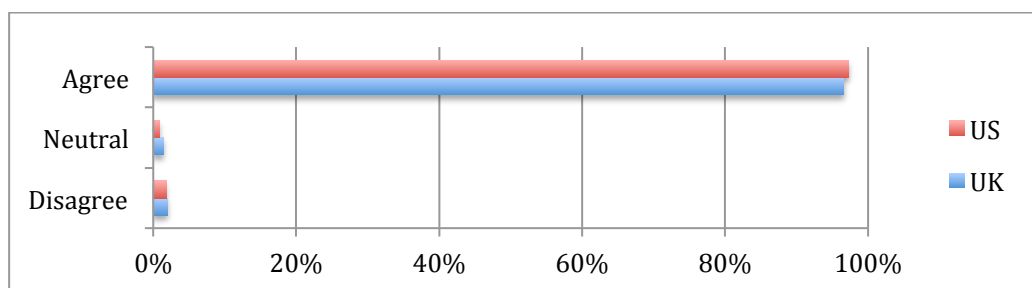
I feel personal responsibility for my job performance



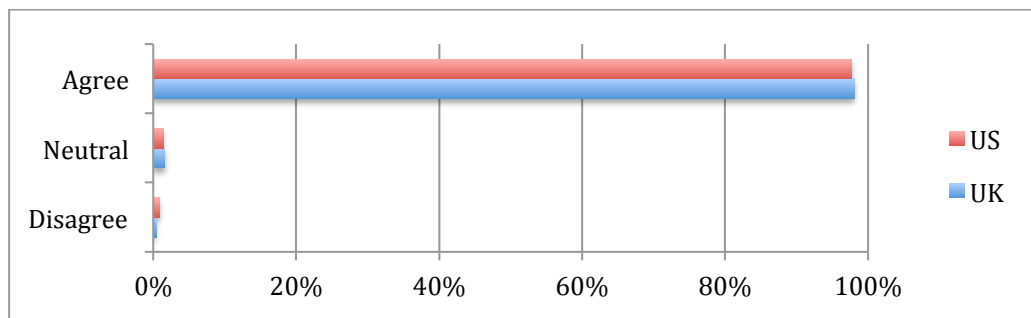
How well I do in my job matters a great deal to me



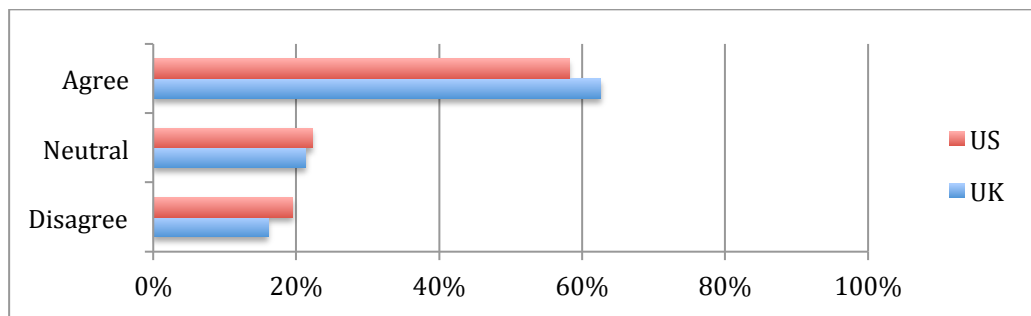
I really care about the outcomes that result from my job performance



I invest a large part of myself into my job performance



I feel recognized by my employer for my job performance



These data display a remarkably dedicated workforce because most or all survey respondents showing strong employment engagement in their answers: personal responsibility (100%), work performance (98%), commitment to work (99%), individual investment (96%) and concern for job performance outcomes (96%). These findings add support the study by Volker Franke and Marc von Bomecken of former law enforcement personnel-turned-security contractors (see Appendix X).

This question addresses the argument made in Chapter 2 of professionalization of security contracting and the perception of it being a viable option after military service. I wanted to directly address a dominant theme in military to civilian transition literature on the loss of recognition when leaving a military identity to reconstruct a civilian identity.

About two-thirds of survey respondents (63%) reported they felt recognized by their employer. The survey supports the idea that the PMSC industry provides recognition and thus a feeling of belonging to the individual, imperative to any professional organisation.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter presents empirical data describing the sample population of military veterans who became security contractors, of which 46% percent went directly into contracting and

the remaining 54% who spent longer than 6 months in civilian life. The survey collected data on basic demographics of this population, which included women for the first time, as well as novel questions on transition, networks, experience and attitudes and values. The major findings presented at the beginning of the chapter demonstrate the sample population reports significant military experience. Their profile of education attainment are similar to that reported for civilian populations of the US and UK. Survey respondents have robust military networks they use proactively to seek and secure employment as a security contractor. Of great interest to the field, security contractors considered their work to be a long-term career employment.

The sample population displays high levels of dedication and pride in security contracting as a form of employment, and was equally motivated by money and opportunities for personal growth, and new career development challenges. They displayed a high level of preparation, planning and execution of their decision to become a security contractor after military service.

The social and physical environment of security contracting appears similar to that of military service. Development of trust among security contractors depended equally upon knowing others had prior military service. While important, prior military experience of others was not prerequisite to trust between security contractors. While prior military experience is often a requirement for employment as a security contractor with a PMSC, prior military experience of fellow contractors to facilitate 'trust' and 'peace of mind' appears to be valuable in the recruitment and retention of this particular labour force.

The next chapter presents the data from the interviews, followed by a theoretical discussion of both the interview and survey data in Chapter 8.

Chapter 6

The Transition to Civilian Life and Becoming a Security Contractor, Interviews of US and UK private security contractors with prior military experience

This chapter presents the data collected from the interviews with individual security contractors. The major findings of the interview data are as follows.

6.1 Major Findings

- Security contractors consider themselves and other security contractors they work with as professionals based on the skills, knowledge and expertise gained from prior military experience. These skills were correlated to prior military rank.
- Professionalism was viewed by the sample population as operational conduct that relied on the use of a similar language, skill set and past military experience. The evaluation of operational conduct in which to qualify someone as a 'professional security contractor' was ongoing.
- Social networks were the most significant facilitator in securing employment as a private security contractor among Service leavers.
- The perception of security contracting as a long-term career mitigated the effects of a short amount of time in civilian life between leaving the military and becoming a security contractor to a degree.
- Becoming a security contractor prolongs the development of the individual's civilian network. This indicates that those who plan to be a security contractor as a form of short-term employment will delay their reintegration into civilian life after military service.

6.2 Homogeneity of Interview Sample

The average age of the interviewees, all of whom were men, was 40 years old. The average length of military service was 13 years; 4 years being the shortest time served, and 25 years the longest. Most of the interviewees were non-commissioned in both the US and UK Armed Forces. Nearly half (49%) had a university degree. The average time spent working as a security contractor was 5 years; the longest having been a security contractor for 15 years, and the shortest 1.5 years.

The average time spent in civilian life between leaving the military and becoming a security contractor was 3 months. The longest amount of time between military service and contracting was 20 years; the shortest was no time (0 days) in civilian life. All participants had combat experience during military service.

6.3 Historical Perspective: Motivation & Influence: Review of Reasons for Joining the Military

Almost all interviewees' perceived rewards associated with joining the military. These rewards fell broadly into two categories: belonging and personal growth.

Belonging includes: *camaraderie, brotherhood, distinctiveness, loyalty, recognition, social identity and a common language.*

Personal growth includes: *social mobility by way of education, acquisition of skills and training, and feelings that include life purpose, fulfillment, structure, discipline and social support.*

There was no one reason given as *the* reason why an individual joined the military. The decision to join was remembered as being influenced by a family history of military service or by the appeal of belonging to 'something greater.' This sense of belonging manifested itself as a sense of recognition, camaraderie, accepting the military ethos, and as a contribution to the greater good.

Chris: *'I was 19 when I joined. I grew up in Northern Ireland and have a lot of friends and family that suffered under the hands of terrorism. So it was something I could do, do my bit as it were. That's why I joined up, to fight against the IRA.'*

Harry: *'I was around 22 or 23 when I joined the military. I liked what the [British] Army was doing. It was a time when we were coming to the end of the 20th century and there were a lot of UN peacekeeping missions. I was*

idealistic and thought I could save the world and do some good. So the news for me was places like Bosnia and Sierra Leone. I knew friends that were doing and enjoying it and I wanted to do the same.'

For other interviewees, joining the military enabled personal growth as it provided opportunities for upward social mobility.

Tom: *'I was 16 years old and feeling the influence of a hard economy in 1985, where there wasn't much else to do, really.'*

Will: *'The rural state I grew up in was depressing. My community did not have a lot of great jobs. In the military I could travel, be deploying on ships, and have adventure.'*

Aaron: *'I joined because I wasn't qualified for other jobs, and I wasn't interested in any apprenticeships. I saw the military as an opportunity to see quite a lot and do quite a lot.'*

Former family members who had served in the military also influenced interviewees to join. A combination of opportunities for social mobility, his grandfather's military service and the perceived distinction of belonging to the US Marine Corps influenced and motivated Will to join the military. Influenced by his grandfather who served with the US Army's 29th Infantry Division of the Penn National Guard, Will read numerous military history books, initially envisioning himself as a pilot. He soon realized his eyesight would prevent him from pursuing aviation. Instead, he joined the US Marine Corps for its distinction among the other branches of the Armed Forces.

Will: *'You're already a Marine, that in itself is pretty special, you're already elite.'*

A family history of service in Manny's family meant military life was familiar to him.

Manny: *'It was what I was brought up with. It is what I knew.'*

Having been brought up in a military family Manny felt he was aware of all the military had to offer: a variety of career opportunities, job specializations and travel. Bill also felt the influence of family and recalled in the interview that serving in the same regiment as his grandfather had served in World War I influenced his decision to join.

Some interviewees saw joining the military as an adventurous form of employment in comparison to civilian employment.

Bill: *'My dad had wanted me to join the family business after school, as a barrister. I enjoyed academic life, but I felt that there would be something missing if all I did was law.'*

Andy: *'I always wanted to be a soldier, ever since I was a little kid. It was intriguing, the travel, the military ethos, the camaraderie and all of that good stuff.'*

Two interviewees reported the physical barriers to entry for military as a type of challenge or test as motivation to join.

Brandon: *'The high point of joining the [US] Navy was passing the test to become a Navy SEAL. I saw this training as a way to test myself, and that was really appealing.'*

Daniel: *'I had really low self-confidence, and low self-esteem. I wasn't a very confident individual. Thinking back, subconsciously, I wanted to prove myself to myself. I wanted to prove I was a man [laughs] when really I was a bit of a weed.'*

Most of the interviewees joined the military at a young age. Bill was so young his parents had to sign on his behalf to join the UK Army. Only three interviewees attended university before joining the military. Of these three, only two received university degrees before joining.

Despite the various influencers and motivations to join the military, the US and UK service leavers-turned-security contractors interviewed discovered their expectations of military service and the reality of military service proved different. For some of the interviewees, military service was the best experience of their lives. For others, it was a memorable and happy time, but not an experience by which to define themselves by.

6.4 Reasons for Leaving the Military

The decision to leave the military, for both career and non-career soldiers and commissioned and non-commissioned officers interviewed, US and UK, tended to be for one of three reasons:

1. To explore opportunities for which they believed themselves eligible;
2. A perceived betrayal on the part of the military against them, and;
3. Family responsibilities.

The first reason, 'to explore opportunities for which they believed themselves to be eligible', was attributed to various self-evaluations by the interviewee that included an

evaluation of their rank, age, experience and their perceived capabilities outside of the military during a particular point in their service. Although a high level of self-confidence was expressed at the time of the self-evaluation this did not necessarily last through the exit process or the period spent seeking other civilian employment. The most common reasons for leaving the military were often given in combination with one another.

Brandon: *'I had it in my head that when I got to a senior point [in the military] I would re-evaluate if it was something I really wanted. The last couple of years I didn't feel like I was doing anything new. I don't know, you might only live one time. I'm not really sure how that works, so if that's the case I wanted to pursue other things.'*

Bill: *'After serving for about 14 and a half years, I wanted to make the right decision for my career. At that point in my military service I could have either stayed in the Army and completed the full 22 years, or give those better opportunities a try. I decided to explore those avenues and also I wanted a change and to see what normal life was all about.'*

Some were affected by experiences in which they felt an acute sense of betrayal by the military.

Andy: *'I went to Sandhurst and did really well, went to the Staff College, the junior division of the Staff College and did well there too. Whereas my contemporaries knew what jobs were coming up, my regiment was waiting for the results of my exam. My results came through, I'd done very well, I was in the top twenty-percent, and I was just annoyed with them for not having some faith in me. Knowing and thinking I would not enjoy the staff job, I decided to pull the plug.'*

Chris: *'At 18 years of serving they told us our regiment was to be disbanded. I had planned to stay in for the full 22 years, but they wanted to amalgamate with another regiment and create an entirely new regiment. The thought of having to start over with a brand new regiment was daunting and I felt disappointed.'*

Will: *'My battalion commander was replaced. He had a charisma and ability to forge those bonds of brotherhood. The new commander was a clown, inept and bureaucratic. I felt like he spoke disrespectfully to the enlisted ranks, in a way that trivialized our intelligence and our ability to do the job. I became bitter with this new commander. If this guy can lead the Marines, I'm getting out. I'm going back to college. I am not going to have people talking down to me because I don't have a piece of paper that says I'm smart.'*

Some were ready to leave when faced with an office job in the military. Andy, in addition to the betrayal he felt, was also influenced to leave by the prospect of a job change in the military.

Andy: *'I had been in for 9 years when my next posting was an office job, and I could not see myself working in an office.'*

Daniel: *'I found out that I was going to be assigned to a desk. I was coming up through the ranks but I found I would be doing only an hour or so of training in the morning and then sat down for the rest of the day. When I saw my career would have been deskwork – even when we deployed I wouldn't be at the 'tip' with the guys, I'd be behind.'*

Others felt the time away from their family unsustainable and said their frustration with this separation acted as the final influencer of their decision to leave the military. In addition to family separation, the level of stress of military service had on the interviewee often negatively impacted their family dynamic.

Tom: *'I was disillusioned with the separation from my family and I wanted to stay at home with my wife and daughter.'*

Chris: *'If anything it would have been being away from home.'*

Manny: *'Towards the end of my time I was getting stressed. My wife was telling me I was stressed and I thought 'fine', but there came a point where I realized I was stressed out and the impact the military was having on me physically and my life was too much. I had always said I would never let the negative outweigh the positives on a personal level, and so it was time to leave.'*

Harry: *'My wife had wanted me to leave. After five years I left, but did not want to.'*

Some of the interviewees participated in a government provided transition service, the UK's Career Transition Workshop.

Daniel: *'The workshop was helpful, but was more for people needing basic skills.'*

Daniel described terminating his military contract anti-climatic in relation to the significance of the event.

Daniel: *'I logged in online, pushed a button. Within five seconds it was done.'*

While the process of terminating the military contract may have been expedited, the physical act of leaving was painful for some. Most recalled their former military colleagues as a type of family.

Chris: *'I found it hard, very very hard. It was the saddest day for me. It's like saying goodbye to your family and everybody you serve with. There were people*

I had served with for lots and lots of time and had been through a lot of stuff together, and then you're leaving the Army and saying goodbye to all of them, it was very hard. I found it hard, anyway.'

Harry: *'I resented the decision to leave what I thought of as my family.'*

Daniel: *'The guys were like a close-knit family.'*

It appeared leaving the military was a cumulative decision based on self-evaluations of where the individual believed they should either be during the self-evaluation, e.g. a particular rank, or the type of job they were facing in the military. The possibility of a particular job, for example, deskwork, and the separation from family did not appear to be core reasons for leaving the military. Rather they appeared to be 'final influencers' in the decision to leave the military.

6.5 The Transition from the Military to Security Contracting (those with interim civilian employment)

Just fewer than half of the interviewees spent longer than 6 months in civilian life between leaving the military and becoming a private security contractor. The two feelings felt most strongly in civilian life by the group of interviewees were the loss of belonging and the loss of recognition. For the latter this meant a loss of distinctiveness where during military service they had felt distinctly different to their civilian counterparts, a feeling they enjoyed during service. Some reported this loss of recognition as becoming 'ordinary' or feeling 'invisible.'

Tom: *'When I left, I was a Warrant Officer, which is the highest rank you can get as a soldier in a 22 year career. In my unit of 700, there was only one other soldier that had a higher rank than me, so I had a lot of respect, a lot of pull. People listened to me and things like that. All the good things you earn in the military, and then I left and dropped worth because no one cared what a Warrant Officer is, no one cares the tours in Iraq and Afghanistan you've done. You're just there to make them money. I wouldn't say it was degrading, but it was definitely a shock to the system.'*

Andy also felt the loss of belonging, something he chided himself for in the interview.

Andy: *'I did [feel the loss of recognition], unfortunately. You shouldn't be defined by what you do, but in many ways you are I suppose. You get a lot of kudos, I suppose, for being in the military at that time, and now. Not so much as in the States. There was a lot of support in the British public for what the military was doing in Afghanistan – for the individual soldiers – not necessarily being there. And it's good to feel a part of that.'*

The loss of belonging was attributed to both a loss of belonging to an identity and a loss of belonging to a specific social group. These losses for some were short-lived. Andy's initial horror over the perceived lack of commonality or purpose among the civilians was somewhat ameliorated when he secured civilian employment. He found those aspects he missed in the military by working in a bank. He described the teamwork, team spirit and 'learning new things' he experienced in this employment as:

'important to the military because you're not always on operations, you're training, soldiers have a thirst for knowledge and information. I recovered some of that work ethic in the city.'

Others did not recover the loss of belonging or social identity in civilian employment. Using the employment training he received in the military Tom sought and secured civilian employment as a physical education teacher at a local school, working with 14-19 years olds.

Tom: It was hard work, and the harder the work got the more difficult I was finding to make my name. As the marking and preparation came in around 18 hours a day, six days a week, I was getting emails from friends who were abroad in Iraq and Afghanistan saying 'come over here, they've got a job for you.'

It was not simply the work that was hard, it was the gap between expectation and reality that Tom reported difficult to reconcile.

Tom: It didn't really help that the Army tended to give you an inflated idea of your capabilities. What I mean by this is they tell you, 'Look, you can manage anything, you've done this, you've done that, whatever you've done in the Army – your responsibilities, your rank, the places you've been to, the experiences you've got, that is valuable to civilian employers.'

Tom, though, did not feel either the training or military experience prepared him for his civilian teaching job.

The US interviewees reported a specific frustration in civilian life as navigating the US healthcare system after military service and government provided healthcare.

Brandon: 'I have no idea how the healthcare system works. So, despite having coverage from the Veteran's Administration for awhile, the word 'co pay' didn't mean anything to me, let alone any of the other insurance terms. I just took it for granted because since I was 20 years old, all of that stuff was taken care of, dental and health, so that has been something – trying to figure out how all of that works. That was a definite negative [of civilian life].'

Chuck: *'The administrative aspects after the military were stressful, as well as the actual process of finding a job.'*

Some found civilian life daunting at first and did not enjoy it.

Will: *'I was scared shitless. Because I didn't know what the fuck I was going to do. I had no clue. I just stepped off the cliff. This situation [the military] is bad for me, I want to get my education, I'm leaving. Those eight months when I worked in civilian life, most of those nights I would wake up sweating, thinking, what am I going to do? I am not a businessman, I can't do math. I don't care about marketing or sales. Fear was my initial response.'*

Chris: *'I did a couple of things back home [before contracting] just to fill up time, to help a few people out and I was mixing with civilians and stuff and it was just so weird. Everything is different. The mindset – the way I used to joke about with the blokes at work, you couldn't have that same time of banter or same type of relationship with a civilian, it just doesn't work. They never got me or understood where I was coming from.'*

Colin: *'I was hired for a job right away with a start-up company I had invested some money in. When I got to the job there was no real paperwork contract for me, they had every intent not to pay me. I was paid half of what I was told I was going to get, which with a mortgage loss and moving out there, I couldn't even afford to live. So that was a huge, painful debacle. That was more stressful than going to war.'*

Andy: *'Frankly, it was bloody awful. I look back on it now and it was a very trouble time for me, and for my wife. But I didn't put it down to leaving the military, I put it down to being a civilian and not really enjoying what I was doing. I probably had some young mid-life crisis.'*

Some did enjoy civilian life upon the immediate transition.

Harry: *'The quality of life [civilian] is a lot better. When you're in the Forces it really does become your life, the only family you have they come along with you. Positives [of civilian life] include sleeping in your own bed and spending time with friends and family.'*

After the first initial few months of separation one interviewee suddenly felt he had made a big mistake leaving the military.

Andy: *'I suddenly asked myself, what's going on here? I need to go back to work. I rang my regiment headquarters and said, 'You know, I think I might have made a mistake. I'm interested if it's possible for me to sign on again.'*

Andy ultimately chose not to sign on again this time. While he experienced, at times, rewards like belonging and personal growth in his civilian employment, after nine years in civilian life Andy joined the British Army Reserves in an effort to belong to a group with whom he continued to feel a strong connection of identity.

Andy: *'I had watched a documentary on the UK military in Afghanistan. I had done four operational tours when I served, but when I watched that video, it was just a completely different experience for those guys and I decided to sign on again so that I could go experience the same thing, so I could still be in that club.'*

The reported negatives of civilian life were offset to a degree by the positives reported: freedom, autonomy and control over the interviewees time with their family.

Chuck: *'I do feel a stronger sense of freedom and control over my life. I enjoy being free to accept or deny jobs. I have more time to spend with my wife and daughter. I have spent time with old hometown friends I have not seen in years. I felt a sense of freedom and excitement to move home.'*

Civilian life appeared to be a major adjustment for all those who spent time in civilian life. Military attributes found in civilian employment, see the example above of 'team work', appeared to lessen the strain felt during the transition but did not replace the losses entirely. The benefits of civilian life, like lifestyle and freedom over how time is spent did not appear to reduce the loss of belonging or identity.

6.6 Use of social networks in becoming a private security contractor

All those whom were interviewed relied on their informal social networks of former military colleagues and friends to begin the process of seeking and securing employment as a private security contractor. The use of social networks in seeking and securing employment as a private security contractor confirmed the existence of the following to the job seeker:

- 1) *A sense of belonging (including camaraderie), and;*
- 2) *Environmental similarity of security contracting to that of the military.*

Some used their informal social networks as a way to gather information about security contracting in order to make a reasoned decision whether to become one.

Manny: *'I talked to all the old guys that used to work for me, guys that had left before me and guys in the process of leaving. It's like an old boys network. You ask everybody so you can get a good perspective across the whole of the security industry, whether it be security contracting like protection or whether it was maritime piracy.'*

Chris: *'I had heard about it from all the other guys who went before and came back and said it was pretty much like being in the Army. With all these ex-army guys there's a chance it's going to be that camaraderie you had in the Army.'*

Chuck: *'I called and emailed other contractors for information and talked to a couple of security companies. I began to learn about the contracts I was qualified for, which ones current contractors enjoyed the most, which ones not to take, information about the companies, as well as how the hiring process works.'*

Andy's social network led him into security contracting when he met a former military colleague at a wedding. This colleague mentioned a particular job he believed Andy to be qualified for, and sent an introductory email. Andy formally applied for the job, which he secured.

Some believe social networks to be the only way to secure a private security contracting job in today's world.

Brandon: *'I think the Blackwater days of having been a cop for a little bit, or being in the infantry a couple of years and getting hired – I think those days are over. I don't see how you'd get hired otherwise (with no network).'*

These social networks also exerted influence upon the individual's decision to become a security contractor.

Daniel: *'It's safety in numbers. If there's a lot of guys doing it, and apparently enjoying it then it sounds like a safe bet.'*

Harry: *'Because I worked with him [former military colleague] and we are friends and I trust him. When he said I could do the job I believed him. When he outlined the level of risk I knew exactly what he was talking about. You don't want to be sold a crap job by someone who is putting a warm body in a seat. He was very frank, detailed the job and I said yeah, sounds like good fun.'*

Colin: *'It's a person-to-person network connection, all the guys working there have been recommended by people already working there. I would be working for X now if it wasn't for my former teammate. Just from the way he described it, he was probably the sole influence of why I chose to go.'*

In addition to social networks exerting influence on the decision to become a contractor, these networks indicated the existence of things like camaraderie, a common language and a sense of belonging.

Chris: *'The obvious things are that you are working with people how have the same mindset and with people who have the same background. That was a big lure. That was the main thing, anyway. I want to work with guys who work right, they know me and I know them and get that sense of brotherhood, get that connection again. That was the number one reason I wanted to go back.'*

Brandon: *'Knowing that I had friends that I could get on the same contract with, knowing it was a similar environment to where I was coming from, it made sense that that would be a comfortable platform to walk away from the military on...I think knowing others definitely played a role.'*

For a few of the interviewees the number of people from their units leaving the military and becoming contractors gave the impression to the interviewee that security contracting was a 'natural next step' after the military.

For example, Daniel reported that 70% of his former military unit became contractors. Manny observed 'around 50% of the guys who left since 2003 have gone into the security industry.'

Brandon: *'At the time [he was preparing to leave the military] I'd say I knew about 10 or so guys that were out contracting. Once I got out and started doing it myself I realized it was more like 30 guys.'*

Colin: *'Of all the guys that got out [of the military] from my age group, I went through BUDs with, I would say at least one quarter to one half of them tried contracting.'*

It appeared that everyone interviewed used their social network to either gather information on the environment of security contracting and/or the process by which to become a security contractor. Social networks were also used to validate the similarity of environment and the type of people who were already contractors of which a sense of trust appeared to be a major component.

These social networks were derived from the individual's former military colleagues. It appears that for the individuals interviewed large numbers of their former military units had either been contractors before them and/or currently still contracting or like the interviewee also in the process of becoming a security contractor.

6.7 Professionalism in private security contracting

The word 'professional' was used by the interviewees to describe themselves, those around them (e.g. other security contractors) and the environment in which they worked they considered to be a profession. The 'professionalism' of security contractors was perceived by the interviewees to be:

- 1) Operational conduct/abiding by the Rules for the use of Force (RUF), safety measures, national and international law, and;

- 2) Social conduct among contractors in the absence of a rank hierarchy like that of the military.

The operational conduct of security contractors rested on prior military experience that implied a specific body of knowledge of how to operate, e.g. safety measures and checks, weapons handling, etc. The nature of security contracting as a chosen form of employment to a specific, and often hostile, area appeared to qualify security contracting as a profession and those within it, professionals.

Harry: *'In the Army you will work with people you don't like or you don't trust or who are incompetent and you don't have a choice. In the private sector people were much more professional. They were much more keen to do the job. Overall the quality of work is much more enjoyable because the people are passionate about the work and they're all usually very good at it. If you have a company of 80 soldiers, most of them are 19 years old. If you have a group of 80 contractors most of them are in their mid to late 30s with a lot of experience. As a force multiplier, the effectiveness of that private team is far greater.'*

Chuck: *'The men I have worked with treat their work with the same professionalism as when in the military. Everyone takes their jobs seriously and performs well.'*

Acceptable social conduct that qualified a security contractor as professional was derived from the ability to adjust to the lack of a rank hierarchy as would have been present in the military. The inability to adjust to the absence of this hierarchy and/or recognition of past military rank in security contracting was considered by the interviewees as unsuitability to the job and was directly related to 'trust'. Initially, the lack of rank status recognition was an adjustment for some of the interviewees.

Bill: *'I was used to being a Staff Sergeant in the British Army and I joined the [PMSC] team on the contract I was given and went back to what is in essence a private soldier. That was quite a bitter pill to take. My Team Leader was previously a Lance Corporal in an Infantry Regiment. That said, he was a capable guy and he had his head on his shoulders and knew what he was talking about, so I sat back and learned. That was quite a hard transition, you know, you've gone from being a senior NCO in a Guard's Regiment to being a no-mark in a civilian company. You have to then prove yourself as a person, a soldier, an operator there on the ground, reliable both in combat situation or normal day-to-day work. That was kind of weird to me.'*

Andy: *'So the guy has done very well in the military, often, they strive for years to gain promotion. They play that game and they've been successful. When they come into contracting a lot of them are very happy to just turn up, go to the briefing, go and do the job, make the money and go home after nine weeks. They are sensible enough and mature enough to just sit there and soak it in. That little guy giving advice here and there, they don't get hung up on it. If they do get hung up on it then we let them go because he's not the right guy for the job.'*

Professionalism was also derived from the individual's area of expertise and knowledge and not their organizational position, e.g. a manager or team leader in security contracting. However, professionalism was also found to be a respect for the chain of command in security contracting regardless of prior military rank.

Colin: *'There is not a structured chain of command so I'm an officer and now I'm working with guys that weren't officers. There are little jokes at first but everybody realizes they are now a contractor. You try to carry that same respect that you had for a chain of command to the contracting side, no matter who you are working for – whether it's a newbie or a new team leader, or a new boss, I want to show him the same respect because he's the tactical expert and he's the expert out there.'*

Trust and the development of social cohesion among security contractors was instrumental in being termed a 'professional' or contractors as a group 'professionals.' Social conduct relied on the following:

- 1) Prior military experience that included expertise in a particular area (although the expertise is not always required), and;
- 2) Induction and continued training with other contractors in an area of operation/hostile environment that served to assess the skills and abilities of prior military experience *and* the social conduct displayed during this training.

Overall social conduct appeared crucial to the perceived suitability of an individual for the job by the group as a whole. This social conduct was directly related to past military experience including general skills and knowledge and/or specific expertise. The initial vetting relied on prior military experience as an indication of similarity among the group and also created a type of placeholder for trust that was further developed in induction and continued training.

6.7.1 *Prior Military Experience*

Prior military experience played a major role in the initial feeling of social cohesion felt amongst a group of security contractors when first working together.

Tom: *'If you turn up to an organization of all ex-soldiers you already have the knowledge from the same background. As a British soldier, you've seen the same thing, you've had the same hardships, you've been through the same separation and working in remote areas and all the rest of it. It's what you know, as you all have the same background. It's the same when you join the security industry and that camaraderie, it's a pre-thing, a known thing. There is no need to have a process to make that happen. You already know how people would operate in a hostile environment, so after a few weeks of operating/working with like-minded people,*

sometimes with friends from the Army when you were in, that camaraderie manifests itself quickly.'

Chris: *'I think it's a case of when you're in the military you put your trust in the guy beside you and you grow up with them when you serve with them and get to know them over a period of time. Whereas in contracting you may only know them for a couple of months. You work closely and you begin to gel – you may not get on the best – but you have each other's back because you both know what's expected of you. In contracting you trust that what he knows, you know, know what you both went through in the Army, similar backgrounds and you both know you can rely on the other guy.'*

Some did not immediately trust other security contractors solely on the basis of their prior military experience.

Manny: *'If I was in the military in my own unit I would trust everybody with my life. I wouldn't say that is the same out here. There are different levels of competence and levels of fitness. Lots of people have come from different strands of the military where different competencies are required. Some aren't as good as others.'*

Where the level of trust was not the same, as Manny stated above, it was not long before training engendered a sense of trust among security contractors.

Harry: *'Teams of different backgrounds are less cohesive, after weeks and months it doesn't matter. I did worry the first time I went out I would be with a bunch of soulless guns for hire that would leave me if anything happened. I would say civilian teams bonded faster than over the Army. Once you meet and shake hands you know what they are and you have comfort.'*

Language specifically was an important aspect of immediate social cohesion felt among security contractors who did not know each other previously.

Daniel: *'There is no development [of cohesion]. There is, but it's very short. It's a very simple process. You turn up for a new project and it depends on the kind of person you are. You turn up, you say hello, they're ex-military, by the second or third – actually probably the first conversation you're slagging each other off. There's no development. It's already there because if you know someone else was in the military you know their expectations are going to be yours.'*

Chris: *'You know the guy is ex-military, you have some fun, have a bit of banter, have some coffee together and when something happens you knuckle down and get through it together.'*

Some viewed prior military service as a vetting mechanism.

Manny: *'It's [prior military experience] is like a filtration system. Starts off with you must demonstrate military or para-military experience. Once they've done that*

basic building platform in-country you go through an induction training and then you're on a three month probation period. It's a quality assurance process until you pass probation and some tasks with a couple of people.'

Some equated cohesion with ethos.

Chuck: 'There is not a common ethos among contractors. Everyone has their own reasons for doing it. There is not the closeness of the platoon. Contractors are there to provide a service. The other contractors have been excellent people to work with, and when we work we are part of a team.'

Cohesion was also associated with loyalty.

Harry: 'Because you tend to end up with experienced soldiers that are good at what they do, that are professional and keen to do the job, generally one of the characteristics that people bring with them is loyalty.'

Prior military experience provided an expectation of what security contracting would be like. Once a security contractor, the prior military experience of other contractors was used initially to informally vet other security contractors within the team, company or group. This appeared to be a type of risk-assessment for the individual where the skills and abilities were equated with an acceptable level of trust and competence. What was acceptable was different for everyone. However, acceptable competence that engendered trust relied on the individual's own moral and ethical considerations. Once this informal vetting occurred prior military experience was relied upon to develop cohesion by use of similar language and structure.

Being considered professional, both by the individual to themselves or to others, appeared to be singular. Professionalism was a combination of prior military skills, experience and knowledge, operational and social conduct as well as training with other security contractors, both during the induction phase and continued training.

6.7.2 Training

Induction and continued training with other security contractors appears to be the gateway to the social identity of security contractors, creating a feeling of belonging to a group whose characteristics are familiar.

Andy: 'Our particular firm has induction training when you first arrive that lasts a week. And that I guess is where it starts. In that training you have fitness tests, all firearms training, you have to pass a range practice, you have to pass a collective med training, they are briefed by the management team of what's expected of them. It's not long but it's enough to at least develop the foundation for relationships.'

Longer term, cohesion is developed by physical fitness training and sport.

Andy: *'They do some quite demanding physical fitness training, physical fitness tests and that is a bonding experience. We do a lot of sport. We tried everything in Afghanistan. That was 1,100 people, so slightly bigger than an infantry battalion. Three different employee groups, 250-300 ex-pats, 500 LN [local national] staff, and the remainder were Ghurkas. Three different bunches of people with different needs but we did what we could to make sure that they became one family really, working under one roof.'*

Bill: *'You'd be on the range and have fun and people would see how you moved, how you handled yourself with a weapon, and that would give them confidence in working with you and give confidence in you working with them. The driving drills, the vehicle drills would build confidence within the team. At the end the team would be so strong you could do things, you could speak on the radio to the vehicle behind you and they would know exactly what you are doing. Or if you were the lead vehicle everyone would support you because you've trained, you've done all of these drills, you've constantly gone over your SOPs (standard operating procedures). It was very professional, a lot more professional than the British Army, believe it or not.'*

Prior military experience enhanced an immediate sense of cohesion and belonging. It, though, was not required for long-term cohesion as some security contractors have different backgrounds than the military, e.g. law-enforcement.⁵¹⁰ Long-term cohesion was dependent upon training and the ability to adjust to an organizational structure that did not depend on a hierarchy of rank. Cohesion was thought of in terms of loyalty, friendship, trust and team-spirit. Language played an important role in the initial cohesion where prior military experience was validated by use of a common language or a way of communicating, e.g. 'slagging each other off' [Daniel, above].

Tactical and physical fitness training contributed to the overall cohesion felt among security contractors. Training appeared to be a continuation of an initial vetting process that eventually resulted in group and/or team cohesion expressed as a sense of loyalty and trust. Once operating as a cohesive team the behavior of other security contractors was described as professional. Professional was also how the interviewees described themselves.

Chuck: *'I think of myself as a professional security operator.'*

Professionalism seemed to depend on how the individual managed the transition from a hierarchy of rank to the possibility of taking orders or being managed by someone junior to

⁵¹⁰ It is important to note that while training developed cohesion among those from different backgrounds, there appeared to be an initial bias towards law-enforcement personnel that dealt with issues of trust and prior operational experience.

them in military rank. Professionalism also relied on the operational conduct of the contractor. This operational conduct appears to be a two-stage process. The first is operational conduct and skills and/or expertise learned in the military that are transferred when the Service leaver becomes a security contractor. The second was how the individual performed in training exercises.

6.8 *Similarities between the military and security contracting*

There were a large number of similarities reported between the military and security contracting. They fell into two categories:

- 1) Social similarities (language and camaraderie), and;
- 2) Organizational similarities (structure and operational).

Language, professionalism and camaraderie all appeared to be social similarities between military service and security contracting.

Tom: *'The camaraderie and how we do business, the language and how we conduct ourselves professionally. It's [security contracting] got weapons armories, it's got dining facilities, it's all based on the Army, but it's ex-soldiers who run the place. You look after yourself, you look after your equipment, it's exactly the same to being in the Army.'*

Manny: *'Most PSCs will try to operate their business on the military system to prove they have what it takes to work and most employees are familiar with that system so they know what to expect.'*

Harry: *'Language used was the same, we are all ex soldiers so we all speak the same, and certainly makes sense you work all together you use all the same acronyms you don't need to explain everything twice. When you refer to something you know exactly what everyone is saying.'*

Colin: *'Soon as I got there [contracting] and got my weapons, did gear checks, comms checks, you quickly fall right back into the position where you're on watch and you're ready to go and it was pretty seamless. You're on the same mindset. To me it was very similar to working in the military.'*

A sense of 'structure' was often reported in the interviews. It appeared that structure meant a daily or deployment rotation structure versus an institutional structure like the military that offers support beyond daily happenings, like housing, healthcare or family support services.

Chuck: *'There are many similarities such as a language, tactics and some form of structure with a chain of command. It is more relaxed but not undisciplined. I*

think the nature of the work keeps most guys sharp and serious without having the regimented military life.'

Daniel: *'The similarities are the social environment. With the guys, mostly ex-military so you typically have the same banter back when you were serving. The rotation is very similar when you were serving and come back on tour. You come back and you're a rock star for four weeks [in civilian life].'*

Bill: *'Contracting was so well structured, it was just like being in the military.'*

Brandon: *'A lot of it is apples to apples. It's really the same thing under a different set of authorities. A lot of stuff has been the exact same language, exact same planning process maybe a different template on the paperwork being submitted, but a lot of the same stuff.'*

Structure appeared also to be something in which other attributes were associated. For example, professionalism, camaraderie, prior military experience were described in reference to the structure of security contracting. The sense of structure felt in security contracting appeared to provide comfort in relation to the individual's transition from the military to civilian life.

Tom: *'The structure is reassuring. When I walk into a coffee shop or a bar at home and I meet another contractor or something like that, you know you guys are signing out of the same hymn sheet and that provides a lot of comfort but not too much. There is still an element of discipline, an element of self-discipline. There is still an ethos of professionalization. You can't totally de-militarize, so to speak.'*

Chris: *'The obvious thing is the brotherhood, the way you work together, the way you stick together. The structure of the Army in contracting world you have bigger and smaller teams, so you still have that structure. When you have that structure in the contracting world, it's comforting.'*

While PMSCs do not offer an institutional structure *per se*, similar social characteristics like language and camaraderie, and operational characteristics like tactics, operational conduct and tempo appeared to create a feeling of structure among security contractors. This structure gave a sense of comfort and reassurance.

6.9 Sense of difference between the military and security contracting

The dissimilarities between the military and security contracting fell into two categories:

- 1) Autonomy, and;
- 2) Operational intensity and support.

6.9.1 *Autonomy*

Security contracting appeared to give a feeling of autonomy and control to the individual over their career after the military and control over how they spent their time. Autonomy was not described as a freedom of wearing what one wants or growing their hair long as often reported in veteran literature as a type of liberation from the Armed Services. Instead, autonomy was the control the individual had over their time. Specifically when and how long they would deploy on contracts.

Chuck: *'I do feel a stronger sense of freedom and control over my own life. I enjoy being free to accept or deny jobs and have more control over where and when and how long I'll be deployed.'*

This positive feeling of autonomy was directly related to an improved sense of quality of life compared to the military.

Manny: *'When you're a contractor you're away most of the time, but when you get back it's pure relaxing with the family and you can go on holidays and things like that.'*

Chuck: *'I have more time to spend with my wife and daughter. The time I am off, my family and I are free to do as we please. I don't enjoy leaving my wife and daughter, but when I return I have a month off to spend quality time with them.'*

Brandon: *'The autonomy of being able to leave when I wanted to, being able to focus more on the business I had started and the relationship I had.'*

Harry: *'As a private contractor if you don't agree with the moral or ethics or the purpose of the job you can just walk away, you can quit. If something comes up, if another job comes up or if you need to go to somebody's wedding you can just resign and walk out of the door. You are very much the master of your own destiny.'*

While the quality of life was felt to have improved as a security contractor, the interviewees spent more time away from their family than when in the military.

Aaron: *'I don't see much of my family.'*

Chris: *'It's the same impact [time away from family] as being in the military. The missus still misses me and my daughter still misses me when I'm away. Whenever I go home we make up for it. We can still go places and do things as a family.'*

The control and quality of the time spent when not deployed on a contract is what appeared to give an improved sense of quality of life as a security contractor, despite the

amount of time away from the family being the same or longer than when serving in the military.

6.9.2 *Operational Intensity and Support*

The differences reported were the reduced intensity of operations in comparison to the individual's experience deployed to areas of conflict as a soldier.

Tom: *'The intensity in the military, the intensity of operations in the military, of combat and hostile activity in the military is nowhere to be seen in most security companies, certainly not in Iraq and Afghanistan.'*

Manny: *'You take the principles of what you applied in the military and you transfer it to another market at a much reduced tempo and more akin and in line with civilian requirements.'*

Lack of support was the main different reported between the military and security contracting. Support was referred to as operational support for when security contractors would be in a situation needing backup, e.g. other contractors, helicopters, tanks or cover.

Harry: *'The bad news as a private contractor when you get into trouble you are left to your own resources, there is no back up. It may just be the 4 or 5 of you to extract yourselves and get out of trouble. You're a much smaller team, it's quite easy to stay out of the trouble and the risk is low. When things happened they tend to be quite bad.'*

Manny: *'Whereas before you have the security of the military system behind you which gave you that warm fuzzy feeling of security you don't get that in a civilian environment because obviously it's a commercial enterprise.'*

Aaron: *'In the Army you have the back up, you get into a problem, you call on the radio and someone will come and help you. Here, more often than not you're on your own, for quite awhile. In the early days of Iraq, yes, you could call the military if they were available. But it's a big transition in people's minds, especially the younger generation now, to say 'hang on, I haven't got this back up.' It does play on their mind.'*

Bill: *'PMSCs do not have the strength of firepower should contractors get into certain situations, despite the good equipment and weapons provided by the PMSC.'*

Lack of support was a dominant observation among the interviewees but did not appear to influence the contractors against being a security contractor in terms of risk with the exception of one interviewee.

Harry: *'I left because my son was born and it was Iraq in 2005 where the fighting had been getting quite bad and I had seen it getting worse and worse and I realized the bar I set for the level of risk had risen considerably.'*

The similarity of environments between the military and security contracting where social and structural characteristics appeared to be present in security contracting appeared to offset the general risk of being a contractor. The evaluation of risk occurred during induction training with the confirmation of skills and abilities of other contractors, initially validated by prior military experience. Continued training with other security contractors while on a contract developed cohesion and trust among contractors which appeared to offset a level of risk acknowledged as lack of back up support in hostile situations.

6.10 *Transition from security contracting to civilian life*

Only one interviewee had left contracting at the time of interview. As stated above Harry felt the risk of security contracting in Iraq to great in the face new family responsibilities. His transition from security contracting appeared to be a gradual progression to 'regular' civilian employment.

Harry: *'I went off [after my son was born] and did intelligence gathering and low-level executive protection, away from the military side of things in non-hostile environments.'*

The transition appeared to be similar to that of leaving the military.

Harry: *'It was similar to leaving the Army. You don't have to be posted in a foreign country. You have officer hours 9-5, and you have evenings and weekends with your family. And the food is a lot better.'*

The remaining interviewees either had retrospectives of their time as a security contractor in regards to the role it played in their transition to civilian life or forecast as to how they believe they will transition once they leave security contracting for civilian life.

6.10.1 *Perception of Security Contracting*

There were two (obvious) categories of those who felt security contracting had played a role in their transition from the military to civilian life and those who felt it had not played a role. For those whom believed security contracting played a role, security contracting was considered a natural progression from the military. The progression from the military to security contracting was considered natural based on the skills and experience possessed as a result of military experience were those same skills and experience required for security contracting.

Security Contracting played no role in the transition from the military to civilian life

Tom: *'I think the best thing I did to transition from the military to civilian life was to go work in a college with all kinds of people from different backgrounds, including staff and students, in a quite rundown area in the UK. That was a big challenge. That taught me a lot about how to conduct myself in a civilian environment.'*

Daniel: *'I don't think it did. I perceived the transition to be simple. But it was not so long ago maybe the transition is still to come when I go back to the UK. Yes and no. In some ways it has and some ways it's still to come.'*

Security Contracting played a role in the transition from the military to civilian life

Brandon: *'I think that it has. I think it made it a lot more comfortable getting out [of the military] to begin with. It facilitated me to put that money aside to finish school because the last couple of classes I took I realized I was on my own. Whereas the military did that for me before.'*

Manny: *'I left the military and where I used to demand things so to speak and expect things to happen, that element has been shaken [sic] away in a more civilian manner. I see this as another means of transition to proper civilian street. It's taking away those military edges, slowly.'*

Colin: *'I think it is now. I originally didn't want it to be, but it definitely is now.'*

Security contracting appeared to provide time in which to figure out a next step.

Chuck: *'It does give you time and income to explore many other options.'*

A common description of the role of security contracting in regards to transition was the term 'halfway house'. The term appeared to denote a type of limbo, neither in the military, neither in civilian life yet a place firmly in between both worlds.

Andy: *'I'm in this halfway house and I think the 300 or so ex-pats in my PSC world are all people similar to me who aren't quite ready to go back to being a civilian. I think we are all trying to work out what we are going to do when we grow up.'*

Harry: *'It [security contracting] gives them [Service leavers] a halfway house. Anyone who has been institutionalized for a long time is going to have difficulty leaving the military. In any industry if you have anyone trained and worked for 10 years in their mid-30s they aren't going to retrain and start from scratch, so the economic burden is what attracts people into contracting. There are 25,000 contractors [security] in Iraq – they could go off and retrain but it would be a long, hard road. For me, the transition is purely an economic one, they just don't have the skill set.'*

Chris: *'It's like a halfway house, like half is the military but has some civilian traits to it.'*

Others termed security contracting a 'quasi-military' environment.

Aaron: *'It's a quasi-military environment. It is because of the military, you're working with the military, the fact that you are working with people who have like backgrounds.'*

Contribution to the greater good was a dominant retrospective of security contracting.

Tom: *'You get satisfaction, clients may be on a reconstruction mission in Afghanistan and you are a part of that process so you know you're contributing some good.'*

Harry: *'When you're in these places you see things that will never appear on the news, the inside story of what goes on, and I was proud of what I did, I felt I made a difference. Your first question, why did I join the Army, it was to make a difference. I probably did more of that while I was a contractor than when I was in the Army.'*

There appeared a contradiction regarding the role of security contracting in the transition to civilian life. While security contracting was acknowledged to have played a role in the transition as a natural progression in terms of skill and knowledge gained from the military, the majority of interviewees felt no more ready for civilian life than when they left the military. Most reported apprehension at the thought of leaving security contracting for civilian life.

Bill: *'I think I am going to struggle getting back to the real world. I don't really know what it's like to be a civilian. I've been out of the Army for nearly ten years, yet I don't actually know what it's like to be a civilian or work in a civilian environment. Never done it.'*

Chris: *'It [security contracting] prolongs your military service in a way. Whenever I finish this I am going to be facing the exact same as I was when I left the Army. It is going to be quite daunting. It will be sad to leave all the guys behind so I'll be going back to square one again.'*

And some felt that security contracting was a type of holding pattern that became difficult to break away from once you had starting contracting.

Colin: *'If you go straight from the military to contracting, you continue to move along the same path as you were in the military which the longer you're in it, the more comfortable it becomes and the harder it is to transition to something else.'*

Bill: *'I've seen others [security contractors] try to make a clean break from contracting but it's like a drug, they always come back.'*

Chris: *'You're in a military environment; you're ex-military with a lot of ex-military around. You're still in a hostile environment and often you're working with the military. So it actually prolongs your military service in a way.'*

Overall the dominant themes across the retrospectives were adventure and camaraderie, similar themes to both the motivations for joining the military and the aspects of the military most enjoyed by the interviewees.

Bill: *'I think it would have to be the adventure and camaraderie.'*

Daniel: *'There was coming back into conflict zones that was appealing. Going back into high threat areas if I'm honest.'*

Tom: *'People come for the same reasons. It's the camaraderie, the structure, the discipline, the benefits of a challenge, the adrenaline rush you get from working in a hostile environment that they have become accustomed to as ex-soldiers. I fit the bill and so does everyone else. We are all here for the same reasons and motivations.'*

Chris: *'What's it done for me? I enjoy it, it makes me happy, it fulfills me for lack of a better phrase.'*

6.11 Conclusion of the findings from the interviews

This chapter presented the data collected from the interviews. What emerged from the data is a significant sense of belonging and personal growth that the interviewees attributed to the experience of becoming and being a private security contractor. This sense of belonging was comprised of the camaraderie, brotherhood, trust and loyalty perceived to be present in security contracting. It relied on being admitted to a particular social group (other security contractors) in a particular physical environment (hostile environments and/or areas of operation). The process of entry and acceptance to this group began when the individual used their social network to gather information in seeking and securing employment as a private security contractor. This part of the process relied on trust between the job seeker and those who were already security contractors within the individual's social network. All of those whom were already security contractors were former military friends of colleagues of the job seeker. Trust enabled the job seeker to confirm the existence of desired social and operational characteristics in security contracting like camaraderie, a common language, structure, and the operational

competence of other security contractors. Trust in this stage of the process is where the individual began to evaluate the risk of being a security contractor.

Once the individual had been hired the trust between the job seeker and their network was transferred to the physical environment of the job and further developed by way of the prior military experience of other security contractors. This initial stage was marked by the use of a common language that included military terms and acronyms. The language may not be restricted to particular words or terms *per se* but how the language is communicated, e.g. 'banter' or 'slagging off.' Further to the development of trust was the induction training in an area of operation/hostile environment. The induction training allowed the new security contractors to evaluate the social and operational competence of the other security contractors. At this stage trust took on the appearance of social cohesion among the group where trust became an aspect of the social cohesion among the group and gave a sense of belonging to a group with a common identity. This identity was based on the prior military experiences of the individual and the other security contractors with prior military experience, but also the perceived moral and ethical behavior observed during the induction training and carried through the continued training while on a contract.

The dissimilarities reported as most apparent between the military and security contracting were the autonomy and freedom felt by the individual once they left the military and the operational tempo in security contracting which included a lack of operational support in comparison to the military. The freedom felt upon leaving the military by the individual seemed to continue to be felt in security contracting and was expressed as control over the individual's time; what type of contract to work on and when to deploy on the contract. While separation from family appeared to influence the individual to leave the military, the interviewees spent the same amount of time, if not longer, away from their family as a contractor. In contrast to separation from family as a major 'dislike' of military service this separation from family as a security contractor was not considered a downside of security contracting. On the contrary, the control over the individual's time as a security contractor enabled the individual to spend time with their family in a way they could not when serving in the military, e.g. uninterrupted and lengthy holidays.

Professionalism was a dominant theme in the interview data. It was used as a descriptive of the contractor themselves and to classify those they work/ed with. The term 'professional' relied fundamentally on a willingness to be a security contractor and choose the conflict. This contrasted from military service where it was felt among the interviewees that one

could not choose their colleagues and as a result felt stuck with the perceived ineptness and incompetence of their military colleagues. Because security contractors were able to choose which contract and to make a personal determination on the ethical and moral virtues of a contract, along with a personal vetting of other security contractors, there was a feeling of mutual professionalism among security contractors.

Overall the interview data showed no singular trajectory into security contracting. The decision to become a security contractor and the experiences as a security contractor proved to be a combination of a variety of things. Many of these things were common among the interviewees; camaraderie, language, structure, adventure, etc. Yet, there appeared no one prototype as to the individual security contractor. The next chapter will develop this observation in a discussion of both the survey and interview findings.

Discussion of the Survey and Interview Data Findings

7.1 *Contribution of Original Data – Introduction*

This project was designed to understand the role becoming a private security contractor played within the framework of the military to civilian transition. This chapter discusses the findings from the survey and interviews within a theoretical framework of transition, motive, networks, social identity and the 'life world'. The relevance of these findings to the project's initial hypotheses of transition and security contractors as an epistemic community will be considered. The chapter concludes with a review of the strengths and limitations of the project.

'Sample population' refers to both the interview and survey sample population. When describing them separately they are referred to as either the 'survey sample population' or 'interview sample population.'

7.2 *Demographics*

7.2.1 *Age*

In age, gender and rank the sample population is representative of the wider Service leaver population of both the US and UK. The average age of the sample population⁵¹¹ (36 to 45 years old) is consistent with the average age of civilians in the UK⁵¹² and the US⁵¹³ as well as Service leavers in both countries.⁵¹⁴ The six year average length of service for the sample population is consistent with average service lengths in both the US and UK.⁵¹⁵ Demographic comparisons of this study are applied to Dunigan *et al's* study of 660

⁵¹¹ In both the survey and interviews

⁵¹² 'Profile and Needs of the Ex-Service Community 2005-2020' Royal British Legion Report, September 2006, p1 available: <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/media/33526/summary%20and%20cons.%20report.pdf>

⁵¹³ The average age of the US civilian is between 35-44 years at 13% of the US population. US Census Bureau, US Department of Commerce, available at: http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_3YR_S0101&prodType=table

⁵¹⁴ Cite David Walker and US Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 'Veteran Population' available at: http://www.va.gov/vetdata/Veteran_Population.asp

⁵¹⁵ 'Profile and Needs of the Ex-Service Community 2005-2020' Royal British Legion Report, September 2006

respondents included security contractors, with similar ranges in citizenship and age to the present study.⁵¹⁶ However, because the Dunigan *et al* study included both security and non-security contractors in their study population, direct comparison with the sample population of this project where the sample population was *only* security contractors, are limited.

The other three empirical studies reported by Feinstein (2010), Feinstein and Botes (2009), and Messenger *et al* (2012) recruited samples of less than 100 people⁵¹⁷ and focused exclusively on the mental and physical health of security contractors. While these three studies contribute valuable context to better understanding of the experiences of security contractors, their focus was limited to mental health and geographic area (e.g. Iraq).⁵¹⁸ Demographic comparisons of this project to prior literature are therefore limited. The current work represents a distinctly different contribution to the field due to its larger sample population and broader perspective, enhancing and extending the published literature on private security contractors.

7.2.2 Gender

Women represented 1% of the total survey respondents, which is less than the percent of women in the US (14%) and UK military (10%). The low numbers and difficulty in recruiting women security contractors to research studies may be attributable to US and UK policies on women in ground combat roles.⁵¹⁹ This restriction on work experience makes many women ineligible, as PMSCs often require security contractors to have experience deploying to hostile environments. A study of social media reported a significant number of women were members of professional Close Protection Officer (CPO) groups or organisations.⁵²⁰ Despite this female security contractors or CPOs have received little attention in compared to their male counterparts in research studies.

⁵¹⁶ Molly *et al* (2013)

⁵¹⁷ Feinstein (2010); Feinstein and Botes (2010), Messenger (2012)

⁵¹⁸ Messenger *et al* (2012).

⁵¹⁹ Paul Cawkill, Alison Rogers, Sarah Knight and Laura Spear 'Women in Ground Close Combat Roles: The Experiences of other Nations and a Review of the Academic Literature' DSTL Report, Ministry of Defence, 29 September 2009 available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27406/women_combat_experiences_literature.pdf. David F. Burrelli (2013) 'Women in Combat: Issues for Congress' *Congressional Research Service* May 9, 2013 Report No.R42075 2013 the Department of Defense modified their policy allowing women in combat positions to take effect January 2016.

⁵²⁰ There is one large group of female CPOs on social media site Facebook with over 100 female CPOs as members and the Athena Female Close Protection Operatives group on social media site LinkedIn.

The range of age, education, rank and length of service, women in this project's sample population were similar to women serving in the US and/or UK Armed Forces. While the survey provided novel information, the small number of women in the present study was insufficient for robust statistical analysis of their demographics and opinions. The literature to date on women in private security focuses on the institutional impact on women (both as employees of PMSCs and host population civilians) via regulatory and legal regimes.⁵²¹ Reporting original empirical data on female security contractors extends the current literature, and demonstrates that different methods are needed to ensure more representative numbers of women security contractors in future research.

The majority representation of males in the survey and interview population confirms prior literature on individual private security contractors showing men dominate private security contracting.⁵²²

7.2.3 Education Level Attainment

The majority of the sample population (65%) were limited in educational attainment as most only reported completing high school (US) or GCSEs (16 years old) or A Levels (18 years old) (UK). These findings are consistent with those reported for the general veteran population of the US, where the majority of veterans report 'high school degree' or 'some college' as the highest level of education attained.⁵²³ The average education attainment of the sample population is also consistent with that reported for UK Service leavers and the general UK population. A recent population study found 54.4% reported A levels as the highest level of education 51.9% for the general UK population.⁵²⁴

In terms of transition to civilian life, the limited educational attainment reported in the present study is an important finding because it may limit access to particular sectors of the labour market other than security contracting. It will continue to affect their transition opportunities once the decision to leave security contracting is made. Pascarella and Terenzini found that having an educational degree beyond high school 'provides a net

⁵²¹ Vrdoljak (2010) Vrdoljak is concerned with the regulatory mechanisms that exist or are in development, namely through institutions like the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, to clarify the protection of women 'both as civilians and employees' of PMSCs. Her contribution is theoretical and normative with an emphasis on state and organizational structures, not the individual contractor themselves.

⁵²² See Higate (2011, 2012), Chisholm (2012), Dunigan *et al* (2013) Franke and von Boemcken (2011), Messenger *et al* (2012), Feinstein and Botes (2010), Fienstein (2010)

⁵²³ US Department of Veterans Affairs 'Profile of Veterans 2011' Data from the American Community Survey, National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics, March 2013, where 47.1% reported 'some college' and 38.8% had high school degrees, p16.

⁵²⁴ Howard Burdett 'The Mental Health and Social Wellbeing of UK Ex-Service Personnel: The Resettlement Process' University of London 2013; and Office for National Statistics, 2008b

occupational status advantage over a high school diploma.⁵²⁵ Many studies have shown that ‘as the amount of postsecondary education increases, workforce participation increases and the likelihood of being unemployed decreases.’⁵²⁶

Particularly for the average age of the sample population (mid-40s) whose educational attainment is a majority of ‘some college/university but no degree’ ‘men with a bachelor’s degree earn, on average, about 15 percent more than men with four years of college credits but no degree. For women, the corresponding earnings advantage is about 12 percent.’⁵²⁷

Non-degree holders have a more difficult time finding employment, are more likely to be unemployed or employed in low-paying jobs. The low level of education attainment would suggest that the option of security contracting after military service might provide employment to a larger number of people than had this population chosen to pursue other civilian employment. Just over a quarter of the survey sample population stated once they left the military they actively sought employment other than security contracting but could not find any. A further 41% of the sample population felt security contracting was the *only* option for them regarding employment after military service. There were no data collected to correlate the findings of the individual’s perception of their labour-market potential directly to their educational attainment. The interviews showed that self-evaluation by participants led to the opinion that security contracting had higher earning potential than other civilian employment when deciding to separate from the military.

Restrictions on employment opportunities based on level of education may be explained by Elder’s hypothesis of military service as an interruption of the life-course. Elder found in American veterans from 1928-1929 ‘early-entry [to military service], in particular, entailed a later transition to adulthood in terms of completing their education...than nonveterans.’⁵²⁸ The extent to which security contractors without university or college degrees consider pursuing further education is not known. Only one interview respondent in the present study (Brandon) stated that security contracting allowed him to finish his university degree. He had started his degree programme before joining the military. The literature on Vietnam-era veterans found that veterans were ‘disadvantaged in the labour

⁵²⁵ Ernest T. Pascarella and Patrick T. Terenzini (2005) ‘How College Affects Students’ Vol.2 Jossey-Boss, San Francisco, CA p535

⁵²⁶ *Ibid*

⁵²⁷ *Ibid*

⁵²⁸ G.H. Elder (1986) ‘Military times and turning points in men’s lives’ *Developmental Psychology* Vol.22, No.2 (March 1986) pp233-245; p233

market in comparison with non-Vietnam veterans and nonveterans, primarily because they were slower than others to return to school.⁵²⁹

7.2.4 Rank

The majority of the survey and interview population were non-commissioned officers (NCOs) (88%) or other rank (OR). Most US Service leavers in the sample population held the rank of Corporal, Sergeant or Staff Sergeant (67%). UK Service leavers held ranks of Lance Corporal, Corporal and Sergeant (68%). These levels of rank are consistent with the sample population's average time served in the military (6 years), educational attainment and average age across 10-year cohorts.

These data on the former rank of the sample population are significant because they indicate the range of skills, experience and knowledge that supports a perception of security contractors as being career professionals and provides empirical evidence to support the argument of security contractors constituting an epistemic community. The role of former military rank in developing a sense career professional, and identifying security contracting as a profession, will be discussed later in this chapter in 7.4 *Attitudes, Values and Professionalism*.

7.2.5 Length of Military Service

The average length of service for the overall sample population was 6 years. This demographic is an important finding in terms of the government provided transition services available to the security contractor when they leave security contracting. As literature has shown for both the US and UK, participation in government provided transition services during active duty and up to six month of separation has shown to have a positive effect on the employment rates of veterans.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁹ John Modell and Timothy Haggerty 'The Social Impact of War' *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol.17 (1991) pp205-224

⁵³⁰ Judson Faurer, Apryl Rogers-Brodersen and Paul Bailie (2014) 'Managing the Re-Employment of Military Veterans Through the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) *Journal of Business & Economics Research* Vol.12, No.1 pp55-60; For US Service leavers Faurer *et al* found that in a sample of 350 Army personnel, 84% of those who used the government provided transition services found employment as a result of using TAP, p56. Further, in an study of 3,000 Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air-Force Service leavers, the greater job assistance provided by government transition services the 'more prepared they felt and the greater success they achieved in the civilian labor market.' Society of Human Resource Management, 2010 *Employing Military personnel and recruiting veterans – attitudes and practices* Available at: <http://www.shram.org/Research/Survey/Findings/articles> For the UK Service leavers those who used the CTP had an employment rate of 83% in 2013, and those that used the CTP within 6 months of leaving 85% in 2013. Career Transition Partnership quarterly statistics: UK Regular Service Personnel Employment Outcomes, 2009/10 to 2012/13 Q1, 12 September 2013 update, available at:

For the US Service leaver, a rank of Corporal and Staff Sergeant meant they were eligible for government provided transition assistance within 180 days of their separation. Apart from two individuals, all of the US Service leavers interviewed in this project became private security contractors immediately upon military exit. While they all were eligible for the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), only one participated and that one individual did not complete the full TAP programme. The average length of security contracting for the interview sample population was 5 years. This means that the US Service leavers in this sample population are no longer eligible for government provided transition services (excluding various health services for some) when they leave security contracting for other civilian employment.

UK Service leavers with ranks between Lance Corporal and Sergeant are eligible for both the Employment Support Programme and the Full Support Programme, which provide access to career advice, workshops, finance and housing advice. Those with 4 to 6 years of service have access to the Employment Support Programme for up to 24 months after military separation.⁵³¹ A service length of 6 years or longer means eligibility for the Full Support Programme, including job finding assistance for the rest of their life.⁵³² On average the sample population (survey and interview) had an average length of service of around 6 years. While UK respondents will have lifelong access to government provided transition services, US respondents will not have such access after leaving security contracting for other civilian employment. This lack of support may affect their transition to civilian life.

For those with lifelong access to government-provided transition services there are no published data on whether they would utilize such services if they choose to look for civilian employment other than security contracting. It is also unknown whether those who do utilize their access to transition services after security contracting will experience 'culture shock' from re-engaging with the military after a prolonged period of separation from the military in addition to the experience of being in the quasi-military environment of security contracting.

This sense of inverse culture shock may contribute to the barriers to care for those security contractors who suffer from a range of mental and physical issues such as those reported by

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/280704/2009-to-2010-and-2012-to-2013-q1.pdf

⁵³¹ Career Transition Partnership 'Starting your resettlement' www.ctp.org.uk/getting-started-with-resettlement accessed on 9 November 2014

⁵³² Career Transition Partnership 'Starting your resettlement' www.ctp.org.uk/getting-started-with-resettlement accessed on 9 November 2014

Dunigan *et al* for contractors working in conflict environments. As the majority (84%) of the present sample population reported prior combat experience during military service, access to care becomes problematic for diagnoses like PTSD. It may be difficult to determine whether brain trauma was incurred during military service, and worsened or extended during security contracting. The ambiguity acts as a barrier to seeking help from government provided services both in the US and the UK because obligation to provide support is restricted to injuries incurred during military service. The eligibility for health services, based on time served, may serve as a benefit to those leaving security contracting for other civilian employment. But it may, like turning in the military ID at the end of service, become a painful acknowledgement that the individual is no longer a part of the military and may be considered an 'other' when seeking government services. More research is needed on this topic.

Published indicates that exposure to combat may enhance camaraderie and resilience.⁵³³ These affects depend on the individual's perception of the combat experience.⁵³⁴ All of the interview respondents enjoyed their military service overall, despite some reporting organizational dislikes, such as lack of autonomy/freedom. None of the reported 'dislikes' had an apparent relationship to a particular experience in or outside of combat exposure. Independent of prior combat exposure, security contractors were willing to return to hostile environments. They attributed their motivation, in part, to wanting to reclaim the sense of 'camaraderie' experienced while in the military.

7.3 Networks

The data showed that the informal social networks that individuals developed while in the military were crucial to seeking and securing employment as a private security contractor. This finding challenges Granovetter's network theory the 'strength of weak ties', wherein he claims it is the weak ties of lesser known people that may be the most effective in securing employment.⁵³⁵ In the present study, strong ties to military friends and/or colleagues were instrumental in seeking and securing employment as a security contractor. This finding suggests a labour market for which traditional network theories are not sufficient to explain the process of seeking and securing employment as a security contractor.

⁵³³ Elder & Clipp 1988a, b and (1989)

⁵³⁴ MacLean and Elder p182-183

⁵³⁵ Granovetter (1983)

This finding also challenges Christakis and Fowler's network theory that knowing between 1 and 3 people exerts the highest degree of influence when making a decision or expressing certain behaviours.⁵³⁶ My data suggest that it is not the number of people known that exerts a high degree of influence. Rather the type of information gathered from people known to the individual, and the expertise and prior military experience of those people, were key influences for decision making in this sample of private security contractors.

These data also indicated that respondents created relatively large peer networks of other security contractors, before and after their decision to enter security contracting. Networking to groups of other security contractors influenced their decision to become a contractor. The prior military experience of other security contractors provided respondents with certain feelings, such as trust and/or peace of mind, as they entered into the field of security contracting.

In his studies of networks, Lewin reported that social groups place great importance on their perceived environment, as constructed by group members.⁵³⁷ The interviews in the present study suggest that the perceived environment of security contracting, which included considerations of trust, skill, experience and camaraderie, influenced the decision to become a security contractor. Once the commitment to be a security contractor was made, the perceived environment became one in which individuals considered themselves, and their peer security contractors as professionals, based on considerations of social and operational conduct. This finding is significant because it indicates certain barriers and exclusions of entry to the group. When seeking employment as a security contractor the initial barrier appears to be prior military service. Once becoming a security contractor the exclusion extended to include trust, skill, and experience. Scott's theory defined exclusionary elements as 'boundaries' that determined group behaviour, shaping their actions and experiences.⁵³⁸ The findings confirm boundaries within which elements of trust, shared values and attitudes appear to be drawn from past military experience. An example of this was the survey sample population's responses on attitudes of war ('Machiavellianism') that indicated a fairly militaristic population in terms of attitudes. These exclusions are important in creating a distinct social identity. Overall, these findings suggest the social networks of security contractors are an important part of their social identity as professionals within the field of security contracting.

⁵³⁶ Christakis and Fowler (2009)

⁵³⁷ K Lewin (1936) Principles of Topological Psychology in John Scott 'Social Network Analysis, A Handbook' 2Ed 2000, Sage Publications, London, p11

⁵³⁸ John Scott (2000) p11

In recent years, these informal social networks have become less important to securing employment as PMSC hiring practices have become increasingly formalized. While social networks are regarded as the preferred and recommended type of facilitation between a would-be security contractor and a PMSC, their influence is weakened as formal hiring practices and lengthy vetting procedures are adopted. Within the time frame of the present study, interviewees reported their informal social networks as most effective in obtaining information with which to make a decision to become a security contractor, and to assess the work environment. Within the context of this information gathering, the social network appeared to rely solely on a sense of trust derived from the shared experience of military service among network members. After becoming a security contractor, membership in these networks provided social support and a sense of belonging. Further, once hired as a security contractor, these networks were leveraged for career mobility, to find within a country. Individuals became less reliant on former military colleagues and more reliant on other peer security contractors. Importantly, these networks did not appear to hold significant value to an individual when leaving security contracting and searching for alternate civilian employment.

Hinojosa and Hinojosa reported that the social relationship networks of veterans were vital to the success of the veteran's reintegration to their family.⁵³⁹ Hatch *et al* showed a correlation between social networks and reported prevalence of mental health issues in veterans.⁵⁴⁰ The findings of the current project enhance and extend this small but important area of research. The influence of social networks for veterans appears to be important in the transition to civilian life. Specifically, the degree to which their exclusive social groups affect their re-entry to civilian life appears to be a critical influence. Further research is needed to confirm generalizability of this project's findings to the entire security contractor population.

7.4 Attitudes and Values

There was an extraordinarily high level of job engagement expressed in the survey sample population, despite a lower percentage of feeling recognized for the job being performed. This indicates security contractors constitute a highly dedicated work force despite high levels of mortal risk with little back-up support. There are no comparative data to assess levels of job engagement in their US or UK counterparts. There is no pertinent literature correlating level of job engagement with level of risk. Security contractors do not

⁵³⁹ Ramon Hinojosa and Melanie Sberna Hinojosa (2011) 'Using military friendships to optimize postdeployment reintegration for male Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom veterans' *Journal of Rehabilitation Research & Development* Vol.48, No.10 pp1145-1158

⁵⁴⁰ Hatch *et al* (2013)

participate in offensive combat as a security contractor so comparisons to research like Rune Erikson's 'What make people actively fight in combat' are necessarily limited.⁵⁴¹

The high level of patriotism in the survey sample population was a significant finding as it conflicted with traditional notions of 'mercenaries' who are not loyal to any one country. In this sample population, data indicate that private security contractors are qualitatively distinct from such notions of mercenaries. A study by Volker Franke and Marc von Boemcken also reported that former law-enforcement personnel-turned-security contractors displayed similar levels of patriotism similar to those reported here.⁵⁴² Franke and von Boemcken's sample population were exclusively US citizens, whereas the present study included US and UK nationalities.⁵⁴³

Like interviewees, the sample survey population was nearly as motivated to become a security contractor for personal growth, as they were for remuneration. In contrast, the interview data indicated motivation by the existence of camaraderie, a sense of belonging and adventure, and the opportunity to implement skills already in possession. These motivations significantly outweighed remuneration for the sample interview population. It appeared the interview sample population was motivated by what Mills found to be situational elements (similarity of environment) and dependent on vocabulary (a common language).

In popular literature, money is often identified as key motivation to become a private security contractor.⁵⁴⁴ The survey sample population appear similar when compared to re-enlistment motivations of Armed Forces personnel. The survey sample population had served in the military on average for 6 to 10 years, and held ranks that ranged from E5 or E6 (US) or Sergeant or Staff Sergeant (UK). Within this range of rank, these soldiers would have been earning a base pay of between USD\$32,000 and USD\$35,000 or between £30,000 and £33,000 (UK).⁵⁴⁵ This base pay does not include allowances and certain benefits such as hazardous duty pay. Boesel and Johnson reported that a minimal 10%

⁵⁴¹ Rune Henriksen 'Warriors in combat – what makes people actively fight in combat' *Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol.30, No.2 (2007) pp187-223

⁵⁴² Franke and von Boemcken (2011)

⁵⁴³ The data did show that there was a statistically significant difference between US and UK contractors in the scale of 'Patriotism.' This was not considered a significant finding as US Armed Forces tend to have a more pronounced view of patriotism in comparison to their British counterparts. These were considered cultural, and obvious, differences.

⁵⁴⁴ Jeremy Scahill 'Blackwater; The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army' Nation Books, 2007 and Robert Young Pelton 'License to Kill, Hired Guns in the War on Terror' Three Rivers Press, 2007, among others.

⁵⁴⁵ US military wages: <http://www.goarmy.com/benefits/money/basic-pay-active-duty-soldiers.html> and UK military wages: <http://www.army.mod.uk/UOTC/32108.aspx>; accessed on August 15, 2014.

increase in pay would convince approximately 25% of this population to re-enlist, when combined with re-enlistment bonuses of up to \$40,000 (US) and £7,500 (UK), depending on eligibility.⁵⁴⁶ This means the average US soldier of this rank, upon re-enlistment, could earn between \$35,200 and \$39,050 and the UK soldier could earn between £33,000 and £36,000. Private security contractors can earn an average yearly pay (assuming they secure continuous contracts) of up to approximately \$160,000USD.⁵⁴⁷ That represents a 400% increase in re-enlistment pay salary. Electing to pursue security contracting and leave military service for pay suggested this survey sample population resembled the general military population in making career decisions based on remuneration.

The literature agrees that in labour markets ‘pecuniary variables are shown to be the chief determinates of peoples’ decision to seek new jobs, with non-pecuniary variable playing a secondary role; ‘higher wages or salary is the reason most frequently cited by all groups.’⁵⁴⁸ The survey respondents appear to be no different in their primary motivator, as 80% indicated ‘making more money than my previous job’ as a motivation considered ‘important’. Interestingly, interview data provided a more in-depth analysis of motivation, showing additionally the value of camaraderie, a sense of belonging and adventure, and the opportunity to implement skills and expertise. The present study suggests that interviews, while more labour-intensive and time consuming, may provide a better perspective on the comparative value of remuneration among other motivators.

Overall the attitudes and values of the survey sample population indicated a level of professionalism comparable to other forms of civilian employment in terms of job engagement, personal growth and remuneration. The interview sample population extended this by identifying certain socio-cultural characteristics that defined security contracting as a unique form of employment, which excluded those who did not have the same type of experience.

7.5 Professionalism

The finding that the interview sample population considered themselves professionals within a profession is significant. It is important to define how they qualified themselves as professionals, e.g. their criteria of legitimacy.⁵⁴⁹ Overall this finding appeared to indicate

⁵⁴⁶ David Boesel and Kyle Johnson (1984) ‘Why Service Members Leave the Military: Review of the Literature and Analysis’ Defense Manpower Data Center, p9.

⁵⁴⁷ All US government contracts are paid in USD, regardless the nationality of the contractors. See Elke Krahmann (2010), Moshe Schwartz (2010)

⁵⁴⁸ Boesel and Johnson (1984) p.iv

⁵⁴⁹ Valerie Fournier (1999) ‘The appeal to ‘professionalism’ as a disciplinary mechanism’ *The Editorial Board of the Sociological Review* pp280-307; p297

an effort to differentiate security contractors from other forms of employment. The label 'professional' also provided a way to differentiate security contractors with various backgrounds from each other. The most common example was the difference in level of competency felt by those with prior military backgrounds, compared to those with law-enforcement backgrounds. This distinctiveness of prior military experience, in particular, the experience of war and combat, appeared to serve as a qualification for which security contractors with law-enforcement background could never hope to achieve. This type of differentiation is not uncommon in the literature on private security contractors.⁵⁵⁰ The exclusivity of security contracting by way of exclusion reflects the process by which social identities are formed.⁵⁵¹ This finding extends Franke and von Boemken's finding of professionalism in their sample population, where they found 'a strong interest on the part of contractors to be considered professionals in the provision of security.'⁵⁵²

The process by which a Service leaver became a professional security contractor appeared to have a baseline requirement and three distinct phases. The *baseline* requirement was prior military service. Prior rank did not appear to be a factor of prior military service in the qualification of professional. Prior rank determined the level and type of skill, contributing overall to the label of 'professional.'

The *first phase* was meeting the eligibility requirements for employment by the PMSC that included formal vetting procedures and the possession of various licenses, e.g. Security Industry Authority (SIA) weapons license.⁵⁵³ The *second phase* was induction training once in country with the other security contractors on the job.⁵⁵⁴ It is during this stage that the Team Leaders and/or managers evaluated the social conduct of security contractors. In particular, evaluation of an individual's adjustment to the lack of a rank hierarchy appeared to signal suitability of the individual for the job. This is a significant finding. In prior military to civilian transition literature, the loss of rank-status recognition tends to cause role confusion as the Service leaver adapts to the loss of distinction their rank had previously afforded.⁵⁵⁵ In civilian life the inability to adapt and subsequent role confusion have emotional and social consequences, such as loneliness, isolation, etc. In contrast, the inability to adapt to a different role (for example, one in which those with previously lower

⁵⁵⁰ Paul Higate (2012)b

⁵⁵¹ Michael A. Hogg 'Social Identity Theory' Chapter 6 in Eds 'Contemporary Social Psychological Theories' Stanford University Press, Stanford (2006) pp111-128

⁵⁵² Franke and von Boemcken (2011) p725

⁵⁵³ The SIA weapons license required by the UK Home Office for any protection of goods and/or people.

⁵⁵⁴ For maritime security contractors this training took place before they would deploy on a contract, usually in the company's home country.

⁵⁵⁵ McNeil (1983) in McClure (1999) p309

rank may now be in a higher position than the new security contractor) had employment consequences. The individual may be considered unsuitable for the job and let go.

The second phase also includes an evaluation of skill and conduct during training, e.g. use of safety measures on the firing range, handling of weapons, etc. Both new security contractors and seasoned contractors appeared to use this opportunity to personally vet each other, based on skill, judgment and safety. It appeared that a certain level of operational conduct was considered professional, and that those exhibiting this level of conduct were considered to be acting as professional security contractors.

Also significant is the finding of cohesion among security contractors during this second stage. Similar to becoming a 'professional', cohesion amongst contractors appeared to rely on a history of prior military service. For some of the interview sample population, cohesion was felt to exist on the basis of prior military service. The use of a common language seemed to reinforce the value of prior military service. While history of military service provided a shared experience, it is not clear its value relied on battle drills conducted during military service and/or social elements like camaraderie, shown by King to be the key to developing cohesion.⁵⁵⁶ Others in the sample population felt induction training was where cohesion among security contractors began to develop.

These findings extend King's work on cohesion of primary groups.⁵⁵⁷ While it appeared the sample interview population knew other security contractors working for the same PMSC or even within their team, there are no data to support this is the case every time for each security contractor. Induction training lasted between 2 to 6 weeks. During this time the interview sample population described better living conditions as a private security contractor, such as en-suite accommodation with internet access.⁵⁵⁸ This arrangement resulted in less social activity between the security contractors while deployed. Some of the interview sample population observed this led to lower levels of socializing, in comparison to their experience of military accommodation. These findings support King's argument that 'other social practices may be rather more relevant to social cohesion [in the military]',⁵⁵⁹ e.g. training.

The *third stage* of becoming a professional security contractor appeared to last for as long as the individual is a contractor. This was dependent on the frequency of changing contracts

⁵⁵⁶ Anthony King (2006) 'The Word of Command, Communication and Cohesion in the Military' *Armed Forces & Society* Vol.32, No.4 pp493-512

⁵⁵⁷ King (2006) p494-495

⁵⁵⁸ This level of accommodation for security contractors was also found in Chisholm (2012) and Dunigan *et al* (2013).

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid* p495

amongst various PMSCs. In this third phase, operational conduct appeared to be the most important factor in determining whether another security contractor was a professional. Operational conduct was defined as use of good judgment, adherence to regulations and law and the safe handling and storage of weapons. Poor operational conduct by one security contractor appeared to increase a perceived level of risk for the observing contractor.

While individuals perceived themselves to be professional before they began these three phases, considering others as professional was contingent upon the success of the first two phases and continued acceptable operational conduct in the third. This indicated that the sense of security contractors as professionals may be based more on observable conduct and appropriate use of skill sets, rather than personal moral or ethical convictions.

The skill sets appeared to be ones learned during military service. The interview data found that all of the sample population leveraged their skills and knowledge from their military service into their work as a security contractor. Skill sets were not defined in the data in terms of listing skills categorically. However, in the interviews, there were references to weapons handling, skill of threat assessments, for example, of protecting a person, exercise of judgment when in a hostile situation, etc. Given the average rank of between Corporal to Staff Sergeant (US) and Lance Corporal to Sergeant (UK) a certain level of skill can be assumed. All of these ranks carry the responsibility of command for between 4 and up to 35 soldiers.⁵⁶⁰ Their responsibilities will range from the personal development of those under their command, to responsibility for equipment, such as tanks and guns.⁵⁶¹ Responsibilities also include specialist and instructor qualifications, setting an example for privates, and for some, responsibility for advising and assisting junior officers.⁵⁶²

The leverage of prior military experience in terms of skill and expertise show that the professionalization of security contractors rested on the relationship of the PMSC to the client in what the contractor perceives to be ethical and moral, criteria of legitimacy, professional competence and personal conduct.⁵⁶³ These conditions define what Fournier calls 'disciplinary logic among professional employees.'⁵⁶⁴ While there is some literature on

⁵⁶⁰ Sergeant in the UK Army, www.goarmy.com/about/ranks-and-insignia.html; Lance Corporal in the UK Army, www.army.mod.uk/structures/3231.aspx

⁵⁶¹ See www.army.mod.uk/structures/3231.aspx and www.goarmy.com/about/ranks-and-insignia.html, accessed 5 September 2014

⁵⁶² *Ibid*

⁵⁶³ Fournier (1999) p297

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid*

PMSCs as having professional identities,⁵⁶⁵ the present study extends the concept of professionalization beyond companies to individual employees.

As security contractors are not responsible for the management of violence (as Huntington considered this responsibility as one of the professional soldier), not legally allowed to engage in offensive combat, and do not receive selected personal and social benefits as a result of their work, there is little utility in discussing security contracting as a normative profession serving the greater good. Examples of such professions would be health professionals, including doctors, or lawyers. The professionalization of security contractors appeared to be identity-based; and the label 'professional' requires a 'sort of person'⁵⁶⁶ not a specific professional education. However, a particular type of experience (military service) is necessary to gain entry into this social group, because it denotes a specific skill set and understanding of common practices in security contracting. Experience, skills and understanding together produced a particular type of knowledge translated as operational conduct.⁵⁶⁷ This particular area of knowledge is what Abbot would consider a claim over jurisdiction within the sphere on military expertise. Security contractors are now claiming the area of military expertise and knowledge particular to them.

The label of 'professionals' also appeared to be a way in which to create legitimacy as a form of employment that should be considered to be a long-term career path. The most significant aspect of this finding is the confirmation of security contractors as having a specific and defined view of who they are, and their sense of exclusivity. This sense of professional identity appeared to give them great satisfaction and fulfilment. While some of the interview population reported never having had 'been a civilian', this may not matter if their choice of security contracting represents a career path. If their transition occurs under the auspices of 'retirement' then the career decision represents a transition to retirement, a type of transition supported by a large body of scholarship rather than postponement of transition to civilian life.

Further, using the label 'professional' as a means of distinction appeared to support the social identity of security contractors. The interview data suggests this social identity in which they enjoyed commonality of experience with other security contractors was a way of making sense of their place in the world. Tajfel found subscription to a social identity reduced uncertainty of behaviours, both of an individual and of others in the group,

⁵⁶⁵ Joakim Berndtsson (2012); p318 and Joachim and Schneiker (2012)

⁵⁶⁶ Fournier (1999) p297

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid*

allowing for the individual to place himself or herself within their world perspective.⁵⁶⁸ This practice is not uncommon amongst Service leavers who, whether experiencing a smooth or difficult transition, will grapple with their place, purpose and function in civilian life. Social identity, in which a common language contributed to feeling a sense of camaraderie and peace of mind, may also contribute to the sense of cohesion amongst contractors. Communication was found by King to be vital in small groups becoming cohesive.⁵⁶⁹

Security contractors, in considering themselves professionals, then conceived security contracting to be a profession. Evetts found 'professions are essentially the knowledge-based category of occupations which usually follow a period of tertiary education and vocational training and experience.'⁵⁷⁰ There are no other published data collected on educational or vocational training by security contractors, while they were contracting, that would fit this formal definition. In the present study, continued operational training and prior experience of the sample population were documented, and did contribute to the respondents defining themselves as professionals.

7.6 Transition

Transition appeared to permeate every aspect of the findings, from similar environments, use of a common language, networks, social identity, and professionalism. It was clear that transition was a cumulative process and ultimately subjective, as Goodman *et al* theorized. For the interview population, many of the interviewees stated our interview was the first time they had thought about their transition outside of the practicalities of their transition, e.g. securing post-military employment. It was shown that for all of the interview population and most of the survey population the transition was anticipated. The data on preparation, planning and use of informal social networks supports Goodman *et al*'s findings on anticipated transitions. The similarity of environments showed that for those with a shorter amount of time in civilian life the transition, despite preparation and planning, was considered smooth. This contrasted to the interview data in which leaving security contracting created apprehension for some in which they acknowledged having to 'finally' transition. While Levinson posited the ages of 40 to 55 years old as being one in which a mid-life transition will occur there was no data that made a distinction or correlation between mid-life transition and the military to civilian transition for the

⁵⁶⁸ Hogg 'Social Identity' (2006) p120

⁵⁶⁹ Anthony King (2007) 'The Existence of Group Cohesion in the Armed Forces' *Armed Forces & Society* Vol.33, No.4 pp638-645; p640

⁵⁷⁰ Julia Evetts 'The Sociological Analysis of Professionalism' *International Sociology* Vol.18 (2003) pp395-415; p397

interview population. For those who saw security contracting as a short-term career there was no data to confirm whether this fit into the transitional period after leaving a structure and before the next emerges, the process of which is central to Levinson's theory.

The interview sample population did contrast experiences in civilian life to those found in military to civilian transition literature. In the literature the adaptation to a lack of structure in civilian life can be found in the most simple of tasks like what to wear to be difficult and confusing. In contrast the interview sample population found this freedom to be liberating, especially choosing what to wear and how long their hair could be. Those that did spend time in civilian life before contracting were found to have some similar experiences to that of the literature that included frustration, loneliness, and isolation.

As far as the stages of transition put forth by Jolly and Harris *et al*, the sample population appeared to have completed the stage of confrontation whereby the individual acknowledges a change is about to occur, i.e. having an anticipated transition. However, the two resulting states of disengagement and resocialisation were ones found in the interview population with those having had 1 to 6 months in civilian life to have not occurred. Resocialisation for this cohort of the interview sample population appeared to have taken place but instead of reconstructing a civilian identity, what occurred was an adaption to the social identity of a security contractor.

Some with a longer length of time in civilian life appeared to find the disengagement the most troubling aspect of transition. Becoming a security contractor appeared, for this group, to address those difficulties and they were found to resocialise to the social identity of a security contractor.

The data confirmed that a transition did occur; all survey and interview participants had separated from the military and moved on to other employments including security contracting. However, it was the subjective perceptions of security contracting that determined their overall transition. As such transition was a constant process and the data showed no definitive beginning or end.

7.8 *Support for the Original Hypotheses*

At the start of this project, the relationship between length of time in civilian life between leaving the military and becoming a security contractor was hypothesized to affect the individual's transition to civilian life. The data showed that becoming a security contractor within 1 to 6 months after military separation delayed any type of re-integration to civilian

life. The similarity of environments between the military and security contracting appeared not to force the individual to engage in traditional military to civilian transition issues or processes after military exit. The literature on transition supports this observation in that it has been found when no significant change occurs in the environment the individual is not forced to adapt to new norms, rules or values that is crucial to reconstructing a new identity. This project found the sub-set of the interview sample population with less than six months in civilian life had not yet experienced a type of transition similar to that found in military to civilian transition literature.

The effect of length of time since military exit depends on how long they intend to work as a security contractor. If, as the data showed, security contracting for those currently in the sector is a long-term career choice, their military to civilian transition may change into one of a general transition into retirement after a second career. However, for the percentage of those who indicated security contracting as a temporary form of employment, the above hypothesis was proven. Some of the interview sample population indicated they would undergo their military to civilian transition when they left security contracting for other civilian employment.

For those experiencing a longer duration of civilian life between leaving the military and becoming a security contractor, the career choice of security contracting was based on a desire to regain the same sense of belonging once felt in the military, in terms of camaraderie, trust, communication and exclusivity. There remains uncertainty whether those with longer experience of civilian life would continue to reconcile their transition with their prior military service, and address the difficulties or frustrations they felt they were facing in civilian life. Only one respondent, Will, with 16 years in civilian life sought security contracting as a way to reconcile his experience in the US Marine Corps, specifically to overcome his feelings of leadership betrayal.

The study showed that security contracting represents a form of professional employment that offered personal and social rewards. Some saw it as a 'transition within a transition' (Brandon), and some recognized its utilities (Colin) before getting caught in the cycle (Bill), but there was unclear whether security contracting was a tool to explicitly negotiate their transition.

The short time period in civilian life represents a significant finding. The evidence showed a shared belief that security contracting was an acceptable form of professional employment with eligibility criteria required for entry. Eligibility was correlated with a sense of social identity that relied on exclusivity requirements, such as prior military experience and a

common language. The label of 'professional security contractor' was derived from this social identity based on operational conduct. Operational conduct was found to be a combination of experience, knowledge and skills; its origin was discernable in the individual's informal social networks, *before* they became a contractor. This was because trust within the network was used to gather information to evaluate the level of acceptable risk in becoming a security contractor. As the individual expanded their social network as a contractor, trust translated into a sense of cohesion as security contractor training continued.

7.9 Conclusion

The major finding of this project was that the perception of security contracting as a long-term career by the majority of the overall sample population appeared to mitigate the effect of any length of time spent in civilian life between military exit and security contracting. Importantly, security contractors consider themselves as professional within a profession.

Entry to the profession was shown to require eligibility criteria and upon entry access to an exclusive social identity. This social identity was experienced as a life-world, replete with norms and values particular to the group and first acquired during military service.

There were some distinctions made within this life-world. For example, those with prior military service were differentiated and regarded as distinct from those with prior law-enforcement service. Membership to this social identity with its sense of professionalism appeared to end upon leaving security contracting.

Social networks among peers who were already security contractors (but former military colleagues) were critical to the process of becoming a security contractor. The process of becoming a security contractor for those with prior military service was a complex process. Trust was a key value used to gather reliable information on becoming a contractor, and achieve success in operational conduct. Operational conduct was used to informally vet security contractors amongst themselves, and as a key process to develop a sense of cohesion and acceptance as a professional security contractor.

The need to regain a sense of belonging once felt in the military revealed a need unfulfilled in most civilian career tried by the study population. Security contracting has a key role to play in military to civilian transition, and may represent a choice of professional career with no further need for civilian transition.

Overall, the findings of this project produced a complex and rich profile of private security contractors. In both its methodology and findings, this thesis represents an original contribution to scholarship; both to the study of military to civilian transition and to the sociology of private security contractors.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

'You go into an area and you know in the years to come, people look back and know exactly what happened when they were there. The locals and the military were in a state of flux. I went into Saddam's palace, a day or two after it had been cleared. I was struck by the sense of history that I was standing where Saddam had been a few days earlier and for decades. Suddenly, you click your fingers and I am standing there in his palace scratching my bum and having a cup of tea and wondering. It's exciting, not inspiring. It's interesting.'

- Interviewee, 'Harry'

8.1 *Why this subject and its importance*

In the last fourteen years, the PMSC industry has experienced an unprecedented growth. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of contractors required to support state-led coalitions in conflict environments. As the numbers of contractors increased, governments, NGOs and the PMSC industry have developed sets of standards and codes of conduct, specifically the International Code of Conduct (ICoC) and the PSC.1 to regulate contractors recruited by private security service providers. These policies and regulations include required training of contractor personnel, human rights impact assessments, mental health and well-being evaluations, and vetting procedures for hiring, among other things. The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have provided the largest market for private security services since the Cold War and have given security contractors wide exposure to civilian society.

As the markets for private security in Iraq and Afghanistan decline, the PMSC industry has been adept and flexible in expanding their services to emerging markets, such as the need to combat piracy to animal poaching in Africa. Not all PMSCs continued in business after the military withdrawals of Iraq and Afghanistan. A recently analysis of the approximately 780 company signatories to the ICoC reported two-thirds were either defunct entities or were companies that had supported only a single contract. Those PMSCs that continue in business provide core offerings of consulting in risk mitigation, training of law-enforcement and military personnel, and kidnap and ransom services. This shift in roles and responsibilities for former-military contractors hired by PMSCs is changing the perception of contractors, and impacting career decisions of individual contractors.

The ICoC has winnowed the PMSC industry by continually raising the requirements for certification to the PSC.1 Standard. These requirements include a six-month certification

process, which includes audits of company practices and procedures. The financial and human resources required to achieve certification has not been feasible for some PMSCs. Those companies that continue to work outside of the ICoC code and PSC.1 Standard are unable to secure contracts from Western governments and organizations that require certification of the PSC.1 as terms for eligibility to bid for contracts. These standards and codes seek to mitigate incidents that may be caused by the individual contractor in the operating environment of the contract. The reliance on the private security sector by states and organizations, such as the UN, indicates the PMSC industry is here to stay. This means a continued need for a labour force possessing particular skills, expertise and knowledge required to deliver security services. Armed security contractors are the group most likely to confront complex issues such as the use of force, their impact on host country populations, and their respect for human rights. Data as simple as basic demographics can shed light on how these individuals process information and react to certain events. For example, information on the highest level of rank achieved for those with former military service gives an immediate indication of level of skill and competence in certain areas. Further information like understanding why the individual becomes a security contractor may indicate how they perform on their job, as well as shedding light on issues of military retention.

I chose to investigate demographic and social aspects of this labour force by studying those within this population who have prior military experience. The PMSC industry openly recruits Service leavers by prioritizing those with prior military experience as a condition of eligibility for employment. While the industry is recruiting those leaving the Armed Forces, the individual being recruited is in the process of transitioning to civilian life. It is this process I believed important to explore for several reasons.

First, the physical environment of private security contracting in conflict situations provides a unique environment in which social military norms, like self-responsibility and language, can be continued in a civilian employment, rather than in conventional military institutions. It has been noted previously that some veterans naturally gravitate to other uniformed professions, such as law-enforcement. This transition has been interpreted by Higate as the ability to adapt certain environments in civilian life, and by Jolly as the institutionalization of the individual. The PMSC industry has created new civilian employment and career paths for this sub-set of the contractor population. Career opportunities and the decision-making process underlying the choices of Service leavers after leaving the military is of interest to government military recruitment and retention, and job creation policies. My work extends and enhances the literature on military to civilian transition and civilian employment opportunities for this population.

Second, my work contributes to a greater understanding of how transition is experienced through a particular type of employment. In military to civilian transition literature, employment is one of various units of measurement to analyse the degree to which an individual has transitioned, and the services they may need to secure employment. What distinguishes private security contracting from other types of employment for Service leavers is its similarity to the military and its organizational structure. Similarities include the physical area of operation (i.e. those who deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan as active-duty soldiers), and socio-cultural similarities like language and camaraderie experienced while in the military. The organizational structure of private contracting is similar to that of the military in terms of working in teams, but the age and level of experience among the teams are distinctly different to that of the military. In private contracting, younger or previously lower ranked soldiers may be employed as 'Team Leaders', responsible for older, previously higher ranked soldiers.

The research question 'What role does this type of employment play in the individual's transition' is important to ask. This type of employment environment may postpone transition to conventional civilian life, especially for those who immediately enter the security contracting after leaving the military. The delay in their military to civilian transition in this way means such individuals may not be eligible for government provided transition services. This population may therefore face difficulty in accessing services or care, when they eventually transition into conventional civilian employment, after their private contracting work completes.

Third, by examining personal history to understand *why* an individual chooses to become a security contractor after their military experience, may help develop prediction models of *how* they perform on their job. Job performance is the concern of the PMSC industry, governments and organizations alike, due to potential (and, in some cases, deadly) risks of the work. For example, one finding from the survey sample population indicated that becoming a security contractor was a career move within a security contracting career path. Complementing this finding were the interview data in which the sense of being a career professional was a dominant theme. As discussed in Chapter 3, professional norms exist within a profession. The professional norms of leadership, including responsibility, and safety, were reported by the interview sample population. The growing number and size of professional organizations and associations representing security contractors indicate that these individuals voluntarily observe the rules needed to remain in good standing and to be considered professional. Together, these findings indicate a population that may be less likely to harm their professional career by committing offences or illegal acts in areas of conflict.

Investigating individual private security contractors using accepted research methodology, contributes knowledge to what is known about the transition to civilian life from the military; how and why individuals work within the industry; and how they perceive their role within the industry. As PMSCs have becoming increasingly standardized and regulated, the reasons above underscore the importance of shedding light onto an otherwise largely unknown population. This thesis, then, represents an original and unique contribution to the literature by providing quantitative and qualitative data that extends the current understanding of Western private security contractors.

8.2 Study Design

This study was designed using qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate how Service leavers experience the transition from the military to civilian life by becoming a private security contractor. Semi-structured interviews were designed to develop the personal biography of an individual, and included basic demographics, why they joined the military, why and how they left the military, and why and how they became a security contractor. In this way, transition could be documented as a holistic experience. This strategy assumed that inclusion of recalled experiences from before, or during, military service might provide a more comprehensive view of the transition.

In the Pilot Interviews, it became apparent that the time period between leaving the military and becoming a private security contractor varied considerably between respondents. Because of this, I sorted the survey respondents into two groups: those who spent a shorter amount of time in civilian life (less than 6 months) and those who spent a longer amount of time in civilian life (7 months or more) before becoming a security contractor. I chose 6 months as the short period as this is the period in the US and UK where the highest number of government provided transition services to are available to all Service leavers. The aim was to see if there were statistically significant differences that depended on the time in civilian life between these two groups.

An initial review of the literature on the privatization of security led me to focus on a common, but unexplored, observation: that most Western private security contractors were military veterans. Through my participation in several PMSC industry initiatives (such as the development of the PSC.1) and industry conferences, I noticed that most PMSCs sought security contractors who had recent and relevant military experience. After a review of military to civilian transition literature, and literature authored by veterans themselves, I developed the theoretical framework for this project to explore transition events, motivations, social identity, and the contribution of social networks in

decision making. The interview questions were based on this framework, which subsequently informed the questions developed for the survey.

The aim of the survey was to collect empirical information to validate and extend the interview findings. By using descriptive statistics to describe the population, I was able to support specific findings from the interviews. The inclusion of Franke and von Boemcken's 5-point Likert scales on 'attitudes and values' allows this project's survey findings to be generalized to the Western security contracting population. Collecting data on the size and type of social networks used by Service leavers to secure employment as a security contractor, extends and enhances prior studies, such as Howard Burdett's work on why and how people leave the military and find post-military employment. Published literature, such as Granovetter's theory on securing employment, and Hatch *et al's* findings on the relationship between social networks and the mental health of military veterans, suggest social networks influence various aspects of an individual's life. To extend prior studies by others, I used the interview data to describe the properties of the social networks of security contractors.

Using grounded theory to interpret the interview data provided me with flexibility to continuously go back to the interview datasets to develop codes, concepts and themes. This meant I engaged with the interview data from when the interview took place through to the writing up process. This process helped, for example, when professionalism emerged as a theme. I re-read the interview transcripts to reference words such as 'skill' or 'expertise,' for example. As the personal histories emerged, I used the survey as a means to describe the general population of Western security contractors, and to see if findings from previous studies confirmed the information obtained in the interviews.

8.3 *Key Findings*

8.3.1 *Demographics*

The demographic data collected in the survey and interviews showed the majority of respondents to be middle-aged males with limited educational attainment, whose length of military service made them eligible for government-provided transition services for a limited period of time. Within these data are two key findings. The first is that those who go immediately into security contracting after military service are unlikely to use government provided transition services. By the time they leave security contracting, their eligibility for these services has lapsed. The survey data indicated that approximately 50% of the survey sample population had experience of between 2 and 5 contractors. The

remainder had deployed on between 6 and 11, or more contracts. The data reveal that this population was at a disadvantage when seeking employment in civilian life after security contracting, in terms of transferability of skills, earning potential in comparison to their civilian counterparts, and loss of access to care and services as a result of prior military service.

This thesis contributes to the literature on the earning status of veterans and their civilian counterparts, for which there is a large body of scholarship. Prior literature reports that veterans tend to have a higher earning status than their civilian counterparts. Becoming a security contractor after military service may affect the employability of an individual, once that individual leaves security contracting. However, because the majority of the overall sample population indicated security contracting to be a career in which they intended to stay, they may have no intention of entering the more conventional civilian labour market again. In this case, security contracting becomes a ‘second career’, an employment pattern that has been widely documented in literature on veterans. Nevertheless, because the number of jobs available in security contracting can fluctuate rapidly – as seen with the drawdown of Western involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan – the individual, regardless of a belief in security contracting as a second career path, will continue to be in a potentially vulnerable position when trying to secure alternative civilian employment.

8.3.2 *Transition*

To address the main research question on transition, I report that becoming a security contractor after military service *does* play a role in the individual’s transition to civilian life.

I found that the length of time an individual spent in civilian life was important in the decision to become a security contractor, confirming this project’s hypothesis. The majority of the overall sample population went immediately into security contracting after military exit. Becoming a security contractor postponed an individual’s transition from the military to conventional civilian life in three ways.

First, by immediately becoming a security contractor after military service, an individual was less likely to use government-provided transition services. For most of the survey population, eligibility to access these services will have expired by the time they leave security contracting.

Second, by immediately entering into security contracting, individuals failed to engage in a transition process that included de-construction of the military identity and re-construction of a civilian identity. These processes are regarded in the literature as an important step in transition. My findings extend the options for transition by showing that the alternative choice to immediately enter security contracting can re-enforce the military identity due to the similarity in environments of military and security contracting. Specifically, in security contracting, there appeared to be no change in the type of language used, or in skills and expertise developed in the military. The sense of camaraderie with their peers in security contracting indicated no attempt to adopt civilian norms in an effort to reintegrate into conventional civilian life.

Third, the physical location of security contracting for those deployed overseas (all of my overall sample), further isolated the individual from civilian influence, and appeared to hinder the development of civilian social networks. As Hatch *et al* showed in their study, the lack of development of civilian networks by veterans correlates to mental health issues. Dunigan *et al*'s study on contractors deployed to conflict environments showed security contractors experienced the same rates of PTSD as military veterans. The lack of civilian networks among security contractors is a key finding of the present study.

Another key finding for those immediately entering security contracting is the extent to which similarity of environments prevents engagement with an individual's military to civilian transition. This finding implies that an individual may not experience a military to civilian transition until they leave security contracting, and that security contracting offers an environment in which those who spent longer time in civilian life may seek to address unresolved military to civilian transition issues. The challenge for such individuals is that the social rewards offered by security contracting do not necessarily address the root causes of transition issues. If an individual does not intend to eventually secure alternative civilian employment, the need to resolve issues of transition may not be important. However, if security contracting is short-term, or if employment contractors are difficult to secure, an individual may not only experience unresolved issues of their first transition out of the military, but may also experience the challenges of a second transition from security contracting to civilian life.

For those who spent more time in civilian life, the role that security contracting plays in their transition is easier to interpret. The interview sample subset was very clear about what they were missing, and where they were missing it. They identified security

contracting as a means to regain what they felt had been lost. Specifically, they reported in civilian life that they missed the camaraderie, adventure, travel, a sense of belonging, and a familiar way of communicating, which had given them a sense of purpose while serving in the military. This sense of purpose was linked to an identity that made sense to the individual. The absence of these features in civilian life was felt so strongly that the individual sought to replace them by seeking a similar environment in which they believed these features would be present. This finding indicates that those who spent more than 6 months in civilian life had not yet reconciled to their loss of the military environment. By wanting to regain those aspects of their prior military experience that gave them positive feelings (happiness, purpose, fulfillment, etc.), this subset indicated they had not resolved their transition to civilian life.

8.3.3 *Networks*

Data from this project show that the networks of those with prior military service served three important functions in the process of becoming a security contractor: gathering information, facilitation and communication. The interview sample population relied extensively on their military networks to gather information from former military colleagues and/or friends on employment as a security contractor. Types of information gathered included level of risk in certain areas of contracting, information on the competence and skill of other security contractors, types of contracting jobs (e.g. protecting a building or protecting a person), length of a contract and time off policies. Trust amongst network members played a significant role during this stage. These networks were the main source of information supporting the decision to become a security contractor. Once a security contractor, the individual changed roles to become a recruiter rather than a job seeker. Networks among security contractors were used as a vetting mechanism by which other security contractors were determined to be professional or unprofessional.

Networks of security contractors exhibit large, dense clusters of strong ties that were leveraged successfully to find employment. This is a distinctly different observation than that of Granovetter, who theorized that weak ties in a network provide a greater probability of securing employment. He speculated that near proximity of ties within a network meant that those with 'strong ties', knew and experienced the same things, offering little opportunity to connect to someone who might know of other opportunities. His research found it was the weak ties, 'friends of friends of friends' as Christakis and Fowler put it, which presented the best chance at securing new employment. This study supports the alternative hypothesis that security contractor networks of former military

colleagues and/or friends may be the primary way to secure employment as a contractor. This key finding changes traditional perceptions of how networks are used by Service leavers to secure employment as security contractors.

The density of strong ties within these networks contributed to the social identity of security contractors, by minimizing the influence of civilian norms and behaviours. This observation is consistent with the published literature, specifically the study by Harris *et al's*, which speculate that replicating socio-cultural characteristics of the military, like language, provides an individual with a sense of who they are, enabling them to feel comfortable in security contracting environments. In the present study, social networks connected military personnel who shared a common military language, and expectations for standards of behaviour derived from prior military service.

8.3.4 *Professionalism*

The finding of a sense of professionalism amongst security contractors confirms published literature on the subject by Higate, Berndtsson, and Kinsey. The present study extends these observations due to the finding of a shared perception of security contracting as a profession with standards, that offered a legitimate career path in life. This key finding indicates that in parallel with the adoption of standards by the PMSC industry, the security contractors themselves accept the need for standards and regulations.

Another key finding was the identification of a process by which security contractors consider themselves to be professionals, operating within a formalized structure. The first phase of this process is the regulatory requirement by a state for the security contractor to be licensed. With this regulation, the state overtly recognizes and accepts the need for standards in this type of employment. The second phase in the development of professionalism occurs during training drills in the induction phase of security contracting, followed by the experience of working under contract. A sense of cohesion appears to develop during this "initiation" period amongst the security contractors within the organizational structure of the PMSC. The third phase in the process of developing a sense of professionalism was dependent upon the group acceptance of social and operational conduct among security contractors as they became more experienced. Acceptable conduct included behaviours such as the safe handling of weapons. Acceptable social and operational conduct appeared to be derived from military norms, which were subsequently reinforced with PMSCs by state and company standard. The present study reports the novel finding that the sense of professionalism depends on three distinct levels of control exerted over the behaviour of private security contractors. This finding informs on the

importance of informal social controls, especially the persistence of military norms contributing to the concept of self-identity of a professional security contractor. The policy implications of this are discussed below.

8.4 *Issues of Interest*

This project's sample population provides new information in veteran transition literature that can contribute to development of more comprehensive assessment of the military to civilian transitions. Dandeker *et al* considered more extensive data of employment, social exclusion (e.g. homelessness) and alcohol and substance abuse were essential to ensure appropriate government transition services.⁵⁷¹ Findings from this project's sample population contribute to the discussion of acceptable criteria for success assessments, when analyzing the transition to civilian life. For example, if the security contractor reports PTSD, but is holding a job without incident, should they be considered unsuccessful or successful as a security contractor in civilian life? The same reasoning can be applied to those suffering from alcohol abuse or depression, as these were two important issues reported by Dunigan *et al* to be highly prevalent among the contractor population. More research is needed to resolve these dilemmas.

Another issue of interest is the idea of security contracting as a profession, and whether such a concept is desirable for civilian society. The Oxford Dictionary defines "profession" as a paid occupation that involves prolonged training and formal qualification. Observation of the growing number of organizations and associations that represent security contractors, encouraging and offering them 'professional development' assistance suggest security contracting is on the path to being accepted as a profession. In the context of a civilian market, security contractors possess specialized, knowledge and expertise, largely as a result of their general military training and their specialist branch/job training and experiences while in the military. For example, can specialist skill training and experience as an explosive ordinance device operator be translated to the civilian market as a professional security contractor? Based on findings from the current project, I argue yes, it does, but acceptance of these skills and expertise as indicative of a professional is at its nascent stage. For security contracting to be regarded as a profession, there must be recognition by those who are not security contractors, i.e., government, industry and civil society. Recognition of security contracting as a profession by society and governments has policy implications (discussed later) for how they are used.

⁵⁷¹ Dandeker *et al* (2003)

8.5 *Policy Implications*

The below are some policy implications drawn from this project as the information is likely to be of interest to various organizations, and governments at the state and national level.

8.5.1 *Professionalism*

Recognition of security contracting as a profession alters the relationship between security contractors and their employer, governments and civil society. If security contracting is recognized as a profession, security contractors are likely to experience negotiation in terms of wages, accountability criteria, and rights (e.g. the provision of healthcare after a contract is finished). Policies on entitlements of the security contractor will have to be developed by the PMSC, or the contract originator, for example, the UK government. Being recognized as a profession presents parameters, within, or around which security contractors can negotiate and protect certain rights. A key challenge would be the resolution on access criteria and the barriers to care for contractor personnel, as extensively documented by T Christian Miller and supported by Dunigan *et al's* study.

8.5.2 *Government Provided Transition Services*

The data collected in this study indicated respondents seldom used government-provided transition services. One reason was that those who immediately entered into security contracting after military service felt no need to engage with these services, as assistance in finding employment was not needed. A key challenge for security contractors is that by the time their security contract completes, most of them are no longer eligible for government-provided transition services. This finding should be brought to the attention of administrators for US and UK transition programmes, such as the TAP and the CTP, respectively. Reintegration into civilian life after security contracting may be the first time an individual engages with their military to conventional civilian transition. As both the US and UK transition programmes offer assistance in becoming a close protection officer (CPO) as a part of the transition to civilian life, effectively assisting them to become a security contractor, this may be of specific interest regarding the duty of care.

8.6 *Strengths and Limitations of the Study*

8.6.1 *Strengths of the Study*

Little is known about private security contractors as a special population. This project introduces original and unique data that extends the published literature, modifying existing concepts and introducing some new ideas. For example, the data collected on the demographics of this population are the most extensive to date. Prior literature such as the study by Dunigan *et al* collected demographic data on *all* contractors deployed to conflict environments. The current project presents more detailed and original demographic data on a well-defined security contractor sub-set from the UK and US military. The data collected on transition and networks represent original contributions that will further our understanding of how Service leavers choose to experience transition.

One strength of this study is the focus on a clearly defined sample population comprising US and UK contractors with prior military service. Private security contractors comprise a diverse group of nationalities, languages and backgrounds. Native, English-speaking, Western security contractors represent a small but important group within the worldwide private security contractor population. Chi-squared analyses of the survey population found no significant statistical difference between the US and UK respondents, in terms of transition, networks, and job engagement. Where there were statistical differences in attitudes and values, I have highlighted them in the discussion of the findings.

An important contribution is the information on a population that is often unwilling to participate in survey research. Middle age males are less likely to complete surveys compared to females. In addition to successfully obtaining data from a group of middle-aged males, I was also able to collect preliminary findings from women. Prior studies have been limited to men, so these preliminary data can be used to design research on the issues important to women exiting the military, and searching for career options.

The decision to study the military to civilian transition of private security contractors enabled me to draw on an established body of scholarship, both on theory and experiences of transition in designing this research. For example, analyses of the sample interview population could be put into the perspective of prior published literature, to, contribute to a better understanding of the contribution of private security contracting to a successful civilian transition.

The use of qualitative and quantitative methodology to gather and analyse information enabled me to develop robust analyses of the individual security contractor. Grounded theory was used to develop themes from the interview data, while maintaining the integrity of the individual's personal biography. Grounded theory also provided the flexibility to reflect and refer back to the interviews, as the project progressed. Importantly, profiling the basic demographics of the population via the survey complemented and validated information obtained in the interviews,

8.6.2 *Limitations of the Study*

Private security contractors are a diverse group of individuals, of whom Western security contractors represent the smallest percentage. As such, a limitation of this study's focus on US and UK security contractors with prior military experience meant the conclusions drawn here may be limited in the extent to which they can be generalized to private security contractors worldwide.

Based on the cross-sectional study design, survey data were captured for a single time point. As the literature has shown transition is a process, a prospective longitudinal design would be valuable for future research to validate correlations, and to continue to improve our understanding of the various stages of military-civilian transition. A survey with multiple time points for data collection may yield more information on transition as life experiences may modify the original perception of the transition process.

The quantitative data analyses were limited by sample size, as subsets, such as women and nationalities other than US or UK ex-military were not present in a large enough sample for robust statistical analyses. Additionally the quantitative data was limited by not addressing certain data points in the survey. For example, information collected on numbers of jobs held in civilian life, job types, length in each job, and access (frequency, type of engagement) to government provided transition services would have provided greater support to the personal histories from the interviews. Further, data collected from the survey on motivations to enlist or join the military would have provided a greater reliability of data to the sample population as a whole. Lastly additional data on the types of positions held during security contracting would have given greater support to the interviews in terms of the organization structure of PMSCs from which to address the professionalism of security contracting.

8.7 *Future Research*

I suggest four areas below as potential areas of future research arising from this project's findings on security contractors experiencing their military to civilian transition.

8.7.2 *Cohesion among security contractors*

Multiple levels of training were identified in the process required to become a security contractor accepted by peers as a professional. Such training appeared to be integral to the development of cohesion between security contractors, especially among those who did not know each other before starting a contract. Further studies on how cohesion develops among security contractors would extend the current literature on cohesion to groups outside of the military, but often operating in the same sphere. Such studies could draw on work published by King, Henrickson and Dew to observe how people with like backgrounds, but different nationalities (for example cohesion amongst Western contractors and Local Nationals), develop cohesion as a "civilian" group under state control, in comparison to the state's military.

8.7.3 *Female Security Contractors*

This project's survey indicates a need for more in-depth studies of the female security contractor population, their sense of professionalism and their civilian career options. Vrdoljak published some preliminary data on women security contractors, in 2010. The extent of similarity between demographics of men and women security contractors has not been studied. Female security contractors have a strong presence on social media, and are often used for specialist jobs within security contracting, for example, canine handling. There are no data, on female security contractors in terms of access to transition services, experience of transition, reasons for choosing security contracting as a career, and their social networks. This area of research would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the private security population in general.

8.7.4 *Transition from Security Contracting to Civilian Life*

With one exception, the survey population and interview respondents were active contractors at my time of contact with them. There is virtually nothing known about those who leave security contracting for civilian life. Of the respondents interviewed, only one security contractor left contracting for conventional civilian life. Considering all of the measurements for what is considered in the literature to be a successful transition, this

individual appeared to have transitioned successfully. Various communications and social media used by those I interviewed indicate they continue to contract, with the exception of one, who died 6 months after our interview. An important area of future research is investigating reintegration to civilian life from the quasi-military environment of private security contracting. Such research would facilitate comparisons to military to conventional civilian transitions, and assess the consequences of security contracting experiences on any immediate separation issues, including the need for organizational support and health services.

8.7.5 *Impact on Families of Private Security Contractors*

One of the reasons given by the interview population for leaving the military was the separation from their family over the years outweighed their job satisfaction in the military. Almost all of those interviewed had a family that included one or more children. Leaving the military, they reported to me, would give them time to spend with their family. However, as a security contractor, the data showed they spent more time away from their family than they had while serving in the military. I discovered that control over time spent with family, and the duration of time spent with family ameliorated the disruption of family separations for contractors. Wong and Snider have published extensively on the impact of deployed spouses on military family dynamics in the US. It is reasonable to speculate that the same amount of separation as a security contractor from family would impact family dynamics. The study by Dunigan *et al*, which investigated similarities between contractors, soldiers and veterans, suggests that families of security contractors may face the same issues as returning soldiers or veterans. Research into differences in family dynamics when a spouse is in the military compared to when that spouse works as a security contractor could help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of support services and company employment policies.

8.8. *Value of the Research*

Analyses of individual security contractors produced a complex picture of individuals in their life-course, as they leave the military and chose to become employed as private security contractors. This project extends the existing literature on individual private security contractors, and presents original and unique data on the selected population. Through developing the personal histories of the interviewees, this research revealed that a particular group of people used security contracting to gain social rewards (high wages, camaraderie) and personal rewards (professional and career development) in negotiating their transition from the military to civilian life. The study provides a greater

understanding of the demographics of this population, as well as key insights into how and why they leave the military. The data gathered on social networks, attitudes and values contradicts the popular perception of security contractors as ‘mercenaries.’ It is clear that security contracting is developing as an occupation that is rapidly undergoing professionalization and more general societal acceptance, as the sample population self-identified as professionals. Most importantly, this project represents a first attempt to include in-depth data on private security contractors, thereby contributing to research on the privatization of security, and their military to civilian transition.

In conclusion, this project has contributed significant and original data on a part of a population largely considered to be unknown. These data build on the literature of both military to civilian transition and on the privatization of security, and have potential policy implications for the PMSC industry, governments and the clients of PMSCs. The most important next step in research is to examine the transition from security contracting to civilian life. This is important because it can provide information on how long individual remain security contractors, and how and why they leave security contracting. Finally, it can examine this transition to analyse the issues faced in comparison to the traditional military to civilian transition.

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APPENDIX A

Interview questions format; semi-structured interviews.

Interview

Demographics

Age	
Sex	
Branch of military service	
How many years did you serve in the military?	
What year did your service end?	
How long have you been a contractor for?	
Amount of time between military and contracting	
Nationality	
Highest degree of education received	
Combat experience	

Interview

Tell me a little bit about why you joined the military and what about it appealed to you	
How old were you when you joined?	
What did you like best about being in the military?	
What did you like the least?	
Was leaving the military an anticipated event?	
How did you prepare for your military exit?	
Did leaving mark as a significant event in your life?	
When you actually exited the military did you notice a significant change, whether it was positive or negative?	
Can you remember the impact leaving the military had on your, your friends or family?	
How would you describe the change you experienced?	
Do you remember feeling a lot of stress during this time?	
Do you remember feeling uncomfortable in civilian life?	
Did you experience difficulties with friends or family after leaving?	
Was it difficult to become a civilian in the sense that you were no longer recognized as a soldier by public/family/friends?	
Do you still think of yourself as a soldier?	

Did you think or even know about contracting when you were still in the military?	
Was security contracting the only option for you? What was the appeal of contracting?	
What other jobs had you looked for, what other employment did you have before becoming a security contractor?	
Is contracting a temporary job in your mind?	
Or is it giving you time to figure out a next career move?	
Do you feel the environment is different between being in the military and being a security contractor?	
Do you use your skills or knowledge you learned in the military in contracting?	
How does cohesion develop in the work teams of contracting?	
How do you think being a security contractor has benefited you?	
Do you trust the other contractors that you work with?	
Do you feel that contracting plays any role in your transition to civilian life?	
Has contracting met your expectations of what you thought contracting would be – and what did you think it was going to be?	
Before you left the military did you know anyone that was already a contractor?	
Did you serve with them in the military?	
How did you start the process of becoming a security contractor?	
Did you know most of the people in this process?	
How long did it take for you to get a contract once you started the process?	
How many contracts have you completed?	
Do you think knowing other people that were in contracting influenced you in any way to become a contractor yourself?	
In what way?	
As a contractor do you feel like you live in civilian life? If not describe what you feel the environment is you live in	
Do you foresee going on more contractors or staying a contractor long term?	
What is the appeal of contracting?	
What is your most memorable experience as a contractor?	
Is there anything I didn't ask that you think I might have missed?	

APPENDIX B

Sample of survey; 'Networks' section

1. Before I left the military or law enforcement, I knew one or more people that were employed as private security contractors.
Y/N
2. How many people did you know approximately that were **ALREADY** security contractors before you became one?
 - a. 0
 - b. 1-3
 - c. 4-6
 - d. 7-10
 - e. 11 or more people
3. In what capacity did you know these other security contractors?
 - a. Former military colleague/s
 - b. Friend, former military
 - c. Friend, non-military
 - d. Acquaintance, military or non-military
 - e. Family
 - f. Other
4. How did you begin the process of becoming a security contractor?
 - a. Someone contacted me that was already employed as a security contractor
 - b. I reached out and contacted someone I knew that was already a security contractor
 - c. I signed up to a security contracting recruitment website
 - d. Basic internet search for security contracting jobs
 - e. Security company website
 - f. Other
5. Have you completed one or more contract as a security contractor?
Y/N
6. If yes to the previous question, how many contracts have you completed?
 - a. I have only been on **ONE** contract
 - b. 2-5
 - c. 6-10
 - d. 11 or more contracts

7. Please rank the following statements on the scale provided (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)
- a. Knowing other people who were security contractors BEFORE I became one had an influence on me becoming a security contractor
 - b. The environment of security contracting is similar to the environment of the military in terms of language used and operational conduct
 - c. I am comfortable working with other security contractors I did not know previously
 - d. Knowing that the security contractors I work with have previous military experience gives me peace of mind
 - e. Security contracting is a similar experience to when I served in the military and/or law enforcement
 - f. Security contracting has helped me transition to civilian life
 - g. I trust the other security contractors I work with
 - h. I only trust other security contractors that have the same background/experiences as I do.